



B'NAI GOMBIN

Newsletter of the Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society

The Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society (GJHGS) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that seeks to educate the public about the history and genealogy of the Jews of Gombin. To achieve this goal, the GJHGS collects and publishes relevant materials, encourages historical and genealogical research, and undertakes activities aimed at preserving documents and relics of the culture and history of Jewish Gombin.

B'nai Gombin is the newsletter of the GJHGS. Everything published in *B'nai Gombin* is meant to provide information for Gombiners and their descendents. Articles, stories, poems, or other genres about Jewish genealogy, Poland, Gombin, or other subjects of interest to Gombiners submitted, may be published in *B'nai Gombin*. The views and opinions expressed in *B'nai Gombin* are not necessarily those of the Gombin Society. For further information or to receive back issues, contact the Gombin Society by mail at 320 County Route 105, Highland Mills NY 10930 or by email.

www.gombin.org

© 2006. Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society

Gombin Synagogue Project; Trip Postponed to Summer 2007

The Board met on March 12 and voted to move forward on a project to memorialize the Jewish presence in Gombin by creating a small park and monument at the site where the Gombin Synagogue stood before the war. The site is currently an open parking area behind a small store on Kilinskeiga Street. A proposal will be sent to the community leaders in Gombin for their review and input.

The park would consist of a landscaped area with trees, shrubs and three fixed benches. The monument would include an engraved metal plaque and suitable stone pedestal depicting the image of the synagogue which stood on this site for over 200 years. A brief description of the significance of the location will be included.

The proposed 2006 group trip to Gombin is being postponed to 2007 to allow time for the planning and construction of the monument. To stay informed about the 2007 trip, send names and addresses (and email addresses) for yourself and children and grandchildren to Gombin Society- with your 2006 dues.

Issue 18, Pesach, 2006 (5766)

My Father - Raymond Boll

Excerpts from Eulogy by Harold Boll



It's hard to believe my father is really gone. He had such an indelible presence in life that even in death his after-image is still palpable to me. When he came into a room, people knew he was there even if he spoke not at all. His aura could not be ignored.

He was deceptively strong; as a butcher he could lift a hind of beef off a hook as though it were a mere hamburger. My family had a macho tradition of arm wrestling; my brother Benny beat all comers. But no one dared challenge my father; it would have been no contest.

His words carried a ring of authority and certainty – ambiguity was not part of his *weltanschauung*. I remember talking to him about politics when I entered high school during the

tumultuous 60s. I was struck by the cogency of his reasoning and the nimbleness of this thought processes as we verbally sparred against one another. It soon dawned on me that my father, the butcher, would have been a star on my high school debating team. ...at this point in my life the egalitarian principle of not to judging people by their job or by the size of their paycheck was brought home to me.

Had he been born into a middle-class Jewish family in New York rather than a farming family in Gombin; had he gone to college in his early 20's rather than running for his life from the Nazis; had he had the advantages of peace and not the numbing experiences of war in his formative years – who knows what station he could have attained. But it really didn't matter, because I saw the same energy and intellect in him as a butcher as he would have shown in any profession – and I was proud of him.

My father came to this country from a Polish *shtetl* and settled our family into urban Newark. He worked hard and was a good provider for us. His first job was in the Carpenter steel mill. But he soon took a job at cousin Willy's small supermarket in Bloomfield. He worked hard there and learned the business up and down – including how

to be a butcher. And though he worked hard, he made sure we had a sense of being connected to family and to our roots as Gombiner Jews. We were always visiting cousins, or going to the Orange Mountains for picnics with other Gombiners. He was the last president of the Young Men Gombiner's Society of New Jersey.

My father and mother came of age during a time in history and a place in the world where to be a Jew was tantamount to a death sentence; 19 of their 20 family, friends and acquaintances perished during the Holocaust. And yet he survived along with my mother, Bella, my older brother Benny and Uncle Sam who fled from the Nazi onslaught. He helped others survive during a time when it was far easier to perish than to survive. During the first year of the war, they survived a brutal winter in the northern Russian tundra where as many people died from depression and hopelessness as died from the harsh conditions. When the spring came he organized a group to leave this harsh region and undertake a train sojourn into the belly of the Asian Russia where they waited

out the war. There were many times when only my father's wit and verve helped get them through situations which would have ensnared the less daring and nimble minded. As my father got older, he would often talk about those war years. I regret tuning out occasionally; I wish I had been a more attentive listener.

My father's actual decline really began with my mother's death more than 6 yrs ago. He loved her dearly and never really recovered from her passing. A part of him died with her... I think his happiest moments were in the mid-80's after he and my mother retired to Florida, where their apartment became the social center for many of the Jewish elderly living there. Whenever I visited, I would see a bunch of people, couples and widows, come by every evening to sit around the dinner table, kibbitzing, noshing and occasionally playing *Kalooki* - a kind of Jewish gin rummy. He was in his element, surrounded by friends who respected his graciousness and hospitality. I don't think I was ever more proud of him than for the mitzvah he did down there.

Volunteer to Join the Board of the Gombin Society

The GJHGS seeks 4 new members of the Board to expand the membership and the representation of Gombiner families. If we are to be successful in passing the love of our Gombin heritage to the next generation, we must have young people and new families get involved. The current by-laws allow the immediate expansion of the Board from 11 to 15. Contact Bernie Guyer bguyer@jhsph.edu (410-366-2760) if you are interested and willing to attend one Board meeting a year.

Yom HaShoah Yellow Candle™ Program – 2006

From Elliot Ballen

It's been sixty years since Nazi concentration camps were liberated, and the Holocaust that claimed six million Jewish lives came to an end. To ensure that the six million will be remembered and that the Holocaust never happens again, we join with Jews throughout North America by participating in the Yom HaShoah Yellow Candle Program™, a program sponsored by the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs in cooperation with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the North American Federation of Temple Brotherhoods.

We encourage every Gombiner family to light a Yellow Candle on the night of Monday, April 24, 2006. When each family lights a Yellow Candle, it will increase the awareness of the Holocaust and perpetuate our commitment to our people. In the case of Gombiners, we recall the approximately 2000 Jews from Gombin who were taken, in April, 1942, to Chelmno where they were murdered.

Yom HaShoah candles are a highly visible symbol for keeping the flame alive. Their color recalls the badges Jews were forced to wear in Nazi-occupied Europe, but their flame inspires hope that we can yet make our world a tolerant place to live.

For information contact Elliot Ballen: emballen@excite.com Phone: 908-272-1920



GOMBIN JEWISH HISTORICAL &
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT: Bernard Guyer; SECRETARY: Minna Packer; TREASURER: Mindy Prosperi

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Phil Ball, Elliot Ballen, Harold Boll, Ronny Boll, Jeremy Freedman, Arthur Gertzman, Noam Lupu, Joe Richards.

REPRESENTATIVE IN ISRAEL: Ada Holtzman; REPRESENTATIVE IN BRITAIN: Jeremy Freedman; WEBMASTER: Noam Lupu

Mailing address: 320 County Route 105, Highland Mills NY 10930