



# 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](http://www.gombin.org)

© 2007. Gombin Jewish  
Historical & Genealogical  
Society

Reservations and deposits for the 2007 Gombin trip must be received by March 15<sup>th</sup> to assure that trip is not cancelled.

## Final plans for “Back to Gombin-2” in July, 2007; Synagogue Memorial Plan submitted to town council for approval

Following the visit of Arthur Gertzman and Mindy Prospero to Gombin in November, 2006, and with the assistance of Sebastian Balko, a set of drawings and plans for the proposed Gombin Synagogue Memorial were submitted to the Gombin Town Council for approval. The Memorial will be located in the town park at the corner of Plocka and Polskiego Streets. Additionally, bids from potential contractors have been obtained. The dedication will take place during the July 16-24 visit to Gombin.



Special Issue #20 - February 2007

# My Father Michael Zielonka; a Eulogy

Lillian Zielonka-Richards

One of my father's favorite times of the year was the beginning of the New Year, a time for reflection. *Mein tate* was looking forward to observing the High Holy Days of *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*. With his family and friends, *Michel Godol*, his Hebrew name, was looking forward to the sacred withdrawal from the world to become right with G-d and others, so that real life might be received with passion and purpose.

Six years ago, when he moved north from Florida and decided to live with us, I decided to step off the fast track and devote my time and emotions and *koach* (strength) to the man who used to be my tower of strength. The man who was always there for me and my sister Minna, through good times and bad; my father, my daddy, my little *tatele* was always there in times of trouble and joy. I was there every day, practically 24/7, as I witnessed his failing strength. I was there to help him in his time of trouble, to buffer him as he slowly faded away.

In those six years I discovered many miracles as I grew to know my father in a deeper sense. He did not live his life as if nothing was a miracle. He hoped with a sense of serenity quietly blowing everyone's mind, including my own. He went on with poise and courage. He wanted to live... he said, "I want to live"... and made it to ninety. Next month he would have been ninety-one... we wanted him around more and more. To us he was still a young man and we never had enough of him, always



wanting more time together. I think it was love that actually kept him going.

He lived like every day was a miracle. As a sole survivor of his family in the Holocaust, his miracles were love of life, love for his family and others. He rose above the pain and torture of his youth, trapped in the chaos of World War II. The miracle was that he existed in love even though he and my mother and I were caught up in the terrible times and turbulence of war. The miracle was that he was the only survivor of his family in Poland; a large *meshpuchah* that once thrived in the place called Gombin and later in Lodz.

We came to America. We were strangers in a strange land, after living in a displaced persons camp called Bergen Belsen. I grew up there, had fond

memories, oddly enough, not knowing the hard history of the earth that I tread on. My circle of love kept me secure. My husband, Avram, was my childhood playmate there, as he is today. And that's the place my parents and I left to start a new life; to renew our faith in humanity. It was the sacred continuum of love that brought us through... love for each other.

The lesson of the Holocaust taught my father to struggle, to feel guilty. As a survivor, it taught him death before its time and mass murder. But he had the courage to replace that fear with hope for a brighter future. He was so proud of his family, his wife and his daughters, but most of all the fruits of his labors, his *einechlach*, his grandchildren, Joseph Shaya, Rachel, Menachem Mendel, Soren and Mimi. They and we are his true miracles. He found his way back home, through us. His faith in human kind was renewed.

*Michol Godol* was his Hebrew name. It means great angel. We all have angels guiding us. They look after us, they guide us, they heal us, touch us, comfort us, with invisible hands. That's what I think my father will be doing. He'll be guarding us, protecting us, inspiring us and loving us all. There's a reason my father was pulled back from danger and death by an invisible force. Heaven was truly watching over him. His life was touched by an angel.

Rabbi Wolowick informed us that the passing of a person right before Yom Kippur signifies that he is excused from his *averahs* (sins), automatically. He is forgiven and swiftly enters the world of *Olam Habah*. That's truly a miracle.

As for me I know of nothing else, but miracles.

*Michol Godol Ber*, Michael Zielonka; born October 25, 1915; died September 18, 2007.

---

## Travel Scholarships of \$1000 for Gombin trip available to Gombiner grandchildren

The Board wants to assure that many Gombiner "grandchildren" have an opportunity to participate in the 2007 trip. Therefore, the Board is offering travel scholarships to encourage teenagers and young adults to take part. Up to 10 scholarships of up to \$1000 each will be available. Applicants must propose a project that they will complete

during the visit and submit the project after their return. Examples of projects: (a) developing an exhibit/display for the Historical Society Museum in Gombin; (b) researching and writing about some aspect of Gombin Jewish history; (c) researching and writing a biography of a Gombiner Jewish grandparent; or (d) any other original idea.

For more information and details, please contact Bernie Guyer, President, GJHGS, at either [bguyer@jhsph.edu](mailto:bguyer@jhsph.edu) or in the evening at home- phone 410-366-2760. Don't hesitate to call with any questions or interests that can be developed into a project. Be creative!!

# Register for Gombin Trip by March 15<sup>th</sup> to avoid Cancellation; Last Opportunity!

Many Gombiner families have expressed regret at having missed the 1999 “Back to Gombin” trip, but few have registered for the organized trip scheduled in 2007. Former President Mindy Prosperi has worked with EF Tours to design a package that includes a comfortable bus, good hotel accommodations and meals, and guided tours (see itinerary). We will have at least one day of activities in Gombin where we will dedicate a new memorial to the famous

Wooden Shul. Those of us who have visited Gombin in recent years have enjoyed meeting Gombiner officials and friends of our Jewish society. Seeing the Gombin Historical Museum and walking around the town have helped us connect with the lives of our grandparents and parents. For many of us, this may be the only or last time we will be able to make this historic connection.

## July 16-24, 2007 – Proposed Itinerary

- Visit Gombin to participate in the dedication of the new memorial to the *shul*;
- Visit the Gombin Jewish cemetery with its monument of *matevot*; the Gombin Historical Museum in the old square; and tour Gombin including the old and new market squares and an opportunity to locate former Jewish sites;
- Meetings with Polish officials and residents of Gombin;
- Visit to Plock and the surrounding countryside, including the famous “vald;”
- Bus trip to Chelmno where most Gombiners perished and see the monument erected there in 1999; the Konin Regional Museum with its exhibit of Judaica; and Konin memorial;
- Warsaw with the remains of the Warsaw Ghetto, Monument to the Ghetto Fighters, Mila 18, the rebuilt old city, Chopin, gardens, synagogue, and more;
- Trip to Krakow with its old Jewish sites and Auschwitz for those who wish to go;

The cost of the EF Tours is approximately \$2100 (per person, double occupancy) if we can assure a group of at least 25; if fewer register, the price will be somewhat higher. You can choose just to take the land only portion of the trip (bus, hotels, etc.) for approximately \$1000 less than the listed price. Deposits and registration fee (\$95) will be required by March 15<sup>th</sup>.

ACT NOW TO AVOID CANCELLATION OF GROUP TOUR  
FOR INFORMATION ONLINE: [www.eftours.com](http://www.eftours.com) and view  
TOUR # 859360  
Or CONTACT MINDY PROSPERI at 845-642-7654 or  
[prosperi1@frontiernet.net](mailto:prosperi1@frontiernet.net)