

Community news

Daughter of "Schindler's List" survivor Joseph Bau visits Winnipeg



By

MARTIN ZEILIG

Though our life together was so short, I must leave now. Sad and forlorn, I am going to a fate ordained by these desperate times, by a road unmarked by any signs, to a mocking destiny all set to welcome me. (first stanza from *The Parting* – a poem by Joseph Bau that was published in his memoirs: *Dear God, Have you ever gone hungry?* [Arcade Publishing 228 pg. Translated from the Hebrew by Shlomo "Sam" Yurman]).

During her recent visit to Winnipeg, Tel Aviv resident Clila Bau Cohen met two businessmen from Germany at the hotel where they all resided.

She told them the story of her late parents, Holocaust survivors Joseph (1920-2002) and Rebecca (Tennenbaum) Bau – the original couple whose wedding is shown in the movie "Schindler's List".

Bau Cohen and with her Winnipeg born husband, Chaim Cohen, were here from September 11-29 to lecture about her parents' lives during and after the Second World War.

"We came on an Israeli government grant, "Programs against the Denial of the Holocaust," said Bau Cohen in an exclusive interview with *The Jewish Post & News*,

adding that she spoke at Isaac Newton School, Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute, West Kildonan Collegiate, St. James Collegiate, Collège Jeanne-Sauvé, and Faith Temple, among other places.

A couple of days later, one of the German guests came to hear her speak about Rebecca and Joseph at a private home.

"I didn't hear any anger in what you were saying," Bau Cohen recounted the German visitor saying to her afterwards.

"And, now after he heard me speak, he said that he was going to visit Israel, and that he will arrange for us to talk in Germany and to arrange an exhibition of my father's paintings."

Rebecca and Joseph Bau are the original couple whose secret wedding is shown in the movie "Schindler's List".

In the Plaszow concentration camp Mr. Bau wrote and illustrated a miniature book, *The World and I*, the size of the palm of a hand.

"It contains beautiful poems (including *The Parting*) that did not mention at all the horrors occurring around him," said Bau Cohen during a power-point presentation before some 40 congregants and other guests at Faith Temple on September 22.

"After Plaszow he was transferred to Gross-Rosen and then to Oscar Schindler's camp where he stayed till the end of the war."



JOSEPH and REBECCA BAU



Above and below: Drawings by Joseph Bau that were contained in a miniature book of poetry he wrote in the Plaszow Concentration Camp in Krakow, Poland during the war.



L to R. CLILA BAU COHEN, PASTOR RUDY FIDEL, CHAIM COHEN

"My husband was more important to me than I was, and I wasn't afraid," Rebecca said to a journalist many years later after the release of Steven Spielberg's movie, *Schindler's List*.

Significantly, she mentioned that it was her mother, who was sent to Auschwitz after the destruction of Plaszow, who found a place for her husband on Schindler's list.

"My husband was more important to me than I was, and I wasn't afraid," Rebecca said to a journalist many years later after the release of Steven Spielberg's movie, *Schindler's List*.

(Significantly, Joseph Bau dedicated *Dear God, Have You Ever Gone Hungry?* to "the memory of my beloved wife, Rebecca, who died on April 28, 1997. We lived together for fifty-three years, through thick and thin. Only thanks to her was I able to write and illustrate this and other books.")

After the war, Joseph Bau graduated from the University of Plastic Arts in Krakow. During his studies he worked for three newspapers as a graphic artist and illustrator. In 1950 he immigrated to Israel together with his wife and three-year-old daughter, Hadasa.

He was recruited to a secret unit of the intelligence corps that dealt with technical covert operations that utilized his talent for art and graphics. Later he was transferred, together with other Intelligence corps personnel to a similar unit that was formed and worked as part of the intelligence community belonging to the Prime Minister's office. Joseph never spoke of these activities, added his youngest daughter. "My father's dream was to make animated movies in the Holy Land," said Bau Cohen, commenting that her father was called "The Walt Disney of Israel" because of his pioneering work in animation.

Joseph Bau was nominated for the prestigious Israel Prize in 1998.

Today, Joseph Bau House, which is located at 9 Berdychewski St., Tel-Aviv, is an authentic artist's workshop that conveys to the visitor, as a brochure says, the amazing life story of Joseph Bau reflected in his wide range of creativity including movies, the original equipment he built, animation, paintings, graphics, literature and research of the Hebrew language – "all spiced with his special humour" stemming from his optimistic view of life and accompanied by fascinating stories told by his daughters. This writer visited the museum during a trip to Israel and the West Bank in April 2005. It was time well spent.

Joseph Bau's artwork continues to be shown in museums and galleries around the world, including, among other venues, at the U.N. Headquarters in New-York in June 2007, Baltimore, Chicago, Minneapolis, Winnipeg, the Spanish parliament in 2009, and the Krakow Ghetto Pharmacy. An exhibition of his works has also been shown at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center, and at the Ministry of Education in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. His paintings and drawings have been listed by Sotheby's as significant contributions to the art of the Holocaust.

"Joseph Bau's art is filtered through the prism of his own experiences," says information found on Wikipedia.

"It reflects both the brutal reality of life during the war, as well as the joy and humour he observed in later years in Israel."

Bau Cohen emphasized: "My father wanted everyone to love and be happy. He said that if they did then there wouldn't be any wars."

For further information, see the website www.josephbau.com