



Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation  
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*A Foundation to support and preserve our earth, medicine, Jewish culture and causes special to all our local communities.*

*Florence Laurence Carol Debbi Danny Glenn*

Date: February 18, 2010

Simon Waksberg – Our Friend  
September 10, 1921 – February 18, 2010  
A Note From Danny Spungen

It is with great sadness, yet such an honor that I take these few moments to write about our dear friend Simon. My family has known Simon for many years through our Bar-Bat Mitzvah events in Memphis that we will always treasure.

However, when Simon took a well deserved “center stage” at several different Holocaust related events in 2008 and 2009, he captured our hearts forever. In such a short time he also captured the inspiration of so many new people he met, inspiration that will keep all our hearts beating strong whenever he is thought of!!!

Simon spoke with such open passion about his life’s tragic beginnings and blessed post WWII years. I knew Simon was special when I became a student of the Holocaust in 2007. I immediately sensed that Simon’s smile, sense of humor, and his overall ability to keep an audience fixated with his stories that I had to bring him to Chicago to meet my friends and family. My daughter said it best when I heard her say, “Oh, little sweet Simon is coming?”

In July 2008 our family hosted an event in Waukegan, IL to display our newly acquired award winning exhibit of letters, postcards, stamps and monies used during the WWII era in ghettos, concentration camps and internment camps. We invited guests from local Rotary clubs, family, friends, and several guests from out-of-state. Although the exhibit speaks for itself, the several survivors of the Holocaust that attended spoke even greater and Simon was the honored guest! He left Chicago with so many warm hugs, that it was hard to imagine that Chicago had a reputation for being a cold/windy city!!!!

There was an incredible “leap of hugs” when Simon was the featured speaker at many 2009 events in Memphis. In March 2009 Simon spent four days on such a busy schedule that only dignitaries can relate too! In every introduction speech guests were told that Memphis had such an incredible gem right in their own backyard and by the end of the events they all agreed! Simon was busy with events at the Belz Museum, The Civil Rights Museum, The University of Memphis (Bornblum Studies), Memphis Rotary Club, and St. Benedict High School.



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Simon was free to talk about his relationship with his old friend Oskar Schindler (Schindler's List), how Schindler's secretary (Martha) named their son "Simon," his thoughts about being in the Lodz (Poland) Ghetto, his time at Auschwitz, his beliefs about how he survived and the importance of teaching children/students about respecting one another.

The standing ovations at the events were surely special....but those hugs...those hugs from the students at St. Benedict High School.....priceless! A vast majority of the students had never met a survivor and they were touched in a way that not even photos were able to capture! I can't thank the school enough for opening their doors for Simon to share his stories. He was so honored that he spoke about that day until a few weeks before passing away!

Simon's final event was extremely special. On June 27<sup>th</sup> 2009 there was a Money Show in Memphis for collectors of paper money (currency). People from all over the world attend this show every year. I decided to come to this Memphis show for the 1<sup>st</sup> time but with the main purpose of hosting a very very special dinner in Simon's honor. I teamed up with the Marriott Hotel who helped put on an incredible event that brought tears to Simon's eyes (and I bet so many of the invited guests).

Simon loved and appreciated the exposure he received from so many people the last two years. Sure he spoke to news reporters in the past, was recorded by the Steven Spielberg Shoah Project but it was the intimate time he had with those he met the last two years that really made him feel so special.

Simon has been a part of all our Foundation's Powerpoint presentations and this will continue. In talking with his daughters (Nancy and Berry), I suggested that in lieu of any flowers that any donation received, the money would be equally divided between the Memphis Jewish Home (a nursing home that caters to 75% non-Jewish residents) that Simon was so fond of and the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation that will apply the money to the Holocaust educational projects we are actively involved in.

Any words of remembrance and/or condolence you wish to send to Simon's family, if you wish, you can send to me. I plan to combine responses into a special booklet for Simon's family and our Foundation's library.

Danny Spungen  
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