

Survivors of Shanghai Ghetto honored in Rosemont

Des Plaines department head goes to Lake Zurich
BY MARIO KRIVONAMURTOV
The Plaines' revolving door... Des Plaines' revolving door...

Shanghai Ghetto survivors to gather

For almost nine years Kurt and Gerry Jacoby and their partners lived in one room of a seven-bedroom house... The house had one bathroom, but no running water...

The Japanese had overrun China and permitted a Jewish ghetto to be set up in one square mile of the Hongkong Director of Shanghai, which allowed life to go on — almost normally... Kurt, Gerry and 14 other survivors of the Shanghai Ghetto will be honored tonight at a dinner at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel in Rosemont...



Gerry Jacoby of Lincolnshire looks at Chinese characters that spell his name. Jacoby lived in a ghetto in China to avoid Nazi persecution during World War II.

Kurt Jacoby's paperwork from Shanghai, which had set up a one-square-mile ghetto for Jews during World War II... Kurt, 71, never took to Shanghai life. He was born in Lincolnshire, Ill., and spent his childhood in the village...

passage out of Europe. He couldn't fly, though, and all three family members eventually died at Auschwitz concentration camp... She was too young to understand that not all children get sick or wheezing cough, or that not having enough food wasn't normal.

"I remember the beatings and the six weeks. We had to sit outside a desk in the office where we lived for a long time, but to me that was not unusual, Kurt said. "How looking back it was very incredible..."

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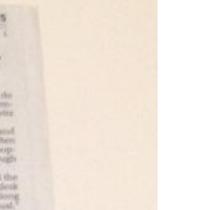
BY MARIO KRIVONAMURTOV
Des Plaines' revolving door keeps spinning as yet another city department head, Joyce...

Earl will serve as Lake Zurich's director of community services, a newly created position that comes with a \$120,000 salary plus benefits... "It's a new challenge and a new opportunity," Earl said.

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BY MELISSA SILVERBERG
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Jewish survivor Kurt Jacoby of Lincolnshire, center talks to Arif Quersehi about his experiences before the presentation "Shanghai Memory" based on survivors of the World War II Shanghai Ghetto Thursday at the Hyatt Regency in Rosemont. The Shanghai Ghetto in China was an area where Jews fled Europe to escape Nazi persecution. Jacoby's brother Gerry is behind and to the left.

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GILBERT R. BOUCHER II | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Coins commemorating the Shanghai Ghetto are on display during the presentation "Shanghai Memory" based on survivors of the World War II Shanghai Ghetto Thursday at the Hyatt Regency in Rosemont. The Shanghai Ghetto in China was an area where Jews fled Europe to escape Nazi persecution.

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GILBERT R. BOUCHER II | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Roughly a dozen survivors of a lesser-known chapter of World War II history — the Shanghai Ghetto — were recognized and honored Thursday in Rosemont.

The event, held at the Hyatt Regency and organized by the Lincolnshire-based Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation, included dinner and a keynote speech. It brought smiles to the faces of the survivors who attended.

"It's always interesting for us to get together and talk — there are not too many of us left," said Gerry Jacoby, a Lincolnshire resident who was among the 15,000 to 20,000 Jewish people who fled Europe for Shanghai, China, in the late 1930s. Jacoby lived in Shanghai with his family, including his older brother, Kurt, who was also at Thursday's event.

The Jacobys left Berlin in early November 1938, and spent about a month on a crowded ship to get to Shanghai, one of the few places Jewish people could go to at the time without a visa or passport.

Gerry Jacoby said he hopes events like Thursday's help spread the word about the suffering, courage and community that existed in the cramped and unsanitary living quarters of the Shanghai Ghetto.

"Not enough people know about it, and there were so many people there," he said.

Historian Steve Hochstadt, who teaches at Illinois College in Jacksonville and released a book of interviews with Shanghai Ghetto survivors, delivered the evening's speech.

"It's an important part of the whole story of the war," he said before his talk began. "I think the reason why there haven't been more memoirs written about it is that survivors have felt a bit awkward because they didn't experience life in the concentration camps like so many did."

Thursday's dinner was the first of two events organized for Shanghai Ghetto survivors. On Friday, the group will appear at the Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie for tours and lectures.

Danny Spungen, the lead organizer of the events for his family's foundation, said bringing the survivors together this week was a rewarding experience.

"They've gone unrecognized up until now," he said. "I'm so happy to see them together here. What this shows is that the war was a breakdown in humanity that occurred all over the globe, not just on the European stage."

By Matt Arado