

Painful memories prohibit a visit to center

By Carolyn DeMarco
staff writer

A man who is afraid to tour the Holocaust Memorial Center in West Bloomfield because of the memories it may provoke is promoting adoption of the Hebrew word and symbol for remembering it.

Beri Falbaum was an infant when his parents escaped Berlin in 1939 and fled to the small Jewish community in Shanghai, China had no immigration laws and was one of only a few countries accepting Jews fleeing Hitler, Falbaum said.

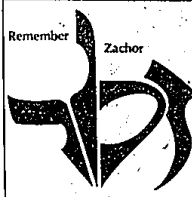
"We were allowed to practice our religion (in Shanghai)," Falbaum said, "but we were restricted to the ghetto. Certainly there were abuses."

Falbaum's father worked as a tailor in Shanghai for nine years before immigration laws opened up in the United States, allowing them to enter.

"It was a common route for many Jews," Falbaum said, "going from Germany to Shanghai to the United States. So many, that at one time, there was a social club in Detroit of this Jew."

Many of Falbaum's relatives and friends were less fortunate and were lost in the Holocaust. His early memories and experiences, Falbaum said, may have led him to his current project — promoting the zacher, the word and symbol for remember. Remember the Holocaust.

FALBAUM, A West Bloomfield resident, is vice president of corporate communications for Perry Drugs. At the request of Jack Robertson, Perry Drugs' chairman of the board, who also is on the board of the Holocaust Center in West Bloomfield, Falbaum helped promote the



The zacher is the word and symbol used to remember the Holocaust. Beri Falbaum is promoting its use in the hope it will become widely recognized.

center's first anniversary in November 1985.

But he is unable to tour the center.

"I can't say 'genuch,' enough," Falbaum is deeply committed to the idea of remembering the Holocaust, not so much for the past but for the future.

"We live in disconcerting times. There is an anti-Semitic message being given on a world scale."

In terms of comparison with pre-Hitler Germany, Falbaum said, the neo-Nazi movement is much stronger, more sophisticated today.

Falbaum suggested to his wife, Phyllis, that a zacher would be an appropriate gift for him this past Father's Day. Unable to find one, she commissioned a local jeweler to make a pendant.

It was so small that Falbaum converted it to a tie tie. "People would ask about its significance, giving me the opportunity to launch into a dissertation. Finally it dawned on me. This was an excellent idea to promote remembrance."

WITH A committee of other communications specialists — Sid Lutz, Leonard Fink, Patty Liss, Gary Dembs and Nathan Roth along with Lois Zemel of the Holocaust Center — the group began a campaign to promote the symbol on behalf of the West Bloomfield center.

The movement was officially launched Nov. 9 during the center's second anniversary dinner at the Westin Hotel. Zacher pins were given away at the event.

Falbaum told the crowd of 1,500, "We want to see the zacher hanging from necklaces, bracelets and worn as pins. The issue is not how the zacher will be worn. The issue is that it be worn." The idea is to put something physical in front of Jews and non-Jews.

"I hope," he continued, "that when next we meet, this hall will be glistering with the symbol zacher, because the secret of redemption lies in the remembrance."

In his speech, Falbaum cited Austria's recent election of a president with a Nazi background, educators teaching that the Holocaust never existed, and today's Soviet Jews being denied exit visas as reasons for the remember movement.

"When we see the world generally working hard to forget, forgive the unforgivable, supplant and appease, we know we must remember."

"Some philosophies must not be forgotten. Some events cannot be forgiven. Some concepts we dare not appease."

THE ZACHER campaign has an

ecumenical dimension as well, Falbaum said.

"The Holocaust has significance not just for Jews but it has vital importance to non-Jews also. As Elie Wiesel has said in many of his books, the Jews were not the only victims — mankind was."

Falbaum's committee will make no money on the campaign, he said. The committee exists to convince organizations to promote the idea and jewelry stores to make the symbol available.

"Whatever they do, they do on their own. We exist to give advice."

They'll address groups who want more information and advice on launching a campaign, as a fundraiser or for other reasons.

"Many people we've talked to think the movement is a great idea, but they don't know what they can do as an excellent time."

Falbaum is hopeful the idea will catch on nationally, and even internationally. He is tentatively scheduled to speak at Israel's Bar-Ilan University in February on media, and hopes to use the trip to promote the zacher movement there as well.

"For lack of a better word, it's a chain letter type concept. Once we get it going it will take off."

"On behalf of the Holocaust Memorial Center, on behalf of the victims of the Holocaust, of its survivors, the victims of the pogroms, the victims of anti-Semitism generally and on behalf of human decency, compassion and sensitivity and on behalf of the dignity of the human soul," Falbaum said he hopes it will take off.

THE ZACHER campaign has an

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Beri Falbaum, vice president in charge of corporate communications for Perry Drugs, displays the zacher used as his tie tack. The Father's Day present inspired him to begin a campaign promoting remembrance of the Holocaust to prevent future tragedies of its kind.

2 ski clinics for visually impaired

Oakland County Parks and Recreation offers cross-country ski clinics for visually impaired and blind skiers at Glen Oaks Golf Course on Saturday, Jan. 24 and Feb. 7 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"These cross-country ski clinics provide an opportunity for skiers who are visually impaired to enjoy skiing," said Dan Stencil, recreation supervisor at Oakland County Parks and Recreation.

"The volunteers who help with the ski clinics receive a sense of accomplishment in facilitating skill development for visually impaired individuals," Stencil added.

The ski clinics consist of a lesson and a ski tour in which the visually impaired skier will be matched with a volunteer guide. There is a fee of \$3 per clinic.

Jumping rope for heart care

Students at Power Middle School will participate in a one-hour Jump Rope for Heart Friday, Feb. 6, at the school, 34740 Ribwood.

Participants will collect pledges from the community during the next several weeks. Pledges will benefit the American Heart Association of Michigan in its efforts to combat the state's number one cause of death — heart disease and stroke.

It will also earn educational materials and athletic equipment for the school.

The school raised \$9,187 last year in the same event, and coordinator Patricia Messina hopes to top that amount this year with a goal of \$9,500.

Each student will jump as part of a six-person team and with each member jumping until tiring then passing the rope to another member, she said.

Jump Rope for Heart is a community service project sponsored by the Michigan Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance to promote the benefits of physical education.

Skiers should be at least 10 years of age. Participants are encouraged to provide their own transportation, although transported will be available to participants on a limited basis. A fee of \$2 will be charged for transportation.

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Interested individuals must register the Wednesday prior to the clinic. Glen Oaks Golf Course is on 13 Mile Road, between Orchard Lake and Middlebelt roads, Farmington Hills.

For more information, call the city hall, 474-0115, ext. 257.

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