

CHESED

Published by the Hebrew Free Burial Association
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PLANS TO MARK GRAVESITES UNVEILED

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Unfortunately for this family and thousands of others, the next year — and the years after that — brought them no closer to their dreams of subsistence. Even a small stone marker remained beyond their means.

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This month, HFBA's executive committee introduced an innovative program to mark each grave with a simple footstone engraved with the person's name, date of birth (when known) and date of death.

"Over the next year, we will be calling on organizations, synagogues and their auxiliaries and individuals to fund the erection of a specific number of footstones as part of a multi-year project," said Gerald E. Feldhamer. "Participating groups and individuals will pledge to erect these stones each year. This way, the financial burden can be spread out over several years while HFBA is assured that the graves will be marked."

Individuals and groups who make significant contributions to the project will be honored on special donor plaques to be erected in the chapels at Mt. Richmond and Silver Lake cemetery.

"As Yom HaShoah approaches, we remember those Jews who have no graves and whose burial places will remain unmarked forever. We at HFBA are determined to mark each grave in our cemeteries so that no Jewish grave will ever be unmarked again," explained Feldhamer.

Individuals and groups can learn more about this new project by contacting the executive director at 212 686-2433.



Section of unmarked graves needing footstones

PRESIDENT'S CLUB HONORS MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS

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HFBA through membership in the PRESIDENT'S CLUB.

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President's Club honorees will receive membership certificates that are suitable for framing. Members will be invited to meet the president, executive committee and board of directors at a special reception in their honor later this year.

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CEMETERY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM ON TARGET

Burials Resume at Mt. Richmond Cemetery

The Hebrew Free Burial Association has always affirmed that its cemeteries are more than final resting places. They are environments for contemplation and repose and a trust from less fortunate Jews to our children and grandchildren. After more than a year of work, Mt. Richmond and Silver Lake cemeteries have once again become cemeteries where families and friends can feel comfortable when visiting departed loved ones.

The first phase of our planned maintenance program has been completed on schedule. Working with our landscape and garden contractor, paths have been cleared and every grave is accessible once again. The grass is cut regularly and grave care is once again what it should be. As important is our regular grounds- maintenance schedule which assures HFBA and cemetery visitors that the sad situation which occurred at the beginning of the labor dispute called by our caretakers cannot be repeated.

Although this unfortunate labor dispute necessitated burying over 300 people in other cemeteries over the past two years, the board has always looked for a way that funerals and burials could begin again at Mt. Richmond Cemetery. The board of directors recently announced that the cemetery is once again fully operational and that all burials are now performed on HFBA grounds.

"The ability to utilize our own cemetery was crucial in establishing cost-efficient and effective procedures for present and future services," asserted treasurer Jack M. Gross. "Now that we have met this challenge, we are ready to go ahead with stage two of our cemetery maintenance plan."



Mt. Richmond Cemetery after first phase of maintenance

The second part of the plan will upgrade facilities at Mt. Richmond cemetery and develop a program for marking all graves lacking headstones with simple marble markers. Plans have already been drawn for renovating the historic chapel and caretaker's cottage at Mt. Richmond. Executive director Dr. Alan Manheim noted that the chapel project is a priority as the structure has already sustained significant water damage because needed maintenance was deferred over the years.

"These renovations are critical if the chapel and caretaker's cottage are to remain structurally sound. Since the funds cannot be taken from our operating budget to complete this program, we need to reach people and foundations who are interested in preserving this piece of American Jewish history. We are creating an special fund for renovation in addition to an endowment for cemetery maintenance. Renovations will commence as soon as fund raising targets are met," concluded Mr. Gross.

HFBA WINS PASSAGE TO FREEDOM GRANT

Since the first wave of Soviet emigration to the United States began almost 20 years ago, the Hebrew Free Burial Association has buried thousands of Soviet Jews who could not afford the cost of a Jewish funeral. Our special relationship to the Soviet Jewish community has been reaffirmed this year by New York's UJA/Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, who awarded the agency a special Passage to Freedom Grant so we may continue this work.

"Soviet Jews came to America believing they would be able to make a better life for themselves and their families among the Jewish communities in the United States. Unfortunately, many were already old or infirm when they arrived. These people found it difficult to acclimate to a democratic, free market system. Many were not able to learn the language and the customs of their adopted homelands. When they died, their families couldn't afford to bury them, but they knew their parents, their grandparents, their sisters and brothers, wanted to be buried among Jews," explained HFBA president Gerald E. Feldhamer.

"The Passage to Freedom grant will take the bite out of the funerals and burials the organization provides to Soviet emigres. The monies awarded will be used to offset the difference between the actual cost of the service and reimbursements and other funds utilized to pay for burials. This will allow us to shift our resources to other indigents who also need our help."

The Passage to Freedom program is a special fund raising effort spearheaded by UJA/Federation to resettle the influx of Soviet Jews expected to emigrate from the Soviet Union in 1990. It is anticipated that tens of thousands of Soviet Jews will choose to settle in New York to join relatives and begin new lives. Past experience has demonstrated that the number of Soviet Jews who require HFBA assistance to bury a loved one is directly related to the number of Soviet Jews allowed to emigrate from the Soviet Union. Consequently, HFBA expects that its Soviet Jewish caseload will significantly increase in 1990 and beyond.

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HFBA NEEDS YOU!

Dedicated volunteers are the lifeblood of a non-profit agency. And HFBA is no exception to this maxim. Many people have asked us how they can become involved in this important mitzvah. The administration has defined several projects in which volunteer input can make the difference between success and failure. In other words, WE NEED YOU!

1. Home computer owners are needed to help organize our Silver Lake records. Burials at Silver Lake are recorded in chronological order only, making it nearly impossible for visitors to find the graves of their loved ones. We are now trying to cross reference all burials alphabetically.

Anyone with a home computer and a data base program can help. HFBA will provide you with copies of records and the format.

2. Are you a carpenter? House painter? Do you enjoy tinkering in your spare time? Our caretaker's cottage at Mt. Richmond cemetery may be just the laboratory you've been seeking for your home improvement ideas.

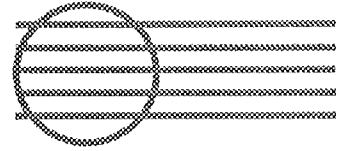
Our turn-of-the-century cottage and guard's residence needs extensive "sprucing up" from the electrical system to water-proofing to painting and carpentry. If you can donate your time, HFBA will pay for materials.

3. HFBA is looking for a few good men and women who want to become involved in the critical task of raising funds for our endowments and Century Campaign. Even if you can't make a large contribution yourself, you can become our most important donor by motivating others to donate and assure our future.

For more information about any of these projects, call Dr. Alan Manheim, executive director, at 212 686-2433 during business hours.

**The officers and staff of HFBA wish you
and all Israel a very Happy Passover.**

FROM THE MAILBAG



The first issue of CHESED elicited many comments from our contributors and supporters. Here's a small sampling:

"It is a privilege to give charity and especially to Chesed Shel Emet. My sainted mother was a member in Poland until she was murdered..."

Paulette Kabran

"About ten years ago, when I was teaching English to newly arrived Russian immigrants, one of my students had to find a burial place for her sister, who had come to live with her. You provided her with that place.

"Some years later her husband died...Once again you provided a burial place. If I remember correctly, you also arranged for a rabbi to be present...My very best wishes to you for your great mitzvah."

Jessie Hantman

"In May of 1981, my mother died...I contacted you and your organization was very kind and helpful to me. I had always hoped to be able to repay you in some way when my financial situation improved.

"I am happy to say that things have become a little easier for my husband and myself and I do not want to forget your kindness at a time when it was greatly needed. Therefore I am enclosing a check as a donation to your wonderful organization....My deepest thanks for helping me in my time of sorrow and need."

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Please Note: Mt. Richmond and Silver Lake Cemeteries are closed on Shabbat and Jewish Holidays. Please refrain from visits on these days.

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