

"Make Your Mark" Project Will Recognize Monument Sponsors

As HFBA officials prepare to unveil new monuments over the gravesites of 100 men and women this Spring, a major new initiative to involve individuals and institutions in the work of the HFBA was announced by the agency's board of directors.

The "Make Your Mark" program is a concentrated effort to find and recognize sponsors for the simple headstones needed for more than 30,000 unmarked

graves in Mt. Richmond Cemetery. Sponsors will receive handsome framed certificates acknowledging their contributions.

"Since we began the Second Century Campaign, over 350 graves have been embellished with simple monuments," noted HFBA president Gerald E. Feldhamer. "They have been erected over the final resting places of indigent Jews who died without friends or families who could afford to mark their graves.

"While we are proud of what we have accomplished, as we look out at the vast empty spaces of Mt. Richmond Cemetery we can see that there is so much more to do. The 'Make Your Mark' program will encourage new donors and old friends to help us with this crucial work."

"Make Your Mark" For \$150

The program will recognize contributors of at least \$150 (the sum needed to purchase the engraved granite stone and erect it at the gravesite) with personalized framed certificates. Schools, synagogue groups, benevolent associations, individuals and other agencies are encouraged to take part and "make their mark" at Mt. Richmond Cemetery.

New Markers To Be Installed In Spring

The newest group of markers, which will be erected in two sections of the cemetery, will be formally unveiled in the Spring of 1995. Half of the monuments will be

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This issue of Chessed is dedicated to our readers and supporters, many of whom contacted us following the publication of a special feature on HFBA in the B'nai Brith International Jewish Monthly.

A sample of their moving letters and more information about the article is located on page 3.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Living on a fixed income is never easy. Neither is supporting a worthy cause when your savings are needed for living expenses or for that proverbial "rainy day" when you might require costly care to remain comfortably at home.

Many of our donors are in this situation. They remain passionately committed to the work of the Hebrew Free Burial Association, but they are unable to commit the sum they would like to donate. Day after day, week after week, we receive letters that begin, "I'm sorry I can't give more, but I live on a fixed income..." At the same time, we have become the beneficiaries of many bequests, large and small, from those who were longtime contributors of small annual amounts.

Leaving a bequest is not a complicated manner, but it does require that you have a will. If you would like to provide for HFBA in your will, we would like to simplify the process. HFBA will draft the will of any contributor who wants to leave the agency a bequest. We will work together to ensure that your wishes are codified legally and that your possessions are given to those individuals and organization most important to you.

Many people who think of themselves as having limited means fail to recognize the benefits of having a will. For example, making a contribution in your will can substantially reduce estate taxes for your heirs (depending of course on the size of your donation.) On the emotional side, being able to put your affairs in order in a rational manner may help to solidify relationships with those around you and avoid infighting later on.

If you don't have a will and would like to leave a legacy to the Hebrew Free Burial Association, I urge you to contact our office now at 212 239-1662 to find out more about the process. If you already have a will, our attorney will modify it to conform to your wishes. In either case, there is no charge to you.

Speaking from personal experience, I can honestly say that my mind is at ease knowing that the organizations that are important to me now will continue to receive the benefit of my support after I am gone. I think that once your will is finished, you will feel the same.

I hope to have more details on this project in the next issue of CHESED. Keep reading!

Gerald E. Feldhamer

The Son Nobody Wanted

He had been severely brain damaged as the result of a childhood accident. His mental and physical disabilities and life expectancy were so forbidding that he couldn't live at home. His parents assigned responsibility for his care to the State of New York. He grew up in an institution and earlier this year, Martin* died.

The story is already a tragedy of immense proportions. But the suffering did not end with his death. His parents refused to take any responsibility for his funeral or burial. Since he could not be their son in life, he would not be their boy in death. If not for the intervention of the Hebrew Free Burial Association, Martin's body would be in Potter's Field instead of a Jewish Cemetery.

Usually, the public administrator in each borough has the responsibility to authorize HFBA to perform a funeral and burial when an indigent Jew dies with no next of kin. But since Martin's parents were alive but unwilling to bury him, he was the center of a bureaucratic nightmare.

HFBA was contacted by a case worker in the institution which cared for the young man. Our office immediately called an attorney associated with the Association for the Help of Retarded Children. With the attorney's help, the

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* The name and certain identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of our client.

B'nai Brith Feature Helps Many Find Lost Loved Ones

We have always known that many of the people buried in our cemeteries left grandchildren, nieces and nephews, siblings and other relatives who loved them but never knew of their final resting places. A recent feature on HFBA published in the B'nai Brith International Jewish Monthly once again demonstrated that love and remembrance indeed do span generations.

The article focused on the history of the cemeteries and their place in the American Jewish saga. It reached over 200,000 members of B'nai Brith, the largest Jewish fraternal organization in the world.

Almost immediately, we began to hear from people who wanted to know if we had information about grandparents, great aunts and uncles, siblings who died in childbirth and other beloved relatives. Many had never heard of HFBA; all were grateful that there was an organization that provided the poorest of our society with a Jewish funeral so many years ago when it was needed by their families.

When we began to research our records, we were able to end the wondering for many who had written. We were able to confirm that their loved ones were laid to rest in either Silver Lake or Mt. Richmond Cemetery. For others, the story brought back memories of their parents' struggles to survive in a new country.

Dear Mrs. Wiesel:

My brother, Jacob A., of Southfield, MI, has advised me of your correspondence with him relating to the burial site of our brother, Abraham, and your wonderful assistance in this matter...

I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciate your taking the time and trouble to do this for us... For the past 60 years or so we knew only that he died in the East somewhere. That was all... Your help has taken a burden off our hearts....

Mrs. Sarah C.

Dear Mrs. Wiesel:

I read about the service HFBA renders... This work is certainly worthy of tzedaka, so my check is enclosed...

I was especially moved by the story about Rebecca Reines, who died in the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, since my late father was instrumental in saving three or four of the girls. He had his hair burned off, but survived...

Mr. L. S.

FROM THE MAILBAG

Editor's Note:

We recently received this letter which describes our services more eloquently than any article we could write.

We are including it in CHESED with our gratitude for the author's kind and heartfelt words.

Dear Mrs. Leist:

I wish to take a few moments to express to you and the Association my deepest thanks for all you have done to help my friend receive a dignified burial. As you may recall, with no family or estate, Mr. M. was likely to have ended up in Potter's Field or utilized otherwise. I am very, very grateful.

Of greatest impact was the quality and sincerity of Rabbi Plafker's service. He made a difficult moment very much at ease. He shared his kind thoughts and wisdom with my father and me at the gravesite and we shared thoughts with him which I know made my friend smile. I hope you will forward this letter and its content to the Board of Directors of the Association so they may know how sensitive and caring Rabbi Shmuel Plafker is.

On another note, I enclose a check to the Association which was presented to me by Mr. M.'s most loving friend, Ms. L. I would ask that it be applied towards your costs and to obtain a proper foundation when a monument is procured.

Once again, my deepest thanks to all and best wishes for a healthy and peaceful new year.

Respectfully,
M.A.S., Esq.

The Son Nobody Wanted

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public administrator was able to name HFBA a friend of the deceased and assign responsibility to our agency.

Soon afterwards, Martin was laid to rest in Mt. Richmond Cemetery. He was the son that nobody wanted but a Jew who needed our help; in the end, we were his friend.

"Make Your Mark"

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placed over the graves of men who died in the years 1912-1914, a period of tremendous Jewish immigration and poverty. The second fifty monuments will be placed in the women's section to mark the resting places of women who were buried in 1938 and 1939.