



HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION

Volume 8/No. 7

December 1999 / Kislev 5760

In This Issue

③ Tax time is coming up: Chesed offers a few options to benefit you and HFBA.

④ There are so many new names on our Leave Your Mark Plaque in Mt. Richmond Cemetery that we are adding another board!

⑤ The Far Rockaway/Lawrence community demonstrates its generosity of spirit during the first Chayei Sarah breakfast, held earlier this year.

⑥ More From Our Mailbox and a view of new signposts that make finding your way much easier.

Chesed is published by the Hebrew Free Burial Association, 363 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001. Telephone 212 239-1662



UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

HFBA Uncovers Autopsy Abuse at Nursing Homes, Hospital

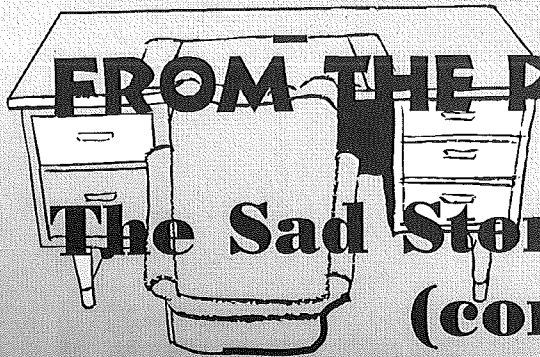
While responding to a routine request for burial from a social worker at a nursing home in New York, HFBA discovered an ongoing pattern of possibly illegal autopsies at a New York State hospital.

Mr. F*, a psychiatric patient at a New York nursing home, died in the middle of the night. His nearest relative was a very distant cousin who was not close enough to authorize the burial. As soon as we received the call from the nursing home social worker, we contacted the appropriate Public Administrator, who authorized us to arrange the funeral and burial.

When we tried to make arrangements to remove Mr. F's remains to the funeral chapel, we were shocked to learn that his body was ready to be shipped to a research department of Pilgrim State Hospital for an autopsy of the brain tissue. We explained to the nursing home that an autopsy would be against Jewish law and custom and instructed the social worker to refuse to release the body.

HFBA was immediately contacted by an indignant employee from Pilgrim State, who informed us that autopsying psychiatric patients from the nursing home was standard procedure. This fact was confirmed by the nursing home administrator, who allowed that the patient himself had authorized the autopsy. (The administrator was not troubled

Continued on page 5



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The Sad Story of Cindy Blum (continued)

In our last issues of Chesed, I related the tragic tale of Dora and Cindy Blum, mother and daughter. Dora had died after a long illness, leaving her daughter mentally fragile and emotionally distraught. She was so upset that despite the intervention of family members and social workers, she could not accept her mother's death and refused to consider signing an authorization for burial. Without it, her mother could not be interred, and her body lay in a county morgue.

As it became clearer that Cindy's mental state precluded her from signing the authorization, HFBA kept in touch with the morgue where she was lying in repose. Our goal was to save Mrs. Blum from interment on Potter's Field, not only for religious reasons but because we envisioned a time when Cindy would be able to accept her mother's death. What would happen to her delicate balance of emotions if she discovered that her mother lay in a mass grave that she could never even visit? How would she ever find closure and peace?

Week after week, we wrote to Cindy (who had no phone,) gently reminding her that HFBA was

ready and willing to handle all the arrangements. Friends and relatives also tried to urge her to accept the death, balancing the need to bury Mrs. Blum

with their fears that pushing Cindy might end in disaster for the daughter.

After five months, Cindy's emotional state improved

enough for her to understand that her beloved mother had passed away. Reluctantly, and with great sorrow, Cindy signed the authorization and Dora Blum was buried in the family plot next to her husband.

While we were not the ones who buried Mrs. Blum, the months of letters and worrying were well worth it. We take tremendous satisfaction in knowing that we played an important role in ensuring that Dora Blum was buried in a Jewish cemetery and had a Jewish funeral and that one more Jewish person was saved from an anonymous grave on Potter's Field.

Our hearts go out to Cindy and to all those who lose a loved one. May they know no more sorrow.

Gerald E. Feldhamer

We played an important role in ensuring that Dora Blum was buried in a Jewish cemetery.

Thinking About Taxes? Ponder This...

Give the Gift of Life (Insurance)

Remember that life insurance policy you took out so long ago that is no longer needed? Consider giving it to the HFBA — and take a tax deduction at the same time!

To receive the charitable deduction, name the HFBA as both the owner and the beneficiary of your policy. If the policy has a cash value, you can take a one-time charitable deduction approximately equal to the cash value at the time of the gift. In addition, if you continue to pay annual premiums, those premiums are tax-deductible for the year in which they are made.

Forever Gift Annuities Are Excellent Strategy for Reducing Taxes

As we approach the end of the year, who isn't looking for a way to maximize the tax benefits for charitable contributions?

Consider investing in the HFBA Forever Gift Annuity, the investment that provides an immediate tax deduction as well as quarterly income for the rest of the donor's life.

The Annuities pay a competitive rate of interest based on the age of the donor at the time of the contribution. The HFBA becomes the beneficiary of all funds remaining in the plan at the time of the donor's death. The minimum contribution for purchasing the Annuity is \$5,000 and you can add another gift at any time.



Forever Gift Annuities are a great way to earn income during your lifetime while insuring that HFBA will continue to benefit from your generosity after your passing.

Substantiating Tax-Deductible Donations to the IRS

You know your contributions to the HFBA are fully tax-deductible. We know your contributions are fully tax-deductible. Now, what about the IRS?

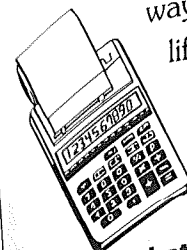
According to IRS regulations, contributions of more than \$250 must be acknowledged in writing by the organization to which the funds were donated. Separate cash contributions of less than \$250 do not have to meet this substantiation requirement unless there is evidence of abuse, for example, the donor writes several checks on the same date that together total more than \$250.

Remember, though, even if you contribute less than \$250, you need to maintain some proof of your contribution — a receipt or cancelled check, in case the IRS decides to audit.

For more information on annuities and donating life insurance policies, contact our office at 212 239-1662.

We're on the Web! Look for us soon
(site under construction) at
<http://www.HFBANY.org>

Out Taxes? Ponder This...



Forever Gift Annuities are a great way to earn income during your lifetime while insuring that HFBA will continue to benefit from your generosity after your passing.

Substantiating Tax-Deductible Donations to the IRS

You know your contributions to the HFBA are fully tax-deductible. We know your contributions are fully tax-deductible. Now, what about the IRS?

According to IRS regulations, contributions of more than \$250 must be acknowledged in writing by the organization to which the funds were donated. Separate cash contributions of less than \$250 do not have to meet this substantiation requirement unless there is evidence of abuse, for example, the donor writes several checks on the same date that together total more than \$250.

Remember, though, even if you contribute less than \$250, you need to maintain some proof of your contribution — a receipt or cancelled check, in case the IRS decides to audit.

For more information on annuities and donating life insurance policies, contact our office at 212 239-1662.

We're on the Web! Look for us soon (site under construction) at <http://www.HFBANY.org>

We are pleased to announce that the following names have been added to our Leave Your Mark Donor Plaque in the Mt. Richmond Cemetery Chapel Building

Donated in Memory of Klara Markovitz by R. and S. Lurie
In Memory of Mr. and Mrs. Isador Levine and son Albert Levine
In Loving Memory of Inge J. Seewald
The Seewald Family

Doris Leslie Blau
Hyman and Muriel Bursky
Joseph Einstoss
Tracy and Sander Gerber
Hebrew Academy of Nassau County Sixth Grade Girls
Milton H. Schwartz
Elisa Rothman

In Memory of Ethel Fogel, Mother of Irving and Sylvia
Joseph and Laurie Huss
In Memory of Baruch and Frieda Last
and Mr. and Mrs. N. N. Rothschild

In Memory of Frances R. Lask
Susan E. Meyer, In Memory of Her Mother,
Dorothy Nerefesky Meyer
Herbert and Marion Achtentuch

HFBA recently installed a second tablet in the Mt. Richmond Cemetery Chapel building to recognize the overwhelming number of donors who have contributed a minimum of four markers to the Leave Your Mark program. We look forward to filling this tablet and adding many more.

Far Rockaway/Lawrence Welcomes HFBA



The first Chayei Sarah breakfast in the Far Rockaway/Lawrence community was a great success, thanks to the multitude of friends and supporters who came to honor Louis E. Newman and Rabbi Ralph Pelcovitz. Mr. Newman received the Anshei Chesed Award, while Rabbi Pelcovitz was honored for a lifetime of service to the Jewish community with the Rabbinic Achievement Award. We are grateful to co-chairs Simon Kaplan and Gabby Kaszovitz for their hard work on behalf of HFBA. Pictured here are Rabbi Tzvi Flaum, who presented the award to Mr. Newman, Louis E. Newman, HFBA President Gerald E. Feldhamer and breakfast co-chair Simon Kaplan.

HFBA Uncovers Abuse...

Continued from page 1

by the idea of asking a person with admitted diminished capacity to understand the request to accede to an autopsy.) The hospital employee was insistent on claiming the body and would not relent until we notified her that we were prepared to sue the nursing home to stop the autopsy.

Mr. F. was buried the next day at Mt. Richmond Cemetery. HFBA is now fighting to

stop the practice of automatic autopsies for Jewish patients. We have contacted chaplains at all the nursing homes that refer clients to HFBA to alert them of the pattern of abuse and to make sure that Jewish patients are not included in the "automatic autopsy" program.

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



From The Mailbox...

Dear Friends at HFBA:

Last month I won tickets to the American Ballet Theater at the Met: two aisle seats in the 14th row of the orchestra. Heaven! I took one of my "sisters" — a member of my local chapter of Emunah of America. She didn't quite know how to express her appreciation, but trust me, I found a way.

Since we're both Emunah members, it would seem an easy solution. No? No! I told her she might want to do something for which the recipient couldn't thank her. She agreed. Watch for her check — we're in the same zip code.

Cordially, S.B.

Dear HFBA:

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for your efforts on behalf of J.R., a"h. Your assistance helped us provide a proper Jewish burial for her, where we would not have been able to do so otherwise.

This helps us realize how crucial and important your organization truly is. May you be rewarded for all your kind efforts.

Sincerely,

Sherri Feller, MSW

Broadview Manor Home for Adults

New Signposts Make Finding Graves Easier



Finding your way through Mt. Richmond Cemetery is now easier than ever, thanks to the new signposts along the road. The white-type on green-background signs resemble street signs and are placed strategically along the main road to guide visitors to their destinations.