

success in view of the immense obstacles that impeded their path makes their stories all the more remarkable.

One other element that is also common to these five outstanding business leaders—they are “Founders” of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum here in Washington, D.C. They have shown a strong commitment to remembering the brutal horrors of the Holocaust, paying honor to its victims, and working to prevent the repetition of this vicious inhumanity.

Mr. Speaker, Fred Kort is one of the five Holocaust survivors and leading American entrepreneurs highlighted in this article. Fred is the Chairman of the Imperial Toy Corporation in Los Angeles. As we here in the Congress mark the annual Days of Remembrance in honor of the victims of Nazi terror, I ask that the profile of Fred Kort from *Fortune Magazine* be placed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

[From *Fortune Magazine*, Apr. 13, 1998]

EVERYTHING IN HISTORY WAS AGAINST THEM  
FRED KORT, CHAIRMAN, IMPERIAL TOY CORP.

He's 74 now and has hair that spikes from his forehead as if it were exhibiting surprise at having made it this far. That image fits Fred Kort's life: At Treblinka, the Nazis' killing camp in north-central Poland, somewhere between 700,000 and 850,000 Jews were exterminated and only nine are believed to have survived. Kort is one of the nine.

Before Treblinka, the youth then called Manfred endured the Holocaust as most of its survivors did, fleeing and barely substituting. The son of a hard-up Polish Jew who lived in Germany, he was pushed with his family into Poland and then, as the Germans overran that country in September 1939, into a succession of mean ghettos and work camps. Once, when he was 17, he turned smalltime entrepreneur, sneaking out of the Warsaw ghetto, risking capture and probable death each trip, to sell baking powder, cinnamon, and other spices on the streets. “When you're young,” he says, “you think you're invincible.”

He abandoned such thoughts in July 1943, when the Germans summarily collected Kort and 2,000 other Jews and packed them into cattle cars headed for Treblinka. The train crawled for two days, and people perished. Those who didn't were shoved into a selection process aimed at sending around 300 of the strongest to the work camp called Treblinka 1 and the rest to the gas chambers of Treblinka 2. From the grass on which all the Jews huddled, one man rose to plead for the work camp and was immediately shot. Kort nonetheless also rose and in German said rapidly that he was an electrician—true, sort of, since he'd been an apprentice before the war—and could be useful. A German raised his gun. He then waved Kort to the work group.

Kort skinned by for about a year, mainly doing water-carrying duty that got him food from the guards' kitchen. Then one day in July 1944, the Jews in Treblinka 1—about 550 at that point—heard the guns of the advancing Russian army. To them the sound was ominous, because they felt sure their German captors would not let them live to broadcast the story of Treblinka 2's exterminations. On a Sunday morning, July 23, 1944, guards burst into Kort's barracks with a rough command: “Lie down wherever you are.” Instead, Kort ran, climbing out a barracks window and hiding in a storage shed.

Guards searched the shed but did not find him. He hid there until nighttime, repeatedly hearing gunfire that he assumed, correctly, meant that Jews were being shot.

And then—we know this scene from fiction, except that this was not—Kort covertly

watched the guards patrolling the camp's three rings of fences, discovering that their rounds were at intervals of 15 to 20 minutes. When the moment seemed right, he took a spade and ran for the fences, there finding the ground so softened by rain that he could dig under them easily. As he crossed a corn field outside the fences, sentries in the camp's towers tried to shoot him down, but he zigzagged into woods just beyond. He walked all that night and in the morning discovered that he must have gone in a circle, because he had returned to the camp's edge and to mass graves that held the hundreds of Jews murdered on the previous day.

Shortly, Kort joined up with members of the Polish underground. But Jews were unwelcome there, and within days he risked crossing into Russian-held territory, his hands high as he entreated: “Don't shoot, comrades. I'm a Jew.” Russian troops interrogated him for ten days before finally accepting his Treblinka story as true.

Later, Kort entered the official Polish army, then reconstituting itself, and in a battle caught a piece of shrapnel from a German shell. A far deeper wound: His father, his brother, and 60 relatives died in the Holocaust.

Fred Kort, then 24, arrived in the U.S. in 1947 with a nickel. On the boat that carried him, he used the English he'd begun to learn in postwar Europe to ask a sailor what American money was like—and got not just a look but a coin to keep. Beyond the nickel, though, Kort had some resources, because he was under the wing of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee—called the Joint by all who knew it. The Joint put him up in a modest Manhattan hotel, and soon he got a job at Bendix Corp. and entered night school.

Still exploiting those electrical skills, Kort next landed a job at General Electric and in time wangled a transfer to California. Leaving GE, he went to work for Los Angeles' Biltmore Hotel as an electrician. On one fateful day, he was called to a guest's room to fix a desk lamp. Engaging Kort in conversation, the guest, Martin Feder, said he was planning to open a toy factory and wondered if Kort knew anybody he might hire. “How about me?” Kort asked, in a question that would chart the rest of his career.

Over the next 20 years he worked for Feder, who specialized in producing the bubble-blowing kits that we all used as kids; started, and folded, a bubbles company of his own; and served as a manufacturers' rep for other toy manufacturers, proving to be a master salesman who could have sold jump ropes to snails. As a rep, he made good money. So he was ready to march when by chance he came upon a tiny, hard-rubber, high-bouncing ball that hadn't been pushed in the market. In 1969, Kort took this irrepressible bit, the Teeny Bouncer, and \$50,000 and, with a partner, set up Imperial Toy Corp.

Today the partner's gone, but the original Teeny Bouncer is still a big seller in Imperial's huge line of 880 toys. Most of the items are the year-round, very basic, \$1.99-to-\$4.99 stuff of everyone's childhood—jacks, marbles, balloons, paddle balls, water guns, rubber snakes, and yes, bubble kits, of which Imperial is the world's largest producer. Imperial's 1997 sales were just over \$100 million, which makes the company a midget compared to Mattel and Hasbro but a steady, important force in an industry teeming with smaller, trend-riding companies. Kort says with particular pride that Imperial has never had “a losing year.” That applies even to 1997, though the importance of money in that year was dwarfed by a disaster: a November explosion in Imperial's Los Angeles headquarters (linked to roll caps sold by the company) that killed four factory employees and injured several others.

That tragedy punctured Kort's natural ebullience, but not much else does. From an office decorated in purple—and with that hair going boing!—he runs his business as if he expects to be there forever, which he pretty much does. His son Jordan, one of three sons who work with him and try to match his pace, says his father has “this drive, this incredible drive.”

Since the war, Kort has testified in four war-crimes trials and has sketched, from memory, a detailed map of Treblinka 1 that is now at Washington's Holocaust museum. But Kort is in no way locked into the memories of the past. Deeply aware that America has been good to him, he is instead propelled by the thought that he'd just better bounce out there and “do more.”

## TRIBUTE TO THE LAKE COUNTY PUBLIC VOLUNTEERS

**HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 21, 1998*

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to commend Lake County Public Library (LCPL) volunteers during National Library Week and National Volunteer Week. The LCPL honored its volunteers on Sunday, April 19, 1998, during the Friends of the Lake County Public Library annual meeting, which was held at the library in Merrillville, Indiana. Two individuals, Helen Goodman and Frank Peterson, earned special recognition for their outstanding service to the library.

Helen Goodman, of Crown Point, Indiana, has volunteered at the Lake County Public Library since 1986. An assistant in the library's Indiana Room Helen researches and locates materials for library patrons on such topics as genealogy. In addition to her daily responsibilities of sorting and reshelving materials, Helen takes the initiative to offer personal assistance to patrons who are in need of specific information. Helen is prompt, reliable, and so dedicated to serving patrons, the library's Reference Department has considered naming her an “Honorary Reference Librarian”. Helen also volunteers in the Friends of the LCPL Book Sale Room, where she helps patrons select and purchase used materials. In addition, Helen is a loyal participant in all library programming, including book discussion group, as she thrives on the exchange of ideas through reading and research. Helen also displays her dedication to public service by working at the Veterans Administration (VA) several days a week. A VA volunteer since 1988, Helen assists disabled veterans with transportation needs by determining their eligibility and availability for assistance programs, as well as coordinating travel schedules. Helen also recruits other volunteers to help disabled veterans when necessary, and she is invaluable in maintaining quality patient care for the service.

Frank Peterson, a native of Portage, Indiana, has been a volunteer at the Lake County Public Library for 5 years. Frank assists the library's Book Coordinator by moving boxes of donated books for sorting, selecting, and shelving in the Book Sale Room. He works at least 2 hours each Tuesday morning and sometimes on Thursdays, re-arranging the books and encyclopedias, clearing the shelves of books for new selections, and organizing the Book Sale Room for the public. In addition, the library considers Frank to be its one-

man publicity department, as he promotes the Book Sale Room to area newspapers and places advertisements for book donations. Frank has also taken the initiative to arrange for the distribution to underprivileged libraries and school districts in other states the library's excess books. Despite his ongoing battle with lung cancer, Frank continues to pursue his commitment to volunteerism through his service to the Lake County Public Library, as well as the Porter County Public Library book sale.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me in commending Helen Goodman, Frank Peterson, and all the other volunteers at the Lake County Public Library for their outstanding service to their community. Their commitment to assisting others in the pursuit of knowledge has proven invaluable to the citizens of Indiana's First Congressional District.

IN HONOR OF YAFFA ELIACH

**HON. CHARLES E. SCHUMER**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 21, 1998*

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Speaker, one of the great pleasures of serving in this legislative body is the opportunity we occasionally get to publicly acknowledge the outstanding pillars of our community.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in congratulating Mrs. Yaffa Eliach on being named Brooklyn College's Alumna of the Year.

Mrs. Eliach currently is a professor of History and Literature in the Department of Judaic Studies at Brooklyn College. She is a pioneer scholar in Holocaust Studies and the creator of the acclaimed "Tower of Life" at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and also served on President Carter's Holocaust Commission. Yaffa was among a handful of academics who introduced Holocaust Studies on the American Campus, and is the founder of the first Center of Holocaust Studies in the United States. She served as its volunteer director until 1991.

Mrs. Eliach was born in Vilna, lived in Ejszyski until she was four and spent the rest of the early years of her childhood in Nazi-occupied Europe, in ghettos and hiding places. Because of these experiences she felt that she must never let people forget what took place during those turbulent years in Europe. Today Mrs. Eliach is a historian, poet, and a playwright dedicated to educating people about the past. Her most recent publication, "There Once Was A World; A Nine Century Chronical of the Shetel of Eishyshok" is her latest attempt to teach people about the past. It is the history of the people in the "Tower of Life" exhibit.

She is also contributing scholar to the "Encyclopedia Judaica," the "Women's Studies Encyclopedia," "The Encyclopedia of Hasidism" and is a frequent contributor to scholarly, literary and popular publications in the United States, Canada, Israel, Europe and Australia. Some of her accomplishments include winning a Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowship Award, a Louis E. Yavner Award, and being named by CBS as the Woman of the Year in 1995.

Ms. Eliach's hard work and dedication throughout the years make her a very deserving

recipient. I congratulate her on this award, and wish her continued success championing her cause.

CONGRATULATIONS TO SINAI HOSPITAL AUXILIARY, INC. ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING

**HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 21, 1998*

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay special tribute to the Sinai Hospital Auxiliary, Inc. on the 50th anniversary of its founding. A hospital is only as good as the people who are associated with it, and for more than 130 years Sinai Hospital has been one of the leading health care institutions in Baltimore, Maryland. Over the years, the Sinai Hospital Auxiliary has contributed to this success by supporting the hospital and reaching out to the larger community.

In 1948, the Sinai Hospital Board of Directors created the Women's Auxiliary of Sinai Hospital. Its mission was to interpret the hospital to the community, provide volunteer and other services and allocate all designated funds to help the hospital. Its first meeting was attended by more than 700 women.

In 1968, the Women's Auxiliary became the Sinai Hospital Auxiliary, opening its membership to include male members. As an integral part of Sinai Hospital, the Auxiliary supports and funds many innovative programs and projects that benefit the hospital.

The Auxiliary has been involved in almost every aspect of the hospital. Among its many noteworthy accomplishments, the Auxiliary has presented the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit with a \$125,000, five-year grant; donated a specially equipped car to help stroke victims; provided care safety seats for infants and children; and undertaken many educational health programs.

I hope that my colleagues will join me in saluting the Sinai Hospital Auxiliary on its 50th anniversary and in commending its members for their dedication and commitment to the community.

A FAREWELL TO DR. STANLEY S. BERGEN, JR., UMDNJ PRESIDENT

**HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 21, 1998*

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, Dr. Stanley Bergen, Jr. is now enjoying something few of us will have an opportunity to experience. Quite simply, his dreams have come true. Dr. Bergen saw his dream of a renowned public medical and dental school in New Jersey spring from modest beginnings and blossom into reality.

Dr. Bergen is now retiring after being the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's first and only president. He provided the vision and leadership to make this institution a nationally recognized medical and dental research and educational facility. UMDNJ is the largest free-standing public health

sciences university in the country. This institution is now comprised of four campuses, seven schools, 5,000 students, 11,000 employees and over 100 affiliated health care institutions.

But UMDNJ is not only a world class medical and dental school, biomedical research organization and health care provider, but it is also an organization which has given back to the community. In 1994, UMDNJ was awarded the Association of American Medical Colleges' prestigious Outstanding Community Service Award. The school also boasts one of the largest minority student populations among the nation's medical and dental schools. UMDNJ's excellence is the reflection of a man who has insisted on excellence in everything he does.

Dr. Bergen credits the support of his wife, Suzanne, and his children Stanley, Steven, Stewart, Victoria, and Amy for making his success possible.

I would like to thank Dr. Bergen for his incredible contributions to the health of New Jerseyans and for inviting me to his farewell luncheon on April 16, at the Newark Club.

IN HONOR OF 50TH BIRTHDAY OF THE AIR FORCE RESERVE

**HON. DAVID E. BONIOR**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 21, 1998*

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I have the honor to pay tribute to the Air Force Reserve as they observe their 50th Birthday on April 14, 1998. The 927th Air Refueling Wing at Selfridge Air National Guard Base will celebrate the event with a dinner and dance on April 21, 1998.

After World War II ended, the Army Air Forces began the task of post-war reorganizing. With the passage of the National Security Act in 1948, the Air Force became an independent branch of the military. The same year, the leaders of the Air Force began an overhaul of the Air Force Reserve. Although the Reserves had been in place since 1916, a formal organization did not exist. It was not until April 27, 1948 that the U.S. Air Force Reserve was officially established.

The 927th Air Refueling Wing at Selfridge Air National Guard Base is just one of the many units created from the reorganization of the Air Force Reserve. For the past 35 years, the unit participated in missions such as ferrying aircraft, equipment, and supplies to Vietnam, flying in supplies to flood victims in New York and Pennsylvania in 1973, and has provided refueling to fighters in Bosnia. The personnel of the 927th continually train both overseas and in the United States so they will be fully prepared when they are called upon to perform a mission. The 927th Air Refueling Wing deserves to be commended for their dedication and commitment to duty.

For five decades, the Air Force Reserve has faithfully defended the citizens of our great nation. I would like to join the 927th Air Force Refueling Wing in celebrating the 50th birthday of the Air Force Reserve.