

JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA

Exhibition The Severin Szperling Collection of
Holocaust Medals & Coins
Talk "How I Built My Collection" by Severin Szperling

Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre
April 22, 2007

By Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo and Marta Burczycka

An annual meeting of our Association featured a renowned medals collector from Arizona, USA, Severin Szperling.

The chairman of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada, Jerry Nussbaum, presented the current situation in the Korczak movement, in Canada and internationally, to the members and supporters of the organization.

Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo introduced the audience to a particular aspect of the Korczak related heritage: Korczak in music, movies, theater, and fine arts - his enigmatic personality and his legendary life was very attractive to the artists.

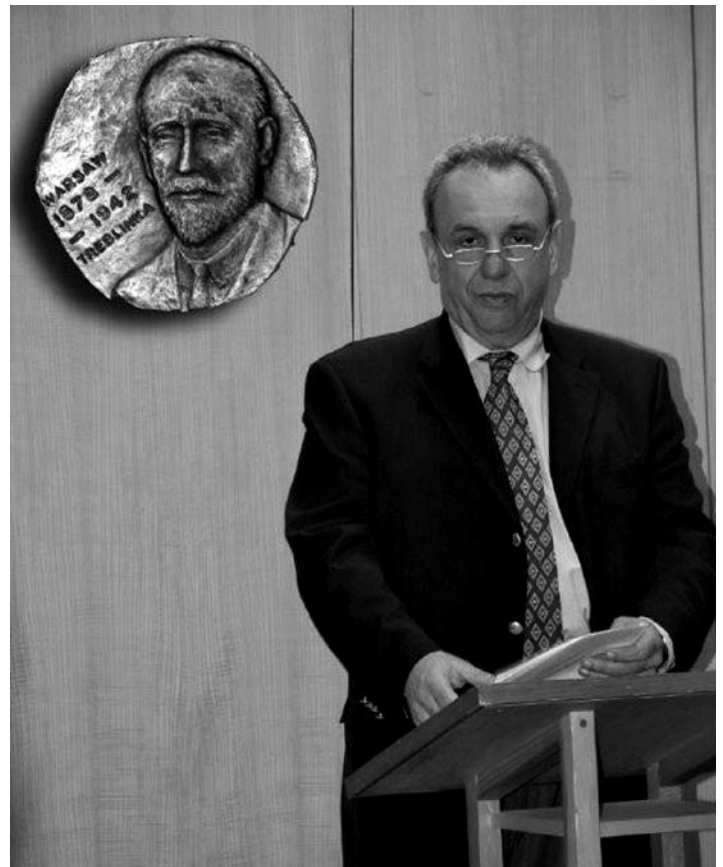
Some of the artists depicted him as a real person of flesh and blood, while others as a personification of Good. Jan Twardowski, a Catholic priest and a poet, who died last year at the age of 91, and who admired Korczak since his childhood, once said: "I consider Korczak a 'saint' because he "allowed God to act through him"¹.

The symbolic significance of the Korczak phenomenon is even more exposed in the medals than in the other arts because a medal - this small sized, miniature piece of art - can be an award, for someone's contribution in doing Good.

There are artists who are inspired by Korczak and there are people who are inspired by the Korczak art. Those are collectors, very special, passionate people.

One of them,

Mr. Severin Szperling, has been a friend of our Association since 2003. Our readers might have read about his collection in our Newsletter #2, p. 18-19. Below you will find more information about his life.



President of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada Jerry Nussbaum took the floor.

Photo by Z. Polubinski

¹ For more information about Jan Twardowski see our Newsletter #4, p.20-21 and the current issue p.38.

I am a Son to Four Parents

By Severin Szperling

I started collecting commemorative medals and coins about the Holocaust in memory of my parents. It sounds so natural to say “in memory of my parents” but I should be more precise in saying: in memory of my biological



Severin Szperling

Photo by Z. Polubinski

parents, because history wanted me to have two mothers and two fathers.

This is my story:

I was born March, 1940 in the city of Czestochowa, Poland, which had already been under the Nazi occupation for seven months. I lived with my birth mother Nechuma Prybulska and my birth father Michal Szperling for lit-

tle over two years in the Czestochowa Ghetto. Sometime in July or August of 1942, I was safely smuggled from the ghetto to the "Aryan" side where a Christian couple, Anna and Stanislaw Pociepny, hid me in a hole under their house. They put in a pipe that let me breathe. During the summer they hid me in a barrel that was placed in a concave in between the raspberry bushes. This is how my childhood went by until the liberation of the city on January 17, 1945. And this is how I became an only child to my perished Jewish parents and an only child to my Polish ones who saved my life and brought me up.

After the war I was raised as a Catholic, but later on I returned to Judaism.

In 1968, when an infamous anti-Semitic campaign took place in Poland, I worked as a draftsman in an architectural office. I made the decision to pursue emigration from the country with which, I believed, I was inextricably tied. In 1970, with the help of the HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society], I traveled from Poland to Vienna and Rome and landed in the USA a few months later.

In the United States, I graduated from a technical construction school in Chicago and worked in the construction business.

In 1996, I moved to Tucson, Arizona where I worked in the hotel industry for a few years and then retired.

I live in Tucson with my wife Alfreda from Czestochowa and two daughters Julie (30) and Michelle (27).

Whenever I have a chance I visit Poland. Now when I return to my hometown, I visit the Jewish cemetery where, people assumed my parents were executed along with other Jews in July 1943, and the tombs of my Polish parents at the Catholic cemetery. My parents, all of them, are in my heart and in my prayers.



The earliest medal commemorated the Holocaust.

Photo by Z. Polubinski

About the Collection

Severin Szperling is a widely known collector of Holocaust medals and coins. He is a member of the ANA, American Numismatic Association; the AINA, American-Israel Numismatic Association; and the PANA, Polish-American Numismatic Association.

Medals and coins from his collection were produced both by mint companies and private entities between 1945-2005. He has collected more than 300 medals from over a 30 year period. They originate from 14 countries (the USA, Israel, Poland, Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Greece, the United Kingdom, Germany, Hungary, Denmark and Russia). The subjects of the medals in the collection are: the Nazi Concentration Camps, the Deportation, the Anniversary of the Liberation of the Camps, the Ghetto Uprising, Museums and Memorials dedicated to WWII, and historical figures such as Anne Frank,

Raoul Wallenberg, Simon Wiesenthal, Oscar Schindler and Janusz Korczak. The Janusz Korczak portion of the collection represents 40 medals and coins from Poland and Israel. They were produced in metals such as cast bronze, bronze-tombay, silver plated, gold plated and silver. To the best of the collector's knowledge, only three countries issued numismatic items related to Janusz Korczak: Poland, Israel and Russia. The officially circulated and un-circulated coins of Janusz Korczak were issued only by the Polish Government in 1978 commemorating Korczak's centennial anniversary. A few commemorative medals which are registered in the catalogue of the Polish State Mint were issued as well. Some of these medals are rare, and cannot even be found in famous Jewish museums.

Currently, Severin Szperling is preparing a catalogue which contains photos and descriptions of commemorative Holocaust medals. The catalogue is going to be published in the USA in 2008.

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List of Displayed Medals & Coins

Number of medals/coins.	Theme	Issued by Country	Year	Author
1	Janusz Korczak 100 zloty circulated silver	Poland	1978	unknown
2	Janusz Korczak 100 zloty un-circulated silver and nickel	Poland	1978	unknown
3	The Ship Yard named "Janusz Korczak"	Poland	2000	unknown
1	Janusz Korczak	Poland	1979	L. Wielunski
1	Janusz Korczak The International Congress of Poets "Arcadia"	Poland	1996	Z. Kotylo
3	Janusz Korczak The National Youth Philatelic Exhibition	Poland	1983	Stanley Watrobka
1	Janusz Korczak's 100th Birthday, The Polish State Mint, cast bronze	Poland	1978	K. Pikorska
1	Janusz Korczak's 100th Birthday, The Polish State Mint, struck	Poland	1978	K. Pikorska
1	Janusz Korczak's 100th Birthday The Polish State Mint	Poland	1979	P. Gawron
1	Janusz Korczak The Museum of Auschwitz, cast bronze	Poland	1994	M. Stobierski
1	Janusz Korczak The Museum of Auschwitz, cast bronze	Poland	1994	M. Stobierski
1	Dr. Janusz Korczak The Polish State Mint	Poland	1990	A. Nowakowski
1	25th Anniversary of the Union of the Trade Schools named "Janusz Korczak"	Poland	2000	unknown
2	Troop of Scouts XXV named "Janusz Korczak"	Poland	1979	unknown
1	Troop of Scouts XXV named "Janusz Korczak"	Poland	1978	unknown
3	In Memory of Janusz Korczak The Ghetto Fighter's Museum	Israel	1978	unknown
5	In Memory of Janusz Korczak The Polish State Mint	Poland	2005	unknown
1	Terezin Concentration Camp	Czech Republic	1991	unknown
1	In Memory of the Polish Jewry	Israel	1989	unknown
1	In Memory of My Parents	Israel	2000	unknown
1	40th Anniversary of the Deportation Hungarian Jews	Hungary	1984	unknown

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3	60th Anniversary of the Liberation Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi Concentration Camp	Poland	2005	unknown
2	40th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising	Poland	1983	unknown
2	40th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising	Poland	1983	unknown
1	50th Anniversary of the Liberation Concentration Camps	France	1995	unknown
1	In Memory of Anne Frank	France	1964	unknown

Total Number - 40

Dear readers:

If you have any Holocaust medals or coins and are ready to share them or information on them with Mr. Szperling
please contact him at
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