Photographic memories

Leslie Starobin’s montage, “The Sketchbook of MZ,” captures the story of a family torn apart by war. The charcoal drawing is of the same woman who is in the photo of the mother and son wearing skis. Leslie Starobin’s montage, “The Sketchbook of MZ,” captivated the group’s imagination. A haunting mixed-media work was based around a single, mysterious image.

Teaching how to detect stories in family pictures

By Dawn Swann
Special to the Advocate

The funny thing about treasures: They’re often hiding in plain sight. At least that’s what the Jewish Women’s Archive hopes.

The JWA’s mission is to uncover, chronicle and publicize the rich history of Jewish women in North America. It is always on the lookout for lost pieces of history in attic boxes and family albums or on the walls of homes.

Two JWA representatives, Emily Scheinberg and Judith Rosenbaum, brought their mission to Mayyim Hayyim, the mikvah and education center in Newton, in the format of a workshop called “The Album as Archive: The Photograph as Story.”

A dozen women gathered around a table, sipping steaming mugs of tea and peering at photos they had brought from home. The goal was to ferret out the stories behind the photos, by examining the expressions of their subjects, their clothing and other telling details. It was also to prod the memories of the keepers of the photos.

For inspiration, the women looked at the montages on the wall by Leslie Starobin, a professor of Communication Arts at Framingham State College. Each mixed-media work was based around a single, mysterious image.

One montage in particular, “The Sketchbook of MZ,” captivated the group’s imagination. A haunting charcoal image of a woman’s face takes up most of the canvas. She appears to be staring into the distance, as if longing for something lost. Elsewhere on the canvas are a young man’s passport, a photograph with a cracked seam splitting the image of a mother and son. The mother is a smiling version of the woman in charcoal, cracked seam splitting the image of a mother and son.

Participants in the Jewish Women’s Archive workshop scrutinize family photos for clues to the past.

Continued on Page 2

Armenians, Jews push genocide legislation

Local group launches national campaign

By Cara Hogan
Advocate Staff

Local leaders from the Armenian and Jewish communities have launched a nationwide petition drive to press Congress to pass legislation recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

The petition reads, “As a presidential candidate, Barack Obama proclaimed ‘a principled commitment to commemorating and ending genocide.’ He then explicitly pledged, ‘As President I will recognize the Armenian Genocide.’”

The petition calls for the United States to recognize the genocide on its 95th anniversary this April. Organizers say they have collected 3,400 signatures from people across the country since the drive was launched Feb. 2.

The petition (posted at www.change.org) was drawn up by the Coalition to Recognize the Armenian Genocide, which was co-founded by Rabbi Howard Jaffe of Temple Isaiah in Newton, and Rabbi Elaine Zecher of Temple Israel in Boston.

Jaffe said he was galvanized by the controversy triggered when the director of the New England chapter of the Anti-Defamation League broke with the national organization by saying it should recognize the Armenian genocide. The director, Andrew Tarsy, subsequently resigned.

“I thought the ADL did good work, but I learned more, and my eyes were opened to how so many of our national Jewish organizations weren’t just silent on the Armenian genocide, but working to oppose recognition,” Jaffe said. “I was horrified.”

An estimated 1.5 million Armenians were massacred in the Ottoman Empire in the period around World War I. The Turkish government has rejected the label “genocide” for the killings.

Continued on Page 2

Facing down Shoah denial

In her Our Turn column, the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor describes her encounter with Arabs who had been taught the death camps were fiction.

Shul's annual culinary contest

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Educating about the past

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Shabbat Candle Lighting Times

Parshah: Mishpatim

Established 1902

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Is that coat kosher?

Out of a lab in his Brighton house, a rabbi tests clothes to make sure they don’t violate the commandment of mixing linen and wool.

See Page 3

Fighting down Eruv status

Eruv Status:

See Page 7

The great cholent cook-off

The kosher food lover ventures into the kitchen at Young Israel of Brookline for a behind-the-scenes look at the shuf’s annual culinary contest.

See Page 11

Celebrating a dance great

Boston Conservatory hosts a centenary tribute to Anna Sokolow, a pioneering Jewish choreographer and modern dancer.

See Page 16

Campers send out SOS

The international alumni of Camp Szarvas in Hungary are waging a Web campaign to raise money as the economic crisis has slashed in half this summer’s sessions.

See Page 24

Have a news tip or story idea?

E-mail us at:

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Shabbat Candle Lighting Times

Parshah: Mishpatim

BOSTON 4:54 PM
MANSFIELD 4:54 PM
FALL RIVER 4:54 PM
PORTLAND, MAINE 4:54 PM
PROVIDENCE, R.I. 4:54 PM
SPRINGFIELD 5:00 PM
WORCESTER 4:57 PM

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Continued on Page 2
How to sleuth through the family album

Continued from Page 1

Two Costa Rican firsts: one for women, one for Jews.

The Central American nation elected its first female president and first Jewish vice president in elections last week.

Luis Lieberman (above), a former banker and financier, ran with Laura Chinchilla, a social conservative, who won the presidency by a large margin.

Lieberman is the son of Polish immigrants and the grandson of Costa Rica’s first Jews.

The newly elected Jewish vice president said Jews have served in prior Costa Rican governments, and his religion was not a factor in his candidacy.

Some 3,000 Jews live in Costa Rica out of a total population of 4 million.

Controversy

February doll debate

Israel has presented the UN with its Gaza war. Critics say it does- not officially acknowledge the genocide and neither does Israel.”

If you start denying the Armenian genocide, very soon people will deny the Holocaust for politi- cal expediency,” said Boghosian.

“We have a double standard as Americans. Our government does not officially acknowledge the genocide, but says it does Israel.”

Jaffe agreed. “If there were any group out there saying we’re not going to recognize the Holocaust because it was a political and emotional relations, we would be up in arms screaming.”

Boghosian said that while the ADL controversy brought the group together, it does not define them.

“Genocide scholars tell us that denial of any genocide fuels current atrocities and emboldens those who would commit future crimes against humanity. Acknowl- edgment of the Armenian Genocide is, therefore, a human rights issue for all,” she said.

Correction

A Jan. 29 story on J Street Boston incorrectly stated that JStreetPAC has a minimum donation. Donors to JStreetPAC give on average less than $75.

Keeping photos picture-perfect

Judy Boghosian of the Jewish Women’s Archive offers these tips for preserving family photographs:

• Digitize all your old pictures. Scan them into the computer at a high resolution and save them as digital images.

• Scan in the back of the photo, too, if it contains a note or a photo- grapher’s seal.

• Upload images to an Internet site such as Flickr. Besides providing backup storage, the site will help you organize photos and add tags like names, dates, places and short descriptions. For example: New York, bow, book, student, birding.

• Tagging photos with proper nouns is a way for long-lost relatives to contact each other. Don’t forget to include details like the name of the ship that transported your great-grandmother to America.

• Instead of displaying a family heirloom on the wall where it can fade or be broken, place it on the com- puter and make a high-quality print to hang instead. Original photos should be carefully stored on acid- free, heavy duty paper.

• Back everything up. CDs are one way, but they degrade quickly and are breakable. Other options in- clude an external hard drive or a thumb drive.

• The number one tip JWA has to offer is to get all your stories from relatives or memory, and write them all down.

• A novel way to archive photos is to have them turned into a work of art by an artist like Stanorbin or to have them fashioned into a hand- bag by craftswoman Lauren Teller who uses pictures, twinkles and poems to tell stories with photographs.

Local Armenians, Jews push for genocide bill

Continued from Page 1

Local Armenians, Jews push for genocide bill

United States and Israel are said to be at odds over their relations with Turkey.

Jaffe said the Jewish and Ar- menian communities in Lexing- ton decided to create a grassroots or- ganization to discuss the issue and resolve lingering ill will.

“It quickly moved from dialog- uge to a group interested in doing something,” he said. Eventu- ally, after a number of meetings and conversations, we agreed that circulating this petition would be a positive step.”

He said the group took two

years to come out with a final peti- tion because of scheduling issues, rather than conflicts over the con- tent.

Abraham Foxman, the national director of ADL, last commented on the issue in 2007, saying the ac- tions of the Ottoman Empire against the Armenians during the period of 1915 to 1918 were “tan- tamount to genocide.” As of press time, representatives from the local ADL chapter did not re- spond to requests for comment.

Laura Boghosian, an Armenian community leader who co-found- ed the group with Robert Jaffe, said today’s diplomatic concerns should not trump history.

“If you start denying the Armen- ian genocide, very soon people will deny the Holocaust for politi- cal expediency,” said Boghosian.

“We have a double standard as Americans. Our government does not officially acknowledge the genocide, but says it does Israel.”

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