

## Krakow Jewish Culture Festival 2011

### Why was this festival different from all other festivals

The subtitle makes the presumption that I've been to or have knowledge of all the preceding festivals. I admit I haven't. The festival started in 1988. I think that I have attended the festival longer than any non-Polish born visitor though I do have a family connection through my grandmother.

I first came to Krakow and the festival in 1996 and have missed two perhaps three festivals since that date. The festival then was every two years. It was a more basic event. The big Saturday concert was on a small wooden stage loosely covered by a tarpaulin if it rained. One year when the rain was heavy there was a danger of water entering the electrical equipment (and possible electrocution) so everything stopped for a while.

For about the last ten years a super metal covered stage with lighting etc has been provided by Polish TV – another world.

My view of the festival has always been that it is an exercise in nostalgia for the days when Krakow had a vibrant Jewish community of about 60,000.

Yes the program does relate to the contemporary world in both the lectures and music but there is a feel-good atmosphere that shuts out some of the realities of today's Jewish world.

For about the last ten years there has been an award ceremony at the festival that gave certificates to school teachers, youth leaders and church officials from throughout Poland who led groups that took care of Jewish cemeteries and memorials in places where there is no Jewish presence. Meeting and applauding these adults and children was a moving and gratifying experience.

The first of the two events that made this festival different from its predecessors was a ceremony. It was a Yad Vashem Ceremony. Yad Vashem is The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority based in Jerusalem Israel. [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

Another English guy named Marcel Manson has been a regular visitor since 1998. His mother was from Krakow and his father

from Szczuczyn (pronounced Stuchin). His father was hidden on a farm by a family of Polish gentiles for three years and after marrying another survivor they eventually made their way to London where they founded a family comprising Marcel his brother Leon and eventually their families. For the last few years Marcel has been bringing groups to the festival and from this small beginning he has built up a successful Jewish Heritage Tours business.

After searching for several years Marcel traced the family who at risk to their lives saved his father. As is well known the whole family would have been murdered by the Nazis if they were found out. There was also a risk of anti-semitic neighbours in their village reporting the 'hidden Jew' to the Nazis. They might then acquire the farm for themselves. This often happened.

After many years Marcel found the farm where his father was saved, though the actual saviors had died but their three children one born after the war were living there. Marcel wanted to gain recognition (albeit posthumous) of the family so that Yad Vashem could honour them

<http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/about.asp>

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It took several years for Marcel to get the data and testimony required by Yad Vashem but he finally succeeded. Yad Vashem agreed to hold a ceremony in Krakow during the 2011 festival coordinated by the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw that would honour several Poles or posthumously their offspring with Righteous Gentile Medals and Certificates.

The Ceremony held at the Galicia Museum was very emotional some old saved survivors were there usually with their families. Also some of the actual persons who all those years ago defied the German war machine and saved their fellow beings. It will stay in my memory.

Speech delivered by Marcel Manson to the daughter at the ceremony  
I feel so proud, humble and privileged to stand here in front of such distinguished guests. Ambassador of my beloved Israel,

Rabbonim, family and friends honouring 8 Righteous Amongst the Nations who risked all, particularly Anna & Stanislaw Jaje of

blessed memory – who hid my father for 3 years on their farm,

represented here by their daughter.

Please allow me to address you by your first name –Michalna, and salute the exceptional bravery and courage your parents must

have gone through in their daily struggle to survive such a terrible time.

You were born after the war, so please allow me to tell you about my father. He was known as Reb Shayer, a real Galitzianer, who

carried your home town, his Shtetl Szuzchine wherever he went in life.

Here in Krakow after the war marrying my mother Zoshu Ginter of UL Jacuba both only survivors of large families, then on to Paris

and finally settling in his recreated Stehtl in Golders Green London. He always described Kroke Gevayson del Galizean

Yerushalayim – and this week who can argue that the Yiddish magic has not come back.

He never forgot what your parents did and sent parcels every Easter and Christmas and I have here your mother's thank you

letters – which I will show you later.

What does it mean being a Righteous Gentile. I was in Israel last month and took your parents pictures to Yad Vachem in Jerusalem. Your parents are the 11,802 award bestowed to exceptional people rewarded up to 1980 with a tree in their honour. Now their

names are preserved on a Remembrance wall and I would like to give you this (present frame), which are pictures I took there.

A Survivor of Auschwitz was giving a tour in the Avenue of the Righteous and described this line of trees, barely a fraction of 1%, bearing in mind that Nazi Germany at its peak had in their control nearly 500 million people.

Michalna, I want you to see the legacy of your parents extreme courage, my dear beautiful family and friends (make yourselves

known) and there are few more who could not be here due to important reasons.

Due to your parents actions, we are here in my Mother's beloved Krakow enjoying the Jewish festival – which I have been coming

to for 14 years.

I am indeed blessed and *Jenkua Baidzwo moi cerca* from the bottom of my heart I thank you.