

# THE IVANSK PROJECT e-NEWSLETTER

Issue Number 21

November - December 2006

*[Editor: In late October four generations of Ivanskers (including two “originals”) gathered in Warsaw to embark on an 8 day journey; a voyage filled with a range of complex emotions. They came to pay homage to their ancestors and to remember the Ivanskers and the millions of other Jews who were murdered in the Shoah. A Jew coming to Poland, especially for the first time, is confronted by deep inner feelings about this land, its people and its history. Our ancestors escaped from this place and never wanted to return. Likewise, most of us thought we’d never, ever come here. But something compelled us to climb aboard; we had to see what we could learn about our past and about ourselves. Many will remember the experience for the rest of their lives.*

*In the next 2-3 issues of The Ivansk Project e-Newsletter we will get a glimpse of what happened to the group on the trip. All participants have been invited to share their experiences with us and many have already communicated their thoughts and their photographs. Some of their letters and essays are printed in this issue; others will appear in subsequent editions of the e-News. The invitation to contribute material remains open; we look forward to receiving mail from those who are still wrestling with how to begin to describe what happened to them.*

*This edition of our e-newsletter focuses primarily on events surrounding the rededication ceremony held in Ivansk on 23 October. The January-February and March-April issues will deal with other aspects of the trip including the ceremony to mark the anniversary of the 1942 deportation of our people from Ivansk; the visits to Treblinka and Auschwitz and the reception at the Junior High School in Iwaniska.*

*Many thanks to the Ivanskers who sent photographs for use in the e-newsletter: Sid Freedman, Gary Lipton, Susie Kaplan, Shelly Kesten, Ethan Rotenberg, Audrey Taichman, Darren Taichman, Lorne (Lazer) Taichman, Susan and Michael Taichman-Robins and Dorothy Wiener.*

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**Participants: Ivansk Cemetery Rededication, 23 October 2006**

Aidelman	Bonnie	USA	Monheit	Ellen & Sonny	Canada
Bloomberg	Jack & Mollie	Canada	Newman	Lisa	Canada
Blumenfeld	Charlotte	Israel	Rosenbloom	Joel	USA
Blumenfeld	David & Melissa Sahar & Ya'ar	Israel	Rotenberg	Ethan	Canada
Eisenberg	Evy	Canada	Rotenberg	Josiah	Israel
Freedman	Sidney & Dawn	Canada	Rotenberg	Ken	Canada
Freedman	Bonnie	Canada	Rotenberg	Robert	Canada
Gregorczyk	Grzegorz	Poland	Samuels	Sandra	Canada
Iron	Gilda	Canada	Scherer	Hyla	Canada
Kaplan	Susie	Canada	Silberstein	Jacob (Kobi)	Israel
Kasten	Sydney & Fruma	Israel	Taichman	Audrey	USA
Kesten	Sheldon & Linda	Israel	Taichman	Darren	USA
Lipton	Gary & Bonnie	Canada	Taichman	Lorne & Ettie	USA
Lipton	Lili	Canada	Taichman	Marsha	Canada
Lipton	Noa	Canada	Taichman- Robins	Michael & Susan	USA
Lipton	Dina	Canada	Waterman	Fern	Canada
Lipton	Lawrie	Canada	Wiener	Dorothy	Canada
Lipton	Lisa	Canada			

## Itinerary: Tour of Poland to Mark the Rededication of the Ivansk Jewish Cemetery

<b>Thursday, 19 October 2006</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrival Warsaw from various points worldwide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour Hotel: Warsaw Westin</li> <li>• Get acquainted dinner meeting at the hotel</li> </ul>
<b>Friday, 20 October 2006</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning bus tour of Warsaw emphasizing sites of Jewish interest:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Jewish Cemetery</li> <li>2. Monument to the Ghetto Heroes</li> <li>3. 18 Mila Street Monument</li> <li>4. The Monument of the Umshlagplatz</li> <li>5. Visit to the Museum at the Jewish Historical Institute</li> <li>6. Visit Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lunch at "Pod Samsonem", a restaurant in Old Town.</li> <li>• Kabbalat Shabbat services at the Nozyk Synagogue.</li> <li>• Candle Lighting at 5.15 PM</li> <li>• Dinner at the "Florian" near Nozyk Synagogue.</li> <li>• After dinner lecture by Monika Krawczyk, "Being a Jew in Modern Poland"</li> </ul>
<b>Saturday, 21 October 2006</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shabbat services at Nozyk Synagogue.</li> <li>• Walking tour of former Jewish Ghetto area:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The streets of former Little Ghetto,</li> <li>2. The fragments of the Ghetto Wall,</li> <li>3. Grzybowski Square (Yiddish Theatre)</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Lunch at Menora restaurant in town.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free afternoon</li> <li>• Shabbat ends at 6.22 PM</li> <li>• Dinner at Westin Hotel</li> <li>• After dinner lecture by historian, Wacław Wojciechowski, "A Survey of Polish Jewish History"</li> </ul>
<b>Sunday, 22 October 2006</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning departure by bus for Treblinka via former Jewish section of the Praga district on the right (East) bank of the Vistula River.</li> <li>• Box lunch</li> <li>• Bus to Sandomierz.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dinner at Hotel Basztowy</li> <li>• Screening of David Blumenfeld's documentary film, <i>"Within These Walls: The Death &amp; Life of Ivansk"</i></li> </ul>
<b>Monday, 23 October 2006</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning departure by bus to Iwaniska</li> <li>• Walking tour of Iwaniska.</li> <li>• Meet town officials and townsfolk</li> <li>• Box lunch in Town Hall.</li> <li>• Reading of "The Funeral" (Ellen Monheit)</li> <li>• Reception at Junior High School and Essay Award Ceremony</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolic march to cemetery</li> <li>• <b>Rededication of the Ivansk Jewish Cemetery</b></li> <li>• Reception hosted by the town</li> <li>• Return to Sandomierz via Klimontow, stopping at the old synagogue</li> <li>• Dinner and discussion at Basztowy Hotel</li> </ul>

<b>Tuesday, 24 October 2006</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning departure by bus for Krakow</li> <li>• Hotel: Novotel Centrum</li> <li>• Lunch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour Kazimierz District of Krakow. Visit Remuh and Temple Synagogues, Old Synagogue Museum and Galicia Museum (view photo exhibit of Jewish Life in Southeast Poland)</li> <li>• Dinner at the "Ester Restaurant" with Jewish music.</li> </ul>
<b>Wednesday, 25 October 2006</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning departure by bus for Auschwitz</li> <li>• Guided tour of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II (Birkenau)</li> <li>• Late lunch after completing tour of Auschwitz</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return to Krakow in late afternoon</li> <li>• Dinner at Novotel Centrum</li> <li>• Free evening</li> </ul>
<b>Thursday, 26 October 2006</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning departure by bus for Iwaniska</li> <li>• Gather in town square to observe anniversary (<i>Hebrew calendar</i>) of deportation of Jews from Ivansk to Treblinka</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus to Cmielow where Ivanskers were loaded onto trains bound for Treblinka</li> <li>• Lunch in Ostrowiec</li> <li>• Return to Warsaw; Hotel Westin</li> <li>• Farewell dinner in hotel restaurant</li> </ul>
<b>Friday, 27 October 2006</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour concludes. Participants depart Warsaw for home.</li> </ul>	



Scenes from Warsaw





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### Sights and Sounds of Iwaniska

- 1. Street scene.    2. The Lipton Maidens.
- 3. Outside the Town Hall.    4. The well on the Road to Staszow.
- 5. The Rotenberg Family: Bobby, Lisa, Ken, Ethan and Josiah.
- 6. Site of shul and Beit Midrash.
- 7. "On the Town".    8. The "Brina" ("river") where women used to wash clothes.
- 9. Lorne Taichman speaking with Marco Bousena and Stefan Viktor.
- 10. Our Two Original Ivanskers: Sidney Freedman & Dorothy Wiener.

## Assembling for the Rededication Ceremony



The Jewish cemetery is approximately 2 km outside of Ivansk. In a symbolic act, most participants walked to the cemetery as was the custom with our ancestors. The same route was followed as in former times, leaving town by way of the Road to Rakow and then turning onto the gravel road which leads to the graveyard. Approaching the restored cemetery it became apparent that many local inhabitants and invited dignitaries had gathered at the site. Although rain had been predicted, the weather was ideal for the service.



# Rededication of the Ivansk Jewish Cemetery

## 23 October 2006

### Opening Remarks

by Gary Lipton and Grzegorz Gregorczyk

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honoured Guests, Mayor Zoltek, Friends and Relatives, Ivansk Descendants from Around the World,

Good afternoon one and all and welcome!

My name is Gary Lipton; when my family lived in Ivansk, our name was *Lipovich*.

My grandparents were born in Ivansk and immigrated to Canada over 100 years ago. I will be your co-host today together with my good friend and associate Grzegorz Gregorczyk.

Today we are assembled in the town of Iwaniska, Poland, in order to honour and remember a vibrant Jewish community that had been established in this town and its environs for hundreds of years. In 1939 with the outbreak of WW II and the German occupation of Poland, the normal course of life was suddenly interrupted. Over the next three years every Jewish custom, institution and way of life was first limited, then devastated and eventually annihilated, as was almost every Jewish inhabitant of the town. Most were murdered in the gas chambers of Treblinka.

But we, the descendants of those who left Ivansk before the Holocaust, as well as those who are descendants of survivors, have come today to rededicate and remember.

Before us are the fruits of our labours, the restored Jewish cemetery.

When our ancestors arrived in the town, probably in the early-mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, one of their first tasks was to secure a plot of land for proper Jewish burial. Even before there was a synagogue, *Beit Midrash*, or any of the other vital Jewish institution, a cemetery had to be secured.

So, it is fitting that the cemetery is the sole remnant that survived in any form whatsoever after the complete devastation. Each "*Matzevah*" in the cemetery was both a grave marker in the literal sense, as well as a "*Matzevet Zikaron*" or a memorial monument commemorating and representing the deceased. Our own work can be seen in the same way: we have rebuilt the walls and gate and by doing so have created a new "*Matzevet Zikaron*", a symbolic memorial to our ancestors.

Many organizations contributed to this endeavour. The Ivansk Cemetery Restoration Project evolved over the last 5 years. From the onset, the prime mover and director of the project has



been Norton Taichman. His tireless efforts include numerous visits to the town, the establishment of an Ivansk interest newsletter reaching hundreds of people, and, as well, he successfully forged relationships of trust and friendship with local people including Mayor Zoltek, Mr. Kotowski the director of the regional council in Opatow, Father Kolasa the parish priest, members of the local junior high school including Pawel Skowron, and many citizens of the town.

Norton has been supported by a large group of Ivansker descendants from around the world. Many of you are here today. As we all know, Norton was unable to journey to Poland due to surgery that he had two weeks ago. I am happy to report that he is recovering well and represented here by many Taichman family members. In a sense, Norton is represented by everyone here, because he is the common thread through all of us.

At this time I would like to name the following institutions that have supported our efforts:

The *Polish Jewish Cemetery Restoration Project* directed by Norman Weinberg of Buffalo, New York. We owe a great deal of gratitude to Mr. Weinberg as well as to Mr. Andrzej Omasta who coordinated every phase of our work in the field.

The *Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland*, directed by Ms. Monika Krawczyk. The Foundation was the conduit for our funds in Poland and will undertake the perpetual care of the cemetery, an extremely important task.

*Michael Schudrich the Chief Rabbi of Poland* for his guidance and support.

*Local officials such as the aforementioned Mr. Kotowski, Mayor Zoltek and Father Kolasa.*

And finally, *Mr. Grzegorz Gregorczyk*, "our man in Iwaniska". Greg, your co-host today has been a driving force and the go-to guy for much of the project activities. Those of us in attendance today, in fact all Ivanskers, owe him an immense debt of gratitude.

In addition I would like to mention the support of the *Ivansker Mutual Benefit Society in Toronto*, numerous donors worldwide, and The Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto. Every single contributor was a necessary building block to completing our work.

And now on behalf of those of us who have worked years to prepare for this day, I want to thank those in attendance today, local Iwaniskans and Ivanskers, you who took the time to come and be a part of this occasion.

**On the following pages we present some of the messages that were delivered at the rededication ceremony. It was our intent to print all the addresses.**

**Unfortunately, we do not have copies of the text presented by several speakers.**

**Our sincere apologies for these omissions.**

**Address by Kasimierz Zoltek, Mayor  
Town of Iwaniska**

Dear Friends and Distinguished Guests

It is my privilege to welcome you to Iwaniska. I have the honor of representing the Town Hall and all the residents of Iwaniska. We are most pleased that you are here.

After years of preparation this day has finally arrived. The people of Iwaniska and of the Opatow District want me to tell you how pleased they are to welcome you and to applaud what you have done. I would especially like to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Sidney Freedman and to Mrs. Dorothy Wiener who were born in Iwansk.

During the past 3 years I have come to know many wonderful people who have become my friends. Let me mention who they are: Professor Norton Taichman, Mr. Gary Lipton, Mr. Andrzej Omasta and Mr. Grzegorz Gregorczyk.

Welcome to all and thank you!

**Address by Monika Krawczyk, Director  
Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland**

Dear Iwaskers; Dear Friends.

Hello and Shalom to All of You!

It is a great honor and a great pleasure to be here. I have been thinking what I can say to you but I am speechless.

I want to thank you for your work. Together we restored this cemetery from a field. If it would not have been for your effort, the next generation would not even know about the existence of this cemetery. So, you have saved this place for future generations. Just as important you have preserved the memory of the Jews who once lived in this land and enriched its culture.

We hope that that our organization will be your arm locally and serve to keep you abreast on the status and maintenance of your ancestor's cemetery.

Thank you very much.



## Keynote Address

*by Norton Taichman*  
*read by Susan Taichman-Robins*

**Narberth, Pennsylvania, USA**  
**Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania, USA**

*Ladies and Gentlemen; Family and Friends; Honored and Distinguished Guests*

*My name is Susan; I am the eldest daughter of Louise and Norton Taichman.*

*As you know my father has been involved in restoring the cemetery of our ancestors. It is a task which has given him much pleasure. For the past 5 years he has been looking forward to this day, but circumstances have forced my mother and father to remain at home until he recovers from his operation.*

*Members of our family, including my husband, my brother and sisters, my uncle and aunt and my cousin are here to represent the Taichman family.*

*My father has asked me to deliver the address he prepared for this occasion.*

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Gen Dobry, Dear Friends,

I am honored and proud to be with you on this unique and important event.

None of this would have been possible without the close co-operation and contributions of many, many good people.

First, I wish to thank the countless Ivanskers throughout the world who supported and gave so generously to fund the reclamation of our ancestors' cemetery. As a result of this undertaking, Ivanskers have bonded closer together and have taken a deeper interest in their past. Many descendents of the Ivansker Jewish community are with us today. Others who could not make the journey are with us in spirit.

For us this is a bitter sweet moment. The return to our ancestors' shtetl has been a long time coming and many of us never thought it would or could happen. But here we stand. Tears fill our eyes, but pride and hope swell our hearts.

Our ancestors have been remembered and their heritage has been preserved for future generations of our people.

In Poland the reclamation of our cemetery was under the guidance of the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, who assured that our ancestors' religious traditions were upheld and



respected. Rabbi Schudrich is a beacon of hope and resilience to the small Jewish community that lives in Poland today. His tireless efforts on their behalf are without parallel.

Two organizations have been indispensable to our undertaking as well as in the renovation and preservation of hundreds of other abandoned Jewish cemeteries in Poland.

The Poland-Jewish Cemetery Restoration Project (or PJCRP) has stood by our side from the very beginning. Lead by its founder, the visionary Dr. Norman Weinberg who lives in the USA and directed locally by Mr. Andrzej Omasta, the PJCRP is a guiding light for those who would not otherwise know how to get started or navigate through this complex venture to honor our dead. The PJCRP has devoted countless hours assuring that the objectives of our mission would be realized, and we are grateful for all that they have accomplished on our behalf. Unfortunately, Dr. Weinberg could not be in attendance, but he is represented by Mr. Omasta.

Likewise, we are deeply indebted to Ms Monika Krawczyk who directs the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland. The Federation is responsible for protecting and commemorating the vast physical and intellectual Polish-Jewish legacy that miraculously survived the carnage of the past. Ms Krawczyk's work is unlikely to ever be finished; and so our gratitude for her devotion and that of her colleagues is never ending.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of many, many Polish men, women and children who have been so welcoming and so caring about helping all this come to pass.

Our dear friend, Gzregorz Gregorczyk has unselfishly given his time, his knowledge, his energy and his heart to advance the project and to foster reconciliation between our two peoples. In Judaism we call such a person a "*Gantz Mensch*", a whole, complete human being.

Grzegorz, there is no way we can ever thank you for all that you have done. The world desperately needs more menschen like you!!!

To the people of Iwaniska we are forever grateful for welcoming us "home". In the past we have shared good and bad times. Today marks a new beginning to our relationship. You have demonstrated unambiguously your sincerity and your desire to come together with us as friends and as landsmen, and we accept your invitation without reservation. Over the past 5 years I have come to know many of you on a personal basis and ever since I have looked forward to returning to my father's little shtetl where he was born 100 years ago this November.

I would like to specifically acknowledge the friendship and support of:

- Mayor Kasimierz Zoltek,
- Father Stanislaw Kolasa
- Mr. Kazimierz Kotowski
- Mr. and Mrs Stefan Viktor
- Mrs. Maria Barwinska
- Mr. Pawel Skowron
- Mrs. Ewa Malinos
- Mrs. Jadwiga Pawlik
- Mahfoudl ("Marco") Bousena, his wife and their daughter Sara
- Mr. and Mrs Henryk Kijanka
- Mr. Bronislav Walanski
- Mr. Lukasz Ksiazek.
- And finally thanks to those who I have unknowingly omitted but who also contributed to making this day possible.

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It is 10 years since my first visit to Poland and to Ivansk. At that time I stood on this very spot looking out onto the beautiful hills and fields. But I could not appreciate the scenery because the place were I stood held the remains of my ancestors and the Jewish community that once belonged here. All evidence of their past had disappeared. And the holy nature of this site was

obscured by dense overgrowth of trees, shrubs, bramble and weeds. Nothing was left. Absolutely Nothing! I was overcome with loneliness and hopelessness, and I wept openly.

For me, this forgotten, violated and abandoned graveyard became a universal symbol for what had happened to our people during the course of European history. This desecrated ground became the driving force for me to try to pay homage to my ancestors and to assure that future generations of Jews and non-Jews would never be allowed to forget what hatred and bigotry can lead to.

No one knows exactly when Jews began to settle in this area of Poland, but it seems likely they arrived in Iwaniska about 300-350 years ago. They were welcomed as immigrants because they were engaged primarily in mercantile and commercial trade...something that was deficient in the Polish economy of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At that time the indigenous local inhabitants remained primarily bound to the land as peasant farmers. The arrival of Jewish merchants and traders marked the beginning of a market-based economy that would ultimately spell the end of serfdom.

On the surface Jews and Poles got along rather well. Jews were accorded several basic privileges: they were allowed to practice their religion, retain their language (Yiddish) and manage their own cultural and social affairs. Poland became a magnet for Jews who were being persecuted in Germany, France, England, Spain and other western nations. Poland was a safe refuge and became a land where Jewish culture and learning flourished.

But over time Polish-Jewish relationships deteriorated. There are many reasons but only a few need be mentioned here. Most important, we were not Catholic; we did not accept the Christian gospel and we were accused of causing the death of Christ. Basically, we were a different people who refused to shed our identity and traditions: we resisted assimilation. People who are different are always regarded with suspicion and mistrust.

Anti-Jewish sentiment reached a climax in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the interwar years Judeophobia reached its zenith in the nation's political, economic, social, religious and academic value systems. Couple all this with a stagnant economy and you can understand why Jews saw little hope for a better future, and large numbers began looking for ways to leave the land which they had called home for hundreds of years.

Although anti-Semitism was generally not as intense in the shtetlach as in the major population centers, new tensions emerged even in such places as Iwansk. Polish nationalists pressured local people to boycott Jewish businesses and hooligans committed violent acts against Jews and their property. But despite these disturbances the basic fabric of the town remained intact; Gentile and Jewish children continued to play and go to school together, and the majority of Jewish and Christian townsfolk remained on good terms and treated each other with respect. Both sides hoped that this troubled interlude would soon end and that better times would follow.

But it was already too late: time had run out! In September 1939 Hitler's army smashed across Poland's western borders and Stalin's tanks quickly followed from the east. It was the end of the Polish Republic and the beginning of a new and terrible dark age in Europe.

During the next 4 years the people of Iwaniska were subjected to unimaginable brutality; terror, starvation, deprivation and humiliation. And when it finally ended, millions of people were dead, homeless and destitute. The country lay in ruins and only a pitiful handful of Iwaniska's Jewish citizens managed to survive the Holocaust.

In its long history this was the greatest disaster that had ever befallen the Jewish people. They had no place to go ...no family ... no home ... no country. They wandered across Europe for

three years until the State of Israel rescued them and gave them life, hope and the resolve to never, ever let such madness happen again!!"

However, 60 years later we have yet to fully mend the shattered dreams of those terrible times.

We have unfulfilled obligations to both the dead and to the living.

We are gathered today to pay homage to our dead.

The gaping wound of our cemetery remained an open sore and thus began the process of retrieving our lost tombstones; rebuilding the cemetery walls and the re-consecration of this holy place. Here lie the remains of generations of our people who died in their homes and who received a proper burial according to ancient custom.

And what of the thousands of Ivanskers who were murdered and denied a proper resting place? We trust that this burial ground will symbolically return them to the company of those they loved and that they will find eternal peace in these quiet, beautiful surroundings.

And what of our duty to the living?

Have we made the world a better place for our children and our children's children? Is their legacy a safer and saner world? Is it necessary to remind you of Bosnia, Algeria, Vietnam, Cambodia, Rwanda, Kosovo, Ethiopia, Chechnya, Darfur and on and on?

The killing, devastation and the clash of religions and civilizations continues unabated, even in the face of undeclared war. Terrorism, violence and barbarity increase day by day, and the threat of a nuclear deluge looms closer than ever before.

Why do the lessons of history continue to escape our understanding? Why have we failed to grasp where bigotry, xenophobia, contempt for human rights and the rule of law ultimately lead?? Can anything be done to mitigate the gathering storm or is it too late???

I humbly suggest that the little town of Iwaniska and its good people can do something meaningful to assure a better future for its children and for generations to follow.

I propose that the town take it upon itself to sponsor a formal program to educate the young about the causes of racial prejudice and to arm them with the confidence and the knowledge to combat bigotry and intolerance. The idea is to develop a special program of study in the junior high school to encourage students to accept and to celebrate people from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Our purpose is to sensitize them to the historical roots of religious, political and sectarian fanaticism. We need to teach the young how to critically evaluate and reject the overtures of demagogues or individuals who denigrate and demean others.

Of course, such a program will demand the investment of time, money and professional personnel. In my country, which still wages an internal war against racial intolerance, such undertakings are well established and are making a real difference. We could profit by adopting elements from established programs in the USA as well as other countries. I do not know what has been undertaken in Poland, but I would not be surprised if similar efforts are underway here. Other resources, including funds to set up various essentials of the program, are also within reach and should not be a major obstacle to establishing this course of study in the junior high school. Most important I know first hand of the abounding energy and optimism of the children of Iwaniska; they are perfect for such a program. And once underway, the program is bound to attract the attention of neighboring communities and inspire others to follow your lead.

I am not naïve to predict that this effort will change the world. But who can measure the dimensions of a child's mind or potential? It is conceivable that one of them will become the Pope, the President of Poland, the Secretary-General of the United Nations or just a good, solid citizen. Let's work hard and together to make it happen.

I pledge whatever talent I may have to help you achieve this objective. I know that many people of good will welcome the opportunity to serve this great enterprise. Let this be the foundation of our reconciliation and our coming together to serve the future of mankind.

And let it also be a fitting and meaningful way to honor and memorialize those who once lived amongst us.

Thank you!

**Message from Ewa Junczyk Ziomecka  
Minister in the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Ivanskers, Distinguished Guests

This Jewish cemetery in Ivansk, or rather a reconstructed place that once used to be a Jewish cemetery is like hundreds of other similar sacred places for Jews in Poland – a symbol of a still existing memory after those who once lived in this land.

Until the last world war Ivansk was home to some 1600 Jews: children, women, men, old and young. Their ancestors settled here in the 17th century I. Their existence came to an end in October 1942 as they were transported to death camp in Treblinka. A furious evil Nazi politic was triumphing over good: the whole Nation was being murdered as well as a memory after it.

We are now several generations after the Holocaust. But can we say that we are wiser? Can we be sure that the demons of hatred and anti-Semitism are non existing? Do we know precisely answers to all the questions from the past? Do we know how to think, how to feel and how to talk about the Holocaust?

Taking care of the ancestors' graves is becoming a symbolic act of the mutual reconciliation. And this is what is happening right now in Poland; this is happening here, in Ivansk. We are very much encouraged by the enthusiastic involvement and participation of the young people, so many are willing to discover for themselves the history and knowledge about the common Polish-Jewish heritage and memory. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to organizations and people of good will whose wisdom and full engagement over the years made it possible to re-write a new chapter of the national history and consciousness.

On behalf of the President of Republic of Poland Mr. Lech Kaczynski and on behalf of myself I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Mr Kazimierz Kotowski – the district governor from Opatow, and Mr Kazimierz Zoltek, the mayor of Ivansk, for being so much devoted to bringing back the memory of Ivansk's Jews. I wish to extend my gratitude to all those participating in the project, especially to Mrs Monika Krawczyk, the President of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Jewish Heritage in Poland and to Mr Andrzej Omasta from PJCRP.

With best regards,

**Message from Norman Weinberg, Executive Coordinator  
Poland Jewish Cemeteries Restoration Project**

**read by Gary Lipton, Toronto, Ontario, Canada**

Ladies and Gentlemen; Dignitaries, Clergy and Honored Guests:

On behalf of the Poland Jewish Cemeteries Restoration Project, I express my great thanks and deep gratitude to all of you here who have made possible the long-held dream of Ivansk Jewish descendants to restore this historic cemetery. Norton Taichman in the US, Lisa Newman and Gary Lipton in Canada and Grzegorz Gregorczyk in Poland led the Ivansk Cemetery Restoration Project. They, along with their team of volunteers and donors deserve high praise and congratulations for their dedication. My sincere thanks are also extended to the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, led by Monika Krawczyk, for its participation. This has been a true labor of love, of cooperation and mutual respect, spanning continents and bringing together Jewish descendants and so many Polish people.

Why now have Jews and Poles joined together in bonds of friendship and mutual respect to restore this cemetery?

*"Because by rebuilding this sacred place, we honor and remember the dead and the millions murdered in the Holocaust, hundreds of thousands of them slaughtered in mass graves and nearby forests; because, we are doing for the murdered what they and their unborn children cannot do... restoring their sacred burial grounds, religious burial millions of them never had; and because what we do teaches children respect for one another, tolerance, and reconciliation, and that we must do acts of Tikkun Olam - repairing of the world and ourselves, Mitzvot - good deeds, to bring Shalom...peace into the world. So the dead can truly Rest in Peace. That is why we do this!"*

My sincere thanks and admiration to all of you for accomplishing this great Mitzvah!

**Message from Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland**

**read by Father Stanislaw Kolasa  
translated by Grzegorz Gregorczyk**

Dear Father Kolasa

I am writing to you on the important occasion of the rededication of the Jewish Cemetery in Ivansk. Jews in Ivansk lived side-by-side with their Christian neighbors since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Their relationship was more than correct as described by a former Parish Priest of Iwaniska. Let us today concentrate on tolerance – a true and mature tolerance that shows respect for other people's cultures and religions. True tolerance means love and responsibility.

In the past many Jews suffered because of a lack of tolerance, but let us today remember those times in history when Jews and Poles worked together to enrich this nation. Let us concentrate on fostering dialogue amongst nations. And let us pray that the terrible times of the past will never be repeated.

# Consecrating the Memorial to the Jewish People of Ivansk



## **Memorial Inscriptions at the Gate and on the Obelisk**

Inscriptions are in English, Hebrew, Polish and Yiddish.

We present the English and Hebrew versions.

### **THE JEWISH CEMETERY OF IWANISKA (IVANSK)**

The rededication of this cemetery was undertaken to honour the memory of the Jewish community that lived in Iwaniska (Poland) and the surrounding area for hundreds of years.

May the souls of those who are buried here and those who perished in the Holocaust without proper burial find eternal peace and may their memory never be forgotten.

Rededicated by Descendants of the Jewish People of Ivansk

2006 – 5767

### **The Jewish Community of Iwaniska (Ivansk)**

Historical records indicate a Jewish presence in Iwaniska (Ivansk) beginning as early as the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. These people were well integrated in the life of the shtetl (town) and the local community and supported their own institutions: a school, synagogue, study hall, labour union, burial and benefit societies. Because of harsh local economic conditions prevailing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many Jews immigrated to points world wide, notably Canada, the United States, Israel and Colombia.

Following the German occupation of Poland in 1939, the Jewish population of Iwaniska, including a group of Viennese Jews who were deported to the town by the Nazis, was subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment. Several were murdered; some were sent to slave labour camps and others fled to the forests. Finally, on 15 October 1942, Jewish life in Iwaniska ceased when the Nazis and their collaborators brutally transported the town's Jews to their deaths in Treblinka. Only a very small number survived the war.

We their descendants, deeply grateful for our Ivansker heritage, have restored this cemetery to honour the memory of our ancestors who are buried here as well as the innocent Jews of Iwaniska who perished in the Holocaust.

May their souls find everlasting rest; may their lives inspire the living; may their tragic deaths serve as a warning against future hatred and bigotry.

2006 - 5767

## כתובת עברית בלוח ההקדשה בשער בית העלמין

### בית עלמין היהודי באיווניסקה (איוונסק)

בית עלמין זה נחנך מחדש לזכר הקהילה היהודית אשר חייתה באיווניסקה ובסביבותיה במשך מאות שנים.

שתהא נשמותיהם של הקבורים כאן ושל הנספים בשואה שלא זכו לקבורה הולמת צרורות בצרור החיים. שינוחו בשלום על משכבם וזכרם לא ימחה.  
נחנך מחדש על ידי צאצאי יהודי איוונסק

5767 – 2006

## כתובת עברית במציבת הזיכרון

### הקהילה היהודית באיווניסקה (איוונסק)

תיעודים היסטוריים מעידים על נוכחות יהודית באיווניסקה (איוונסק) מאמצע המאה ה-18. אנשים אלו התערו בחיי השטעטל ובקהילה המקומית והחזיקו מוסדות משל עצמם: בית ספר, בית כנסת, בית מדרש, מועצת פועלים, קבורה ותנאים סוציאליים. בשל המצב הכלכלי המקומי הקשה ששרר בסוף המאה ה-19 ועד תחילת המאה ה-20, יהודים רבים היגרו לרחבי העולם, בעיקר לקנדה, ארה"ב, ישראל וקולומביה.

בעקבות הכיבוש הגרמני של פולין בשנת 1939, האוכלוסייה היהודית של איווניסקה, כולל קבוצת יהודים מוינה שגורשו לאיווניסקה ע"י הנאצים, היו קורבן לאכזריות ולטיפול לא אנושי. כמה מהם נרצחו, כמה נשלחו למחנות עבודה ואחרים נמלטו ליערות. לבסוף, ב-15 באוקטובר 1942 החיים היהודים באיווניסקה נקטעו כאשר הנאצים ומסייעיהם שלחו באכזריות את יהודי העיר למותם בטרבלינקה. רק מספר מועט שרד את המלחמה.

אנחנו צאצאיהם אסירי תודה למורשת איווניסקה, שיחזרנו את בית הקברות לכבוד זכרם של אבותינו אשר קבורים כאן ז"ל ועוד לזכרם של היהודי איווניסקה שנספו חפים מפשע בשואה הי"ד.

תהא נשמתם צרורה בצרור החיים, שחיהם האיתנים יתנו השראה לחיינו, ומותם הטרגי יהווה אזהרה נגד שנאה וגזענות בעתיד.

5767 – 2006

## Ivansk Revisited

by Dorothy Kestenbaum, Brauner, Wiener      Toronto, Canada

Where do I begin to describe my "pilgrimage" back to Ivansk?

I guess I should tell you that my father "*Yechiel Yaacov Kestenbaum*", was lucky enough to be able to leave the shtetl in January of 1930 to join his sisters and a brother in Toronto. I was born one month after he left. He left with great pain, but he realized that it may be his only chance to make a life for his wife and family to be. He hoped to bring my mother and me soon after he arrived in Canada, but Canadian immigration was not accepting families. So it was three years before my mother was able to join my father, leaving me behind in Poland with her mother, Chana Brauner. Imagine, leaving me in Ivansk without any idea when I would be able to follow! Things must have been pretty desperate. Thankfully, they were able to arrange for me to come to Canada in January of 1934, under my mother's maiden name and in the company of a cousin (Ruchcha Saltsman Lederman). Ruchcha had also been left behind as a bride in 1930, and now she was joining her husband in Toronto.



So in my mind good times were not associated with Ivansk, and of course the tragedy of the Holocaust and the loss of so many immediate family members left no desire to ever go back. It was never on my agenda to return to my "roots".

However, when the Ivansk Project newsletters and e-mails started coming, and as the Cemetery Project evolved, I couldn't resist getting interested. Then when I heard that my siblings were joining the group to go to Ivansk, how could I not join them?

The experience was grueling, often gut wrenching. But unforgettable!

I wouldn't have missed it for the world!

Warsaw was pretty much what I had expected, a large European city trying to catch up from years of Communist domination. We toured many parts of the city that were of interest to Jewish people including the cemetery, the Ghetto monuments and the Nozyk shul where I attended Friday night services. After dinner we celebrated Shabbat with an excellent lecture on the History of Polish Jews, and on Shabbat morning I joined a group who took a walking tour of the ghetto.

On the walk I experienced "*déjà vu*": we entered a restored building that resembled an arcade with several entrances leading from it. Somehow, this kindled a recollection of the type of structure that once was my family's home in Ivansk. I can also remember that there was a bakery near the entrance to the arcade. When we arrived in Ivansk I looked for the arcade but there was nothing resembling this type of building. The church appeared to be the only building that clearly predated the war. [Ed: *The arcade that Dorothy remembered in Ivansk was*

*probably the 'Roodhouse' that once stood in the market place and housed several families, shops and a stable for horses. The structure was demolished shortly after WWII.]*

Ivansk was very much smaller than I had imagined, and not at all familiar. I do have some very distinct memories of my childhood, all centering on my family. One picture that stands out is going to the river with my mother and watching from a large rock while the women washed the



**The Kasten/Kesten Family in Ivansk**  
L to R: Linda, Shelly\*, Dorothy\*, Syd\* and  
Gilda\* (Fruma Kesten, not pictured)  
\* Siblings

clothes. I also have a strange memory of walking down the road passing a very shiny wall with my arm raised in the air! My mother laughed when I told her about this some years ago and was able to explain what was happening. Her grandfather, Moishe Benyuma Brauner often took me for walks; he was very tall and I had to reach up to hold his hand; and that is how it seemed that my arm was in the air. As for the shiny wall, many of the buildings we passed were faced with tiles, which were shiny! Other memories are like snapshots, but nothing familiar remained in Iwaniska for me.

Of course, the highlight of the week was the Cemetery Dedication. It was a very moving experience standing in that open, quiet, sacred place where so many of our ancestors found their final resting place. The memorial obelisk seemed so lonely at the centre of the enclosed field; as I

read the inscription chiseled in the stone, I knew why we were there!

I was very impressed with the people who worked with the group, and I was glad to have the feeling that we were welcome in Poland. I was also glad to see the efforts of the people who are working to save the history of the Jewish Poles, who contributed so much over the centuries to Poland.

A special bonus for me was getting to know the Ivanskers who came on the trip. I hope we will continue our contacts and include more of our people down the road. I have always been amazed by the numbers of our expatriates we come across (I guess Ivansk is a good place to come from) and it was good to be in their company.

## **e-Mail from Ivansk, 17 October – 26 October 2006**

*[Ed: Although I missed the trip to Poland, I was still in the loop. Several Ivanskers, especially my daughter Susan Taichman-Robins, kept me abreast of what was happening via e-mail. In addition, Shelly Kesten, David Blumenfeld, Greg Gregorczyk and Darren Taichman rigged up a cyber communication network (mobile phone and webcam) allowing me to see and hear much of what happened at the rededication of our cemetery in Ivansk.]*

*Here are some of the e-mails I received from those on the tour. I hope this will give you the flavor of what happened. In the next e-Newsletter I'll reprint additional letters written by participants after they returned home and had a chance to collect their thoughts. In some cases I have edited the material, deleting information that is not of immediate relevance to the trip. e-Mails are listed as they were received; dates and times are East Coast, USA.]*

**From: Gregorczyk Grzegorz****Sent:** Tuesday, October 17, 2006 4:22 PM**Subject:** RE: the last message before we meet

Dear Ivaskers! Dear Haverim!

IT IS REALLY COLD in Poland these days (a particular and special note for those coming from Eretz Israel), bring some woolies FOR SURE as you risk to get cold either in Ivansk or in Warsaw or Cracow. (I did already and am now doing all my best to recover before you arrive!).

Should you have any additional questions (weather, religion, customs, whatever) feel free to give me a call - calling from US or CANADA you should dial 001 48 513 106 758 ( I will always be there for you).

Can't wait to see all of you so soon!!!

L'hitraot ve shalom!

Greg

**From: Gary Lipton****Sent:** Tuesday, October 17, 2006 4:33 PM**Subject:** Re: the last message before we meet

Dear Greg,

What a lovely greeting from you to all the tour participants!!!  
That was a tremendously thoughtful thing to do.

**Get ready Poland because here come the Ivaskers!!**

Bye for now,  
Gary

**From: Darren Taichman****Sent:** Tuesday, October 17, 2006 11:21 PM**Subject:** RE: Norton's absence from Ivansk ceremony

Shelly, Greg, David-

By way of this email, I hope the pieces necessary to have a live webcast of the events at Ivansk can come together. I think the three of you know what you are talking about - whereas I admit to understanding only the concept but not the details.

I can try to set up whatever is needed at my Dad's computer. I wonder if Greg already has in Poland the very phone service Shelly needs. Regarding cost of a call, we can cover as I really want my Dad to see this after having invested so much of his own time and emotions into this day.

Thanks again to each of you for being so willing to try to make this work. If all else fails, there's always the back up plan of FOX or CNN using one of their set-ups. But, I had hoped to avoid all the media, advertisements, and to give my Dad exclusive coverage.

Darren

**From: Gary Lipton****Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2006 12:08 PM**Subject:** Monday weather

It looks like Monday [23 Oct] will be warm, but it may rain. I am out-a-here!! Gotta pack.  
Gary

**From: Shelly Kesten**

Sent: Wednesday, October 18, 2006 2:14 PM  
Subject: RE: Norton's absence from Ivansk ceremony

I just got off the phone with Norton and we were able to have the Webcam from my laptop displayed on Norton's computer.

Now the only remaining variable is the link speed from the site in Poland.

Shelly

**From: Susan Taichman-Robins**

Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2006 10:23 AM  
Subject: Hello from Warsaw

Greetings, we are here. The trip was very good and mom will be happy to know we all had room to spread out. Our comrade Joel [Rosenbloom] has been entertaining us and we found an unexpected surprise during our stopover at the airport in Frankfurt. It was Marsha!!! [*Marsha Taichman flew in from Montreal on her way to Warsaw*]. So now we get ready to meet others. Pooped out! Wish daddy was here to tell us what we are looking at out the window. I miss you both. Suz

**From: Susan Taichman-Robins**

Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2006 11:37 AM  
Subject: Re: Hello from Warsaw

Gary et al [the Liptons] just arrived and have gone to their room; they missed their connecting flight in Munich. (They're wiped out but we'll see them at dinner in a little bit.) We have met the Monheits. They are very friendly. They had a bad experience coming over: some man was yelling Yid! Yid! Lisa [Newman] is here too and everyone is just getting acquainted. Mike and I are having a glass of wine and waiting for the dinner to begin.

**From: Susan Taichman-Robins**

Date: Friday, October 20, 2006 7:40 AM  
Subject: Re: Speech at rededication

Right now we are eating lunch in a Jewish-style restaurant-- many people seem to be very skeptical, critical, confused and torn about being here but they are all very eager to get to Ivansk. Their emotions are dynamic-- and they raise interesting and very painful questions to which I doubt there are straightforward answers. The tour is good. Love and kisses

**From: Susan Taichman-Robins**

Sent: Friday, October 20, 2006 12:37 AM  
Subject: Re: Hello!

Sorry to tell you that as all the people stood up last night to introduce themselves and say why they are here and what they are hoping to get out of the trip, I started to cry and could barely speak. I was very overcome by emotion and as you know I rarely throw the opportunity for public speaking! :) Everyone was very understanding. It was very hard to arrive and not have you, Mummy or my brothers and sisters with us. Felt very far away with out my "net" ----so I listened and Mike recorded it all for you. Lots of nice people and lots of funny characters.

We leave at 9am to go to the old city--very excited!!!!!!

Susan & Michael Taichman-Robins  
Celebrate Their 11th  
Wedding Anniversary in Warsaw

**From: Susan Taichman-Robins**

**Sent:** Saturday, October 21, 2006 8:43 AM

**Subject:** Re: Gen Dobry; Good Shabbos

Dad! Hello! All here is well.

We went to see the remnant of the wall of the ghetto.

Ettie and Lazer have arrived as well as Darren and Audrey [*all Taichmans*].

The tour guide is feisty and can hold a good conversation, but I think she may go too fast for many of the elderly people who cannot walk as quickly. In some way I think Mummy is actually lucky not to be on this trip--it would wipe her out. Mike and I are doing well--seeing a lot of Marsha.

I finally got to taste Polish plums and blueberries. Delicious.!

Love, Susan

[*Ed: Susan's reference to polish plums and blueberries:*

*Lombardy plums grow in perfusion along the banks of the stream flowing through Ivansk. Using an Ivansker recipe, my Mother would heat the plums in a little water and sugar to create a sparkling, wine-colored compote, delicious hot or cold. My Dad especially enjoyed the compote served in the company of boiled chicken or flanken, and my family has followed his example.*

*Blueberries also occupy a special place in the Ivansker tummy: in Toronto blueberry buns are a delicacy that is eagerly anticipated every summer; we have sought in vain for these treasures in other cities where we live (have lived) [Philadelphia, London or Jerusalem].*

*In August 2000 I was in Warsaw and there on the hotel's breakfast buffet was a large cache of beautiful blueberry buns!! What a memorable feast that was. It looks like we inherited something good from Poland.]*

**From: Susan Taichman-Robins**

**Sent:** Saturday, October 21, 2006 1:54 PM

**Subject:** Re: Hello

We are now all together with Lazer, Ettie, Audrey, Darren, Marsha, Mike and me. Having our family here makes things feel so much better. After dinner we will be treated to a lecture on Jewish History in Poland and we will be done by 9:30pm. Then, I'll go back to our room to pack for Treblinka. We will be giving out the map tomorrow night [the K-B Map of Ivansk] at the preview of David's film as well as copies of the student essays. We'll phone you in about an hour and a half.

Susan

**From: Norton Taichman**

**Sent:** Monday, October 23, 2006 8:53 AM

**To:** Bonny Aidelman; Jack Bloomberg; Charlotte Blumenfeld; David Blumenfeld; Evy Eisenberg; Freedman, Bonnie; Sidney Freedman; Gilda Iron; Susie Kaplan; Sydney Kasten; Shelly Kesten; Dina Lipton; Gary Lipton; Gary Lipton; Lawrie Lipton; Lili Lipton; Noa Lipton; Ellen Monheit; Sonny Monheit; Newman, Lisa Newman; Joel Rosenbloom; Bobby Rotenberg; Rotenberg, Josiah; Ken Rotenberg; Sandra Samuels; Hyla Scherer; Cobi Silberstein; Taichman Robins, Michael (Phila); Audrey Taichman; Darren Taichman; Ettie Taichman; Lazer Taichman; Marsha Taichman; Dorothy Wiener

**Subject:** Mazel tov!

My dear landsmen!

What a wonderful day!!!!!!

How proud I am at what has happened.

Thanks to Shelly Kesten's mysterious, magical powers, Louise and I were able to share all this together with you. It was a moment we can all savor and celebrate.

There are just too many people to thank individually. Ivaskers and Iwaniskers made nice music together.

Special thanks to Gary and Grzegorz; Lisa, Mayor Zoltek and all who helped put things together so beautifully and with such tenderness.

Let us hope that the feelings we share today will guide our thoughts and our actions in the future.

To all of us, Mazel Tov!

### From: Lawrie Lipton

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2006 11:01 AM

Subject: Re: Mazel tov!

Nissi

Yasher Koach to you and all you have done to make this day possible  
I have not had the pleasure of meeting you but I certainly hope I have the opportunity  
in the near future  
Best of luck and I hope you are recovering from your surgery  
I will tell the group about your email

Regards  
Lawrie Lipton



### From: Shelly Kesten

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2006 4:05 PM

Subject: One of the most amazing days of my life

Norton,

This was certainly one of the most amazing days of my life. The work that you have done over the past years in this project is reflected in the most praiseworthy restoration of the cemetery. I really do not know which superlatives to use; I think that in many respects any superlative somehow constrains the full force of the day. Your speech was very moving. I was actually thinking to myself over the past days in Poland that we could build on the cemetery project effort by fostering an ongoing program in the school in Ivansk that would further tolerance and understanding. It would be an attainable goal. Your speech did in fact propose this. Hopefully it will come to fruition. If there is anything that I can do to help you in this effort, please let me know. I would be more than pleased to assist you in this.

I am sorry that the video link was up and down. The cell link that I was connecting to was not the best, and I think that my phone was becoming overloaded and simply shut itself down periodically. I kept restarting it until the battery died. I hope that you got a taste of the atmosphere.

Everyone missed you so much. Linda and I hope to meet you soon.

Be well and thanks  
Shelly



### From: Norton Taichman

To: Shelly Kesten

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2006 4:01 PM

Subject: Re: One of the most amazing days of my life

Dear Shelly

It has been an overwhelming day for me as well. And thanks to you it just wasn't confined to my mind's eye...I got to see it really happening.

I never would have believed that all this would/could come to pass and that so many of our people would take part in the journey. Actually, we were oversubscribed as the bus could only hold 50 people. Many Ivanskers have deep feelings about their heritage...I can't explain why as my folks usually wanted to avoid talking about Ivansk. Perhaps that explains it...if you don't know where you're from, how do you know where you're going??

I was delighted at the way you were treated by the local people, especially the reception in the school. I did not get to see the spontaneous hora dancing, but I can just imagine how much fun it must have been. The teachers in the school are very devoted to their students and can give detailed summaries of what so-and-so is like; their strengths, their frustrations, etc. The kids are very spontaneous and inquisitive...they don't seem to be burdened by the problems faced by children in the big, anonymous (and now dangerous) schools of our cities.

If the town does decide to set up something to tackle intolerance and prejudice, I am confident that the faculty will get behind it and do it right. I have no specific insights or experience to bring to such an undertaking, but I didn't know much about cemetery restoration either. It'll be something new to learn. And it would be great if we could use this as a way to get closer and work together. I'll let you know if anything happens.

I am thinking of returning to Ivansk in the spring, when the town is at its best. And perhaps we will be able to go on to Israel to meet with all the landsmen I now come to know as a result of The Project.

Many of the group will be leaving the tour in Krakow; please give my best wishes to everyone.

Thanks again for being part of all this; I look forward to meeting you and Linda in the near future!

Sincerely

Nissi

**From: Evy Eisenberg**

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2006 3:31 PM

Subject: RE: Mazel tov!

Dear Norton

What a pleasure to meet your nice family. And I can't believe all the work you put into organizing this really special trip. I will forever be in debt to you for opening my eyes to the world of Ivansk and for establishing this monument. Today was one of the best days of my life, a day I will never forget and hopefully bring to many future generations. We miss you terribly and hopefully we'll meet one day soon.

Love your landsman,

Evy

**From: Norman Weinberg**

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2006 9:06 AM

Subject: Ivansk Rededication

Norton:

I received news this morning that the Ivansk rededication ceremony was spectacular and a great success!

Norman [*Executive Coordinator, Poland Jewish Cemetery Restoration Project*]

**From: Norton S. Taichman**

**To: Norman Weinberg**

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2006 10:26 AM

Subject: Re: Ivansk Rededication

Dear Norman

Yes, it was great. I witnessed several aspects of the morning's events. One of our people is a whiz in 21st century cyber space communications and hooked things up to send live webcam transmissions through my computer. Although rain had been predicted, it never dared to show its face. My son counted 187 people in attendance. The

mood appeared to be extremely friendly and some who had said they had deep reservations about making the trip indicated that it was an experience they'll never forget.

With warm regards, Norton

## **From: Susan Taichman-Robins**

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 24, 2006 4:45 PM

**Subject:** Krakow to Auschwitz

Hello! Well, we've left Ivansk and arrived very tired in Krakow. Tonight we ate at a Jewish restaurant featuring Klezmer Music. I would love to try some Polish food but so far all we have been given is Polish versions of Jewish food!

Last night however we had delicious pizza but got into big trouble with the tour guide. She yelled at Bonnie and Gary, the instigators who persuaded a bunch of us to desert the group for a piece of pizza. Ha! Troublemakers!!!!

Krakow is beautiful and it was very nice to walk around. Please tell Mummy that I am not finding anything worth buying--I am shocked! Nothing seems appealing. I am still not easy about spending money in Poland: this trip raises more questions than it answers but this is good.

I have bought something special for Marco's daughter [Sara]--you should have seen him-- he was so wonderful to us, as was Stefan Viktor and all of your friends--one man and his wife kept trying to get me to come to their house for food and a drink--and last night two sisters who are on the trip (Susie and Evy) ended up in a woman's kitchen in Opatow (Apt) speaking to a woman who purchased their father's family home in Ivansk. *[Ed: The families of Marco Bousseña and Stefan Viktor have become good friends and I visit with them each time I return to Iwaniska.]*

Marco was all dressed up yesterday at the ceremony. His wife and daughter Sara came along and took the Israeli flag as a souvenir. I looked around Ivansk and thought that how easily little Sarah could be Ari *[Ed: Susan's 9 year old daughter]* and how lucky we are that Zaida Chamol left Poland when he did. And I realized how much we all have back home in comparison to little Sara! So, today I bought her "Polly Poekctes" and a bracelet with her initial imprinted in faux diamonds. I will give them to her when we go back to Ivansk.

A man named Kobi *[Jacob Silverstein]* from Israel left the group today--he has a "special map" in Hebrew with a lot of information--I misunderstood him and thought I would have more time to copy information from the map. He was very, very nice and I liked him--he said he would email the information to me.

The Monheits are sweet people as is everyone on the trip. I thought David's *[Ed: David Blumenfeld's documentary]* was awesome--I think you will really like it! He said it will take another 6 months to finish! Perhaps he can send you what he has made so far.

So tonight I will get ready for the next 2 days which promise to be very, very long and there are many sore tushy's and aching backs from sitting on the bus--but onward we move and will see you in just a few days after we finish up in Ivansk on Thursday--I think we will also go to Opatow that day.

Tomorrow on to Auschwitz.

Much love, Suz and Mike

## **From: Susan Taichman-Robins**

**Sent:** Thursday, October 26, 2006 2:33 AM

**Subject:** Gen dobry

Hello. We are now on the bus to go one last time through the Jewish area of Krakow, then back to Ivansk and finish up in Warsaw. Last night Mike and I went off on our own and sat in the square and ate a kebab, drank a glass of wine and beer and listened to the sounds of the city. It was a really nice evening. Plus we have met so many wonderful people on this trip: Jack and Molly, Sandra, the Kestens and on and on!!!

Love, Suz

**From: Josiah Rotenberg**

**Sent:** Thursday, October 26, 2006 6:35 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Mazel tov!



Norton,

I want to thank you for all of your hard work. I am so glad that we were able to make the trip and that due to all of your hard work over such a long period of time, the trip was a great success. It was a pleasure to meet some of your family members and I do hope that you and I will have a chance to meet at some point in the future (perhaps in Ivansk as I would like to bring my family back again one day – it turns out that my wife's family comes from a shtetl not too far away).

We were all disappointed that you couldn't make it, but were all so grateful to you.

Best,  
Josiah

**From: Ethan Rotenberg**

**Sent:** Thursday, October 26, 2006 8:58 AM  
**Subject:** Re: Hello and welcome home!

Dear Norton,

Your family certainly does not appear to have any mazel on this trip! I'm sorry to hear about the malfunctioning cameras. It would be my pleasure to send you my photos.

On a related note, I spoke briefly to Gary about making a website where everyone from the trip can share their photos, and ultimately where we collect the best ones, and make an album of the trip as you suggested.

A website might not be practical because of the sheer number of photos (and video?) that were probably taken over the course of the trip by all the participants. A DVD might be more practical.

In the short term, I will send out a CD with my photos; and in the longer term we can discuss the best way to create some kind of image archive from the trip.

Regards,  
Ethan



**From: Josiah Rotenberg**

**Sent:** Thursday, October 26, 2006 9:20 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Mazel Tov!

Norton,

Unfortunately, my wife and I decided that it would not be appropriate to bring Nitai along [*Ed: Natai is Josiah's son; I believe he is about 8 years old*]. Until the last minute I was debating whether or not that was the right decision, but given the amount of traveling time, the food, and the length of the ceremony in Ivansk, it was the right decision not to bring him. I hope to have a chance to bring the whole family when everyone is older.

Best,  
Josiah

**From: Susan Taichman-Robins**

Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2006 4:09 PM  
Subject: Re: Gen Dobry

We are scheduled to arrive in Philadelphia 1:50pm. Everyone has said their goodbyes and we are now in our room.

I feel as though we have been on an amazing pilgrimage and I have "family" that I never knew before. I even want to join the Ivansker Society in Toronto. Everybody wants a reunion and you can tell there are genuine heartfelt friendships: we have all shared something so special. Everyone kept telling me to thank you that you were like Moses leading us to Ivansk. It is so inspiring I cannot tell you.

This was a grueling trip physically but perhaps the most important trip of my life. We look forward to being home and seeing all!!!!

People are already panicking, "How will we all share pictures????"

***May the Festival Lights Shine on a World at Peace***

**HAPPY CHANUKAH!!!!**

***To Our Colleagues and Friends in Poland***

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!!**

***And to Everyone***

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!**