

# Holocaust Memorial in Scranton to be dedicated on December 12

BY DANIEL GROTTA

The Holocaust, considered by most to be the worst catastrophe ever to befall the Jewish people, ended almost 60 years ago with the final defeat of Hitler's Third Reich. For generations afterward, "Never again! Never forget!" became the watchwords of Jews everywhere and Israel in particular. But, as the years pass, the shock, horror and impact of The Holocaust diminishes, and some fear that its importance and impact will be largely ignored, marginalized, or even forgotten. And with fewer survivors around to bear personal witness to the systematic slaughter of six million Jews, Holocaust deniers are increasingly able to make their case to the ignorant, apathetic. That's why Sam Rosen decided that Scranton needed something tangible to remind future generations of the Holocaust.

Rosen is one of a rapidly dwindling number of survivors living in Northeast Pennsylvania. Born in Czechoslovakia to a family of six brothers and five sisters, Rosen was the only one of his siblings, or of a family made up of some 240 aunts, uncles and cousins, to live through the war. "For 20 years, nobody talked about the Holocaust," he recently observed. "And in 20 years, no one will be



Above: A close-up of the head of the Holocaust victim on "Lest We Forget," a sculpture to serve as a permanent reminder of the Holocaust as well as a memorial to its victims. At right: The tallit on the sculpture is examined by Caryl Picker, who created the monument, to be dedicated on December 12 at the Scranton JCC.



(Photos by Sally Wiener Grotta ©)

around to talk about it. My generation of survivors and liberators are rapidly passing away from the scene. Soon, there will be no one to speak or to remind the world about the Holocaust. What we need most is to continue our work and carry forth the message."

After his wife, Olga, who was also a survi-

vor, passed away three years ago, Rosen set up a fund in her name dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust. He then spearheaded a committee at the Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service in Scranton whose purpose was to commission and fund a work-

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of art that would serve as a permanent reminder of the Holocaust, as well as a memorial to its victims. After inviting a number of distinguished artists to submit drawings and models and considering their work, the committee unanimously selected Caryl



A close up of the head of the rabbi on "Lest We Forget," the sculptural Holocaust monument by Caryl Picker. (Photo by Sally Wiener Grotta ©)

Picker, who lives in Waverly, is an internationally-known sculptor whose dramatic, distinctive-looking bronzes grace hotel lobbies, synagogues, universities, concert halls and homes of private collectors. One piece that she created for the Joffrey Ballet, of an exuberant dancer, was destroyed on September 11 when the Hyatt Hotel next to the World Trade Center collapsed. Another piece, an androgynous figure dancing with the Torah, was commissioned by Temple Shomay Tefila in Manhattan to commemorate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary; it had been selected from among 225 entries. "Lest We Forget," Picker's concept of the Holocaust, is represented by a naked, emaciated Holocaust victim who had lost everything and everyone, sitting alongside a rabbi with hands outstretched

to attend. The unveiling of the monument will be at the Jewish Community Center at 1:30 pm on Sunday, December 12, at 601 Jefferson Ave., Scranton. The public is cordially invited to attend.

Picker, who lives in Waverly, is a

"The Holocaust was just such an incredible sad moment in history," Picker notes. "As Jews, we have to keep remembering the horror, of people slain, butchers. It was such a horrific time, how can we forget it. I think in my piece you can see the sadness, the emaciated figure, there's death around him. But on the same step, there's a rabbi looking up with his arms outstretched. I think the rabbi signifies life and going forward. The rabbi will teach us all to remember and yet teach us to look to the future. It gives everyone hope."

At one point, the project began to falter. That's when local businessman and philanthropist Gilbert Weinberger stepped into subsidize the memorial in honor of his four deceased brothers, all of whom fought the Nazis as members of the U.S. Armed Forces. "This is a beautiful piece of art; it will be forever," explained Weinberger. "I want people to see a piece that says, when you are down and out, you can be uplifted. The worst thing a man can do is to live in the past and not in the future, but we must never forget the past. This is for the community, which was very good to my father and my family."