

1997 Based on the information authenticated by Yad Vashem in 1990 and extensive text and photographs from Josef and Felicita Jakoel, Harvey Sarner publishes *Rescue in Albania* to call international attention to the unique role of the Albanian people in saving Jews from the ravages of the Holocaust.

1998 The Albanian American Foundation begins the distribution of 10,000 copies of *Rescue in Albania* to publicize the courage and tolerance of the Albanian people during World War II and to bring to the attention of the Jewish people the plight of the Albanians in Kosova living under a brutal occupation at the hands of then Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic. (At the request of Harvey Sarner, Congressmen Lantos and Gilman and former Congressman DioGuardi write forewords to the book.)

2003 Norman Gershman, a resident of Basalt, Colorado, contacts Joe DioGuardi (whom he had known twenty-five years earlier when he was a businessman in New York), after reading Harvey Sarner's *Rescue in Albania* and discovering Joe's introduction and the Albanian American Civic League's phone number.

2004 The Albanian American Foundation raises funds to help Jewish American fine art photographer Norman Gershman photograph Albanian families and their descendants, from Albania and Kosova, who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. He travels to Albania, where he is assisted in his search for the rescuers and educated about Albanian history by Albanian-Israeli Friendship Association Director Dr. Petrit Zorba and his codirector Professor Apostol Kotani, author of *Albania and the Jews* (1995) and *The Hebrews in Albania throughout the Centuries* (1999). Norman Gershman holds the first exhibition of his photographs of Muslim Albanians who saved Jews during the Holocaust at Aspen Art Museum in Aspen, Colorado. Joe and Shirley DioGuardi attend. (Although Albanians rescuers were Muslims, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Catholics, Gershman's focus is on Muslims saving Jews.)

May 2005 The Albanian American Foundation and Civic League host "A Salute to Albanian Tolerance, Resistance, and Hope: Remembering *Besa* and the Holocaust," on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Nazi death camps. Congressman Tom Lantos and Senator Charles Schumer are the keynote speakers, and Harvey Sarner, Local 32BJ President Mike Fishman, and Norman Gershman are the honorees. Then House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Henry Hyde and former Chairman Ben Gilman also address the 800-person event, along with Rabbi Arthur Schneier and Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, the head of the New York Board of Rabbis. Gershman shows for the first time a 22-minute film of his work with the rescuers in Albania. The Civic League brings Petrit Zorba and Apostol Kotani from Tirana and the late Roman Catholic Bishop Mark Sopi, Fr. Shan Zefi, and Fr. Lush Gjergji from Kosova to Manhattan to participate as honored guests. Gershman travels to Kosova and investigates the role that Albanians played there in saving Jews during the Holocaust with the help of Kosova-Israeli Friendship Association codirectors Mustafa Rezniciq and Xhangyle Ilijazi.

September 2005 Local 32BJ Service Employees International Union, under the leadership of its president, Mike Fishman, sponsors a poster commemorating the strong bridge between Jewish and Albanian peoples and distributes it to thousands of Albanians who are members of the union for placement in the buildings and restaurants where they work.

October 2005 AACL Balkan Affairs Adviser Shirley Cloyes DioGuardi gives a presentation, including a showing of Norman Gershman's short film, to the Oral History Association's annual conference in Providence, Rhode Island, about the role that Albanians played in saving Jews from the Holocaust.

The Civic League begins work with the American Jewish Congress in preparation for international recognition of the unique saving role of Albanians in World War II. The Albanian Canadian Community in Toronto, led by Civic League board member Saimir Lolja, hosts a public meeting with leading Jewish organizations and distributes in advance 500 copies of Harvey Sarner's *Rescue in Albania* to Canadian politicians, members of the media, Jewish groups, schools, and museums.

January/February 2006 Shirley Cloyes DioGuardi publishes "Jewish Survival in Albania & the Ethics of 'Besa'" in *Congress Monthly*, the magazine of the American Jewish Congress. Shirley Cloyes DioGuardi gives a speech to the Rotary Club in Manhattan about *besa* as the source of Albanian religious tolerance and response to the Holocaust. Harvey Sarner gives the Albanian American Foundation permission to reprint 20,000 copies of *Rescue in Albania*, which the AAF distributes to synagogues.

June 2006 U.S. Senators Charles Schumer and John McCain introduce S.Res. 521, "commending the people of Albania on the 61st anniversary of the liberation of the Jews from the Nazi death camps, for protecting and saving the lives of all Jews who lived in Albania, or sought asylum there during the Holocaust."

July 2006 Joe and Shirley DioGuardi travel from Prishtina to Tirana, at the request of the Albanian government, to discuss with Prime Minister Sali Berisha and Deputy Foreign Minister Edith Harxhi plans for increasing international awareness of Albanian heroism during the Holocaust.

September 2006 The Albanian American Civic League gives Senators Schumer and McCain their annual Balkans Peace Award for their Congressional efforts to recognize Albanians who saved Jews. Edith Harxhi and American Jewish Congress Executive Director Neil Goldstein attend the ceremony in the U.S. Capitol. The Civic League brings Harxhi to meet members of Congress with responsibility for foreign policy.

February 2007 Harvey Sarner dies at the age of 73 in Palm Springs, California, after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. His body is buried in Jerusalem.

November 1, 2007 Norman Gershman's traveling exhibit, "Besa: A Code of Honor," opens at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. In a reception and ceremony, Albanians are recognized for their unique role in saving Jews during the Holocaust. Joe and Shirley DioGuardi, Xhangyle Ilijazi, Felicita Jakoel, Apostol Kotani, Mustafa Rezniciq, and Petrit Zorba attend this historic event.

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