Obituaries: United States*


BRONFMAN, ANDREA, philanthropist; b. London, England, May 30, 1945; d. NYC, Jan. 23, 2006, after being hit by a car; in

*Including American Jews who dies between January 1 and December 31, 2006.
BUTTONS, Red (Aaron Chwatt), comedian, actor; b. NYC, Feb. 5, 1919; d. Los Angeles, Calif., July 13, 2006. Served U.S. Army in entertainment unit, 1943-46. Began singing for pennies on street corners as a child; first appeared on stage at age 12 as "Little Skippy," winning amateur contest at Fox Corona Theater; while attending high school worked as bellhop and singer at a bar; first Cutskills performance, 1935; performed as comedian in burlesque houses beginning 1939 (was onstage the night police raided Minsky's); first Broadway appearance in Vicki, 1942; while in army appeared on stage in Winged Victory and its film version, 1944; after entertaining troops in Europe returned to U.S. where he worked in nightclubs and made occasional guest appearances on TV shows; became an instant success in "Red Buttons Show" on CBS TV, 1952-55; award-winning dramatic performance in film Sayonara, 1957; also appeared on screen in Imitation General (1958), Hatarit (1962), The Longest Day (1962), A Ticklish Affair (1963), They Shoot Horses, Don't They? (1969), The Poseidon Adventure (1972), Gable and Lombard (1976), and It Could Happen to You (1994); appeared on TV as a regular on "The Dean Martin Celebrity Roast" in 1970s and other shows; Broadway one-man show, Buttons on Broadway, 1995. Rec.: Acad. of Radio and Television Best Comedian Award, 1954; Acad. Award for Best Supporting Actor, 1957; Friars Club Lifetime Achievement Award, 1982.


GOLDBERG, ITCHE (YITZHAK), Yiddish scholar, left-wing activist; b. Apt, Poland, Mar. 22, 1904; d. NYC, Dec. 27, 2006; in U.S. since 1932. Educ.: Poznanski Teachers Sem., Warsaw, Poland; McMaster U., Toronto, Canada. Yiddish teacher, Workmen’s Circle schools, Toronto, N.Y., Philadelphia, 1920s; when the Jewish socialists split over the Russian revolution he took the pro-Communist side and managed its Yiddish school system, Arbeter Ordn Shuln, expanding it to 140 schools nationwide; dir., Camp Kinderland (known as the “red-diaper camp”), 1930s and 1940s; dir., natl. school and culture, Jewish People’s Fraternal Order (part of Internat’l Workers Order, the pro-Communist labor federation), 1937–51; editor, Yungvarg children’s magazine, 1937–51; editor, Yiddische Kultur, 1964–2004; prof. Yiddish, Queens Coll., NYC, 1970–85; turned against Stalinism after the execution of Russian Yiddish writers, 1952; asked to don tefillin and put muzuzot on doors six months before his death. Au.: Essayen (1981); Essayen Tseyv (2004); Yiddish textbooks; Yiddish translations of Western classics; more than 20 librettos for Yiddish operas.


MeeD, Benjamin (Benjamin Miedzyrecki), advocate for Holocaust survivors; b. Warsaw, Poland, Feb. 19, 1918; d. NYC, Oct. 24, 2006; in U.S. since 1946. Edu.: yeshiva, public high school, business school, Warsaw. Confined with family in Warsaw Ghetto by Nazis, 1940, and used for forced labor; escaped and smuggled some of his family out, passing as a gentile and working for the underground, and during Warsaw Ghetto revolt, 1943, helping several Jews escape through the sewers; in U.S. after the war worked as furrier and then in import-export; with his wife, Vladka, helped found Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Org., 1966, World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, 1981, Amer. Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, first conference 1983 (which sought to prevent Pres. Reagan from visiting Bitburg cemetery, 1985), and Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, which collects names of survivors in U.S. to facilitate locating relatives; mem., adv. bd., President's Comm. on the Holocaust, which recommended creation of a natl. Holocaust museum; mem., governing council, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1980–2004, chairing its com. on permanent exhibits; a founder of Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, NYC, 1997; mem., negotiating com., Conf. on Jewish Material Claims against Germany; established Summer Seminar on Holocaust and Jewish Resistance to enable schoolteachers to incorporate material about Holocaust in the curriculum.


Mitofsky, Warren, pollster; b. Jersey City, N.J., Sept. 17, 1934; d. NYC, Sept. 1, 2006. Edu.: Guilford Coll. (BA); U.N.C.; U. Minn. Designed surveys for U.S. Census Bureau, 1960s, where, together with Joseph Waksberg, he developed the technique of random digit dialing; pollster, CBS News, 1967—90, pioneering use of the exit poll in the 1967 Kentucky gubernatorial election and using it for the first time nationally in


Spertus, Herman, businessman, philanthropist; b. Lubach, Russia, Mar. 10,
1901; d. Chicago, Ill., Apr. 5, 2006; in U.S. since 1923. Upon arrival in U.S. worked in a factory, opened a business in wrought-iron products, and then manufactured lamps until he went bankrupt in 1929; with the new popularity of inexpensive cameras started, together with his brother, Metalcraft (later Intercraft) for the production of brass picture frames, 1933, which, by the time it was sold in 1992, was the largest in the world; during WWII diverted production entirely to navigational instruments for U.S. Navy. Became major supporter of ChicagoColl. of Jewish Studies, 1968, renamed Spertus Coll., 1970, and founded Spertus Museum; both institutions, plus Asher Library, were renamed Spertus Inst. of Jewish Studies, 1993. A founder of Council for Jewish Elderly, ORT Training School, North Shore Cong. Israel, Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center, Amer. Israel Cultural Found., Amer. Friends of the Israel Museum; other major philanthropic gifts went to Chicago United Way, Art Museum of Chicago, many others; oldest person to chair annual campaign of Chicago Jewish United Fund, 1980, raising record sum of $36 million. Rec.: Chicago Sr. Citizen of Fame, 1981; Rosenwald Award, Metropolitan Jewish Fed., 1993.


TEITELBAUM, MOSHE, rabbi; b. Ujfeherto, Hungary, Nov. 17, 1914; d. NYC, Apr. 24, 2006; in U.S. since 1946. Educ.: Hungarian yeshivot. Head of yeshiva in Karc-eska, 1936–39; rabbi, Zenta, Yugoslavia, 1939–44; deported to Auschwitz, 1944, where his first wife and children were killed; rabbi of Sighet, Romania, 1945–48, fled the communist regime and came to U.S., living in Brooklyn, N.Y., and functioning as the Sigheter rebbe; succeeded his childless uncle as Satmar rebbe, 1980, and under his leadership the sect grew to over 100,000 people worldwide, with assets estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Au.: Berach Moshe, a live-volume Torah commentary.

WASSERSTEIN, WENDY, playwright; b. Brooklyn, N.Y., Oct. 18, 1950; d. NYC, Jan. 30, 2006. Educ.: Mt. Holyoke Coll. (BA); CCNY (MA); Yale Drama School (MFA). First play, Any Woman Can't, staged by Playwrights Horizons, NYC, 1973; followed by Happy Birthday (1974); Montpelier Pizzazz (1974); When Dinah Shore Ruled the Earth (1975); Uncommon Women and Others (1977, filmed for TV); Isn't It Romantic (1981); Tender Offer (1983); The Man in the Case (1986); Miami (1986); The Heidi Chronicles (1989, filmed for TV): The Sisters

WELLES, ELLIOT (KURT SAUERQUELL), Nazi hunter; b. Vienna, Austria, Sept. 18, 1927; d. NYC, Nov. 28, 2006; in U.S. since 1949. Deported with his mother to Riga ghetto, 1940, where she was killed, transferred to Stutthof concentration camp, escaped to Vienna, 1945; after arrival in N.Y. worked at several menial jobs; employed as waiter at Lorelei restaurant and became part owner; dir. European affairs, dir. task force on Nazi war criminals, Anti-Defamation League, late 1970s—2003; with help of U.S. Office of Special Investigations traveled to Germany and located the former SS officer who murdered his mother, who was tried by a German court, convicted, and given a short jail sentence; known especially for persistence in tracking down and bringing to justice Latvian collaborator Boleslav Maikovskis, whose trial was suspended because of the defendant’s ill health in 1994, and labor camp commander Josef Schwammberger, extradited from Argentina to Germany and sentenced to life in prison in 1992.
