

With small children to look after, Syrian Jewry was not her main concern. But the telegrams kept flowing and it spurred her to continue.

She remarried, and following several years of successful book shipments, Feld Carr was contacted in 1977 by a Syrian Jewish émigrée now living in Toronto. “She told me that her brother was very sick and had been tortured in Syria. He desperately needed to get out,” Feld Carr relates. “He ended up being the first person I got out by ransom.”

The world of human smuggling is complex, dangerous, and can result in sudden death. “I started to develop two systems, one for ransoming people and the other for escape routes,” Feld Carr continues. “Both were extremely difficult. I ran it alone from Toronto. And I never told anyone, except for my husband, Donald Carr. Money went to all levels of the Syrian government and police.”

The smuggling was both heart-wrenching and heart-warming. On the one hand, Feld Carr was freeing people from torture, unlawful imprisonment, and living in constant fear. On the other hand, the colossal endeavor was emotionally draining and stressful. “Buying another human being is disgusting,” Feld Carr intones. “It’s just like buying livestock at an auction, except I was dealing with people. What if I lost somebody, what if they were caught, what if in the middle of a rescue, they decided to take children off the plane, even though they were paid for? But in all those years, I didn’t lose one person. I was so careful.”



To understand how and why on earth Feld Carr risked her own life to save thousands of others, you need to go back to her roots in Sudbury, and her parents, Jack, an adventurous fur trader, and Brooklyn-born mom, Sarah. “My dad worked in the raw fur trade with natives and would travel very far,” Carr relates.

“When I was born, he was off trapping, and it took three months for a dog team to find him in Baffin Island. Let’s just say my mother wasn’t happy about that.”

Next door to her family lived a woman named Sophie, a Holocaust survivor who had been experimented on by Dr. Mengele and lost two of her children in Auschwitz. “Sophie became my surrogate mother. I loved her,” Feld Carr says. “One day, when I was about 12, she was making me a white smock for my bat mitzvah, and she started screaming. It was the day of her daughter’s birthday and she was sobbing. She kept saying, ‘You can’t let what happened to me



Ellen Schwartz

happen to the Jews ever again.”

The incident left Feld Carr reeling. She had nightmares about it and has never forgotten the anguish of Sophie’s scream. “But now, I think it’s finished. I paid her back with what I did [in Syria]. I did it for her.”

“Mrs. Judy, do you remember me?” The question is asked in São Paulo, Brazil, by a man Feld Carr has never seen before. But as soon as he gives his name, the memory of the rescue is crystal clear. “Oh, my goodness,” Feld Carr exclaims. “You escaped in March 1981. Of course I know who you are.” Suddenly, the

man opens a *siddur* (Jewish prayer book) and inside is Feld Carr’s handwriting. It was one of the books she sent. It is now his permanent good luck charm.

Today, this man is the chief Sephardic rabbi of São Paulo. In fact, almost everywhere Feld Carr goes in the world to speak about her amazing mission, she is greeted with effusive joy and gratitude by doctors, rabbis, soldiers, and numerous people who lovingly call out, “Mrs. Judy, do you remember me?”

“Gratifying is an understatement to describe how I feel about this,” Feld Carr says. “This was very difficult work, but I see that I have created the possibility for generations and generations. Many of them are now naming their children Judy. I feel like a great-grandmother to them.”

Great, Mrs. Judy, is quite the understatement.

Ellen Schwartz

Have you ever told someone to stop and smell the roses? Ellen Schwartz is someone who not only offers that recommendation, but she actually takes her own advice, every day.

“Life is hard. There are things that are just going to pull you down, no matter how old you are,” reflects Schwartz, a teacher, author, and advocate in Toronto. “So what we have to do is look for ways to pull ourselves up again—seize and live for the moment. When I look at my son, Jacob, he is a constant reminder of that because he lives for the moment. He expects nothing and gets joy from everything. He has opened our eyes to seeing things that way.”

Jacob is tragically stricken with a neurodegenerative disease called Canavan’s. The incurable disease severely affects the 10-year-old’s movement, speech, and functionality. “When I bring Jacob into the classroom with my students, the first thing they see is a boy in a wheelchair who can’t move

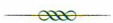
Photo by Al Gilbert

and is unable to touch anything," Schwartz relates. "But when they move closer, they look at his eyes and see a sparkle. They rub his chest or say his name and this beautiful boy comes to life. That's what inspires people, to see this light come from a lifeless body."

From the time he was born, nurturing Jacob has been incredibly demanding for Schwartz and her husband, Jeff. It took several years for the family to accept the sheer magnitude of his limitations and the fact there was no cure. But with immense fortitude not only did they pull through, they decided to turn their adversity into an opportunity by launching the Jacob's Ladder Foundation. In seven years, the foundation, which supports innovative research, education, prevention, and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, has raised \$1.5 million.

"At our annual event, we get a turnout of 3,000 people and over 200 volunteers," says Schwartz. "Our theme is teaching children how to give. And when they walk out, they have this wonderful satisfaction of knowing that they helped another child."

In addition to her hard work for neurodegenerative research, Schwartz has also been a tireless advocate for raising awareness about genetic screening. Jacob's Ladder has teamed up with several other foundations and as a result of their efforts, there are now seven different diseases that people can be screened for, without any fee. "I will be somewhere on the street, and a person will come up to me, hug me, and say, 'Thanks to you, I now know that I am a carrier of a certain disease and I would not have known that without you,'" Schwartz says.



They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree and Schwartz is living proof of that. Her optimism and strength are rooted in the values and example set for

her by her parents, Bonnie and Peter.

"My parents are happy and positive people who have been through real adversity in their lives and have bounced back," Schwartz says. "They are so resilient and kind to others. And I believe that watching them has instilled those values in me."

Schwartz is passing on that sense of optimism to her own children. In addition to Jacob, daughter Beverly and son Ben are both joyful children who cherish life the way their parents do. "Beverly is pure sunshine, and Ben is so well adjusted," Schwartz reveals. "They are



Cherry Tabb

great kids who have learned patience and acceptance." Schwartz equally credits her husband not only for their children's development, but for acting as a devoted partner in their joint work in support of Jacob's Ladder. "Jeff is a very hands-on father," Schwartz says. "He is wonderful with the kids."

Along with all the work she does with Jacob's Ladder, teaching part-time and being a doting mother and a public speaker for Coping with Adversity, Schwartz has penned a captivating book called *Lessons from Jacob*. The brilliantly written book is full of powerful lessons about hope, courage, and living life to the

fullest. She is also in the midst of starting an innovative, curriculum-based project to instill students with the values of giving.

With all she has accomplished, Schwartz was a natural choice to be one of the extraordinary women honored by the ICRF. "Cancer is an awful disease and research is the answer," Schwartz relates. "Even though I initially felt uncomfortable with being given this honor, I believe I have to do this for the cause, to try to help people."

Reflecting on what has happened in her life since Jacob came into this world, Schwartz realizes the family could have taken a very different path, but she's thankful they chose to make their struggle very public. "We could have just been private, closed the doors, and tried to live a simple life," she relates. "But by starting Jacob's Ladder and having our friends, family, and entire community come together for this cause, we have gained so much strength. And I believe that strength is our inspiration to keep doing it."

For more information, please contact info@jacobs ladder.com.

Cherry Tabb

When Cherry Tabb reflects on the origins of her business savvy, the time and place that springs to mind is a baseball field in Texas nearly 38 years ago.

Usually the lone girl among a group of neighborhood boys, 10-year-old Tabb was selected last for the team. To make matters worse, when it was her turn at the plate, the boys moved in, anticipating a weak hit. But Tabb, with something to prove, cracked a hit right over their heads. "Actually, I even surprised myself," relates the co-founder and CEO of the Herzig Eye Institute. "But after that, I was never picked last again.

"Being a woman in business is a lot like playing baseball with the boys. And I've always enjoyed the challenge."

Since the Toronto-based Herzig Eye Institute was launched in 1996, Tabb

Photo by Al Gilbert