

## Books seized by Nazis returned to Greenwich woman

Lisa Chamoff, Staff Writer

Published: 12:27 a.m., Thursday, August 12, 2010

One of [Inge Isler](#)'s recollections from her childhood in Germany is the extensive library accumulated by her father, a huge room in their home filled with books.

After she and her family narrowly escaped Nazi persecution, Isler had assumed the books would remain just that -- a memory.

But 71 years after Isler's parents parted with their possessions, which were eventually seized by the Gestapo, the Greenwich resident was reunited with a symbol of her family's perseverance at Temple Sholom. Several books, bearing the name of Isler's father [Isaac Bick](#), a teacher who had earned a doctorate in philosophy, were returned to her by the Hamburg State and University Library.

Rabbi [Mitch Hurvitz](#) presented the books -- including a Haggadah, which contains the story of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, and is read at Passover, and a rare collection of cantorial music -- to Isler during a ceremony at the synagogue's last Lunch 'N' Learn session of the summer Wednesday afternoon.

"I never thought they would survive the war," said Isler, 86, a longtime member of Temple Sholom.

In 1939, Isler's parents packed up their belongings and left them at the Port of Hamburg, with orders to ship the items to their new home in New York. Isler had already gone to Belgium, and was awaiting her parents. Shortly after they left, the war broke out, and their possessions never arrived.

The family's container had been confiscated, and everything in it was auctioned off. The books were given to the [Hamburg Library](#) by the Gestapo in October 1940.

About 10 years ago, officials at the library were seeking out Nazi-looted property in its stock. They found four books, and, following a trail that began by researching the stamps and signatures that marked them, discovered the rightful owner. With the help of the U.S. consulate in Hamburg and the [Museum of Jewish Heritage](#) in New York, the library officials learned more about Isler, and contacted Hurvitz after seeing a notice of the death of Isler's husband, Eric, in the Temple Sholom bulletin.

"Today's bringing a little bit of God's light into the world," said Hurvitz, who recounted the story to the more than a dozen people assembled for Wednesday's event.

Hurvitz, along with the Rev. [James Lemler](#) of nearby [Christ Church Greenwich](#), recited a blessing over the volumes. The temple's cantor, [Asa Fradkin](#), sang a song from the book of music.

"I wonder how my father would feel," said Isler, choking up during the ceremony.



Along with the books, the library also included copies of documents used to research Bick and his family, such as a list of passengers bound for the United States in 1939.

"The fact that we are now, seventy years later, able to return some of these books to you as the rightful heir of Isaac Bick, encourages us to keep up the search for Nazi-looted property in our stock," wrote [Gabriele Beger](#), executive director of the Hamburg State and University Library, in a letter to Isler. "The library is well aware of its history and fully acknowledges the moral and historical responsibilities that derive from it."

Isler said she hasn't yet discussed with Hurvitz or her family what to do with the books, but they may remain at Temple Shalom.

After the war, the German government compensated Isler's family for their losses at the hands of the Nazis, but Isler said the return of just some of their possessions is much more meaningful.

"It's symbolism, really," Isler said. "It's really amazing that this happened."

Staff Writer [Lisa Chamoff](#) can be reached at [lisa.chamoff@scni.com](mailto:lisa.chamoff@scni.com) or 203-625-4439.

**Penny Stocks Trading Community**

Sign up now for 100% free penny stock alerts. Watch your profits soar.  
PennyStockAlley

**Ads by Yahoo!**