

The Daily Transcript

Established 1882

www.sdtranscript.com

All content on this site is the property of the San Diego Daily Transcript and its parent, Daily Journal Corporation, and fully protected by copyright. This content is provided for the exclusive use by subscribers to the San Diego Daily Transcript and may not be distributed, reproduced, modified, stored or transferred without written permission. For permission share this content and to order presentation-ready copies for use in commercial marketing materials click [here](#).

Monday, April 2, 2018

Gaffen recognized for holocaust memorial garden



Photo courtesy of Gafcon

The menorah and bimah sculptures at the Bauska Memorial Synagogue Garden in Bauska, Latvia.

Daily Transcript Staff Report

Gafcon CEO Yehudi Gaffen won the Latvian Construction of the Year award for his conception and development of a holocaust memorial garden in Bauska, Latvia -- a garden with a special meaning for Gaffen, who lost his grandparents during the holocaust.

The Bauska Memorial Synagogue Garden, which took more than 15 years from concept to reality, was designed by Latvian sculptor Girts Burvis. It was dedicated last October.

The garden is a sculpture garden featuring gabion (a rock-filled container) walls outlining where the synagogue once stood, as well as five gabion figures, as if coming out after a service. A gabion and metal sculptured menorah has been placed at the site where an aron kodesh (which stores Torah scrolls) was once located, while a symbolic bimah (a platform holding a reading table) is standing in the center of the memorial.

The bimah contains a brief history of Bauska Jews and the surnames of the families who perished in the holocaust. The sculptures and walls were constructed with the original stones of the synagogue, which were dug out from the ground during excavation.

Bauska is a town in southern Latvia where Gaffen's family's roots stretch back to the 1750s until 1941, when 830 Bauska Jews, including his grandparents and great-grandparents, were marched to the woods and shot by Nazi forces and their local collaborators.

"My ancestors lived in Latvia for many centuries, and my lineage traces directly back to the people murdered in Bauska during Nazi occupation," Gaffen said. "Working on this memorial with the people of Bauska has been an honor unlike any other project in my career and a deeply personal memory that I will carry with me for the rest of my life."

The memorial garden was conceived as a monument in celebration of the Jewish community that once lived and thrived in the town.

Gaffen led the fundraising and development process, along with his sister Beverly Gaffen Altman and Jehuda Feitelson, a former Bauska resident, concentration camp survivor and a retired Doctor of Chemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Ceremony attendees included ambassadors from the United States and Germany, political officials of Latvia, various foreign diplomats, historians, members of non-governmental organizations, the Jewish community, residents of Bauska, and the ancestors of Bauska Jews from Latvia, Israel, the United States, and the United Kingdom.