

# Holocaust survivor gave back to community



**Remarkable Rochester**  
Jim Memmott  
Rochester Democrat and  
Chronicle

By any standard, Jack Feldman, a Holocaust survivor who died on Dec. 20 at age 95, had a life harder than most.

But as much as Feldman, who would have been 96 on New Year's Day, was tested by unspeakable cruelty and loss, he lived a life marked by extraordinary kindness.

"He was not someone who was angry," says his granddaughter Stacey Saiontz, who grew up in Pittsford. "He was just a happy person who gave to others."

For his perseverance and his generosity, let's add Jack Feldman's name to the list of Remarkable Rochesterians that we've been compiling for years, though, it may be that "remarkable" is an inadequate adjective to describe his life.

As a Jewish teenager in Poland, Feldman and his family members were taken from their home into a ghetto. In the 1940s, the Nazis grabbed him off the streets and sent him to a series of labor and death camps, the last being Auschwitz. From there, in 1945, he and hundreds of others were sent on a death march that lasted more than three months before they were liberated by Russian troops.

Feldman would go on to marry another death-camp survivor, settle in Rochester and raise a family.

He opened a fish market on Joseph Avenue in the mid-1950s. He knew what hunger was like and was well-known for giving food to those in need. It's likely that, because of this, his market was spared during the 1964 riots.



Jack Feldman with his great-grandsons Jared (left) and Elliott Saiontz (right). It was taken at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in 2018 on the day of the premiere of "The Number on Grandpa's Arm." MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE

In 2007, when he was 81, Feldman was shot during a robbery at his store. "If they would have known who Jack is, they would never, ever done that," Eddie Felder, a long-time employee of the market, told the Democrat and Chronicle. "Jack fed everyone."

As the newspaper story predicted, Feldman came back to the store after he recovered, working there for many years.

When she was young, Saiontz, who now lives in Chappaqua, Westchester County, would talk to her grandfather about the story behind the number (A-17606) tattooed on his arm, the identifier he was given by the Nazis after he was taken prisoner.

In 2016, her son Elliott, then 10, would

ask some of the same questions in the extraordinary HBO documentary, "The Number on Grandpa's Arm."

In the film, which was released in 2018, Elliott and his great-grandfather look at pictures taken before the war, pictures of Feldman's family life, of peace, of all that was lost when the Nazis arrived.

Prompted by Elliott, Jack Feldman, who was the only member of his immediate family to survive the Holocaust, talks about life in the death camps, about nearly starving, about the long march, about rescue.

The conversation is tender, a young boy learning the harsh facts of a time when his great-grandfather was young as well.

## Remarkable Rochesterians

As was mentioned, let's add the name of this resilient and kindly man to the list of Remarkable Rochesterians found at <https://data.democratandchronicle.com/remarkable-rochesterians/>.

**Jack Feldman (1926-2021):** A Holocaust survivor who went on to settle in Rochester, he ran a fish market for years and gave back to the community in many ways. Born in Skarzysko-Kamienna, Poland, he grew up in Sosnowiec, Poland. After the Nazis invaded, he and his family were forced to live in a ghetto. In the 1940s, he was taken to a series of concentration camps ending in Auschwitz-Birkenau. In January 1945, he and other prisoners were forced on a death march from Poland to Germany. Many died before they were liberated by the Russians in May 1945.

Jack Feldman and his wife, Sally, who died before him, had three children, seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Diagnosed with cancer last year, he was living at the Summit at Brighton when he died peacefully after a last meal of fish, the food he knew so well. Thus ended a good life.

"His story has changed a lot of people, the way they think, the way they act," Elliott says at the end of the film. "You need to know it, to understand, to stop it from happening in future generations. ... He's a hero to most people for how he survived and stuff. I know he's my family's hero."

From his home in Geneseo, Livingston County, retired senior editor Jim Memmott, writes Remarkable Rochester, who we were, who we are. He can be reached at [jmemmott@gannett.com](mailto:jmemmott@gannett.com) or write Box 274, Geneseo, NY 14454

## PHOTOS OF THE PAST



1920s: The New England Furniture and Carpet Company, the Lyceum Theatre and Hotel Seneca are shown on Clinton Avenue. The Lyceum closed in 1934.  
FILE PHOTOS



1956: Skaters make their way around an ice rink made for community use by West Webster firemen.



January 1909: East Avenue at the approach to the old Erie Canal bridge in Pittsford.



1942: A city bus finds the going difficult on Genesee Park Boulevard following a snowfall

## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

### Sunday, Jan. 2

1929: The United States and Canada reached agreement on joint action to preserve Niagara Falls.

1960: Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts launched his successful bid for the presidency.

1974: President Richard Nixon signed legislation requiring states to limit highway speeds to 55 mph as a way of conserving gasoline in the face of an OPEC oil embargo. (The limit was effectively phased out in 1987; federal speed limits were abolished in 1995.)

2016: A heavily armed group led by Ammon and Ryan Bundy seized the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, beginning a 41-day standoff to protest the imprisonment of two ranchers convicted of setting fires on public land and to demand the federal government turn over public lands to local control.

### Monday, Jan. 3

1777: Gen. George Washington's army routed the British in the Battle of Princeton, New Jersey.

1961: President Dwight D. Eisenhower announced the United States was formally terminating diplomatic and consular relations with Cuba.

1977: Apple Computer was incorporated in Cupertino, California, by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Mike Markkula Jr.

2002: A judge in Alabama ruled that former Ku Klux Klansman Bobby Frank Cherry was mentally competent to stand trial on murder charges in the 1963 Birmingham church bombing that killed four Black girls. (Cherry was later convicted, and served a life sentence until his death in November 2004.)

### Tuesday, Jan. 4

1821: The first native-born American saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton, died in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

1964: Pope Paul VI began a visit to the Holy Land, the first papal pilgrimage of its kind

1999: Europe's new currency, the euro, got off to a strong start on its first trading day, rising against the dollar on world currency markets.

2002: Sgt. 1st Class Nathan Ross Chapman, a U.S. Army Special Forces soldier, was killed by small-arms fire during an ambush in eastern Afghanistan; he was the first American military death from enemy fire in the war against terrorism.

### Wednesday, Jan. 5

1896: An Austrian newspaper reported the discovery by German physicist Wilhelm Roentgen of a type of radiation that came to be known as X-rays.

1914: Auto industrialist Henry Ford announced he was going to pay workers \$5 for an 8-hour day, as opposed to \$2.34 for a 9-hour day. (Employees still worked six days a week; the 5-day work week was instituted in 1926.)

1953: Samuel Beckett's two-act tragicomedy "Waiting for Godot," considered a classic of the Theater of the Absurd, premiered in Paris.

2004: Foreigners arriving at U.S. airports were photographed and had their fingerprints scanned in the start of a government

effort to keep terrorists out of the country.

### Thursday, Jan. 6

1412: Tradition holds that Joan of Arc was born this day in Domremy.

1974: Year-round daylight saving time began in the United States on a trial basis as a fuel-saving measure in response to the OPEC oil embargo.

1994: Figure skater Nancy Kerrigan was clubbed on the leg by an assailant at Detroit's Cobo Arena; four men, including the ex-husband of Kerrigan's rival, Tonya Harding, went to prison for their roles in the attack. (Harding pleaded guilty to conspiracy to hinder prosecution, but denied any advance knowledge about the assault.)

2021: Supporters of President Donald Trump, fueled by his false claims of a stolen election, assaulted police and smashed their way into the Capitol to interrupt the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's victory, forcing lawmakers into hiding; most of the rioters had come from a nearby rally where Trump urged them to "fight like hell." A Trump supporter, Ashli Babbitt, was shot and killed by a police officer as she tried to breach a barricaded doorway inside the Capitol. Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, injured while confronting the rioters, suffered a stroke the next day and died from natural causes, the Washington, D.C., medical examiner's office said. (In the weeks that followed, four of the officers who responded to the riot took their own lives.) Congress reconvened hours later to finish certifying the election result.

### Friday, Jan. 7

1608: An accidental fire devastated the Jamestown settlement in the Virginia Colony.

1789: America held its first presidential election as voters chose electors who, a month later, selected George Washington to be the nation's first chief executive.

1963: The U.S. Post Office raised the cost of a first-class stamp from 4 to 5 cents.

2019: Amazon eclipsed Microsoft as the most valuable publicly traded company in the U.S.

### Saturday, Jan. 8

1815: The last major engagement of the War of 1812 came to an end as U.S. forces defeated the British in the Battle of New Orleans, not having received word of the signing of a peace treaty.

1982: American Telephone and Telegraph settled the Justice Department's antitrust lawsuit against it by agreeing to divest itself of the 22 Bell System companies.

1994: Tonya Harding won the women's U.S. Figure Skating Championship in Detroit, a day after Nancy Kerrigan dropped out because of the clubbing attack that had injured her right knee. (The U.S. Figure Skating Association later stripped Harding of the title.)

2016: Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, the world's most-wanted drug lord, was captured for a third time in a daring raid by Mexican marines, six months after walking through a tunnel to freedom from a maximum security prison.