



# The Secret Rescuer

How Judy Feld Carr  
single-handedly  
smuggled over 3,000  
Jews out of Syria

BY MALKIE SCHULMAN



or 28 years between 1973 and 2001, knowing her only as “Mrs. Judy,” if they knew her name at all, Mrs. Judy Feld Carr single-handedly rescued 3,228 Syrian Jews from the clutches of the cruel Hafez Assad Syrian regime. Her story reads like an espionage thriller, and in many ways it is. Many details still cannot be shared today.

Decades later, she still asks herself, “Why me? I was a widowed mother of three small children as well as a musicologist. What did I know about surveillance, bribes and ransoms, lobbying and rescue missions?”

But perhaps we can find a hint by going back to her early years.

Judy was born in Montreal in the late 1930s in the Canadian province of Quebec, and at the age of five her family moved to Sudbury, a small mining town in the province of Ontario. The entire region, which included other mining towns, was home to 30 Jewish families. “Our town had the *shul*,” Judy explains. Located in Northeastern Ontario, it was cold and dark for much of the year. Her father was a fur trapper and trader who lived on the Indian reservations during the winter months. “He was the last of the *coureur de bois*, the French phrase for ‘runner of the woods,’ meaning the independent, entrepreneurial folks who traveled into the wilderness to trade with the indigenous people.” Judy’s father had been sent to live with his stepsisters in Montreal at the age of 11 after his younger brother was murdered in a pogrom in Bialystok, Poland.

Judy’s mother came from quite a different background; she was born and raised in Brooklyn. “The farthest place she’d ever been to was Grossinger’s Hotel in the Catskills!” says Judy with a laugh. It was definitely an adjustment for her when she moved to Ontario. Not only did she have to get used to the rough miners and the black flies that it turned out she was allergic to, but for most of the year everything was covered in snow.

“I attended Hebrew school three days a week after school, and a *chazan* came from Toronto for the *chagim*. Unfortunately, there was also anti-Semitism,” she acknowledges. “I attended public school. But after our school burned down, I was transferred to the local Catholic school and went there for the next two years. By then I was in the second grade and the only Jew in the class. I was walking home from school on Erev Pesach, which was also the day before Good Friday, when some sixth graders started throwing rocks at me. They broke two of my teeth, and my lips and face were pretty banged up. That year, my *bubby* came from New York for Pesach. She cooked for everybody, and the whole community joined us for the Seder. I was forced to drink my chicken soup with a straw, and I couldn’t eat solid food. I never forgot what those kids did to me, and I never forgave them.”

Another episode Judy recalls happened in high school when a teacher made a snide remark. “You Jews have so many holidays. You’re always taking time off. How do you expect to pass your exams?” Years later, after graduating from university with honors, Judy went back to the woman to show her the diploma. “Look,” she told her. “Even with all those Jewish holidays I still managed to graduate with honors.”

In fact, Judy went on to earn three degrees from the University of Toronto in music education and musicology. “A musicologist,” Judy explains, “is someone who studies music analytically and historically. It’s sort like a mathematician who dissects complex mathematical problems, but we dissect musical compositions to understand how and why they were composed, what their influences were from society and earlier composers, and how elements like harmony, counterpoint and form evolved over time.”

A pivotal experience during Judy's childhood involved a neighbor named Sophie. Sophie was a survivor of Auschwitz who lived in a nearby boarding house. One day, Sophie noticed an Israeli flag hanging in Judy's brother's bedroom. A short time later she told Judy, "You're Jewish. I want to talk to someone Jewish." "She confided that her daughter, who would have been the same age I was, had been murdered in Auschwitz. She became like an adoptive mother to me," says Judy. "I adored her."

When Judy was 12 years old, she went to visit Sophie after school, as she often did. "I remember that it was a snowy afternoon, and we were drinking hot chocolate when Sophie suddenly began to cry. 'Today is my daughter's birthday,' she wept. 'You must save the Jews. Nobody saved my children.' She was crying uncontrollably and wouldn't stop."

"I didn't know what to do. I ran outside, completely overwhelmed, and sat on a snowbank, trying to make sense of what had just happened. It got dark early where we lived, and I sat there in the fading daylight, trying to understand what Sophie wanted from me."

Aside from these early incidents, there is really nothing in Judy's background that would account for the remarkable, heroic turn her life ultimately took. Yes, she came from strong stock. Her father had forged a difficult path on his own. Pride in being Jewish was in Judy's bones. But to single-handedly run a high-stakes, life-and-death rescue operation for nearly 30 years?

That speaks not only to Judy's extraordinary will but to the deep and often untapped capacity of every individual. Her story reminds us how much we can accomplish when we stop limiting ourselves.

## Initial Contact

Judy married Dr. Ronald Feld in

Toronto, and the couple had three children. In 1972, they read an article in *The Jerusalem Post* about eight young Syrian Jewish men who were tragically blown up after stepping on a mine while trying to flee Syria. The Syrian guards just stood there and watched them die. "We were horrified," says Judy. "We wanted to do something, but we had no idea what. At the time, everyone was involved in Soviet Jewry. Jews were raising money and demonstrating for refuseniks like Anatoly Sharansky. But nobody was talking about what was happening in Syria."

"One night in January of 1973 we had some friends over. My husband turned to us and said, 'We have to do something to help the Syrian Jews.' The next day, I went to speak to an Israeli Consulate official. '*Shray gevalt!*—Scream for help!' he suggested. His advice wasn't very helpful."

Since that clearly wasn't enough, the Felds and their friends decided to organize a teach-in, an informal educational gathering. They invited a professor from Toronto's Youngstown University who

was an expert on the plight of refugees from Arab countries to talk about Syrian Jewry. It was the coldest night of the year, but the *shul* was packed, Judy recalls.

Some Palestinians also attended the lecture and stood up to ask what was being done about Palestinian refugees. This turned out to be a good thing, Judy explains, because thanks to them the media paid attention. The event ended up being written up in the *Toronto Star*, so they even got some publicity out of it.

The next idea, hatched together with the rabbi and members of a local Sephardic *shul*, involved calling Syria. "We knew that in the attempt to help Soviet Jewry, people were calling Russia to speak to Jews, so we figured we'd call Syria." But they had no idea whom to call. Was there a rabbi? A head of a school? "We were so naïve."

In those days, to make a phone call to Syria, you had to go through five countries. Because you couldn't dial Syria directly, the call would be directed through Europe. "I'm still not sure how it worked," Judy admits, "but

The call went through to Damascus. "It turned out that the operator had put us through to a Jewish couple. The wife was in the service of the Mukhabarat (Syria's secret police), but it was bashert that she wasn't home at the time."

you could hear the operator putting the call through from one country to the other." Fortunately, the rabbi directed them to a *shul* member who was fluent in seven languages and was willing to speak to the various foreign operators. By *hashgachah pratis*, the first operator they reached in Canada was a Moroccan Jewish woman who was sympathetic to their cause. She put the call through to Rome. "What's a rabbi?" the Italian operator wanted to know. "A Jewish priest," they answered. She connected the call to Syria. But when the Syrian operator picked up, she told them, "The Jewish community is incognito." The line then went dead.

What did that mean? Did it mean that they didn't exist? Had they disappeared?

"But we had come this far," says Judy, "and we weren't about to give up." Over the next few weeks—only when they knew that the Jewish Moroccan operator was working—the Felds, the rabbi and the *shul* member would attempt to contact a Jew in Syria. "My husband was a physician, and I taught at the university, so we had to coordinate everyone's schedules," she recalls. Unfortunately, every attempt ended with the Syrian phone going dead. They decided to try

one last time, and that very day they made contact.

The call went through to Damascus, and a Jewish man answered. "It turned out that the operator had put us through to a Jewish couple. The wife was in the service of the Mukhabarat (Syria's secret police), but it was *bashert* that she wasn't home at the time. The husband almost had a heart attack when he heard that we were Canadian Jews requesting that he supply us with the name and address of a rabbi. He quickly gave us the information and hung up."

They now had a name, that of Rabbi Ibrahim Hamra (who passed away a few years ago), as well as his address. They dispatched a telegram to him in French that asked, "Do you need any religious books?" A week later, they received a response. "My hands were shaking when I got the call saying that there was a telegram for us," Judy recalls. "Read it to me!" I said breathlessly to the operator. The telegram from Rabbi Hamra contained a shopping list of *sefarim* he wanted.

From then on, everything was done via telegram. At the beginning of their correspondence, Judy and her husband had no way of knowing if Rabbi Hamra received the *sefarim* they were sending. "I figured that if I enclosed a line from

*Tehillim*, he might intuit that he should answer with the following line," she shares. "I read in a book by the historian Cecil Roth about the Inquisition that this type of correspondence was used by the Marranos in Spain. So I thought I would try it, and it worked for a while. When he replied with the following verse in his next telegram, I knew that he had received the books." However, when the secret police later discovered one such note, they assumed that it was a spy code and arrested the rabbi. Thankfully, he was released after only one night in prison.

Tragedy struck on June 7, 1973, when Judy's husband died of a sudden heart attack on his 40th birthday. "I was devastated and ready to quit, but the telegrams kept arriving from Syria. A short time later, our synagogue in Toronto started a fund in memory of my husband to help Jews in Arab lands. That paid for the next shipment of *sefarim*." (In time, the fund became a major source of revenue for Judy's operation.)

In the beginning it was all about sending *sefarim*, but later people were asking for things like *tefillin* and *talleisim*. In 1976, aside from Damascus, Judy had also started sending shipments to the Jews of Aleppo. "If you had asked me then if I would end up saving lives, I would've said, 'No way!'" she maintains. But everything changed when she received a desperate letter from a Rabbi Jacques Sasson in Aleppo. "You must help get us out of here!" he wrote. "Our children are your children."

The story of how Rabbi Sasson's letter came into Judy's hands is a testament to the extraordinary bravery of one determined individual. One day, a Jewish Syrian woman living in Toronto called Judy to say that she was on her way to visit her sick brother, Rabbi Eliyahu Dahab, in Aleppo. The woman had left Syria in 1948 and had served in the Israeli Army. "I thought she was insane to return to Syria, especially after serving in the IDF," Judy says.





Predictably, after arriving in Syria, the woman was brought in for questioning. When they asked her if she spoke Hebrew, she replied, “I speak only Arabic and English.” (Her passport said that she was born in Aleppo, and there was nothing to indicate that she also had an Israeli passport.) “Her calm response took more guts than I can even imagine,” Judy asserts. When the woman left Aleppo to return to Toronto, she willingly undertook to smuggle Rabbi Sasson’s letter to Judy, hiding it in her clothes. “If they had caught her,” says Judy, “she would have probably met the same end as Eli Cohen, who was hanged for spying on behalf of Israel.”

Judy’s courage was no less extraordinary. “I had three small children whom I was raising on my own. My youngest was three years old,” she shares. Nevertheless, she acceded to Rabbi Sasson’s request and began to focus on helping Syrian Jews escape their homeland.

Ever since the 1948 Israeli War of Independence, Syria had been tormenting its Jewish citizens, often imprisoning, torturing and murdering them on trumped-up charges. One of the Jews Judy ultimately helped had been imprisoned and tortured because the Mukhabarat saw him looking out of his house into his garden with binoculars. This was not unusual. A member of the Sasson family, while planning his son’s bar mitzvah, was killed when he answered a knock at the door. Why? The Syrian who shot him had made a bet with a friend that he would kill the first Jew he saw.

Over the years, the Syrian government made several attempts on Judy’s life as well, but it didn’t deter her from continuing what she had started. “It became my life. A lot of my *neshamah* was invested in this work.” Nevertheless, the fact remained that Judy had absolutely no formal training or background in intelligence or rescue operations, nor had she ever been inside Syria. “I was the daughter of a fur trader. My expertise was in the musical composition of a Brahms symphony. What did I know about foreign intrigue?” she asks rhetorically.

And so, Judy started reading spy novels to educate herself about the world of espionage. “I had a Western mind,” she says. “I knew I needed to learn about the Arab mentality. Whenever a situation arose, I would ask myself, ‘How would they think?’” She also spoke to a lot of Syrian Jews who told her their stories, giving her another glimpse into the Arab worldview.

This is one of the reasons, she explains, that Israel is always being condemned. Westerners simply cannot conceive of the Arab mindset. They don’t understand that to the Islamists, death is noble. They want to die, and they enjoy torturing others. “Look at what’s going on today

“They’d say, ‘Why can’t the people just go to our embassy in Beirut and get their passports?’ I had to explain that they weren’t allowed to leave their city!”

with the Druze community in Syria. The Western world just doesn’t get it. I mean, what kind of people chop up women and children with an ax? I had to immerse myself in this stuff and then go home and be a regular mother and tell my kids, ‘Make sure you drink your orange juice and finish your asparagus.’”

Judy was motivated to continue her work every time she heard a heart-wrenching story. In 1975, a telegram arrived from Rabbi Hamra that Judy didn’t understand. He’d written the *pasuk*, “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children...”

“I went to my rabbi, who explained that it comes from the *Haftarah* we read on the Second Day of Rosh Hashanah. That’s how I found out there had been a pogrom in Damascus on that day.”

Three years after her first husband passed away, Judy married Donald Carr. Donald was the president of the Jewish Federation and a well-known leader in the community. His wife had died of cancer, leaving him with three children. “Our two little boys were in day school together. One wanted a mommy and the other one wanted a daddy. We got engaged after our second date, and we had a beautiful marriage,” shares Judy. [Note: Sadly, he passed away less than a year ago.] But even her husband didn’t know everything she was doing. “He knew what I was involved in, and he was my

sounding board, but I couldn’t share the details.” Even those who were actively helping her gather inside information or working with smugglers didn’t know the names of the other people involved. Similarly, on the other side of the world, Jews who attended the same *shul* in Damascus had no idea that the person they were sitting next to might also be part of Judy’s rescue operation.

Although Judy never traveled to Syria, she often flew to other countries, meeting people at a bar, in the middle of a busy hotel lobby or in a private room in the back of a restaurant. Sometimes she’d meet with Syrian Jews who were out of the country on a business trip. With the valuable information they imparted she learned who was incarcerated, whom to pay off and what kind of arrangements she would need to make to get people out. She also lobbied the Canadian government, but she found it frustrating because they didn’t understand what was happening in Syria. “They’d say, ‘Why can’t the people just go to our embassy in Beirut and get their passports?’ I had to explain that they weren’t allowed to leave their city!”

Travel restrictions forbade Jews from going more than three kilometers from their homes without permission from the Mukhabarat. Limited movement within the same city was eventually permitted, but travel from city to city still required official approval. There were

also restrictions on whom Jews could do business with. Judy explains that a separate division of the secret police was set up to monitor Jews. There was always someone stationed at the *shuls* and schools, ensuring that no one was planning to escape.

She also made calls to the Jewish Agency to demand that they do something. “You’re helping Russian Jewry. Why aren’t you doing anything for the Syrian Jews?”

Eventually the Canadian government opened an embassy in Damascus, and Judy was able to get half a dozen Jewish students out by ransoming each of them individually. She helped some of them reach Istanbul, where they were hidden and later flown out by the Israelis. A few eventually ended up studying in Canadian universities.

Judy’s house became a nerve center with calls coming in at all hours of the day and night. “Hey, Mom! A Syrian is on the phone,” her kids would say. “How long are you gonna be? I have to do my homework.” That was normal in the Carr house. Some mothers have jobs, others run escape missions.

Judy was always extremely cautious. “Not one person I helped ever got caught. Before I made arrangements for someone, I would ask myself if I would do the same thing for one of my children. If I felt trepidation, I wouldn’t go through with it. I waited until another escape route could be found.”

Nevertheless, one rule was firm. “I never made the first call. I wasn’t an organization. I was one person with no staff and no agency behind me, but my name was out there. If people had no other way to get out of Syria they had to find me, after which I would do whatever I could to help.”

People learned about her in strange ways. “I have a mother who needs to get out,” someone might whisper in *shul*. “I’ll give you a phone number after Shabbat,” the other person would respond. Other

times, a father would obtain permission to travel to Cairo for the day if he agreed to leave his family behind. As soon as he arrived, he'd put a call through to her. "Mrs. Judy, I need help." Names even came from the president of Israel.

However, too often the rescues came at a cost. "There were times when I was forced to break up families," says Judy with a sigh. She once got a mother, a father and their sick child out of the country, but their other two children were left behind. "The parents gave their kids up to someone they didn't even know." It was heartbreaking.

Because attempts had been made on her life and the success of the missions depended on secrecy, most people knew only her first name. Even so, Judy says that the Syrians had a file on her. Only her best friend knew when she was leaving for another country. Even her children didn't know. "They'd find a letter on the kitchen table for them," she says, although she concedes that they probably had some idea. "I always made a lot of briskets before I left."

Despite the challenges, Judy maintains, "Everything about our operation was *bashert* from beginning to end. It started off with us not knowing what we were doing and ended with over 3,000 Jews being saved."

## Behind Enemy Lines

There were two brothers, Salim and Eli Swed, who had been falsely imprisoned and placed in solitary confinement. Someone who knew them phoned Judy and described the difficult situation. Salim's wife, Sara, was also in terrible shape with no food in the house, seven children to take care of, and her husband in prison. Judy's first thought was to see

if she could help the kids. She wrote to Sara, assuring her that she wasn't alone and that she would do whatever she could to help.

What ensued was a back-and-forth correspondence that went on for years. "It was hard to avoid becoming emotionally involved. You start to live their lives, which I don't like to do. It becomes like your own family. Sarah was baring her soul, but I was 6,000 miles away and felt that there's not much I can do." Fortunately, not only did Judy end up helping Sara with her daily needs, but she was eventually able to get Salim and Eli out of prison, and she later helped the family leave the country.

Her efforts began by sending coded letters to Sara, who picked up on them and replied in similar code. "I wrote in English and she replied in Arabic; I had her letters translated. I deliberately wrote in English because I knew that the secret police would open the mail, and I wanted them to know that someone from the outside world was in touch with her."

In their letters they talked about the

weather—but the weather was actually a reference to Sara's husband, whom Mrs. Swed hadn't seen in five years. Ordinary phrases carried hidden meaning. Any mention of Montreal really meant Israel. When the Sweds' daughter got married, there was a long series of letters about the wedding in Damascus and how they hoped that her father could attend it.

Judy deliberately enclosed bank drafts in US funds, made out in Sarah's name so the secret police couldn't cash them. "I wanted them to see that I knew the roof of her house had caved in and it was snowing. I wanted them to know that I was fixing the roof." Sometimes she would send \$500, other times \$1,000. Part of it was used for bribes and survival. It ensured the children got home from school safely, and, once Mrs. Swed discovered where her husband was imprisoned, it allowed her to pay off the guards so she could visit him.

To get that information, after many false leads and more than five years of failed attempts by others, Judy approached the head of Amnesty International. "You're helping prisoners all



over the world,” she said, “but I don’t see you helping any Jewish prisoners. I want you to find out where those two men are being held.” A few weeks later, she received a letter from the Committee on Enforced Disappearances giving her the name of the prison. “It wasn’t a moment too soon,” Judy says. “After the horrific abuse they’d experienced for so long, I knew the Sweds wouldn’t last another day.” In the end, Judy paid off every single person involved, but *baruch Hashem*, she was able to secure their release.

Judy explains that because of the many potential dangers, smuggling a family out of Syria was never her first option. Ransoming or buying someone’s freedom was the safer choice. Still, there were times when there was no other way. For example, in 1980 Judy arranged for the entire extended Sasson family to be smuggled out of Syria. That meant coordinating payment for the smuggler, overseeing the escape route and making sure that they arrived over the border to Turkey safely. The journey was fraught with danger and tension. Rabbi Sasson’s wife was expecting, and they were traveling with small children, including a one-year-old niece who started to cry as they were cautiously making their way over the mountains. The smuggler warned them that if she continued to make noise, he would kill her. When they arrived at the border, a few of the other children began to cry and the Turkish police opened fire. The adults ran with the children and huddled under a tree, attempting to shield them. Thankfully, nobody was hurt.

Sadly, there were many people who tried to escape on their own and were either shot and wounded or killed. “There’s a woman in Brooklyn who’s confined to a wheelchair to this day,” says Judy. “She was paralyzed by a bullet while trying to escape. Her husband and kids were imprisoned. I had to raise the ransom money to get her husband and four children out.”

Judy shares a story that reveals the



“He was already sitting on the plane when two members of the secret police came on board and told him, ‘You have five minutes to choose which two children are left behind.’”

emotional toll her work often took.

“There was a Jewish man who had been imprisoned three times. I was eventually able to broker a deal to get him released, and he was given permission to leave Syria with his four children. He was already on the plane when two members of the secret police came on board and told him, ‘You have five minutes to choose which two children to leave behind.’ What an awful choice to have to make! When he finally landed in New York, he was a basket case. Of course, his first phone call was to Mrs. Judy.”

Thankfully, Judy was able to secure permission for the other two children to leave, but it took another year and a half. “There’s so much emotion involved,” she relates. “This wasn’t a demonstration or rally for Syrian Jews. These weren’t pleasant phone calls. I became an important part of these people’s lives.”

Judy never accepted money for her work or hired anyone to assist her. “I raised all the money myself. I never took a penny from Israel or the UJA. If I did, I wouldn’t be independent. If I made a mistake and used another organization’s money, what would I tell them if they asked me, ‘What do you mean you lost the \$10,000?’”

One of the many amazing aspects of this story is that Judy engineered this

operation with only herself to answer to. At a certain point, the Mossad heard about this woman in Canada who was conducting rescue missions, but they were wary. “It was difficult for them to comprehend that I wasn’t trained in foreign intrigue but could still figure it out.” Years later, she formed a quasi-alliance with them. They’d offer tips and information and provide protection, but only rarely. Their missions did intersect in that the Israeli government would take over where she left off. “My job was to get the Jewish escapees over the Syrian border into Turkey. From there, it was up to the Israeli government to get them to Israel.”

The Mossad had been facilitating escapes through Lebanon for years. Over time, they came to respect Judy’s nerve and instincts. As one Mossad member once put it to her, “We want you to die in your own bed.” Whenever Judy traveled to foreign countries, she’d pray, “G-d, please help me. Let me get home safely.”

For security reasons, she didn’t travel to Arab countries directly from Canada. “But I had other ways of getting there.” On the plane, she would wear her regular clothes. But once she landed, she’d change into whatever style clothes were worn in that country. “I wanted to



blend in. I'd go to the local souk and buy a dress for next to nothing," After her mission was completed, she'd stop at her apartment in Israel before heading home to Canada. To help her transition back to normal life, Judy says with a laugh, "First I'd make myself a large martini and then go down the block for some pizza. It worked every time." Once she returned to Toronto, the transformation was complete. As the Mossad liked to joke, "Don't call Judy at 9:30 on a Friday morning. She's at the hairdresser's."

Over the course of time, Judy met with many Israeli government and army officials. "I once spoke to an Israeli general who told me that during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Mossad had trucks near Damascus ready to take Jews and Torah scrolls out of the country. But they couldn't do it because they knew that the Syrians would murder the Jews in Aleppo and Qamishli in retaliation. They were forced to turn the trucks around and go home. 'We couldn't save them,' he told me urgently. 'But you have to.'"

Not only did Judy get people out of Syria, but she also managed to smuggle out the Damascus Keter, a manuscript of the *Tanach* that was written in Italy in the 15th century. In 1993, while Judy was on a visit to Israel, the curator of the Israel Museum asked her for ideas on how to get it out of Syria. Judy called Shlomo Gal, a senior Mossad official, in his home on a Friday afternoon, who advised her to continue saving people instead of worrying about the Keter. But that didn't stop Judy. She'd heard from underground sources that the priceless codex was in a *shul* in Damascus. Until today she won't divulge her full methods, but she did admit to working with contacts in Canada's Foreign Ministry and communicating with Rabbi Hamra.

An official at the Foreign Ministry agreed to participate in the clandestine mission. He visited Damascus, and when

passing Rabbi Hamra on the street, Rabbi Hamra surreptitiously handed him the Keter, which he quickly placed in his coat as he continued walking. The official transported the Keter through customs in a black shopping bag and personally brought it to Judy. It now resides in the National Library of Israel.

In total, Judy helped 3,228 people to freedom, the vast majority of whom have no idea who she is. "Only a few people know me personally, mostly those whom I helped get out of prison," she says. And although many will never meet her, she is not forgotten. There is more than one Judy among their children and grandchildren. "The first Judy named for me was Rabbi Hamra's daughter," she shares. But there are others. The man she saved who was already on the plane to Israel and was forced to leave two of his children behind has a granddaughter named Judy. And she recently received a photo of two girls sitting on the floor next to a huge heart drawn on a big piece of paper. Inside the heart was a picture of Judy. The two Judys met at a party. When they introduced themselves, they realized that they had both been named after the same person.

The last Jew to be rescued from Syria arrived only an hour before the 9/11 World Trade Center attack.

"It was 2001 and most of the Syrian Jews had already left the country, so I was basically out of business, thank G-d," she recalls. "Then I got a call saying that there was a Syrian Jew who'd been deliberately run over by a car and was seriously injured. He was trying to leave the country with his wife and seven children." Judy was asked to collect the money for their flight, which she did. The flight was originally set for right before Rosh Hashanah on Air Pakistan, but for some reason the Syrian government had switched their flight.

"A short time later I received a call from the Sephardic Bikur Cholim," she

continues, "asking if I had anybody coming in on a Royal Jordanian flight. 'Not that I know of,' I replied. 'Well, there's a family with seven children arriving today.' As it turned out the change was fortuitous, because after 9/11 they wouldn't have been able to leave Syria. After they arrived safely, I remember saying to myself, 'Sophie, I did what you asked me to do.' Maybe it was Sophie's exhortation all those years ago to save Jews that drove me. Maybe that's what lit the fire. I don't really know."

## Standing Proudly

This is probably one of the hardest times in Jewish history, Judy observes. The world and the media have turned against the Jewish people. Judy points to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as a blatant example, calling it totally anti-Israel. No matter what Israel does, the other side of the story is never shown. Reports blame Israel for a destroyed hospital in Gaza even when Israeli soldiers weren't there.

"And why are there lines two blocks long being guarded by armed police just to get into *shul* for Yom Tov?" she asks. "We've always had security, but nothing like this. If a Jewish organization holds a dinner, they can't even advertise it until the day before, and the venue must stay secret out of fear of demonstrations. I've never lived this way," she continues, "even though I've lived with anti-Semitism."

Still, Judy remains steadfast in her pride. She feels privileged to have been born into a Jewish family and proud of who she is. Four of her grandchildren are officers in the Israeli Army. One was a lone soldier in Gaza. Another was injured and sent home. Her son lives in Israel with his five children. Others in her family live in Washington, DC, and Canada.

Although much of Judy's work remains undisclosed and she is still a mystery to most of those she rescued, in recent years she has been recognized and awarded at the highest levels. In 2001, she was named a member of the Order of Canada, the nation's highest civilian honor. In 2012, President Shimon Peres presented her with the Presidential Award of Distinction of the State of Israel, created to recognize outstanding contributions to the Jewish people. She has also received the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, the Medal of Valor from the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, and an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

Before we end our conversation, Judy says, "I would like to tell everyone to stand up. Be proud of who you are. Tell everyone you're proud to be a Jew. Absolutely do not hide. Stand tall in government, in demonstrations, and say, 'I'm here, and I'm not going anywhere.'" ●