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For: No Mere Bagatelles

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HOT OFF THE PRESSES:

NO MERE BAGATELLES,

AN EXCITING NEW BIOGRAPHY OF JUDITH & GERSON LEIBER

New York, NY --- NO MERE BAGATELLES, a biography of Holocaust survivor and handbag design genius Judith Leiber and modernist artist Gerson Leiber, has just been published. It was written by Jeffrey Sussman.

The dramatic and amazing story begins with Judith's resourceful struggle to survive under the daily threat of extermination posed by the terrifying Nazi occupation of Budapest during World War II. While Judith proved determined and resourceful in saving the lives of her family and herself, she also managed to learn the intricate craft of designing and making a handbag from conception to finished product.

When the war finally ended, Judith met an American G I, Gerson Leiber, on the war torn streets of Budapest. They had a whirlwind courtship and were married within the year. While still in Budapest, Gerson began his formal art training at the Royal Academy of Art.

When the Leibers arrived in New York City, they were a pair of ambitious dreamers. He wanted to succeed as an artist, and she wanted to design handbags. Gerson studied at the Art Student's League and learned to paint in virtually every modern style. Judith took jobs with fashion houses that have long since faded into the memory banks of Seventh Avenue. Most of her time was spent working for America's then most esteemed fashion designer, Nettie Rosenstein, the woman who created the little black dress.

Judith's reputation for creativity and uniquely beautiful designs was rapidly spreading amongst the arbiters of fashion. Her handbags were featured in Vogue and Harpers Bazaar as well as other top-flight fashion magazines. And beginning in 1953, every First Lady, from Mamie Eisenhower on, has carried a Judith Leiber handbag to her husband's inauguration. In the world of high fashion handbags, Judith was known as the only person who could design and make a handbag from conception to magnificent finished product. And each bag was considered a unique work of art.

During that same period, Gerson Leiber was exhibiting paintings, etchings, and lithographs in galleries across America. Important collectors began snapping up his critically acclaimed works. It was not long afterward that important museums also began to acquire works by Gerson Leiber for their permanent collections.

Then, in 1963, Judith and Gerson decided it was time for her to start her own handbag company. In short order, the Leibers were able to sell to one elegant department store after another.

So sought after were the handbags of Judith Leiber that First Ladies and socially prominent arbiters of fashion all became devoted collectors of her artistic accessories. And the list of celebrities who own and show off their Judith Leiber handbags could fill a volume of Who's Who. Opera diva Beverly Sills, for one, owned nearly 200 Judith Leiber bags. In addition, many

prestigious museums began collecting Judith Leiber handbags and exhibiting the bags as part of their permanent collections. Among the museums that have Judith Leiber handbags are The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Smithsonian, The Corcoran Gallery, and The Victoria and Albert Museum, amongst various others.

Success followed success. And then in 1993, the Leibers received an offer they couldn't refuse. A British company would give them a huge lump sum to buy their inventory, the name of Judith Leiber, and her consultancy; it had been a fairy tale adventure for Judith, whose name had once been on a Nazi list of Jews to be exterminated, but was now worth millions of dollars. Hers is, indeed, a remarkable story of survival, determination, visionary creativity, and success.

And to top it off, the Leibers have now built a magnificent Palladian-style museum in East Hampton, which houses hundreds of Judith Leiber handbags as well as the stunning paintings, etchings, lithographs, and drawings of Gerson Leiber, and one of the most distinctive private collections of rare antique Chinese porcelains.

NO MERE BAGATELLES recounts in dramatic and evocative detail all that has occurred in the amazing lives of two highly creative and accomplished individuals, each of whom has made an important and memorable contribution to the world of art and fashion.

About the author: Jeffrey Sussman is the author of ten non-fiction books, two novels, dozens of short stories, book reviews, and numerous articles on a wide variety of topics. In addition, he wrote and produced two television series. He is president of Jeffrey Sussman, Inc., (www.powerpublicity.com), a marketing and PR firm based in New York City.

