

One Candle
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Sometimes someone of great courage comes forth to lend a hand in the hour of need. Chiune Sugihara was such a man. When the Nazis in 1940 stepped up their campaign to eliminate the Jews, Sugihara was a Japanese consulate in Lithuania. Daily, hundreds were seeking a way to leave Europe; if they could get out through Lithuania, go to Russia and then Japan, they could get to safety. But they needed one thing — visas. To issue them Sugihara would have to go against the Japanese government.

He tried three times to get permission to issue visas but was refused each time. With great courage he put his job on the line and risked his life and the lives of family members to do what he felt he had to: He began issuing visas, hundreds every day. Before he was removed from his post he had issued more than 6,000.

In a recent lecture in Boulder, Colo., Sugihara's son Hiroki related that his father's goal was to issue 300 a day. This was no easy task — each visa required several long paragraphs to be handwritten. When finally forced to leave in August 1940, Sugihara continued to write visas from his hotel room and even handed out blank ones from the train. As the train pulled out, a lone man's voice cried out, "Sugihara, we will never forget you!"

Rabbi Chanowitz, a Sugihara survivor, was at the lecture to express his gratitude. "It takes but one candle to push away the darkness," he said. One person can make a difference, as Sugihara proved. From the 6,000 people he saved, there are now 40,000 living descendants throughout the world.

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