

Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project

By Jack Mayer

Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project has won 3 book awards:

- **2012 India Reader Discovery Award – Biography** - June 3, 2012 Book Expo America, New York City
- **2011 Kansas Notable Book Award** – presented Sept. 24, 2011 in Topeka, Kansas by the Kansas Center for the Book (State Library of Kansas).
- **2011 da Vinci Eye** (Eric Hoffer Book Award for superior cover art.)

Translations and foreign publication:

Polish (AMF Plus Group, Warsaw Poland) – May 8, 2013

Polish title: Życie w słoiku: Ocalenie Ireny Sendler

Chinese (Oriental Press, Beijing, China) – Jan. 1, 2013

Russian (Eksmo, Moscow, Russia) – due in 2013

SYNOPSIS

This is a work of creative non-fiction, recounting the story of Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic social worker during W.W. II, who knocked on doors in the Warsaw ghetto and asked Jewish mothers to give up their children in order to save them. She and her network rescued 2,500 Jewish children from certain death. After the war, her story, as well as those of countless other rescuers, was suppressed in communist Poland and forgotten. She lived in obscurity in Warsaw.

Sixty years later, her extraordinary history was rescued by three teenage girls in Kansas, who began a history project about Irena Sendler and ended up elevating her to the status of Polish national hero and furthering dialogue and education for Poles to come to terms with their traumatic W.W. II history. Each of these teens also carried a painful personal burden; the project changed their lives. And it changed the world. Because of their efforts, Irena Sendler was nominated for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize by the President of Poland and the Prime Minister of Israel. Students of history became agents of history.

Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project is based on my interviews and research over six years in the U.S. and Poland. In 2005, I visited Poland with the Kansas students, where I met and interviewed Irena Sendler some of the children she rescued, now in their 60s and 70s. The Kansas students who initiated this project and their teacher, Norm Conard, visited Vermont in 2008 and presented their play, *Life in a Jar*, in Burlington, Montpelier, and Middlebury. Vermont Governor James Douglas proclaimed October 17, 2008 as “Irena Sendler Day” to honor their visit.

Sixty percent of author royalties from the sale of *Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project* are donated to the **Irena Sendler/Life in a Jar Foundation**. The foundation promotes Sendler’s legacy and encourages educators and students to emulate the project by focusing on unsung heroes in history to teach respect and understanding among all people, regardless of race, religion, or creed. (www.irenasendler.org).

BIO

Jack Mayer, MD, MPH

Jack Mayer began practicing pediatrics in 1976 in Enosburg Falls, Vermont, a small town in eastern Franklin County on the Canadian border. His was the first pediatric practice in that half of the county. From 1987 – 1991 Dr. Mayer was a National Cancer Institute Epidemiology Fellow at Columbia University School of Public Health in New York City. Most of his scientific writing was done during those four years. Dr. Mayer returned to Vermont in 1991 and established Rainbow Pediatrics in Middlebury, where he continues to practice primary care pediatrics.

Throughout his career, he has written short stories, poems, and essays about his years in pediatric practice and hiking the Long Trail in Vermont. He lives in Middlebury with his wife, Chip. They have a grown son, Alex.

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