

Thursday, December 10, 2015 | return to: news & features, local

## Family jewels raise funds for cancer research

by drew himmelstein

A ring made from jewels saved from Nazi looting during the Holocaust fetched nearly \$20,000 at a fundraiser for a local sarcoma cancer foundation.



Suzanne Felson shows off the ring with her husband, Elliott.

San Jose resident Gary Wiener started the Sarcoma-Oma Foundation this spring in memory of his wife, Linda, who died of sarcoma at the age of 60 on April 16 of this year.

"Linda's grandparents were jewelers in Brussels," said Wiener, an event planner and the executive director of the Jewish Sports Hall of Fame of Northern California. "Somehow the family got wind of the fact that the Nazis were coming and they hid [their diamonds] in the fireplace."

A family member was able to retrieve the jewels and they were returned to survivors after the war. Over the years, some of the gems were used to make pieces of jewelry, but Linda inherited her mother's remaining share, Wiener said. Two years ago, Linda decided to commission a San Jose jeweler to create a ring for the remaining stones. She never saw the finished design, which was still in the jeweler's possession when she died.

The ring was only discovered this September when a mutual friend, Dore Warshal, solicited a donation from the same jeweler for the foundation's silent auction.

Wiener said that though the ring, valued at \$19,000, had a significant family history, it wasn't hard for him to offer it up for auction "because it went to a good purpose."

The couple's two children and granddaughter attended the Nov. 7 gala at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, which

netted \$103,000 and is intended to become an annual event. A good-natured bidding war emerged over the ring between Maggie Glickfeld Sedar, who went to junior high and high school with Linda, and Elliot and Suzanne Felson, longtime family friends. Linda, an event planner, had planned multiple events, including a bat mitzvah and a baby naming, for the Felson family, and Elliot Felson's father, who was also a Holocaust survivor, lived with Wiener's father's best friend when he first came to the United States.

In the end, the Felsons won the ring with a bid of \$17,000. Combined with a voluntary donation, the proceeds for the ring ultimately exceeded \$19,000.

"People's generosity that evening went far beyond my imagination," Wiener said.

The next annual gala is scheduled for Nov. 5 of next year, but smaller fundraisers for the Sarcoma-Oma Foundation are ongoing. Wiener has used connections in the entertainment and sports industries to schedule celebrity-led spinning classes for charity; former S.F. Giants slugger Barry Bonds co-led a session in Corte Madera on Oct. 17, and more are in the works for the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Miami and New York, Wiener said.

**Sarcoma-Oma Foundation** resources and event listings at <http://www.sarcoma-oma.org>  
For more information, contact Gary Wiener at (408) 374-1600 or [gary@sarcoma-oma.org](mailto:gary@sarcoma-oma.org)

<http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/76393/family-jewels-raise-funds-for-cancer-research/>