

Alfred Bader Fonds

Chemistry and Art  
More Adventures of a Chemist Collector

Chapter 18 -  
Help the Neediest and Ablest:  
Promoting Communication Between

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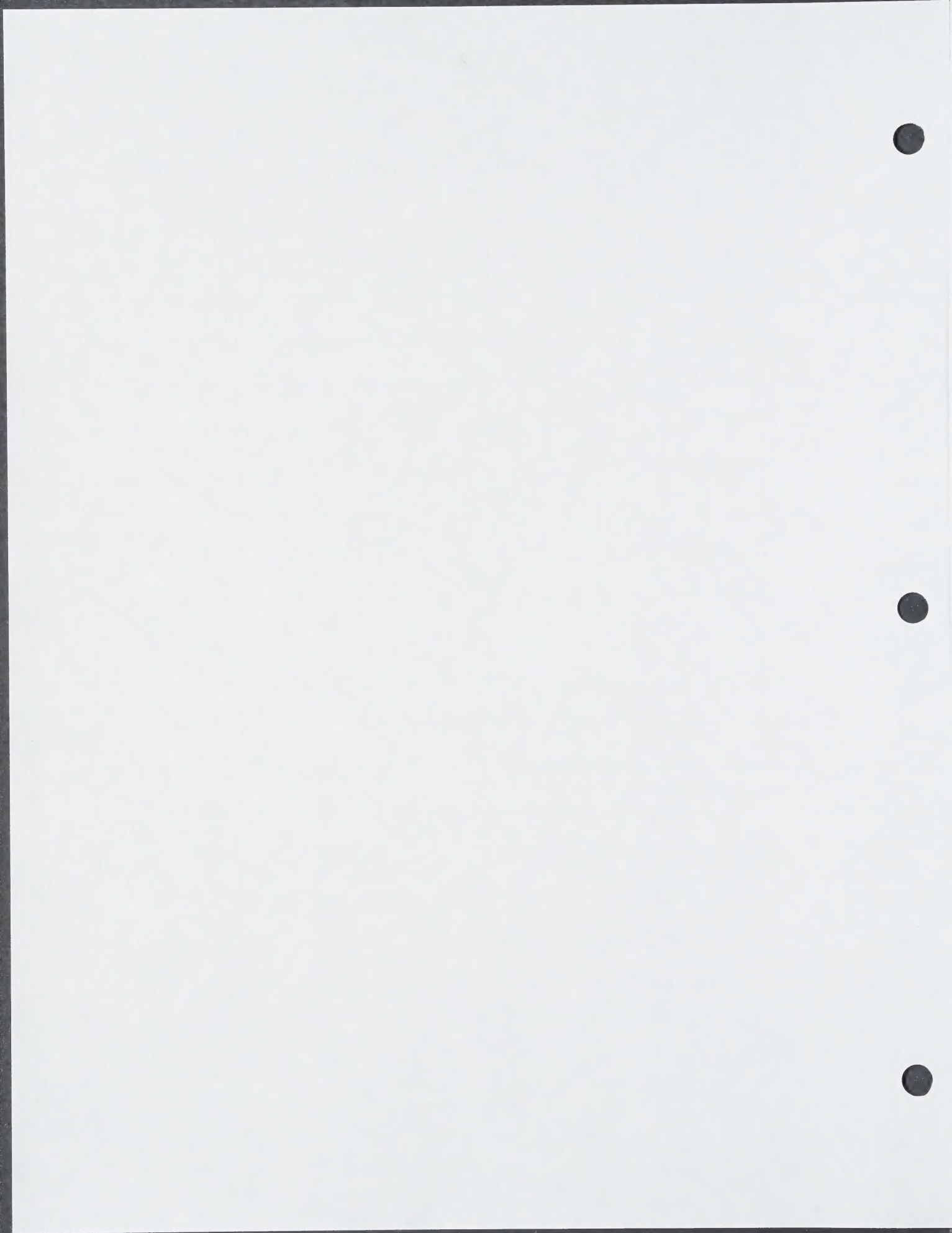


## Chapter 18

### **Help the Neediest and Ablest: Promoting Communication among People**

What are the roots of our efforts to be charitable? With me, these are in my early childhood. Muttli gave to many people who asked even when she herself had almost nothing, and there were so many in need in Vienna during the Depression. In my first year in school when I was six, our very good teacher, Heinrich Strehly, compared my good clothes with those of some of the other kids and asked Muttli to send money to help them. Muttli's husband, a multimillionaire, had died in 1922 without teaching her how to manage his great wealth. During the deep Depression following the inflation, the wealth disappeared, and by the time I was fourteen, there was little left.

For some time, I had been active as a stamp dealer, using my earnings to buy basic foods. When I left Vienna on the first Kindertransport to England on 10 December 1938, I left with one U.S. dollar that an old friend had given to Muttli and some stamps I hoped to be able to sell in England. An elderly lady, Mrs. Sarah Wolff, had paid £50 to guarantee that I would not become a burden on the community and then paid a guinea a week for my room and board. But I had absolutely no pocket money and was only too happy to sell stamps to other kids in school. I was overjoyed when one day I received a letter from old friends of my paternal grandmother, dealers in jewelry in London, who sent me a large white £5 note, which immediately found its way into the post office savings book I had opened with the money I got for my one U.S. dollar.

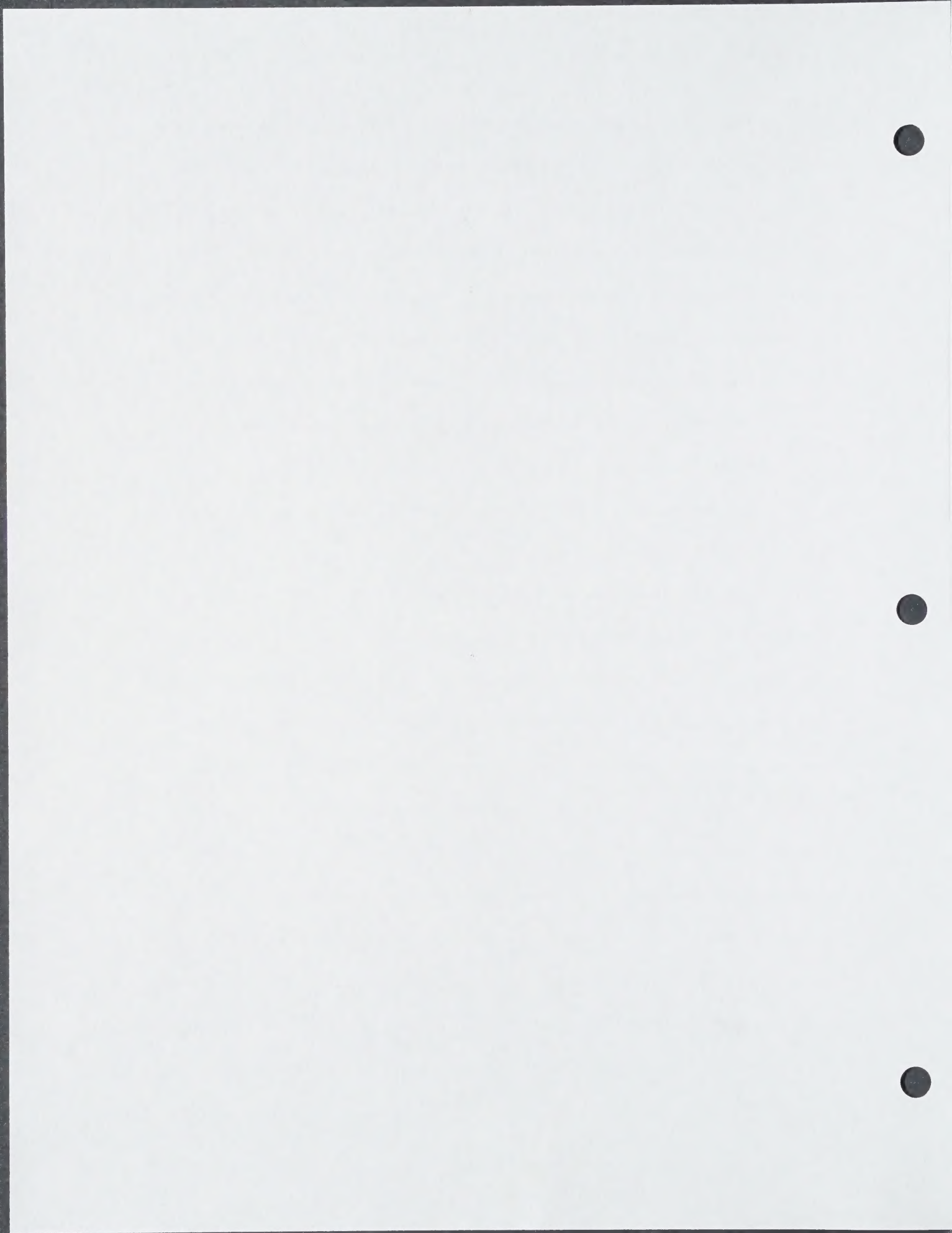


The Brighton Technical College that I attended beginning in January 1940 was too far away from home in Hove for me to return for lunch, and so Mrs. Ethel Scharff, where I boarded, gave me nine pence. I discovered that I could have beans on toast at the nearby Lyons Corner House for five pence halfpenny, and of course I saved the three pence halfpenny daily. I watched my expenditures very carefully: ten shillings for a pair of shoes and fifty shillings for a dark suit at Burton the Tailor.

In the internment camp in Canada, one could earn 20 cents a day, for instance making camouflage nets, but I decided to forego this pay in order to study for the McGill Matriculation Examinations.

I was among the first to be freed from the camp in Canada. It was more than I could possibly have hoped that Martin Wolff, the son of Mrs. Sarah Wolff in Hove, would secure my release. Here was a man who had just lost his wife and had five daughters, four of them unmarried, yet he took me into his small home and immediately helped me to apply to university. The day after my release, he took time off from his job to go with me to apply to McGill. On the way, he gave me \$5 in pocket money but did not say how long it was to last. When I was turned down at McGill, he wrote to Toronto to make application for me, and when I was finally admitted to Queen's on 15 November, he paid for my first year's tuition; I think this was \$250 for the year. I could hardly believe my good fortune and was determined to do my very best.

I found a comfortable room near the campus which, with breakfast, cost \$3 a week. Every day except Friday I had a good lunch at the student union for 35 cents. For the evening meals, I bought bread and apples and cheese, and on Friday evening was invited to the home of a wonderful family, the Isaac Cohens, for a sumptuous meal. I still





have my little book <sup>(fig.)</sup> detailing all of my expenses: so many cents for food, so many for the occasional haircut, so many for postage stamps to write to Martin Wolff.

At the end of that academic year, I won my first scholarship, the Roberta McCullough scholarship in English, \$30. Mr. Wolff found me a job for the summer at RCA Victor, inspecting soldering of radios, and although it was boring, I earned 45 cents an hour and of course saved all of it. When I returned to Queen's in September, I was invited to join the Science '44 coop. This was a great blessing. We paid \$8 a week room and board and at the end of the academic year received a small refund. Also, in 1943, I received two scholarships and a bursary that took care of my tuition. That summer I found a wonderful job with the Murphy Paint Company in Montreal paying \$130 a month formulating paints and lacquers.

My life was changed by the kindness and generosity of the Wolff family and Queen's University. The scholarships were extremely important to me, and naturally I determined that if ever I could, I would also establish such scholarships. The first opportunity I had was in the spring of 1948 when Martin Wolff died of a heart attack while I was a student at Harvard. Though he had five daughters, he left me \$1,000 in his will. I used that money to establish the Martin Wolff scholarship in civil engineering at Queen's University.

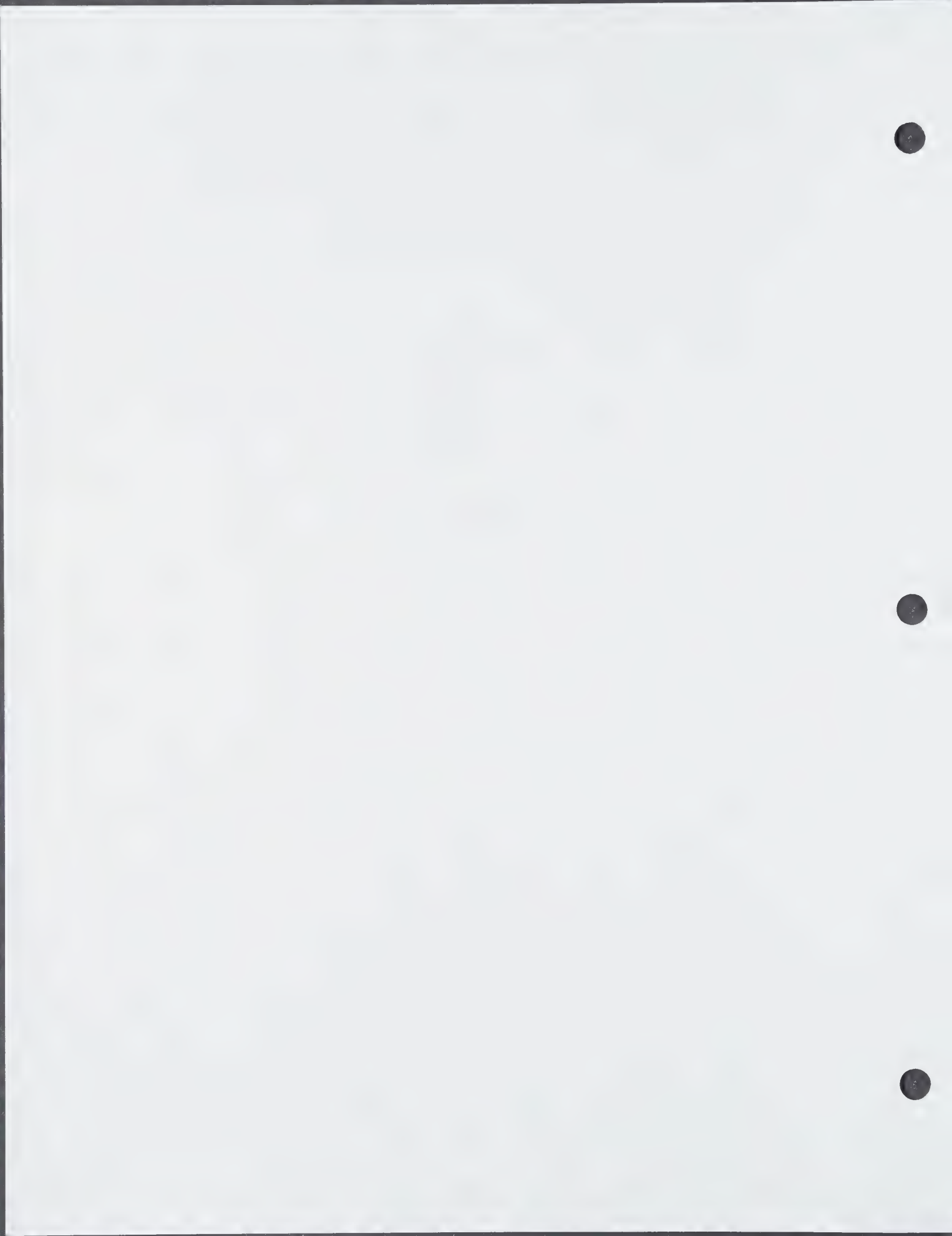
From the time I went to the Murphy Paint Company for my second summer, I have been truly happy with my work as a chemist. Starting Aldrich in 1951 was a great time, because the early 1950s was the most fortuitous time to be starting a company to sell chemicals for research, a fine chemical company. There was really just the one company in the United States, Eastman Kodak, with whom I was told I could not



possibly compete. They had only some four thousand products, however, and were not really interested in the business. I was, and these were the very years when the demand for new products was growing rapidly. I spoke German and was able to travel to Europe and buy many new products there. In the United States more students were going to universities to study chemistry so there was an ever-increasing demand for new products for research there and in the pharmaceutical industry. I loved my work and looked forward to each day, wondering whom I could help that day. I could not pay a great deal, but wanted to provide a stable workplace, health insurance, and profit sharing for my employees. When eventually I was able to establish the first Bader scholarship in chemistry at Queen's, it made me immensely proud to be giving back.

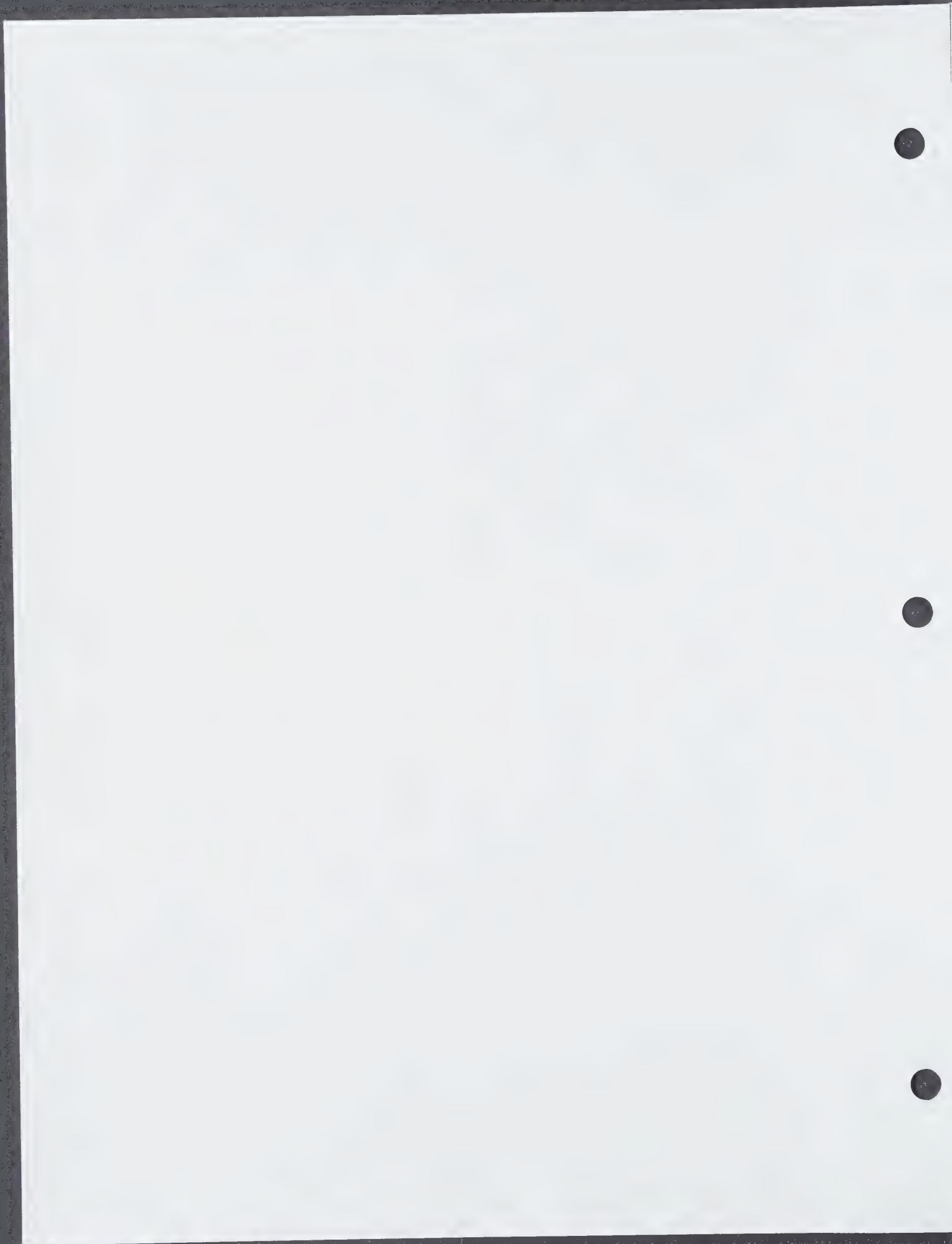
For the past many years, we have been in a wonderful position to help people. Isabel and I don't need much for ourselves. Our good friend Marvin Klitsner arranged for my sons' trusts, each to have 6.5 percent of Aldrich - long before Aldrich was worth much - and so both are well-to-do and know that Isabel and I have wills, also written by Marvin. These wills leave almost everything to a foundation, just as Danny did. My son Daniel, who administers this charity, the Helen Bader Foundation, will administer our foundation also, but why should we not help others in our lifetime? Help for others and pleasure for us. Yet giving money away is not all pleasure, and in fact it is the most difficult of my four current jobs.

Luckily we have been helped by good and able people. Daniel has seventeen able people in the Helen Bader Foundation, and he himself is always willing to help us. He and Linda often make suggestions, particularly for local causes.



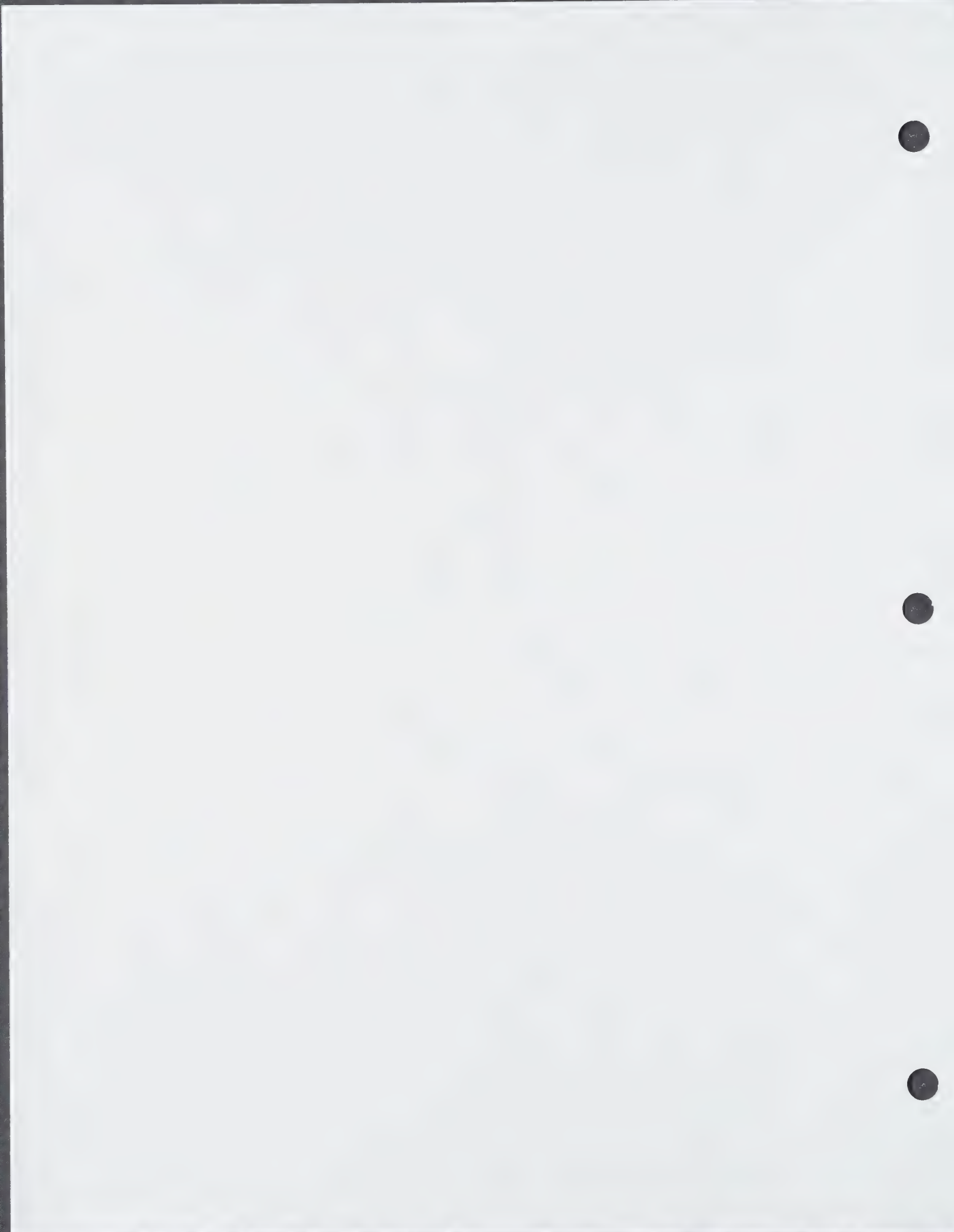
Marvin Klitsner, of course, had guided us in everything, but sadly he died in Jerusalem in August 2001. His older daughter, Frances Wolff, has taken his place on the Board of the Helen Bader Foundation, and one of Marvin's nineteen grandchildren, Adina Shapiro (fig.), has also been most helpful to us. A remarkable young woman with a Hebrew University law degree, she was co-chair of MECA, the Middle East Children's Association, which tries to bring together Israeli and Palestinian teachers to discuss how best to teach children. Such meetings are very difficult to arrange during the mutual hatred engendered by the second intifada, but Adina and her able Palestinian co-chair, Dr Abdullah Ghassan, have succeeded in arranging for several meetings, two at Herstmonceux Castle which we have funded, and other larger meetings in Turkey. MECA has also been funded by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and the U.S. and E.U. governments.

I have long wondered whether life in Israel would be safer and better if Arab Israelis had been treated equally. Israel is a democracy, there are Arab members of the Knesset, and public signs are in Hebrew, English, and Arabic. But in the infrastructure of Arab towns and villages, educationally and socially, there has not been equality. Adina agrees. So now we give her several hundred thousand dollars annually through the Foundation for the Jewish Community, which she spends as she sees fit. I believe that since we are dealing with Marvin's granddaughter, we need no accounting, but she has told us that she has spent it on diverse projects, most recently on improving Israeli Arab libraries. I have asked her to explain. She wrote:



One of Israel's greatest challenges as a Jewish Democratic State has been its treatment of its Arab citizens. Although many organizations, projects and research have addressed this issue, the past few years of intifada have also marked a significant decline in Jewish-Arab relationships within the State of Israel, indicating that strategic approaches were significantly needed. We chose to address this question by using two principles. First, private initiative with the Arab sector must replace the government agencies and should engage them in seeing their role as serving the Israeli population in its entirety. Second, the Jewish-Arab question cannot be addressed as an independent "problem" but must find its way into the mainstream issues that the State must address. In keeping with these principles we decided to address the field of the public libraries in Israel, which was in dire need of incentives to reach out to their communities. Encouraging the public libraries to take a community-based approach was an optimal opportunity to look at all parts of the Israeli community with its many cultures, religions, and political beliefs.

With the help of the funds at my disposal, as well as some matching funds from our family in memory of my grandfather, we funded approximately thirty projects a year in public libraries throughout the country. The projects, which took place equally in Jewish and Arab libraries, reach out to the community in different ways such as programs for toddlers, single parents, youth in distress, and documenting the oral history of communities. All of the librarians meet once a month in a joint forum where they discuss the professional challenges of their community-based programs as well as Jewish-Arab relationships in the country. The entire program has been done



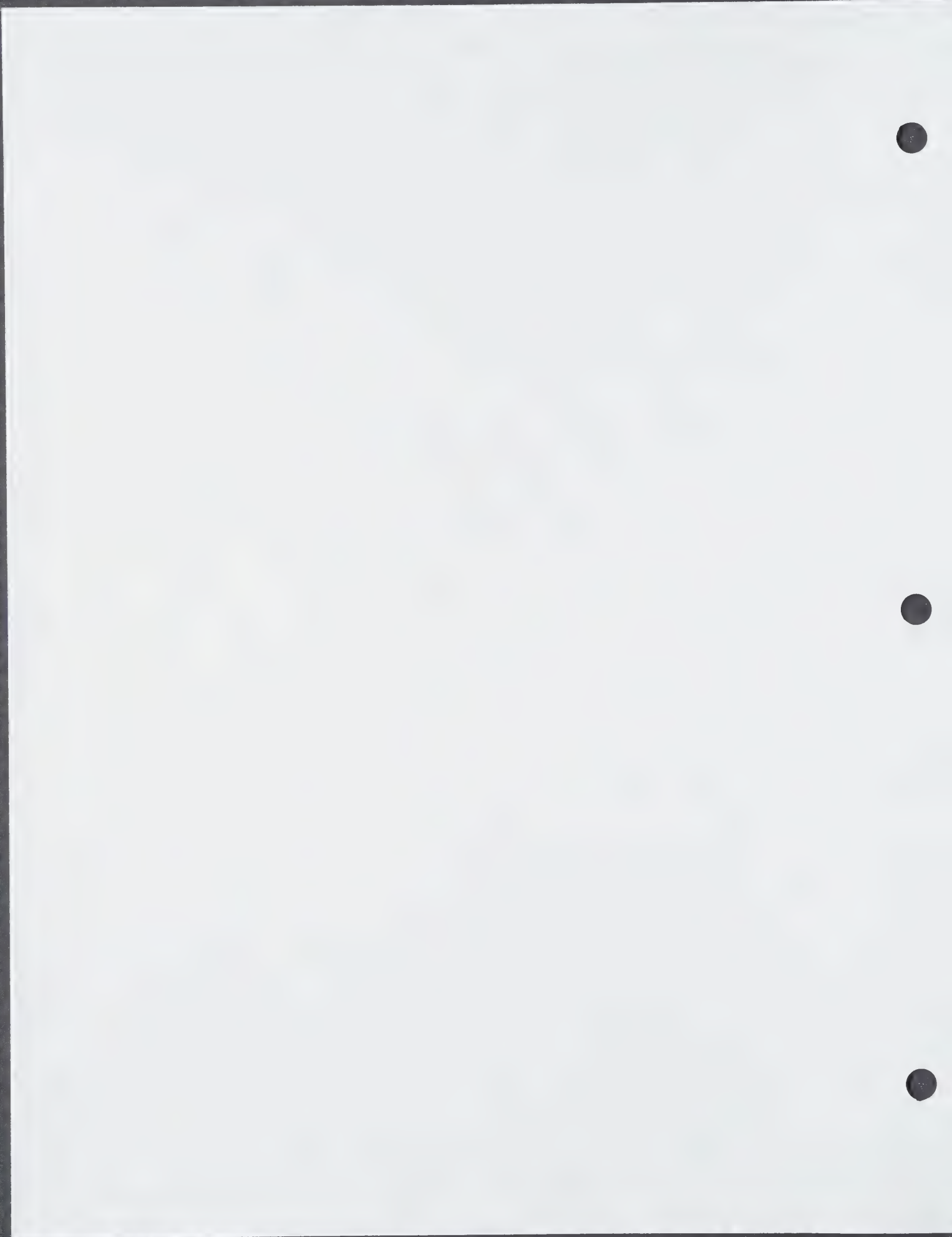


in partnership with the Ministry of Education and some local municipalities, leveraging the funds with matching governmental grants for the Arab sector that did not exist previously.

The outcome of the first few years has led to the establishment of several Bedouin libraries in unrecognized villages as well as an Arab library in Haifa and in Mukeble, where no public libraries existed prior to this. Furthermore, contents have been brought into the libraries by the directors infusing some of their experiences with the different populations to their communities. The ultimate success of the programs, however, in my eyes has been that as different peripheral populations in Israel address the needs of their communities; they see professional cooperation with their Jewish or Arab colleagues as integral and complementary parts of their pursuits. This is a sound basis for not only paying lip service to concepts of equality and diversity but actually implementing it on the ground.

Daniel is on the board of trustees of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Joint, a wonderful, almost century-old organization that helps people in need - and not only Jews - around the world. We have made good friends and been helped enormously by Yechiel Bar Chaim <sup>(fig.)</sup>, who operates from the Joint office in Paris.

Born in Washington, D.C., in 1945, Yechiel has degrees from Harvard, the Sorbonne, and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He served in the U.S. Army, last as captain in the NATO Military Headquarters in Belgium from 1969 to 1972. After his



move to Israel in January 1974, he held several industrial and governmental jobs and served in the reserves as a press liaison officer of the Israel Defense Forces. Since 1986, he has been working for the Joint and in 1989 came to Vienna to help the tens of thousands of Jews then leaving the Soviet Union for the West. Later that year he was also made responsible for the JDC programs in what was then Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia and recently in Tunisia and Algeria as well. He and his family moved from Vienna to Paris in 1991.

What a background, but most important, he is such a caring, totally reliable man.

And, of course, many like-minded people really enjoy working with him. To me, the most outstanding of these is an American writer and humanist, Paul Polansky. Originally from Mason City, Iowa, Polansky moved to Prague in 1990 where he became a Romany rights activist, documenting how the Nazis with the help of some Czechs treated Roma. In 1999, he volunteered to live in Kosovo, trying to help Roma threatened by the Albanian majority. He now calls Kosovo and Nis, in southern Serbia, his homes.

The Nis gypsies live under the worst living conditions anywhere in Europe. Some of their homes were built in an historic Jewish cemetery, while another part of the cemetery became their garbage dump and open-air latrines. It was Yechiel who told us about Polansky and his work with the Roma. The scenes he described were so dreadful that we immediately decided we would make a donation to fund an employment project that Yechiel and Paul hoped to set up. The idea was to employ the Roma living in one part of the cemetery to clean up the other part. These efforts with the Roma produced a remarkable cleanup of what had been a site of shame and an opportunity for the workers



to earn money, often for the first time in their lives. Yechiel described this so clearly when he nominated Paul for the John Humphrey Freedom Award:

Paul put together teams of Roma workers from the cemetery settlement (called “the Jewish village”) to do the work. For better pay than they usually get, these Roma workers took out 220,000 wheelbarrows full of indescribable refuse over seven weeks’ time. They spent eight hours a day in the sweltering heat, sometimes up to their chests, manoeuvring heavy, seventeenth-century tombstones to get them out of the cesspools. Some of them had never had a job for so long in their entire lives.

More important than saving cemeteries is saving lives. Again to quote Yechiel from his John Humphrey Freedom Award nomination:

When the Albanian refugees came back to Kosovo, some of their extremists drove the Kosovar Roma out of their settlements and burned down their houses. Near Mitrovica the UN put the displaced Roma in camps, “temporary” ones that just happened to be located on land where the toxic wastes of nearby mines had been dumped. Paul warned the UN that the sites were dangerous, but to no avail. That was in 1999. Repeated appeals and alarming medical reports since then have never budged the authorities.

The camps are still there and now there is a generation of Roma children showing lead in the blood at unprecedented levels; above 65 mg/dl (About 10 mg/dl is considered safe). The affected children (and adults) are suffering irreparable brain

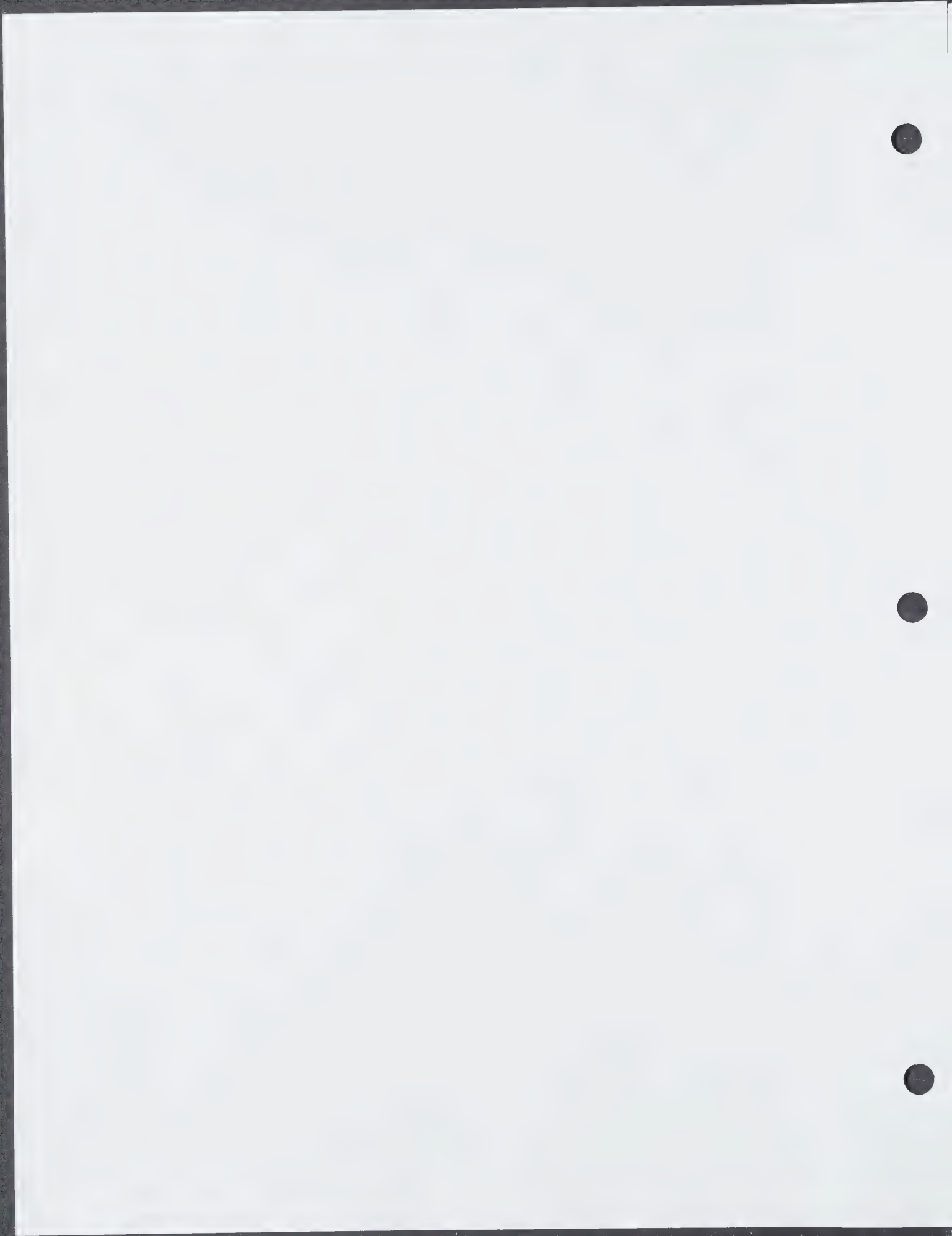


damage. They stagger around disoriented, vomiting, some going in and out of coma. Paul is the one on the spot. The one taking a child in coma to a hospital in Belgrade for treatment. (Actually he had to smuggle her in, because Roma kids don't have any identification papers). The one finding a new residence for the family so Nikolina doesn't go back to the camp when she's better. The one badgering the alphabet soup of international organizations that we trust to prevent these tragedies from happening, the ones who aren't supposed to let children get lead poisoning in their camps: UNMIK, UNHCR; WHO....

When no one stepped forward, Dr Bade; again agreed to make a grant. Now Paul has taken a new set of kids to the hospital in Mitrovica. Some of them are beyond saving, it appears. Paul will be finding ways to help the fathers become self-employed so they can move away from the camps. Now Paul has the International Committee of the Red Cross calling for their immediate evacuation and scurrying to find trailers (caravans) for the families Paul helps to escape these UN-sponsored death traps.

The world is truly blessed to have men like Yechiel Bar Chaim and Paul Polansky working together.

Working with Yechiel and Paul was not our first involvement with the Roma. We first learned of their plight in Czechoslovakia years ago. We know that during the war, they had been treated almost as brutally by the Nazis as Jews were, but while Jews spoke up after the war and were compensated by Germany, the Roma had hardly anyone to





speak up for them and even now have received little compensation. The Roma are disliked almost everywhere because they try to live in their closed society. Some are thieves, and their children, often not speaking Czech, are put into schools for disadvantaged children. It is a vicious circle that can be broken only through education. We first became involved by funneling support through Charter 77 and now through to the Joint, with Nadace Via, an organization in Prague that supports Roma educational efforts.

Eventually I asked Yechiel what he thought of our collaboration, and his response almost overwhelmed me:

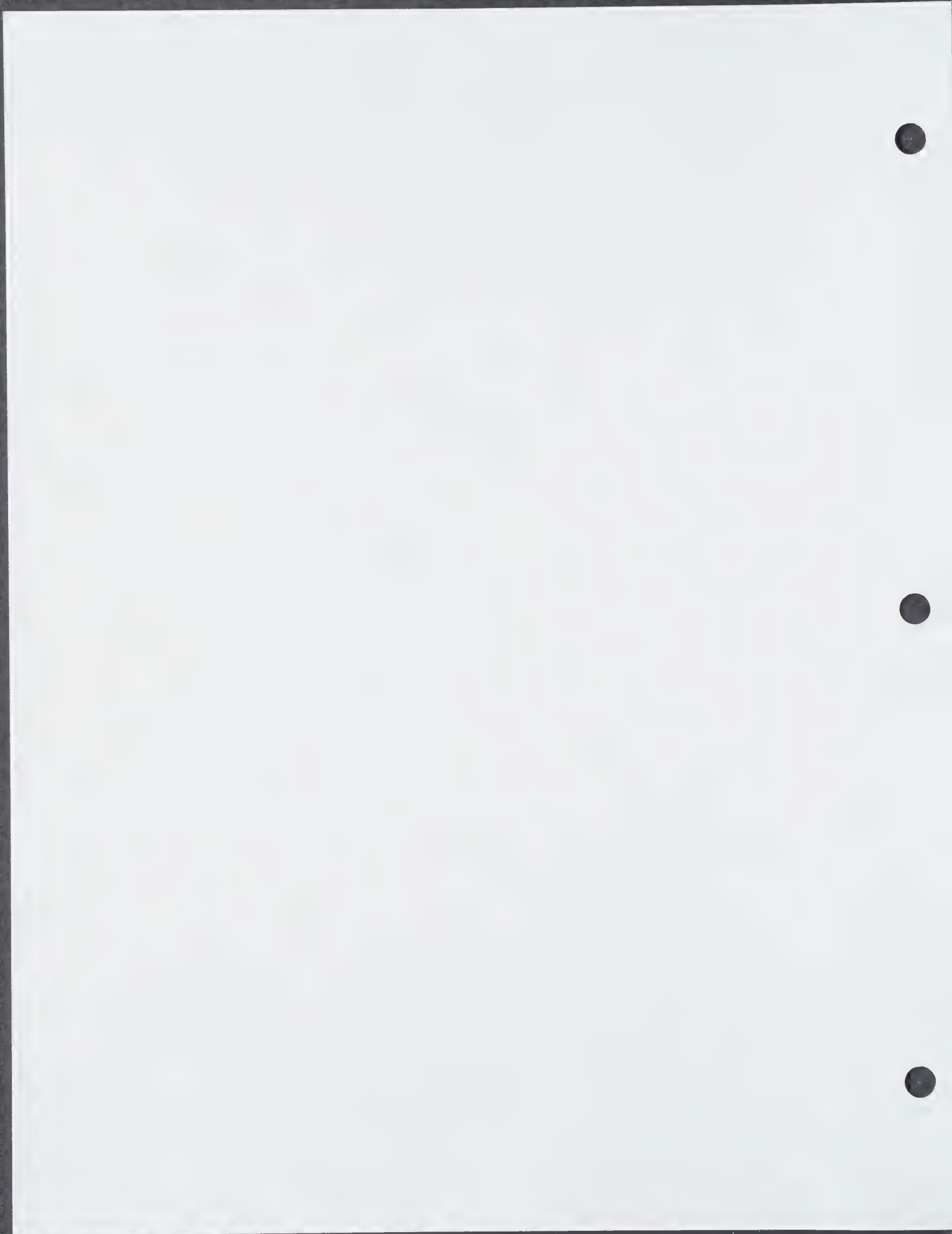
How might one characterize the philanthropic giving you channel through the JOINT (and thus through me)?

There is a saying attributed to the great teacher Hillel in the Talmudic Tractate, *Pirke Avot*, (The Savings of the Fathers II: 6), which in English goes as follows:

*“In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man.”*

Now this phrase has two markedly different interpretations, both of which you seem to fulfill.

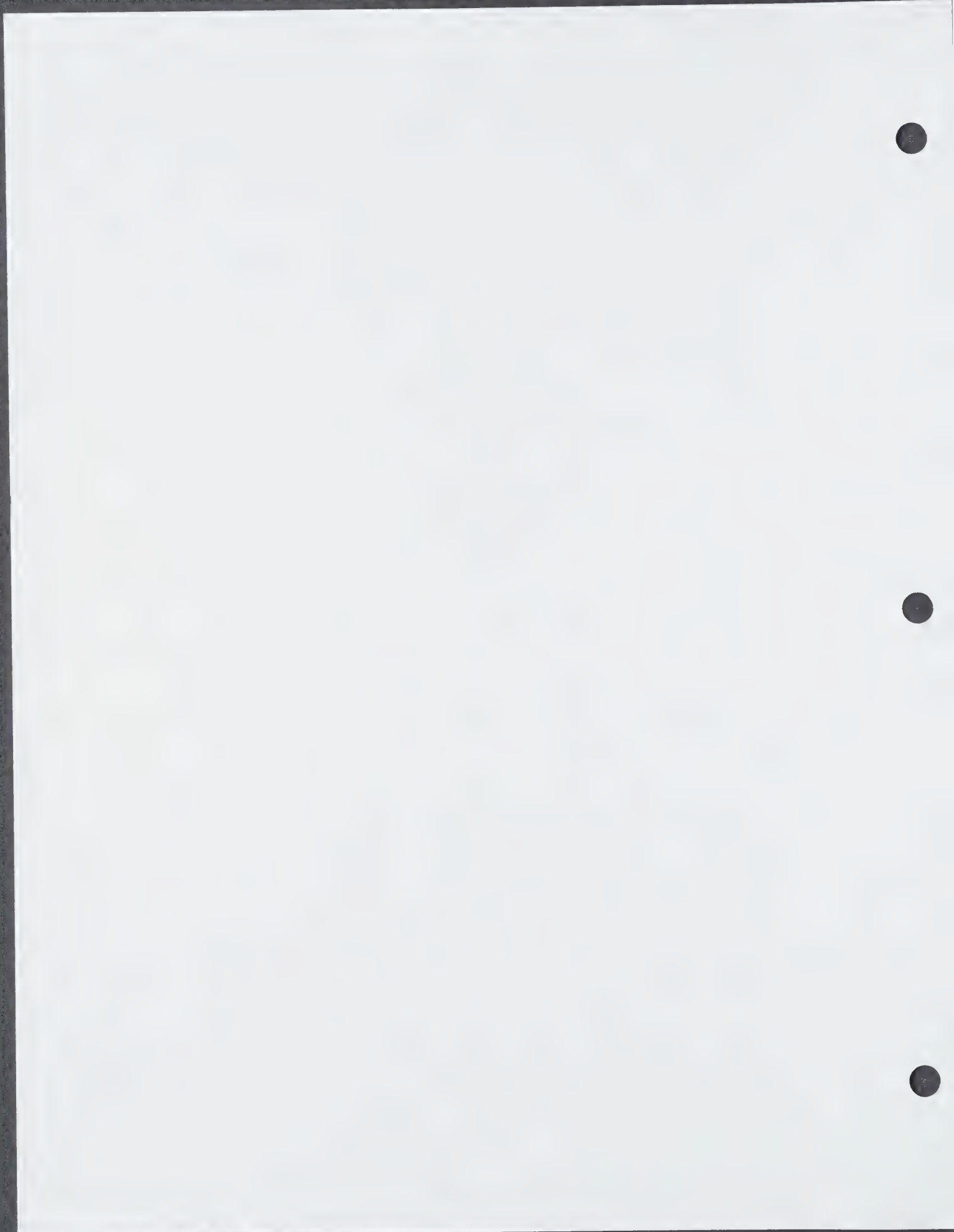
It might be thought that virtuous behavior requires interaction with other, like-minded men. Yet here Hillel characteristically stresses the importance of individual independence. *One should be virtuous even in the absence of any partners or*



*observers.* When it comes to supporting a soup kitchen for the poor in Novi Sad (Serbia) or vocational training for Roma refugees from Kosovo living near Skopje (Macedonia), I am well placed to assure you that when we began these projects no one anywhere in the vicinity had any idea who Alfred Bader was. And I presume that even now these places mean little to those who have known you for years.

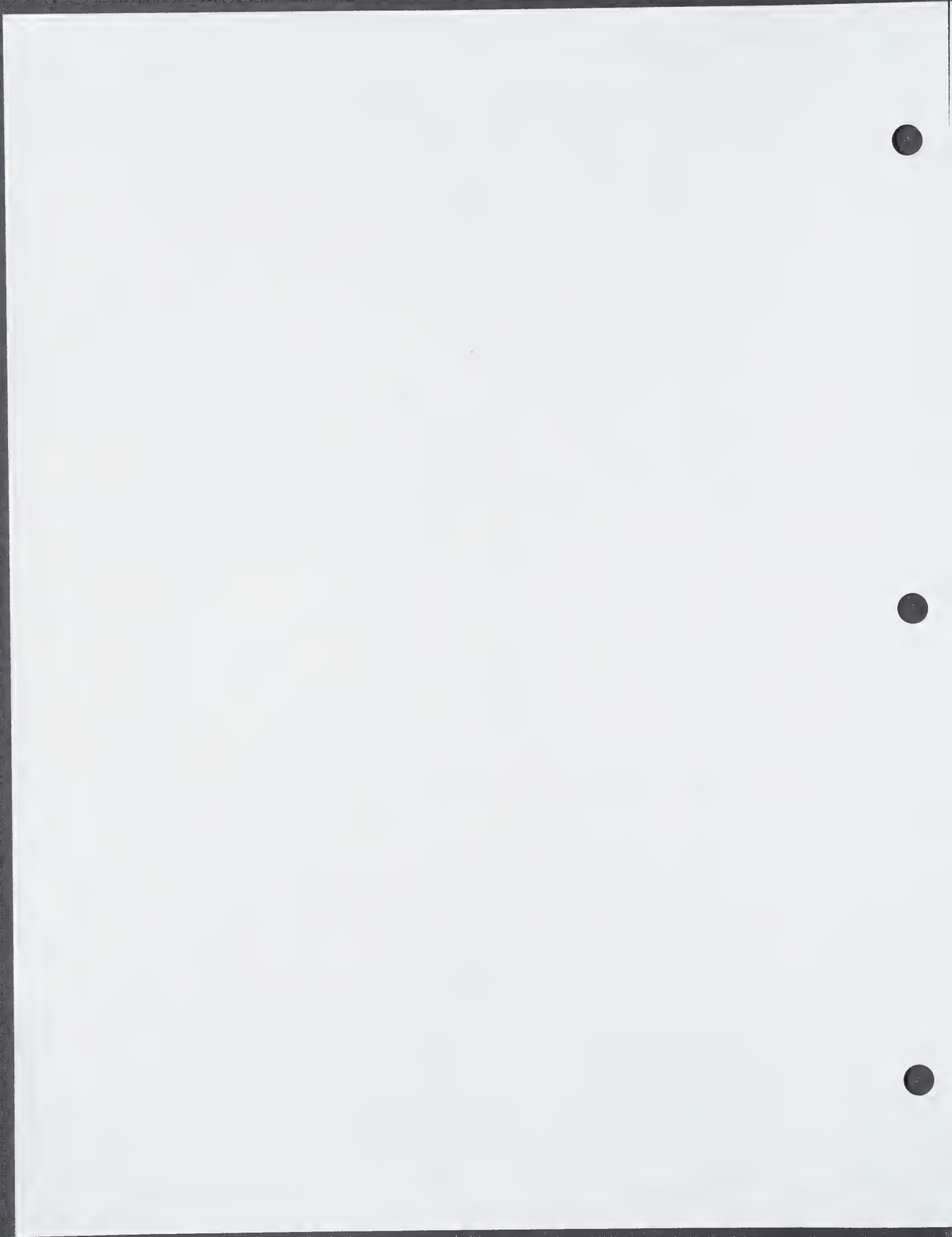
You yourself refused any sort of plaque or naming ceremony in these locations, saying justly, "*My family has never had any connection to the Balkans.*" The most we have been able to do for you is to name as "*Bader Vests*" the sweaters made by paraplegic women in Sarajevo for individuals living in institutions or homebound elderly.

The second interpretation --- which I like better --- has a "High Noon" ring about it. *Where no one else will step forward, you do it.* The first project we ever did together exemplifies this approach. When the Bosnian War ended, there were nearly 200 NGO's working in Sarajevo, all basically looking for ways to help the most deprived, the neediest victims of the conflict. Left out of these considerations, however, was the vital center, the capable young men and women whose potential was being ignored. You enabled us to introduce entrepreneurship training for these individuals, and based on the same rationale our local partners built an important micro-lending operation to go with it that still thrives today.



You have, I would say also introduced a so-called "Bader Corollary" to Hillel's Talmudic dictum. Phrase it this way, "*Where there are men present, go elsewhere.*" Thus, when other funders are already helping, your tendency has been to say, "*Count me out. I'll save my resources for those causes that others overlook.*" Thus you were distinctly reluctant to assist after the catastrophic floods in the Czech Republic in 2002, precisely because everyone else was rushing to chip in. Only when I found an overlooked, nearly orphaned school in Prague which served the youngest mentally challenged children --- most of them Roma --- a school with a playground dangerously polluted by two meters of floodwaters, did you come forward. If I am not mistaken a picture of a cheerfully costumed child taken during the festive re-opening of that playground should grace this book.

In your philanthropy you take special pleasure, Alfred, it seems to me in recognizing merit that has been heretofore overlooked. Just like you like discovering masterpieces of art in unsuspected paintings. How else to understand your efforts to build up the reputation of that until now less than well-known nineteenth century Czech chemist, Josef Loschmidt, or your lonely efforts to support the Jewish School in Vienna in memory of its noble headmaster at the time of the Anschluss, or your re-establishment of the Ignaz Lieben Prize for scientific achievement in the former Habsburg Empire, a prize initially established by a prominent Jewish family in Vienna that also fell victim to Nazi depredations.

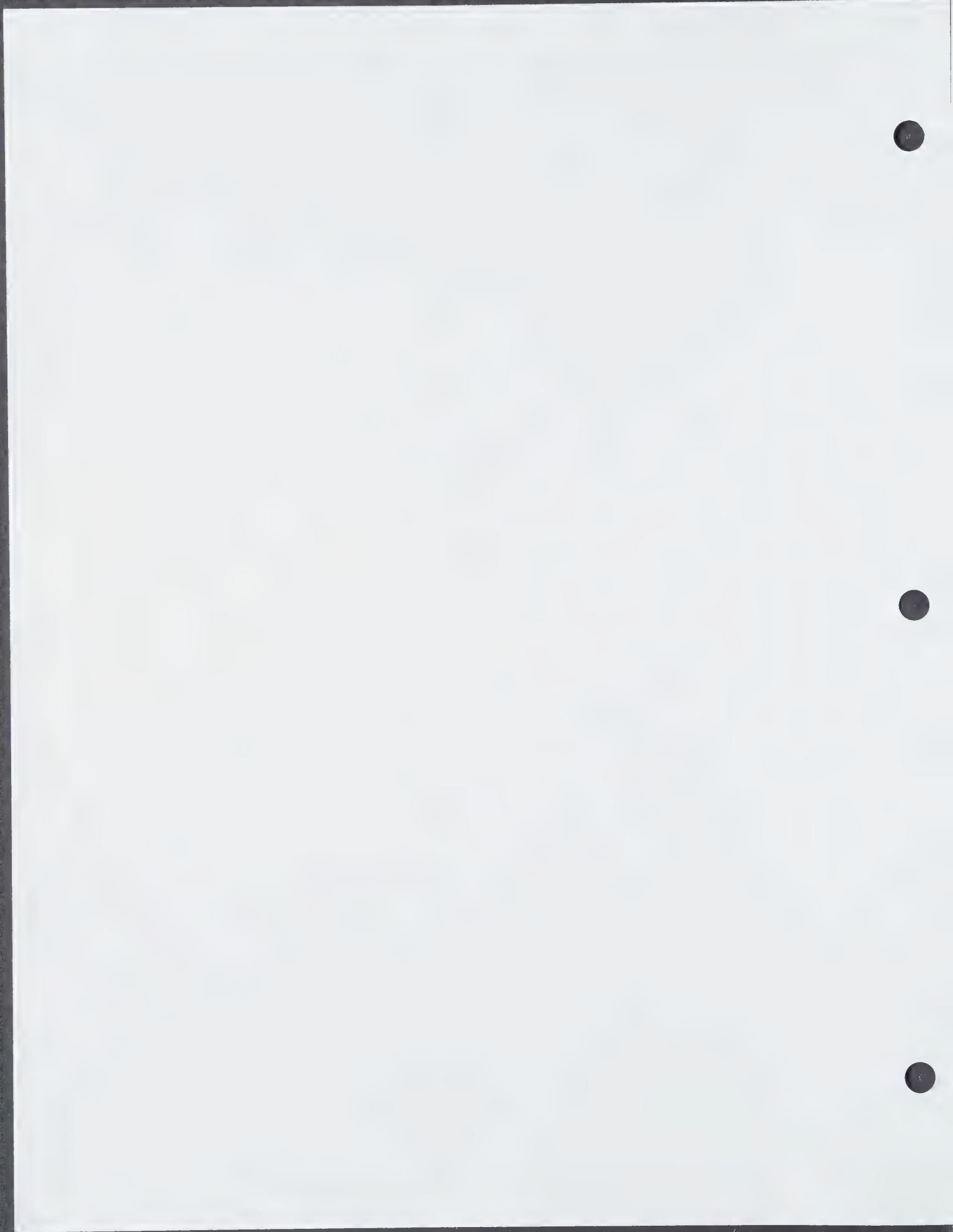


By my reading, you like to combine a certain sense of righteous indignation (drawn perhaps from your faithful teaching over the years of the Hebrew prophets) with an unswerving respect for personal character (a trait in my experience which no one who had ever studied at Harvard can ever fully escape). Thus the sterling record of the British Quakers in saving Jewish children from the Nazis (including yourself) during World War II had endeared them to you forever.

Of course you would never describe your philanthropy in the terms I have used above. As you always like to tell me, "*I just like to help 'good people'.*" Yet that seemingly straightforward ethical principle has proven to be one of our most challenging issues.

Thanks to one of your grants, JDC-Israel was able to train Roma --- living under frightful conditions of poverty and multiple discrimination in East Jerusalem --- to work as caterers or cleaning staff in hotels. But when these Roma insisted on being paid in black so as not to put their welfare benefits in jeopardy, you pulled the plug. My colleagues in Israel are still trying to figure out how to do it right.

A special trip to Vienna --- and from what I could tell your entire afternoon with Isabel --- was upset when I informed you that I had used some of the funds you had put at my discretion to organize through the Jewish Community of Zagreb a summer camp on the Dalmatian Coast for young juvenile delinquents. But juvenile delinquents just didn't qualify as 'good people.' Only when we were able to clarify



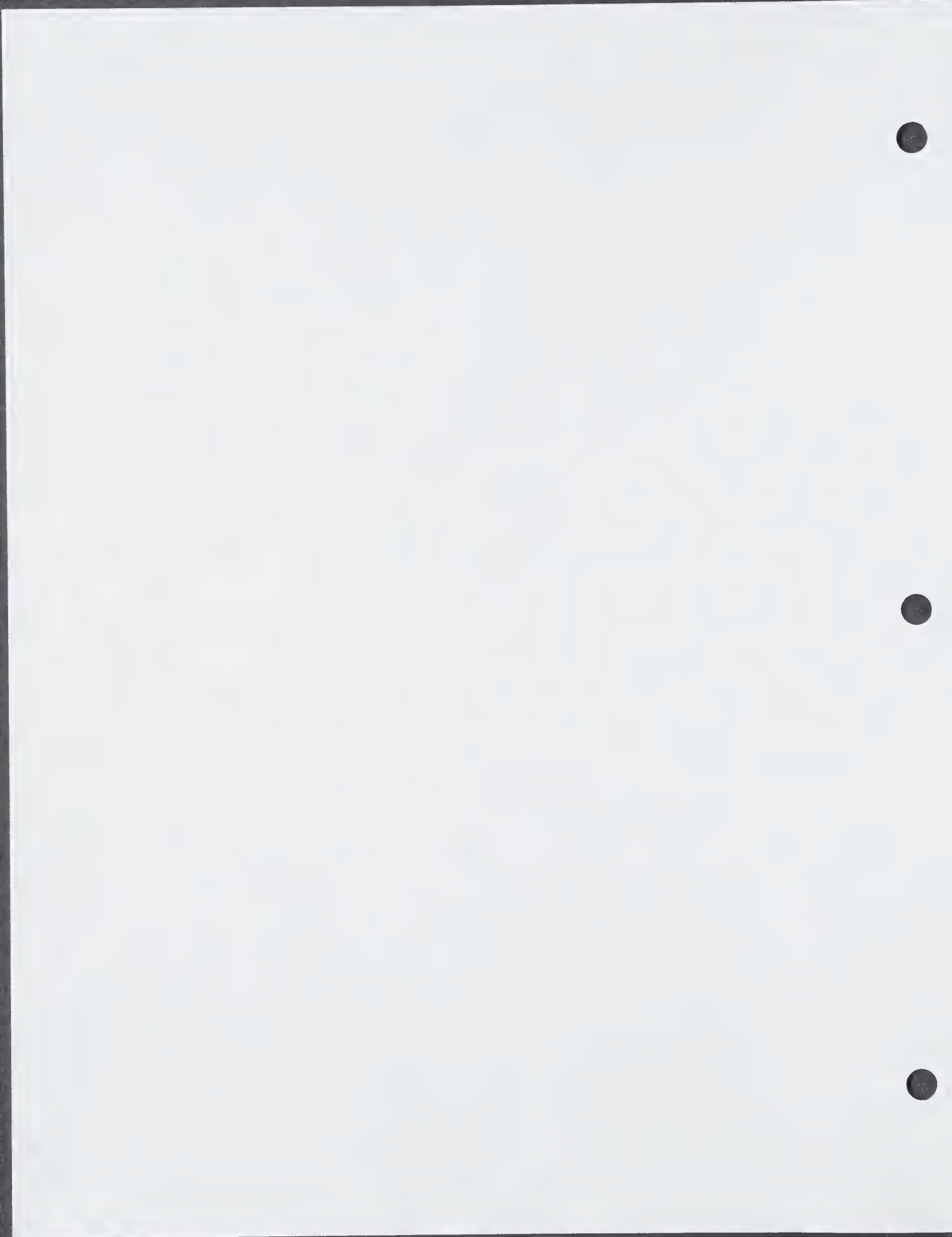


much later that these youngsters were in reality only "children at risk" who had good chances of not becoming juvenile delinquents if given the right care, could the argument be settled and the project carry on.

More seriously, this debate between us has continued over your considerable philanthropic aid to projects in Serbia. Certainly before, but even after, Slobodan Milosevic was deposed as the leader of Serbia and Montenegro and put on trial in The Hague, you felt uncomfortable about such assistance. In making the case to you for putting mentally retarded adults to work producing furniture or providing a modern, sanitary kitchen for children from Kosovo still living in refugee camps years after the war ended, I have sometimes imagined the scene when Abraham had to argue with the Almighty on behalf of even the smallest number of virtuous residents in Sodom.

What a delight it is to be able to work with a man of such strong character and principles! In discussing which path to take in directing your gifts towards worthy goals we have to wrestle over questions of morality and politics. I love it.

At any given moment your thoughts and reactions seem to reach back in time. They draw on your varied past, coursing over the so markedly different phases of your own life. They touch on fierce loyalties and acute sensitivities that sometimes I can only guess at. Vienna: England; the internment camp in Quebec, Queens



University in Canada; Harvard; Milwaukee; Prague ... they all speak in many different voices through you and through your special generosity.

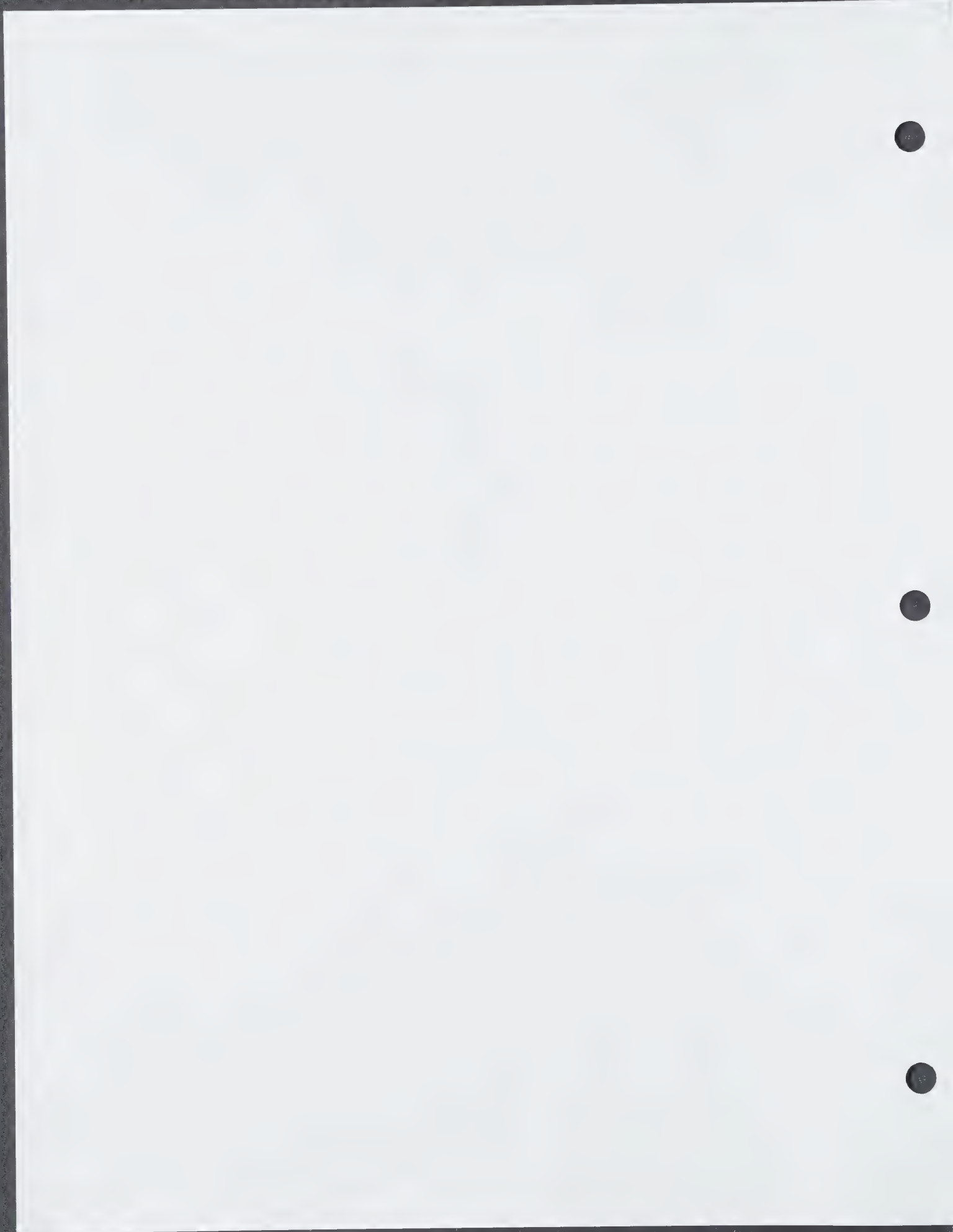
Alfred, I feel I am especially privileged to work with you.

The biggest challenge of course is that so much remains to be done and to be done well. Whenever I become especially overwhelmed by the opportunities you open up for me, it is another phrase from *Pirke Avot* to which I turn. This teaching is attributed to Rabbi Tarphon, and perhaps it can bring you comfort as well.

*“It is not up to you to finish the work, but neither are you free to turn aside from it.”*

We first thought about helping in the Balkans when our old friend Jane Whistler returned from Sarajevo in 1994. She had gone there with an organization called “Through Heart to Peace” of the Dandelion Trust, Women helping Women. She told us about the great help being given by the small Jewish community led by Jacob Finci. The old synagogue in Sarajevo was the only safe building in the city, and the community was trying to help everyone it could. Jane wondered whether Isabel and I might be able to help in Bosnia, perhaps through Queen’s University.

Following her suggestion, we learned that Queen’s did indeed have a strong presence in Bosnia, through an organization with the cumbersome name International Centre for the Advancement of Community-Based Rehabilitation (ICACBR). Dr



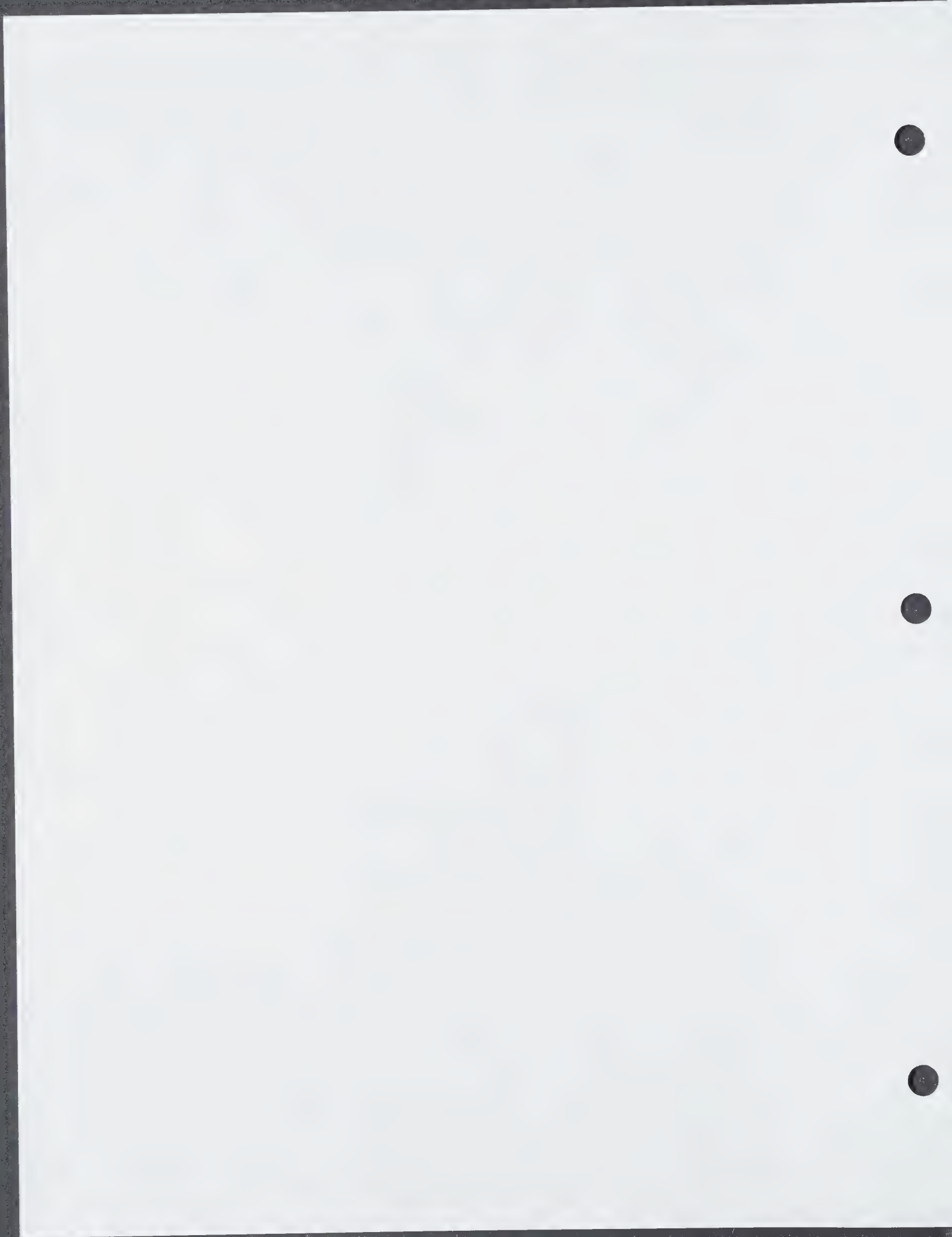
Malcolm Peat, the director of the Queen's School of Rehabilitation Therapy, spent a long time in Sarajevo where help was indeed needed so badly. During a visit to Queen's in 1995, the dean of medicine at Sarajevo University reported that "in Sarajevo alone 12,000 citizens, including 2500 children have been killed over the past three years. Our surgery has performed over two million operations to remove shrapnel!" We were very impressed by the work of Dr Peat and Queen's students, so in 1995, we gave Queen's U.S. \$500,000 to help Dr Peat in his work with the traumatized in Bosnia.

One of our happiest days in Prague was Friday, 13 June 2003, described so clearly by Alan Levy in the *Prague Post* of 25 June 2003<sup>(fig.)</sup>

### **A playground for outsiders**

Partly because he has roots in southern Moravia, Bader endows prestigious annual prizes and a professorship in organic chemistry at Masaryk University in Brno. He also funds Bader Art History Fellowships for Czech scholars to do research, mostly abroad, and Bader Science Fellowships enabling four Czech students a year to do their doctoral work at the Imperial College in London and three Ivy League universities: Harvard, Columbia and Pennsylvania.

There is a non-elitist side to Bader's generosity, epitomized by his motto: "Save my money for somebody left out." In recent years, he and his wife have been active in humanitarian and educational aid programs for Roma (Gypsies).

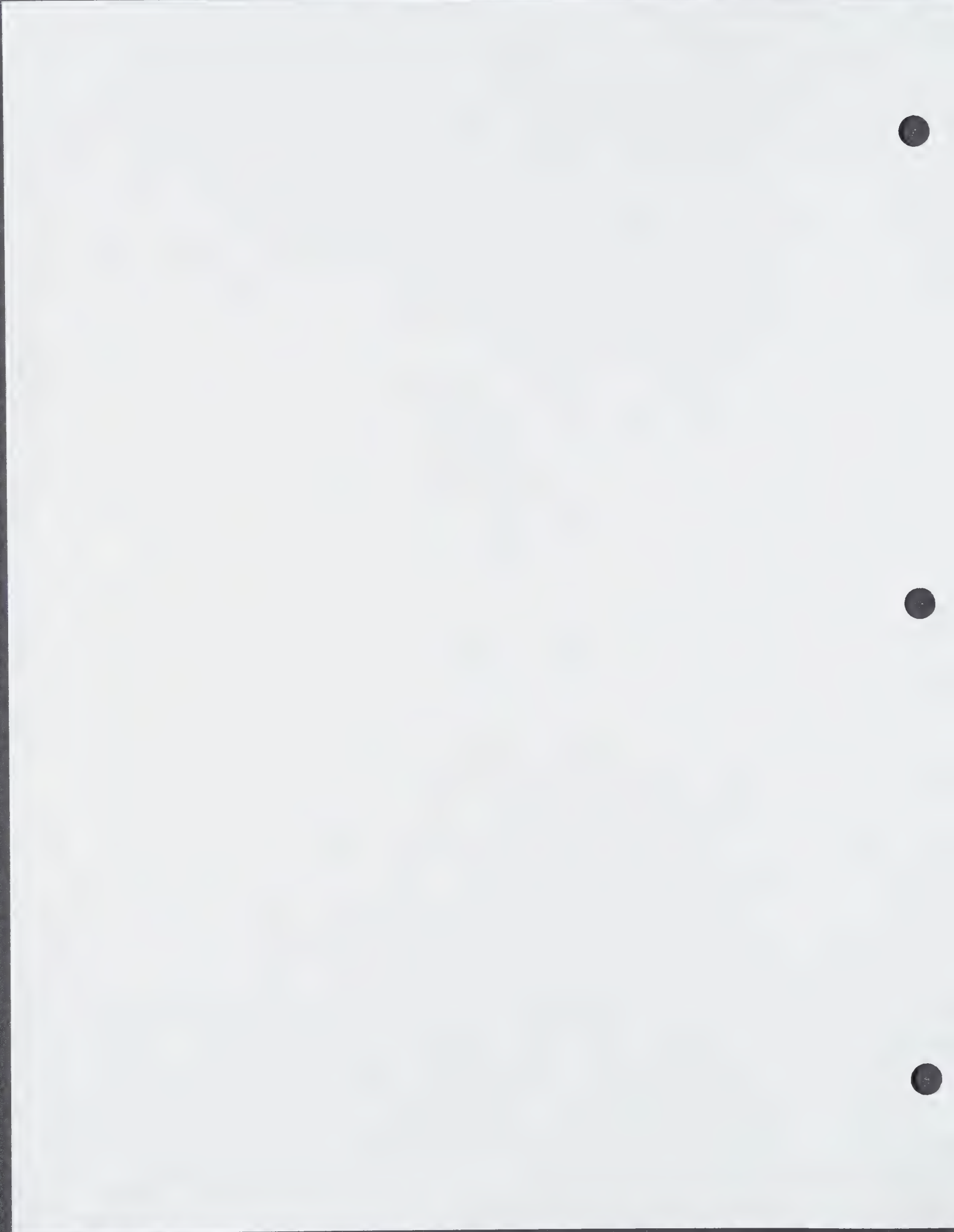


One of the reasons they visited Prague in June is a case history in how philanthropy can prove profitable for everyone:

In Prague's flood-devastated Karlin sector, the Molakova street special school for 120 children classified as mentally or socially underdeveloped (90 percent of them Roma) was heavily damaged by last August's waters. City funds weren't readily forthcoming to repair the school. So the children were dispersed to study in special shifts, if at all.

To encourage action, Bader pledged \$20,000 (now 540,000 Kc) toward repair of the school *if* City Hall would match that sum. Neither school director Jitka Vargova nor the municipal officials to whom she brought Bader's offer had ever heard of matching grants, so the bureaucrats threw up their hands and gave her the entire 5.5 million Kc needed to restore the school.

Pleased but embarrassed, Vargova offered the Baders their money back. No way! Instead, they re-earmarked the money to dredge a sea of contaminated mud coating the school's garden. When work started, it was discovered that soil and plant contamination was much less than feared. So the money was reassigned again – this time for architect Josef Smola to create a state-of-the-art playground in the school's garden.



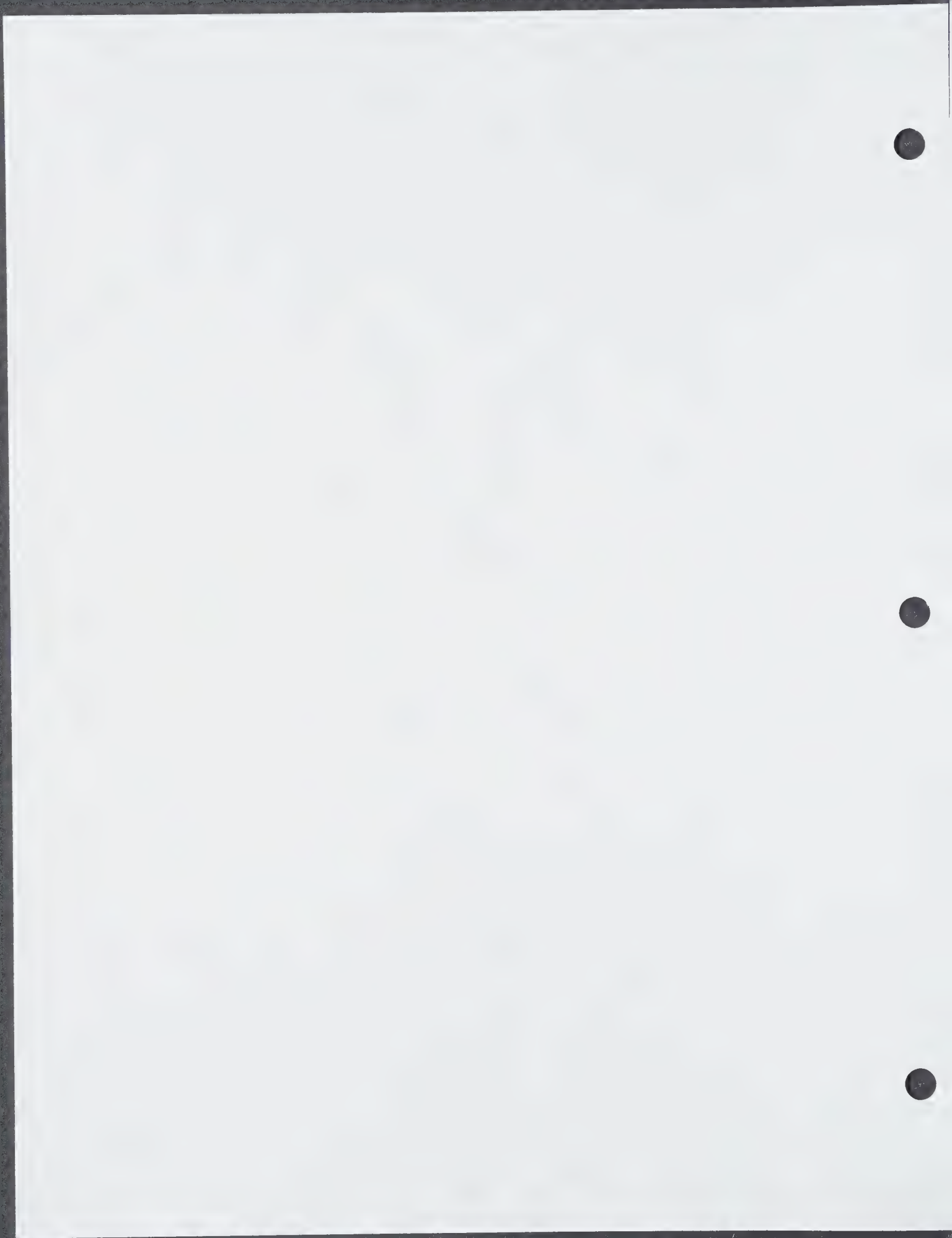


Complete with slides, swings, climbing wall, gazebo and wicked-witch hut, the playground was opened on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> by the roly-poly, cherubic philanthropist and his slender, elegant wife. During the speechmaking and after the ribbon-cutting, this loving and generous couple held hands, already enjoying their gift as much as the kids who couldn't and didn't wait to start using it.

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Through the Joint we have also helped the ablest in art history and chemistry in the Czech Republic. After some initial difficulties, both proceed relatively straightforwardly. Two awards go to young Czech chemists, one in organic chemistry and one in bioorganic/bioinorganic chemistry chosen by the Czech Chemical Society. Awards for students in baroque art are chosen with the help of an old friend, Milena Bartlova, and in June of 2003 there was a ten year celebration in Prague, organized by Yechiel, with some 30 art historians who had received the Bader awards. We were very pleased to see that students who ten years ago were much more confined in their areas of interest have now branched out confidently after study outside the Czech Republic. Some have found positions abroad but many have returned, enriching Czech art history.

Our most ambitious and difficult effort was to establish a chair in chemistry at the Masaryk University in Brno. To be called the Josef Loschmidt chair, after one of the ablest Bohemian born chemists of the nineteenth century (see Chapter 15 for more about Loschmidt), it was the first chair in chemistry funded in the Czech Republic by an outsider. The only difficulty we foresaw at the beginning was that the academics in Brno insisted that the salary offered be very low, initially \$20,000, so that the Loschmidt



professor would not be paid more than they were. This would mean that few who had studied outside the Czech Republic would be interested in applying because they could earn far more elsewhere. Far greater difficulties followed.

The simple contract (appendix B) that Dean Jan Slovak, Isabel, and I signed in August 2001 established a Josef Loschmidt professorship in physical organic chemistry, this position to be an addition to the existing faculty of the department. The University did indeed have great difficulty in attracting a suitable candidate, partly because of the low salary and partly because many able Czech chemists prefer to work in Prague, where they can be in close contact with the country's ablest chemists. Eventually, a very able young biochemist, Dr Jiri Damborsky, applied. He had worked at the Masaryk University for seven years after receiving his PhD there and had won the Bader Award in bioorganic chemistry in 2003. Our belief that he was an excellent choice has been borne out by the fine scientific work he does and also by his efforts to make Josef Loschmidt's chemistry known. As he came from within the university, we expected his department to find a junior to replace him. This has still not happened, probably for the same reasons that made finding the chemist for the Loschmidt chair so difficult.

But a much larger problem arose. Professor Damborsky received ample funding for his research, particularly from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the Czech Ministry of Education. With seven PhD students and several assistants and postdocs, he produced world-class biochemical research. But the Masaryk University was building a new chemistry building, to be completed in 2005, and the department was unwilling to give him sufficient laboratories in the new building! Clearly nasty politics were involved. Dean Slovak, who had signed our contract, was really sympathetic, and at first



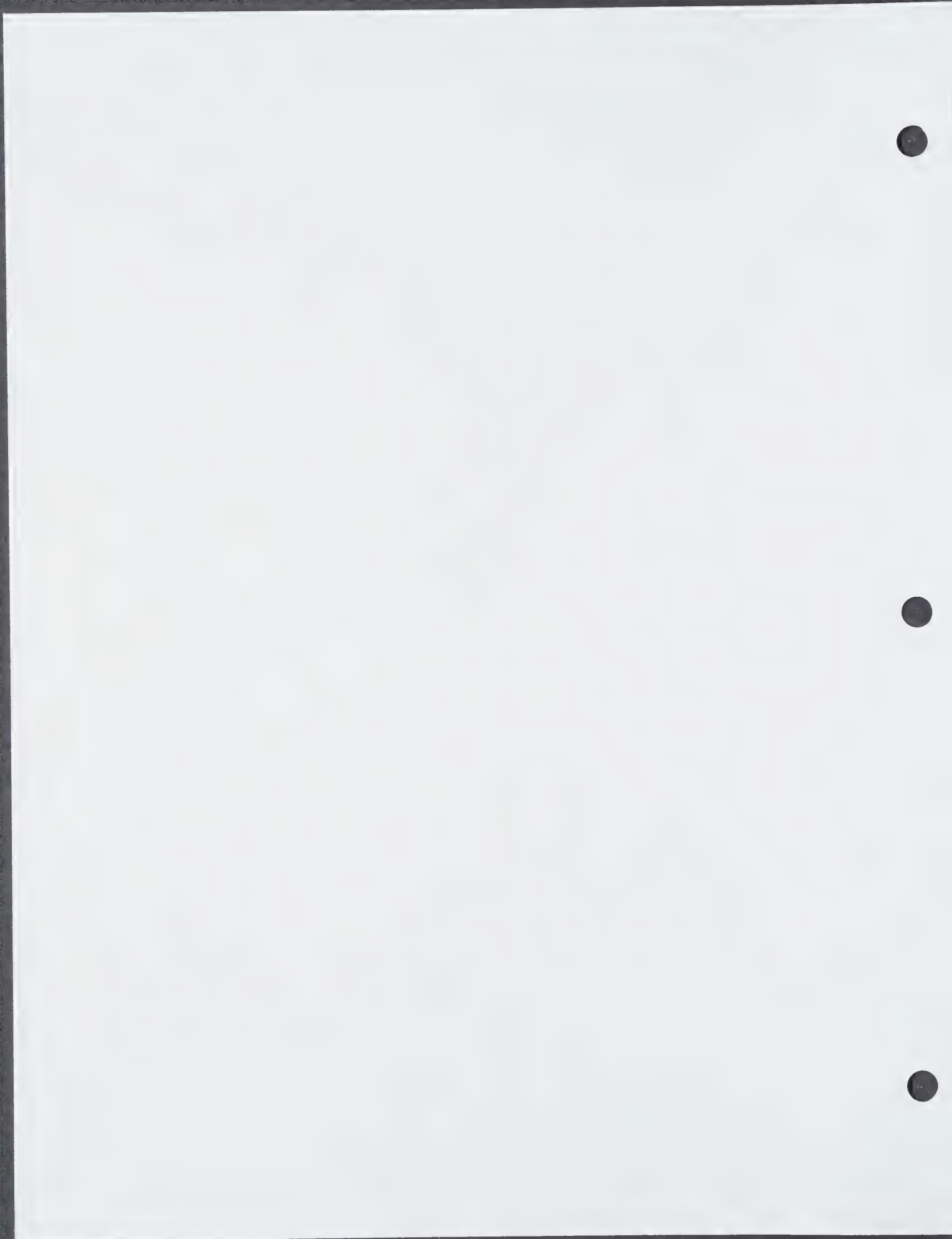
so was his successor, Dean Milan Gelnar. But at least one senior professor created such opposition that Professor Damborsky seriously considered accepting a position in Prague. It had not occurred to us to put into the contract that the Loschmidt professor should be provided with adequate space. We have been staggered by all this, since he is clearly an excellent research professor and his care for his students is admirable.

To force him to leave would, of course, end the Loschmidt Chair, as the university would have broken its contract. Perhaps we should have taken legal counsel before establishing the chair, but donors seldom question the good faith of the recipients. At first we only questioned the wisdom of the low salary, which was easily raised.

We visited the Masaryk University in June 2005 and spoke strongly with the key players. That helped, and Professor Damborsky was really happy in his new laboratories. But not for long.

In July 2003, Yechiel Bar-Chaim wrote to Dean Gelnar, "Do we understand correctly that the Loschmidt Chair will be a tenured university position (for life) since Dr Bader has assured that the Chair will continue to be funded for the foreseeable future?" and the Dean replied that month:

There is no doubt that the Loschmidt Chair will be a tenured university position for life. However, in the agreement between MU and Drs. Isabel and Alfred Bader from August 24, 2001, The Josef Loschmidt professor have to be chosen as professors in the Department (it means Dept. Org. Chem.). According to our rules there is need to have first contract for shorter time (maximum 5 years) and after it is possible to have contract for longer time, in our case for life.

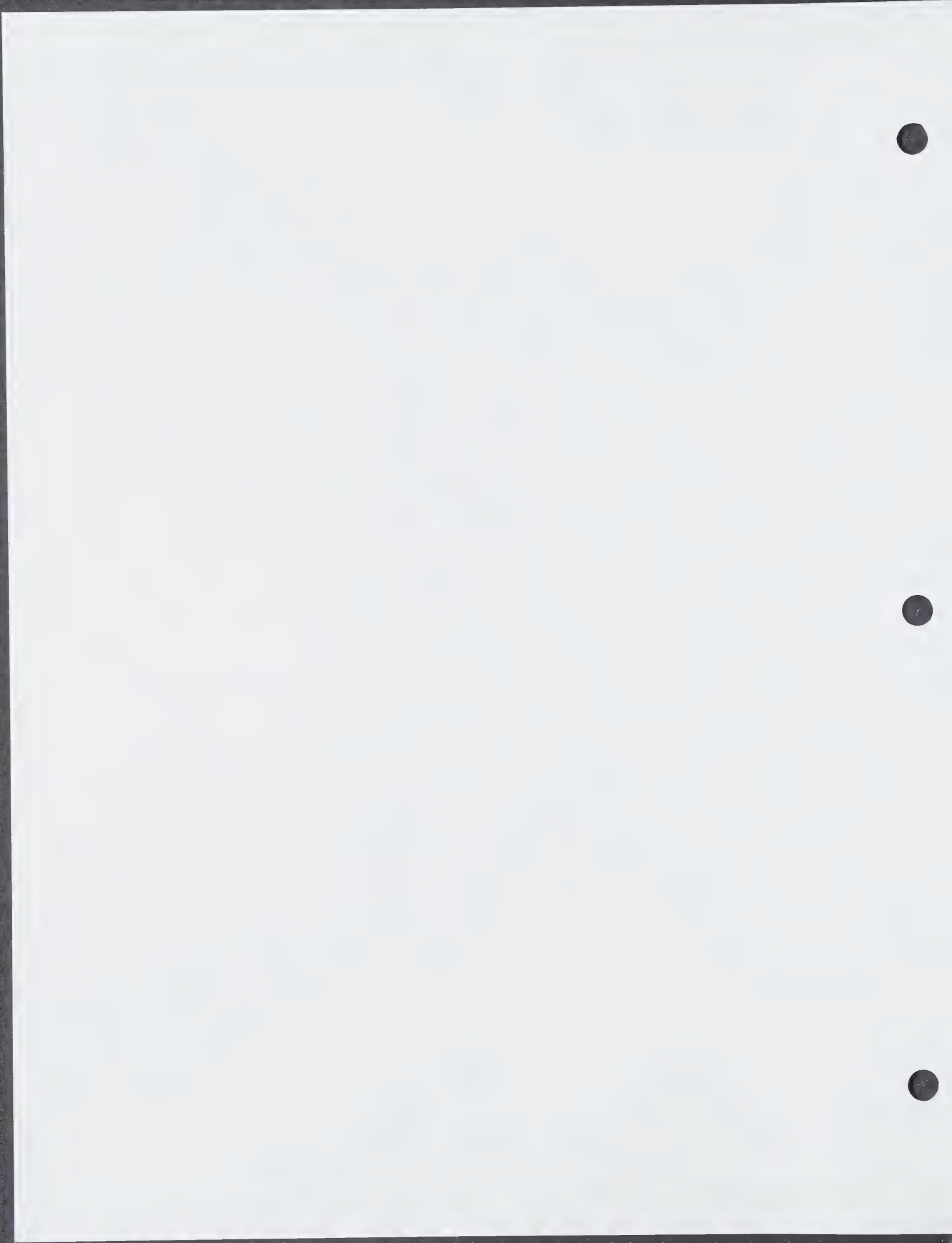


We discussed all these matters with Dr Damborsky and again with full agreement with him we decided to have first contract for 5 years. However, it is important to know, within 6-8 months Dr Damborsky will defend his habilitation thesis to be formally appointed as professor here. After his event, we can have another contract for him and there is no administrative barrier to have this contract for much longer time even for life.

After this correspondence and our meeting in Brno in June 2005, we assumed that Professor Damborsky would receive tenure, and were truly staggered by a letter from the vice-rector for science, Jana Musilova, sent in January 2007 advising us that Professor Damborsky's employment contract expires on 31 August 2008 and that "the Dean of the Faculty of Science is bent on to open a competition for Loschmidt chair."

Professor Damborsky is an excellent teacher who has done world-class research that has been published widely. Through his Web site, [www.loschmidt.cz](http://www.loschmidt.cz), he has made Josef Loschmidt well known. He was promised tenure, and now he would be asked to leave in August 2008. If this happens, there will be no point in the Dean looking for another chair, because we will take the position that the university has broken the contract and we will not continue to support it.

What a nightmare! Isabel and I were so proud to help establish the first chair in the Czech Republic funded by an outsider. An excellent scientist and great teacher was found, and the university administrators do not understand their good fortune. This is such a mystery to us. On 15 August 2007 a very important patent was issued to Professor





Damborsky and his group and later that month the university organized a press conference about this patent and the projects going on in the Loschmidt Laboratories. On 4 October 2007 Mirek Topolánek, the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, visited the Loschmidt Laboratories to congratulate personally the team working on the development of the patented technology. Yet Professor Damborsky has still not been assured that he will receive tenure! And as of this writing, we still do not know whether the Loschmidt Chair will survive beyond the August 2008 expiration of Professor Damborsky's initial contract.

One of our ongoing gifts that brings us a lot of pleasure is to Project SEED (Summer Educational Experience for the Disadvantaged) of the American Chemical Society, about which I wrote in some detail in my first *Adventures* (pp. 263-266). Project SEED provides economically disadvantaged high school students with opportunities to conduct mentored research in academic, industry, or government laboratories during the summer. The original program was for one summer. Because we believed that it would be a great advantage to offer these students a second summer's research, we helped start the SEED II program, and have recently given funds that the ACS has matched for about twenty college scholarships to support former Project SEED students who are accepted at universities. We have been so happy to see how well many of these students are doing, most in chemistry and chemical engineering, but some also in other disciplines, medicine and dentistry for instance.

In Milwaukee, we have been really impressed by the many educational efforts of Chabad, the Lubavitch organization. Two of my grandsons, Carlos and Alex, have gone to their nursery school. Chabad now directs the Hillel Academy, one of the local Jewish

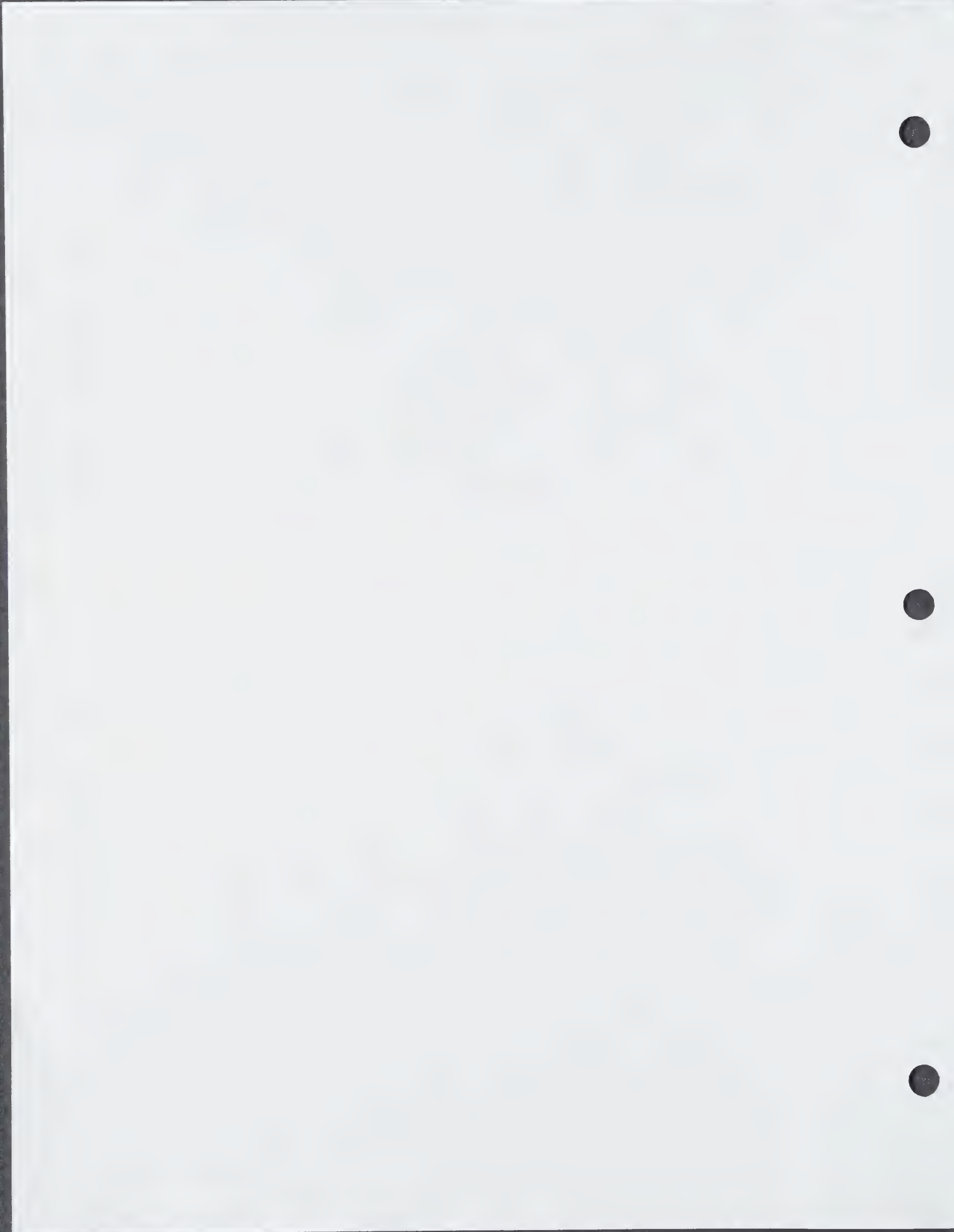


day schools, and one of the rabbis, Mendel Shmotkin<sup>(fig.)</sup>, has become our good personal friend. We have been able to help to get them completely out of their debt, and Rabbi Shmotkin has guided us to help elsewhere, for instance the Chabad orphanage in Dnepopetrovsk.

Establishing bursaries for able students who need some financial help seemed eminently sensible to Isabel and me, because both of us benefited from scholarships and bursaries when we were students. Isabel established the first such bursaries at Victoria University in Toronto where she graduated in 1949. Bursaries at University College in London, at Edinburgh University, and the University of Glasgow followed. Victoria and Edinburgh have been clear and punctual in their reporting to us, and it gives us such pleasure to see how well some of the students have done. At University College, the funds for the bursaries were mixed up with the funds for an annual prize I had given earlier, but that has now been straightened out. With Glasgow, we have had the surprising problem that time and again we do not receive its promised annual reports about the students receiving the awards.

We have often said that of my four jobs, three are easy; the fourth, giving money away sensibly is the most difficult.

Helping the ablest is *relatively easy*. Bursaries, scholarships, and fellowships help the ablest and most, though not all, are easily monitored. Problems can arise in the most surprising places, totally unexpectedly. For instance, I made two gifts to the Department of Chemistry of the University of Sussex. In 1990 I gave the funds for an annual prize in organic chemistry and in 1992, funds for another in organometallic chemistry. I urged the University to invest the capital in long-term government bonds then yielding well

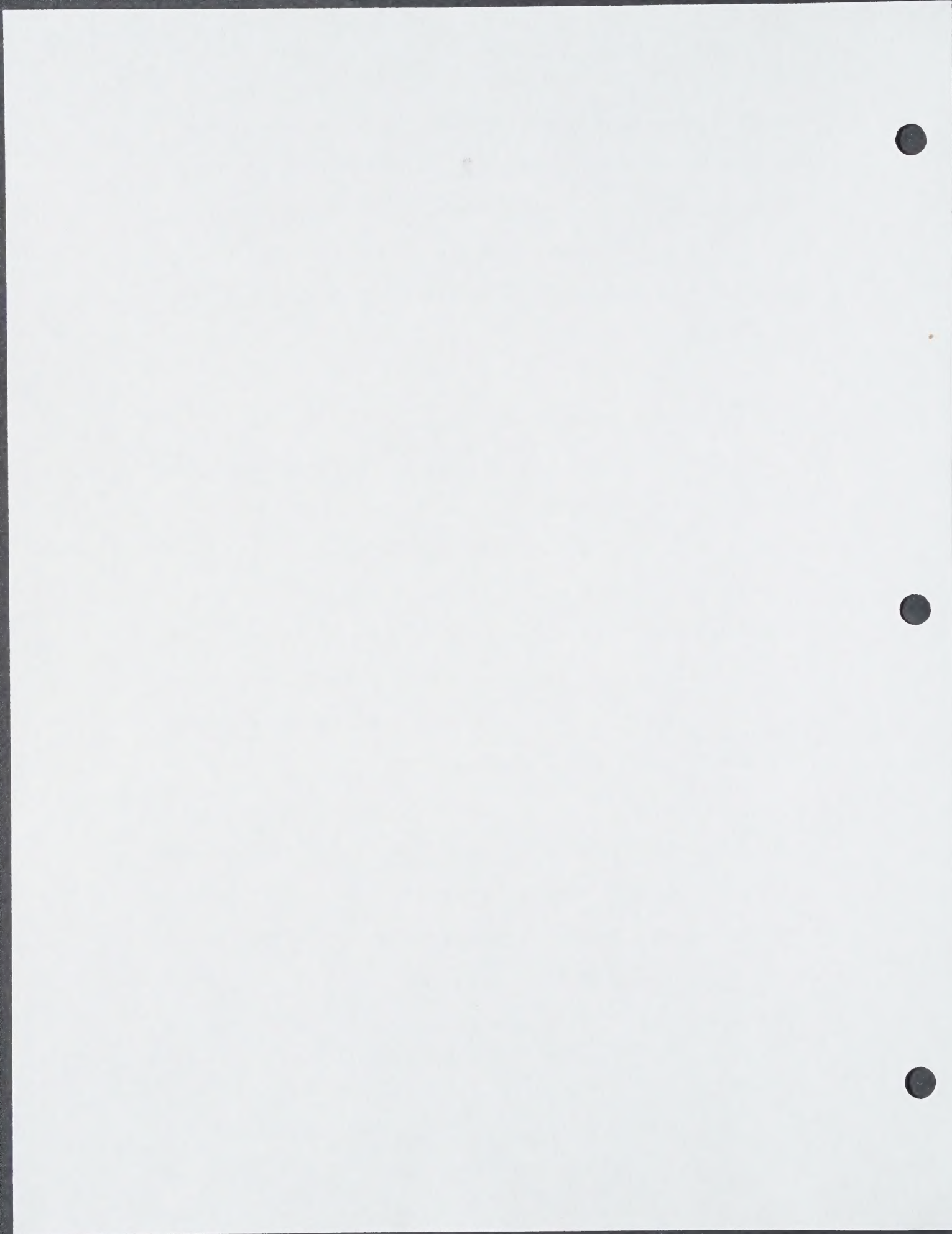


over 12 percent so that the awards would be assured. This the university did not do. Interest rates declined, as did the capital, and by 2001, the funds had declined to the point where it was no longer possible to make the awards; the university last gave them in 2001-2 and then stopped. Although I visit the Chemistry Department each year, no one mentioned this to me until I inquired about the prizes in 2006. Professor Philip Parsons wrote to me in November:

During 2003-04 Robert Smith, the then Dean of Chemistry, Physics and Environmental Science, was informed by Finance Administration that the capital value of the fund was being eroded given that the annual interest no longer covered the annual prizes of £1k. It was therefore felt that the prizes could not be covered from interest alone and the option of offering a prize every third or fourth year was considered. However, it was felt that this was not in line with your intention that a £1k prize should be awarded annually. It was therefore concluded that these funds would have a finite life and be treated as donations. However, the records held do not indicate precisely what was agreed finally.

Of course, I was really saddened and annoyed. I asked whether I could not increase the capital so that the interest would be sufficient to give the two awards in perpetuity. I have been told that this is possible and made this gift in December 2006. Naturally, from now on I will inquire every year who the award winners are.

Caveat donor.



How to we help the neediest? Again, in Milwaukee it is relatively simple, particularly with the advice of Linda and Daniel and the Helen Bader Foundation. But in the world, in Africa and Asia? In the Balkans we have the help of Yechiel and Paul Polansky, and there even fifty or a hundred thousand dollars help. But in Africa, our gifts would be drops in a bucket and we feel so helpless.

Still, Isabel and I are so happy that we have been able to help many of the neediest and the ablest.

