

Card leads to miracle meeting

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In the season of miracles, two Brooklynites have had a special one this year.

Through a holiday greeting card that hardly seemed like it could achieve miraculous things, Kari Bornstein discovered an elderly man who was a friend of her grandfather's right after World War II - whom she'd only heard about because he died before she was born.



Kari Bornstein (l.) found another 'grandparent' in Shlomo Spielman, who was a friend of her grandfather's after WWII.

"He was a big, beautiful guy. Everyone loved him," Shlomo Spielman, 87, told Bornstein of her grandfather, Karl.

In 1946, Spielman lived in a displaced persons camp in Bad Reichenhall, Germany, across the street from where Karl Bornstein worked as the town's chief of police.

"The minute I heard Kari's name, her grandfather popped into my head," said Spielman.

Kari Bornstein first met Spielman through her work as a coordinator for the Meals on Wheels program at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Coney Island.

"Just before Thanksgiving, I [sent] the seniors a card," said Bornstein, "and I wrote my phone number on the envelope, just in case they needed to get in touch with me.

"Shlomo called to thank me for the card and said, 'I'm noticing your name. ...'"

He asked whether her grandfather was a policeman at Bad Reichenhall - and Bornstein got chills.

She told Spielman, "Now Shlomo, before we go any further, let me tell you my grandfather's name to make sure we're talking about the same person. There must be many Bornsteins around. My grandfather's name is Karl."

"Karl?" Spielman responded. "Akiva? Kivi? Sure, I knew your grandpa!"

"That's what my grandfather was called! Kivi!" Bornstein said.

Since then, Bornstein has made regular visits to Spielman's Sheepshead Bay apartment. "It feels like I have another grandparent," she said.

Spielman, who lost his immediate family in the Holocaust, was happy that this Chanukah he can count a friend's grandchild as his own friend.

"We are full of miracles," he said. "God has been watching over me."

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