

London City Press Club honours four 'newsmakers'

Newman thought call was joke

By **Sandra Coulson**

Free Press Lifestyles Reporter

A 20-year effort to memorialize an outstanding violinist and Holocaust victim has earned a London writer a place in the London City Press Club Newsmakers' Hall of Fame.

Richard (Dick) Newman, a former arts reviewer for The London Free Press, will be one of four inductees at the near sold-out event tomorrow. The others are:

■ **Paul Soles:** The actor, director, writer, singer and TV personality broke into radio while a student at Western. He worked at CFPL-TV when the station opened and later won a national amateur acting award. He was also co-host of Take 30 on CBC-TV for 22 years and continues acting.

■ **James Reaney:** The national literary figure has won three Governor General's Awards, three Chalmers Awards for drama and an Order of Canada. The retired UWO professor is best known for his interpretations of the Donnelly saga.

■ **Murray Brown:** He began his broadcasting career as a writer and

announcer with CFPL radio and helped start CFPL-TV. Still a director with Blackburn Radio, he has been named to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters hall of fame and was broadcaster of the year in 1975.

Newman's critically acclaimed book, *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*, published this year, was the result of a newspaper contact building into a friendship.

"People said I had to stop it some place. But there were little things that came up."

*Richard Newman, on why it took him longer than expected to write *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz**

Newman met Alfred Rosé, Alma's brother and a nephew of composer Gustav Mahler, when Alfred Rosé joined the music faculty at UWO in 1947. The contacts between the Rosés and the Newmans grew into the 1960s, when Rosé asked Newman to be co-executor of his estate.

"Alfred did not talk much about Alma. However, one day I found in a trunk in the basement letters from Alma and (their father) Arnold written from Vienna . . . during the war," Newman recalls.

He discovered a woman who was a gifted classical violinist, but often played popular music, perhaps to escape the shadow of her father, also a leading Viennese violinist.

Alfred fled to America as the Nazis took over Austria. Alma got Arnold to England, but then went to the Netherlands, where she could

still make a living as a musician.

She was caught by the Nazis trying to escape to Switzerland and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Bizarrely, in the concentration camp, she led an orchestra of female prisoners who had to play to stay alive. Four dozen camp musicians survived, but Alma fell ill and died in 1944 at the age of 37.

"It wasn't hard to get to know her because some of the letters she wrote were very appealing to Alfred," Newman said. "She hoped to get to the United States. One had a picture with 'Do not forget me' written on the back."

Newman started research for the book while working at The Free Press, squeezing it between assignments. Even after retirement in 1983, he found it took longer than he thought because he kept finding out more about his subject.

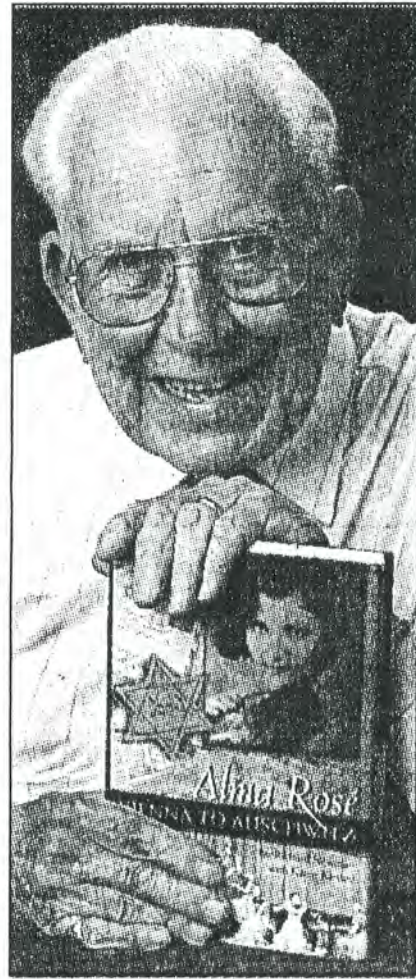
"People said I had to stop it some place. But there were little things that came up."

He said one woman who lived with Alma in the Netherlands teased, "You're falling in love with the woman."

In the end, Newman worked with Karen Kirtley, a freelance editor and writer with ties to the classical music world, to complete the book.

Newman says when he got the call to tell him he was going to be one of this year's inductees into the Newsmakers Hall of Fame, he thought it was an old newsroom buddy pulling a joke on him.

"That was the last thing I would ever have thought of. . . . I never thought I would be in the same league as those people."



MORRIS LAMONT The London Free Press

London author Richard Newman is being inducted into the London City Press Club's Newsmakers' Hall of Fame for his biography of Alma Rosé.

IF YOU GO

What: Newsmakers 2000

Where: London City Press Club, 379 Dundas St.

When: Tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Tickets: \$30; only a few left; call 645-8253