

Stockhammer

Book Club Questions

- 1) Knowing of Mrs. Stockhammer's heroics during the holocaust, did Paul Horowitz do the wrong thing in revealing these heroics to the board of Baruch Todah?
- 2) Why did Horowitz have such a need to please the rabbi and get involved in Jewish affairs? Do you think he did so to repent for having represented so many undeserving clients, including organized crime figures earlier in his career?
- 3) After reading this book have you thought about how you might have character traits similar to Paul Horowitz? Take an introspective look at yourself. Do you stick your nose into other people's business? How much appetite do you have to interfere in the life of others?
- 4) "Be well," is an expression used in certain factions of the Jewish community. It is used at the end of a conversation – almost as a substitution for goodbye. Its use became an integral part of the plot. Have you heard this expression before and if so have you ever used it? After this book was released the author has come across the expression being used at the checkout counter at the Walgreen pharmacy chain. Can you think of other expressions that may have started out being used by a narrow group of people that gained greater popularity within the population as a whole?
- 5) Do you think Mrs. Stockhammer should have been extradited to Israel to face charges or should she have been prosecuted in the United States?"
- 6) Do you believe there are people like Paul Horowitz who have a hypnotic power to influence others? Thinking back on your life has anyone ever exerted influence on you in ways you can't explain.
- 7) How did you feel about Mrs. Vorster's early interaction with Melissa Steinberg followed by her stare down with Paul earlier in the book that led to her stroke? How did your opinion of her change once you found out more about her later in the book?

- 8) Same question for Mrs. Stockhammer. Early in the book she was portrayed as a sweet little old lady, but then the events of her past were slowly exposed. Did you feel any sympathy for her? Was she the woman who gave little Paul presents in the allergist's office and saved so many Hungarian Jews during the war, or was she the woman who placed a razor against Paul's throat and killed and brutalized so many Jews as a Gestapo assassin?
- 9) Do you believe that Mrs. Stockhammer suffered from multiple personality disorder? How could a woman have done so many bad things and then so many redemptive acts that saved thousands of people, only to once again resurface after the war in the capacity of a contract killer?
- 10) What symbolism did you find in the binoculars that were returned to Ingrid Vorster? Did you like the story Paul Horowitz told her as to how he reacquired them? Should he have revealed the truth to her or do you believe he finally learned his lesson of interfering in other's lives? Given Horowitz's relationship with Mrs. Stockhammer do you think Ingrid Vorster truly believed these binoculars miraculously resurfaced?
- 11) According to Mrs. Stockhammer, she killed Hans on board the ship heading to America. Do you think it really happened the way she told Paul? Do you think Hans ever made it to America? Evidence that Hoyt Cimarron uncovered suggests that he might have left the ship in disguise. Which of the explanations that Mrs. Stockhammer gave later in the book did you believe? Is it possible that everything she said was a fabrication?
- 12) Zvi Glucksman and Myer Zylberberg both survived the concentration camps having shared a horrific experience. After the war both continued to hunt Nazi's and spent their lives standing up for the Jewish people. Yet their personal lives were so different. While Myer had a family, Zvi never was able to build a relationship with a woman. What could have caused the two men to have developed such different personal lives after sharing similar experiences in the camps?
- 13) Zvi Glucksman had the romantic notion that the "Blue Eyed Angel of the Light" was the woman he had waited for all of his life. Had they met under different circumstances might the two have had the chance to discover love?

- 14) The soliloquy where the school teacher reveals to the class that President Kennedy had been assassinated and the immediate implications to America was repeated by the books author word for word from his own memory. These words had actually been uttered by the author's teacher. Nothing in that scene has been fabricated. What do you think of what that teacher said? What psychological scars might children who were brought up during the cold war have suffered? Is living through air raid drills, a missile crisis, and a general fear of communism, any worse an experience then what children of other generations were forced to endure?
- 15) The book takes place in 1994. At that time cellphones were used but society did not depend upon them for everyday use. Some of the key characters in the book chose to use payphones or did not rely on mobile phone usage. How strange is it that almost twenty years later smartphones have become a permanent fixture in our lives? Any book taking place in today's world must consider how the existence of cellphones, texts, pictures, videos, Facebook and Twitter can alter the plot. What impact do you believe this has on the development of the plot in the modern novel? To the extent you believe it impacts the novel, is the novel just the tip of the iceberg when we compare the impact these devices have had on our everyday lives?