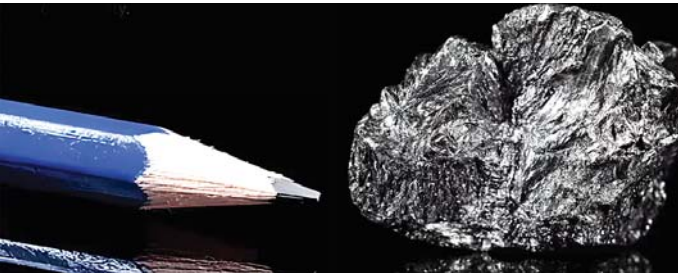


#MYTH
Pencils Have No Lead

No, There's No Lead in Your Pencil- Just a Longstanding Myth



For centuries, pencils have been an every-day tool, used by students, teachers, engineers, artists, and writers around the globe. But one

common misunderstanding about them has stood the test of time: the belief that pencils contain lead. Despite the popular phrase 'pencil lead,' modern pencils contain zero actual lead, and never have.

The Origins of the Misconception

The confusion dates back to the 1500s when a large deposit of a shiny, dark substance was discovered in Borrowdale, England. Locals believed it to be a form of lead due to its appearance and weight. In truth, they had found a particularly pure form of graphite, a naturally occurring form of

carbon. Because the material was unknown at the time, and it resembled lead ore, it was misidentified. The term 'plumbago' (Latin for 'lead ore') was used, and the name stuck, eventually giving rise to the term 'pencil lead,' which is still used today, despite being scientifically inaccurate.

So, What's Really in a Pencil?

The core of a pencil is made of graphite, often mixed with clay to control hardness. The more clay, the harder the pencil and the lighter the mark it makes. This mixture is shaped into rods, dried, and inserted into a wooden casing, giving us

the pencils we use today. Graphite has a layered structure that allows it to easily slide onto paper, making it perfect for writing and sketching. It's completely non-toxic and poses no health risks, even if accidentally ingested or touched.

Lead: A Toxic Heavy Metal

Lead, on the other hand, is a heavy metal with the chemical symbol Pb. It is dense, soft, and highly toxic if inhaled or ingested. Lead poisoning can cause serious health problems, particularly in children, including developmental delays and damage to the

nervous system. Fortunately, lead has never been used in pencil cores, and concerns about getting lead poisoning from pencils are entirely unfounded. Chewing on a pencil may not be a great habit, but it's certainly not going to give you lead poisoning.

A Lingering Misconception

Despite scientific clarity and modern education, the term 'pencil lead' continues to be widely used. Experts

suggest that the phrase has become so ingrained in language and culture that it persists out of habit.

Bottom Line

The next time you sharpen a pencil, rest easy; it's not lead you're using, but safe, reliable graphite. So write on, myth-free!



It Was A Simple Stamp And A Lot Of Bravery

For those who received visas from Sugihara in the summer of 1940, the thin line between life and death came down to a simple piece of paper, a bureaucratic stamp that enabled them to travel through Soviet Siberia to Vladivostok and then on to ports in Japan. Sugihara, exhausted and suffering the ill health effects of his tremendous effort, continued to issue visas until shortly before he and his family departed for Prague, which was now under German control, in early September 1940. He closed the consulate before moving on to Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia) and then Bucharest, Romania.

Kshema Jatuhkarna

Ultimately, Sugihara could not avert his eyes from the desperation that was right before him. As he reflected in his memoir, he 'came to the conclusion that humanitarianism and philanthropism should be the priority.'

Once resolved in his course of action, Sugihara worked at a furious pace, aiming to issue 200 to 300 visas each day. He wrote until his hands cramped, skipping meals to process even more visas as his family packed away their home and prepared to leave Kaunas, as ordered by the Soviets. "My husband issued those visas in defiance of his government's orders because he was following his conscience," Yukiko said in 1985.

In the summer of 1940, Camhi and her sister stood outside the Japanese consulate in long lines on multiple occasions a few days apart, in hopes of making it inside. When they finally pushed their way up the crowded staircase, the sisters pleaded with Sugihara, telling him that their mother had no papers and their father was deceased.

"He looked very sympathetically at us, and he just stamped, gave us the visa right there on the spot," Camhi recalled in 1999. "My sister and I got hysterical, started to cry, and started to say, 'Thank you, thank you,' in Polish. And he just raised his hand, like saying, 'It's OK.' And that's it, and we went out of the room."

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The balance of wartime alliances had shifted once again when Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy on September 27, 1940, creating the Axis powers and negating the substance of Germany's non-aggression pact with the Soviets. On June 22, 1941, the Nazis launched Operation Barbarossa, invading the Soviet Union. Two days later, on June 24, the Nazis reached Kaunas. In the months that followed, German soldiers, Lithuanian nationalists and anti-Soviet paramilitary forces murdered thousands of Jews in the city. By mid-August, the Nazis had sealed the remaining

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Jews off in the Kaunas Ghetto, which was used as a site of forced labor. The Nazis and their collaborators killed around 90 percent of Lithuania's Jewish population during the Holocaust, one of the highest rates in Europe. In Kaunas specifically, just 2,000 of the roughly 35,000 to 40,000 Jews living in the city survived.

Many of the refugees who received transit visas from Sugihara made their way to the Japanese city of Kobe, a hub for those fleeing the Holocaust. In the months leading up to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the Japanese government forced most of these individuals to continue on to Shanghai, already home to an estimated 17,000 German and Austrian Jews who had fled persecution in the 1930s. Living conditions for Jews in the Japanese-controlled Chinese city were cramped and dilapidated, but many who reached Shanghai ultimately survived the Holocaust. Shanghai was a "stranger-than-fiction loophole to which people could flee because you did not need a destination visa to go there," says historian Sakamoto. "A lot about getting out of Europe was the red tape of documents. Shanghai, since

#HUMANITY



A group portrait of Jewish refugees in Kobe, Japan, who escaped from Europe with visas signed by Sugihara.

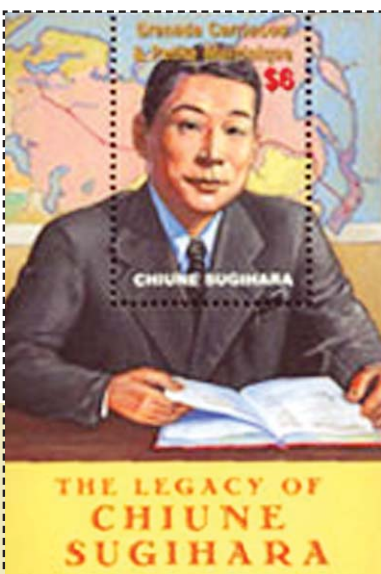


Chiune Sugihara and his wife Yukiko pose in front of the gate to a park in Prague, in 1940 or 1941.

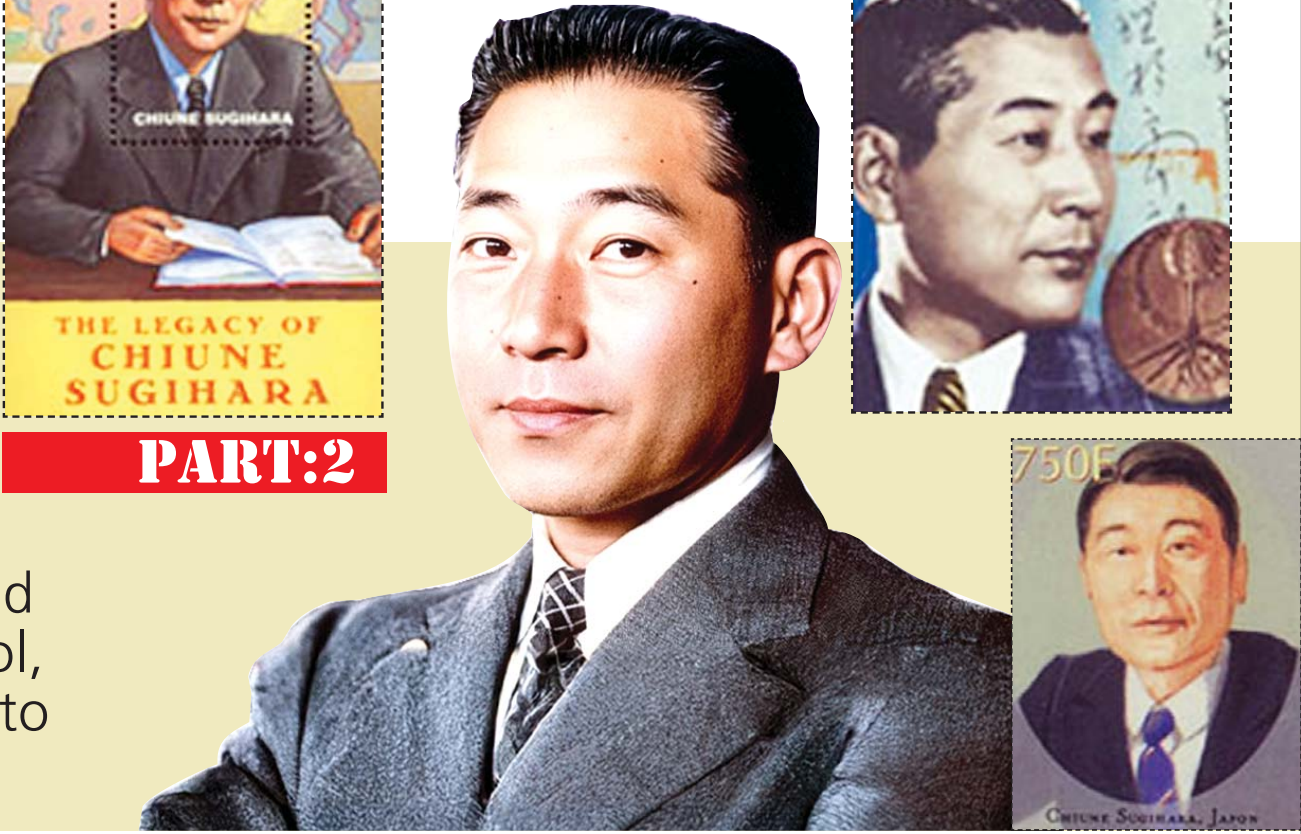
it was a treaty port (open to foreign merchants), was quite international and allowed people to come in."

The Mir Yeshiva, a leading Jewish educational institution based briefly in Lithuania, was the only Eastern European school of its kind to survive the war intact. It continued operating in exile in Shanghai, thanks to the visas issued to its students by Sugihara.

Among the other refugees who found their way to Shanghai was Bernard Salomon, who ended up working as an accountant in India



PART:2



Celebrating the Tree of Life

Observed every year on September 2, World Coconut Day celebrates the versatile 'tree of life' and its vital role in the livelihoods, cultures, and economies of tropical regions. From nourishing coconut water and nutrient-rich flesh to coir, oil, and eco-friendly products, every part of the coconut tree offers value. In India, it holds religious significance, symbolising prosperity and purity, and is used in festivals, rituals, and cuisine. The day also highlights the need for sustainable coconut farming to support farmers and protect biodiversity. As global demand grows, World Coconut Day serves as a reminder of this humble fruit's immense global impact.



#THE LIANGZHU CULTURE

Makers Of Jade Beauty

Beyond their social and spiritual functions, Liangzhu jade pieces also demonstrate an advanced understanding of cosmology

Dating back over 5,000 years, the Liangzhu Culture in ancient China stands as one of the most remarkable prehistoric civilizations, renowned for its exquisite jade artifacts. Flourishing during the late Neolithic period (circa 3300-2300 BCE) in the Yangtze River Delta, the Liangzhu people produced jade objects that are celebrated not only for their breathtaking beauty but also for their profound spiritual symbolism and intricate craftsmanship.

The jade artifacts of Liangzhu are far more than decorative objects; they provide a fascinating glimpse into an advanced society with complex cosmological beliefs and a highly structured social hierarchy. The culture's mastery of jade carving, using only primitive tools, reflects an extraordinary level of skill and artistic innovation. Despite the absence of metal tools, artisans achieved incredibly precise and delicate designs, showcasing a deep understanding of both material properties and symbolic language. This speaks to the dedication, patience, and technical ingenuity of Liangzhu craftsmen, who meticulously shaped hard jade into forms that remain awe-inspiring even by today's standards.

Jade held a sacred place in Liangzhu society, symbolizing purity, power, and immortality. Many of the artifacts unearthed are ceremonial in nature, including ritual discs known as 'bi' and cong tubes. These jade pieces are often intricately carved with motifs such as dragons, mythical creatures, and geometric patterns, each imbued with symbolic meaning. These objects were believed to serve as intermediaries between humans and the spiritual world, facilitating communication with deities or ancestors and reinforcing the cosmological worldview held by the Liangzhu people.

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of large-scale burial sites, containing elaborate jade artifacts, indicates the high status of certain individuals and the ceremonial importance attributed to these items. The considerable effort involved in sourcing raw jade, often transported from distant mountainous regions, further underscores the immense value placed on these artifacts. Such treasures were not simply personal adornments but were likely symbols of political authority and spiritual power.

Beyond their social and spiritual functions, Liangzhu jade pieces also demonstrate an advanced understanding of cosmology. The recurring motifs of circles and squares in jade carvings are widely interpreted to symbolize the heavens and the earth, respectively. This duality reflects the culture's interpretation of the natural and supernatural world, mirroring ideas that would later become central in Chinese philosophical traditions. The jade carvings encapsulate this worldview, illustrating the harmonious balance between cosmic forces, the natural environment, and human society.

Today, the jade artifacts of the Liangzhu Culture continue to astonish archaeologists, historians, and art enthusiasts alike. Their meticulous craftsmanship, rich symbolism, and cultural significance provide invaluable insights into a society that flourished thousands of years ago. These artifacts not only represent some of the earliest examples of sophisticated jade work but also highlight the enduring human quest to connect art, spirituality, and identity. As such, the Liangzhu jade legacy remains a powerful symbol of ancient Chinese civilization's ingenuity and cultural depth.

Some recipients of Sugihara's visas never learned his identity. As the daughter of one survivor told Nobuki at an event in New York in 2019, "My father spoke about your father, and about the visa that he got. And he always wondered, 'How can I thank this man? I hope I will see him in my lifetime.' So I'm taking this opportunity ... to say thank you for making our family exist." More than 150 people, including someone who had received visas firsthand as children, lined up to share similar stories.

For the remainder of the war: "But for the acts of Sugihara, I wouldn't be here, and as my son (Mark) said, neither would he," says Bernard's son Rick. He points to his own grandchildren, Bernard's great-grandchildren, as the continuation of this chain of life.

Stationed in Bucharest when the war ended, the Sugiharas were imprisoned for more than a year by the victorious Soviet Union. Finally able to return to Japan in 1947, the family saw their hardship turn to grief when their young son Haruki, born in Kaunas seven years earlier, died of leukemia.

Returning to the foreign ministry in hopes of receiving another posting, Sugihara was instead asked to sign a resignation letter with no further explanation. "He didn't ask the reason. He just signed and left," says Nobuki. "He knew it was because he had disobeyed the order not to issue visas."

Despite that dismissal, Yukiko later said that her husband never regretted what he did.

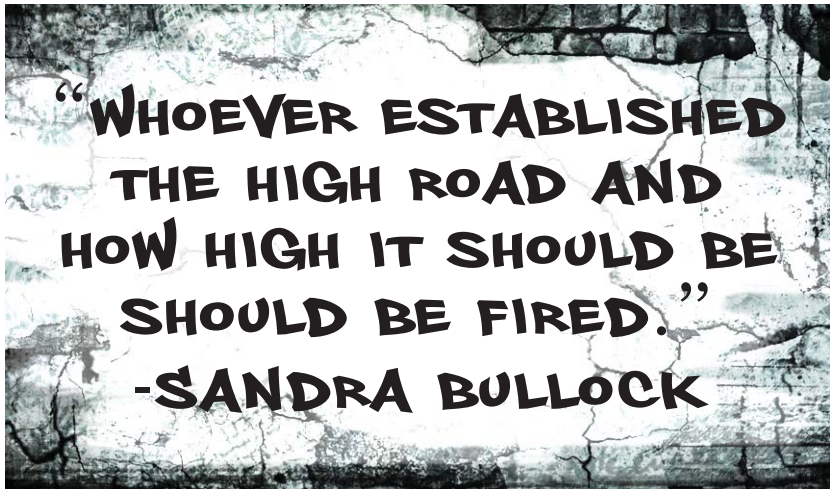
According to Nobuki, Sugihara

done, seemingly not seeking attention. When Nobuki asked his father why he had helped the Jewish refugees, he replied that "the very simple answer was because I pity

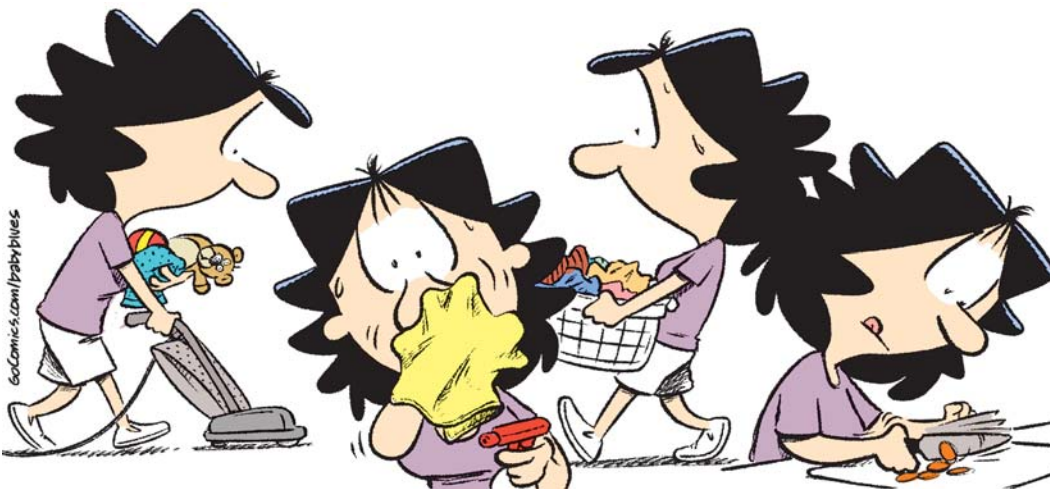


Chiune visiting his son in Israel in December 1969.

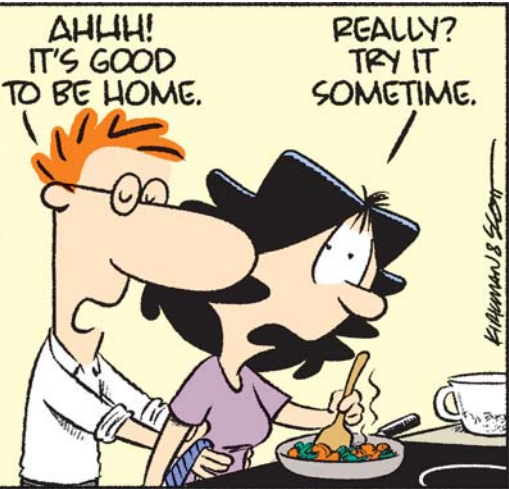
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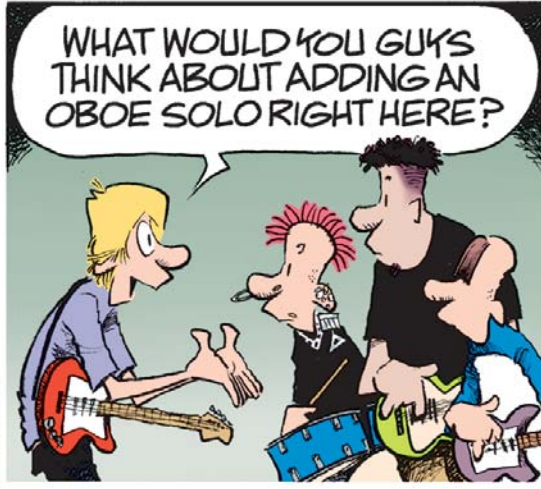
BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman