



JOURNEY PLANET



THE HOLOCAUST

This issue of Journey Planet is dedicated to the memory of

Alter and Chinke Pitluk

Feivel and Devora Pitluk

Kenneth and Sally Pitluk, and his first wife, Sima, and their unnamed daughter

Malka Yeshenofski and her daughter Pesza

Pesach and Rishka Walotzky and their sons Moshé, Shlomo, and Shmuel

Izhak and Chaya Wishniewsky and their daughter Chana

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Introduction

Steven H Silver

In 2023, I sent a note to Christopher Garcia and James Bacon suggesting a topic for an issue of *Journey Planet*. My father had died in February and I was thinking of editing an exploration of how we deal with death and the loss of a loved one, as well as the period in which you know that inevitable death will be coming sooner, rather than later, possibly as a welcome relief for the survivors. We scheduled the issue to appear in February around the anniversary of my father's death, his *Yahrzeit*, in Yiddish terms.

However, on September 26, before I had really had a chance to work on the issue or solicit articles, James reached out to me. Would I be interested in editing an issue of *Journey Planet* that looked at the Holocaust. At the time James asked me, he did not know about my connection to the Holocaust. He didn't know that my grandparents (and most of their families) had been murdered by the Nazis in their shtetls in Poland, trying to escape trains to the concentration camps, or in the camps themselves. He didn't know that my mother was a hidden child, taken in by heroic Catholic Poles to raise as their own daughter rather than allow her to be murdered when she was one year old.

James told me he felt the issue would be looking at an important topic. I told him I would consider changing the focus of the issue from dealing with death to the Holocaust.

And I considered it.

Eventually, I said yes, but it was a difficult decision.

I can't say when I first learned about the Holocaust. After all, my grandmother¹ had numbers tattooed on her arm that I had seen from the youngest age. When we visited my grandparents in Cleveland, we often visited with their various friends from the old country, speaking in English so heavily Polish-accented it was difficult to recognize the language. Certainly, the release of the 1979 miniseries *Holocaust* on NBC gave my grandparents permission to begin talking about their experiences during World War II in a way they never had before the series aired.

Throughout my childhood and into my college experience, I would wake up, perhaps twice a year, from nightmares in which Nazis were going door-to-door, seizing any Jew they could find in an attempt to finish what they had started in the 1930s.

My sophomore year in college, I helped with a showing of Claude Lanzmann's epic 9½ hour documentary *Shoah*. We

screened it over two days for the students at Indiana University. My junior year, I worked to bring a woman named Rose Zar² (1922-2001) to campus to speak about her experiences pretending to be a Roman Catholic woman named Wanda Gajda, who worked as a maid for a Nazi Commander and his wife. My senior year, I brought Robert Clary (1926-2022) to campus. Best known for portraying Louis Le Beau on *Hogan's Heroes*, Clary was sent to a concentration camp when he was 16 years old. While ten of his older siblings were killed in the Holocaust, Clary managed to survive.

I decided I would agree to edit the issue and also told James about my background that perhaps made me especially suited for the task.

Unfortunately, the issue comes out at a time when antisemitism has skyrocketed by more than 360% over the previous year. One-time allies who once joined in saying "Never again!" seem to feel that the time has come to say, "Never again until it is again time." My daughter, who works for a Jewish organization, is afraid to tell people who she works for and goes to work in a building that sometimes has a police car parked in front of it as a deterrent after protestors attempted to gain access to the building. Many people, including many Jews, seem all too eager to accept news directly from an organization whose charter calls for the annihilation of not just the Jewish state, but the Jewish people, because of the Israeli government's overzealous response to a terrorist attack that resulted in the murder of more Jews in a single day than on any date since the Holocaust, to say nothing of the rapes and maiming that accompanied the attack on a concert for peace and people living in their homes. I've seen people I thought were friends repeating and sharing blatantly antisemitic memes on social media and justifying them with rounds of "whataboutism."

When James wrote to me saying this issue would be different from previous issues I've edited, "but it's very important." I couldn't realize how much truth he wrote. When I agreed to edit the issue on September 29, I couldn't realize it. One week later, it would begin to become clear.

"Never Again" means "Never Again."

We're still here.

¹ Yes, I know I said my grandparents were killed by the Nazis. They were. I'll explain in an article later in this issue.

² Born Ruzka Guterman, Zar wrote of her life in the book *In the Mouth of the Wolf*, Jewish Publication Society, 1992.

What Time Is It?

Avram Davidson

Written under the name A.A. Davidson, this story was never published. It was likely written in the late 1940s. We are giving it a date of 1947. You can learn more on The Avram Davidson Universe podcast, <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1310005/12341788>.

With thanks to Seth Davis.

Uncle Moritz came to us one spring morning in my childhood, heralded by the sound of dynamite explosions. The freshness of that morning is, in its fullness, beyond recall. The maples arched the streets with thick green leaves, the locust trees were in white flower, and, a few blocks away, the Hudson ran joyously to the sea. I held my mother's hand and breathed the freshness of the earth.

"What's that noise?" I asked.

"They are blasting in Europe," she said, jokingly.

"Where Uncle comes from?"

"Yes."

I passed a schoolmate, sitting on the wooden steps of her house.

"Hello, Lois!" I called. "We're going to see my new uncle. He's a greenhorn." My mother laughed.

"Now, don't call him that to his face," she said.

"Does he speak English?"

"No, but he'll learn."

Uncle Moritz was really my great-uncle; he had married the youngest sister of my grandmother, who was born after my grandmother, at fifteen, had come to America. His trip had been planned for years; everyone had saved for it, and even some of the American members of the family had contributed. The idea at that time was, that Uncle Moritz's daughter Marya would come over: she would marry a citizen, she would be allowed to stay, would become a citizen herself, bring over her parents: the parents would become citizens and bring over the other children, who were minors. The plan seemed fool-proof.

And then came the news that Uncle Moritz had decided to come, instead of his daughter.

"But why?" the angry question was asked. "He knows he can't stay. He just has a visitor's visa. He can't get in on the Quota. The Quota is filled up for 15 years." Ah, that Quota! A faceless monster, spawned by the immigration laws, that kept in Europe people who asked nothing of life but to come to America.

My grandmother's house had the look of bounty associated, in my mind, with religious celebrations such as circumcisions, namings of baby girls, redemptions of first-born sons, and confirmations. There was yellow sponge cake and brown honey cake, so unflinching in their presence at these occasions that I half thought they must have been ordained in the Law of Moses. There were boiled chickpeas with salt and pepper, little pieces of pickled herring to which a stray clove or bay leaf still clung lovingly, mixed raisins and nutmeats, candy, and pastry. Did I say "pastry"? A pale word. Hardly adequate as a description of my grandmother's *kuchen*, her *shtrudel*, her dark-brown and moist spice cake. Not at all enough to define the crescent-shaped *kipfel* (said to be a relic of the days of the Turk), or the *pogacs*, formed like a Chinese persimmon, and made with pounds of butter.

In the midst of all this, surrounded by aunts, uncles, in-laws, and cousins (whom I literally reckoned up by dozens), sat Uncle Moritz, holding a glass of tawny Tokay in his hand. After these years, when I try to bring back the features of his face, all I can recall are his mustache—it was long—, his bald-

spot, and his gold tooth. He kissed me with an absent-minded, wine-scented smile. Uncle Moritz was not having an easy time of it. The inevitable question came up.

"Why didn't you send the girl?"

He moved uneasily in his chair.

"Nee? Nee?"

He made small, nervous smiles. He waved his free hand. The family waited, inexorable. At last he said, in a small voice, "I was afraid."

Outrage and shouts.

"Afraid of *what*?"

"I was afraid for her."

"But of *what*?"

He moved in his chair and looked as if about to weep. He mumbled something in a low voice. Something about "a young girl," "a strange country," "Indians," "black people," and "Chicago."

Shouts and outrage.

"I was only a young girl when I came here!"

"Does he think America is Borneo?"

"There are no Indians here," said my Aunt Martha; "the black people are as civilized as you are, and Chicago is thousands of miles away." She fixed him with a long look. "Esel!"—jackass—she said, pulled on her gloves with vicious jerks, and stalked out.

Poor Uncle Moritz!

After a while the indignation died down, and was replaced with resignation. "A poor thing, but our own," was the general attitude. Uncle Moritz got a job, a room, and a little red-covered book, out of which he began to learn English. I appointed myself tutor, and had, of course, a great deal of pleasure.

For example, the night he pointed to the clock and asked, "What tile is it?" Not until the mistake was explained to him, and he laughed, did I feel free to laugh. Thereafter, we had a pass-word. Uncle Moritz would come up to me, give me a secret little nudge, and whisper, "What time is it? Hey? What time is it?"

He studied American history, and I, at the same time, learned Hungarian history. It is difficult to explain the position Hungary held in my imagination. I had never been there, nor my parents, and we had no particular desire to do so. We knew—it was not a matter of opinion—we knew—that America was the finest country in the world. Everyone in Europe wanted to come to America, and would, if it weren't for the Quota.

My grandmother had come to America when she was fifteen, my grandfather came at eighteen. I have seen his naturalization certificate, the precious "citizenship papers," old and tattered, in which he foreswore allegiance to all foreign princes and powers (I think the phrase ran), "particularly the Emperor of Austria, of whom I am now a subject." There, I think, was the phrase which allowed them all to retain Hungary in its special place, for they knew Francis Joseph in his capacity as King of Hungary only, and not as "Emperor of Austria."

From my grandmother I received an impression, never entirely lost, of Hungary as a sort of cloud-cuckoo land, ruled by a storybook monarch called "Franz Yo-sef." Franz Josef rode in an ornate state coach, drawn by splendid horses, attended by footmen in strange garb. He went almost everywhere in this coach or almost. When my grandmother wanted a euphemism for the privy, she called it the place "where the Koenig goes on foot." And when he alighted from his coach, red carpets were spread for him, which he always kicked aside, saying, "Let me walk on the earth like other men." And when people knelt to him, he would lift them up, and say, "One kneels before the Almighty only." He called the people, "My children." On occasions of celebration he would let the prisoners loose, dismiss cases awaiting trial, and remit fines. Franz Josef loved to play chess with Rabbis, and to hand them cigars, which they treasured as too precious to allow to go up in smoke. And in 1867 he "emancipated" the Jews, and gave them full civil rights.

My grandmother sang to me old songs in the Magyar (pronounced "Mudge-yar") language, learned from her aunt, who never married because her sweetheart had been killed fighting the Serbians. She told me how her "old ma," my great-grandmother, then still alive, had taught her to spin, weave, sew, cook, and do all the household tasks.

"We had many servant-girls, but my old ma said, 'Sarah, if you marry a rich man you will have to care for his household; and if you marry a poor man, you will have to do all these things for yourself.' And so it happened: I married a poor man, and I had ten children, *keine ha-ra* (no evil eye)."

From Uncle Moritz I learned of the long history of Hungary; how the Jews had settled there in Roman times, and how more Jews had come in with the Magyars, over a thousand years ago. He spoke of the Arpad dynasty, of Julius the Blind and Ferenc the Great, and of King Istvan's hidden crown. I learned of my grandmother's great-great-grandfather, who lived in the days of the Holy Roman Empire; drank a glass of *schnapps* with his breakfast every morning and died at the age of a hundred and fourteen. They told me how the men of our family had fought under the great Kossuth in the Hungarian War of Independence.

Uncle Moritz himself had been in the World War, although, I realized to my secret dismay, on the wrong side. Grandmother had no such worries. Hungary's fight was with Russia or Serbia or some such place: it had nothing to do with the war in which three of her sons had served against "Kaiser Bill," as she still called him. Grandmother was a registered Republican and remained loyal to Hoover till the bitter end, but—after all—could one compare Hoover to Franz Josef? No. Absurd.

The time went quickly. Uncle Moritz's visitor's visa lapsed, was renewed, lapsed again, and was renewed for the third and last time. Only six months to remain in America. What did he expect, after all? I really don't know. Perhaps he thought to make enough money to maintain his family in comfort for ever. Or that the law would be changed, that the president would issue a Proclamation, or the government would forget about him—one little person among so many millions.

He often spoke of his children, my cousins, and I felt that I knew them. He had the one daughter, Marya, who would have come to America if he hadn't been afraid; and three sons, all of whose names ended in -or: Andor, Sandor, and Tibor. The village took shape before my eyes. There were white houses that looked like outdoor ovens, and silvery oxen with tremendous horns. The women wore embroidered dresses, and the men's costume was quaint and archaic. Greensward was everywhere, the brightest green that ever was, and the peasants, with staves in their hands,

drove geese to market. At evening the cows returned from pasture, and each cow knew her own home, and turned aside to it. There were great land-owners like Count Saponyi and Count Eszterhazi; and in the distance, on the hills, the magic coach and horses of the King, reduced to doll-size, galloped along, preceded by tootling trumpeters.

In Hungary, America had been Fairyland. In America, Hungary was Fairyland.

Once Uncle Moritz had gone riding with us on Sunday. It was one of his infrequent times out of the city. We rode along past open land for miles and miles.

"Who owns this land?" he asked.

"I don't know," my father said.

"Someone must own it."

"Maybe the county owns it."

"What is the county?"

"Part of the government."

"Is it a hunting reserve?"

"No."

"What then? What do they do with it?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? That is immoral. In Hungary this land would support thousands of people. So much land. Such a big country, with so much room, and they will not let people come in or stay. I do not understand it all."

So, at last, still not understanding, Uncle Moritz packed up to leave. Sad as he was, he saw my own sad face, and began to smile. He poked me in the ribs, and whispered, "What time is it? Hey? What time is it?" And then he left. He wrote back once or twice.

After the War my grandmother received a letter from Hungary with a familiar postmark, but she did not know the handwriting. It lay on the kitchen table for a day. She was afraid to open it, because she had heard nothing from her family since the War. It was finally opened, with all of us sitting around the table.

The letter proved to be from an old woman who had known my grandmother in their childhood; it addressed her as, "Highborn Lady." The opening lines were equally formal. Then—

"With grief and sorrow I have to tell you, dear lady, of what happened to your family and to all our Jews here in this village...It was after the Germans had come, but to our eternal shame I must tell you that it was our own police who carried out their Orders...I asked them, 'Christian men, how can you do this thing?' But they laughed and said that at last they would get rid of the foreigners..."

"...I am an old woman, there was nothing I could do. One child I hid...I could see them going by in the trucks... Your honored sister and her husband and children, your honored brother and his family...none returned, dear lady. The world is dark, there are no Christians any more. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, pray for us."

From time to time since then I have had a dream, a very short one. A row of white houses like ovens stands behind a green lawn. A peasant with a staff in his hand is driving geese before him. A tiny coach rides rapidly across the lawn and in it, beaming and nodding and waving and stroking his white whiskers, is Franz Joseph. The white houses, I realize, are ovens, real ones, and the geese are Jews. I watch them file into the ovens, over the doors of which are written, "Emancipation of the Jews," and then I hear a voice, a loud whisper, which asks over and over again, "What time is it? What time is it? What time is it?"

Armenian Remembrances

Pat Sayre McCoy

I grew up in the shadow of genocide. Not that it was called a genocide, that designation was only used for the Holocaust. But it was a genocide, a slaughter of a population of a different religious group in the last days of the Ottoman Empire. When I was young, my fellow students didn't even know where it was. But we knew, the children and the grandchildren. We heard the whispers when the adults thought we were safely playing with our toys, or watching TV. They spoke in Armenian, thinking the grandchildren wouldn't understand it. But we did.

At the end of the Ottoman empire a "pan-Turkic" movement was gaining power in Turkey. "Turkey for the Turks" they said. Did our grandparents or great-grandparents know what that meant? Maybe in the cities, Istanbul, perhaps. But not in the towns and villages of eastern Turkey, the original Armenian homeland. It was 1915, and Turkey was at war. This was also a time of nationalism, of the crumbling of empires. Armenians, like many others, wanted their own land, their own country. No more religious taxes, no more limits on what could be built or where, no restrictions on the language they spoke. The Young Turk Party saw this as a threat, a fifth column in their eastern lands, too close to Russia to trust. In fact, once it was clear that the Armenian soldiers were going to be killed, some did desert and join the Russians on the border in the Caucasus. They technically were traitors, but only to protect their own lives. And their numbers were small compared to the general Armenian population.

They eliminated the threat by killing and deporting three quarters of the Armenian population. This systematic killing was masterminded by three high ranking members of the Young Turks Party: Talat Pasha, Enver Pasha and Cemal/Jamal Pasha. On April 24, 1915, the intellectual leaders, business men, priests, and teachers, were arrested and imprisoned. The next morning, many of them were hanged in the prison courtyards. Having eliminated the leaders, they turned to the soldiers. The Armenian soldiers enlisted in the Turkish Army had already been disarmed and relegated to menial jobs like digging ditches. They died in those ditches. Did they know they were digging their own graves? The remaining old men and boys over 10 or so were shot, sometimes in front of their houses and families. The family protectors were gone.

The women and children were rounded up in their towns and villages and forced to march towards the desert Der Zor, now in Syria. There was no food or water provided, no warm clothing, only what they could grab on their way out. They marched and then they died. Attractive young women were often kidnapped by Turkish soldiers and carried off. If they were lucky, they were converted to Islam and became wives of the soldiers. Some young children were taken as slaves by the soldiers or the Turks in the towns they passed through.

There was some resistance, notably the village of Musa Dagh, a village on a mountain that escaped the soldiers sent for them and held out on the mountain for 40 days until a French navy ship rescued them (see Franz Werfel's *The 40 Days of Musa Dagh*, published in 1934 for a fictionalized version of this event). There was also resistance in other Armenian areas, notably Van. But they were outnumbered, out gunned, and without supplies.

This is a very condensed version of what I have studied

and believe to be true. For a more complete story, see Ronald Grigor Suny's *"They Can Live in the Desert, But Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide*, Princeton University Press, 2015. I admit that I am not able to view this impartially.

To be sure, there were some Turks who did not participate in the massacres but rescued Armenians and helped them to safety. Some hid the Armenians in their own homes, risking their lives by doing so.

My Family's Story

This is the story of my grandmother's family. Nana, Hranoush Bedrosian. My grandfather's family, the Der Matosians, have a shorter story with a better ending, many of his immediate family, his two brothers and many sisters, sisters-in-law, and cousins either left Armenia around 1900 to 1910, or were able to escape and contact their relatives to reunite them. Nana's family was not so lucky.

I have heard these stories in bits and pieces, at many different times, and details aren't always clear. And I was too young to know what questions to ask. I can't prove these facts, but I have heard them from the people involved and I knew they were telling the truth.

Nana and Uncle Kulen/George were the only members of her family and her town/village (we're not sure which) and they were the youngest of the family, we are not sure of their ages, our best guess is that Nana was about 7 and her brother maybe 4. There were several older brothers and sisters, but I only know one name, Gederina. She was probably a teenager and Nana said she was very pretty. She was taken off by a Turkish soldier and never heard from again.

Nana talked about walking, walking, walking, trying to keep up with the older members of the family. Once, she said, they got to ride on a farmer's cart for awhile, but when they saw soldiers in the distance he put them off and hurried away. Somewhere along the way, a Turkish family took Nana (and maybe her brother?) as a sort of daughter/slave. They went to Istanbul (Bolis or Stamboul to the Armenians of the area). Nana kept running away and told us of some of the sights she saw, Hagia Sofia and the Blue Mosque, especially. She went to Hagia Sofia several times. (Side note: when she arrived in the United States she was at the rail of the ship as it pulled into New York Harbor and she saw the Statue of Liberty. Her reaction? "This is America?").

One day she wandered into the Armenian section of Stamboul and some people talking Armenian. She ran up to them and said she was Armenian too. They arranged for her to go to an Armenian orphanage in Marseilles. Nana never mentioned her brother accompanying her, so I am unclear on where he was. My sister, who heard more from Nana than I did after I moved to Chicago, says he was with her in Stamboul. That makes more sense than a reunion at the French orphanage, although that has also been suggested by some old aunts. Somehow the nuns who were running the orphanage were able to locate relatives in the US and arrange for Nana and Uncle George to go to the U.S.

First problem—immigration of "Asiatics" was strictly limited and only immediate family members were allowed to join relatives already in the U.S. I am not sure how closely the cousins in St. Louis were, but they said that Nana and

Uncle George were their younger siblings and to please send them along. Second problem—Moprey arrives at the orphanage. He was the best friend of one of Nana's older brother so they recognized each other. They decided to tell the nuns that Moprey was also their brother and could they contact the St. Louis cousins and tell them he would be coming too. I imagine telegrams were exchanged (and no, I never knew how they were located. A question I should have asked). They said of course, "send our other brother to us too." I imagine they then turned to each other and said "Who's Moprey?" I was 20 or so before I finally figured out that he wasn't a blood relative.

So my mother is the daughter of an undocumented refugee who lied to the federal government about her family, and my sister and I are the granddaughters. The anti-immigrant sentiments of the last seven or so years had me concerned—would we be legal citizens? Silly, I know but it worried me.

So Nana's family story does have a somewhat good ending. Some of her family survived, although we have never found anyone else from her town/village other than Moprey.

I have heard other stories from other "relatives" (one never knows if the "cousins" or "uncles/aunts" are really related or not and no one says one way or the other). I remember sitting beside a man my grandparents' age who told me stories of his escape from Armenia. He was also from a large family and in order to get to Der Zor they had to cross the Euphrates river (or the Araxis River, again, conflicting information). Crossing that river meant leaving Armenia. His mother couldn't do it. She threw her children off the bridge and then jumped with her baby in her arms. This man and his mother were swept ashore by the currents, so she threw him in again, weighted her clothes with stones in her pocket and turned back into the river.

Armenian refugees spread out over the globe. Armenians have a long history as traders so there were Armenians all over the world, Europe, Russia, even Singapore.

The first church built in Singapore was an Armenian church. If they were lucky enough to get out of Turkey alive, many Armenians had contacts who could at least give them money or take them into their homes for a while until they could get back on their feet. Armenian churches and charitable organizations ran advertisements in the newspapers announcing the arrival of someone, or asking about relatives and friends. It is heartening to know that many of these ads were answered and families were reunited.

But there is so much we don't know, so much family history that is lost. Most of the church records were burned, many Armenians outside the big cities didn't keep many records outside of the family Bible. (I have Grampa's Bible, with many names in it, but when I took it to church to get some help reading them, the priest said that whoever wrote this had the worst handwriting he'd ever seen.) I know the names of my great-grandparents. I don't know their parents' names, where they came from, or who their parents were. We don't know if they had siblings and if they did, we can't name any of them. I envy those of you who have long family histories because of this. It's frustrating to just *not* know.

As a result of this lack of knowledge, I scrutinize every picture of the Armenian refugees and orphans. Do any of them look like me? Are my lost uncles and aunts in one of these photos? Will I ever know? And what about Gederina? Was she converted and married? Does someone in Turkey have a hidden Armenian mother or grandmother? This knowledge is coming out recently, long enough after the genocide that all the participants in it are dead now. Many Turkish families are discovering that they are half-Armenian or a quarter-Armenian. What a shock that must have been.

One final note: I have heard some cousins call us "Hitler's excuse"—in the early days of creating the "Final Solution" someone asked what the world would think of killing so many people. Hitler allegedly replied "No one remembers the Armenians" and the planning went on.



Testimony, Part I: Before the War

Sally Pitluk

Sally Kubel was born in the Polish village of Płonsk on November 11, 1920.

After the war, Sally emigrated to the United States and eventually married Kenneth Pitluk. After learning that nearly his entire family had been killed in the Holocaust, Kenneth took custody of his niece and brought her to the United States. Kenneth and Sally raised her as well as three of their own children.

On August 8, 1984, she sat for an interview with Sidney Eisner as part of the Spielberg Oral History project. The [interview](#), presented in two parts, runs for 1 hour 48 minutes. The original video tapes are housed at the Jewish Archives at the Western Reserve Historical Society Library. Copies are available at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection as a gift of the National Council of Jewish Women Cleveland Section.

Her testimony, which can be found online at <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn505049>, is broken up in sections and printed throughout this issue of Journey Planet.

We are at Television Studio WEWS in Cleveland, the 8th of August, 1984.

Another of the interviews with Holocaust survivors living in the Cleveland area.

I'm Sid Eisner.

This is Sally Pitluk, who comes from Poland. The town is Płonsk, P-L-O-N-S-K, 70 kilometers north of Warsaw.

Sally will relate her experiences in the Płonsk ghetto, Auschwitz, and elsewhere.

But first, Sally, tell us about Płonsk itself.

You had told me that it was the hometown of David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel.

Yes.

Describe Płonsk and tell us about Ben-Gurion's relationship to it.

I would say that perhaps Ben-Gurion put Płonsk on the map.

It was a small town. There were about 10,000 people in town. I would say they were about 60% Jews in the town. It was before the war. We had sort of a nice life.

I come from a background of, I would say, lower middle class. My parents had a small dry goods store. It was very difficult to make a living. But we didn't know any better.

We had a very cultural life. Every Jewish parent strived to give their children the best education they could possibly afford. I, myself, went to school for about eight years. The Jewish people didn't go together with the Polish people to school. We went in the afternoon. The Polish people went in the morning. We were always felt that we are Jews, that the children, the Polish children, always used to call us dirty Jew. They would say Jew, you belong in Palestine, which is Israel now.

What year was this?

This was, as far as I could remember, perhaps it was in the late '20s, as far as I can remember. I had two brothers. One of my brothers was born in 1928, and the other one in 1933.

My brother went to a Hebrew school. I went to a secular school, as I mentioned before.

Now how big was Płonsk, the population generally and the Jewish population?

As I said, the population perhaps were about 10,000 people. But I would say that 60% of the people were Jewish people. They were mostly tradesmen and small businessmen. There were perhaps maybe 10% were other, more affluent. But most of them were just making a meager living.

What drove Ben-Gurion back there? At what period would he come?

Well, Ben-Gurion, actually, he was born in the late 1800s. I believe that he was born in 1886. He left Poland when he was a young man. So I really don't remember. This was before I was born.

But when I remember, when I was growing up, when I was a teenager, we had quite a few Zionist organizations. He would come back, and he was naturally our hero, because he was already well-known.

He was one of the first people settling in Israel. He left for Israel when he was a young man. Occasionally, he would come back because he still had some relatives left in our hometown. He would come. To us, it was a great holiday when he came.

I know that the Jews came to Poland, probably, in the 12th or 13th century, because there was a Polish King who needed to trade and needed more civilization. He invited the Jews from the Western part of Europe. I presume most of them came, perhaps, from Germany. They brought the Yiddish language with them. This much I can only tell you from history. This was long before my time. But I know that for generations, many generations, the Jews always lived in Poland. We were sort of contented with our lot because we didn't know any better.

Now we'll take a big leap forward and bring you up to today.

Tell us about your own family, and your work in Cleveland, and what your home life is like, what your husband did.

Well, my home life right now is, first of all, I'm not a young woman anymore. I have four children. I have two sons. My sons are twins. One is a physician. The other one is an optometrist. My youngest daughter is a lawyer. She's married to a physician. My oldest daughter is a teacher. She's married to an engineer. I have six grandchildren. I unfortunately lost my husband three years ago.

What can I tell you?

I think the United States is a magnificent country. Only in America, it could happen that I should have two doctor sons.

[LAUGHTER]

And a daughter, a lawyer, that's only in America.

OK. Well, go back to Płońsk from Cleveland. What was your town like, its general appearance, its industry? Did it have telephones? Did it have electricity?

No.

Was it big enough for streetcars?

No. I told you that this was rather a backward little shtetl. As far as I know, we had electricity. Perhaps there were a few telephones in the more affluent homes. We didn't have one. We didn't have any plumbing in our house. We had outhouses. We didn't have any running water. It wasn't an easy life. But the only thing that I could recollect that it was a very cultural life.

I know that from my youngest years on, I always loved to read. Whenever I could get hold of a book, I love to read it. And it was emphasized. It was emphasized in every Jewish home. The Jewish education, I presume it goes back to centuries that the Jewish parent always wanted to have as best an education for the children as possible.

Of course, I didn't have the opportunity because it was very, very expensive.

We had one high school in town which was impossible to go to because it was very expensive and we were not affluent enough that I should go to it.

How did your family make a living?

As I said before, my family, we had a small dry goods store. It was a rather meager living. We had two market days. We had all the villages, the small villages around. There were the Polish people that were living in the rural area. They were bringing, in the market days, their produce to town.

We would buy from them the goods that they brought, and they would buy from the Jews the goods that we had to offer.

In the late '30s, we felt an awful lot of anti-Semitism because the government absolutely they just told them that they should not buy from Jews.

The Polish people were always rather anti-Semitic. My earliest recollection was that Jew go to Palestine.

That's all I can say about Poland.

But at the same time, we just lived with it. We didn't know any better.

What was the main language spoken in your home?

In my home, we spoke Yiddish. But our language was Polish, because I was born and raised in Poland. I went to school in Poland. My second language in school I took was German. But at home, we spoke only Yiddish.

Well, how do you remember yourself in those days, Sally? That is, what did you look like?

I remember myself as just another teenager. We didn't realize that we were teenagers. There was never the emphasis on age and being a teenager or something. We didn't have really big aspirations, because it was a small town.

Did you have any non-Jewish friends?

No, no, I didn't have any non-Jewish friends.

What do you remember about anti-Semitism from those days?

Well, I'm telling you, this was the only thing that we were not—we had no assimilation in our town, because the Polish people wouldn't let us assimilate. We were always sticking with our own people. Like, in the United States, when the

children go to school, there is not a secular school. The Gentile children, the American children, and the Jewish children go together.

We didn't have this.

The Jewish children had to go together. We did not go with the Gentile kids together. So consequently, we didn't have Gentile friends. Perhaps in very rare occasions, but I certainly didn't have any Gentile friends, any Polish friends.

When were you first aware of the war?

All right.

On September 1, 1939, the war broke out. I remember it was a foolish yet. Because the Polish government, they told us right away.

In one street, there were loudspeakers. They were telling us that we should make masks, that there is going to be a lot of a gas war. So I remember that everybody was selling masks and putting it on, in case the planes come and they dropped some deadly gas.

I remember that we were sewing up masks. All of a sudden, we saw planes. Everybody was saying these are our planes. These are Polish planes.

But already this was September. This was Friday. I remember it very clearly.

They were already German planes over our hometown. In the afternoon, we were bombed already. There was a lot of chaos, naturally. A lot of people started to run away. We didn't know what to do.

The Polish government was telling us that we should run toward the East. So a lot of people foolishly were running, and on the roads, they were bombed. The war didn't, as far as I'm concerned, I know that Warsaw was under siege, perhaps for a month.

But the September the 4th, we had the Germans. Already they entered our city. There was bombing, but not too much of it. I don't think they had any resistance. They just occupied our city right away. When they came in, we read so much about it. That's what the irony of it is.

We read before the war what's going on in Germany. We knew about the Kristallnacht. We knew that Hitler is persecuting the Jews in Germany. But somehow, we just couldn't believe it.

I remember that my father used to tell me. And I said my God, what's going to happen to us. My father used to say, look, child, you don't remember. You were not born before the First World War, but I remember when the Germans occupied Poland during the First World War. The Jews had a pretty nice life at that time.

So it's all propaganda.

We ourselves believed. We didn't believe that all the atrocities that Hitler started in 1933 until '39 in Germany, that this could really come true. Then, again, we didn't have such a nice life in Poland. So we thought, well, perhaps it's not going to be that bad for us.

When the Germans entered our city, the first month, I presume, there was still the chaos. They were still fighting in certain parts of Poland. So we didn't feel anything yet. But little did we know that pretty soon they are going to start with the Jews.

It soon started.

Discovering My Family Tree

Steven H Silver

Growing up, I knew my grandparents were Holocaust survivors. My grandfather Kenneth (Akiva) had jumped off a train and managed to escape into the woods while his two brothers (Feivel and Sholom) were killed by Nazi guards. My grandmother managed to survive in various concentration camps. My mother had been given to a Catholic family in their village of Knyszyn, Poland to be raised as their own. After the war, my grandfather kidnapped my mother from the family that wanted to keep her, found his wife in a displaced persons camp, and they came to America to find a new and safe life.

As I grew older, I noticed there were some strange inconsistencies in our family tree. I knew I had cousins named Malitz and Weinstein and David, but was never able to get a clear idea about how we actually connected to them.

The answer to that question came about in a peculiar way.

Later in life, my grandmother suffered from a disease called progressive supranuclear palsy. The disease kept her mind intact, but destroyed her ability to control her body. She lost the ability to move or speak, becoming trapped in her own head. It always struck me as a particularly cruel fate for someone who had suffered through the Nazi concentration camps. Despite her inability to speak, you could still see the spark of intelligence and understanding in her eyes.

One day, before the power of speech had left her completely, but at a time when it was very difficult for her to put together any words, let alone coherent sentences, my brother-in-law was talking to her. It was a long and laborious process, but he has always had a lot of patience. Eventually, when asking my grandmother about the similarity of appearances between family members, when he asked about my mother, he got a reply that confounded him.

He told my sister. "When I asked who your mom looked like, she replied, 'Sharon's not mine.'"

Those three words set off a chain of events, with my sister talking to my aunt and our parents and eventually my parents calling to tell me that they needed to talk to me. Since we had just put our infant daughter to bed, we had them come over to our house.

We learned that my mother's birth parents were Devorah and Feivel, for whom my sister and I were named. Kenneth, the man we thought of (and still think of) as our grandfather was actually Feivel's brother. Feivel was shot while jumping from the train and it was his brother who kidnapped my mother at the end of the war and brought her to the United States.

His wife Sima, was killed hours after giving birth to a daughter who was never named. After the war, Kenneth searched through displaced persons camps looking for surviving relatives, but couldn't find any. He did find a woman named

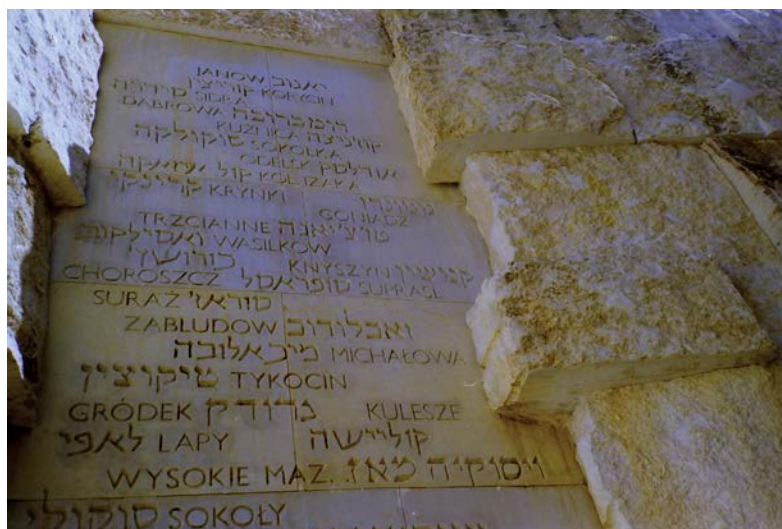
Sally Kubel Appel, whose husband had been killed during the Holocaust. Kenneth brought my mother to Cleveland where he had relatives and he exchanged letters with Sally, who had made her way to New York. Eventually they married, raised my mother, and had three children of their own.

My grandparents made my mother promise not to tell anyone the truth, although it was something of an open secret among the Jewish-Polish community of Cleveland. My mother did tell my father before they were married, but my siblings and I weren't told. My grandmother was afraid that if we knew that she wasn't our biological grandmother it would make a difference in the way we viewed her. I don't think it does, but if I'm wrong, it is only because I view her as even more heroic now than I did before.

The Jewish community of my mother's village of Knyszyn was destroyed on November 2, 1942. Some tried to hide from the Nazis and below is a list of my relatives who were murdered that day when the Nazis found them hiding in a potato cellar. Others were put on trains and sent to concentration camps, including Akiva, whose wife and infant daughter were among those killed, although Akiva managed to jump from the train and survive the war.

- Alter Pitluk (65), my great-grandfather
- Chana Wishniewsky (18), my first cousin, twice removed
- Chaya Wishniewsky (57), my great grandaunt
- Chinka Pitluk (65), my great-grandmother
- Devora Pitluk (34), my grandmother
- Dov Pitkowsky (60), my first cousin, twice removed
- Feivel Pitluk (34), my grandfather
- Izhak Wishniewsky (60), my great granduncle
- Lima Pitkowsky (36), my first cousin, twice removed
- Malka Yeshenofski (30), my grand aunt
- Moshé Walotzky (18), my first cousin, once removed
- Pesach Walotzky (40), my grand uncle
- Pesza Yeshenofski (6), my first cousin, once removed
- Rishka Walotzky (40), my grand aunt
- Shlomo Walotzky (16), my first cousin, once removed
- Shmuel Walotzky (12), my first cousin, once removed
- Sima Pitluk (35), my grand aunt
- Unnamed daughter Pitluk (new born), my first cousin, once removed

Prior to the war, Knyszyn had a Jewish population of round 1,800. Only 15 were known to have survived. My mother was the 16th.



Memoirs of a Hidden Child

Sharon Pitluk Silver

A loud pounding on the door woke me from my sleep. That was followed by voices shouting and some crying. Before I was fully awake, a tall man in some kind of uniform burst through my bedroom door, wrapped me in my blanket and ran out of the house with me. I remember the feeling of his bare chest as he carried me, wrapping his tunic around me. It was only when he lifted me onto the back of a truck waiting in front of the house that I was able to see his face and became somewhat less afraid.

Though I didn't know his name, I recognized him as the man who had been coming through my bedroom window since I could remember. I didn't know who he was, but I knew he was nice since he brought me treats—an orange or an apple, fresh fruit that was so hard to get during wartime, or perhaps a small can of sliced pineapple. That made him a good person in my five-and-a-half year old mind.

We drove a very short distance and stopped in front of a house. He and the driver of the truck got out. Within a few minutes, the scene had repeated itself and they returned with another little girl, about my same age and coincidentally with the same Polish nickname, Nyushka.

We drove for what seemed a long time during that night until we reached a farmhouse. There Nyushka and I were lifted out of the truck. I suppose we were fed and put into a bedroom where we were told to be very quiet and not speak.

There were blackout blinds on the windows because even though World War II was officially over, there was still the possibility of a rogue bomb being dropped. I remember lying still and thinking that it wasn't fair, that the men in the next room were all talking, but we weren't allowed to and we had to lay silently in bed. Eventually, I fell asleep.

That was the last time I saw Nyushka. I learned later that she had been sent to Israel, that she was the single survivor of her entire family and that her chances of adoption were better off there than anywhere else.

I remembered that night all these years, occasionally wondering how the other child fared, occasionally wondering whether she was, in fact, the companion I remembered playing with so many years ago. Occasionally I wondered about a lot of things from those years. There were many questions, but few answers.

It began in 1942 in the village of Knyszyn, in the northwest part of Poland. A woman, looking out her window, saw something she thought was strange. What she saw was a young woman walking down the road carrying a baby. She was carrying the baby, not the way one would expect in her arms, but holding her down near her hip. The woman walked outside and realized what was going on. Down the road a bit, there were a few soldiers. She realized immediately that this was a Jewish woman, obviously, trying to hide the fact she had a baby with her. As she watched, the woman knelt quickly down, deposited the baby behind a bush and quickly veered away in a different direction, obviously trying to deflect the soldiers' interest in the path she had been on. That was the last time I saw my mother. I was ten months old.

The village priest was called. He volunteered to take me into his home, but the townspeople convinced him it would be a bad idea. "Priests don't have children. When the Nazis come, they'll know that this is a Jewish child. They'll kill her and then they'll kill you, as well." The priest acknowledged

the truth of that and surrendered me to someone who ultimately took me to the local police station.

This was a small village, the police station was the second floor of a home. In addition to the police, there were a few men, friends, who were hanging out with them. One of those standing in the corner caught my eye and I raised my hands toward him. He lifted me in his arms, thought for a moment and then said, "Regina and I have been trying to have a baby for a while and haven't been able to. I'm going to take this baby home to her. Don't tell anyone what I'm doing."

And so, I went from being Shulamit, the beloved only child of Shraga Pitluk and Devorah Weinstein Pitluk, a Jewish child of Jewish parents to becoming Anna Ostrowska, the Catholic daughter of Czechek and Regina Ostrowski.

They cared for me, fed me and loved me. I had no idea that I had ever been anyone but Anna. I remember playing in the remains of a house across the road. The little girl I remember playing with so much of the time and I would get into trouble when we played there. "It's not safe. You'll get hurt." Probably that made it all the more attractive to us.

I remember going to church. My Polish mother on my left and my Polish father on my right, each whispering that I should be still and stop wiggling. I decided then that when I grew up I would not kneel to pray, that it was too hard to think about anything except how much my knees hurt from leaning on the unpadded kneelers. "I'll bet even God doesn't want, us to kneel" I thought to myself, "because when your knees hurt you can't think about God—just how much longer you have to be kneeling."

I remember a man who would climb in from my bedroom window after it was dark. I had no idea who he was, but I knew he was nice because he always brought me a treat, a fresh apple, a pear, or sometimes a can of sliced pineapple.

At one time, I was in the hospital. When a lady came to see me and gave me a bruised apple, I was very excited. "Don't say anything about the brown spots on the apple," I was told. "She went to a lot of trouble to get it for you." "But I love apples with brown spots on them. They're so soft and sweet." I replied.

Weeks and months and years passed until one night I was awakened by a loud pounding on the door and voices shouting and crying. A man came into my bedroom, wrapped me in my blanket and carried me out into a waiting truck.

Little did I know that many years later, thoughts of that day would come back to me in a very powerful way.

My biological first cousin, Shlomit (we were named for our mutual grandfather) was born in kibbutz Shfayim in Israel, which made her a sabra (a person born in Israel named after the sabra cactus—prickly on the outside, but sweet on the inside. She had married an American who had come to Israel looking for an Israeli wife. They married and had a baby who was born with a severe cleft lip and palate. The baby did not survive past her first birthday. Shortly after that, Shlomit and her husband moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico and began life anew.

Thirty years passed and her husband, Izzie, had died on the table following surgery that was to correct a heart defect several months when she called me to explained that she had spent three months in Israel following his death. During that time, she met a woman who had spent years searching for

any information about her family. She explained that she had been a hidden child during the Holocaust, hidden with a Catholic family in Poland in the town of Knyszyn.

The hair on my arms stood on end, I could feel every beat of my heart, almost as if it were trying to beat itself out of my chest. I was breathless. "Oh my God," I finally said, "it has to be the other little girl that was kidnapped the same day I was." "Would you be willing to speak with her?" Shlomit asked me. "Of course I would, but does she speak English well enough to communicate? My Hebrew is sketchy at best. I'd want someone here to help me translate and make sure that I was understanding properly."

After running errands for a good part of the next day, I came home with a car loaded with groceries and other necessities of family life. My husband was very excited to tell me that there had been a call from Israel. The woman who called spoke English quite well and told him that during the Holocaust, she had been a child hidden with a Catholic family in Poland. She thought I might be able to give her some information about her life during those years. My husband told her that I would be happy to speak with her and she promised to call back later that day. Shortly after he finished talking to me, the phone rang. "This is Pnina Kris," she announced in a somewhat accented voice, but still one that was easily understood. She proceeded to recount her story to me. It was a familiar tale, one in which she was left orphaned and homeless at a very young age.

"I was sent to Israel," she told me, "and there I was adopted by my parents who already had a son six years older than I." They lived on a farm and were a well-blended and loving family. When she was twelve, her father was hospitalized with what was to be his final illness. Each morning her mother would get her ready and send her off to school and then take a bus to spend the day at the hospital, coming home in time to meet Pnina at the school bus stop. On one particular day, her mother had a fatal heart attack as she was returning home on the bus. Her father died a few months later. My heart went out to that little girl who, by the age of twelve, had lost her third set of parents.

She told me "I've always had a strong need to find out about who I really was, who my real parents were. I didn't feel as if I could try to find out because my brother loved me so and took such good care of me after our parents died, I didn't want him to feel as if he wasn't enough for me.

"He died a few years ago and since then I've been trying to get some information. I've written to Poland time and again with no response, I've talked to hundreds of people, searched the records at Yad Vashem (the Israel National Holocaust Museum), spent time researching at the Children's Museum of Israel, a place where whoever has information about any child connected to the holocaust is encouraged to file it, but I've had no results at all. And I remember nothing, nothing at all of my time in Poland. I was six years old when I arrived in the land of Israel in 1947."

"I don't remember very much, Pnina" I told her. "But I'll tell you everything I know. My father, who was biologically my uncle, kidnapped me and that same night he kidnapped you."

"I remember nothing" she said.

"He wore some kind of uniform when he came to get you and he put you in the back of the truck with me. "I remember a truck!" she yelled with excitement, "I remember being in the back of a truck!"

As I shared my sparse memories with her, I couldn't help but ask her. How on earth had she found me. I had four different names from the time I was born in Knyszyn, moved to a different continent, as had she, and yet now, sixty years after the fact, we were reconnecting.

She explained that after her brother died, her need to learn about her roots and her past had become even stronger. She talked to everyone, explaining her situation. Finally someone said to her that there was a 93-year-old woman living in Tel Aviv who had lived in Knyszyn before the war and was one of the fifteen Jewish survivors left after the war.

Pnina went to Tel Aviv to speak to the woman. She described her as being quite old, but having "all her marbles." "Pnina," she said, "what do you expect to find out? It's been more than sixty years, everyone is gone. Forget about it and get on with your life."

Pnina convinced her, however, that she couldn't get on with her life until she knew something about her roots. Finally the woman said to her, "All right, I'll tell you what I know. Akiva Pitluk kidnapped his niece Shulamit and after that he kidnaped you also."

Not very much to go on, but she did have a name, Pitluk. Pnina was infused with a new energy and once more she asked everyone. People she knew and people she had just met. Luckily for her, the name Pitluk is and was a very uncommon one. It didn't take too long for someone to say to her, "You should look for the Weinstein family. I'm pretty sure there was a Pitluk who was married to a Weinstein."

When she was in the Haifa area, she looked in the phone book and found a listing for Michal Weinstein. She called her and explained her situation. Michal listened carefully and then said to her, "It sounds very much like it might be a cousin of mine, but I don't know very much about her. Contact my sister Nehama at Kibbutz Shfayim." When Pnina called Nehama, she was told that it sounded as if it could easily be her cousin, Sharon Silver. She thought she lived in the Chicago area, but her sister, Shlomit, who lived in Albuquerque, would know because she kept in touch with her.

And so, she called Shlomit, who called me and completed the circle. While I marveled at the "needle in the haystack" of all this, my daughter reminded me that when it's Israel, the haystack is a much smaller one.

As I got to know Pnina, I marveled at the different paths our lives took from a similar beginning. Pnina had a very difficult life" while mine was, and is, filled with love and family from the time I left Poland with the man who kidnapped me, I don't remember when he told me that he was my father's brother and my uncle and I was in fact a Jewish child. In the years since, I had a marriage lasting almost 60 years, three children and five grandchildren.

A Visit to Knyszyn Deanna Jacobson

In most ways, survivor families look and act just like other families, but there are some things that are different.

Even as children, my brothers and I knew when to stop asking questions of my mother and grandparents: it was as though there was an invisible fence and we knew not even to contemplate crossing it. In time, we learned that Grandma survived the Warsaw Ghetto, three years of Auschwitz, and came to NY where her aunt and uncle nursed her back to health. We knew that Grandpa was one of the forest people, part of the resistance, and rescued my mom from the Catholic couple who kept her identity a secret during the war.

Until I was 35, I believed that it must have been a personal miracle that the three members of my family—the mom, dad, and little daughter, survived the Shoah in separate ways and managed to find each other at the end of the war.

So, when our family secret was revealed, it is not surprising that it wasn't one of us kids who asked—in fact my parents always said it would probably be my husband Mark who discovered it. You see, my grandparents weren't my mom's biological parents. When Grandpa jumped off the train to the death camp, Treblinka, so did his two brothers. Only he survived the guards' gunshots, and the train continued on to its deadly destination with their wives, sisters, other family, and entire Jewish half of the village. My grandpa carried on the guilt of causing his brother, my mom's father, to be shot until the day he died. Never mind that if he hadn't jumped, he too would have been gassed within a day, and of course, I wouldn't be here.

In March 2005, my mother got an e-mail, and then a phone call from Israel—it was another little girl my Grandpa rescued from hiding the same night he retrieved my mom. These communications would set in motion a series of events that resulted in my parents, my aunt and me going to Knyszyn, Poland, my mother's birthplace.

Timing was interesting, as we were in the early stages of planning my elder son's bar mitzvah. He would be the first of a new generation—the second generation—of Jews in our family, who would not to have been born, and certainly not to have been born Jewish, had Hitler accomplished his goal.

When my mother asked if I would come on the trip, I was honored and terrified. I am a happy person! I love to focus on the good. I had no desire to go to this place. But, how could I not go? In addition to supporting my mom, it would be a once in a lifetime opportunity to learn about my family's history, gruesome as it is. How many times had I asked my mom about finding her Catholic mom to thank her? How many unanswered questions of our grandma's past would we never know?

So, we went. And so did the needlepoint *atarah* (the *tallit* collar) that I had been working on for my son. That started when my mom spontaneously found a *tallit* bag that was perfect for my son. She began needlepointing it when he was in kindergarten. How could I put a quickly purchased *tallit* into such a beautiful and lovingly stitched bag? Of course I couldn't. I began work on his *tallit*—he would truly be wrapped in love every time he prays. It became a fixture in my lap as I worked during little league games and book clubs, various school, and other meetings. I took it to Poland because I knew there would be a lot of travel time—on planes, trains, and automobiles. But I took it for another



reason too. I knew we would be visiting the places where hope was gone—the death camps of Treblinka and Auschwitz and the villages, once as high as 50% populated by Jews with vibrant, full lives, now places devoid of Jews, save for an occasional monument. Our hosts, the family of my mom's Catholic parents, would point out “typically Jewish” homes, distinct from the “typically Polish” homes (since Jews

frequently had businesses run out of the front of their homes, the doors were in the center, facing the street, while the Poles' homes had side entrances).

The stories we heard, about the past and present, were terrible. A few were even worse than we could have anticipated, and believe me, we anticipated horror. But there was something powerful to me, something proudly defiant, as I put in each stitch to make this *tallit*, this tangible garment of our strong, proud Jewish future that our son would wear when he took his place on this *bimah* and chanted the words of *Shema* and Torah. He would become the next link in our people's chain. After lengthy discussions with my parents and my Aunt Debbie, I decided to carry the needlepoint bag through Auschwitz, as we walked the same cursed ground that my grandma, her first husband, parents, brothers, other relatives, friends, and strangers walked in the mostly empty hopes of a future. We spoke *Kaddish* for them at the site of the crematorium. We did what so many of them could not do. We walked out alive, on our own feet, holding hands and on our own terms. While we couldn't do anything to bring them back, I hoped that by bearing witness to this most evil place in the world, and raising our children to be happy, knowledgeable and proud Jews, it would mean those deaths were not in vain. I became recommitted to ensuring that my children, and anyone else I could touch, would know this part of our history, but their Judaism would allow them to choose the joys and to celebrate and be proud of our faith. There are generations who loved our tradition and never looked to the Holocaust as reason to stay Jewish, and we can also look to the richness and the celebrations to find meaning as well as guidance for our lives.

One thing that struck me as odd for me was that throughout the trip, I only cried twice. Maybe it was because we were there to do a job—we had come to learn and to witness, and a breakdown there would have prevented that job. Really, none of us spent the time crying (and we are all prolific criers), although when we came home, we made up for lost time. Except for one moment, I surprisingly stayed dry eyed through the death camps, yet at dinner the night I

got home, I could barely speak as I told my family that only the day before I had been to the most evil place on earth. For days, weeks, after our return, those of us on the trip would call each other to touch base to see how we were doing. I slept fine in Poland, but for days after my return home, nightmares haunted me.

Now you've heard part of our family's story. It is unique, yet far from alone. In 2009, my mom, my brother Steven's family, and my family sat in a crowd of about 12,000 at the opening ceremonies of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie. We had the opportunity to sit in the survivors' section. There were about 500 seats reserved for survivors and their families. Where ever you turned, you could ask the person "what's your story?" We shared with the people next to us, behind us and nearby while we were waiting for the beginning of the program. We heard their stories. Most of those in attendance were hidden children or young adults, since of course, most of those in the camps were murdered there, and many of those who survived have since passed on. What struck me was that each story of survival had a hero—someone whose love and compassion was stronger than the hatred of the Nazis. The new museum includes over 2,000 stories of survivors and the love and luck that saved them, including interactive holograms that relate the stories of survivors. That is where the power lies in this museum. Teaching us, our children and our grandchildren that love is stronger than hate that each of us has a responsibility to the world to do our part to make it a better place. I encourage you to go, and take others with you, to visit this museum to listen to those stories. They reflect courage, love, luck, and hope.

So, we are the same as other families. We love, we laugh and sometimes even travel together. But we are different. It's impossible for us to cherish certain moments without also appreciating how lucky we are to be able to do so. I hope that one day, my children, or perhaps their children, can bless their children and wish for them to reach for the stars—and just know that they don't have to wish that they and all children will be free from hate and persecution.

Testimony, Part II: The Ghetto

Sally Pitluk

What were the changes in your family's life, then?

All right. Right away, about a month later, or perhaps six weeks up to two months later, they said that all the Jewish men have to gather at the Jewish cemetery.

They came with trucks. They took away the elderly men. We never heard from them. Then they started to go against the younger people. My parents at the time, we were afraid that, although my father had a very, very small business, we were afraid that perhaps they may take him away.

We still didn't know that they were going to shoot them or they were going to hurt them.

We all were afraid that they are going to take him away and God knows when he's going to come back.

So my mom and my dad gathered, they made a few things, what we had there in our store, and they left for Warsaw.

And I and my two brothers were left at home. Little by little—we didn't have the ghetto yet. We still had the Polish people used to come. And whatever I had, I used to sell just to be able to buy some food for myself and my brothers. We were living in an apartment, which was like two rooms.

One day, the Germans came in, a German Gestapo man. He said, tomorrow morning you have to move from here, this place. You can't live here anymore.

So here I was.

I was 19 years old when the war broke out. I had to go and find a place for myself. I want to regress for a moment.

When the Germans came, after a while, they sort of made like a Jewish government. Like, we had to govern ourselves. Let's say that the Germans needed 200 people for work, young people.

They would come to that Jewish *Judenrat*, they call this. They would say you have to bring me 200. Let's say 100 women and 100 men. We need them to work for tomorrow. So when I was told that I have to move, I went to the *Judenrat* and I said, what am I going to do. Here I have two small brothers. I wasn't so sophisticated. I didn't know how to move. I didn't know where to move.

So these people there told us that the Germans said that pretty soon they are going to have a ghetto in our town. So it would be the best, it would be advisable I should go to the place where the ghetto is going to be and see a place where I could go. This is for the future, because there's going to be a ghetto.

So sure enough, they took me to a certain place where Polish people lived. They lived in a very, very neglected little



place. They moved out, and they moved into the apartment where I lived with my brothers, and I moved into this place here.

Because the Germans were preparing already that the Polish people that lived in this street where the ghetto was supposed to be, they would just move them out to the place where they outside the ghetto.

From my parents, I didn't hear for a while.

Then I heard that in Warsaw it's getting very, very bad. And they're talking about also a ghetto. We have to understand that where I lived, the town where I lived, Płock, was called the Reich. They sort of annexed it right away to Germany. Now Warsaw was called a protectorate, which it was just like there would be still a Polish government.

But naturally, it was not a Polish government anymore. The Germans were there. So there was a border between us and Warsaw. But my mom sort of smuggled through the border, and she came home.

She was telling us already about the terrible atrocities and the hunger that was starting in Warsaw, and that they are also trying to erect a ghetto there. So my father was left in Warsaw.

During this time, they were constantly bringing the Jews out to a certain place, the square of the city. They would take lots of people away, and we never knew where they take them. Later on, we found out that they shot them.

I remember certain incidents, this was right in the beginning, this was still in '39, that they took the Jews that had beards. A lot of Jews were very religious and they had beards. They took them out to the marketplace. They would stand there, and they would pull their hair out from their beards. They would beat them. They would tell them you raped German women and children. It's so hard absolutely even to talk about it. Those poor Jews, they were hitting them so long. Until they said, you tell us that you raped German women. There weren't any German women in Poland. When they were hurting them so terrible, they said, 'All right. Yes, I did.' That's when they would shoot them.

This was still the times where the ghetto was open. We didn't have a closed ghetto yet. Then the time came when all the Jews were ordered into the ghetto. And in order to describe a ghetto, people in the United States talk about the ghetto where people live in one particular neighborhood, the Jews or the Blacks.

Our ghetto was different.

We had only one street. All the windows that went out to the street had to be barricaded and closed off. We could only use the back of the yards. The yards were not too large, either. They took all the Jews, they brought us into the ghetto. In the beginning, the ghetto wasn't closed yet. We could still go out occasionally from the ghetto.

But in 1940, in the summer of 1940, they closed up the ghetto.

That's where the tragedies began.

First of all, I forgot to tell you that as soon as the Germans came in, they made us wear yellow patches. It was a big patch in the front and a big patch in the back. We're not allowed to walk on the sidewalk. If a Jewish man went by, naturally he was wearing those yellow patches. If a German went by, he had to take off his hat and bow. They tried to make us as nonpeople.

How can I explain it?

At first, they tried to take all the dignity away from us.

But it still didn't matter.

Because we were so desperately clinging to hope. And in retrospect, I just see how stupid we were. Because every

once in a while, we would get a German paper. It would say that here they occupied Belgium, and they occupied Holland, and they are occupying France. Every time we heard about an occupation, we thought that pretty soon the English are going to destroy them, that somehow, somewhere, they just cannot keep on going and winning all of Europe. But little did we know how strong they were.

Anyhow, in 1940, in the latter part of 1940, they closed the ghetto. When they closed the ghetto, that's when the terrible tragedies started to happen.

We were assigned, like, cards. We would go, and they made a bakery in the ghetto, and we received a certain amount of bread per person, and also other, different goods. It wasn't a starvation diet. We still could live with it. But later on, there's a particular incident that I would like to recall.

I think that this was in 1941. We called it the Bloody Sunday.

About 100 people of the Gestapo came in to the ghetto.

They said that all the Jews have to come out from their homes.

We had a little meadow in the ghetto. Everybody has to segregate in this little meadow. There were hundreds, maybe more. I don't recall. But there were a lot of Gestapo men. They were standing in two rows. They had those huge rifles and those huge sticks. They made the Jews go through that as they were standing there and they were hitting everybody. And particularly, there were quite a few women that were pregnant. So they took those pregnant women, and they were hitting them, and they were hitting them with their boots.

The blood was running. We were probably knee deep in blood. There were so many people killed at that time. This took, maybe, about three hours. And later on, when they left, there were so many dead. There were so many injured. This was one day.

Now I have to regress again.

In our ghetto, when they closed the ghetto, I said before that there were 60% Jews in our hometown. But what they did is, all the little towns from around, the Jewish towns, they brought them into our ghetto. So when we were in the ghetto, I would say that we were about 12,000 or perhaps 15,000 Jews. Because they all brought into our ghetto.

Now the living conditions were absolutely indescribable. They were in one room could live about 20 people. In retrospect, I really don't know how we didn't commit suicide. But somehow, nobody even committed suicide. We had such hopes that perhaps some miracle is going to happen, that maybe they'll start losing the war and they won't put so much attention toward us.

Was there any underground in the ghetto, resistance?

In the ghetto, there was no underground. There was no resistance. Let me tell you why.

There are a lot of people that don't understand it. They think that we were not heroes, that we had no resistance. First of all, we didn't know that we are going to be all killed. We didn't know that. Nobody would ever believe that. But we only knew that, let's say that once there was a resistance. There was somebody who hit an SS man. So they took his whole family and put them against the wall and shot them.

So how could there be resistance?



It's so easy to stay in the United States and talk in retrospect and say, why didn't you resist. If you resisted, if one would kill a Gestapo man, they would take 100 Jews and kill them. That's why there was no resistance.

There was fear.

They instilled in us such fear that we just didn't. We were just numb. We were just like sheep. They took us out once. They said that there was typhoid. Typhoid was terrible in the ghetto from the dirt, from the congestion. We didn't have sanitary anything. We didn't have soap. We didn't have

anything, really, to clean ourselves. So all of a sudden we had typhoid.

So the Germans said that we are dirty, and we have to eradicate the typhoid.

So they made us all come out and they shaved the women's hair. They said that we are dirty, and we don't know how to take care of ourselves, and that's why it happened.

People were dying.

We didn't have any medication. We had one doctor in the ghetto. He died of typhoid, too. So we had nobody. We had nothing.

I had a cousin of my mom's that lived in a nearby little town. They brought him to our town. But before they brought him, they took them somewhere, the whole little town. They took them somewhere in barracks. And they were hitting them so much that a lot of them never came back. But this cousin of my mom's, with his family and the wife and three children, he came back. He never walked again. He came back paralyzed because they were hitting him so much. He was living in that ghetto.

How can explain you that 16,000 Jews were living in one small street? There were big gates. You couldn't go out. You didn't know what was going out in the outside world.

We had our own police. We had the Jewish police.

I remember one incident. Those policemen were not happy to be policemen, but they could earn a meager living. They were paid as being policemen, so they were policemen in the ghetto. One of them, who was a few years older than I, before the war he went to the university. He came home when the war broke out, from Warsaw. He came and he had no way of making a living. He had a mother and he had two sisters. I remember when he came and he says, you know what? I became a policeman. Isn't that degrading?

It wasn't anything to be a hero, to be a policeman. It's just to be able to earn a few marks that he became the policeman. And as it happened, they caught a man who escaped from the ghetto. They brought him into the ghetto. And they told this policeman that he has to take care of him that he shouldn't escape. Because they probably were going to shoot him.

This policeman, evidently, he sort of didn't watch him that closely, and this man escaped again. So I remember that one day we didn't even know what was happening. But a couple of days later, they erected gallows in that meadow, that famous meadow that they took us all the time out. They made all the Jews come out again. They brought this policeman. They did hang him. From then on, hangings were every day.

If they were caught, somebody out of the ghetto, because people were still running out and taking off their badge because there was hunger already—their patches, rather, the yellow patches. If they caught them, they brought

them into the ghetto and they would hang them, or there were shootings constantly going on. Still, we were coping. Because we still lived with that silly hope that perhaps the war is going to be over.

And especially in 1941, we heard that the Germans are invading Russia. Well, by then, we were absolutely so delighted. Now we thought perhaps for sure, now the Russians and the English are fighting against them. We didn't know anything about the United States. And sure enough, later on, I found out that the United States was not in the war until '41.

We were delighted.

We felt now this time, perhaps our liberation is going to come from the Russians.

Little did we know that they were so strong that they went deep into Russia. That was the summer of '41, June, July. This was the summer. This was June and July. It was the summer of '41. We saw the Germans going to the front, through our place, going to the East, the Eastern Front. We heard the cannons going off. It wasn't that far from us. We had lots of hope. It was false, false hope.

Most of all, in retrospect, when I remember, when I remember the devastating way what happened to our families, my brothers were so young. My brother was then—my younger brother, who was born in 1928, he was, let's say, he was in 1940, 1940, how old would he be, he was 12 years old? He was 12 years old.

My little brother was born in 1933. So he was what? He was 7 years old. In the winter of '41, they took my brother to work. My little brother didn't have any shoes. It was such a miserable, miserable wind. It was so cold. We had no way of getting any shoes for them. We had no way of having any food for them. It was so devastating for my parents to see their children always hungry. And my father, who was a well-respected Jew before the war, would go out to work, out of the ghetto if he was lucky and sometimes he would bring home a little food because some Germans, if he worked real hard, they would give him an extra piece of bread.

Or I remember once he was working with some—I don't know how to describe it. But we didn't have any coal. So we didn't have any fuel. So they took my brother. And he was digging turf. It was called turf. We put it in a stove to burn it in the winter. He was coming home and logging that turf that we should be able to warm up by that little stuff.

They gave us potatoes. That's what the Germans gave us. They made huge holes in the ground, and they brought lots of potatoes. We had the potatoes, and perhaps that's how we survived. So constantly, we made all kinds of foods with the potatoes. We brought this, it wasn't fuel, it was a turf that we put in the—

Peat?

Peat, right. They put it, and that's how we cooked with it.

Emotionally, was it worse for you in the ghetto personally than later on in the camps?

Emotionally, I think in the ghetto, I was completely devastated, when I had to look at the suffering of my parents and my brothers and my whole family. My father had three brothers in our hometown, and he had two sisters. All of

them were married. All of them had had children. All of us were hungry. All of us were degraded. We were made to a nonpeople. We were made to hate each other, even.

Because the one who was the policeman, perhaps that he had a little better living, he had no choice. He had to be strict with the other people. Let's say that somebody wanted to go out from the ghetto. He would say, what do you care? I'm going to go out. If I'm going to be killed, it's none of your business.

But this policeman wouldn't let him go out. So he would be the mean one. They would say just because look, one Jew is against the other Jew. What the Germans accomplished is they made even the Jew hate the other Jew for certain things that they were not responsible for it.

Like, let's say that they came to the *Judenrat*, and they said I want to have 500 people for work today. There were certain places where perhaps the work wasn't as hard as other places. So they had no way of knowing where one part of the people were going to work and the other.

Well, always they would say, oh, because this one has some sort of influence. But this is not true. They didn't have any influence. It was just that they tried to make amongst us that hatred. They succeeded with it, too.

When you hear about, in Warsaw, that they say that the children would say about their parents where they are hiding or something, this is not even true. But they just tried in every respect to degrade us. They took away our pride. They took away everything from us.

And the ghetto years, I would say the ghetto years, mentally, were to me the most horrendous years.

And then started the story with the taking the Jews out to the gas chambers.

Well, before that, in the ghetto, to what extent did the non-Jews help the Nazis, if any? And also, did non-Jews help the Jews—non-Nazis, the Polish people helped the Jews at all?

Yeah. As far as I'm concerned, when we went to the ghetto, I know that in certain parts of Poland there were some Polish people that perhaps helped the Jews. Because I know that there was an underground. But not in my part of Poland. In our part of Poland, we didn't have any help. As a matter of fact, the Polish people, when the Germans came in, I think that they were delighted when we started to wear the yellow patch in the back and in the front and when we started to be persecuted. Right away when they came in, there was a law that everything that if we have any furs, we had to give up. Any jewelry, we had to give up.

This was right away. This was right in 1940.

We had to give up our worldly goods. Then they came to the *Judenrat*. They would say that we need today, we need certain things for the Germans. And I presume that not all Jews would give up everything. So they would take it and they would give it to the Germans. Otherwise, they would say otherwise you would have to give me 50 Jews or 100 Jews. We never knew what happened to them. We didn't know that they were taking them away and they'll never come back. We still hoped against hope.

How could it be possible that this German race, that the German civilization can do this to people?

Faces and Names

Russell J. Handelman

"I think Russell has something he would like to share with us."

Uri, our ARZA Israel tour guide, motioned me forward and handed me the microphone tuned to the headsets of the two dozen other group members. We were partway through our visit to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and museum in Jerusalem, standing in the gallery titled "Mass Murder: The Final Solution Begins," on July 23, 2017. Uri had seen me looking at the photos taken by Nazi soldiers of the "Holocaust of bullets" that took place in the occupied Soviet Union beginning in 1941, when *Einsatzgruppen*, special killing squads, rounded up Jews in cities and towns, marched them to isolated locations, and machine-gunned them into mass graves. I had been glancing back and forth between the displays and a sheet of paper I had unfolded, and Uri had quietly asked why. When he found out, he asked if I'd be willing to speak. As I said yes, I thought back on how at the beginning of the tour, about ten days before, Uri had told us to always think about wherever we visited, "Why am I here, and why does this matter?"

I had been interested in history as far back as I could remember, and often talked with my paternal grandfather, who lived nearby, about where our family came from. Once, he shared with me a translation of a letter, written by his own father, on the family's emigration in 1906 to New York from Staraya Ushitzza, a shtetl in what's now western Ukraine.

One topic that never did come up, though, was what had become of any relatives who did not emigrate then. From my great-grandfather's letter, I knew there were kin who'd stayed in the shtetl, but what had become of them, no-one seemed to know.

Then, about ten years ago, I got e-mail from a distant cousin who had made contact with even more distant cousins, descendants of the Boorstein family, the family of my great-grandmother, a family with which we had almost completely lost touch. She sent Anne a vast tranche of .pdfs of long-lost family history, which my cousin, knowing my interest in family history, forwarded to me.

Included in the files was a photo of a formal family group, posed stiffly in front of wooden wall, and dated April 1, 1928. According to the caption, this was the family of Lipa HaLevi Boorstein, my great-grandmother's brother (and, therefore, my great-granduncle). Behind him were his three sons by his first marriage, two looking rather husky and strong (Isaac and Haskel), one thin and bespectacled (Velvil), Velvil's wife, Bronya, and their son, Manya, barely four years old. Next to Lipa was his second wife, Valya, and in front, their son, Zyama, fourteen years old.

Scrolling down further, my breath felt icy as I read what became of them. Lipa, Valya, Velvil, Bronya and Manya "were killed by the Nazis on July 23, 1942, Tish B'Av 5702, buried [in] the common grave at Grushka Hill, located 2km from Staraya Ushitzza." Haskel and Zyama had been killed while fighting in the Red Army, and only Isaac had survived the war.

According to another document, Lipa was a retired blacksmith. Velvil had been the town postman.

I stared hard at their faces, seeing a resemblance to some of my cousins—a high forehead, wide-set eyes, Roman nose. I thought about how, whatever challenges my grandfather, father, uncles and cousins may have faced in 20th century America, whether educational, employment or housing discrimination, hostile neighbors, or social prejudice,

these forgotten relatives had survived World War I, the Russian Revolution and civil war, the mass starvation, and Red Terror of the 1930's, only to end as they did.

Searching further online, I eventually found out that the family had been among 1,300 Jews from two neighboring towns, Staraya Ushitzza and Studnetsa, who had been told on July 23, 1942 that they were to be "relocated" to a labor camp. Instead, they were marched to the spot halfway between both towns to face machine-gun bullets and anonymous burial. I also found that after World War II, the Soviets had erected a monument to "the victims," mentioning neither names nor that they were Jews, and that the site itself may now be underwater since the Dneister River was dammed for a hydroelectric project in the 1980's.

During World War II, my grandparents spent their summers at a tiny farmhouse in central Connecticut, where my father and his brothers grew Victory Gardens and raised chickens. I could imagine them there on July 23, 1942, which was probably an ordinary week, filled with feeding chickens, hoeing weeds, playing baseball, and swimming in the pond—and halfway around the world, their unknown cousins were among a faceless, nameless crowd standing on the edge of pit, waiting for the order to fire. But for a decision to emigrate in 1906, it could just as easily have been them.

For the first time, the Holocaust had touched me, not as something from textbooks or documentaries filled with monochrome images nameless faces, but as faces I could know, who had names I recognized.

My decision to visit Israel in 2017 had to do primarily with my family's connection to a kibbutz southeast of Haifa. My grandfather had known several of the founders, and we had stayed in touch over the years. As part of the kibbutz's 80th anniversary, I would go to represent the family. I saw it as an opportunity for a more extensive visit, and had signed on with a tour group through ARZA (Associations of Reform Zionists of America).

When I got the detailed itinerary, I was stunned to find out that the tour's visit to Yad Vashem, near the end of the trip, was set for July 23, 2017—seventy-five years, to the day, of the murder of the Boorstein family by the Nazis.

And so, on July 23, 2017, I stood next to Uri in front of the tour group, looking past them at enlarged photomurals of faceless, nameless Jews collapsing into pits and trenches, and unfolded the printout of the photo of greybearded Lipa, seated beside Valya, hair combed neatly, with Velvil, in his postal service uniform, standing behind next to Bronya, with Manya's small face peeking out between them.

I began to tell the story of why I was there and why it mattered, and at the end, looking at images of all those who had no-one to do so, read the names of Lipa HaLevi Boorstein, Valya Boorstein, Velvil Boorstein, Bronya Boorstein, and Manya Boorstein, seventy-five years to the day after their faces and names had been erased by gunfire and earth.

And so, today, when I read the newspapers and websites full of numbers of dead and missing, when I read of those who would tear down or deface posters of faces and names, I will do what I must and what I can to keep Jewish faces and names from once again becoming political statistics and historical abstractions.

A Meeting in the Cemetery in Łódź

K.G. Anderson

It was nearly midnight when we drove into Łódź and the city's broad boulevards were dark and empty. This was July of 1985, and Poland was still under Russian Communist control.

I was traveling with my then husband, Ted Weinert, and his colleague Piero Cappuccinelli, a molecular biology professor at the University of Sassari, Italy. Ted and Piero had given a talk at the university in Prague the day before and we were on our way to visit colleagues of Piero's in Warsaw. The most direct route to Warsaw went through Łódź, once a major industrial center of Europe. There were few hotels for foreigners in Russian-occupied Poland, but a friend of Piero's had arranged for us to stay with a Polish artist, Boguśław ("Boguś") Kudelski.

Our host met us outside his studio in the city's main square and we followed his car to the nondescript modern apartment complex where his sister Jadwiga, also an artist, and her teenage daughter lived. The family greeted us with open arms, and, even though it was nearly midnight when we arrived, prepared a light meal of scrambled eggs with onions for us. We slept on fold-out sofas in their living room. (All conversations were conducted through Boguś and Ted, both fluent in German.)

The next morning Boguś took us on a driving tour of the city. We visited the sunlit attic studio where he painted. He showed us immense brick factory buildings the size of entire city blocks that had once housed a thriving textile industry, much of it owned by Jewish families. More than 200,000 Jews were living in Łódź in the early 1900s. I found out later that only 10,000 had survived forced labor, starvation, and the German death camps of World War II. Few of those 10,000 chose to return to Łódź.

After learning of my Jewish heritage, Boguś insisted on taking us to the Jewish cemetery on Bracka Street. He told us it was the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe. We were eager, but also a bit worried. There was no evidence of Jews in the contemporary city, the Russian and Polish governments were obviously hostile to Jews, and we wondered—who could be left to visit the cemetery?

The cemetery turned out to be a vast place, encompassing several city blocks and surrounded by massive brick and concrete walls. The elaborate main gates were locked, and the grounds inside looked deserted. Boguś directed us to drive around to a small brick building that was an external office of sorts. There, he spoke to a caretaker, who, after some discussion, grudgingly opened a rusted metal door in the wall and let us inside. The man clearly wondered why a non-Jewish Pole was showing three foreigners the Jewish cemetery. It was mid-afternoon; the caretaker asked us to be out of the cemetery fairly quickly.

Because of the overgrown trees and bushes, the cemetery grounds seemed endless. It felt an open field, rather than the middle of a major city. (I found out later the cemetery spans more than 100 acres) A main roadway, hard-beaten dirt and concrete, seemed to vanish into the far reaches of the place. Boguś explained that the cemetery had been vandalized in the 1970s, but there were now steps being taken to protect and restore it.

Towering trees, fully leafed-out in the mild summer weather, obscured many of the pathways within the cemetery. Branches hung down and touched the tallest stone

monuments. Weeds were everywhere. This was a miniature city, with grave markers instead of buildings. I learned later there are some 160,000 people buried there.

Ted and Piero wandered off along a side path. I followed the main path, trying to get a sense of the place as a whole before studying the elaborate gravestones.

I'd reached the middle of the cemetery when I spotted four figures further down the roadway. They were dressed formally, in dark suits. For a moment I wondered if I'd stumbled onto a graveside service.

Then the group spotted me. One of the figures began motioning to me, and, as I came closer, I saw it was a tiny woman in a black pantsuit, with dark, neatly styled short hair. She wore fashionable jewelry, dressy flats, and looked as though she might be from Paris or London.

She flashed a warm smile. "Hello," she said. "I'm Edzit Milich from Beverly Hills."

That was not what I'd expected. "Karen Anderson," I said. "from New Haven." And added, by way of explaining my presence and my confusing surname, "I'm Jewish."

Edzit's three companions, all men, did not appear to be from Beverly Hills. They were dressed in the style of Orthodox Jews, with beards, fedoras, and worried eyes. They looked back and forth from Edzit to me, clearly puzzled. Edzit spoke to them, with great animation, in Polish.

Then the men began talking with each other. Edzit turned back to me. "I told them you had come from the United States to visit this cemetery," she said. "They can't believe it. They've been told by the Russians that no one remembers the Holocaust, that the whole world has forgotten what happened to them."

One of the men pointed at me and asked me a question. He was speaking in Polish, so I turned to Edzit for a translation.

"He says you look familiar. He wants to know, do you have relatives from here?"

Sad to disappoint him, I said no, that my relatives were from Warsaw and from Kaunas, Lithuania.

At this point, Piero and Ted appeared in the distance, waving to me with some concern. It was getting late, and the caretaker probably wanted to us to leave.

Edzit and her group began walking with me toward the cemetery exit. She explained that the three men were friends from her childhood, camp survivors who were among few thousand Jews who had returned to Łódź after the war. She told me about the Germans occupying Łódź, and eventually sending her and her young friends to the Poznan labor camp for children. From there, she was sent to two other camps, and in 1943 to Auschwitz. After the war she was taken by the Red Cross to Sweden, eventually making her way to the United States where she'd married and had children. She told me her daughter had come with her on this trip to Poland and she was going to show her Auschwitz.

I introduced Edzit to Ted, Piero, and Boguś, who were astonished to encounter someone in the middle of Łódź who spoke English. (I think Edzit's friends were similarly surprised to find a Polish Gentile leading our tour.) Our group was standing near the tall wall near the exit door, and Edzit was looking at the wall. She asked me to gather up some pebbles for her to put on her father's grave.

Ted, Piero, and I just been to the historic Jewish cemetery in Prague, so I was familiar with the custom of leaving pebbles on a grave to show that the grave had been visited and that the deceased lived on in the memory of those who visited. But I wasn't sure why Edzit was asking me to gather pebbles for her—or why we weren't standing in front of a grave marker.

"Where is his grave?" I asked.

Edzit pointed the area of overgrown grass along the wall. The wall held some metal plaques. She explained that her father had been one of a group of men shot in Łódź and buried in this mass grave by the wall.

I got down on my knees, scratched a few pebbles out of the hard ground, and handed them to Edzit. It was then that I noticed her hands, and realized why she'd asked me to dig out the pebbles for her. Some of her fingers—laden with expensive rings—ended not in fingernails, but in stumps.

"Frostbite," she told me. Then she took the pebbles and placed them on the grave, murmuring something in Hebrew that I didn't catch. (My guess is that she was asking that her father and the others be "bound up in the bond of life," *tz-ror haHayyim*.)

We started to say our goodbyes. I was startled when Edzit ask if I'd like to take a picture of the two of us together. I gave my camera to Ted, and Edzit and I stood side by side. She pushed up the sleeve of her jacket. Ted paused, frowning. I realized that he was looking at her bare arm. I looked down for a second and saw the concentration camp tattoo.

Ted took the picture.

I will remember.

NOTES:

Esther (Edzit, Edzia) Frymet Milich (married names: Kozminski and Polanski) died June 7, 1991, at the age of 71 in San Luis Obispo, CA.

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Information about the cemetery in Łódź

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Cemetery,_Łódź

<http://www.jewishŁódźcemetery.org/EN/CemeteryPlan/Default.aspx>

Default.aspx

<http://www.jewishŁódźcemetery.org/EN/AboutCemetery/AboutCemeteryAtBrackaStreet/Default.aspx>

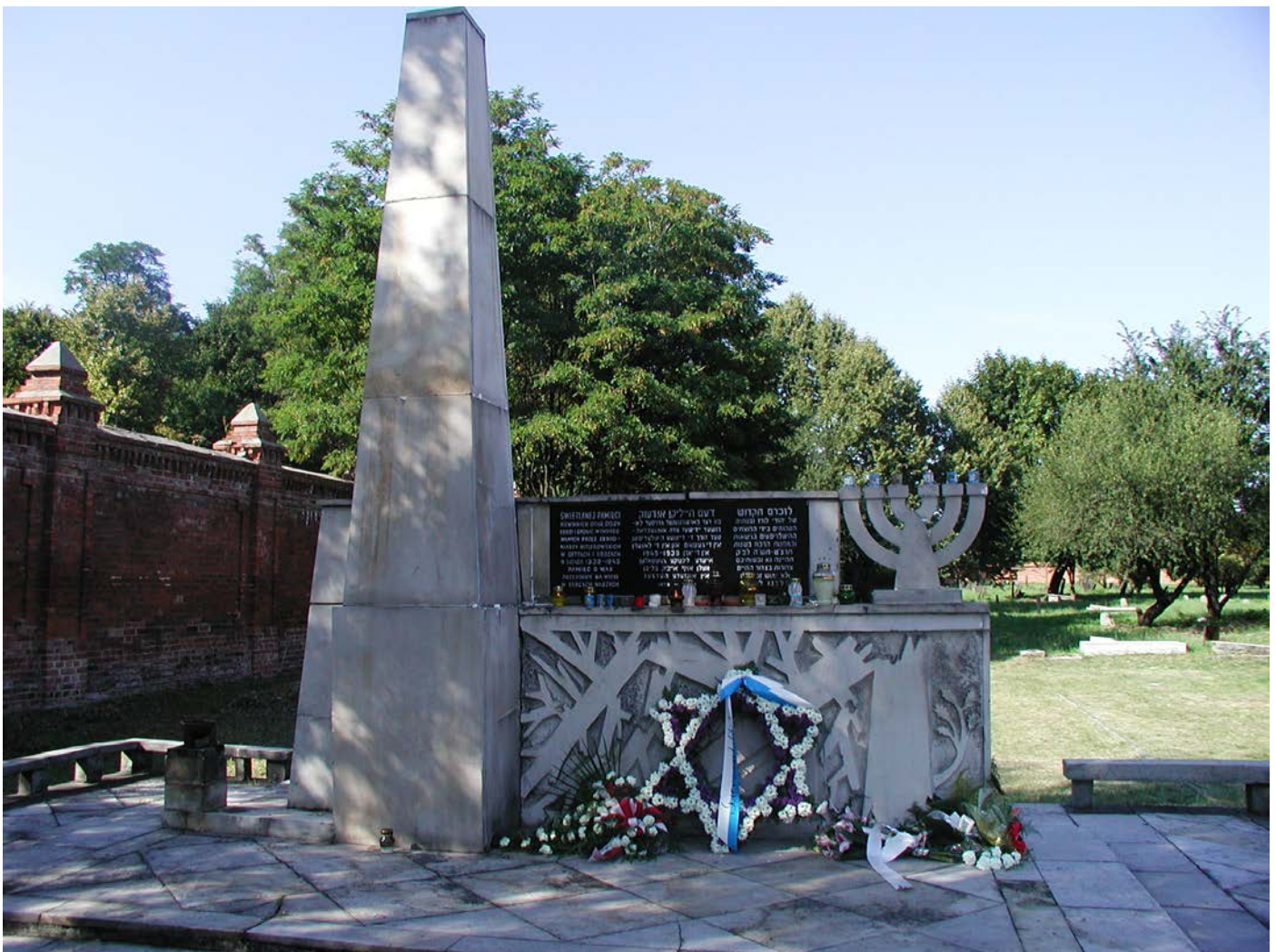


Photo by HuBar. 2006

Testimony, Part III: Auschwitz

Sally Pitluk



Were you deported from the ghetto to a concentration camp?

Yes, in 1942.

I would say it started in July that they started to deport people from the ghetto. Now they divided us. They didn't have that many trains, I presume. I mean, how could they take, like, 16,000 people at one time? So they took 2,000 at one time. And it would be, like, every two weeks, there would be a transport.

They also came to that *Judenrat*, to the Jewish government. They would tell them that we want 2,000 Jews. We are going to send them to different camps. They're going to live in different camps, but we are going to clean out this ghetto of Jews.

So they came.

First, they took the old people. So let's say if they gathered enough older people, they had, like, 2,000 people. So they told them to take everything that they could put on their back and take their belongings, their meager belongings.

They would just march them out to the train. When the trains came, they were cattle trains. They would put them in like cattle in those trains. They would take them away. We never heard from them.

Two weeks later, they would take another transport, another 2,000 Jews.

Then they would take already people with little children. I don't know.

And, again after two weeks, they would come again. They would take, again, let's say, middle-aged people, middle-aged

people. Middle-aged people would be people that they would be in their thirties in those years.

They took, again, 2,000 people out. Finally, they said that there are no more Jewish children in the ghetto.

I remember this so clearly.

That one day, just at random, some Gestapo people came in. Some mothers were hiding their children. Some went together with their children, but some were very young people and they had their children yet. They weren't selected yet to go.

But the Nazis assumed that there are no more children in the ghetto.

They came in.

And that lady was holding a child, maybe the child was eight months old. That Gestapo man took the child from her arms. I saw this with my own eyes. Just he took his gun and he shot the child. He said, "You dirty Jew. Didn't you know that there are no more Jewish children in the ghetto?"

Anyhow, so it depends.

I don't remember clearly if it was every two weeks. Perhaps every three weeks when they had those cattle trains ready they came in.

The night before, they told the people, the Jewish governments they're called, that we need, again, 2,000. They kept on taking the 2,000. They were leaving. And all we knew is they're resettling us, that they are taking us somewhere. Because they want to. They want to resettle us.

What happened to your family?

Now my family still was still there. Luckily, I felt that we were absolutely very lucky that my parents were still not touched. Although my parents, my father was 44 years old, I think, at the time. My mother was 42. But my parents were still not touched. But as I said, my father, his family, his brothers, his sisters were taken with the earlier transports. My family was still there. Then there were, again, transports every few weeks. My parents were still there. We felt very, very lucky.

Then one day, there were already almost all Jews were gone.

There were left, maybe, 5,000 Jews in the ghetto. Still, my parents were there. And being that we were so congested, we were living in those terrible, terrible conditions, so I went to my cousin to sleep there because it was already 10 o'clock at night and we knew that the transport that had to go the next morning out was already gone. Little did we know that they were still on the station. My mother told me, "Oh, go ahead. You'll have a better night's rest. Go over there. You'll sleep at your cousin's."

I went over to my cousin. And about 5 o'clock in the morning, all of a sudden a lot of Gestapo came into the ghetto. They said that nobody should go out. They're going to shoot. We didn't know what happened. We couldn't get out of whatever we were, we couldn't get out. It turned out that they had one empty boxcar, cattle car, and they needed 200 more people. They just went at random to houses and they dragged them out. Amongst them, were my parents and my brothers. When it was all clear, about 10 o'clock in the morning, I went to my brother's. My parents were not there anymore. I couldn't wait, to tell you the truth. I couldn't wait for myself to go already, too. I just wanted to go already. I just didn't want to. I mean, I felt that I'm going to be reunited with my parents, with my brothers.

Well, anyhow, the time arrived. This was in October that our last transport was taken. By then, there were actually mostly young people left.

In 1942?

Yeah, this was 1942 October that it was completely cleaned out and we left. To explain you what was happening in the train, how we were in those trains, in those cattle trains.

How long a journey?

The journey took probably five or six days. And then we arrived in Auschwitz. You went from north of Warsaw—To the south of Poland, the south of Poland. Not too far—Near Krakow—not too far from Kraków. And we arrived in Auschwitz. It was already sort of, like, twilight. Perhaps there was, in our transport, about 2,500 people. As we came down, this is so difficult to recall, because as we came down there were hundreds, probably, of Gestapo people hitting and hollering. And there were trucks. And they were hollering, the men were separated right away from the women.

And there was—Confusion. I don't know. There was so much confusion. We didn't know they were taking us. They were taking some people on one side and the others on the other side. Men in one side. The men you didn't see anymore. They took the men in a completely different part. They took in out of, perhaps, 2,500 people, they took 1,000 into the camp. The rest went on the trucks. And I remember so distinctly.

So they put me with the people to go on the trucks. There was a lady who said "I don't know, is it better to go on the trucks or is it better to be with the people that are not going on the trucks?"

She said I looked young. She said, "Oh, you look so young. Why should you go on the truck? Go try to be with the people that they're counting, the people to walk."

As I was going in with those people, an SS man came by. He says you don't belong here. they counted us in five. He says you don't belong here. Get out of here. Go back to the people that are going on the truck. And then they did help me, again.

"Go in there. Maybe you can go in there. Maybe it's better to be there."

I went back in there.

The SS man came, another one came and he pushed me into the people that were walking. Then the other people they put on the truck, and the 500 women. We walked to the camp. This was a walk to the camp. We came to the camp when it was, perhaps, about 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening.

If you'd gone on the trucks, what would have happened?

We went straight to the gas chambers.

OK. It's OK.

We're back with the second part of our interview with Sally Pitluk of Cleveland in the Cleveland section, National Council of Jewish Women Holocaust Archives. Sally, when we left off, you were telling us that you had just got to Auschwitz. One way was by walking—was to the labor section. By trucks, you were taken to the death chambers.

That's right.

Show us, please, the number on your arm. Tell us the significance of this. Tell us exactly how it was put there, who did it, and what it means.

OK. Now, let me tell you. We started to walk toward the camp. And again, the same thing. We didn't know that the trucks are going to the gas chambers. We didn't know where we are going. I remember that as we were walking and the guards were walking with us, and I asked them, I said, "Listen, about two or three weeks ago, I don't recall how long ago it took from one transport to the other, there were another transport that came here, perhaps here. Do you know where they are?"

And he says, "Oh, they are living nearby. They are all—the whole families are together. And you are going there too. And the trucks are just because we didn't want so many people to walk. So we put them on the trucks."

So we walk in. And we walk in to Auschwitz, to Birkenau. You see, Auschwitz was 40 kilometers square. And they were—the whole compound was Auschwitz. But it was divided. There was Birkenau. There was Auschwitz the camp. There was Buna. There was Budy. There were a few camps in the compound, in the Auschwitz.

Birkenau is where the death camp was, the crematorium.

Yeah. We came into Birkenau. Our transport came into Birkenau. Well, when we approached Birkenau, it was—at that time, it was in October. I think it was late in October. And it was a cold day. And it was very muddy. And we came into a camp which, if you ever imagine hell, that's exactly probably how hell looks like. There were ghosts walking. And there were people laying in the mud dying, with swollen legs and bulging eyes.

And we—they took us to a place in Birkenau which was a building. And they made us take off all our clothes, whoever was wearing shoes.

And I was lucky. And perhaps that's why I survived the first few weeks—because I had shoes that looked sort of inconspicuous. They were sort of old shoes. They were high shoes, tied with ties. And the people that had nice-looking boots or something, they had to take them off. And the ones that had those worn shoes, they let us take them in with us to a room, which was like a—I've never been in a steam bath, but it was like a steam bath. And it was like with steps. And it was awfully hot in that bath.

We left all our clothes outside in a different room. We stayed in that steam bath. And here, I'm talking about 500 women. We stayed there overnight.

In the morning, those Gestapo ladies came in. And they marched us into a large room. And the room had windows. And it was a bitter cold day, I remember. I don't know. Somehow, in October—but I remember, it was already very, very cold. And we walked out from that steam room. And we walked out into a large room. And there, they gave us—we had to stand in line in the nude. And all the windows were up. And they shaved our hair.

This was—I think that was still in the steam room. Or I don't recall exactly if this was in the room where we were.

But I know that they shaved our hair off. And we had to stand in line. And they tattooed us. And they put tattoos in our arms. My number happens to be 27307.

The women did the tattooing?

Yes. The women did the tattooing. We had a lot—we had not a lot, but a few—I wouldn't say a few—and how many. But we had German prisoners, women in our camp. And they were—if you ever heard the word *kapo*, they were our *kapos*. Those prisoners were sent to Auschwitz for prostitution, for theft, for murder. They were sent to Auschwitz. And they were our supervisors. And they were the ones that took care of us, all right.

And they—I do not recall who tattooed me, really, because I was in a stupor, I believe. I don't know. But somebody did. I don't know who tattooed. But we stood in line. And they put the tattoo on in our arms.

Then they gave us some—our transport, they took to a place. It wasn't Birkenau. It was Budy. It was called Budy. They took the 500 women of our transport. And they sent us—we walked to a camp, where they gave us prison clothes. We were wearing the striped clothes. They gave it to us.

And we were—and they gave us—I don't even remember if they gave us some kerchiefs to wear on our heads or not. This I don't remember.

And we came into Budy. We came into a camp where previously, another transport—not from our hometown, but from another Jewish town—were sent there.

When the girls, when we came into this barrack—they put us into one of the barracks. And we came into this barrack.

Excuse me. I have to tell you this. We're 500 women. But 200 of us were sent to Budy. And 300 were sent—were in Birkenau, were left in Birkenau. I was one of those that went to Budy. And I was sent there with dogs, naturally. The SS women had those big, big dogs—and the barking, and the hollering, and the yelling, and we came in there.

And the women who were there, when they saw us, they said, god, how could you allow yourself to come here? This is impossible to live here. There were a couple of them that were laying on those so-called beds. On this day, they didn't go to work. And actually, whoever didn't go to work, right away, they came—they saved them perhaps for a week. And then they came with a truck. And they took them away to the gas chambers.

Anyhow, we started out there. And next day, we went to work. And how to describe this work is absolutely unbelievable what we did.

We had to—every year—this was the—Auschwitz is there on the river, on the big River Vistula in Europe, in Poland. And this Vistula used—every year, in the springtime, it would flood. So we were supposed to make the a wall that the river shouldn't flood in the spring.

So they gave us lorries. It was like big iron wagons. And we had to go toward a mountain. And there, we had to fill it up with dirt. And then we had to go down to the—and we had to empty it by the river.

Now, the first week, we still had the strength, a little bit, from the ghetto, although we were emaciated already. But still, it was more or less—was more food than in camp. And we were all young. So we managed yet.

But after a few days, when you were hungry and you—and they wouldn't let you sleep. We had one—in Budy, there were an awful lot of those Nazi—the German prisoners, the German woman, who were—I think they were—most of them were prostitutes and they were murderers. Because they would—at night, they would come to our beds. And they would beat us. And we had to get up from the beds. And they would beat us. And they would—it was so unbelievable there that within two weeks, they were probably—out of 200, maybe there were 50 left.

And I don't know how I was left there. But one day, I was—get up in the morning. And we were also with Ukrainian prisoners, a few of them. And they would steal. And they stole my shoes. And this was my livelihood. That's how I survived yet till now. And they stole my shoes. And I just—how could I go to work? This was already in November and was bitter cold. So I took—they gave us a piece of rag to cover ourselves. I took that piece of rag, and I tore it, and I put it around my feet. In this, I went out.

And they always counted us. We had to go out at 5 o'clock in the morning. And we were counted and counted and stayed for three hours before we went to work. And all of a sudden, they looked down. And they see that I have those rags. And she says that I committed sabotage, that I tore a piece of that rag up. And they tell me that this day, I'm not going to go to work.

You go back, which meant that they are going to kill me, probably. And sure enough, in the afternoon, a Gestapo man and one of the guards came. And he started walking me. And we walk. And he took me to Auschwitz. There was Birkenau, I told you, there was Budy. He took me to Auschwitz.

And there, they put me into a hall. You couldn't stand up, you could just sit there. And it was completely dark. And later on, they told me that general—when they took the people, they were—when they were—before shooting them. Because there were a lot of shooting too there going on. So they would put them into those cells. I don't know how long I was sitting there. I know that every once in a while, they would open the door, they would throw in a piece of bread. They would throw in a piece—some drink, some coffee, if you want to call it. And after, I don't know how long I was there. Maybe I was there only one day.

But they came in that—a guard came. And he says, come out. And he—and we started to walk again. I was sure that they were going to shoot me or hang me. And he took me to Birkenau. And then I came to Birkenau. He took me on one—into the barracks. And I was in those barracks. And in the evening, there came a transport from Bialystok, I think, from Lomza, which is another town in Poland.

And they counted me in together with them. But I knew that there were some people, the 300 people that came previously, at the same time when I came. And they were left in

this, in Birkenau. So at night, we could walk from one barrack to the other. So I was looking for my people. And I went into that barrack. It was barrack—I remember, it was number 8. And I came.

I want to describe the barracks.

A barrack was—there were big holes in the wall made out of brick. And there were three holes. And in the holes, there—that's where we slept. These were our beds. They were on top one, and on the middle, and on the bottom.

Wooden shelves?

It wasn't wooden. It was like brick, brick shelves. And I came to that one shelf where my friends were. I found this shelf. And they told me that when they came in—I must tell you that this was the time—it was the height of bringing people to Auschwitz at this time, of the Polish Jews—bringing all the Polish Jews in '42.

And then in '43, here, they came from France a lot of transports also.

And here, they told me that this place, maybe there was room for five. So they put in 20 there because there was such a big influx of people that time.

But what happened is within a week, within two weeks, there were three or four remain because all the others died.

They died.

We had selections.

We had—every day, when we went out to work, they would, by the gate, as we were going out, there wasn't a selection in the morning when we went out.

We went to work.

And on the way back, there was a selection. Because every time when we were coming back, there were people dead that were killed on the way.

They were hit.

My transport, my friends, most of my friends, were killed by dogs. The dogs were trained that if one couldn't walk any longer, if we couldn't walk fast enough, then the dogs would eat their eyes out. They scratched their eyes out, literally. My friends had their eyes scratched out. And that's how they died.

Later on, they took them to the gas chambers. And it was—in retrospect, I don't understand. I don't believe how I survived. Anyway, I had my number is 27,000.

Well, the camp supposedly had the capacity of 10,000 women.

And here, there was that huge influx of people coming every day.

There were people in 1943, for instance. There were people coming from Greece. There were people coming from Holland, and Belgium, and France, and Germany, constantly, constantly.

So they didn't have enough room for all those people. But they wanted the people, the fresh people to come to work, the ones that still had the strength. So they would take the older people that were there already a few weeks or a couple of months. So they would just take them and select them by the gates as we're coming in.

And let's say that we went out to work, there was 101. Because there were several Kommandos going out to work. Let's say that we went 100. So they would select 20 couldn't come back anymore because they were so beaten up already because they beat us at work.

So they would come back. And they would select 50 out to die. And then every Sunday, Sunday, supposedly, we didn't work. So they would wake us up anyhow. At 5 o'clock, we had to be up. And we had to stay outside in the cold, bitter wind.

And I forgot to tell you that after we went in in that room, after we came out from that room when they shaved us they put the tattoo on, so a lot of people, right away, they had

pneumonia. And a lot of people just died of pneumonia pretty soon after that.

And Sundays, they would tell us to carry bricks. I don't know what the heck—what they did with the bricks. We had to go out. And we had to carry bricks. And then after we've carried the bricks, then we would come in. And we would all stay again.

And they would select us again. They would go, and they would look, and they would take you out. And they would select a lot of them again.

And we had one barrack, it was the barrack number 25.

If you couldn't live anymore, you would just go to the barrack 25. And they would let you in. You would lay there. And then there would come a truck and take them to the gate—take you to the gas chambers.

Well, the reason I—and then again, in the ghetto, I was lucky or unlucky, but I didn't get typhoid fever. But in the camp, I got typhoid.

Here, I have to go to work. And if you don't go to work, you die. And I go with typhoid, with probably 104° temperature. And I remember it so distinctly that one day, we came back. And there was that huge selection again by the gate. And that Nazi looks at me. And he says—shouted us, [GERMAN].

Because I was so red and my cheeks were so red, I was burning up with temperature. And he thought that I'm so strong that I am so well yet. In English, what did he say? He didn't say in English, he said—

No, I mean, you translate.

—look at her, she's still so strong. Look how good she looks, how red she is in her face.

What was your work at that point?

At that point, our work was—we used to go, and they used to have—there was around Auschwitz—they used to have bombed-out houses. So we had to take them apart. Those houses, we had to take the bricks apart, the wood apart. We had to go—they gave us—I don't know, it was ridiculous work. It was hard work.

Then they took us—it wasn't always the same thing. Then they took us to work in ammunition factories. Then they took us to work in—I have to tell you this. When I was still wearing that—the other people that were in Birkenau were wearing civilian clothes. All the civilian clothes—the real good clothes, they were sent to Germany. And the old clothes, they gave us, they gave to the people that came into camp to wear. And they painted a big Red Cross on the back, on the clothes with paint.

Well, I still had that clothes that they gave me, the prison clothes. And I remember, I was standing once. And I was—they were counting us, again, counting, and counting, counting. And that—he wasn't the commander of the camp, but sort of also—some sort of a big, important man. And he was counting us.

And here, amongst all these people that are wearing civilian clothes, I was standing out with this prison clothes. So he called me out. When he called me out, I was sure that that's it. He's going to shoot me, or kill me, or whatever it was going to be.

So he says, "Why do you have these clothes?"

I say, "Well, I was on Budy."

So he says, "How long were you on Budy?"

I say, "Three weeks." I don't remember if I was three weeks or four weeks there.

He says, "And you are still alive?"

He didn't ask me how I came. I suppose if I would have to explain him how I came—by the way, I want to tell you that when I came back from Auschwitz and they brought me back, they gave me a pair of shoes.

And I was lucky because all the other people, my people, my friends from my hometown that came, they gave them those wooden shoes. And in those horrible, sinking—oh, how do you call it—the mud of Auschwitz, they were sunk in. And they—most of them—and a lot of them just died because they didn't have shoes because they couldn't walk in those wooden shoes in January, and February, and March of 1943.

Now, Sally, I've been to Auschwitz last year. And we were told there that not a blade of grass was allowed to grow, that anything green had to be plucked out.

Nothing. There was no—And they wanted nothing but dirt, mud. There was so much mud. I don't know.

There was—a lot of people got malaria there. And I don't know why. Because we in Poland, we didn't have malaria.

But there was mud. There was purposely—there was so much mud that we couldn't take our feet out that anybody who was weak enough and couldn't walk in the mud just stayed on there and just died like this, and constantly the dogs, and constantly—and I have to relate something that perhaps I don't even believe in it.

I also want to tell you that a lot of people—not as many as you probably would think now that they should have—because we were surrounded with electric wire. And not that many people went to the electric wire. I knew that I'm not going to live.

As a matter of fact, when I came to camp, when I was in camp, I was glad that my parents and my brothers were dead. And by the way, the transport that my parents came with, nobody ever came into camp. They went to the gas chambers immediately.

And when we came, they didn't have right away the facilities that they had later on with the gas chambers. They used to bury them. They used to make holes. And they would bury the bodies. And later on, there was—the Germans alone, they were afraid of—they shouldn't get sick. So they put a lot of oil on the fields. And they would burn it.

Because you could—if you were walking—and you would just walk into humans.

And when I had this typhoid, and I came back once from work, and I figured—and those shelves—and those brick shelves, there were rats. And if you didn't have strength enough there just to chase the rats away at night when you were sleeping, they ate you alive.

You went in at night. And you went to sleep with your friends in the morning, you got up, and both sides of you, your friends were dead.

And I had the typhoid fever. And I remember so distinctly, I don't know if it was something that I wanted to believe in. Must have been the crisis. I was burning up with temperature.

And all of a sudden, I dreamed about my father. And my father was standing there. And he was crying. And he was wearing his prayer shawl. And I said, "Dad"—I never saw my father cry. And I said, "Dad, why are you crying?"

He says, "My child, I want somebody should survive."

And maybe it was just my imagination. Maybe I wanted to believe that there is something there. And I got up in the morning, and actually, my temperature broke. And actually, I was well enough to go to work again.

And I'm sort of digressing constantly.

Anyhow, this Gestapo man saw me in the other clothes, and he says, "You are still alive?" And he says, "Well, I need strong people. I'm going to put you to work in the hospital."

Now, the hospital—the hospital was such a—it's, again, something that it's hard to believe. The hospital—they had a hospital which was people that didn't go to work in the morning. They went to the hospital because they were sick, they couldn't go to work. They would come to the hospital. And they would put in this barrack in, let's say, 1,000 women, sick women that couldn't go to work. And every week, Mengele would come.

You probably heard about Mengele.

And I was working there. I was supposedly working there. My work consisted of going three times a day or two times a day to the kitchen and bringing back those very, very heavy cans with food. Because they gave them some food.

Mengele is the German doctor was in charge of the selections on the platform?

Mengele, the German doctor; he was in charge of not only of the selections, he was in charge of all the experiments.

When I was working in the so-called hospital, the hospital was a place where they gathered the people that in the morning, they wouldn't go to work, they couldn't go to work, they were too sick to go to work, or they had their eyes scratched out by the dogs the previous day.

So they would put them in the hospital. And then the hospital, they would stay maybe sometimes two days and sometimes a week. There would come Mengele and they would come Hessler—or Höss—I even forgot his name, the guy from the—the commandant of Auschwitz. Höss. I think his name was Höss.

He would come with him. And he would make a selection. And they would take out 75% of the people to the gas chambers on trucks.

Just for the record, Mengele is, 1984, supposedly living in Paraguay.³ And Israel isn't that interested in getting him back now. They don't want to go through it. Israel is not interested.

I doubt if Israel is not interested.

I think the world is not interested.

They wouldn't—listen, there are a lot of Nazis—

Yeah, Höss was tried by the Poles and—

—that they avoid like that. Höss was hanged right away.

—hanged at Auschwitz.

Yeah, he was hanged at Auschwitz. But Mengele, he used to come every week. And he used to be by the selections. And he would stay there just like this, left and right. He wouldn't even utter a word. It was too much for him to say. And Hoss would stay. And he would stay.

I remember, one day, we had a lot of people, a lot of young women from Holland. And they were good-looking, beautiful bodies, young, beautiful bodies, naturally.

When we were—there was a long—sort of like a long oven went through the barrack. And they would have to go all around. And those two, Hoss and Mengele, were standing there. And they would just tell them left and right, sort of. And they would—

I remember Hoss saying once, "Look at that good, fat body. She's going to burn well."

And they had just a good laugh out of it.

And Mengele used to come. And they injected a few of the women that were there that they didn't take them away. Those people used to get a double portion of bread and whatever we had else with it. They injected cancer into her.

³ Josef Mengele died on February 7, 1979 in Sao Paulo, Brazil under the name Wolfgang Gerhard. His death was not discovered until May 31, 1985 and confirmed on June 10, 1985.

I remember, she had here a huge, huge boil or whatever it was.

They injected them with all kinds of illnesses.

And then they took them to Auschwitz to experiment on them. Because the experimentations were in Auschwitz, in the camp Auschwitz.

Do you know firsthand, of your own knowledge, of any other experiments there?

Yes, I have a—I know somebody who is now in France. And she was castrated, whatever you call this. I have somebody in France and somebody in Israel, a friend of mine that I went to school together with, that he was castrated. I know firsthand a few people that survived and they were castrated. I don't know of any other experiments that they did that the people survived.

This I don't know.

Do you know anything about Mengele's experiments on twins?

This I don't know. I don't know anything about it. But I know that he was experimenting all the time. I know that then, later on—I just want the world to know one thing, that anybody who reads a book that says that the Holocaust was a hoax, dear god, please, don't believe in that.

The Holocaust was not a hoax.

I was working right there. Because I had lots of jobs.

My last job was that they sent me to Birkenau. And people that know about Birkenau, that's where the gas chambers were. I was working from the gas chambers maybe 20 feet away.

We had a wires.

We were separated with wires.

And those smoke and that stench of the human flesh was constant.

In 1944, when they brought the people from Hungary, perhaps more people survived that are Hungarians than others because until 1944, they didn't—the Germans were not there. And they didn't bring those.

But they brought them because they had already exhausted all the labor force. They didn't have any more people to work for them. So a lot of the young people from Hungary came into camp. But all the older ones and all the people with their children, they went right to the gas chambers.

They had such a—they were so—trying to kill them off so quickly because, I imagine—I didn't know it at the time, but the Russians were already crossing the Polish border.

They were coming already closer to Auschwitz.

And there were the fires at night. I worked from 7 o'clock in the evening till 7 o'clock in the morning because they brought the clothes from other people.

Tell us your work.

My work in Birkenau was already different and Brzezinka. Brzezinka was where the gas chambers were. And there, they brought the clothes from the dead people. They brought it in to us.

We had—again, it was, again, sort of like a separate camp. But I want everybody to understand that all this is Auschwitz. And they brought it in.

And we had to take off the Jewish stars because a lot of other countries had Jewish stars or whatever, any identification of Jewish. And we had to separate. And the good things went to Germany, I presume. And the—whatever.

We worked with all the clothes and all the belongings that the people brought from their homes.

You sorted all the suitcases?

We sorted. We sorted suitcases, we sorted cutlery, we sorted—there was jewelry, there wear—

Eyeglasses, shoes.

There were glasses, eyeglasses, and shoes, and anything that you want to hear of except furniture.

It was everything because people didn't realize it. And if people think that we were not brave enough and we did not do anything, nobody knew that they are going to die.

I saw people that came in 1944—as a matter of fact, there were—I think that there were still yet people from Łódź, which is a big city, a big industrial city in Poland. And these were the last remnants of the Łódź—from ghetto. And they came. And I said, how could you come now? How could you let yourself bring now to Auschwitz?

And they didn't know.

People don't realize it, when people are free, how life is dear. Everybody wanted to survive. Everybody wanted to live.

Sally, there was one incident of mutiny in Auschwitz and Birkenau that you told me about, when a crematorium was blown up by the prisoners.

Yes.

I would like you to start to tell as much as you know, how they got their dynamite, how it was smuggled to them, everything you can about this incident.

I know very little about it.

Whatever.

I only know that one of my friends who survived Auschwitz, she's from my hometown. And she was married in the ghetto. And her husband was working. They were called—the people that were working in the gas chambers were called the Sonderkommando. And every few months, they would take the Sonderkommando. And they would kill them off because they saw too much. And they knew too much.

And there was one crematoria.

And I wasn't working at that time near the crematoria.

But I only know that her husband worked there. And how they got any ammunition, I have no idea. I really don't know.

But I know that this crematoria was blown up. There were three crematoria at that point. Yeah, yeah. Crematoria 1 and 2 are still—the rubble is still there. The 1 and 2, I don't know, I hope one day to go back to Auschwitz and to see it.

Because the 1 and 2, I was close by. That's where they took the people. I saw them coming by with the trucks and going right in there.

And we didn't see our side of the camp, where we were, they didn't show where the people undressed. It was on the other side. There was a little—if you have been there, there was a little woods there.

Are there still woods there?

Yeah.

Yeah.

And there, they would go there. And they would tell them to take off their clothes. They would tell the mothers, put together these shoes so when you come out from the bath, that you should have the shoes for your children.

This was yet in 1943.

In 1944, as I said, when they were already—the Germans were desperate. And they were—and they wanted to just kill as many Jews as possible, so they just had—they just took the

children, they made big bonfires, and they just threw the little kids into the fire. They didn't even bother to gas them anymore.

It's just that the adults, they would put into the showers.

Do you remember when it was, the crematorium was blown up?

I don't know.

I think that the crematorium was blown up sometimes either in the beginning of '44—

I really don't know too much about it. '44. Yeah. We were

Of all these experiences, Sally, which was the most painful to you?

I would say, the most painful for me was the ghetto.

Because in Auschwitz, physically and mentally, I suffered that it's unreal. I mean, I don't see how I survived it. I can't believe that anybody can be so strong. Perhaps there is providence in it. Perhaps there's—I was meant to survive.

I want to tell you that my dad had that big family. And they all were married. And they all had children. And the children and all of them perished.

And I'm the only one who survived from my family, my father's family, my mother's family. And my mother had a sister. My mother had brothers. They all had—they were grown. They all had children.

And nobody survived.

I'm the only survivor of a huge family of cousins, and aunts, and uncles. And there's a whole tree of people. And the same thing goes from all my friends. There are an awful lot of families that everybody perished.

From my hometown, I don't know if there are 50 people that survived.

What was your maiden name, your father's family name?

Yeah, my father's family name was Kubel. My maiden name was Kubel.

And on your mother's side?

Was Drexler.

And everybody perished. And I want to emphasize, again, anybody who ever believes that the Holocaust was a hoax, anybody who reads—writes a book that the Holocaust was a hoax, I would like to talk to them.

I would like to spit at them.

Because this is something that I can't take. I can take anything that is said. But anybody who will write a book that the Holocaust was a hoax, this I cannot take, even after all those years.

Sally, you were in Auschwitz up to January of 1945.

I was in Auschwitz—

What happened afterward?

I was in Auschwitz up to January of 1945.

And in '45, when the Russians were nearing to Auschwitz, they took us all on a death march. This meant that we were—the remnants that were still there, that were still alive started to walk towards Germany. We walked—I don't know how much we walked.

A lot of our people died.

Some of our people escaped because they felt that the liberation is close.

But most of us didn't.

We walked.

And they took us, again, on those cattle trains.

I remember, one day, they brought us to a town. It was a big city. It was an industrial city. It was called Magdeburg. And at night, they left us there on the station. And then and at night—this was the night when the Russian bombs came—they bombed the station.

And quite a few of us were killed.

They locked the trains. We couldn't get out of there. And in the morning, the ones that survived, they took us again. And we walked. Then they put us on trains again.

It's so incredible.

Where did you go?

And they took us to a camp which is deeper into Germany, which was called Ravensbrück. And in Ravensbrück, there was already an awful lot of chaos. We were just laying there on the ice and the snow. I don't know. I think that we were there maybe a week, maybe two weeks. I don't remember how long we were there.

And they sent us to a camp that was called Malchow. And there in that camp—

Deeper in Germany?

It was in Germany. And there in that camp, they had—in the underground, they had factories that were still—they were making ammunition. And they took us to work there in those factories. And we worked there for a short time. I don't know why, but they took us out again from that camp. And they took us. Again, we were on the road.

Now, I want to tell you that on the road—when you tell those stories, it seems that—now, how in the world did you survive? Now, there were a lot of us that on the—as we were walking, that they didn't survive.

They were killed.

If you lay down, if you couldn't walk anymore, then they just shot you. It was incredible. I don't know. I think that the human body is extremely strong. I don't know. Somehow, it seems to me that there are certain things that when I recall—and I myself, I just cannot understand how in the world we survived, even the ones that did survive. Because I want you to know that there are a lot of people that survived, that thank god, thank god that they had they were in hiding, or they were on Polish papers, or they were in the partisans.

But if you will see the people from Auschwitz, that were in Auschwitz, and especially in the year of 1942, there are just a handful that survived. Most of the survivors will be Hungarian Jews, thank god that they did, because they came later on. And they had more—they had the strength yet.

And I want to emphasize that we were all young. There were nobody who was middle-aged in camp. And the day came, naturally, it was coming closer. They took us from Malchow. I don't know why. They took us to another camp, which was called Taucha. This was—I think right now, it is Germany. I think the Russians are occupying it.

It's Germany right now.

And there, we were there a couple of weeks. And from there, they took us again on a march. And we marched again I don't know how long. This was already in April of 1945. And we're marching, and we're dying, and we're marching.

Marching toward the west?

Well, we were told that they had some gas chambers left somewhere. I have no idea. I don't know if they did or they didn't. And to me, it's an enigma that they didn't shoot us all then and there. I don't know why they didn't. But there weren't that many left of us anymore.

But there were still—we still had the guards, women, and we're still marching.

And then one day, it was April 27, we were sort of—they took us somewhere in a meadow on a road, by a road, a meadow. And they—all of a sudden, we didn't see any guards anymore. And suddenly, we saw Jeeps coming by. And we saw the soldiers coming toward us. And we didn't even know. We didn't know who those people were. They spoke to us in a strange language.

And those were the Americans.

By then, I was—I don't know, probably—maybe I weighed 60 pounds, maybe not even that much. Don't think I was coherent then anymore. I know that I woke up later on. They evidently took me to a nearby hospital. I don't know.

And I woke up.

And I was free.

And the Americans liberated us. There were a lot of people that still could walk. And the Americans had their rations. And they would give them their food. And they died. They started to eat too soon. Perhaps I was lucky because I just couldn't eat anymore. And I was so sick. And I was so completely emaciated that that's how I survived. Because they took me and they probably gave me—fed me intravenously.

And then the part of Germany—this was—I was liberated by a town, it was called Grimma. It was near Leipzig. The Americans came in there. And then they said that the Russians are going to occupy this part. And I was liberated by the Americans. And the Americans who liberated me, and the doctors, and the hospital or whoever it was, they said, no, we are not going to leave you here. We are taking you with us.

And there was a Jewish chaplain. And he took me. And I had—later on, I found my two friends that were—they were also on that march.

And he took us to the part that was later on and still—now, it's West Germany. And they took us to a town which is called Bayreuth. This is—people that know about music, this is the Richard Wagner Festspiele houses there.

And then I was—started to look around for family. And I realized that there was no more family. And my closest family was killed.

Did you go back?

As a matter of fact, in Auschwitz, I was never thinking of committing suicide. I knew that I'm not going to live. And whenever they're going to take me, they'll take me all right. But when I was liberated, I suddenly—I just—I was liberated. I expected the whole world to rejoice with us, the few remnants. And all of a sudden, I saw that it isn't so. And I really—I seriously thought about committing suicide. I just—I don't know. I didn't even want to live. But luckily, I got—

All through the war, you stayed away from any thought of suicide.

Yeah. Would you believe that?

And once the pressure was off and you were liberated, you thought about it?

I didn't want to live anymore. I had terrible times in the United States.

You know that?

It was—to me, it was so painful when the American hostages were taken in Iran

and they came home. And I don't take anything away from them.

They suffered hell to be there for a whole year, not knowing what's going to happen the next day.

And the Americans—and they still think, how could they be normal again?

How could they live a normal life again? How can the people that lived through Vietnam? And I understand it. Dear god, how I understand it to live through a war, what it means. And many times, I think, I don't know how normal I am to have gone all this hell through, and to see so much death, and to be surrounded with death, and to have lost everybody, and all of a sudden—and I know that I was here in the United States perhaps

10 years. And after 10 years, I had a tremendous—a terrible nervous breakdown.

I had a tremendous depression. And it haunts me. And my husband had always those horrible dreams. It haunted him. My husband wasn't like I. My husband jumped from the train. That's how he survived. He survived in hiding.

Sally, how did you come to Cleveland?

Well, we found that my husband had some cousins in Cleveland. And that's how we came to Cleveland here. This was the—right after the war, a lot of us wanted to go to Palestine. But the Britons occupied Palestine. And it was illegal to go to Palestine. The people that went, they landed up in Cyprus. And the American people that liberated us, they said, you are not going to go to Cyprus again. You're not going to go to a camp again, not what we saw—how we saw how you looked. You are going to go to the United States. And we couldn't go to the United States. You had to have somebody who send you papers that you wouldn't be a burden to society. But then there was—I believe that there was—Truman came out with some sort of a law that he left—he let the refugees in. And that's how we came.

And we started to build a life again.

My husband was working for—when he came here, he start to work for Forest City. And we rebuild our lives again, our broken life. My husband came from a family of father, and mother, and six children, and all of them married, and all of them with children, except. And none of his family survived either.

Sally, this has been gracious of you to share all this with us for years in the future. We thank you very much, appreciate it.

You're welcome.

And again—are we off the air already?

Please, remember, don't forget what the Jews had to go through in Europe.

My Father and the Holocaust

Mark Herrup

My father was directly affected by the Holocaust and also took part in the effort to end it. He is classified as a "Liberator" in the Survivors of the Shoah video archive⁴, but that only tells part of the story.

My father was born in 1916 in a small village named Bialyglowi in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. If you can't find Bialyglowi on a map, the closest major city is Ternopil, now in Ukraine. His name at the time was Isidor Charap.

During World War I, Tarnopol (as it was known then) changed hands several times. In 1917 his family moved to Vienna. My grandfather owned a small leather goods factory, and he, my grandmother, and my father lived a comfortable middle-class life there. That meant that my father's native language was German. My father got good grades throughout his schooling and began medical school in Vienna in 1936. He was an avid tennis player, which became important to getting out of Austria after it was absorbed into the German Reich in the *Anschluss* in March 1938.

Immediately after the *Anschluss* he was subjected to several instances of abuse by German and Austrian authorities because he was a Jew. He decided that he and his parents needed to get out of Austria. One of the people that he played tennis with was a woman who worked at the British Consulate in Vienna. After he described what had happened and what he wanted to do she told him to come to the Consulate the next day and that she would provide him with exit papers to get to the United Kingdom. From there he would be able to get his parents out. That woman almost certainly saved his life and my grandparents' lives as well.

My father left Austria in August 1938, via Switzerland, and then went to the United Kingdom. He was taken in by a family who remained friends for the rest of their lives. My grandparents were able to leave Austria for London in 1939.

From there my father went to Pittsburgh in late 1939, where several aunts and uncles and their families had settled. It seems that this was the point at which he changed his name to Richard Herrup. Herrup was the name that the family had adopted in the U.S. While he never said so explicitly, we believe that he chose to change his name because the Germans had him on file as Isidor Charap. Having a different name could potentially deflect attention. He was unable to continue his medical training, but worked in several of the family businesses for the next two years. My grandmother passed away in London in early 1940. My grandfather came to the U.S. and Pittsburgh in early July 1940.

When Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese on December 7, 1941, my father felt that it was his duty to

volunteer for the Army. He was turned away at that point because he was not yet a United States citizen.

Once he was able to begin the process of naturalization he was drafted, inducted into the Army on November 13, 1942, and was naturalized on December 6, 1943. Because he was a native German speaker he was immediately tabbed for specific duties, and went through a variety of training in interrogation and intelligence techniques at various bases around the U.S., including at the University of Illinois at Champaign. Strangely, he never actually went through basic training. While stationed at those bases he also used his medical training to serve as a pharmacy assistant. His Military Occupational Specialty was Interpreter, Voice (German).

In early 1944 the unit that he would be part of was formed. It was a radio listening and intelligence unit; the primary mission was to monitor German military radio frequencies, translate them, and pass that intelligence onto the higher ups for action. They trained together in the U.S. for several months before flying to England in May 1944. European combat kits were in such short supply that my father was given a Pacific tropical combat kit. By this time he was a sergeant. When he got orders to fly from the U.S. to England the unit's priority was such that they bumped a major general and his staff from a flight.

His unit landed in Normandy in late June 1944. The unit spent the rest of the war near the front lines, and was eventually attached to Patton's 3rd Army. When they stopped to set up they had to erect a 30 foot antenna in order to intercept transmissions. These antennae were frequent targets of German strafing but they never succeeded in hitting them.

My father told us that his unit was good enough to recognize voices of specific German pilots while they were in the air, and in one case one of those pilots left his throat microphone on after he finished his transmission. With their radio intercept gear my father was able to direct a squadron of Allied fighters to their location and shoot down the entire German formation. Several days later an Army colonel came to the unit's location and wanted to learn more information about this encounter. His security clearance was not high enough for the unit commander to share any of the intelligence with him. This earned my father one of his five Bronze Stars.

His unit was among the first with cameras to enter the Buchenwald concentration camp. His unit also arrived at the location where Hermann Göring was captured on May 9, 1945, and he got a photograph of Göring's surrender.

After hostilities ended, my father's role turned from radio interception to translation. He was present, and



⁴ Richard Herrup's testimony was recorded by the Shoah Foundation on September 29, 1997. He was interviewed by Isabel Alcoff and the interview code is 34019. His interview is not available online, but can be viewed onsite at any of the Shoah Foundation subscriber institutions.

provided the translations, for the interrogation of a number of Nazi officers, including the Commandant of the Mauthausen concentration camp. He saved his original handwritten notes from that interrogation as well as a carbon copy of the typed transcript. This transcript includes the testimony of the Commandant's son, who described how, for his birthday, his father had 40 prisoners lined up to be used to teach the son how to shoot.

My father returned to the U.S. in November 1945 and was discharged on December 7, 1945 with the rank of Staff Sergeant, exactly four years after Pearl Harbor. His discharge papers list the battles and campaigns in which he participated: Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes, and Central Europe. He was discharged at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

He went back to Pittsburgh to try to complete his medical schooling but the quotas for Jews in the medical school classes had already been filled. Instead, he enrolled in the University of Pittsburgh's School of Pharmacy and completed a degree in pharmacy. While in school he worked at a pharmacy in the West End neighborhood of Sheridan. After he graduated in 1948 he bought the pharmacy from the previous owner and remained at that location until he retired in 1993.

My father did not talk about his experiences until later in his life. He had kept photographs and other documents but had not really shared them. My sister-in-law, who was a historian, convinced him to sit for an interview with the Survivors of the Shoah Foundation, which he did in September 1997. He passed away on June 4, 2003. My mother passed away recently, and I have taken up the task of digitizing photographs and documents that accumulated over the decades. These include my father's Army scrapbook and related documents that I've mentioned here.

To end this, I'm going to refer to a notation that my father made on a photograph he took in Germany in 1945. It shows a destroyed house somewhere in Germany. On the back of the photograph he wrote: "Give me 5 years and you won't recognize Germany" —A. Hitler, paraphrasing a line from one of Hitler's speeches in the early 1930s. He was right.



The Holocaust in Comics During World War II

James Bacon

Comics were a huge method of communication and entertainment in the 1940s both in Britain and the USA, with hundreds of thousands of copies printed per issue. They were a huge influence culturally and historically, so many ideas and characters that came from this era continue to exist.

The greatest comics creatives were Jewish, and the history of comics is infused with their work especially when we consider some of the more pertinent work by Jewish people.

In 1934, Max Gaines started *Famous Funnies*, reprinting cartoons. This is considered the first comic. In 1938 Superman made his debut in *Action Comics*, created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. The same year in *Detective Comics #27* we have Batman by Bob Kane and Bill Finger, then in 1940 we have *The Spirit* by Will Eisner, and in 1941 *Captain America* by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. Stan Lee who would create so many comic characters was working at this time in comics writing them. This prevalence of Jewish creators in the comic industry was due to broader antisemitic racism at the time, especially when it came to getting work. It was hard to get work, but as comics were new, it offered an opportunity for Jewish creatives and artists, and to those publishing them. Jewish publishers included Martin Goodman of *Timely Comics* and Harry Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz of *DC Comics*.

It is horrible to think that the work of these incredible people who fill our lives with color and entertainment, whose legacy lives on beyond them, who are well remembered by many, was born out of an antisemitism. And yet, they succeeded, greatly.

It is no surprise that the portrayal of concentration camps before and during the war years involved some Jewish creatives in comics, including Jerry Iger, Alex Blum, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby, Will Eisner, while Mort Leav and Alex Schomburg need further research on my part.

It is without doubt that Jewish creatives are absolutely crucial to comics.

Moreso, Jewish creatives helped share some sort of understanding of what was going on, keeping the concept and knowledge of concentration camps in the public conversation.

We cannot deny that Jewish creatives were sharing their awareness.

Germany was home to some 505,000 Jews in 1933. I note that comic creatives of German heritage also seem to make mention of concentration camps. Of course, we are all appalled and upset when our own country's politics go bad and many Germans of a variety of religions had immigrated to America. Not all shared the comic book propensity for sharing the horror of the Nazis, although in one comic, for instance, we see mention of the German American Bund for the Nazi sympathizing group they were.

It is notable that we see camps referenced as concentration camps. According to the *Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and memorial*, "the main difference between concentration camps, where prisoners of various nationalities were incarcerated, and extermination centers (*Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Kulmhof, Majdanek*), where nearly all the victims were Jewish, was in the first place the annihilation method."

The word *Holocaust* was used in the *New York Times* in May 1943, referring to Jewish refugees from the Nazi Holocaust. The Nazi "Final Solution," the extermination of European Jews, saw over 6 million people murdered.

"The Nazis wanted to 'improve' the genetic make-up of the population and so persecuted people they deemed to be disabled, either mentally or physically, as well as gay people, political opponents, primarily communists, trade unionists and social democrats," says the *Museum and Memorial*. This included Romani, Sinti, Polish, Slav, and Soviet people.

As I progress chronologically, I will identify when concentration camps are referenced in comics, when there is a clearly identified Jewish aspect, and when there is a clearly identified facet connected to the *Shoah* (the Hebrew word for *catastrophe*, referring to the Holocaust).

Part I. Europe under the Nazis, America Watches on, Comics go to War.

The first mention I found of the war was published in October, 1939. It is a prose story in *Marvel Mystery Comics #2*, entitled "Death-Bird Squadron" a short text story of the Angel alter ego of Thomas Holloway and how he saved the citizens of Grybów, Poland from German bombers during World War II. Written by David C. Cooke and penciller Chuck Mazoujian.



In February 1940, *Look* magazine published a two-page Superman story titled "How Superman Would End the War" where Superman takes on the Germans. Hitler and Stalin are found "guilty of modern history's greatest crime—unprovoked aggression against defenseless countries." It is a straightforward and simple enough story.

There were some surprising consequences, as it caused some upset in Germany. The April issue of the SS magazine *Das Schwarze Korps* responded with an antisemitic attack on Jerry Siegel. They described him as "an intellectually and physically circumcised chap who has his headquarters in New York," and go on to propagandize. They tell their readers, "Well, we really ought to ignore these fantasies of Jerry Israel Siegel" and end with the jab, "Jerry Siegelack stinks," which is an odd play on his name, meaning "Sealing wax stinks."

The first mention of concentration camps, albeit in metaphorical countries, not directly identified in Germany, that I have found occurs in *Hit Comics #2* from DC, published



August 1940. This issue was written by Jerry Iger with pencils by Alex Blum. Iger was New York born of Austrian-Jewish parents, and Blum was Hungarian-American, born in Hungary to a Jewish family. This is an allegory using Dunland and Radolf the Dictator.

We follow Neon the Unknown, who is a soldier in the Foreign Legion who drank from an oasis and got Neon Powers, and left the Legion to fight crime and oppression. He leaves North Africa and goes to Europe, to Rachaw in Dunland. Here Radolf the dictator has imprisoned intellectuals in a concentration camp, and Neon gets captured, only to work on a mass breakout, they hijack a train and they all track down Radolf. Neon threatens him with seeing "the ghosts of men, victims of the schemes of your vicious brain, you will suffer the torture that you and your sadistic guards inflicted on them." Radolf is confronted by the escapees, with the culture he destroyed "Toys resurrected from the Dark Ages" torturous implements and with "whips" with this Neon convinces him to end his war.

Smash Comics Vol 1 #18 January, 1941 contains Chic Carter: "Crashing the Concentration Camp" by Vernon Henkel. A fascinating story, set in Croatia, an invented country under dictatorship. We see a New York reporter Lloyd arrested by the secret police dressed in a similar uniform to Nazi Brownshirts and with black armbands with an X in a white circle. Reporter Chic Carter in the U.S. hears what has occurred from Anna Monfried and heads to Croatia to investigate and meets Anna, who explains that Lloyd is in a concentration camp, and that they are under observation by the secret police. Chic breaks into a prison-like concentration camp and rescues Lloyd and all three escape. The imagery of the Croatian Secret Police and



mention of dictatorship and makes a clear allegory of Nazi Germany.

Also in January 1941, we see a portrayal of a German concentration camp, in *Crack Comics #9*, in *The Red Torpedo: "Smashing the Schrecklichkeit"* by Henry Kiefer, born of German immigrants in Ohio. Here we see Dr. Freiheit escaping France to get to England where he wants to continue his opposition to the Nazis. He is captured, beaten, whipped, and sent to a concentration camp from which he escapes. This infuriates Hitler, who sends the raider Schrecklichkeit to capture the doctor, after which the Red Torpedo gets involved. The violent portrayal of what the good doctor encountered is uniquely explicit and brutal, but the most realistic of the war period and the first appearance I think of a German concentration camp.

In February 1941, in issue #2 of *Captain America* by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. The first issue had seen Cap punching Hitler as a very bold and clear statement on the situation and what type of hero we would find Captain America to be. In issue #2 financier Henry Baldwin, who has been trying to raise funds against Germany, gets kidnapped. Cap and Bucky dress up as a grandmother and child and give chase. But when they catch him, they discover he is actually an imposter. The real Baldwin is in Camp 22, a concentration camp in the Black Forest, and so Bucky and Cap go there and rescue him with the help of the RAF. It is rather more slapstick and preposterous than one might expect.

The appearance of concentration camps continues apace with *National Comics #10*, in April, 1941, in "The Phony Heinrich Brun" written by Will Eisner and drawn by Mort Leav. Eisner's father was born in modern day Ukraine and immigrated to New York. His mother was born on a ship sailing from Romania to New York. They were a Jewish family. Mort Leav met other Jewish creatives and was friends, but I have struggled to see him described as Jewish. Information welcomed from readers on this.

This comic shows two emaciated men in chains on the cover and Uncle Sam punching a whip-wielding guard. A phony Heinrich Brun escapes from a concentration camp, reports how political prisoners are tortured, but then turns out to be a spy working with Germans in America. "The hideous claw of oppression reaching into a free land," reads the first panel, but thanks to Paul Brun, who alerts Uncle Sam, not only is the spy captured, but Uncle Sam fights German thugs in the local German American Bund and gets their leader to radio Germany to secure the release of the real Heinrich. This story is a clear indication of the threat within America and creates a link between the Bund and concentration camps.

In *Mystic Comics #6*, from July 1941, written by Stan Lee with pencils by Jack Binder and a cover by Alex Schomburg, we see the debut of The Destroyer. Alex Schomburg's striking cover sets the scene.

Keen Marlow, a journalist, goes to Germany to investigate Stroh Prison, he is not allowed into the prison, and must get his "news" from the Ministry of Propaganda. He sneaks in at night and is captured, sent to the "Torture Dungeon" where he is whipped. In the same camp we see professor Eric Schmitt, a biochemist, refusing to give up his secrets. He is thrown into a cell with Keen, badly beaten and dying. Schmitt then gives Keen a serum so that he can "haff a power unmatched by any man." Keen beats the Nazis and releases treasonous prisoners who are about to be executed and, with other prisoners, escapes. He then creates an alter ego of The Destroyer, a knife and skull as his insignia, and starts a sabotage campaign against the Nazis. We then see him form a partnership with a young German woman, Florence, whose father is killed by the evil Nazi scientist Scar testing his weapon on innocent Germans on a street, upset about the rationing. Florence is an example of the so-called "Good German." Destroyer goes onto defeats Scar, the Nazis killing him in error.

In a column that issue of the Destroyer, Stan Lee writes that "Alone in Germany he is causing the Nazis many sleepless nights, and is bringing new hope to the countless number of unfortunate victims of the totalitarian terror!" Later, he writes that "his noble work will continue until people no longer need to bow to the lash of tyranny."

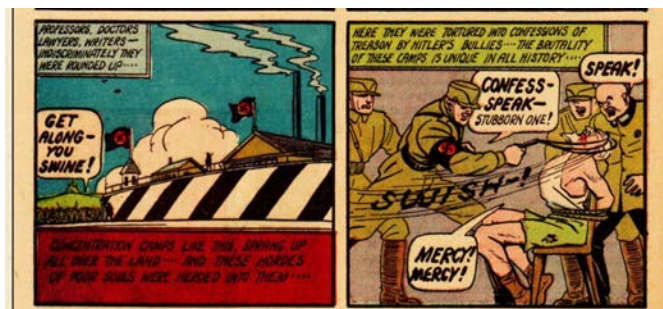
The cover features The Destroyer, and sees the Professor tied to a post with a Nazi Commandant, whip in hand.

Also in July 1941, in *Young Allies Vol #1*, in "Trapped in Nazi-Land!" by Stan Lee with pencillers Jack Kirby and Charles Nicholas and inker Charles Nicholas, we follow the Young Allies who are in Germany ("Charles Nicholas" is a pseudonym for three different artists: Charles Cuidera, Jack Kirby and Charles Wojtkoski). In Berlin they see Agent Zero get captured and follow him to Gestapo HQ where Agent Zero is being whipped by the Red Skull. The Young Allies themselves get captured and sent to "Concentration Camp" where they are humiliated and threatened with whips by guards. They escape and effect a rescue of Agent Zero from the Red Skull's lair, finding the skeletal remains of a previous victim in this grounds, allowing a plan of deception, with the Skull and two Young Allies atop one another. The lighthearted nature of a comic book trope of kids impersonating an adult contrasts with the brutality and death that surrounds them.

Again in July, *Blue Ribbon Comics #14* shows the Germans burning homes and refugees fleeing, skulls rather than faces under the helmets. We see a sympathetic policeman, Muller, arrested and dragged to the "Execution quarters of a nearby concentration camp." Mr. Justice effects a rescue, then rescues his girlfriend, Christine Schmidt. He then discovers that three guards have their loved ones in concentration

camp, and so rescues a mother, wife, and daughter from three other concentration camps.

Finally in July 1941, in *Daredevil Comics #1* we find "Man of Hate," by Bob Davis (as R.B.S Davis). This is a chilling nine page story, seven of which are comics and two prose, giving a very clear view on Hitler. We see the Gestapo taking people, a concentration camp with chimneys, and an image of a bearded man being whipped.



The next month, *Daredevil Comics #2* (August 1941) has a Jerry Robinson story, "London Can Take It," featuring a debonair character, Mark Holmes, a BBC broadcaster who is also known as London. We see Dian, Marc's fiancé, escape from a Dutch concentration camp, with the help of fellow inmate, Franz. But it is a ploy to get Dian close to Churchill, for she is his niece.

All *Winners Comics #2* and *Mystic Comics #7* are both written by Stan Lee and Jack Binder.

We see a story that looks at why Rudolf Hess flew to Britain as the Destroyer prevents a plague bomb. Keen returns to Florence's flat and finds it turned over, and she has been sent to a "Concentration Camp" because her uncle, Herman Berg, a scientist will not collaborate with the Nazis in deploying his black plague bomb, which he designed to kill rats, not humans. They threaten to whip Florence if Berg does not co-operate.

The Destroyer prevents the Gestapo using the bomb on a German town, and then heads to Berchtesgaden where he swipes a bomb that Hess is taking to bomb London. The Destroyer confronts Hitler, who he calls "Mickey Mouse," and Hess drops a bomb containing a message from the Destroyer. As Berg escapes via Switzerland, Florence vows to continue the fight.

Stan then gives us a prose story about the Destroyer stopping an old man in custody from being whipped by a Nazi, and then whipping said Nazi into unconsciousness, and then leaving his calling card with the knocked out goon at the Gestapo Headquarters, the Destroyer is championed as the arch foe of the Nazis and we get a Whizzer story too. For their acts of bravery we learn this is why Captain America has inducted them into the pages of The All Winners.

Mystic Comics vol 1 #7 September 1941, has "The Machine of Death" written by Stan Lee with penciller Al Avison. A Destroyer story, and in this issue, the Nazi murderous inventor Herr Sin figures out that Keen and Florence are not what they say they are and he gets them sent to a Concentration Camp using that term.

Military Comics Vol 1 #4 from November, 1941 we have a Blue Tracer Story:

"Although the Balkan countries have been overrun by the ruthless invaders, many bands of fierce patriots hiding out in the mountains continue to wage guerilla war against the enemy...aiding them in their fight for freedom is the Blue Tracer, the great flying war machine built by Captain Bill Dunn, the American, and his Australian pal, Boomerang Jones."

Blue Tracer is lured into a trap. A Nazi spy, Nadam seeks out Bill Dunn and explains that her father is a prisoner of the Gestapo in the Ohrd Concentration Camp and she asks for his help. Duly, Captain Bill flies the Blue Tracer into the Camp and when the trap is sprung, he breaks free the prisoners by smashing into the Nazis. The prisoners arm themselves and fight back while also repairing the Blue Tracer, there is a visual representation of a mixed selection of prisoners.



The Executive Editor of *Military Comics*, from Quality Comics was Will Eisner. *Military Comics Vol 1 #5* December, 1941 Shot & Shell: "Cutting Out of the Concentration Camp" by Polish-American Klaus Nordling, sees the duo of Colonel Sam Shot and Slim Shell escape from a concentration camp using scissors. The camp more resembles a POW camp and there seem to be other uniformed prisoners therein. Nordling was Polish and one wonders if this is just using the term for broader awareness?

War began for the U.S. with the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Part 2. America Joins the War against the Nazis, Comics Continue Their Fight, Too!

Alex Schomburg's cover of the December 1941 *Real Life Comics #3* shows Hitler, holding a skull and pistol, described as the "Emperor of Hate." The cover includes concentration camps and Nazi soldiers killing civilians. A ten-page biography of Der Fuehrer is inside. This was on the newsstands just as Pearl Harbor was attacked, right before the U.S.A. entered WWII.

In *Mystic Comics Vol 1 #8*, December 28, 1941, "Hitler Meets the Destroyer," written by Stan Lee, the Destroyer hears that scientists are being tortured by the Gestapo in a concentration camp. Hitler sends his only friend and chief

manhunter, Von Maus, to kill The Destroyer, who defeats Von Maus and then pretends to be him to seek an audience with Hitler, who he frightens.

All Stars Comics #14, from January 1942, contains "Food for Starving Patriots!" by Gardner Fox and Howard Sherman. This story shows members of the Justice Society in various countries, all of whom are facing the brutality of the Nazis. Dr. Fate is in a German concentration camp, with others whose only crime is seeking liberty. Dr. Fate helps them sabotage weapons they have to make.

Military Comics Vol 1 #8, March, 1942, contains Death Patrol: "Mademoiselle From Armentieres," by Dave Berg. This story mentions a concentration camp, where fake orders come from Hitler to release all political prisoners.

In *Comedy Comics Vol 1 #10*, March 25, 1942, "Crashing the Concentration Camp," pencilled and inked by Ernest Hart and edited by Stan Lee, shows Victory Boyssees Maxie, a German, stealing a ham and then getting chased by a Nazi. He is saved by Victor, an American boy, in the Black Forest. Maxie's gang defeats a Nazi and they escape, the boys bond and agree to help Victor rescue his father from a concentration camp, which they do. The German boys were orphaned by Nazis killing their parents and they were sent to a Nazi orphanage to be brought up Nazis but escaped.

Military Comics # 9, in April 1942 sees Black Hawk go to a concentration camp to break free a famous plastic surgeon, Fritz Von Rath, who's mind has been weakened by the horrors of the concentration camp.

Star-Spangled Comics Vol 1 #7 April, 1942 Captain X: "The Gas Bombs" by Arturo Cazeneuve features Captain X of the RAF with his Uranium-235 power plastic jet, sets out to first neutralize gas that has been dropped on London killing people, but leaving them with a grin, he then flies to Berlin, seeking Harold Calvert, an English author who was captured during the invasion of Holland. Captain X breaks into the bureau of concentration camps to find where he is being held, and finds he is at Niemar, breaks him free, finds the factory making the gas, and brings back both to Britain.

In a Mr. Scarlett story in *America's Greatest Comics Vol 1 #3*, May 1942. We see Morto, the spirit of murder, joining forces with the Axis. Morto seeks murderers and is informed that "The greatest of all time, Mein Kampf Adolf and his Axis partners, in the last year they've killed millions" Morto goes to Russia where he meets Mussolini, Hirohito and Mein Kampf Adolf, who promptly throws a tantrum about the unreasonable Russians. Morto plans to murder Americans and Adolf demonstrates affinity for the murderer and says "You are the only vun vat understands me, you know vat a lovely thing is murderer." Adolf then sends a message to not kill the Americans but to place them in a concentration camp, Mr. Scarlett enlists the help of his sidekick, Pinky, and they free the captured Americans from the "concentration camp" and defeat Morto. Not the concentration camp we would know and a rather dark more horror styled comic by Phil Bard.

In *Military Comics Vol 1 #10*, June 1942, we have X of the Underground in "A Brother's Betrayal, A Daughter's Rescue Mission," pencilled by Chuck Cuidera. X of the Underground is a skilled woman, an assassin, sharpshooter, brilliant disguise artist, and an absolute nightmare for the Nazis. She is in Bergen, Norway with Jimmy Gray when she meets Elsa Larson, but not before we see local Norwegian women cutting Elsa's hair for being a traitor. Elsa, though, wants X to help her, as her father has been placed in a concentration camp by his own brother Max, identified as a "Quisling" and a trap is first set killing Nazis for their car and uniforms. The Quisling is used to free Nils Larson, who is an underground

leader, from the concentration camp, and Max gets killed, and X slips away.

Mystic Comics #10, by Al Gabriele, features the Destroyer on the cover, in front of a high wall with "Concentration Camp No. 5" on it.

In *Bulletman #8*, October 1942, "The Ghost of the Concentration Camp" by Dave Berg, shows men brutalized in a concentration camp and planning escape. The escape leader, Schwartz, gets killed by the Commandant, and his ghost returns to liberate the prisoners and take revenge as well.

In *Zip Comics #3*, 1 October 1942, we see "The Web vs The Merchant of Hate," in which Heydrich in Czechoslovakia, described as a butcher, tears up a man's ration card, which leads to his ill daughter dying. This man goes on to harbor an American spy, then works with The Web to ultimately assassinate Heydrich. In the story, Hitler wants the town of Lidice razed. It is reported that the 500 residents are placed in concentration camps, but Lidice will live on, as the American Press shares the story, a town in Illinois, which has named itself Lidice.⁵ This story is attributed to Irv Novick, but is reckoned to be by Sam Burlockoff.

An example where concentration camp portrayals are not what we expect, in *U.S.A. Comics Vol 1 #6* October 28, 1942, U.S. and Soviet soldiers, Chuck Wilson and Stanisofski escape from a concentration camp, which is more likely a POW camp. They meet Bri Twimbley, join forces, and steal back three captured Spitfires and form the Terror Squad.

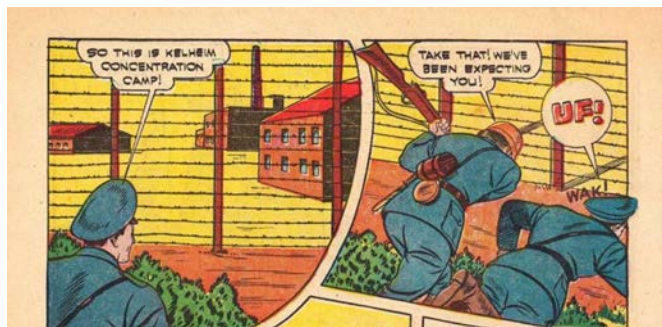
One where it is not the European Theatre of War, is *Captain Marvel Adventures Vol 1 #14* August, 1942 in a Captain Marvel story, we see spies put into a Japanese concentration camp.

Smash Comics Vol 1 #37, November 1942, Marksman: "The Amazing Adventures of the Three Shadows" by Alex Coda. The Marksman debuted in *Smash Comics Vol 1 #34*, July, 1942 that ran for 20 episodes ending with *Smash Comics Vol 1 #58* in April, 1945. The Marksman is Polish patriot, Baron Povalski, a nobleman who pretends to be German Major Hurtz, sharing his ancestral home with Germans in an effort to sabotage the Germans. In this episode in issue #37, we learn of three concentration camp escapees who are dressed in hoods and masks, known as shadows, who are executing Nazis. These shadows are a Czech, an Austrian, and a Pole. The Marksman connects with them and then directs them to steal German High Command plans and get them to England. He assists in this, and at one stage uses an explosive arrow to take down a German plane, and two of the shadows escape.

I was personally fascinated by the similarity here to *V for Vendetta* in the UK, which had debuted earlier that year in *Wizard* boys paper, but my feeling is it is similar, and in no way a copy, as it is not a unique idea.

In *The Black Terror #1*, February 1943, by Richard Hughes and Elmer Wexler, the Black Terror, Bob Benton, effects a rescue of captured Jean Starr. First he interrogates Himmler, and finds out they are at Kelheim Concentration Camp, but he gets captured and we see Young Tim Roland who fights alongside Black Terror, preventing Bob from being executed. They smash up the concentration camp, knocking over the smoke stack. Bob uses the flames from the furnace to burn the barracks, and they rescue captured Americans.

In *Action Comics Vol 1 #58*, March, 1943, Americommando: "The Brigade of the Biting Rabbit" written by Joseph Greene with pencils by Bernard Bailey, Tex



Thompson is the Americommando working with the French resistance against the Germans who are led by Dr Ito, commandant of the local concentration camp. The Americommando allows himself to be captured as a disguised resistance fighter, and then leads a concentration camp break out of an international group of prisoners, including a quiet peaceful character, who shows his bravery when needed.

In *National Comics # 30*, March 1943, by Al Gabriele, we get the headline, "The Notorious Nazi Concentration Camp at Dachau is visited by the Unknown." We see the Unknown receive a letter from a woman in France and then cut to a "Nazi prison train on its way to the Dachau Concentration Camp." The Unknown hijacks it, effects a rescue, and retitles the Dachau Express to the Victory Express.

Also in March 1943 in *Wonder Woman # 3*, art by Harry G. Peter, we have the William Moulton Marston and Harry Peter story. In one part, the nasty Austrian Baroness Paula Von Gunther admits that her daughter is being held in a concentration camp, and so Wonder Woman effects a rescue, first getting captured, placed into a confined electric barb wire pen, and then rescuing a number of children. She "dares the direst tortures of a Nazi concentration camp to wrest a child from the deadly grip of Europe's Bloody Tyrant and place the youngster once again in a mother's arms aching with loneliness."

Marvel Mystery Comics Vol 1 #44 April 26, 1943, we have "The Land of the Rubber People" by writer and artist Ed Robbins. Strange fantastical story where Rubber People are in a concentration camp because of unpatriotic Americans who won't donate rubber. A metaphor for supporting the war, perhaps.

Young Allies Vol 1 #9 26th September 1943 "Toward the Land of the Condemned."

Before we get to "Toward the Land of the Condemned" we see the Young Allies on their way to Rome, and Toro threatens a Nazi, noting he would "wish he were in a Concentration Camp" if he doesn't comply. In the second Young Allies story, the boys learn that Mr. Lafarge is in a concentration camp, condemned to death in four weeks. They infiltrate the camp and escape with Jean LaFarge, but get captured and end up fighting with the executioner, who's torture devices and guillotine, all at home, are a bit gruesome. The executioner's death, (Bucky hits him and he falls into the guillotine) is left to the imagination.

The Fighting Yank #7, February 1944, by Al Camy, includes "The Heart of a Patriot," which features the Grim Reaper who brings hope to the oppressed and fear to the oppressors and has a skull and cross bones on his cape. RAF pilots are kept in a concentration camp and an escape is affected. Not sure, but this should probably be a POW camp. Nazis terrorize locals.

⁵ In fact, the city of Crest Hill, Illinois, which has a sizable Czech population, renamed the neighborhood of Stern Park Gardens to Lidice in 1942

American photojournalist Therese Bonney gets a three-page piece in July 1944's issue of *True Comics* #37, in "Therese Bonney: Photo Fighter." Here we see her first photographing victims of concentration camps, after which she is able to get in and photograph the concentration camp itself. It is noted the images are housed in the Library of Congress.

Mystic Comics Vol 2 #2, July 31, 1944 art by Al Bellman and Don Rico. The destroyer is in Japan and goes to a concentration camp in Tokyo. Another example of a non-European concentration camp.

Captain America #46, April 1945, has a chilling cover. We see Cap and Bucky taking on some Nazis in a prison. There is a line of people, identified with labels, and in the foreground, a dead man lies on a wooden slab, mouth and eyes open. My perception is that he was gassed and is about to be put into an open furnace, bones in the ashes on the floor below. The cover by Schomberg does not relate to any story inside, but it is quite clear.

Part 3 Truth in Comics.

Action heroes fighting Nazis was a strong story element throughout the war. Comic heroes like Batman and Superman had war covers to encourage buying war bonds, while Nazi spies, hoodlums, and soldiers, were absolutely great enemies for most superheroes.

The Following comics, were more reflective, thoughtful, different.

True Comics #39 from September/October 1944 has a thoughtful piece about the equality of humanity. This is an anti-racist piece, entitled "There Are No Master Races!" It sets out clearly how humans are so similar. In it Hitler is asked how the Nazis can instill mental superiority in storm troopers and brutal fighters. He replies, "That is easy! We will make them feel strong by making others look weak. There are just a few Jews. We call the Jewish race inferior!" The piece contains some commentary on how Judaism contains all peoples, but the character of Hitler dismisses this. (I have questions)

"There Are No Master Races!" was also printed as a pamphlet, a standalone comic, possibly in 1944. Both it and the original comic are based on work by Dr. Gene Weltfish in the Public Affairs Committee of Columbia University. The pamphlet came with a letter signed by James B. Carey of the National CIO Committee to Abolish Discrimination.

The Canadian Jewish Congress created three 8-page comics, entitled *Jewish War Heroes*. The first issue was drawn by George Menendez Rae and was published in February, 1944. The next two issues were also printed in 1944, and all feature around six different service people, of high standing and bravery, who fought and received awards.

The war was not over, and Arco Publishing Company out of New York published a 50-page pamphlet in January 1945, called *The Bloody Record of Nazi Atrocities*. This publication "combined previously circulated photographs, drawings and text with newly commissioned works documenting the mass killings of European Jews, Roma and Sinti."

A six-panel comic called "Nazi Death Parade" shows the arrival of victims, their dehumanization, stripped, poisoned in showers, and gold teeth removed. This was drawn by August Maria Froehlich, an Austro-Hungarian-American. The *Smithsonian's* May 2022 article on it is superb.

Part 4 European Comics of the War Era

Even though Europe was overrun by the Nazis comics were created.

Horst Rosenthal drew and wrote "Mickey au Camp de Gurs" while imprisoned in Gurs internment camp in France. Rosenthal was Jewish, a German-born French cartoonist, and





In Britain there was *V for Vengeance* which began in 1942 and ran until 1943.
(See article on page 43)

Part 6 Considering the War Years—Fighting the Fight

Many women drew comics: Rae Herman, Elizabeth Holloway Marston, Joye Hummel, Ruth Roche, and I need to do more research here. Or build on that already done.

Helene Rother, born in Germany, moved to Paris, had a daughter in 1932, whose father went on to be a resistance fighter, fled from the Nazis to Northern Africa and then to the U.S., arriving in New York in August 1941.

Rother's first employment was at Timely (later Marvel) Comics, but by 1943 she was employed in the automotive industry with a very successful career.

Lily Renee Phillips, was a Viennese Jew. She escaped Austria after the 1938 Anschluss in a *kindertransport* to England. She then went to New York in 1940 and reunited with her parents. In 1942 she went to drawing comics. *Fight Comics*, created by Nick Cardy, introduced Señorita Rio who was Hollywood star Rita Farrar by day and Nazi-fighting U.S. secret agent by night and a character that Lily Renee Phillips drew.

Trina Robbins then created the historical work, *Lily Renée, Escape Artist*

From Holocaust Survivor to Comic Book Pioneer in 2011 and I highly recommend it.

The brutality of the Nazi regime is always made clear. Perhaps it was just an interpretation, given how speculative it was, and how monstrous the reality, but it is clear the stories are being told, especially by Jewish creatives. These stories portray the plight of people who face internment, torture, and brutality in concentration camps as part of the horror of the Nazi's overall machine of human destruction. Always pro-America, were comics simply all propaganda, or were they raising awareness of something many could not imagine?

Joe Simon said that Jack Kirby said: he was pleased that Jack Kirby said a good Irish name.

Kirby said "I wanted to be an American. My name is Kurtzberg."

When Gary Groth asked if there was antisemitism, Jack Kirby said "Yes. A lot of it. They were confrontational days when people of different backgrounds had to live together. And it hasn't changed. There's antisemitism today."

Al Jaffee explained his own motivation for going from Abraham to Al: "Antisemitism was in the air. With Hitler slaughtering the Jews in Europe and with the antisemites in America, with the German Bund taking over Madison Square Garden, marching in Nazi uniforms—in the city of New York, a city with a huge Jewish population— escaping Semitism didn't seem to be all that illogical...I want to blend into America; I want to be Tom Sawyer. So that was the motivation."

(Jon B. Cooke, "The Invention of Gil Kane," *Comic Book Creator* #11 (2016), p.34.)

These good people were doing a good thing!
Concentration camps were kept in the minds of people. That is fighting against Nazism.

Too many people want to forget, pretend, lessen or deny.

in his 15 page book, we see Mickey Mouse arrested on suspicion of being Jewish and sent to Gurs.

Rosenthal was in Gurs for two years, then transferred to Auschwitz in September 1942. Upon his arrival, he was selected and murdered.

Mickey gets arrested, because he has no ID papers, by a Vichy gendarmerie. With no mom and only Walt Disney as his father, he cannot respond to questions about his religion, and so the judge concludes he must be Jewish and is sent to Gurs. We get to see Mickey's reaction to the camp, which is portrayed through a photo, not an illustration. The conditions are terrible, so Mickey erases himself, and then is seen going to America.

This is an incredible work, and one worthy of more research.

Robert Rigot's *Cœurs Vaillants* (Brave Hearts) mentioned Mauthausen concentration camp.



The French *bandes dessinées* *The Beast is Dead* was conceived and published after French Liberation in 1944 by Victor Dancette, Jacques Zimmermann, and Edmond François Calvo. It is more of an illustrative book and is in two volumes. These albums tell the history of WW2 in anthropomorphic style so Nazis are wolves, Americans are bison, British are dogs.

In two panels, we see references to the Holocaust. There is a yellow star clearly seen, and we see the deportation of Jews and the text states, "Pursuing more particularly their vengeance against certain tribes of peaceful animals that we sheltered and to whom we had often opened our doors to shelter them from the fury of the unleashed Beast, the hordes of the Great Wolf had begun the most atrocious plan of destruction of the rebel races, dispersing the members of their tribes in distant regions, separating the wives of their husbands, children of their mother, thus aiming at the total annihilation of these harmless crowds who had committed no other crime than that of not submitting to the will of the Beast."

Notes and References

I have found 33 U.S. comics that mention European concentration camps, one of which mentions Jews, one cover that could be a visualization of the Holocaust. Once French comic explicit about the Holocaust, one illustrated book less explicit. One U.S. pamphlet clearly mentions the Holocaust. 25 British comics mention concentration camps, two of which mention Jews.

A total of 61 publications.

23rd May 1943. The *New York Times* page E6, article by Julian Meltzer, mentioned Jewish immigration of refugees from "the Nazi holocaust."

"According to the census of June 16, 1933, the Jewish population of Germany, including the Saar region (which at that time was still under the administration of the League of Nations), was approximately 505,000 people out of a total population of 67 million" U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.



Choosing to Testify

Steve Davidson

Night and Fog. The Judenraat. The Boys From Brazil. Eli Weisel. Adolf Eichmann. The JDL. March on Skokie. Yad Vashem. Birkenau. Treblinka. Shoes. Gold teeth. Hair. Auschwitz. Never Again. Never Again. Never Again.

Except that genocides have happened innumerable times since World War II—in India/Pakistan/Bangladesh, Australia, Zanzibar, Nigeria, Biafra, Algeria, Cambodia, Guatemala, Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, New Guinea/Papua, East Timor, Philippines, Laos, Argentina, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kurds, Marsh Arabs, Tibet, Paraguay, Brazil, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Hazaras, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, Somalia, Peru, Rohingya, Yazidis, Kurdistan, Uighurs...

Rather than recoiling in horror from the practice, it seems that genocide and ethnic-cleansing have become the world's most popular form of birth control.

Since at least 1971, there has been an uninterrupted chain of genocide being conducted somewhere on this globe.

My personal experience of the Holocaust is second-hand. Branches of my Father's family fled Europe and scattered around the world, some to Brazil, some to Israel. Family grave sites in Poland were desecrated. Distant cousins participated in the Jewish revolt against Britain in what is Israel today.

But in many ways I experienced it first hand, as my generation, the Baby Boomers, were given the *Never Again* Torch to carry.

For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time."

Elie Wiesel, *Night*

My Father was raised as an Orthodox Jew. My Mother, not so much. In fact, my Father caught a fair amount of hell from his parents for marrying my mother, a weird expression of a minority discriminating against its own, which still takes place today, especially in Israel.

This resulted in some odd behaviors at home: for example, when my paternal grandmother visited us, we were instructed to at least verbally observe the rules of keeping Kosher. No asking Mom for a ham-and-cheese sandwich while *Sabta* (grandmother) was visiting. No loud playing or asking her to watch cartoons on a Saturday when visiting.

It was complicated, as all "mixed-marriages" are, complicated even further by the fact that I was adopted... from a non-Jewish mother...who was unwed.

Excuse this minor lesson in one of the more arcane aspects of Judaism: there are at least four strains of Judaism—Orthodox (and Hasidism), Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist.

Each of these sects interprets Jewish law differently. Generally, it progresses from strict (Orthodox) to more secular (Reconstructionist). My upbringing progressed from Orthodox, through Conservatism to Reform (I received my

Confirmation and my Bar Mitzvah in a Reform synagogue).

Why? Because my parents (adopted), particularly my father, were obviously concerned about my status.

For example. Had I been adopted from a Jewish mother who had conceived me with someone not her husband, I would be a *mamzer*, a "Jewish Bastard," prohibited from reading Torah ("The Torah commands us that a *mamzer* "shall not enter into the assembly of God"⁶: a requirement for being Bar Mitzvah), and only allowed to marry another *mamzer*, our children forever classed as *mamzers* till the end of time.

But I was not born of a Jewish mother (Jewish identity follows the maternal line). Had my birth status been acknowledged, it would have had to be revealed to the congregation and I'd have had to go through conversion before I could be considered a Jew. The acknowledgment, however, would have also required revealing my unknown status—definitely had a non-Jewish mother, and she might have conceived me in a manner that was also unacceptable.

So my parents opted to keep quiet about my origins. (I found it a bit shocking that the cards distributed to announce my birth made no mention of the adoption, while my brother's, he was adopted several years after I was, did. They'd successfully navigated this identity crises by finding a congregation that didn't strictly enforce the rules, so there was no need to conceal his birth status.)

I delve into this because an important part of my Jewishness can be found in the fact that I do not *have* to be Jewish...and am actually not Jewish according to strict interpretations of that status.

By birth records (only recently uncovered), I am in fact of Irish descent. My birth parents were both Irish and they did marry after I was born. By birth and adoption, I can claim status to two minorities that aren't considered strictly white (and a third by marriage, as my wife was Sicilian-English. Her mother also married someone she wasn't supposed to—but that's a different story).

Returning to the Holocaust: had I been born in say, 1928 Germany (thirty years before my actual birth), when Hitler came to power, my genetic history would have classified me as an Aryan, not an *untermensch*. I'd no doubt have been conscripted into the military. I might even have been putting people onto cattle cars, instead of being put onto a cattle car.

I could have grown up observing the minimal requirements while not considering myself Jewish, or absolving myself of any Jewish responsibilities because I didn't *really* qualify, and there are times when I've thought that this might be an advantage: I could, pretty effectively, renounce my Jewish heritage on factual grounds and then infiltrate Nazi and White Supremacist organizations as an informer: "*They lied to me! They mutilated me trying to make me Jewish, when I am in fact a member of the Master Race! They tried to steal my heritage from me!*" How could such organizations, predicated on a narrative of victim hood, fail to embrace me?

But even then, my actions would be in support of Judaism. Because, whether by indoctrination or the exercise of free will, I have chosen to be Jewish.

You'll find this an even stranger position to understand when I tell you that I am also very much a secular Jew, a

⁶ Deuteronomy 23:2.

cultural Jew, an atheist Jew.

I know that in many ways my father was uncomfortable with the place within Jewish society he'd accepted in order to raise a family. I very much believe that he'd have preferred us to be Conservative, or more likely Orthodox. For example, when his mother died, I went to temple with him to say *Kaddish* (prayer for the dead) and to hear her name read out from the *bima*. I was a little surprised when he pulled out a prayer shawl and put on *tefillin* before the service.

He was very keen on my Bar Mitzvah, taking on the task of helping me learn my Torah portion, and lamenting that I'd not be singing it in the traditional manner (if you've ever heard me sing—no one would have wanted that). He greatly encouraged me to continue my education in things Jewish by attending a Jewish college while I was still in high school. I obtained a degree in religious education, graduating *cum laude* (I don't think I'd ever seen him more proud), and, when I gave voice to the possibility of attending seminary to become a Rabbi, he encouraged me.

Alas, at least for him, that extra bit of education only served to cement my growing suspicion that the supernatural aspects of Judaism were just as unfounded as every other belief based on faith (belief in the absence of evidence).

Just one example: we're taught that a miracle occurred following the Maccabean revolt against the Selucids. There was insufficient oil on hand to keep the Eternal Light in the Temple burning, but through God's intervention, oil that would last for only one day kept the light burning for eight. This is what we celebrate on Hanukkah and why we light eight candles. However, Divine intervention is apparently not needed when Jews are around, because we're pretty intelligent people (nearly one quarter of all Nobel Prizes have been awarded to Jews) and it has been demonstrated that the size of an oil lamp's wick greatly affects the rate at which it burns oil. Most wicks back then were three or five stranded. Substituting a single strand would have been sufficient to slow consumption. No doubt some priest quietly altered the wick—and doing so didn't violate any religious precepts.

I share this example because it is illustrative of my relationship to Judaism: rather than receiving this story as an example of god's existence, I receive it as an example of the resiliency, creativity, and embrace of logic and reason inherent in this religion. Jews are known as "The People of the Book," which many extend beyond the five books of Moses to reference a dedication to learning and the logical employ of that learning.

Jewish cultural practices are also illustrative of this. Take mourning. There are specific steps for mourning the dead, developed thousands of years ago, that largely reflect "best practices" as they are known today.

Or take an oft-quoted bit of teaching about the Sabbath: work is prohibited—but what if a donkey is stuck in a mire and in danger of drowning? Jewish sages argued this point and determined that the saving of a life—any life—takes precedent, is a greater *mitzvah* (good deed) than maintaining observation of the Sabbath. I think there's something to be said for a religion that articulates that logic and reason can take precedence over religious imperatives—in its own teachings.

However, this embrace of logic and reason intertwined with religious belief has caused Jews to experience a crises related to the Holocaust, namely—how *and* why, did this happen to the *Chosen People*?

(Most Jews do not receive that appellation as meaning that they are somehow special people within humanity. They receive it as having been chosen to carry a special burden. To

maintain their traditions and relationship to the religion in spite of a nearly unbroken five thousand year history of rejection and persecution.)

And why do I embrace this history as my own, when I clearly do not have to?

I'm honestly not sure.

Certainly there's acculturation in effect. Certainly my younger self received "Chosen People" as meaning that I was somehow special (just as my mother assured me I was. Brief aside. Back in the 50s, unwed mothers were hidden away and adoption was something of a taboo subject—probably because the source of the adoptee's origin was "sinful"—and no one really addressed the issue. Primary texts, available to the public included a book titled *The Chosen Baby*, which attempted to reassure adopted children that they were not just "normal," but "special" owing to their adoptive status. I still have my copy of that book, which was read to me many times).

I was apparently very well aware of my status, even at a young age (being adopted that is...not coming into this world in the usual way, understanding that people received me differently upon learning that I was not the natural son of my parents). It's more than likely that I accepted Judaism because it was part and parcel of the people who had accepted me.

Looking back on it now (and following a fair amount of investigation of adoption as an adult, which became necessary when I began to search for my birth parents in earnest, the results of which revealed that I am very much a "Gray Market" baby, if not a "Black Market" baby) I experienced growing up in ways similar to other adoptees of the era—believing that in some ways my status was "conditional." That I'd better behave and comply, or I might get "sent away."

One early childhood incident reveals much: my parents had purchased a new house and our move took place during the summer, while I was attending summer day camp. On the day of the move, I was instructed to get on a different bus to go to the new home.

I was stoic, but terrified, believing that this might be a ruse to get rid of me. That I'd never find the different bus to get on, or that I'd get dropped off in the middle of nowhere, or my adopted parents would not be the people occupying the new home when I got there.

These were the thoughts of a five year old, whose adoptive parents thought of him as capable beyond his years, intelligent, well-behaved, polite, compliant, never aware that those behaviors stemmed from a fear of abandonment, a common issue with adoptees. (Over the years I spoke with both of my parents about this and learned they were completely oblivious to that mental state. I did a good job of hiding.)

Perhaps my attachment to Judaism, and, by extension, relationship to the Holocaust, are an extension of that—clinging to the familiar and "safe," regardless of how terrible those familiar things might be.

But there is one other incident in early childhood that plays into my embrace of this history, the details of which are scant, though it has had a profound impact on me throughout my life.

In first grade, during our first class, the teacher lined us up, first by gender (girls first) and then by height. I took up the tail position in the boys line. Thereafter, I was mercilessly mocked by the other boys (and some girls) in the class, every time we lined up, every time we went out to the playground, every time we were let out to go home at the end of the day.

At first, I thought there might be something wrong with

me, to be deserving of such treatment. But the thing I couldn't wrap my head around at the time was that my height, like my gender, was something that I had absolutely no control over. I could not be taller no matter what I did. Everyone seemingly had something about themselves that could be subject to ridicule by mean little school kids—but someone whose mother dressed them funny was subject to correction. My height (and later, my Jewishness, so I thought at the time) was not.

I didn't like it one bit and, rather than making me bitter, it made me determined to never engage in the same behaviors myself (not that I haven't slipped at times to be honest), my own personal "Never Again."

It seems something of a natural fit, doesn't it? I was rejected, the Jewish people have been rejected. I was sent off into an uncertain future. I was subject to persecution for things largely beyond my control.

As a result, despite my non-belief in the religious aspects of Judaism, I have fiercely objected to antisemitism on a number of occasions—ready to travel to Skokie to counter protest, teaching the residents of a small Florida town that the expression "Jew you down" is unacceptable, confronting supremacists face-to-face on several occasions.

I identify with the Holocaust, and remember it, and object to similar things happening again (and not just to the Jewish people: in the not too distant past I became something of a PITA within Fandom, owing to my objections to the Worldcon being held in China, while that country was, and is, engaged in yet another Holocaust of the Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in that country—you can read an explanation of that [here](#)) because my own life has reflected it in so many different ways.

Not the least of which is wrestling with issues similar to those that Jews began addressing during and after the Holocaust.

Many may not be familiar with the *Judenraat*, the Jewish community councils established by the Nazis to assist them in their management of the extermination of the Jews.

These were often comprised of the existing leaders of those communities (uncooperative members were soon shipped off to camps) and tasked with helping to choose

which citizens would be shipped out, and who would remain in the ghetto that had been established.

Some accepted this task as a method of self-preservation, ensuring that they and those close to them would be among the last to be shipped off. Some used it to protect and enrich themselves (to little avail in the long run). Others reasoned that allowing the Nazis to manage things was worse than doing so themselves, that they might somehow be in a position to preserve at least some of the community.

This was a real-life version of that scene in *The Dark Knight*, in which Two Face forces Gordon to choose "who he loves the most," his wife or his child, knowing that the choice will result in someone being killed.

Accompanying this and similar moral dilemmas (fighting for a job in the camps that would offer more food, appearing healthier than others so they'd be picked for forced labor rather than the ovens, being forced to reveal the locations of other Jews in hiding to preserve their own families) was the over-riding question—where was God during all of this?

The Jews own self-identification as the Chosen People simply deepened the confusion. What had *they* done that they were forsaken?

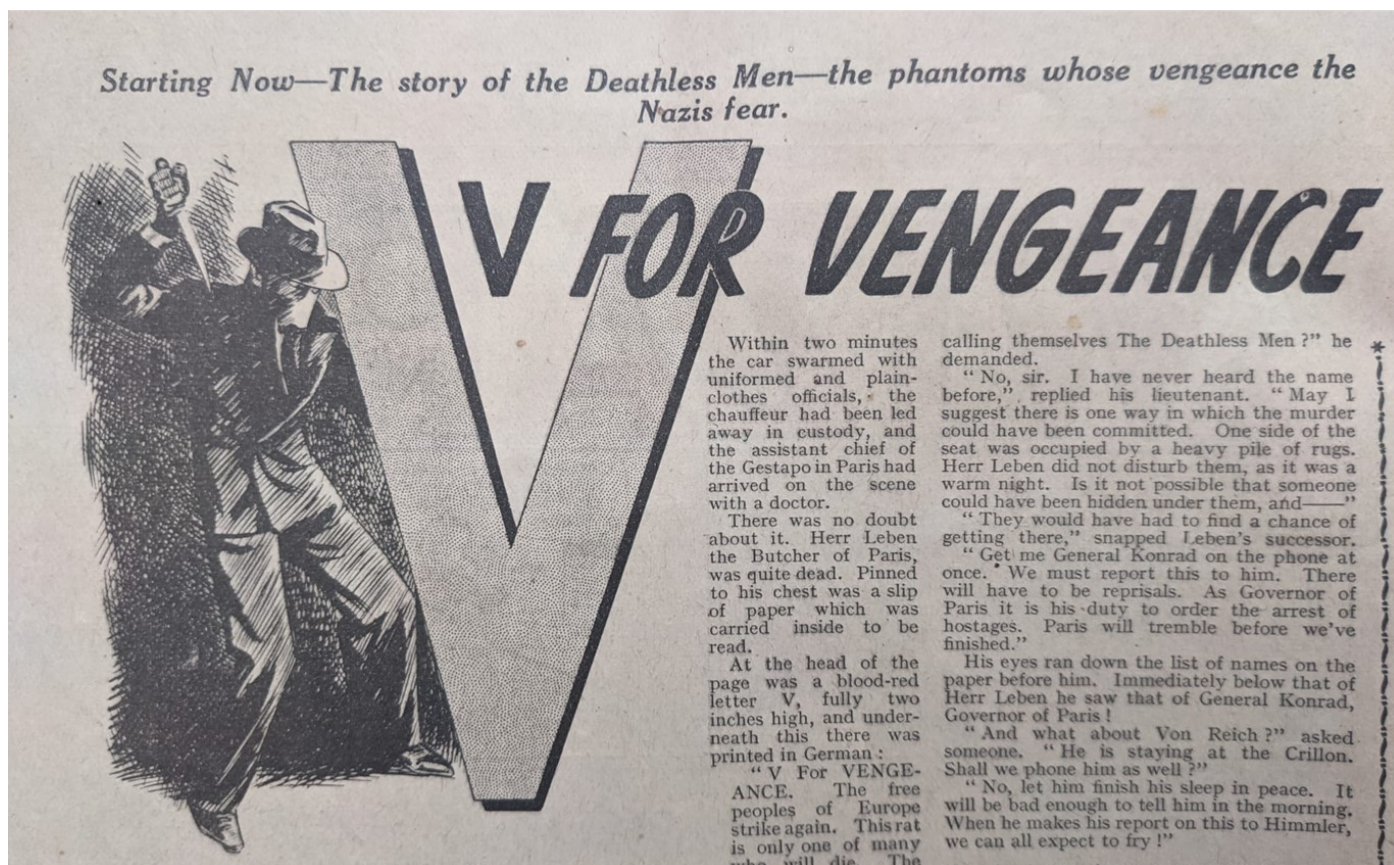
I think the answer for the Jews at that time was similar to conclusions that I came to regarding my own experiences. It wasn't God that was doing this, it was PEOPLE. Misguided, ignorant, twisted, malignant, self-centered, bigoted, avaricious, ordinary, everyday human beings.

If a Divine nature is baked into all of us, so too is our ability to ignore that nature. If that's the case then, whether God is involved or not really doesn't affect things all that much, as the Holocaust itself amply demonstrated. We're reliant on ourselves to try and make the right decisions, knowing that sometimes even making the right decision has no effect on the outcome.

But failing to try is the worst possible choice. Objecting to discrimination, as futile as doing so may be is the first step in preventing it. Not objecting makes you complicit. That it keeps happening again and again demonstrates that not enough of us are objecting, but I will not be compliant.

V for Vengeance James Bacon

July 1942. At El Alamein, there is a stalemate between Rommel and Auchinleck. The Red Army is in retreat along the Don River after losing Rostov-on-the-Don. Treblinka II is opened in Poland and Jews are systematically removed from the Warsaw Ghetto.



On the 8th of August, 1942, *The Wizard* issue 1004 was released for the price of 2d. Hiding inside its dreadfully racist cover is an even darker story, *V for Vengeance*.

V for Vengeance is announced as "The story of the Deathless Men—the phantoms whose vengeance the Nazis fear." These stories are prose, of around 4,500 words with two illustrations each issue. We meet the "Limping Killer," who kills the most senior Gestapo man in Paris and then General Konrad, the Governor of Paris, who is killed as he lies in bed thusly: "The dagger point had descended swiftly passing through General Konrad's eye deep into his brain."

A note, with a list, states that "The Deathless Men are answering the heart-rending cries of the innocent sufferers. It is now the turn of the tyrants, the murderers, the torturers, to tremble...all the undermentioned will share the fate of this scum."

The Deathless Man who was killed after his success was not "some Jewish Terrorist" as initially stated, but a "Czech suspected person, who we learn who was sent to Buchenwald concentration camp" and ended up crippled with an "altered face" through brutal treatment, and thought dead and buried nine months previously. The Holocaust is not ever directly referenced, although it is clear that there is an awareness that Jewish people are suffering at the hands of

the Nazis. Concentration Camps feature continually, given the history of our protagonists, but also as points of vengeance, and as a clear horror that the Nazis are perpetrating.

We find out that Himmler's second in command, Herr Von Reich (VR) is not what he seems. As he takes a phone call from a Deathless Man, VR is revealed as British Secret Service agent Aylmer Gregson, a British spy plant from well before the war, hidden deeply within the Nazi system, a Colonel in the "Black Guard" and party member secretly directing this army of Deathless Men. Quite a story.

VR communicates the arrival of General Henkell at Le Bourget to his spies and a man in a grey leather mask is helped get a case into a cafe near the aerodrome. It develops by the second episode, Henkell is machine gunned by the Deathless Man who then evades the pursuing Germans. He is described; "He limped badly, had a bent back, and was dressed in grey from head to foot. Grey gloves covered his hands, there was a grey leather mask over his strangely flat face, and a hat of the same colour was pulled well down. Fastened to the still warm barrel was a slip of paper headed by a blood-red letter V about two inches high. Underneath this was printed in German: 'V For Vengeance.'"



Kouniz, the Czech Deathless Man from the previous episode, is described as: "Had died and been buried in the notorious Buchenwald concentration camp, where he had been tortured so severely that he had been crippled for long months before his miserable end."

Our current Deathless Man evades the pursuing Germans, doubling back to the airfield where he hides on a plane, and awaits take off. He kills the pilot and then turns to the co-pilot and the next passage ably demonstrates the darkness to this story;

"As he died, one of his flailing hands clawed the mask from the grey man's face. Even in his death agony the Nazi pilot could not restrain a groan of horror at the nightmarish vision which he glimpsed. The man in grey had no nose; it had been torn or cut away. His cheeks were so scarred and battered that they scarcely resembled human flesh. His mouth was crooked, for his lips had been split in a dozen places and had never properly healed. Scars crossed the forehead, and looked as though they had been made with hot irons. So much the Nazi pilot saw before oblivion came. The Junkers screamed downwards in a steep dive as the slayer readjusted his mask...

"Slipping into the pilot's seat, he tugged at the controls until he managed to pull out of the dive..... A long column of German infantry showed ahead, marching towards the frontier. 'May as well take a few more of the swine with me!' snarled the man in the grey mask, and deliberately sent the Junkers nose-first into the massed ranks below. His words were Polish, but no one could hear them, for the nerve-racking impact of the machines in the road was simultaneous with the death cries of mangled German soldiers."

I was stunned by this. It's violent and dark, with levels of brutality that I had not anticipated; concentration inmates tortured, disfigured, damaged, back from the dead and wreaking vengeance upon the Nazis.

Existence of concentration camps was known in 1942—although not the extent or the nature of the Holocaust—and the level of cruelty must have been public knowledge, but this is a story in a paper aimed at boys.

The Deathless Men are portrayed as honourable and brave, with a level of courage and skill despite everything that challenges them, and at one point are described as "that organization of avengers." It is clear that the targets of the Deathless Men are dreadful people, such as Norwegian Chief of Police Erik Monsen, described as the "worst quisling," and German plans for retribution by rounding up 50,000 leaders, people of importance and intelligence of occupied countries and "military leaders, professors, writers, doctors..." who would be imprisoned in the Black Forest with 500 killed for every Nazi death, are attributed to a Baron Von Bierber who suffers a swift attack at his villa in Spandau, and is killed before he can escape to Belgrade.

There is internationalism to the story, with The Deathless Men described as from many countries, including Germans who had "fallen foul of the Nazis." VR had chosen men who "had been tortured almost beyond endurance, men

who could no longer feel pain, men who did not care if they were dead or alive." When one Deathless Man is about to be captured and calls for his comrade to come back and kill him, he does so, "he had killed his friend and avenged him at the same time..."

"Major Karl Woolfgang was in Berlin on leave...perhaps he wanted to shut out the shrieks of the men he had tortured during the past three years at the Oranienburg concentration-camp, of which he was commandant.... he was known to be excessively brutal and vicious. When prisoners were sent to Oranienburg they often tried to commit suicide before they got there..."



Jack One shone his torch on the general's face and waited with his dagger ready.

Oranienburg concentration camp must mean the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, in the town of Oranienburg. Although there had been a previous incarnation in 1933 in the town, it had moved by 1936 and was renamed. Utilizing what actual details the writers had, it is quite telling that here in 1942 we have a clear reference to the brutality.

Our Deathless Man is on hand in the Major's bedroom, awaiting the moment for vengeance, described again in grey and flat leather mask. "In one gloved hand was the revolver, in the other the intruder flourished a whip exactly like that back at Oranienburg."

The description of this assassination is vivid. "The grey man lashed Karl Woolfgang across the face, cutting his cheek to the bone, causing him to clutch his head with his hands to try and shield it with his arms. The cruel thing curled round the Nazi's body again and again...biting deeply into his plump flesh. The grey man seemed tireless. He took his time about the flogging of Woolfgang, but he never stopped. Before long it was hard to recognise the commandant. He lay on the floor in a pool of blood, and the visitor tossed the bloodstained whip...he moved close to the prostrate Nazi and fired three times. Karl Woolfgang would suffer no more, neither would he vent his spite on the eight hundred poor wretches in his power at Oranienburg."

There is such a level of brutality to the writing, vivid, such as the description "the strong odour of bitter almonds" as capture is evaded through poison. There is much tension within the story itself, especially between the Deathless Men and VR. In one instance as a group lay trapped, VR creeps up to ostensibly glean information, but talks to the leader of the group, who realizes that the only way out is death. "If I could

help you I would,' says VR and it comes across, 'the way the men spoke of death always chilled him. They had suffered so much physical torture and misery in their time that death seemed to them a welcome oblivion.'" Even so, while VR is duplicitous and deceives his fellow Nazis, he has incredible loyalty and even devotion from the Deathless Men, who repeatedly do whatever is needed to protect him.

Hitler and Himmler are described as "raving" with anger at times, and quietly fearful. Indeed at one stage Himmler tells Von Reich that "the Fuehrer has refused to return to Berlin until the Deathless Men are wiped out. He says he would be failing in his duty to the Fatherland if he exposed himself to danger at such a critical time...." and VR hides a smile, and it is certain readers would see through that propaganda and know that Hitler was a coward. Yet it is subtle enough.

Atrocities are not hidden although we have no mention directly of the Holocaust. "General Wenningen, notorious as the man who had ordered the complete annihilation of several Polish villages where guerrilla fighters had been located....boasted how he had ordered eleven hundred men, women and children to be shot and in doing so terrorised an entire Polish province..."

There is much to the story, which has an effective formula. VR is near to hand, for some reason or another; we know of or learn about some horrendous Nazis or traitors; they are targeted, and killed as well as many other Germans; there is evasion and a level of excitement as the Deathless Men manage to evade capture or escape an assassination. Although sometimes they do not.

The portrayal of the Black Guard, which I assume to be a group of Allgemeine SS under VR's command, is strong, but only to build them into a defeated and morally repugnant foe, to be hated. This is a regular tactic in the writing, the lack of courage and general failing of character is continually portrayed in the Nazis, fear and cowardice common among the bullies.

That war crimes are openly told throughout stories told to children in 1942 must be indicative of the time. It was a time of war but there is no end of the atrocities portrayed; brutality to civilians, women held as hostages, towns wiped out, the torture and massacre of people, scientific experiments on POWs.

Indeed, subsequent reprints have been edited somewhat. Here is a passage from *Wizard* 1010 in 1942 and then a reprint in 1959. The changes are subtle, but notable.

Wizard no. 1010 October 31st 1942.

"Czarndo, in western Poland. Not an entire building remained standing...Midst the blackened rubble lay the charred bodies of one hundred and thirty men, women and children. Eighty-one other bodies hung on crude scaffolds at the nearby crossroads. Blood splattered the earth everywhere."

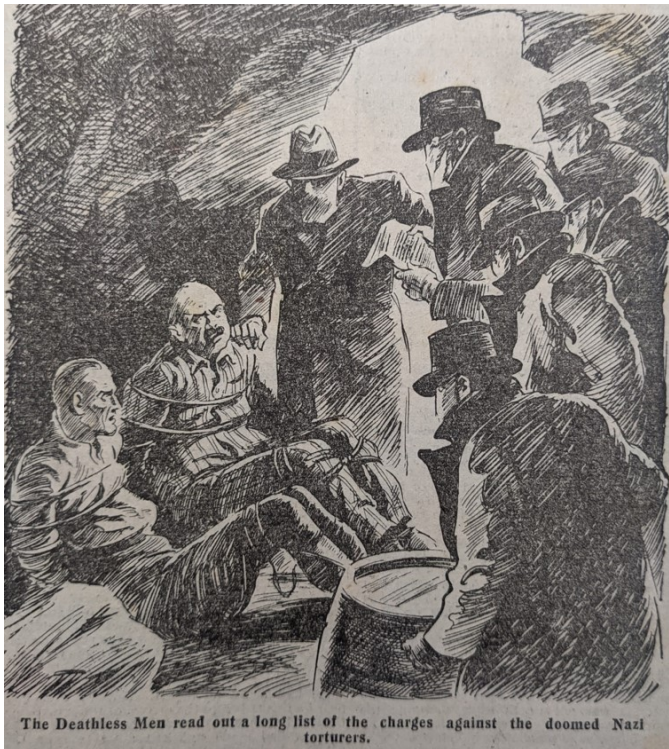
Wizard no. 1722 February 14th 1959.

"Czarndo, in western Poland. Not an entire building remained standing. Amid the blackened rubble lay the bodies of one hundred and thirty people. Eighty-one other bodies hung on crude gallows at the nearby crossroads."

At one stage, the Deathless Men captured Dr. Kurt Kruger, who had laughed at wounded Poles and watched them suffer and die, as he refused them medical aid during the fall of Warsaw. Eight of the Deathless Men imprison him and then "...picking up a surgical instrument 'we are not going to torture you, but you are going to die slowly...' the man with the instrument stooped for a moment and made a deep cut...blood began to spurt out...slowly but surely Dr Kruger would bleed to death, he would remain there knowing what was happening." We won't torture you.

Himmler turns up, ostensibly with two formidable torturers, to get the information out of a Deathless Man captured in Greece, but he has already taken poison, and is furious with a wasted journey and slaps a Commandant of the District, who instinctively goes for his gun, and VR takes the opportunity and guns him down, although the fear of the Deathless Men is in everyone, another Nazi, killed, and of course, Von Reich is ingratiated at the same time.

There is mention of a Jewish prisoner in Dachau, when the Deathless Men capture two Nazis, and a trial takes place: "And on June 18 1942, Schlitter, you and three others interrogated an elderly Jew in the Dachau Camp, when you believed he had nobly hidden away. When even flogging did not produce the required result, you immersed the wretched man alternatively in iced and hot water, before flogging him with wire whips. He died under treatment in twenty minutes."



In issue 1014 as French "traitors" travel on an armored train to see Hitler in Vienna, VR purposely and repeatedly uses psychological warfare against one of them who had been joking about the Deathless Men. He keeps finding notes, in red, and it's wonderful, with him eventually running away, but of course into the hands of the Deathless Men to die.

The psychological aspects are strong, General Houff loses control after being wound up, and ends up getting shot by his own sentries, Herr Roehmer "blew out his brains," and by issue 1020 it is reported that "Hitler has had a nervous breakdown," and later a plan with a double is exposed, with huge crowds informed of Hitler's cowardice.

All tactics are employed, from hanging to blowing up Nazis, to agitating and there is much sense of adventure, such as freeing Vienna circus lions, who then attack the dignitaries!

The connection to concentration camps is frequently reinforced, through the brutal treatment of the Deathless Men, to targets such as Col. Linden of Irimpen Concentration Camp in the Netherlands (which is fictitious location, Amersfoort, Westerbork, Vught, Erika, and Schoorl being the ones that existed.)

Traitors are regular targets. In Belgium, a Jonathan Jules broadcaster is killed, and as VR says, he is glad and describes him "like our own Joyce." In Cologne, a Doctor Koppel, "was

of Jewish blood and was only longing for his chance to avenge the cruelties shown to his friend and relatives” and later a fervent Nazi, Waldemar Binck who owns a newspaper, has spies “in the big concentration camps of Dachau, Oranienburg, Papenburg and Buchenwald” to report on softness of guards, but VR uses this to imprison him.

VR is faced with many difficulties, but is always willing to kill a Nazi if he can, and just at a point when evading escorts and ensuring his cover is not blown, there is also weakness, for the Deathless Men follow VR around, and that would have given the story away, he starts them elsewhere, creates internecine fear amongst Nazis, imprisons 50 Cologne based Nazis of prominence who he accuses of plotting with the Deathless Men, gets the Deathless Men to capture a scientist who tested his poison gas on 100 Polish POWs, dresses him as a Deathless Man, then when captured sees his own gas used on those Nazis held captive, a nicely convoluted twisting within the story that is timely.



Meanwhile a vengeful governor Dorfmann in Pilsen has his own men kill three German officials to “arrest, torture and massacre” as much as he wants, and he suggests “arresting 1,000 women...to be flogged every morning”, confusing the picture of who is the enemy and demonstrating the utter corruption of the Nazis, while working to VR’s gain.

Mental torture builds with the sinister conspiracy, unnerves Hitler, part of VR’s plan, and in the last number of issues, there are some very neat methods in which VR unsettles and upsets the Nazis to the point where a group of SS set out to kill him, and it further allows him to sow seeds of mistrust as he “caused consternation and bitterness.” This fear of the shadows works all the way to the top of the Nazi hierarchy. As the story reaches a pinnacle in July 1943, we see VR escape Germany, but not before he has sown dreadful and indeed believable mistrust between Goebbels, Göring, Himmler, Ribbentrop, and Hitler.

It is interesting that the accusation is levelled against Ribbentrop and Göring that they have “already transferred large sums of money to South America” in front of Hitler, and of course that is before we consider Himmler’s predicament, if it is realised that VR was his right-hand man. We do encounter a Jewish character, briefly. As action takes place in Germany Dr Koppel helps the Deathless men.

In what I consider to be a clear reference to the Holocaust the narrative informs us that he “was of Jewish blood and was only longing for his chance to avenge the cruelties shown to his friend and relatives” his moment is brief, but brave and important.

It is an interesting and thoughtful approach to sharing what was going on, while portraying bravery, insightful of the view of Nazism in 1942, or the view that was desired to be felt by the paper’s young readers. How much was speculation and how much was shared insight, is unclear, but it put the

Nazis into the poorest of lights. VR is always shamed internally that he had to act as a bully for the Nazis, beating, or killing as required, sometimes innocents who were just caught in the maelstrom, be it an informer or soldier. Did the editorial team, who are credited as writing it, know how accurate they were in their depiction of how brutal the Nazis were? As stories go, it is no doubt priming the youth to hate the Nazis and it does that.



The story came to a clear end in July 1943 although left an opening for a return. The story did return many times after the Second World War in sequences such as “M Marks the Spot,” “The Voice from Berlin,” and “Red Vengeance.” It even became a drawn comic, albeit obviously drawing heavily from the original prose story, in *The New Hotspur* and later transferring to *Victor and Wizard*. While these are worth consideration, they lack the dark conviction and visceral brutality possessed by the original stories written for a “Boy’s Paper” at a time of war.

Thanks to Arthur King (Corp. Tech. RAF ret.), PJ Holden comic artist, David McDonald (Hibernia Comics) Justin Marriott (Battling Britons), Paul Trimble, Bruce Scott (S. Sergeant, 32 RRA ret.), Doug Brain, John Vaughn, Calum Laird (DC Thompson Editor Emeritus) and especially the late Vic Whittle, and Colin Noble.

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Holocaust on Film

Daniel M. Kimmel

The critical praise and Oscars for *The Zone of Interest* (2023) suggests that most people think that films on the subject of the Holocaust consist of this and *Schindler's List* (1993). In fact, there are many dramas and documentaries about the Nazis' "Final Solution" that delve into the topic far more richly and deeply than these two examples. This essay is an overview of the subject with several outstanding films noted. Those wanting to delve further into it should get a hold of the invaluable book *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* by Annette Insdorf.

Perhaps the most powerful documentary ever made on the subject was Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) which was originally released theatrically in two parts totaling eight and a half hours. What makes it unique is that it consists solely of original material shot for the film, with no archival or newsreel footage. At the end there is an account of a resistance fighter in the Warsaw Ghetto who sneaks out to get help and is devastated to see normal life going on as usual on the other side of the wall. Whether you watch it in smaller doses (as it was presented on television) or as a whole, it is compelling filmmaking.

Dramas on the subject can be divided into three broad categories. The first are those films about the times before the deportations and death camps, where the audience knows what's coming but the characters don't necessarily do. A classic of this type is *The Garden of the Finzi Continis* (1971) where a well-to-do Italian Jewish family acts as if they can separate themselves from what's happening in the world around them only to learn that they can't. *Ship of Fools* (1965) has its all-star cast also seemingly oblivious to how unprepared they are for the times they are about to enter. The musical *Cabaret* (1972) uses its musical numbers to foreshadow coming events. Joel Grey's emcee blows with the winds so that his earlier comical numbers segue into "If You Could See Her Through My Eyes" – a duet with someone in a gorilla suit – where the "punchline" is "she wouldn't look Jewish at all."

During the war Hollywood mostly shied away from the subject, the Jewish moguls afraid of being accused of "special pleading." Charlie Chaplin, who wasn't Jewish, was an exception making one of his characters in *The Great Dictator* (1940) a Jewish barber who ends up taking the place of his other character, the Hitler parody Adenoid Hynkel. Director Ernst Lubitsch, who was Jewish, made a point of making one of his Polish Shakespearean actors Jewish in *To Be or Not to Be* (1942) as they flee the German invasion of Poland.

There are numerous films set in Germany during the Third Reich and, in other countries, the Nazi Occupation. A good place to start is *The Wannsee Conference* (1984) which is as chilling as *Zone of Interest* is banal. The German docudrama (later remade for HBO) focuses on the meeting of Nazi military and political officials where they calmly plan out the extermination of the Jews. They sit around a boardroom table and discuss the logistics of transporting millions of people, murdering them, and disposing of their remains. One of the most harrowing films is *The Grey Zone* (2002) which was written and directed by Tim Blake Nelson and features Harvey Keitel, Steve Buscemi, and Mira Sorvino. It is the story of the *sonderkommando*, prisoners who were kept alive to salvage valuables from those who were killed.

Of course, many were affected who, unless they were caught, remained in hiding or who were protected by people recognized at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust remembrance center, as "righteous gentiles." One of the most memorable is *Europa Europa* (1991), based on the true story of a Jewish boy who manages to survive the war hiding out as a member of

Hitler Youth, deathly afraid the other boys will discover he is circumcised. At the end of the film we see the actual man, who emigrated to Israel, and it's noted that when his sons were born, he had them circumcised. Louis Malle's *Au Revoir, Les Enfants* (1987) focuses on Jewish boys who were hidden in a French Catholic school. Malle, who was not Jewish, based this on his own recollections, although the inadvertent betrayal of the boys was a fabrication for the film.

There are also films that focus on non-Jews who did not buy into Nazi ideology. *The White Rose* (1982) dramatizes the true story of anti-Nazi students in Munich in 1942. *The Shop on Main Street* (1965) is a beautiful and heartrending film about a bumbling Czech man whose brother-in-law is well-connected with the Nazis and is given a button shop owned by an elderly Jewish woman as part of a campaign of "Aryanization." The local Jews get him to pretend he's her employee as she has no understanding of what's going on, offering to pay him for the charade. He comes to identify more with her than the process that put him there.

The third type of film are those dealing with survivors and here, too, there's a wealth of material. Two breakthrough films came out of Hollywood in the 1960s. *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), about the post-war trials of Nazis, featured a stellar cast led by Spencer Tracy and dramatized trial testimony of some of the atrocities that took place. A key moment is when a German judge tries to separate himself from the regime by claiming he's more akin to Tracy's American judge but Tracy isn't buying it. Also powerful is *The Pawnbroker* (1965), with Rod Steiger as a survivor who continues to live with horrors and losses he experienced. *The Nasty Girl* (1990) looks at the post-war from the other side, as a German teenager starts stirring up a lot of repressed memories when working on a paper entitled "My Hometown during the Third Reich."

As the decades pass and the events of that time pass out of living memory, there will no doubt be more films tackling the subject in ways that might have been surprising to the filmmakers who made the films referenced here. In the superhero movie *X-Men: First Class* (2011) Magneto is about to send the American and Russian missiles aimed at him and his fellow mutants back at the ships firing them. Dr. Xavier pleads with him not to do it, pointing out that ships are filled with good people who were only following orders. Magneto, who we know is a Holocaust survivor, replies, "I've been at the mercy of men just following orders. Never again."

To end on a more upbeat note, we might question how the Holocaust will be presented to future generations. *Paper Clips* (2004) is a documentary about an 8th grade class in a small Tennessee town that is trying to get a handle on the notion of how six million Jews and five million non-Jews (including Roma, the disabled, gay men, and others) could have been murdered. So, they start collecting millions of paper clips to try to conceptualize it. The project grows and grows in ways that will have an impact far beyond this community.

These films and others like them and still others yet to come can be an entry into grappling with this tragic and horrible history. What's important is that it not be forgotten.

Guarding the Streets of Gold

Susan Shwartz

I grew up not in *di Goldene Medina*, the Golden Country, that my Jewish grandparents and great grandparents from Poland and Latvia dreamed of, but in the steel town, Youngstown, Ohio. Now part of the Rust Belt, its streets in the 1950s seemed paved with gold.

As a fourth-generation, assimilated American, I was kept innocent, my family's "American" daughter. Knowledge of being "other" and the Holocaust itself came later. Being "other" may have started when my grade school scheduled the Iowa Tests for Yom Kippur. Apparently, the school wanted my scores, which had been 99 plus the year before, as a status symbol to boost its numbers. My mother overrode the authoritative stubborn insularity of the male administrators, worked out a compromise, and told them they'd be lucky if I wasn't permanently traumatized.

Mother was countering their guilt-trip about wanting "special" treatment for her only child with a guilt-trip of her own – hurting a child. But I was stronger than that. So, I went to school in my good pink and gray dress, aced their damn tests, then left for Temple. Then, my family moved across town to a school with so many Jewish students that it practically shut down during High Holy Days.

Our rabbi in the big, domed Temple had studied at Balliol. He preached about Freud. He also railed about Hanukkah bushes and intermarriage. I had to learn about the Holocaust by myself. Knowledge came in steps. When I was six, we were visiting my mother's family in Boston. My father loved going to bagel factories when they opened after Shabbat and the first bagels came out hot and fresh. I'd go with him. One night, a plump, pleasant woman was counting out the bagels when I saw a crudely tattooed number on her rounded arm. Instinctively, I understood. I made it outside "to get some fresh air."

In Saturday School, during the trial of Adolf Eichmann, we saw pictures of a banal little man in a glass box. I suggested that he should be allowed to live, exhibited in Tel Aviv so he could watch Eretz Israel thrive. They called my parents on me.

The rule in our home was that any book lying around was my rightful prey. My parents left Alan Bistic and Rudolf Vrba's *I Cannot Forgive*, the account of Vrba's escape from Auschwitz, on the coffee table. I read horrors. I saw pictures of naked bodies stacked like cordwood, images of thin men, pressed against barbed wire, wearing striped jackets. They had faces like skulls and deep-set eyes like mine.

My parents did *not* leave out Rene Schwarz-Bart's *Last of the Just*, but I found it, sneaked it off, and read it anyway. Then, I went out into the golden streets to live the life so many people had sacrificed to give me – including my father. He was a combat officer during the Battle of the Bulge, who had requested overseas duty when his colonel at Fort Benning refused to have a Jewish officer. Stubbornly, he refused to put **P** for Protestant on his dogtags or to toss away the ones marked with **H** for Hebrew.

During college applications, I beat out what my aunts swore were Jewish quotas at Mount Holyoke. It was a very fine choice. However, twice, politely antisemitic baby women had to learn that if they said anything cute, I came from a steel town and I'd take them.

"Must you be a *shtarker*?" asked my mother. She wanted to raise a lady. Oh well.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because no one's going to pin a yellow star on me."

I beat quotas again in grad school to join Harvard's genteel and Gentile English department. The adviser I selected was modern Orthodox. He too raised Hell when the university announced that classes would start on Yom Kippur. To make matters worse, this was the year of the Yom Kippur War. The error was corrected, apologies (hah) were made, and off I went to study Anglo-Saxon.

Years later, I attended a conference at West Point. Naturally, I visited its museum. While staring at the trigger device of an A-bomb, a silver knife across the room seemed to call to me. Its blade shone. Its hilt was carved with runes. It was Goering's dagger. I thought it was looking at me from its case.

I looked back. "*You lost*," I told it.

I lived for years in Forest Hills, a heavily Jewish district of the Borough of Queens. Typical of rent-stabilized apartments, the elevator often went out. A very old lady asked me to help her carry her groceries upstairs. I schlepped cheerfully.

"You know," she said, "you remind me of my sister. In Auschwitz." I asked her to let me know any time she needed help. I never saw her again.

In 1990, I took two colleagues of mine from grad school with me to Carnegie Hall to hear Verdi's titanic *Requiem*. The performance commemorated the 1944 concert at Terezin, where Eichmann, other Nazis, and the Red Cross applauded. The Red Cross was deceived. Six months later, most of the singers and musicians were dead. Opera and medieval Latin made me understand precisely what I was hearing – unlike the cultivated West Siders who fled the hall while three Survivors from that doomed chorus wept for joy.

I brought a copy of the program to my therapist. As a boy, he survived the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, lived through a concentration camp, emigrated, won a scholarship to Dalton, and earned his Ph.D. at Yeshiva University. He thanked me for attending a performance he said he could not bear. He was my Gandalf. May the name of Benzion Rapaport be for a blessing.

Whenever I have needed reminders that the Golden Country is a perhaps-temporary exception, not the rule, for people like me, knowledge of the Holocaust has come to my aid.

These days, thug students who chant "From the river to the sea" and brandish Palestinian banners in the main reading room of Harvard's Widener Library have inspired me to join the University's chapter of Alumni for Campus Fairness. We fight against Holocaust denial, the ancient blood libel, and assaults on Jewish students.

My partner and I live now on a lovely exurban street where Christmas lights and **I STAND WITH ISRAEL** are neighbors. I am preparing to go to Israel with our Temple next year. It is my partner's fourth trip and will be my first.

I am not greatly observant, greatly good, or greatly brave. I have even learned I am not as smart as people had hoped. But I do know a few things.

No means no.

Never again means never again.

And eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. After all, someone's got to patrol the streets of the Golden Land.

The Holocaust in Comics: After the War

James Bacon

The Holocaust became more widely known and understood as the allies uncovered what had happened, the atrocities and inhumanity and criminality, the murder and vast scale of industrialized slavery and genocide was laid bare.

American soldiers liberated concentration camps and awareness was shared. The appalling travesty was immediately visible, witnessed.

Peanuts cartoonist, Charles Schulz was drafted in 1942, at just twenty, and sent to Bravo company, 8th Armored Infantry Battalion. He landed at Le Havre on the 18 February, 1945, by this point a sergeant. He got to Dachau on the 29th April, but a bridge over the Amper was blown up, so they camped. They moved on the 30th of April and stopped adjacent to the Dachau Concentration Camp. Many soldiers did not realize what was next to them. The 42nd, 20th, and 9th Tank Battalions had broken in the previous day, but Schulz was ordered onward. However, on the 31st of April, some men from the 1st Platoon entered Dachau and witnessed the atrocity. "Schulz would recall four emaciated survivors stumbling along the stalled column, stopping now and again to hug the side of the American tanks."

In November 1945, *Real Life Comics* #26 includes a two page prose story by Sam Alexander titled "Lest We Forget," which is presented as a letter to his children. It is harsh on Germans, appropriately so, but clear about the Holocaust. "We Americans who are of German descent will always be ashamed," Alexander writes. He goes on to write about a doctor who ran "countless death factories in Germany and boasted that he had supervised the killing of over one hundred thousand victims." Alexander quotes the doctor: "They were not fit to live. They were Jews and other non-Aryans, as well as persons who had foolish democratic ideas. It is well to weed out those who disagree with us, and those we do not like, and kill them. I do not in the least feel ashamed of what I have done."

Alexander concludes the letter with a call to action: "We must remember that the Germans killed millions of innocent men, women and children who had done no wrong—killed them in cruel, cold-blooded ways that revolt all humanity. We must know that the Germans are responsible for this war and for all the spilling of blood that it caused—and no matter how much it hurts, we must keep the picture of their beastliness always before us, lest we forget! Your Dad"

The war had ended, comics continued, and stories were shared. *Challenger* #3, from August/September 1946, includes a story titled "The Golem" by Bob Bernstein and early work by Joe Kubert. It is set in Prague 1944, where we see Nazis entering every house with the instruction "Kill every Jew." We see women, children, and a rabbi. There is a detailed account of the massacre, and then an air raid occurs, during which a U.S. flyer parachutes in and is rescued by Jacob the shoemaker and his family. As he gets entangled on the roof of a synagogue, they tell the story of the golem. Billy Maguire of the US Army Air Force has listened intently, and says "The armies of democracy are not far off being the Golem of 1944" and Jacob assures him of an escape. This is an important feeling story.

Front Line Combat #3 from EC Comics in November–December 1951 has "Desert Fox" by Harvey Kurtzman and Wally Wood looking at German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, but every page has the last panel dedicated to atrocities, the

killing of Polish schoolboys, civilians burnt in their homes, the emaciated corpses of a concentration camp, and then the second to last page details the deaths of a variety of people, including a Jew starved to death. Rommel's own death is the final page, following the failed assassination of Hitler. This is a reflective story, Rommel as a military leader was held in high regard, but his role and position needs to be juxtaposed with the horror of the Nazi regime, and this comic really achieves this very well. The line between fascination and adoration is very fine, and comics helped to ground readers.

Adventures in Terror Vol I #4 February 23, 1951 has a story "Torture Room" with art by Don Rico featuring Concentration Camp Beydorf, a despotic torturous commandant who metes out vile punishments, an inmate who was a psychology student but known as The Professor, spreads word that the inmates have a torture room. The inmates capture Beydorf, and put him in the underground space, and leave him to contemplate the tortures he planned. He imagines the horrors, and his heart gives out, which is what The Professor had planned. A variety of people's faces are seen.

Stamps Comics #4: April 1952 has a story drawn by Vince Napoli entitled "Escape from Maidanek," which portrays Majdanek near the city of Lublin in Poland. This and was a real camp, and people did escape. The portrayal is clearly that of the Holocaust, and the camp was an extermination camp, with a mention of the gas chamber and crematorium on the first page. We see Eli escape from the ferocious brutality and later give evidence against his persecutors.

Of interest is Ruth Roche, and how the Comic Code altered things. *Haunted Thrills* #1 in 1953 had "Out of the Grave" written by Ruth Roche, which is of note because it was subsequently reprinted, if adjusted and edited to comply with the Comics Code Authority and appeared as "Fair Exchange" in *Strange* #5 in 1958. It is unclear who rewrote or redrew the comic. The original saw a commandant brutal towards concentration camp inmates, and his wife demanding a human skin lampshade, while the second iteration has multiple changes: civilians are not shot, art is adjusted and the commandant's wife now just wants a lampshade. Paul Tumey on Comic Book Attic did a whole blog about it at <http://comicbookattic.blogspot.com/2011/02/insanity-of-censorship-ruth-roche-and.html>.

Beware! Terror Tales #4 from March 1953, with art by SF writer Harry Harrison, tells the story of a camp commandant, who separates a man and his wife, and then has a lampshade made from the "finest white skin." This infuriates the husband, who attempts to kill the commandant and gets killed. We see the commandant facing trial, for his crimes, but he gets away with them, only then to meet the victims of his crimes as ghosts. There is no mention of Judaism, but the striped uniform and the mansion of lampshades are all clearly elements connected to the Holocaust.

Master Race was "one of the finest stories ever to appear in the comics form."

The story appeared in *Impact* #1 from EC Comics in March–April 1955 with a cover by Jack Davis, written by Al Feldstein with art by Bernie Krigstein. It is a poignant and much spoken of comic, brilliantly drawn, an encounter

between a survivor and their tormentor, a Nazi war criminal is superlative.

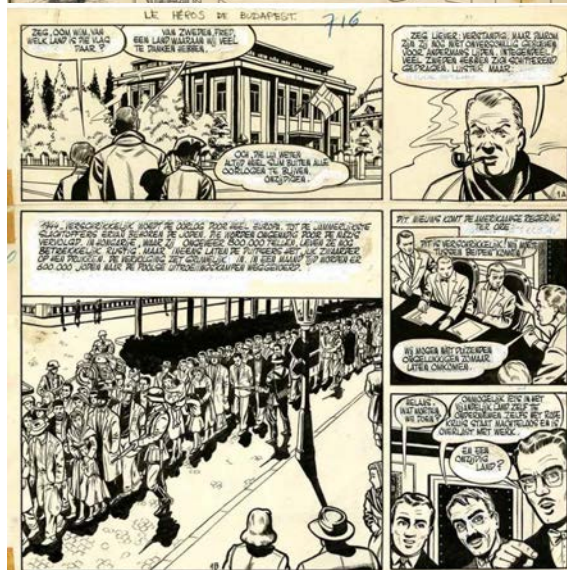
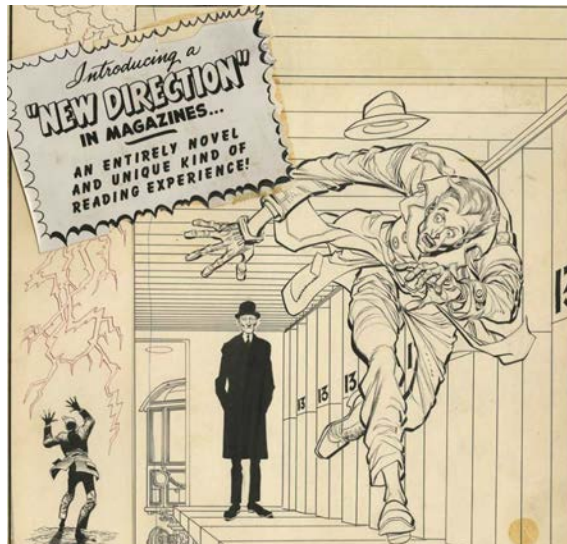
There is an article in *Squa Tront #6* a zine about EC comics which examines this six page story by John Benson, David Kasakove, and Art Spiegelman, They engage Krigstein and get some of his views, in massive seven page article.

Bernard Krigstein's "Master Race" is one of the finest stories ever to appear in the comics form. It is a comic book rarity; a story with such density and breadth of technique that it merits a detailed and exhaustive examination on the part of the reader. Partly because of the nature of the industry, most comic book stories, even the good ones, contain nothing beyond that which is immediately apparent to the casual reader. But "Master Race" has layers of meaning and detail both in its form and visual content which will yield the alert reader new enjoyment beyond the immediately apparent with each rereading.

Yellow Claw Vol 1 #1 June 13, 1956 sees "The Yellow Claw Strikes!" by writer Al Feldstein penciler and inker Joe Maneely. The colorist was Stan Goldberg, editor Stan Lee. Fritz von Voltzmann is the Yellow Claw's lieutenant and formerly the concentration camp commandant of Auschwitz.

American comics were not the only sources of stories about the Holocaust. In the 1950s in France there was *Les Belles Histoires de l'oncle Paul*, a series of historical stories of four pages each, that told a story in *Spirou* and in 1952 there were two that are directly related. "Le Héros de Budapest—The Hero of Budapest" by Jean-Michel Charlier and Jean Graton and "Seul contre la barbarie (L'Oncle Paul)—Alone against Barbarism [Uncle Paul]" by Jean-Michel Charlier Jean Graton and were about the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. These were then collected with other Uncle Paul stories and published as *Les Histoires Trues de l'Oncle Paul Vol 3* in 1953.

In America many of the Jewish creatives who had been involved with comics during the war continued their work, with crucial titles. A key moment was in 1956 when comics entered a new age, described as a Silver age, with Barry Allen as The Flash in *DC Showcase*, by Robert Kanigher



who was Jewish and Carmine Infantino on pencils, Joe Kubert on inks, while Julie Schwartz was editor. In 1961 we had *The Fantastic Four*, followed by *Thor*, *Hulk* *X-Men*, *Black Panther*, *Iron Man*, and *Inhumans*, all from the hands of Jack Kirby and Stan Lee.

"Experiment in Fear" in *Eerie #9* was written by Archie Goodwin with art by Gene Colan and was published in May 1967. It is a beautifully drawn horrific story that portrays Nazi experiments, and then presents a very adept twist in fate to the doctor who is conducting them. Colan was the grandson of German Jews, originally Cohen. This is a dark story that utilizes history to place it in a horror comic.

Captain Marvel #19 in December 1969 at the end of the decade sees a story by Roy Thomas, with art by Gil Kane and Dan Adkins. This is the first U.S. comic to see a superhero with a Holocaust story, Rick Jones and Captain Marvel meets Mr. Weis, an Auschwitz survivor, and they both have to deal with the building being the venue for experiments in Nazi-style social engineering. The final panel sees the number on Weis's arm exposed. Gil Kane was from Riga, Latvia, and his family Max and Helen Kacz came to the U.S. in 1926. They changed their name to Katz, and he grew up in a Yiddish speaking home in Brooklyn. He changed it to Kane as "he was concerned he would be discriminated against."

In December 1971 we have *Batman #237* with art by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano, written by Denny O'Neil, who said "Every Halloween the comic book community was invited to come up to Rutland and sleep on sleeping bags in Tom's big old house. So it was a memorable though slightly blurry night. We were running around the woods and doin' stuff! And then waking up the next morning with headaches. But during that night, the idea came that I ought to do a Batman story with this setting. It was a natural in a way. Dark, spooky, gothic. And then, two weeks later I was having dinner with Harlan Ellison in Manhattan and he said I ought to do a Holocaust story. And there it was. That was certainly enough of a springboard to go home and start writing."

Many comic creators are portrayed in the comic, as we see a Holocaust survivor tracking down a Nazi war criminal but being prepared to do anything necessary. There is clear reference to execution chambers, and a very strong visual recollection of a camp where we see the survivor as The Reaper, and fighting with Batman. As he goes to kill a man wearing a Star of David on a chain, he realizes what he has become, and falls to his death. I'm not sure about Holocaust victims being portrayed as villains though.

In *Star Spangled War Stories* #158 from August–September 1971, we see Joe Kubert writing and drawing an Unknown Soldier story, set in the fictional camp Totentatz, and we see the striped uniform on a man in front of a montage of photos of the Holocaust, and a story with Adolf Eichmann being impersonated, and of course a rescue from a concentration camp. This was during the Vietnam War and so there is a button on the last panel stating “Make War no More.” Joe Kubert was significant in his anti-war stance in war comics, having transcended the likes of Green Beret to a story that was a metaphor for My Lai in *Our Army at War* #233 in June, 1971 entitled “Headcount.”

In May 1972 we have *Combat Kelly and the Deadly Dozen* #2 by Gary Friedrich, with art by Dick Ayers. “Lonely are the Brave” is initially set in a Nazi concentration camp where the Nazis are holding Native Americans. Kelly and some of the Dozen infiltrate the camp, while Native American Jay Little Bear takes the lead in a break out. The last page is a challenging piece about acts of bravery, as three of the Native Americans acted selflessly in helping others, but were also accused of cowardice before their capture, so Captain Happy Sam Sawyer turns down the request for Medals of Honor and also says not to question the why in relation to the cowardice accusations, leaving Jay Little Bear unhappy, and questioning pride and what is right for his people when they are treated so.

In *Weird War Tales* #8 from November 1972, the artists were Steve Harper and Neal Adams and we see the Jewish legend of the golem return in this story, entitled “Thou Shalt Not Kill.” In this story, we see Jewish people praying for help from a statue of a golem and then they are rounded up, forced into a synagogue and attacked with a flamethrower, a tactic that was based on fact. The golem does indeed come alive, but it is noted by Adams that “he comes in so late, so terribly late. It’s like the Allies not paying attention to the concentration camps until the very end of the war. Of course everyone was grateful that they finally came—but why couldn’t they have done something sooner?”

Our *Fighting Forces* #150 in August–September 1974 written by Robert Changer with art by John Severin. In this comic, we have a Loser’s story set in North Africa and the Losers meet some Limeys, but they are of the Jewish Brigade, as we learn when they bury a comrade killed, and then in an unfriendly town, they pray in a synagogue that has been desecrated with a swastika. They uncover hidden Germans and fight bravely, and the Losers honor them. This is a story that not only looks at the Jewish Brigade raised from British Palestine, and who fought bravely in Europe, but also the plight of Jews in Nazi Occupied North Africa. The Vichy French were happy to implement anti-Jewish policies for instance, and this is not often touched upon. Robert Kanigher was born of Romanian Jews who immigrated to the U.S. and was a man who liked to challenge things, in one episode of *OAAW* #160 entitled “What’s the Color of Your Blood” in November 1965, we saw the blood of an African-American G.I. save a Nazi, who was forced to admit, they

were both human. In 1971 he penned a story challenging antisemitism entitled “Leave the Fighting to Us” in *GI Combat* #149.

War is Hell #14 in August 1975 with a cover by Gil Kane and Mike Esposito and the story by English-born Jew Chris Claremont and art by George Evans. This is a fantastical story, which is told from the perspective of a ghost taking over the body of someone at war. John Kowalski is the Ghost and he inhabits the body in the war and then often with Death, or “Old Man,” as he called him engaging as a type of conscience, sees a complex enough story, where a he takes the body of a German paratrooper captain. he allows civilians to go on their way in Norway but is reminded of his orders, and so they are then rounded up, and there is some reflection, engagement with Death and a subsequent story that see them escape. It is interesting that John’s first instinct was to follow orders.

Blitzkrieg #2 in April 1976 sees aforementioned Joe Kubert on the cover, with a story written by Robert Kanigher with art by Ric Estrada. Here we have a series, where the perspective in the words of Joe is told “through the eyes of the Germans.” The cover shows Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto being rounded up and a youngster being restrained with a petrol bomb.

In the story we see mention of the gas chambers, the Holocaust, and also an interesting perspective of three German soldiers, and their views and thinking as they have varying experiences. It is a very thoughtful story in a sense.

In the *Sgt. Rock Spectacular* #13 in 1978 we had a short Gallery of War story called “The Fourth Death by” Robert Kanigher with art by Ric Estrada, where we see an escape from a concentration camp, and a very dark twist for the despotic Nazi commandant who boasts of the bodies of the dead as “human fertilizer.” Having seen things in Auschwitz myself that I would never have believed, the exploitation of humanity by the Nazis knew no bounds. Here the escape in April 1944 from Auschwitz by Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, who went on to give a full report, may be an influence.

In *Captain America* #237 in September 1979, Chris Claremont and Roger McKenzie introduce us to Steve Roger’s landlady, Anna Kappelbaum. Cap is in trouble with the KKK and the American Nazi party, having been the victim of Dr. Faustus’ mind gas, Cap is at quite the low, as he also learns the fate of Sharon Carter. He breaks down. He then starts a new life as a commercial artist and takes out a studio, and when he meets his new landlady, he notes her tattoo, and that she was in Diebenwald. This is Anna who survived *Kristallnacht* in 1938, suffered through the Holocaust, was sent to a concentration camp, and rescued by Cap. Anna is subsequently in another 11 *Captain America* comics, but in issue #245 with art by Carmine Infantino and Joe Rubinstein, we see her experiences in Diebenwald, forced to perform in the camp orchestra, and subjected to unmentioned but heavily implied nonconsensual sexual activities by the Butcher of Diebenwald, Dr. Klaus Mendelhaus. Anna sees Klaus, and this ties in with a modern day Nazi threat, and as she seeks revenge, we see Cap fighting Nazis and we see how Anna must reconcile the brutality and horror she experienced.

Staying with Chris Claremont for a moment, Magneto debuted in 1964 in *X-Men* #1, from the pen of Kack Kirby and Stan Lee. Lee said that Megneto was a villain, but not evil. With the reboot of the X-Men with *Giant Size X-Men* and from issue #94, Chris Claremont began an epic 17 year run.

In 1976, British born Claremont created Kitty Pride who was Jewish and hugely popular.⁷

In *X-Men #150* in 1981, Chris wrote a story, that has created a considerable legacy within this invented fictional world of X-Men, directly connected to the Holocaust. Magneto and Kitty are fighting and Magneto kills Kitty. He is immediately upset and regrets what he has done, and we learn his back story, (some of which had already been shared earlier in this issue) that he had suffered great loss. He tells Cyclops of his family “Mine was a large family, and it was slaughtered, without mercy, without remorse” when Cyclops rejects Magneto’s empathy for his loss of Jean Gray, we learn that he lost his family and that he, Magneto, was an Auschwitz survivor as he is distraught about Kitty, the type of person he actually wants to protect.

Luckily, he had not killed Kitty.

Auschwitz has since been mentioned in the context of Magneto in over 20 other Marvel comics, continually bringing the camp to mind. Not every story is good, faithful, or to my mind sensible, but in 2008 we had *Magneto: Testament* and subsequently we had the X-Men film *First Class*.



The complexity of Magneto as a character, lies in whether or not he is evil, his desire for a Homo Superior, the challenge as he confronts those who fear mutants, his unwillingness to lie down and take discrimination or persecution, challenges readers. In *Uncanny X-Men #161* in September 1982 we continue with Claremont writing and Dave Cockrum and Bob Wiacek doing the art. Claremont said that the X-Men were “a story about downtrodden,

repressed people fighting to change their situation...The Jewish situation is the most obvious genocidal example in the human experience.” In this comic we see serious consideration of the Holocaust as Magneto seeks psychiatric help for his trauma.

There is more thought and consideration here. Again we see it is a Jewish creative, who is stunningly brilliant generally, just highlighting a matter,

British comics touch upon the subject at this time, *V for Vengeance* was the main story in regard to concentration camps, and this was republished many times and in various forms, with softened and edited text, then as a comic and then again as a comic in 1981. It is a poor comic by that stage, not at all containing the seriousness and accuracy, that it had forty years previous. In *Jinty, Song of the Fir Tree* by Alison Christie and Phil Townsend, we have a World War II story about Norwegian children evading internment in a Nazi death camp, appearing on a weekly basis for five months in September 1975. In “Battle,” one of the more respected stories, Hellman of Hammer Force comes into a concentration camp, and there was a Commando Story Nazi Nightmare, but none of these moments stand out.

What does stand out is when comics do an injustice to the historical aspect. As one fan noted, in *Avengers #209* in 1981, it “seemed to me to trivialize the Holocaust, more because of how ham-fisted the writing and drawing were than through any malicious intent.”

Superman #54 April, 1991 is another crack handed story. Here, Superman ends up in 1940s Warsaw, he sees the situation and then learns of Mister Z's plan to detonate an atomic bomb on top of a train transporting Jewish refugees. Superman catches up to the train and causes a derailment, creating the opportunity to “free” those being transported, an asinine scenario. The Nazis drop the bomb, but Superman catches it and pushes it out into atmosphere, saving the Jews. Handily the explosion makes him disappear, taking him out of that point in time, before he can actually do anything useful

The Jews say they have gotten their freedom.

And then in *Superman: The Man of Steel Vol I 82* in 1998, we are back to Warsaw, Poland with Superman and we see him and Lois fighting Generalkommissar Zimmler but actually trying to liberate camps and the ghetto. Instead of succeeding, they are back in Metropolis and saving USians from a fire. Zimmler is actually Dominus, who is somehow linked the realities that Superman appears in.

Superman is always going to be problematic, as a character in the context of human travesty that is the Holocaust, but on these unfortunate occasions, it really is a question of writers or editors going astray. There are other instances when the Holocaust is mentioned as a device and it is not given the weight of importance it deserves.

Thankfully the number of stories that bring heartfelt well written tales to readers is considerable.

In Europe, there are over 100 comics in French that deal with concentration camps, the Holocaust, and Nazi crimes. Unfortunately not all these have been translated, but I have looked at many, and they tell their stories, as I hold my phone with Google Translate working away. *Klaus Barbie—La route du rat* by Jean Claude Bauer and Frederic Bremaud, *Adieu Birkenau: Ginette Kolinka's Story of Survival* by Ginette Kolinka Jean-David Morvan and Victor Matet, Simone Veil, *L'immortelle Paperback* by Herve Duphot and *Paroles d'étoiles: Mémoires d'enfants cachés, 1939-1945* by Serge Le tendre and Jean-

⁷ And Kitty is from the home town of this issue’s editor, Steven H Silver.

Pierre Guéno and in Dutch we have *Kraut* by Peter Pontiac, whose dad was a Nazi, and all stand out.

Further comics I would recommend include *Lily Renee*, *Escape Artist: From Holocaust Survivor to Comic Book Pioneer* by Trina Robbins, Anne Timmons, and Mo Oh, *Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation* illustrated by David Polonsky with *Anne Frank's Diaries* adapted by Ari Folman; *The War within These Walls* by Aline Sax,

X-Men: Magneto Testament is a very clear portrayal of what occurred to Magneto, but of note is the Rafael Medoff and Neal Adams penciled story in issue #5 that was supporting the return of art to Holocaust survivor Dina Babbitt that were created at the behest of Dr. Josef Mengele. *Yossel* by Joe Kubert, is an autobiographical story based on history where the young Yossel, an orphan in the Warsaw ghetto, survives by drawing for the Nazis. *The Boxer* by Reinhard Kleist tells the amazing story of Hertzko (Harry) Haft, a Polish Jew who survived Auschwitz by boxing for the Nazis.

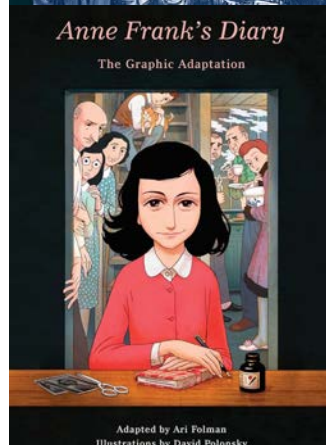
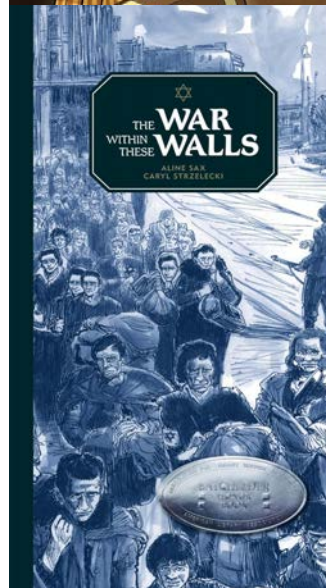
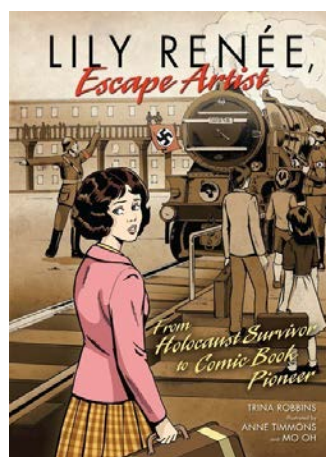
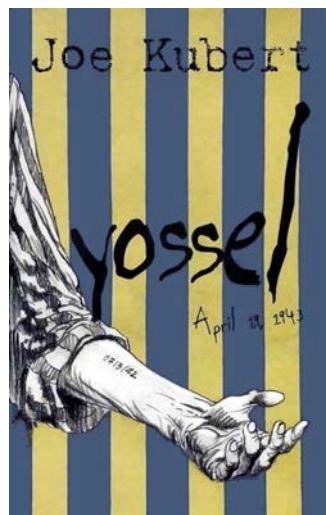
Highly Recommend, and proved brilliant to me, and from which I have quoted heavily was *We Spoke Out, Comic Books and the Holocaust* by Rafael Medoff, Neal Adams, and Craig Yoe and with an introduction by Stan Lee that has 18 stories reprinted with really insightful information and commentary. If this of interest, this is a vital book for you.

The Anne Frank Diary is a superb graphic novel as is.

Should you visit Auschwitz, and I encourage all readers to do so, I was very impressed with the amount of literature available, historical of course, and I bought a number of very serious books, regarding the infrastructure and logistics of the camps, but also stories, so many stories of course, and comics.

Amongst the graphic novels that they have, there is a series created especially for the Musuem and there are four albums. The first is *Episodes from Auschwitz 1*. "Love in the Shadow of Death" is the true story of two prisoners: Mala Zimetbaum, a Jewish woman, and Edward Galiński, that shares their love story, an unsuccessful escape, and their tragic death. There is a hard honesty that shows the complexity of interpersonal relationships in the camp. In *Episodes from Auschwitz 2*. Witold's Report we learn all about Polish Soldier Witold Pilecki, who fought against German invasion, then fought as member of the Polish resistance as part of the Home Army (AK), volunteered to be captured, and purposely sent to Auschwitz to infiltrate the camp, compiled reports shared with the Allies, set up a resistance, and escaped in 1943. He fought in the Warsaw rising. He was arrested by the post war communist regime, and executed. The idea of the AK attacking the camp to free prisoners was fresh.

In *Episodes from Auschwitz 3*, in "Sacrifice" we follow Maximillian Kolbe, a Franciscan monk from Niepokalanów, known as the "Saint



from Auschwitz." There is nice reflection, looking at Kolbe's attitude towards Jews and Freemasons between the wars. There is an honesty in how viewpoints are portrayed, once in the incredible horror that was Auschwitz.

Episodes from Auschwitz 4 "Bearers of Secrets" is about those prisoners tasked with cremating the bodies of those murdered in the gas chambers. These inmates were faced with appalling choices, and suffered brutally, while also being executed by the SS as witnesses of the crimes. Events leading to the Sonderkommando uprising in the autumn of 1944 are covered.

Finally *Maus*. "Maus is a comic about a father and son trying to understand each other, its more directly than that, it is about the Holocaust...you know" Art Spiegelman.

Over thirty years ago, *Maus* first appeared in the pages of *Raw*. It was not only to become a seminal work of comics, but even where it appeared was special, the pages of an underground ingenious intellectual comic book anthology that brought European work to America, that was visually and aesthetically pleasing and yet it was different.

Malus tells the story of Anja and Vladek Spiegelman, as told to his son Art. While Art did create a three page comic in 1972, this was seen later by his father, who wanted to correct matters, to recount, and Art wanted to hear this, and so their relationship went into an important direction, and so the story really began in issue #2 of *Raw* in 1980.

In 1986, *Maus Book One* was published by Penguin Books in a collected format, most comic readers in Dublin are familiar with the penguin on the spine, and the image of two mice huddled below a Swastika, with an angular Cat faced Hitler, in strong hard ink lines. When I arrived at *Maus*, it was expected amongst my comic book reading peers that one would read it, a passage of sorts, and as a teenager, it is a hard story while brilliant.

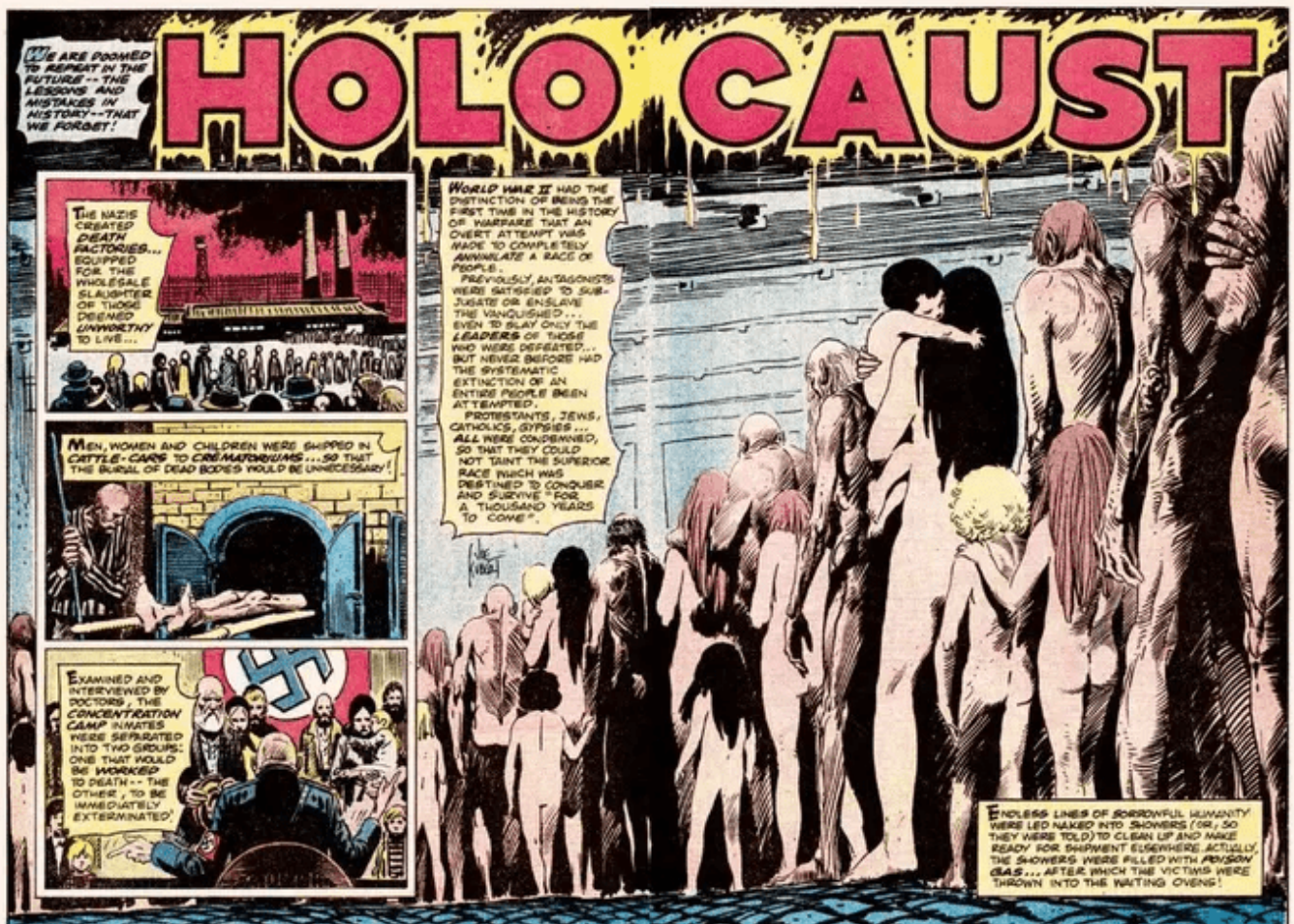
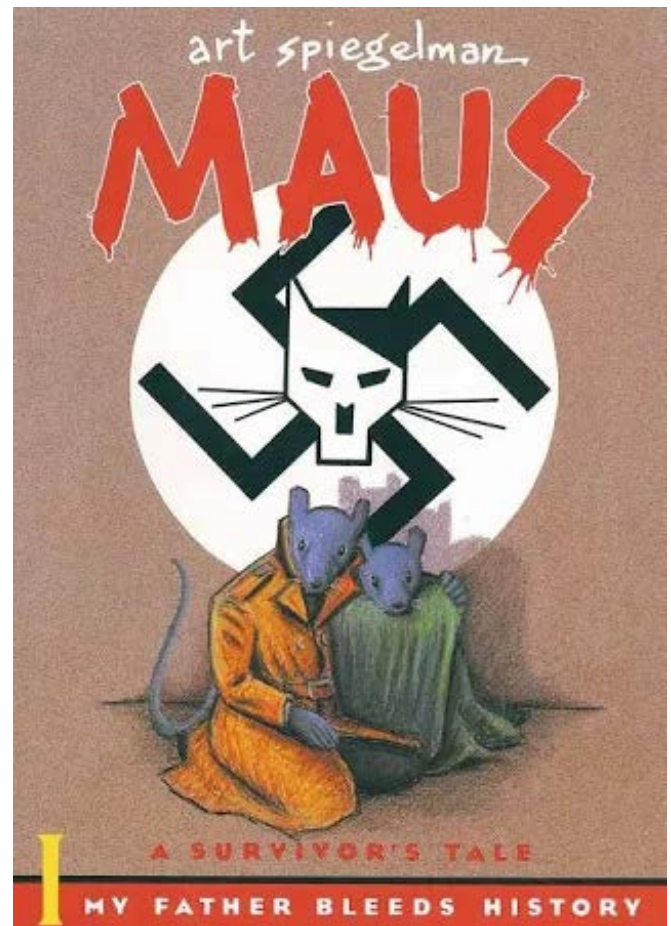
Maus was as much about the relationship between Spiegelman and his father as it was about the horrors of the Holocaust. The story of Vladek, Anja, Mala, Reichieu, and Art, interwoven into this story full of human feelings and frailty. It is an incredible story, and the art black and white, and the anthropomorphic style works so well.

If you read *Maus*, I would suggest you also read *MetaMaus*, Spiegelman has allowed us another look at *Maus*, an understanding of his thinking and thought process as well as the hard work and trials that come with bringing your own work to fruition. It's a beautiful book. It is a companion to the complete *Maus*, yet *MetaMaus* is so much more than a companion, it is a true work of genius art and design. The lovely introduction, about how Art allowed access to his "rats nest of notes" and even "dirty laundry" allows insight and understanding as he explained that it was hard to look at "the book that made me and has haunted me ever since: hard to revisit the

ghosts of my family, the death-stench of history, and my own past.”

The bulk of the book is divided up into three main sections, which address; why the Holocaust, why mice, and why comics.

Maus is one of the greatest comics of all time, it is an incredible story of the Holocaust, it is one of so many that shares a moment of humanity in the face of the worst that humans have done, the criminality and horror perpetrated onto innocent peoples, and it is a moving and thought provoking piece of work.



Holocaust on Television

Barbara Barnett

(Note: Many, but not all, of the episodes described in this article are available to stream on your favorite streaming service or app.)

This May, Jews commemorate the Holocaust on Yom HaShoah. It is a day to recall the unspeakable horrors of a time before most of us were born. The Holocaust eradicated much of European Jewry, its culture, including its language (Yiddish). But the lessons of the Holocaust (in Hebrew, *Shoah*) reach far beyond one group of people, beyond the importance of memory for memory's sake.

We are now in a world where every day, we are reminded that freedom is fragile, life as a Jew—indeed any minority or vulnerable population—including this country, is extremely fragile. And the echoes of fascism ring ever closer. It is crucially important to “Never Forget,” as denial that the Holocaust was real (or overblown) proliferates on social media and beyond.

The generation with direct knowledge of the Holocaust is dying out. Even those who were young at the time are now elderly or gone. Memory fades and then vanishes in subsequent generations unless it's carefully preserved.

But so many of those who lost family in Europe—or escaped it—simply didn't talk about it. To anyone. Not even their children or spouses. Whether that was due to the sheer horror and scope of the Holocaust, survivor's guilt, or the driving need to move forward and quickly push the pain to the far reaches of memory, the genocide of the Jews was not a topic for discussion. Ever.

I recently screened a few episodes of the PBS series *Finding Your Roots*. When confronted by host Henry Louis Gates, Jr. about their Eastern European roots, and specifically their families' experiences with the Holocaust in Europe, several Jewish (and even a few non-Jewish) guests were stunned to silence or tears, never having heard anything, not even whispers, nothing in family lore or story about this fundamental part of their pasts.

So, literature, film, and TV can fill in that void and help us remember, to understand the nature of the genocide perpetrated on the Jews of Europe. Pop culture (and for the purposes of this article, specifically television) often holds up a mirror to the past. Through the years, the Holocaust has been explored by documentary, TV drama, science fiction, and even comedy series. But it has been an incredibly difficult subject to bring to the small screen. For so many reasons, and especially in the decades closest to it.

The Early Days of TV and the Holocaust

Perhaps mirroring the reluctance of those most deeply affected by the Holocaust to discuss it, television of the 1950s and 1960s, and even into the 1970s, largely ignored the Holocaust. Perhaps it was still too near, the wound still gaping.

Maybe Jewish creatives in Hollywood were reluctant to call attention to it—or themselves. Especially in light of the McCarthy era with its often barely veiled antisemitism. Maybe it was the difficulty, the sensitivity of the subject matter. Would TV presentation in a non-news setting trivialize the genocide? Was the subject too specifically Jewish? Would the material be too graphic, too shocking for TV audiences? Would anyone tune in to such a distressing

part of world history, even if it featured A-List stars? For whatever reason, creators, producers (and advertisers) wanted to stay far away from it.

Not even the quintessentially Jewish situation comedy *The Goldbergs* (original version, 1949-1957) touched on the difficult subject. A rare exception was actually before *The Goldbergs* moved from radio to TV. An April 1939 radio episode indirectly references Kristallnacht (The Night of Broken Glass, November 9, 1938) when a brick is thrown through the shop window of a Jewish-owned store.

In the 1949 television episode “The Letter,” Molly Goldberg (Gertrude Berg) receives a letter from European family she has not heard from since before the war. From there, the plot veers back to the homey family comedy that is the show's signature. Nothing more is said.

One of the first serious attempts to bring the Holocaust to the small screen was the CBS Anthology series *Playhouse 90*. It broadcast “Judgment at Nuremberg,” which was adapted from the stage play two years before it was made into the classic feature film starring Spencer Tracy and Maximilian Schell. The television version, which aired in 1959 starred Schell and Claude Rains, and explored the complicity of the German judicial system with Hitler's Final Solution for European Jews.



Other series, including *The United States Steel Hour* and *Philco Television Playhouse*, also broadcast post WWII episodes that evoked the lessons of the Holocaust, including antisemitism and fascism, even if indirectly.

You might think the WWII series *Combat* would have been a fertile ground for exploring the horrors of the Holocaust. But only one episode, “Gideon's Army,” touched on it, and that, only indirectly—never identifying the victims as other than “DP”s or Poles. The episode has the squad of American fighters rescue a group of concentration camp survivors.

But Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone* did not shy away from the most difficult and painful subjects in American society. The 1961 episode “Deaths-Head Revisited,” is a chilling and painful reminder of the Holocaust that resonates even today when a former SS officer returns to a concentration camp he'd once commanded. The officer is confronted by the

ghosts of his victims, who put him on trial for his crimes against humanity.

The ABC legal series *The Defenders* featured a father-son team of defense lawyers. Often willing to take on culturally or politically sensitive subjects, the series tackled everything from lingering fascism to McCarthyism to abortion, and racism.

Several episodes touch on themes relating to the Holocaust. For example, the season one episode "The Iron Man" explores American fascism on campus. The season two episode "The Indelible Silence" which, in a similar vein, explores neo-Nazism. Clearly, the creators of the *Defenders* believed that Nazism and fascism were not completely vanquished in WWII and continued to be a danger in contemporary America. Another episode, "The Avenger," finds the defenders on the side of a man who murdered a German scientist responsible for the deaths for his wife and daughter in the gas chambers.

Holocaust, the Miniseries Opens the Floodgates

NBC's four-part 1978 mini-series *Holocaust* followed the history of that time through the perspectives of two fictional German families, one Jewish and the other non-Jewish. It was an introduction to a new generation. Although criticized by some as trivializing the Holocaust, it was, for many Americans, their first education about the subject, bringing the horror of genocide into the homes of an estimated 120 million. The series is also credited for making the term "Holocaust" synonymous with the genocide perpetrated on Eastern European Jewry during WWII.

I believe *Holocaust* may have finally opened the door for a new generation of adult creatives, born after WWII, who possessed curiosity about the time and had enough distance from the actual events bring it to the small screen. And, since their parents' generation was so reticent to revisit this time, the subject seemed ripe for television treatment. (And, of course, TV—and film—likes to follow the ratings. And knows what brings the viewers.) And so...



The 1980s and Beyond

The 1980 CBS TV movie *Playing for Time* (starring, controversially, Vanessa Redgrave, because of her pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist beliefs) was based on *Sursis pour l'orchestre*, the memoir of Fania Fénelon, a Jewish musician who survived Auschwitz by playing in the camp orchestra. The same year, NBC aired a TV adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, based on the memoir by the Dutch victim of the Holocaust. Also on NBC in 1980, *The Long Days of Summer* tells the story of a family experiencing the effects of increasing antisemitism in 1938 New England, paralleling events overseas in Europe.

Long after 1938 New England, antisemitism has never been too far removed from American life. When I was a kid, the American Nazi Party announced a march through the Chicago suburb of Skokie (my hometown). The place was selected by the nationalist hate group because it was the home of so many survivors.

The march became the subject of a court case that made it up to the Supreme Court and split the largely liberal-leaning Jewish community between those who said to simply ignore the hate-mongers, and those who wanted to confront them. In 1981, CBS brought the story to the small screen via the TV movie *Skokie* starring Danny Kaye and Eli Wallach. One resident remarks that he was told to ignore Hitler and the Nazis back in Europe and the next thing he knew, he was in a concentration camp.

Herman Wouk's epic historical novels, *The Winds of War* and its sequel *War and Remembrance* explore the intricacies of WWII. Brought to the small screen, the two novels explored the question of how it was possible for the most educated and advanced cultures in Europe to have perpetrated or acquiesced to the systematic murder of twelve million Jews and other vulnerable populations. Produced as two miniseries (1983 and 1988 respectively) on ABC, the programs riveted viewers, with more than 140 million tuning in.

On the documentary front, PBS's investigative series *Frontline* has explored the Holocaust and its aftermath since 1985. "Memory of the Camps" aired raw footage from inside the camps for the first time, taken by British and American filmmakers (including, notably, by Alfred Hitchcock). The footage had been locked away in London's Imperium Museum for years, and aired unedited on the long-running documentary series in 1985.

ITV (CBS aired it in the U.S.) produced the British TV film *Escape from Sobibor*, which brought viewers inside the most successful uprising and mass escape from any Nazi death camp. And although all but 70 of the 300 escapees from the camp were recaptured or killed, the Nazis closed down the death camp, bulldozing it to the ground in 1943. The award-winning TV movie starred Alan Arkin and Rutger Hauer.



The 1990s and the Spielberg Effect

In 1991, cable network TNT aired a movie called *Never Forget* (starring Leonard Nimoy). The movie, based on a real case, concerns a courageous man, a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz now living comfortably in 1980s America. He wants nothing more for his family, including his Baptist wife and their four kids to live a perfect American life in California. His children know nothing at all about his experiences in Auschwitz. Yet, when a nationalist group asks for proof of the gas chambers, the man steps into the light to

take on this hate group. He understands that hiding the past, forgetting the past, is worse than confronting it.

A year after he directed his acclaimed film *Schindler's List* came out, Steven Spielberg founded The Shoah Foundation in 1994. The foundation was created to document the testimonies of survivors. These visual testimonies are crucial as the WWII generation passes on, their silence allows us to forget the horror, or worse, give leave for revisionists to bury the past—or change it.

And the “proof” of the Nazi atrocities would emerge via the more than 50,000 survivors’ accounts filmed for the archive. The work of the Foundation has expanded over the years to document genocides in other parts of the world.

Perhaps influenced by the box office and critical success of *Schindler's List*, several new television documentaries and series and TV movies popped up in the 1990s. They attempt to dive deeper, to educate, to reveal.

These include: the documentary series *The Holocaust: In Memory of Millions* (1993), which presents survivor testimonies and archival footage; *Schindler* (1994), a documentary on Oskar Schindler, the German businessman who saved more than a thousand Jewish refugees during the Holocaust; *The Lost Children of Berlin* (1997), which documents the stories of Jewish children hidden from the Nazis during the Holocaust. And *The Long Way Home* in 1997, which examines the experiences of Holocaust survivors after the war.

On *Frontline*, “Shtetl” (1996) showed two elderly survivors as they return to their destroyed community, evoking ghosts of their past. The documentary was produced by “hidden child” Marian Marzynski, who had escaped the Warsaw ghetto to be raised by a Christian family. Marzynski produced another Holocaust documentary for *Frontline* in 2013 called “Never Forget to Lie.” The 2013 documentary examines the consequences and challenges of people like him who needed to lie about identity, background—and everything else, push it into the far reaches of memory in order to survive.

The Devil's Arithmetic aired on Showtime in 1999, based on the novel of the same name by Jane Yolen. In the film, a young Jewish girl who is tired of hearing the same stories about her family's history over and over again is transported back to the Holocaust. The protagonist is two generations removed from the Holocaust and disinterested in the boring, repetitive family recollections, painful as they are. The film is reflective of yet another layer of distance, with memory slipping away in the far reaches of the history books. A reminder that unless we keep it near enough, we become apathetic and ultimately forget entirely.



The 21st Century

In our current century, television has looked backwards through the 20/20 hindsight of history (sometimes well-buried), to what might have been if...And forward to what could become should “Never Again” be forgotten.

Including new documentaries on Anne Frank and survivors’ stories, the PBS investigative series *Frontline* has aired several important documentaries, including “The Last Survivors” (2019), which brings me back to the reticence, the refusal to talk about, to deal with and to share the pain of Holocaust experiences with—anyone. The effects on everyone around them, especially family. I’ve witnessed the corrosive effects on succeeding generations of survivors up close in my own family.



Dystopic visions of what the world might be had Hitler prevailed are explored in the alternate history series’ *The Man in the High Castle* (2015-2019) based on Philip K. Dick’s novel, and *The Plot Against America* (2020), a miniseries based on Philip Roth’s Sidewise Award-winning novel.

Also in 2020, HBO’s *Hunters* is a fictionalized series about Nazi hunters in 1970s America.

The Holocaust is no longer the touchy subject television avoids, with popular series like *The Crown*, the *Upstairs-Downstairs* remake, and even comedy series like *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *The Kominsky Method*, and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* not shying away from dealing with what, is now, in some respects, long-ago history.

And just recently, Hulu released a new series, *The Lucky Ones*, the story of a family caught in the midst of the Holocaust and trying to escape. Based on Georgia Hunter’s memoir of her grandfather’s story, it is the most recent take on the greatest catastrophe in modern Jewish history.

The preservation of memory, through commemorations like Holocaust Remembrance Day, like Yom HaShoah, is crucial to ensuring “Never Again” is for real and is now. But in the fictional and documentary video archives now so easily available for streaming, provide us, our children and successive generation an important conduit for never forgetting. “Not forgetting” in order to prevent anything like it from happening again.

Yet here we are. And, in the world of 2024, here, in America, and around the world, this lesson is never more important and universal. Whether through documentary or high drama or science fictional cautionary tales, the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten.

A Trickle of History

A Child of a Holocaust Survivor Writes a Holocaust Science Fiction Tale

Elaine Midcoh

Have you heard this one: What genre do Time-Travel-Let's-Kill-Hitler-Stories fall under? Answer: Jewish Porn.

If true, then I am an award-winning author of Jewish porn. In 2022, my story, "A Trickle in History," was a winner of The Writers of the Future Contest and was featured in their yearly best-selling anthology, *Writers of the Future*, v. 39 (Galaxy Press, May 2023). What's amazing isn't just that the story was selected among thousands of submissions, but that it was even considered. After all, Time Travel/Kill Hitler (TTKH) stories are such a common trope that some editors

When I was a young sci-fi fan still in grade school (devouring the original *Star Trek* reruns and reading my used paperbacks of Heinlein and Asimov), I fantasized of going back in time to save my mother's family. Later, as a more sophisticated and well-informed sci-fi fan (think teens), I worried about the time paradox issues...if I saved my mother's family, then she would stay with them, have a different life, and not meet my dad, so I wouldn't be born and couldn't go back in time to...well, you know. So the fantasies shifted to going back in time just to save my mom's niece and nephew, one a baby, the other a toddler when the war began. I would rescue them before their deaths in the Warsaw Ghetto and bring them to our time. (In 1999, an *Outer Limits* episode, "Tribunal," aired which apparently was written by someone with similar imaginings. The plot involved a man who time travels back to Auschwitz. While there he rescues his 8-year-old "older" sister and brings her back to 1999 with him.)

By the time I sat down to write "A Trickle in History," in mid-2022, I was approaching 60. My mom had passed away more than a decade earlier at age 81. I was finally ready to write my time travel story, the story that, at least in fiction, would save my mom from all she had endured during the Holocaust, save her family, and...well, why not save everyone? But I didn't want to create another "Let's Kill Hitler" adventure tale. I didn't want to write about Hitler at all. I wanted to write about the resilience of Holocaust survivors like my mom—and the resilience of so many others who have suffered due to bigotry and acts of cruelty committed by evil people, both in the past and today.

upon receiving them presumably wince and say, "Oh no, not another one."

Still, I am the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and time travel stories appeal to me. In Sept. 1939, my mom was fifteen, living in Warsaw, Poland, surrounded by parents, grandparents, siblings, a niece and a nephew, aunts, uncles, even a 103-year-old great-grandma. She was out shopping for shoes with her mom, getting ready for the new school year, when the first Nazi bombs fell on the city. By the time the war ended she was the only survivor of her immediate family.

First, I knew I had to put my characters in a terrible situation. So, when the story opens, it takes place in the future after the Second Holocaust, when almost all the Jews of the world have been killed, leaving just one group of eight survivors, passing as non-Jews under assumed identities. Though exposure would mean death, they still meet in "darkened" rooms to observe Jewish holidays and traditions. Despite the horrors they have experienced they have not lost their sense of self; they have not allowed the hatred of others to define them.

When they embark on a plan to rewrite history (time travel!), they decide to focus on stopping the First Holocaust because the events leading up to the Second Holocaust were too chaotic to determine a turning point. (Yes, it's time to go back in time to kill you know who.) But things don't work out well. At one point the main character is given a way out for herself—she will be able to live safely and openly as a Jew in the past, but the Holocaust will still happen, and the Second Holocaust too. The others urge her to take this route, wanting at least some miniscule success from their efforts. But she refuses. She will not walk away from her people. (Instead, she comes up with a new plan and... whoops, guess you have to read the story...)

As I wrote, "A Trickle in History," I could hear my mother's voice. In writing it I wanted to honor her and other Holocaust survivors like her. They endured the horrible, but did not abandon their heritage. They kept their sense of self and they had the strength to come back and experience the sweetest revenge of all: living good and happy lives.

Severed Inheritance

Jordan King-Lacroix

Every Jew has a story like it, every single one of us. Mizrahi, Ashkenazi, Sephardi, all along the width and breadth of the beautiful spectrum of our huge, extended family, we all share something like it. The details change, nothing is ever a carbon copy of anything else, but the blueprints remain the same.

On my mother's side, both sides of the family came to Canada after a pogrom. Her mother's family arrived in the 1860s or 1870s, fleeing violence in the Pale of Settlement. Her father arrived alone on a boat from either Romania or the Ukraine in the 1920s after similar violence erupted in his home. Neither town where they came from exists anymore, more *shtetls* confined to not even be footnotes in history, erased by fire. The numbers of the lost aren't known to us, not fully. A cousin put together a family tree once, from as many contacts and records as he could find, but it doesn't go back more than three generations. Some survived the *Shoah* to make it to brighter shores, some didn't.

My Uncle Yitzchak, not really of blessed memory, survived by hiding under the floorboards of a Gentile family's barn. Somewhere we Poland, we think. He became bitter and twisted after his experiences and, despite being saved by them, never again trusted any Gentiles.

Whether our families were expelled from Palestine or Babylon or Spain or France or England or Russia or Iraq, ours is a shared history of wandering by force. Our Diaspora grew strong by necessity, new threads in our tapestry emerging with bright colours, new languages, new songs, new foods. Everywhere we went, we made a name for ourselves, forged some new destiny for our little section of the nation.

But, of course, we never forget.

Forgetting isn't really part of who we are. We take the catastrophes, the cataclysms, the horrors, the wrongs, and we memorialize them. Each one becomes a stitch in the tapestry, in the fabric of our people. We remember, we cajole, we pray, we mourn, we eat. Every element of our past is a living part of our present and our future.

There's something crushing, in the context of that, about being severed from the lineage of your own past. In not being able to trace things as far back, in the not knowing. My father's family, French-Canadians, can trace their family all the way back to at least the 1670s, to when they first arrived from Brittany to New France. My wife's family, Chinese, can trace their family to as far back as the 1000s or 1100s. To me, that's wild. Unthinkable.

Although we have some of my mother's side – the Kisilevskys and the Steermans – we don't have as much as would make a foundation, a structure, in the same way those other family's do. There's a point where we have to build our own foundations from bits and pieces, scraps of family myth and legend. Did we change our names to escape a pogrom and sound more Polish than Jewish? Or were we respected workers for the Count of Kisilev and were permitted to take on his name as our own family name? And what of the Steermans? How did one of them get to Sweden in the 1800s? What was the story there?

We don't know. We'll never know.

This is the story of, I imagine, quite of a few of us in what is known to us as the Diaspora. Especially those of us of Ashkenazi origin whose lives have been built up in the shadow of the *Shoah*. We grow up reading about it, watching films about it, hearing about it. We live in fear of another one, especially because it feels like our entire history led to that one moment and any violent incident could lead to it happening again and maybe, this time, the job being finished. That is, in many ways, the thesis of the entire nation of Israel.

"Come live here," it beckons, "the only guaranteed safe place for Jews. The world will eventually turn on us again, as they always have, so you should all gather here under our protective Iron Dome."

There is an interview I watched with Israeli Professor Avi Shlaim, who is of Iraqi Jewish descent, in conversation with Palestinian author Ghada Karmi. In it, he discusses how Jewish history is often Euro-centric, focusing on the plight of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews living outside of the Middle East.

"The American Jewish historian Salo Baron spoke about the lachrymose version of Jewish history, that is Jewish history as a never-ending cycle of suffering, persecution, discrimination, violence, culminating in the Holocaust," he said. "And I'm prepared, for argument's sake, to concede that this is a reasonable account of European Jewish history. I strongly deny that this applies to us, the Jews of the Arab lands. And I now assert my right to narrate our own history, which is very different. It's the history of centuries of harmony between Muslims and Jews and Christians and other minorities."

And I think that this is a really important and keen observation. That not all Jews *do* feel the same element of eternal persecution, that there were happy and thriving communities in areas outside of both Eastern and Western Europe. We celebrate, sure, but there is a large focus on our destruction, our endless cycles of violence, of our blood soaked into the earth or burned to ash. Not enough is made of the celebratory element of our Jewishness, of the fact that we're still here, that we eat and love and feel.

There is another source that inspired part of this thinking, written by Rabbi Joshua Hammerman, called *Embracing Auschwitz*. Which is obviously, by design, a confronting title. The thesis here was that, like the Babylonian expulsion or the destruction of the Temples, huge cataclysms in Jewish history were incorporated into our very being and, after about seventy years, there was a flourish, a Renaissance, of Jewish culture. Seventy years was his number, an average (on the low end) human lifespan. As the first-hand accounts pass into memory, the next generations build something new and bold and big and bright.

And the *Shoah* was more than seventy years ago. The liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau will be eighty years ago next year.

So, who are we now? What is our inheritance? More importantly, what is the inheritance we wish to pass onto our children, born much further out of the shadow of this horror than we were? Theirs will not be a severed inheritance as ours was. Not really, not in the same way. Their futures are bright with possibilities.

I'd love to see a future, a Judaism – our beautiful cultural tapestry – to be weaved in a happier image. It would be good for us, I think, to move out of the shadow of this singular brutal event and into the light of possibility, of renewal. We are a people of renewal, always reinventing and reinterpreting ourselves and our lives.

Do we still experience waves of antisemitism? Yes. Do we sometimes fear for our lives? Yes. But let's not let that snuff out Jewish joy. We deserve a healthier way forward. We deserve to dance and sing and cook and live.

And all of that might take a change or two, but we've done that before.

My Most Memorable Meal⁸

Steven H Silver

Honestly, there are a lot of things I don't remember about my most memorable meal because it sticks out not because of the food or the company or even the location, but rather because of an incident that occurred during the meal.

When I was fifteen, my grandmother and a couple of her cousins decided to go on a tour of Scandinavia, seeing the sights of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The tour was double occupancy, so my grandmother invited my mother to join her. While that should have solved the roommate problem, my father decided that he also wanted to go to Scandinavia. Still in need of a roommate, I was invited to join them.

We had a lot of memorable meals ranging from the ox-burger at a road-side food stand, which I don't recommend, to a fine meal in Oslo at Rica Butler, a restaurant whose name survives in my memory long after the restaurant ceased to exist.

The most memorable meal was one we ate in a restaurant in Stockholm. There is no reason this meal, one of the last of two weeks' worth of meals eaten with my parents, my grandmother, and my grandmother's cousins, should have been memorable. While I can tell you the name of the restaurant in Oslo, I couldn't tell you the name of this restaurant, although I could tell you that it was located in Gamla Stan, the Old Town of Stockholm.

I can tell you what I ate. It was the first time I tried reindeer. That actually was pretty memorable. It is good, I recommend it, although it is a little gamy. What I certainly can tell you is that even in Stockholm people will give you strange looks if you are eating a reindeer steak and humming "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."

So, what made that meal so memorable? The restaurant's owner, whose name I couldn't tell you.

In the middle of our meal, the restaurant owner came out of the kitchen and looked around the dining room. She saw us and hurried over to our table, speaking rapidly in a language I didn't understand, but knew wasn't Swedish.

When she got to our table, she very excitedly grabbed my grandmother's left arm and started to pull up my grandmother's sleeve, all the time speaking in the foreign language.

My grandmother always wore long sleeves. The temperature didn't matter. It was more important to her to cover up the fading numbers that had been tattooed onto her arm when the Nazis wanted to keep track of humans as if they were cattle.

Upon seeing my grandmother's tattoo, the woman rolled her left sleeve up to show my grandmother her left arm. A similarly faded tattoo was on her arm.

Eventually, my grandmother was able to tell us what was going on.

As we had already surmised, the restaurant's owner was also a Holocaust survivor. Although my grandmother didn't recognize her at first over a distance of four decades and 1,000 kilometers, the woman had quite clearly recognized my grandmother.

It turns out that they were in the concentration camps together. When the restaurant owner fell ill, my grandmother made she sure had enough food and kept her out of the eyes of the guards so she would have a chance to survive. Over the years, she remembered my grandmother's name and the number on her arm, and when she saw her, she recognized her.

Their conversation was brief, it was in Polish, so I couldn't tell you anything that was said, even if I wanted to. My grandmother later admitted not having remembered the woman whose life she saved in the camps.

It doesn't really matter that I was eating with my parents and cousins. It doesn't really matter than we were in a forgotten restaurant in Stockholm's Old Town. It doesn't really matter that I was introduced to reindeer steak and received strange looks. It was a memorable meal because a stranger interrupted our meal to thank my grandmother for saving her life under deplorable conditions forty years earlier. And I can't think of a better reason for a meal to be interrupted...or memorable.

⁸ Reprinted from *Eating Authors: 100 Writers' Most Memorable Meals*, edited by Lawrence M. Schoen, Paper Golem, 2020.

My Reflections on My Visit to Auschwitz in November 2007

Elaine Silver

I grew up in Lexington, Kentucky in a small, but strong, Jewish community. Most of the Jews in town did not live close to us and there were very few Jews in my elementary and middle schools. I definitely felt that I was part of a minority.

What I learned about being Jewish came from my parents, my traditional synagogue, and my Jewish Youth Group, Young Judea. I'm not sure when I first learned about the Holocaust, but I have a vague memory as a young child sitting down with my parents in our living room (which was mostly used for company) and asking them about it. My assumption is that it was brought up at Sunday School and I came home asking questions. My parents were very careful to share age-appropriate information, but I remember struggling to understand how people could hate someone for being Jewish. Aside from the synagogue we attended and the holidays we celebrated, we were just like our neighbors... where could the hate come from? My parents also shared that although the Holocaust decimated Jewish families, my grandparents and great grandparents came to the United States before the Holocaust, so we were not directly impacted the way so many other families were. They told me we did have families that stayed in Poland/Russia, but we were no longer in touch with them, so we weren't aware who was gone (at least that's how I remember the conversation).

So, as a Jew, the Holocaust was very meaningful and very heavy, but not on a really personal level.

Then I married Steven. Steven's mother was a hidden child and his grandmother survived Auschwitz. They lost so many family members that they were very close to. The losses were enormous. I'm not sure the severity of the Holocaust felt different to me, but it certainly became much more personal. We often sat at Shabbat meals and my mother-in-law would remind us how special it was to have multiple generations of the family together, because that was something she did not grow up with. Also, of great importance was to see her growing family tree come from just her survival.

Early in our marriage, we went to see *Schindler's List* in the theater. We had worked together on bringing speakers to Indiana University for Yom Hashoah during college, however, this was our first Holocaust "experience" since getting married. Seeing it through the eyes of my new family who had faced the Nazis in Poland was so impactful and gut wrenching. I cried throughout the movie. It was an entirely different perspective.

In 2007, I was fortunate to be selected to go on an Hadassah Young Women Young Leaders Trip to Israel. Our trip began in Poland for three days and then we were in Israel for just over one week, both seeing the sites and visiting Hadassah projects. On the trip we

talked about how important it was to begin in a place where Jewish communities that used to thrive were non-existent, but to end in Israel, where Jews live freely and were thriving.

I found my journal from the day we visited Auschwitz. This was our last day in Poland before flying to Israel. Back in 2007, it was pen on paper after a long day of physical fatigue from travel and emotionally I was so overwhelmed from the experience.

Auschwitz/Birkenau is so overwhelming. The death and destruction is so hard to understand. The "why" is just unbelievable—this was a death camp—you were brought here to die. The rows and rows of barracks, the humiliating toilet house, so dehumanizing, with the intention of being humiliating. I felt frightened that Grandma in Cleveland lived through this place. As hard as it was for me today, it was nothing like what she lived through. The fear of random death is not conceivable. That men could conceive and build crematoriums is not conceivable. And to make Jewish laborers run them is horrifying. How the world could stand by makes me ill.

Seeing Auschwitz, the work camp (as opposed to the crematorium side), was also very tough as everything there is still standing. Seeing the remnants of real people is sickening. The shoes, the brushes, the pots and pans, and the glasses...such a personal item. Living within barbed wire that was electrified is more than frightening.

Going through so quickly was very hard—I wanted to linger and think about what I saw, but there was no time. Yakov (our guide) told amazing stories making it very personal. I'm glad this part of the trip is over, but seeing Yad Vashem in Israel is going to have new meaning. Seeing the "bomb shelter" that was a crematorium made me shudder since it was still intact you can see the ovens and what they did with the bodies. My head is spinning with images.

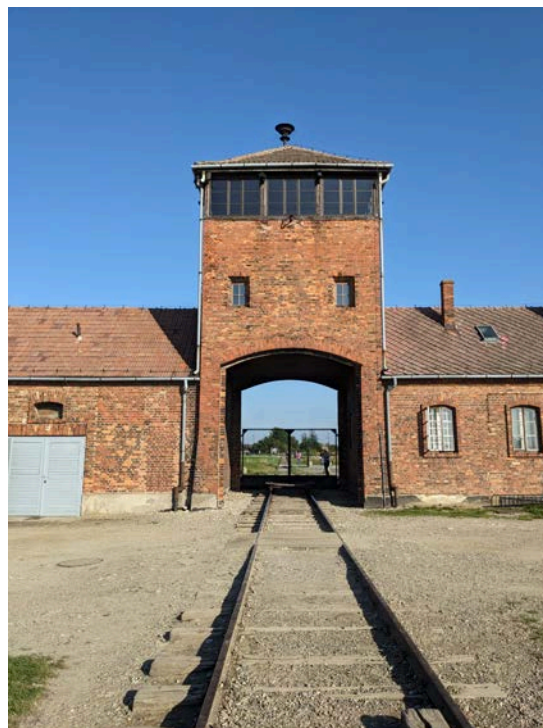
My life is so good, I have so many things, are we really that far from something like this ever happening again?

Although we've learned that the Polish people are beginning to accept Jewish Polish culture as their own, there are still no Jews here—making it not a real culture.

Reading these reflections in 2024 is scary. This was only 17 years ago, and we are facing a world where blatant antisemitism seems to be accepted... exactly what I was worried about after this visit to Auschwitz. Growing up I learned about antisemitism, we talked about it often, but I grew up in a golden time when I couldn't imagine what we are seeing today.

I still have hope, but I'm worried for our students on college campuses and what today's children will face in the next year, five years, ten years, etc.

My 2007 mission trip changed me... I would never have been to Poland and bear witness to the remnants of what hopefully stays a part of history, not current events.



Maus: A Journey

James Bacon

Maus is one of the more important works in comics, the testimony, the experience, the horror of the Holocaust, documenting the crimes that Nazis perpetrated against normal people. It is the story of a mother, father, and son, parents and children, their family, friends. A mother who faced so much, and a father who shared it with his son, who diligently shared this with us readers as *Maus*. It is a sad read, and it is beautifully told in comic format.

In 1972, Art Spiegelman wrote a very short comic story, entitled “Maus,” three pages about his parents’ experience. Later that decade he returned to it, when his father Vladek corrected him, and this became the catalyst for more interviews between Art and Vladek from 1978 onwards, as Vladek expanded and shared what had happened. This was then serialised starting in *RAW* #2 in 1980, an anthology comic, as an insert. It was collected in two volumes, the first in 1986 and then the second in 1991.

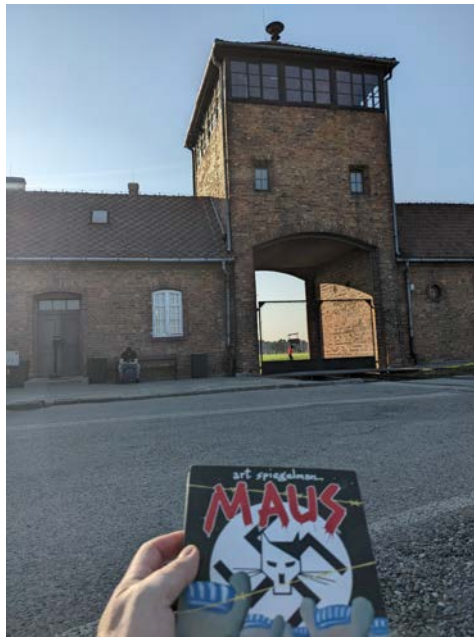
I read *Maus* in the early nineties, as a teenager. It was impactful, strong, and, most importantly for me at the time, a comic, one which utilized the anthropomorphic tradition that was crafted cleverly to this story, and it covered a very important piece of history, through a very poignant family personal story. I went on to read it a number of times, to read Art being interviewed, to pick up *MetaMaus*, review that work when new, and see Spiegelman when I had had the opportunity in 2016 where he presented on *Wordless comics*, at the Barbican Centre fused with music by Phillip Johnston and *The Silent Six* as part of a jazz festival.

I have always both been fascinated and horrified by the story, and often wondered what the places were like. While one gets a sense of matters in the comic, I have found that the actual places can at times give one a perspective, a sense of it all, or in some cases, not of the time, but of the now.

In 2023, a chance short notice decision to take a trip to Kraków, gave me the opportunity to look at some of the locations that are mentioned in Vladek’s story in *Maus*.

Vladek was born on October 11, 1906. In 1935, Vladek was living and working in the small Polish city of Częstochowa (Vi p12). He heads to Sosnowiec in December 1935 by train (Vi p15) where his family lives, 65km south of Częstochowa (he says “35 or 40 miles”) and meets Anja who would be his wife. Vladek moved to Sosnowiec at the end of 1936.

I start at Kraków, I walk across the square past the old Train Station, an impressive and imposing building, and into the modern station where I catch the intercity train to Katowice. The train is smooth, pulled by an electric locomotive, it is quick enough, non-stop. I sit in a compartment, it is for six people in the style, with a side corridor that haven’t been seen in the UK or Ireland for decades. It is modern, spacious and pleasant, with ample sockets. Katowice is a fully covered station although not as impressive as Kraków. It has a better ticket hall and the



attached super modern shopping mall fights hard with the hugely impressive one in Kraków.

I take a regional train to Sosnowiec, where Vladek lived, not to the main or Sosnowiec Główny station, but to Sosnowiec Południowy station, which is the other side of the town center. Here I walk up the main street, Modrzejowska St, a long shopping pedestrianized street that runs north west up to the main station. It is on this street that Vladek saw friends of his father-in-law hung in March 1942 (“walked over to Modrzejowska St and saw them” (Vi p83)). You would never know now, that such a travesty occurred. Vladek, and the clan are forced to move to the Srodula ghetto in Spring 1943. He worked in “German shops” in Sosnowiec and so has to walk between these two places every day—3km apart, a 90 minute march. There is a Srodula Ghetto Memorial plaque Kożuchów, 41-219 Sosnowiec, and so I head out on the 15 Tram to this memorial. The tram only takes

8 minutes, but the swiftness and acceleration of a modern tram disguises the distance, I know it is a long walk for sure.

As the tram approaches my stop, we are in the middle of a dual carriageway, on my left are a series of huge apartment blocks, nice, gentrified, with outdoor garages at street level. To the right is a huge park, but I am looking for a smaller park next to the apartments. I alight and it is pleasant and nice, the area is well kept, clean and the trees provide cover and camouflage the concrete. I skirt around a block and then see a nice smaller park space, with a thoughtfully laid out and circuitous path, that leads to a monument.

The Jewish Ghetto must have been near here, near to this monument to the Jews who were here. It is a large stone, well placed with a large star of David on it. It is a quiet spot, dog walkers are strolling about, and someone is relaxing in one of the many benches that seem to be ubiquitous. It is such an incredibly changed place, there is no indication of older dwellings as far as the eye can see. From the vantage point of the footbridge, it all seems, well, late 20th century at least 60’s modern but nice enough. A flutter of pigeons rise and circle, and I pay attention to other birds, and indeed, I note there is some feather and poop on the memorial, so I wipe these away. They are recent. I suspect it is kept cleaned, new blue bin bags in all the bins.

I pause a moment. It is a lovely late September day, over 20°C now, and a clear blue sky, and it is quiet and peaceful, and nice people walk about, I take pause, take some time. Slowly I head back, and then board the tram that could be in Amsterdam, Dublin, or Croydon and I head into Sosnowiec.

Vladek had a textile factory in Bielsko in the 1930s (Vi p35) and he commuted between there and Sosnowiec on the weekends, a journey of 61km. I plan to go from Sosnowiec Główny to Bielsko-Biała Główna, the route that Vladek would commute. The #15 tram returns me into the town center, and I pass through the underground mall, linking high street to station, full of shops. I emerge and wait at the open air station. Its magnificent building imposing but little used. I change at Katowice again, then board a regional train, and soon we are

off on the stopping service, of about 16 stops, on the journey to Bielsko-Biała. As we approach the city, the heavy industry is visible by the trackside. So many products are obviously moved around Poland by train and one sees the sidings and facilities, the industriousness and infrastructure of the Railway, that is so present still.

In the second quarter of 1938 (Vi p36) Vladek and now-wife Anja moved to live in Bielsko. The town of Bielsko itself is nice. There is a riverside and hills in the near distance with lovely buildings rising above the town, and there are a lot of older buildings. It was a good journey from Sosnowiec to Bielsko-Biała and one senses the mixture of business and industry, and it makes sense that a textile manufacturers would be situated here. A long footbridge goes from one side of the town, over the railways and into what one might call the town center. It seems peaceful, yet was the scene of a personal tragedy for Vladek and Anja.

Vladek and Anja live in Bielsko, with the factory and a two-room house. There are riots but they were happy for a year until August 24, 1939 when Vladek is drafted. (Pg39). Later they return in more unhappier times. Vladek and Anja escaped from the Srodula Ghetto when it is closed on January 13, 1944. They sneak to Sosnowiec, seeking refuge. Vladek plans to get to Hungary and pays people smugglers. They travel by trolley to go to a meeting point. It is unmentioned that it is in a big station. (Vi p154) I suspect it is Katowice.

They go by train and after an hour the smugglers disappear, as they have betrayed them to the Gestapo who board the train in Bielsko-Biała 60km south of Sosnowiec. (PG 155 March 16, 1944) They are arrested by the Gestapo.

There is a lovely cafe bar in the grand station building, and I sit and await my train. I am of course reading, and rereading *Maus*. I have notes, my camera phone, and am writing things out. It seems so incongruous to sit here, looking out at the train tracks, and know the suffering, as I drink a coffee. Saddening. My day is nearly over, I now get an express train, bringing me back toward Kraków, I change and get back to the beautiful city.

The Gestapo bring Vladek and Anja to Auschwitz, by truck, 29km north west of Bielsko-Biała and for reference 32km southwest of Sosnowiec. "Auschwitz was in a town called Oswiecim. Before the War I came often to see my textiles...and now I came again" (Vi p25) said



Vladek. He knew of Auschwitz straight away when it was built in 1942 (Vi p88) but did not believe it.

They were driven in under the *Arbeit Macht Frei* sign. It is also the moment that Volume I of *Maus* ended, which was a hard point as a reader.

I visit Auschwitz, I am standing and looking at it, that sign, the red brick buildings beyond, the barbed wire fencing, originally an army barracks. This is Auschwitz I.

We had travelled very early, again by train, this time with Emma. It was a quick enough journey on a very new and fast train. As I am interested in the complicity of the railway with the Holocaust, I was keen to take in the memorials and railway connections which are off the beaten track. I am off looking at the furniture and infrastructure of the railway that was part of the machinery of suffering and death.

We follow the tracks as they continue, this is a main line, the station is to one side, allowing freight and passenger express trains to shoot through, all electric trains, and the new and modern building is west of the older buildings, which we make our way to. I am following the tracks that diverge, and then one line suddenly stops as it bends as if to go across the modern intersection as it once did and it went into the industrial area, and to the barracks. There are a number of sidings, and we follow the tracks. Beside us is a busy road, and then opposite us starts Auschwitz I. So much around Auschwitz, which was industrial, with slave labour, continued with industry after the war, and the railway here at this exact location has become superfluous, although the tracks still exist.

"*Judenrampe*," meaning Jewish platforms, were where thousands were unloaded from cattle trucks. This are historical locations, and the tracks still exist, tracks that end, severed from the mainline, but which once brought humanity as cattle to the camps. There are no platforms here now, and *Judenrampe* I is now next to a busy road, that goes along beside Auschwitz I.

Not all lines are defunct, tracks link and operate at what was Auschwitz III. IG Farben had its massive chemical plant built there, some distance away, and after the war, we are told, the Polish were happy to utilize it as they rebuilt, and today it is well serviced by rail. We will not investigate this area today.

We retrace our steps, following the track back to the mainline, and then at the intersection, cross over the

railways on the modern road bridge that sweeps across the lines, and as we walk to the other side of the railway mainline, we leave the road, to walk some lanes, in search of an area that is north of the lines and parallel to them, and within sight down certain roads of Birkenau.

These sidings are slowly being recovered by nature, and the road that runs beside them is now next to lovely gardens of nice houses. Children's toys and garden swings so near to the cattle truck and memorials that quietly remind us of the reason and purpose of these sidings. There are flowers placed on tracks, and on the cattle truck, we are not alone in our visiting, but at this moment, no one is about. This is the location of *Judenrampe 2*. Here thousands were unloaded, and marched to Auschwitz II Birkenau,

It is so quiet and peaceful. I pay close attention to the manmade infrastructure of the railway. Trains run close by, but there are so many sidings here, also storage facilities, the potato warehouses, where food was stored for those interned. The memorial is a thoughtful place.

I walk back along the lines, and follow as it diverges in a curve, and find it now covered by grass and driveways. This was the branch from the sidings, and *Judenrampe 2*, that curved and made its way directly into Birkenau. Trains were able to be routed directly into the camp. Operated by railway staff, driven and controlled by railway staff, cleaned out afterwards at these sidings by railway staff, charged for by railway management.

Let's be clear here. Never mind the lies and denial from railway managers after the war. The Deutsches Reichsbahn formulated a unique charge for the SS, they charged for people, and transported as cattle, those railroaded to their tragedy. There was a per person rate, and also a per train rate over a certain amount of people. The statistics are staggering. The realities, horrendous and beyond contemplation. I am walking on the old tracks, until I cannot.

At Auschwitz, Vladék is separated from Anja (Vi p25). Vladék started working as a tin man in Auschwitz in Spring 1944 (Vi p68), while Anja was in Auschwitz II Birkenau Sector BIB, we see trains in the comic entering through the infamous archway (Vii Pg55) and I stand and look, at such a vast industrial sized endeavour to murder innocent people, it is unfathomable.

I take the official guided tour, as we are in an English speaking group. I am slow, taking photos, checking references, looking at maps, thoughtful, it is all staggering, there are things I really had not anticipated, things that are beyond belief, there in front of you, evidenced, and it is important to confront them. I often pace hard to catch up, but find I am not the slowest. An older gentleman in our group is taking many photos, we see similar angles, or moments and want to capture them, he has very specific enquiries. Our guide asks if he is looking for very specific places. He explains to the guide who enquires that his mother was here. The reality standing next to us.

The guide slows, and a two and one half hour tour is paced to four hours.

So much death, and horror and yet even here for me, the comic *Maus* is a connection that brought a personal experience to me as a reader, now experiencing the location of so much death and violence and vivid unrelenting criminal violence against humans, so much murder.

We are thanked for confronting the crimes. I come to realise, that those who read this will know the Holocaust occurred, are reasoned and sensible people, but tragically, some deny it, some think it is a made up fiction, which is utterly preposterous. There is a very clear evidence-based approach to showing the crimes, and the terminology is very



precise. I realise how horrible it must be to have this tragedy denied, and how hard the guides work to share the history.

I see things I cannot bring myself to write about.

Our tour takes us around many parts, there is even a bus between Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II Birkenau. In Birkenau, we have *Judenrampe 3*, and we see photographs of the ramp, with people being divided, and a German officer or doctor looking at an older man, as he is directed to one side, to the side with the shower rooms and certain death. It is a horrendous image to contemplate, and here the railway runs, and cattle trucks sit quietly.

At the end of the tour, we thank our guide, and I follow the tracks away, back towards where we were, until trees and hedging blocks the route, and back again, the evening is upon us when we eventually walk back to the train station, taking it all in again, and head back to Kraków.

In 1945, near the end of the war, Vladék left Auschwitz, "maybe the last one" and was sent to Gross-Rosen in a Death March of 260km. (PG 84) From the 18th of January to the 27th of January 1945, through a sequence of movements, Vladék was sent near to the Swiss Border, and then the Germans slipped away and American soldiers appeared.

Vladék goes to Bergen-Belsen looking for Anja, which is about 50km north of Hanover, and he meets women from Sosnowiec who had had come from there and had seen Anja.

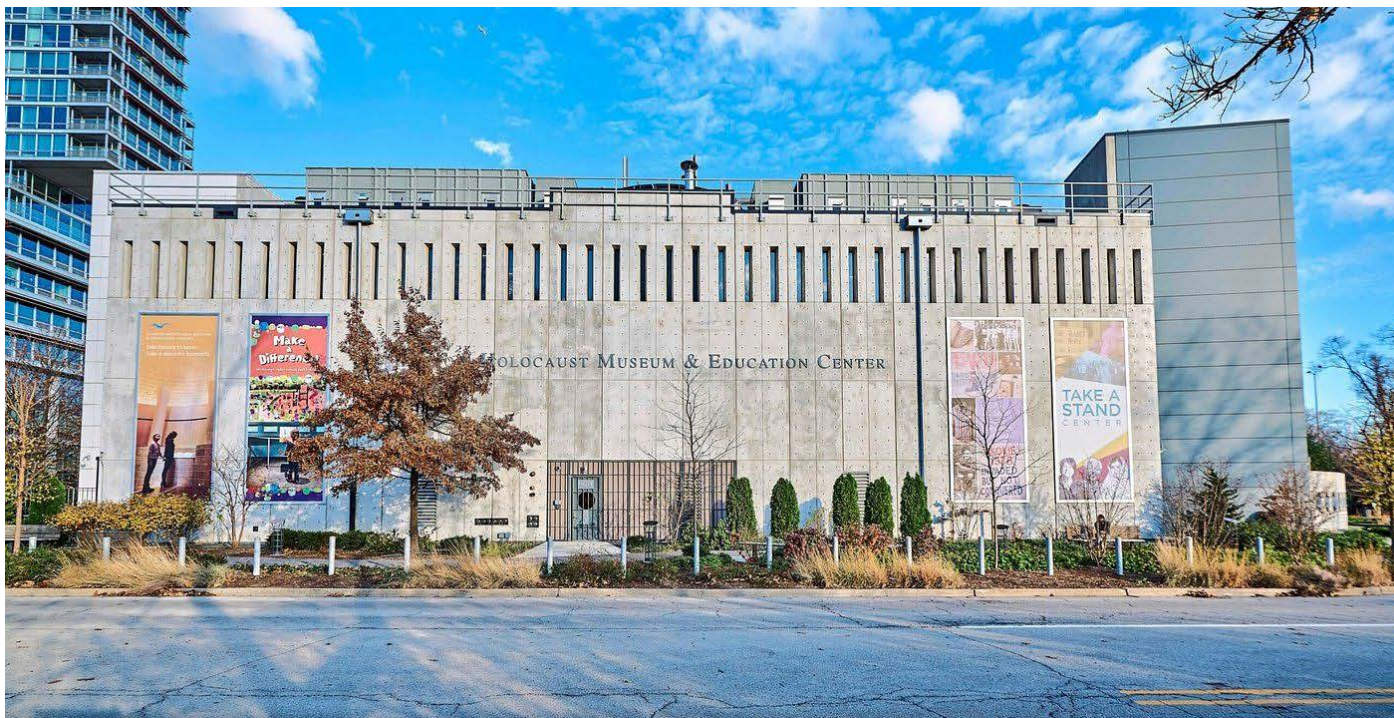
Vladék returns in early summer 1945 in search of Anja. He jumps trains and walks by the tracks to Poland, taking three or four weeks, and makes it to Sosnowiec.

There is so much more to *Maus*, as there is so much more to Auschwitz and the horror of the Holocaust, and how it destroyed good innocent people, old, young, children alike.

My journeys are easy, the journey from Oświęcim to Kraków is in a very modern Polish electric multiple unit train, beautifully fitted out and with two toilets. It's a service between both towns and stops frequently, so unlike the hell that people faced on earth, locked in cattle trucks for days, starving, crying, dying.

The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center: A Docent Eye's View

Dina S. Krause



Who comes to visit a Holocaust museum?

A surprising large number of people of different walks of life.

The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center (IHMEC) is a world class environment of learning.

It is both a monument of memory as well as a monument of warning. The theme of the IHMEC is "Remember the past, Transform the future." We use objects, images, and memory to focus on combating hate, injustice, and bigotry around the world. The museum opened in 1978 by a community of Holocaust survivors, and many others, angry and frustrated at the rise of the new Neo-Nazi movement and plans to march in Skokie.

Now for my road as a docent (fancy name for an interactive tour guide). I came to the museum about 2012. Our daughter was off to college, I had retired from book stores, and my husband was still working. I was teaching Sunday school but needed more. There were many forms to fill out and two interviews for entry into the new docent class. I went in thinking I knew a fair amount about the Holocaust. I had lived in Israel for a couple of years; my parents were first generation American (grandparents from Ukraine and Belarus/Romania), we were raised Traditional Jewish—Kosher home, Hebrew school, etc.

What I knew was the tip of the iceberg. We were given close to 20 pounds of educational material (organized by time and country, as well as survivor stories). Reading, learning, talking at least 1–2 lbs. a day. We did this for 3–4 weeks. We also walked completely through the museum leaning all the pictures, artifacts and stories. We were given a mentor and followed the mentor on their tours.

They asked us to pick a theme that would help in our tours and I picked "Propaganda." I felt it covered a majority

of my interests. We then began to give tours on our own. Our mentor would follow us and critique our performances and help with any questions. Our main goal is to engage the students and hopefully they will learn from their own questions. There are (during busy season—the spring) an average of three schools (60 students from each school, with three docents) every hour. It is truly a very difficult but rewarding experience. We go through as much as we can, and try to get the students to question everything. We then hear a speaker, a survivor, or child of a survivor tell their unique story. I did an average of 2–3 tours a week. Each tour lasted about 3–4 hours with all sorts of pre- and post-planning and discussion.

I became extremely involved in working with the students, adult tours as well, and with the survivors. I saw a need for a specialty tour (there are some) focusing only on the women of the Holocaust. This tour took me a year to plan and develop and was extremely well received. I taught it to other docents and it became a very popular sub-tour. This elevated me to "special" status and I was nominated for the board of docents (there are approx. 120 docents, six board members). We worked on many different projects and tours. For instance during COVID we worked on an outside tour—the building is very specifically Holocaust designed, and we also become mentors to new docents.

Due to my health, and move to over an hour away from the museum I have stopped being a docent. I am still very dedicated to strongly work to fight genocide around the world and encourage knowledge of the past to help us to learn to honor each and every person and their right to exist.

There is so much more to say and stories to tell. If you would like a tour let me know and off we will go!

Popping My Bubble

Melanie Silver

When my dad asked me to write something for this issue to share the perspective of a grandchild of a Holocaust survivor, I immediately said “Yes” as I knew I had something to say. Then, when I sat down to write it, I had no idea what to say. There are too many ideas that I wanted to discuss in a piece with such a broad topic.

I looked back at the introduction to the portfolio I put together when completing my Jewish Studies certificate at the University of Pittsburgh. Reflecting on my growth as a Jewish scholar during my time at college, I noted that I entered college having received, what I believed to be, a very intense Jewish education, mostly split into two categories: the Holocaust and religious studies. I was fortunate enough to grow up in a place with so many Jewish people that learning about the Holocaust was part of my public school education⁹, however, it was more likely that it was important for my parents that I grow up in a place where I had access to Jewish education and Jewish peers, regardless of whether I was presently at a Jewish institution.

I grew up in a Jewish area. Not a religious area, but culturally, I was surrounded by Jewish people all my life. I knew this was not “the norm” and was a product of Jewish people tending to live near other Jewish people. I went to a pluralistic Jewish summer camp where many kids went to Jewish day school for their entire lives, and other kids were the only Jewish person in their school. I was neither of those things, I was a kid who went to public school, but the high school in my district offered Hebrew as one of the four languages you could take because that’s the demographic that lived in the area.

I knew that not every area was as Jewish as mine, and I also knew that I needed not to take the opportunities that it afforded me for granted. Many of those opportunities I didn’t truly understand until I went off the college. I’m grateful my family made it clear I was living in a bubble. That where I was living was not necessarily how the rest of the world operated--days off built into the school calendar for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, is just one example, and a Holocaust education that went through my entire public school education, with projects, Holocaust survivor speakers, and trips to the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie, Illinois.

Then I arrived at college and I was one of only two Jewish people living on my dorm floor, I was in a state of culture shock. Granted, the school I attended had a decently sized Jewish population and the city I was in also had a large

Jewish community that I became involved in during my time there. But there was an initial shock because, for some of my floormates, I was one of the first Jewish people they had ever met—a concept that was shocking to me. It was a story I had heard growing up at weekend religious school, but I did not recognize it was one I would experience.

I visited my best friend from childhood, who is not Jewish, in Indiana for a weekend after college graduation. I spent the weekend with her and her friends who had a lot of questions because they knew I was Jewish and I also shared that I was happy to answer any questions about Judaism for them. One of the interactions I had with one of these friends surprised me because they were asking some questions about the Holocaust, and I naturally mentioned how my grandma was a survivor in response. I didn’t really think anything of it. She had been my grandma my whole life, and growing up I heard her story of being a hidden child in Poland countless times. My peers in school had also heard her story because she would often volunteer to come speak to my grade or purposefully be the speaker when my class was on a field trip to the Holocaust museum. My family’s history in the Holocaust has had a big impact on my life, but having that as her background was run of the mill to me. However, this friend was shocked. She had never met a survivor, nor had ever heard one speak in person.

We were both surprised, her for hearing about my personal experiences with a survivor, and me because it was just normal for me to know a survivor and hear many different survivors speak. Didn’t she have different Holocaust speakers come into school when they were studying the Holocaust? But no, that was another thing I had taken for granted from my upbringing. Logically, I know that, sadly, we are losing many of the people who can share their stories and this history, but the concept that not every school had Holocaust survivors speaking to classes was something I had never thought of having taken for granted.

As I work on a college campus now, I recently had a student come to me with an interest in an event series. This Jewish student had taken a Holocaust class the previous semester and had found an interest and importance in Holocaust education. We sat down to discuss her idea, a series of events to watch and discuss Holocaust films. So far, one of these events has taken place and I got the honor to watch 12 students take time out of their busy schedules and lives to sit for 2.5 hours to watch and discuss the Holocaust because they felt it was important.

⁹ In 1990, Illinois became the first state in the U.S. to mandate Holocaust education in every public elementary and high school.

Kaddish for the Last Survivor¹⁰

Michael A. Burstein

“The deniers’ window of opportunity will be enhanced in years to come. The public, particularly the uneducated public, will be increasingly susceptible to Holocaust denial as survivors die...Future generations will not hear the story from people who can say ‘this is what happened to me. This is my story.’ For them it will be part of the distant past and, consequently, more susceptible to revision and denial.”

—Deborah Lipstadt,
Denying the Holocaust (1994)

Sarah Jacobson’s hands shook as she parked her clunky Volkswagen across the street from the old suburban house in which she had grown up. She sat there, breathing in the gas fumes from the idling engine, as she watched the reporters swarm all over the front lawn.

Her boyfriend, Tom Holloway, sat next to her in the passenger seat. He stared at her for a moment, then asked, “Ready?”

Sarah nodded. As she turned off the car’s engine, Tom jumped out of the front seat, dashed around the front of the car, and opened the driver’s side door for her. For once, she was grateful for the old-fashioned Southern charm. To think when she’d first met him, she’d resented it.

Well, she didn’t resent it now. Tom was positioning himself to fend off the horde of reporters, and she was grateful for that too. Fortunately, no one had noticed, or else they had not yet connected Sarah to the biggest news story of the week. Tom gave Sarah his hand, and she allowed him to help her out.

She stretched as she got out of the car, feeling the warmth of the spring sunlight on her back. How strange that she could enjoy it, on this morning of all mornings. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, listening to a bird singing in the distance.

Tom’s voice intruded upon her brief peace. “Shall we?”

She gave him a small snide. “I guess so.”

“OK.” Tom looked around, concentrating his gaze at the sea of reporters. “Lot of excitement for a small town on Long Island,” he said. Sarah noticed that he was making no effort to suppress his Southern accent; he knew how endearing she found it. “Hard to believe your grandfather’s attracting all this attention.”

“Yeah,” Sarah replied. “I know.” She cocked an ear toward the reporters. Listen.”

One radio reporter, close enough to be heard, was speaking into her thumbnail recorder, taping commentary for her story. “This is Paula Dietrich, reporting from Lawrence, Long Island, where Joshua Cohen is dying. Born in Warsaw in the 1920s, Cohen—”

Tom whistled. “He’s become a celebrity. Finally got his fifteen minutes of fame.”

Sarah shrugged. They’d both studied Warhol. After all, they had both graduated from Harvard with honors. “As far as I’m concerned, he’s just my grandfather.”

“Yeah, I know,” Tom said softly. “Sorry You sure you’re ready?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be, I guess. If I can survive this, I can survive anything.” Sarah grabbed Tom’s hand. They walked off the sidewalk onto the path leading up to the front door. She braced herself for the barrage.

One of the reporters glanced in their direction, and recognized Sarah. “It’s the granddaughter!” he yelled, and began running towards them. In seconds, all of the shouting,

sweating journalists had descended upon Sarah and Tom. The way they jostled at each other, trying to get better positions for recording their images, reminded Sarah of a plague of locusts come to feed.

“We’d like to ask you—”

“May I ask you—”

“I have a question—”

“How do you feel?”

“Did you ever think—”

Tom shouted above the Babel of voices. “Please, everyone! Sarah just wants to get inside.”

Obviously that was not good enough for the reporters. Instead, they used Tom’s interruption to create some semblance of order to their questioning. One reporter took the lead, and the others fell silent.

“Ms. Jacobson, Trevor Hunt, USNA Online. Could you tell us what you’re going through at the moment?”

Sarah glanced at Tom and shrugged. It would be easier to answer a few of their questions first, she decided, and then go inside. She looked directly into Hunt’s right eye, which glowed red with the lens of an implanted camera. “What anyone would go through when her grandfather is dying, I guess.”

“But, Ms. Jacobson!” interjected the radio correspondent they had been listening to earlier. “The circumstances of your grandfather’s position—”

Sarah interrupted her. “Listen. I know what my grandfather is to the world, but to me, he’s just my grandfather. Now let me go say goodbye to him in peace. I promise I’ll talk to you—all of you—later.”

Apparently chastened, the reporters parted in front of Sarah and Tom, clearing the path to the front door. As they walked up the path, a background murmuring began, like cats growling at each other over their food. The reporters chatted with their colleagues or recorded views for their broadcasts. Tom whispered to Sarah, “I’m really surprised. They’re being more courteous than I would have guessed.”

No sooner had Tom said that than a small man stepped right in front of them, blocking their way. He brushed back his sandy blond hair and asked, “Ms. Jacobson, why does your family continue to perpetrate this hoax?”

The growling noises of conversation cut off, leaving nothing but the sounds of the cameras and recorders.

At first Sarah thought he was a private citizen, and not a member of the media, as he carried no recording devices and his eyes appeared normal. But a second glance exposed something far more sinister. This man wore a memory recorder implant behind his right ear. His audience, whoever they were, would be able to directly interface with his memories of confronting Sarah, over and over again.

As calmly as she could, Sarah said, “Excuse me?”

The man smiled. “I asked, given the fact that your grandfather, who lived a long and healthy life, is now on his

¹⁰ Reprinted from *Analog*, November 2000.

deathbed, why does your family feel the need to perpetuate the hoax of the Holocaust?"

Tom stepped forward, shouting, "Now, listen here, you—"

Sarah gently reached out and grabbed Tom's shoulder. "Tom, stop." She turned to the man. "Excuse me, but I didn't catch your name."

"Sorry. Maxwell Schwab, from the Institute for Historical Revision. I'm doing an article for our academic journal." He waved his hand at the other reporters. "We'd like to know why your family has gone to the trouble of inviting the mass media here, pretending to the world that the Holocaust actually happened and that your grandfather was a victim of this fictional event."

Tom pulled at her arm. "Come on, Sarah, we don't need to listen to this shi—this crap."

Sarah resisted. "No, wait." She pivoted her body to face the reporter. "Mr. Schwab?"

"Yes?"

Sarah slapped him on the face, hard, glad she'd studied self-defense. He staggered back, and fell onto his backside. Sarah hoped it was painful enough to keep people from playing this memory.

Schwab sat there, unmoving, just staring at Sarah. No one bothered to pick him up.

She turned to Tom. "Now, let's go inside."

No one else stopped them.

The first thing that hit Sarah as she entered the house was the smell. The odor of stewing meat and potatoes from the kitchen mixed with the old, musty smell that the house always seemed to have whenever Sarah had returned from college. The living room seemed dark, and it took her a moment to realize that all the shades were drawn, probably to keep the reporters from looking in.

She called out to her parents. "Hello? Dad? Mother?"

Her father called back, "In the kitchen, honey, be right out."

Sarah turned to Tom. "Are you going to be OK?"

Tom smiled, shrugged, and took Sarah's hand briefly. "Yeah, I've dealt with her before. It's not too bad."

"She's not your mother, though."

The door to the kitchen swung open. Sarah's parents, Paul and Anna Jacobson, entered the living room. Her father looked calm, cool, and collected, the way that he always looked. He wore a jacket and tie, in stark contrast to the polo shirts and jeans which Tom and she were wearing. Sarah couldn't remember a time when her father wasn't dressed so impeccably. Her mother, on the other hand, wore a sweatshirt and sweatpants, as if dressing well was currently her last priority. She appeared frazzled, with her hair an askew.

Tom greeted them with a simple hello. Sarah's father smiled at Tom, but her mother barely glanced in Tom's direction.

There was a moment of silence, which her father broke. "Come, Tom, I need your help in the kitchen. You can tell me how your family's doing back in Durham. And how about those Mets?"

The two men went through the slow swinging door, which creaked loudly until it finally shut, muffling their awkward conversation about baseball. Sarah and her mother watched the door for a few seconds after it had closed, and then Sarah turned to look at her mother. "I guess," Sarah said, "I ought to go upstairs and see Grampa."

Her mother sniffed. "Sure, go ahead. Do you want to bring your *goyische* boyfriend upstairs too?"

Damn, Sarah thought, *she wasn't going to be reasonable. Surprise, surprise.* "Mother, please—"

"And now you're living with him."

Shocked, Sarah took a deep breath. "I never told you that! How did you find out?"

Her mother grinned. "Just now, Sarah. You may be my smart Harvard daughter, but you're not smarter than me."

Sarah felt furious, but more with herself than with her mother. Anna Jacobson had done it *again*, pretending to know something so as to trick the information out of Sarah. Damn! How could she have been so stupid? Well, as long as Mother had figured it out, Sarah might as well get everything out in the open.

"I was going to tell you anyway, Mother. Today, in fact. Tom and I are living together. We have been for a while now."

Her mother glared at her and Sarah said, "I don't care how you feel about it. And anyway, things are different now."

"Such defiance," her mother said, making clucking sounds with her tongue. "And things being different isn't an excuse."

"You're right, Mother," Sarah said as sarcastically as she could. "An economic depression is no excuse for being unable to afford my own apartment."

"Now, Sarah—"

"Now, Sarah, *what?*" Sarah slammed the doorframe with her palm. "It's not like you have the money to help out; you still live *here*, in the oldest house in the neighborhood. You can't even afford automatic doors. Well, I can't afford to live by myself. No one right out of school can, not with our loans. And as it is—" She paused for a moment, then took the plunge. "As it is, Tom and I will probably be getting married soon anyway."

There. The big secret was out. Sarah studied her mother's face carefully; it seemed completely shut down. Her mother just stared at her, stonily, not reacting. Finally, Sarah couldn't take the silence any longer. "Well?" she asked. "Aren't you going to say something?"

Her mother sighed. "Sarah, it isn't Tom. He's a nice boy, and I do like him. But I—and your father—would prefer that you marry someone Jewish."

"Why?"

"Why? What do you mean, why?"

"Exactly what I said, Mother." She spoke crisply, trying to imitate the Cambridge accent of some of her professors. "Why?"

Her mother looked over Sarah's shoulder. Was it possible she had never really considered this question before? After a few seconds, Sarah's impatience got the better of her again. "Is it because of Grampa? Because he's the last one?"

Her mother immediately replied, "No! It's because you're Jewish. And it surprises me you'd even think of marrying someone who isn't."

Sarah shook her head and sighed. "You know, Mother, you shouldn't be so surprised. You never raised me as Jewish."

Her mother's eyes, filled with shame and fear, locked onto Sarah's. "That's not true," she said softly.

Sarah nodded and went back to being sarcastic. "Yeah, Mother. Matzoh ball soup on Passover, and Chinese food and a movie on Christmas. Should have been enough for me, right? That didn't make me Jewish; it just made me a different type of American. And that's how you and Dad raised me, as an American."

Her mother stood still for a moment, then sank onto one of the cushioned chairs. It sighed, sending dust into the air. "I can't believe it," she said, shaking her head. "I'm doing what I said I never would."

Confused, Sarah asked, "What are you talking about?"

Her mother seemed to go through an internal struggle, and when she spoke next, her words were chosen with care. "Sarah, I guess you were right, in a way. It is because of Grampa that I want you to marry someone Jewish, but it's also because of Grampa that I never really made that clear. Because—because I wanted to protect you."

"Protect me?" Sarah felt surprised; the only things her mother had ever tried to protect her from were strangers and bad grades.

"Yes, Sarah, protect you. I mean, just look outside at that mob of reporters. You don't know what it's like growing up as the only child of a survivor. I had to grow up listening to all these stories over and over, all this pressure on me from your grandfather. Because of the Holocaust. All that pressure you're feeling from me—I felt it from him. He's dying now, and I still feel it. Her voice trembled, but she clamped her mouth shut.

"Because of the Holocaust? Mother, Grampa was never very religious; you told me that yourself. And I don't see how the Holocaust is a reason to marry someone Jewish."

"Why not?" she asked softly.

Sarah considered the question. "I know *something* of our religion," she said without conviction. Somehow, that I was the one thing she had never gotten around to studying while at Harvard. "The Holocaust is not exactly a—a defining event in Judaism., Her mother shook her head.

"Oh, yes it is. After all, Sarah, by intermarrying, aren't you denying what it is about you that made the Nazis try to wipe us out? Some would say that you're letting Hitler win. After all these years."

Sarah didn't know what to say to that; it made her angry and upset, and choked her up. But her mother continued. "Sarah, these were all the things I had to grow up with from your grandfather. I don't know what it was like first-hand to be in the camps, thank G-d, and G-d forbid that anyone ever will again. But to your grandfather, his experience there was always more real than the rest of his life. More real than the people in his life.

Her mother paused for a moment, then said, "It was even more real to him than me."

"Oh," Sarah finally managed to say.

"Your grandfather felt that every minute of life had to be devoted to reminding the world. Except instead of bothering the world, he bothered your grandmother and me. When you were born, I promised myself that I wouldn't let him warp your life the way he warped mine."

"But your life isn't—" Sarah cut herself off.

Her mother chuckled bitterly. "It isn't warped? Sarah, compare your life to mine; You've always had more choices than I did. In my day, there was still so much women couldn't do, or wouldn't be allowed to do. Things were good for a while, but then when the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, it was like the clock turned backwards for all women. And for a Jewish woman, the only daughter of a survivor—" She stopped.

"Yes, Mother?"

"Let's just say that your father was not the first man I wanted to marry. But Your grandfather, well..." She trailed off.

There was nothing Sarah could think of in reply, and her mother gave her a sad smile. "Now maybe, you understand," she whispered.

"And maybe you do too," Sarah whispered back, a question and a statement at the same time.

Mother and daughter regarded each other for a moment, and then Sarah spoke. "I'm going upstairs to see Grandpa, Mother. It's my last chance."

Her mother sighed. "Go. I've already made my peace with him. We'll talk more later, after-when there isn't so little time."

Grampa looked so weak lying in the hospital bed that U.S. Hospice had provided. Where was the strong man of Sarah's childhood, the Grampa who had carried her on his shoulders at the playground, who had comforted her on her first frightening day of school, who had attended her high

school graduation just five years ago? This old, frail shell of a man, lying in bed with blankets around his thin body and snoring weakly—Sarah couldn't reconcile him with her memories of her grandfather.

Then, tattooed upon his left arm, she saw the number: 110290. It had always been there. She remembered that first time she had asked Grampa about it. She'd been six years old. He had taken her to the playground near the house, on a hot summer day. Grampa took off the raincoat he always wore, sat on a bench with other old people, and let Sarah run off and play while he "snoozed and schmoozed," as he liked to call it. She never understood how he could sleep with all the noise from all the children playing, but Grampa seemed able to sleep anywhere. It might have scared her, but he always woke up when she called him.

When she returned, she was shocked to see that Grampa had rolled up his sleeves because of the heat. Grampa never rolled up his sleeves.

'Grampa,' Sarah had asked, 'what's that?' Her little fingers reached out to touch the number.

He woke instantly. "What is what?"

"That number. What is it?"

Grampa saw what she was looking at and quickly rolled down his sleeve. "Better you shouldn't ask," he said, and glared at her. Then his face softened. "*Saraleh*, how old are you again?"

She laughed. "Six, silly!"

"Six." He looked into the distance for a moment. "I had a sister who was six, once. She never got to be seven."

Grampa had had a sister? Sarah had never heard of this before. "What was her name?"

"Sarah. You were named for her." He looked at his left arm, and rolled the sleeve back up, displaying the tattoo. "I was sixteen; that was when I got the number. Sarah, forget what I said before. It is better that you ask. You must ask. And remember."

He had told her of the horrors of the camp. Of how his own grandfather had disappeared one night. Of how he, his parents, and his little sister were taken away in cattle cars from their home to a place called Auschwitz, where they were separated, and how he never saw them again. Of how he had very little to eat, all of it bad. Of how he had to endure the beatings of the guards. Of how he got sick with typhus and thought that he would be sent to the gas chambers and turned into smoke and ash. Of how they marched him to Buchenwald, and how he almost collapsed and died along the way. Of how he was barely able to move when the Americans came to liberate them, and how two righteous Gentiles whose names had sounded Jewish, Sergeant Rosenthal and Corporal Glaub, had attended to him and nursed him back to health.

His stories had seemed so incongruous in the bright, sunny playground filled with the laughter of little children, and at first Sarah thought he was making them up. But as the stories continued and got more horrible, Sarah became mesmerized. When he finished, Grampa had tears in his eyes. She hugged him, and he trembled just like Sarah did when she woke up from a nightmare.

That night, so many years ago, the rain had pounded on Sarah's bedroom window like gunshots. It was a hot, humid night, and as Sarah drifted off to sleep she thought of all her grandfather had told her. She dreamed of being stuffed into a gas chamber, the stink and sweat of human flesh pressing on her from all sides, Nazi stormtroopers shooting people outside, human flesh burning, going up in sweet-smelling smoke

And she awoke, screaming and crying. Her mother had come in and held her for a long time. When she found out about Sarah's dreams, she promised Sarah that she would never have such dreams again. From that day on, Grampa

never took Sarah to the playground alone. And the nightmares had faded away and disappeared, except for the memory of the number on Grampa's arm: I10290.

Sarah shook her head, clearing away the memories of that long ago night, and looked at the bed. The frail old man wrapped in blankets had that same number, I10290, tattooed on his arm. There was no question in Sarah's mind now, that this man was her grandfather, lying in his bed.

And dying.

I shouldn't disturb him, Sarah thought, and had turned around to leave the room when she heard his voice. "Who's there?" Even when he was dying, he woke to the sound of her.

She turned back; her grandfather's eyes were open. "It's Sarah, Grampa."

He smiled. "*Saraleh*, it's good to see you." He struggled to sit up in bed, and coughed. "Here, come sit next to me, on the bed. We'll have one last chance to snooze and schmooze before I go."

"Grampa! Don't talk like that." She moved his blankets over and sat down.

"Sarah, Sarah. Years ago, it would have been tempting the evil eye to say such things, but now ... now I am dying. And I am looking forward to peace. I have not had a peaceful life, *mameleh*."

"I know."

"So *nu*. Tell me, how are things? What are you doing with yourself?"

Sarah shifted around. "Well, I'm living in New York City now, you know. I'm working for a web publisher. Editing."

"And are you enjoying it?"

"I suppose, although what I'd really like to do is write."

"Eh. And are you seeing anyone? I want great-grandchildren, you know"

He laughed, and Sarah joined in. "You remember Tom, don't you? We're living—I mean, he's now at NYU, in law school."

Grampa fixed Sarah with a long gaze. "So, you're living together?"

Sarah blushed. "Yes. Um, I tried to keep it a secret. I'm sorry."

"What is there to be sorry about?"

"Well, it's just..." Sarah trailed off.

"It's OK, *Saraleh*. I understand your generation. It is not that much different from mine."

"But you don't approve of Tom, do you?"

Grampa sighed. "Tom's a good boy, a fine young man. I would have preferred if you had met someone Jewish, but I can't fault you for your choice. He will make a good husband."

Sarah thought for a moment. "Grampa, can I ask you something?"

"Anything, *mameleh*. But you'd better hurry." They both smiled at that. Sarah blinked hard, to stop the tears.

"Why is it so important to you that I marry someone Jewish? It's not like you were ever religious or observant."

Grampa closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "You ask such a difficult question, like the simple child's question about the Passover *seder*. It's true, I never was observant, not before the camp, or after. But, Sarah, because of where I was—Auschwitz—your children *have* to remember, they *have* to know what they are and understand where they came from. I need them to be Jewish, and not just because you are. They have to *know* that they are Jewish."

"But why?"

He sighed. "Because if they do not realize who they are, they will be the first to go to the gas chambers the next time there is a Holocaust."

Sarah was shocked. "Grampa, you can't seriously believe that it could happen again. The Holocaust is a distant memory from the last century. Even if it did happen—"

"If it happens...when it happens, G-d forbid, again, the first Jews to die will be the ones who don't realize they are Jewish. The German Jews saw what Hider was doing. They were Germans, they said, not Jews. What Hitler is doing doesn't apply to us. They never believed it would...until it was too late."

"But it couldn't happen again. Could it?"

Grampa was silent for a moment. "Sarah, your generation grew up in a world that felt much safer than mine. We made it that way. Maybe it really wasn't so safe, maybe we weren't so bright, but your parents and I certainly tried to protect you from the world outside. Maybe we succeeded too well.

"It is because you feel so safe and because the Holocaust is so distant, that your generation is in danger. People are forgetting. The Holocaust Museum in Washington lost its funding and is gone now, after only thirty years, because no one thought it was important anymore. Auschwitz—Auschwitz is now a side attraction for people going to the VR mall across the way." Straining, he bent his head over and spit on the floor. "There are even people who claim the Holocaust never happened in the first place, people who are being taken far too seriously."

"I know what you mean. Just outside—" Sarah bit her lip.

But it was too late. "What? What happened outside?"

Sarah shrugged. "A reporter. He—he accused us of making it all up."

Grampa frowned, his voice bitter. "Always," he said. "Always the big lie. Well, they wouldn't let me live in peace. Why should I expect then to let me die in peace?"

"It was only one, Grampa," Sarah said, dismissively. "The other reporters are—I mean, they know it's for real."

"Even one person denying the truth is one person too many." He sighed. "The deniers are everywhere, Sarah. They started when I was just out of the camps, telling me that the horrible things I had seen with my own eyes never existed. Telling me I was crazy. But there were always enough of us around, to educate, to lecture, to write, to bear witness for the world. But now—"

He coughed, loud, long, and hard. Sarah stood up. "Grampa, you must rest. You're letting yourself get all worked up. I'll go get you some water."

He shook his head and waved for her to sit back down again. "Please, Sarah, wait. I don't have much time, and this is far too important."

She sat down again. "Yes, Grampa, what is it?"

"Sarah, you must promise me. After I am gone, there will be no one to bear witness. I am the last of the survivors. You must bear witness for me—for all of us, the six million who died and those who survived to tell the world." He took her left hand in a grip that was surprisingly strong.

Now the tears welled up in her eyes, past her strength to hold them back. She began to weep. "Yes, Grampa, I will."

Her tears blurred her sight, and Sarah wiped them away. As her vision cleared, Sarah noticed Grampa staring directly into her eyes.

"Sarah, listen carefully. I want you to open that drawer over there." With his right hand, Grampa pointed to the top drawer of the bureau. Sarah let go of his left hand, dutifully walked over to the bureau, and pulled the drawer open. It contained only one item, a small shiny metal box with the logo MEMVOX printed across the side. She pulled it out and turned it around, studying it.

"My G-d, Grampa," she said. "Is this what I think it is?"

He nodded. "A memory recorder. The chip is inside."

Sarah hesitated before asking her next question. She feared she already knew the answer. "Grampa...what's on it?"

He coughed. "Me. When I am gone, I want you to play it."

Sarah now understood what Grampa had meant about her bearing witness. She shook her head. "I can't do this, Grampa."

"You will do the right thing, I am sure of it. Sarah, you must. You're young, You're strong, you can handle it. When you play that chip, you will be the last survivor." He coughed. "Zachor. Remember. Bear witness, from generation to generation." He turned away from her, began to recite the Jewish affirmation in the existence of G-d, "*Sh'ma yisroel...*" His voice trailed off. His breath faded. Then it ceased entirely.

Sarah wiped the tears from her eyes. She stood up, then covered her grandfather's face with the blanket. She finished reciting the Sh'ma for her grandfather in English; she hadn't realized that she remembered: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord is G-d, the Lord is One.* She stood up, turned off the light, and left, closing the door silently behind her.

That night, Sarah sat alone in the bedroom of the two-room-Manhattan apartment she shared with Tom. She had asked Tom for some privacy, and he had readily agreed; so he was in their living room, watching TV or logged onto the Internet, Sarah wasn't sure. Tom had assumed that the stress of the quick late afternoon funeral and burial was what had prompted Sarah to ask for some time to herself, and she had chosen not to correct him. She was glad that Jewish tradition held that a funeral and burial should take place as soon as possible after death; she had a lot to think about, and didn't want to have to worry about seeing her mother again so soon after Grampa's death.

On the small night table in front of her sat the memory recorder and the chip. She picked up the chip and turned it over and over in her hands. Grampa had labeled it in black ink with his name and date of birth. Sarah had written in today's date at the bottom of the label, in blue ink, but that was all she had done so far. Tom had given her the privacy she requested over half an hour ago, and Sarah still wasn't sure what to do.

A wastebasket sat next to their second-hand full-size bed. Sarah could just drop the chip into it, and never think of it again. Or she could take it to a recycling center, and get some small amount of money for it. As for the memory recorder, although used, it was valuable, and could easily pay the rent for the next few months.

But that would almost be like desecrating her grandfather's grave. Grampa had given her the recorder and the chip for a reason. He wanted her to play it, to share those experiences with her. She thought about those experiences, the stories he had told her about the Holocaust when she was six years old; and she realized that she would never want to live through it herself, even vicariously through someone else's memories. She held the chip above the wastebasket, ready to let it fall—

—And then she remembered the reporter from this morning.

She had to fulfill her promise; her grandfather had depended on it. Quickly, so she would not be tempted into changing her mind again, she inserted the chip into the recorder, attached the wires to her head, and hit PLAY.

An hour later, when the chip had finished playing, she slowly removed the wires. She shuddered and began to cry, but softly, so as not to alert Tom. She removed the chip from the recorder and stored it safely away. The memories from her grandfather's Holocaust experiences precipitated in her a decision, a choice; she just hoped that Tom would understand. She knew that she would have to find someone knowledgeable about computers and recorders, someone sympathetic to her position who could hack the Internet and force Grampa's memory records to be played by anyone plugging in, at least for a short while. Sarah would come forward and take responsibility, once she was assured that no one would ever take the revisionists seriously again. But ... if she went forward with this plan, to bear witness for her grandfather, there was one other step she needed to take first.

Sarah walked into the tiny store, a remnant of the old Times Square, struggling against the gentrification of the past thirty years. Most places of this sort had moved to the outer boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn, but this one was still here. The sign above the glass bore the one word ADULT, in large black letters, and hanging in the window Sarah could see signs promising things like fake ID chips and real tobacco cigarettes.

She strode in purposefully, ignored the grime of the floor and shelves, and walked through to the room in the back, where the guy she was looking for worked. The room was small, empty at the moment except for the artist, who was reading a newstape as she entered. His appearance repulsed her, as he had rings through his nose, ears, and eyebrows, and he also sported tattoos on his arms and face. She would never see a person like this socially, but she was here for something else. The guy looked up at her inquisitively as she approached.

"Hello," she said. "I'd—I'd like to get a tattoo. Can you tattoo on a number?"

"Sure," he said, putting down the newstape. "I can do anything."

"Good." Sarah sat on the long chair meant for his clients and rolled up the sleeve of her right arm. "I want you to tattoo the number 110290 right here."

The man looked askance at her "Like a Holocaust victim?"

Sarah nodded, pleased that the guy recognized what she wanted. She would still go through with her plan, but for the first time since her grandfather died, she thought that perhaps there was still hope for the world to remember its history after all. "Yes," she said. "Exactly like that."

Editorials

James Bacon

I am very grateful to Steven for joining us with this difficult and important issue. He has been exceptionally helpful with my own writing, and I genuinely never expected to see such important works come from the suggestion, and I am honoured to include so much of his and his family's experience.

I was ignorant of the personal connection, but I am pleased that I somehow found the courage to ask. I was worried, Steven and Elaine are good to me, and it is a difficult matter, and I am incredibly grateful that Steven agreed, and soon I realised that the personal, the direct issues are indeed, very important to him, for this is his story in a way, that of his family's that is shared to him and through him to us, and that is incredible special. I feel privileged that here we are allowed to read the testimony of his family's experience.

I am unusual in my upbringing as my father was a brilliant man, but that brilliance was not appreciated by the Irish Banking system of the 1980s. I met some wonderful people, who helped my father. Throughout my teenage years, I would see them, popping into them regularly on his behalf as they were situated near my city centre Dublin school. These tasks were important, entrusted to me, and these encounters were with Jewish business people and were positive and nice. My father considered them friends and advisors, defying any trope. This was reinforced by my grandfather. Jim Bacon was an insurance salesman and at night worked as a band leader. Born in 1911, by the late thirties this charismatic pianist operated The Atlantic Beach Band across the country at dances and events. He gave me advice, always, always, work with and work for Jewish people, they always pay their bills, no matter what, no quibble, no renegotiation, and are lovely people. This would have been a rather unusual sentiment, I fear, but Ireland is a place of stories, and word of mouth from people such as my grandfather and also my father on matters of importance, such as trust, were taken incredibly seriously.

My first fiancée was Protestant, from Northern Ireland and was accepted well by what I consider a progressive family, so when I brought home a Jewish girl, who enjoyed lager and liked to laugh a lot, it was barely mentioned. My mother tried very hard to ensure that matters at the wedding were correct, and that certain aspects, that maybe the mother of the bride might manage, she leaned into. We had wonderful gatherings in Croydon, in the run up to Christmas, amazing combined parties celebrating Hanukkah. Our Israeli fannish pals would help fry even more food, and we would spin the dreidel and eat a fantastic selection of meats and delicacies and I loved it.

Yet the visit to the Anne Frank House with her, was harrowing. It was a place I had gone to, many times. The cultural impact of Anne Frank was something I was very aware of growing up. Otto Frank gave an interview on Blue Peter to Leslie Judd on Holocaust Memorial Day in 1976. I was too young for that, but Leslie showed the clip again in 1979 and by this stage, at five and half years old, I was a Blue Peter addict. Anne Frank entered my consciousness. I read the book when I was about 12 or 13, and soon visited with my parents, on our first visit to Amsterdam. The museum has changed since the eighties, but I have been many times since. No visit was like that one, it is important that we reflect on the personal, and be aware of the impact.

The appalling situation now in Israel and Gaza is beyond belief. Dad and I often discussed, with the shadow of the Irish experience, the potential solutions, and we always thought that a two state solution, one of neighbourly and mutual benefit and development, could work, the two countries growing together. Dad also thought, quite extravagantly and some may consider preposterously, that a single state solution could work, in a democratic and pluralistic way, with consideration and empathy for all and their beliefs. Palestinians would have a strong vote in a single state was his contention. It is an ambitious idea and one that reflected on the hatred in Northern Ireland and the imbalances. I noted not everyone shared his ideas, yet it was about a peaceful solution. Ireland demonstrated that inequality and persecution, violence and war, failed, but we have seen Northern Ireland move from violence to politics, of a single state kind, and we will see what happens, and if there will be reunification. Dad is dead, nine years now.

The personal though, when we look at it, is horrific.

The merciless and brutal murderous attacks on the 7th of October by Hamas on Israeli civilians and the subsequent war in Gaza challenges everyone, as we see so many civilians, non-combatant women and children die, impacts so many, and I hope for a ceasefire and call for one.

I feel political leadership has utterly failed, we have seen so many die, we can only hope that not only will peace return, but that a responsibility towards fellow humans can regrow. I fear it will be so hard, but it is vital, not only that politicians and diplomats talk, but that people see one another for humans, how long will that take, and Israel and Palestine can find the leaders they need to forge a future where unnecessary violence, death, and persecution ceases.

I don't have a solution, but antisemitism is not the solution. I, like many in Israel, am critical of Benjamin Netanyahu, his decisions, tactics, and strategy, and we will see what his constituents decide.

In Ireland we saw that fear of empowering or allowing a threat which leads to injustice, inequality, and persecution can then create the situation the fear is fighting against, violence. That feels like a thought from a before time.

It was hard for many here, as so many were too heavily invested and emotionally connected to step away and I appreciate that, but we need peace, and we need diplomacy and solutions. The alternative here was horrendous, and a way forward was found despite the hatred, the state sponsored terrorism, the murdering of children and civilians, a way was found.

Peaceful protest is right. I have protested many times, marched positively. It is both a right, that needs to be defended and a privilege that is to be cherished responsibly by all. Emotions, upset, tragedy all enflame, but we must rise and understand and seek solutions, not just blame, and not blaming kids, going about their daily life. That is preposterous. It polarises and divides and antagonises. Anyone who wants any of these deaths, or wishes ill upon regular folks of any nation or religion or race, needs to reflect damn hard. Let us not continue to fail humanity by ignoring history, let's find the commonalities, reflect, think it through, and find solutions to bring about peace. It is more complex and we need co-operative collaboration to find peaceful solutions not shouting at people who have had no hand in this tragedy.

It worked in Ireland, a land with eight hundred years of bloody hard history.

It is right to call for peace.

Jewish people, Palestinian people, absolutely all deserve that peace too.

My thanks to all the contributors this issue, I am exceptionally grateful, to both the families and those who have allowed us to share, and it is important, as I said to Steven, but I feel it is vitally important right now.

Now. Thank you, readers!

Journey Planet was nominated for a Hugo Award, and I am very pleased for our co-editors

Michael Carroll, Vincent Docherty, Sara Felix, Ann Gry, Sarah Gulde, Allison Hartman Adams, Arthur Liu, Jean Martin, Helena Nash, Yen Ooi, Pádraig Ó Méalóid, Chuck Serface, Alan Stewart, Regina Kanyu Wang, and of course Chris. I thought last year's eight issues were great, and I was fascinated last week when Chris told me that the Operation Morotoman

issue, focused on a few days in 1972 in Northern Ireland, had been downloaded over 2,000 times.

We are working on a number of issues: LGBT in comics, be the change, an issue about the Hugo Award situation, workers rights in SF, and *Dracula*. We already have some ideas for next year, but an issue I know we will be working on will be a 50th anniversary of the British comic *Battle*. Contributions are very welcome, get in touch—journeyplanet submissions@gmail.com

Finally, I am absolutely honoured to have Steven's grandmother, mother, and sister, as well as Elaine's piece and their daughter's sharing their perspective and history, the four generations of a family, imparting what occurred, their first hand testimony. We are privileged to have this in *Journey Planet* and it's vital to consider their experiences carefully and thoughtfully. I'm indebted to Steven and his family and all our contributors for making this issue important.

Chris Garcia

I have a hard time talking about the Holocaust.

My Jewish ancestors have been in North America since the late 1800s; the Germans, on the other side of my family, have been here since at least the 1920s. While I'm not at all religious, I do hold Jewish philosophy very dear, and it's probably the closest thing I have to a faith, though more based on the thinking and writings of the great rabbis of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

I do, however, spend a lot of time reading, writing, and considering the Armenian Genocide. After college, I dated an Armenian woman from Belmont, Massachusetts. She introduced me to Armenian foods and, more importantly, to the story of the genocide through several books her family had on a bookshelf in the family room. I must have read them in full a dozen times.

When I started working at Forever Saroyan, the genocide was something I dealt with on an everyday basis, even though Saroyan's family, like mine, only watched from afar, from Fresno, like some of my relatives. The story of Armenians and the story of the Jews are very similar. These great cultures, nearly wiped out, destroyed for nothing but political ambition and hatred.

This issue brought me to look deep into how I view the history of my people, not only my Jewish ancestors, but the Ohlone (massacred at times and so fully assimilated by the Mexican Californians that other tribes believe we have no culture of our own remaining) and, of course, the Armenians that I have brought into my life. The markers of these crimes are visible in many ways today, some subtle, and some very much a thin layer of skin developed over a wound that still festers underneath.

I've met several survivors of the Holocaust. Two notable ones being Elie Wiesel, who I spent a fair bit of time with, and Simon Wiesenthal, who I met briefly but heard speak more than once. Their stories are harrowing and their continued survival sometimes seemed to serve as acts of retribution against those that would have put their people to extinction. Wiesenthal made it his life's work to do so in both deed and action. This is something shared by all groups who have faced genocide, and is fully addressed in what I consider to be the most defiant piece of writing on the subject, by Saroyan: *The Armenian and The Armenian*

"I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose history is ended, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, whose literature is unread, whose music is unheard, whose prayers are no longer uttered.

"Go ahead, destroy this race. Let us say that it is again 1915. There is war in the world. Destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them from their homes into the desert. Let them have neither bread nor water. Burn their houses and their churches. See if they will not live again. See if they will not laugh again. See if the race will not live again when two of them meet in a beer parlor, twenty years later, and laugh, and speak in their tongue. Go ahead, see if you can do anything about it. See if you can stop them from mocking the big ideas of the world, you sons of bitches, a couple of Armenians talking in the world, go ahead and try to destroy them."

Shalom aleichem

Contributors

K.G. Anderson is a journalist, a speculative fiction writer, and a lifelong collector of easy recipes and difficult cats. She lived in Europe in the mid-1980s while freelancing for the *Boston Globe* and editing the proceedings of the first international conference on retroviruses and HIV. She has reported on politics and crime, reviewed hundreds of mystery novels, and written about pop music for the iTunes Music Store. Her short fiction appears in *Galaxy's Edge* and *Space & Time Magazine* as well as in anthologies from Wyldblood Press, Third Flatiron, and B Cubed Press. Many of her stories reflect her Jewish heritage, her work in tech, and her activism on behalf of universal affordable healthcare. She currently lives in Seattle with her partner, rare book dealer Tom Whitmore. For more information, visit <http://writerway.com/about>

James Bacon is the founder and co-editor of *Journey Planet*, and has been involved with fandom for 35 years. An Irish fan living west of London, he works as a train driver, instructor, and assessor for Great Western Railway out of Paddington station. He is a fan of comics, science fiction, *Star Wars*, railway, and Irish and military history, especially where these interests converge or intersect. He spends too much time and money searching 50p comic boxes for comics no one else wants, but featured an Irish character or location or connection or a train.

Barbara Barnett is the author of three books, including the award-winning *The Apothecary's Curse*, a finalist for the prestigious Bram Stoker Award for a debut novel, and *Alchemy of Glass*, both published by Pyr/Simon and Schuster. Her non-fiction book *Chasing Zebras: The Unofficial Guide to House. M.D.* (ECW Press) has been acclaimed as one of the best books written about the hit TV series.

She is editor-at-large and TV/Film editor at *Blogcritics Magazine* (blogcritics.org), an Internet magazine of pop culture, politics, and more. Barnett has contributed more than 1,000 essays, opinion pieces, reviews, and interviews over the past decade. Also an ordained cantor and Jewish educator, Barnett teaches Jewish Studies in and serves a congregation in the Pittsburgh area.

Michael A. Burstein has earned ten Hugo nominations and four Nebula nominations for his short fiction, which is collected in the *Fantastic Books* volume *I Remember the Future*. He is a winner of the Astounding Award and the editor of the anthology *Jewish Futures*. Burstein grew up in Forest Hills, Queens, and now lives with his family in the town of Brookline, Massachusetts, where he is an elected Town Meeting Member, chair of the Board of Library Trustees, and a former board member of his synagogue. He has two degrees in Physics, once worked at Los Alamos National Laboratory on secret research, and has appeared in two Woody Allen movies as well as one Iron Man novel.

Avram Davidson (1923–1993) was born in New York in 1923 and became active in SF fandom during his teens. He is remembered as a writer of fantasy fiction, science fiction, and crime fiction, as well as many stories that defy easy categorization. Among his SF and Fantasy awards are two Hugos, two World Fantasy Awards, and a World Fantasy Life Achievement Award; he also won a Queen's Award and an Edgar Award in the mystery genre. Although best known for his writing, Davidson also edited *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* from 1962 to 1964. He died in 1993.

Steve Davidson is an author and the publisher of *Amazing Stories*, the world's first magazine devoted exclusively to

science fiction. Steve is a Jew by adoption and Irish by birth, and proud of both heritages.

Seth Davis is a dedicated custodian of literary legacies, serving as the rights holder for the estates of Avram Davidson and Grania Davis. He founded *Or All The Seas With Oysters* Publishing to ensure the preservation and accessibility of their works. In addition to his publishing efforts, Seth hosts *The Avram Davidson Universe Podcast*, where he continually seeks interesting guests to explore Davidson's literary world. Professionally, Seth balances his passion for literature with a career as an executive Legal Recruiter, demonstrating a unique blend of literary dedication and legal expertise. Seth can be contacted at www.avramdavidson.com.

Robert Dwan was a television director who worked on the quiz show *You Bet Your Life* and the short-lived *Tell It to Groucho*. In 1958, he traveled to Europe with Groucho, visiting Groucho's father's home village and East Berlin.

Kurt Erichsen has been a prolific fan writer and cartoonist since age 10. He edited *Endeavor* from 1970-1977, contributed to other fanzines and apas. In the 80s, he syndicated his comic strip *Murphy's Manor* to LGBT newspapers, ultimately running 28 years. He also published stories in *Gay Comix* and *Meat*. Kurt headed up the ConFusion art program from 2016-2019. In 1985 and 1987 Kurt was recognized by the Gay/Lesbian Press Association for Outstanding Achievement in Illustration, and in SF fandom he received the Bill Rotsler Award for fan cartooning in 2002.

Kurt's fanzine publications in the 1970s used ditto & mimeo, switching to Amazon KDP for #14-16. He also produced one *Murphy's Manor* book, *The 30-Year Wedding*, and a collection of his Christmas cards: *Happy Holidays! (But is it Science Fiction?)*. Work in Progress: *Murphy's Manor: Meg for Mayor*.

Russell J. Handelman has published articles on subjects ranging from comparing *Deep Space Nine* to the works of Rudyard Kipling to aspects of Shintoism in anime. Originally from New Rochelle, NY, while most of the kids he knew were watching Saturday morning cartoons, he was in a synagogue classroom learning Jewish history (meaning that it wasn't until high school that he found out that word "edict" did not specifically mean, "a government decree for persecuting Jews.") Completing his fortieth year working the financial sector, he spends weekends reorganizing his collection of vintage SF paperbacks and first editions, going to operas or concerts, and basking in the tranquility of semirural Connecticut with his partner.

Mark Herrup began reading science fiction when he was 10, after convincing his father to buy him a copy of Robert A. Heinlein's collection *The Menace From Earth* because the back cover of the paperback made it sound interesting. After that he was hooked, and has been reading the stuff for 55 years now. Mark recently retired from the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Service Officer, after serving in Yemen, Egypt, and Pakistan. That was his second career; his first was as an IT professional. He and his wife, Theresa Renner, also a Foreign Service Officer, live in Maryland.

Deanna Silver Jacobson reads far more than she writes. She grew up, and now lives and works, in the Chicago suburbs with her husband, where she raised their three now grown

children. She recently added another child (in-law) and is proud to share her Jewish heritage with all four of them. She finds joy in celebrating any holiday with family and friends. Deanna is deeply concerned about the current waves of hate and anger around the world and hopes to diminish it whenever possible.

Daniel M. Kimmel is the 2018 recipient of the Skylark Award, given by the New England Science Fiction Association. He was a finalist for a Hugo Award for *Jar Jar Binks Must Die... And Other Observations about Science Fiction Movies* and for the Compton Crook Award for best first novel for *Shh! It's a Secret: a Novel about Aliens, Hollywood, and the Bartender's Guide*. In addition to short stories, he is the author of *Time on My Hands: My Misadventures in Time Travel, Father of the Bride of Frankenstein, Can Your Heart Stand the Shocking Facts?* and (with Deborah Cutler-Hand) *Banned in Boston*. He is also a working film critic (NorthShoreMovies.net) and writes the "Take Two on the Movies" column for *Space and Time* magazine, spotlighting classic (and not so classic) SF films.

Dina S. Krause was manager of bookstores, going around the U.S. doing author events, including Harry Potter events, etc. She is a published book reviewer and has chaired Windycon and Capricon as well as served as hotel liaison and many other positions on many Worldcons (including internationally), and other conventions.

Jordan King-Lacroix is a Jewish writer from Sydney, Australia, via Montreal, Canada. His first book, the non-fiction *Ugly: A Bikie's Life*, was published by Penguin-Random House in 2021, and his short story "The Last Chosen," in the *Jewish Futures* anthology (Fantastic Books, 2023), was well-received by critics. When not writing, he can be seen gigging around Sydney in his punk band The Limited.

Elaine Midcoh (a pen name) is a short story writer and an award-winning author of science fiction. She's a past winner of the Jim Baen Memorial Short Story Award and "The Writers of the Future" contest. Her stories have appeared in the anthologies, *Writers of the Future, Volumes 37 & 39* (Galaxy Press, Nov. 2021 & May, 2023), and *Compelling Science Fiction Short Stories* (Flame Tree Press, Oct. 2022), and in the magazines/literary journals, *MetaStellar*, *Escape Pod*, *Galaxy's Edge*, *Daily Science Fiction*, *Jewish Fiction.net*, *Flash Fiction Magazine* and *The Sunlight Press*. She's a retired criminal justice professor and recently participated in a 3-day Life on Mars simulation sponsored by The Space Foundation, proving that writing sci-fi can lead to fun and interesting adventures. You can visit her web page at: <https://ElaineMidcoh.wordpress.com> and can connect with her on Facebook @Elaine Midcoh.

Born in Plonsk, Poland, **Sally Pitluk** was a Holocaust survivor, spending time in multiple concentration camps. After the war, she immigrated to the United States and married Kenneth Pitluk, whose family had also been killed in the Holocaust. They raised Kenneth's niece and three of their own children while re-building their lives in Cleveland. She died in 2002. A transcription of her testimony for the Spielberg Project can be found in this issue of *Journey Planet* and the entire video can be viewed on-line at <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn505049>.

Julius "Groucho" Marx was born in 1890 to immigrants from the Alsace region. He performed in Vaudeville with his brothers before they made a series of movies. He eventually struck out on his own as a radio and television quiz show host. In 1958, he visited his ancestral village and discovered the Nazis had destroyed all evidence that Jews had lived there.

Pat Sayre McCoy recently retired from her job as a librarian at the law library at the University of Chicago. Over the years, she chaired Windycon and ran programming at various cons, including the Nebula Conference. She has published two short stories.

After wandering for forty years in the desert of financial services marketing, **Susan Schwartz** returned to her first love, writing fantasy and science fiction. A five-time nominee for the Nebula, a two-time nominee for the Hugo, and nominations for the World Fantasy Award, the Philip K. Dick, and the Edgar, Susan has published around thirty books, including anthologies, science fiction, historical fantasy, and *Star Trek*. Susan has also published about 90 short stories, novelettes and novellas and published nonfiction in *The New York Times*, *Vogue*, *The Washington Post*, and *Analog*. About four stories are scheduled for release in the next year or so on subjects as diverse as the Soviet Space Program, Anna Comnena, World War II with dragons, and Mount Everest. She holds a Ph.D. in English (medieval) from Harvard University, collects SF art, and loves the opera, the theatre, and travel. She now lives in exurban Connecticut with her partner.

Elaine Silver graduated from Indiana University with a bachelor's degree in Telecommunications and is a consultant at Aon where she has worked in compensation for over 25 years. Elaine and her husband, Steven, have been married for 31 years. They have two daughters, Robin (and soon to be son-in-law, Josh) and Melanie. Elaine has a busy volunteer life and is currently serving on the National Assembly of Hadassah as National Vice Chair of Young Judaea and also sits on the Hadassah Great Plains Region Board as Organization Coordinator, having recently completed her term as Great Plains Region President. In her local community, Elaine was a Girl Scout leader for 15 years. Elaine enjoys arts and crafts and spending time with her family.

Melanie Silver graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2023 with a bachelor's degree in Digital Narrative and Interactive Design, alongside studying Computer Science and Jewish Studies. She is currently the Springboard Intrapreneurship Fellow at WashU Hillel. Melanie has spent every summer since 2011 attending or working at a Young Judaea camp. She previously collaborated on the article "First Broadway: First Date" with her father.

Sharon Pitluk Silver was born Shulamit Pitluk in Knyszyn, Poland. She spent the war as Anna Ostrowska, a hidden child, cared for by Regina and Cheszek Ostrowski. After the war, her uncle brought her to the U.S., where she grew up in Cleveland as Sharon Pitluk with her uncle and his wife, Sally Pitluk. She became a teacher and currently helps kids prepare for the b'nai mitzvot. She speaks about her experiences during the Holocaust at schools and museums.

Steven H Silver is a twenty-time Hugo Award nominee and was the editor and publisher of ISFiC Press for eight years. He has also edited books for DAW, NESFA Press, and ZNB Books. He began publishing short fiction in 2008, his most recently published story is "Initial Engagement," his most recent anthology is *Alternate Peace*. His debut novel, *After Hastings*, was published in 2020. In 1995, he created the Sidewise Award for Alternate History. Steven chaired the first Midwest Construction, Windycon three times, and the SFWA Nebula Conference several times. He was programming chair for Chicon 2000 and Vice Chair of Chicon 7. Steven has maintained In Memoriam lists for Worldcon, the Nebula Conference, and the World Fantasy Con for several years. His website is at www.stevensilver.com

Groucho Marx Dances on Hitler's Grave

Art by Kurt Erichsen



In 1958, Groucho Marx traveled to Germany with his wife and daughter and his friend, Robert Dwan and his daughter.

Groucho later said, "I went to Germany once and asked permission to go to East Germany. I inquired as to where Hitler had died and when I got there I danced on his grave. Not much satisfaction after he killed six million Jews."

Robert Dwan wrote, "The chauffeur's only instruction was to drive us to the bunker where Hitler was said to have died, and where, they said, he was still buried. No guards, no people, no marker, just a pile of rubble, perhaps 20 feet high. Groucho climbed to the top, alone, stood for a moment, and then danced his eccentric, frenetic, Charleston. It was not a casual gesture. It went on, maybe for a minute or more. Then he climbed down, we all got in the car, and drove back to West Berlin."