

REGENERATION

By David Gewirtzman, Holocaust Survivor and Educator

Autobiography of Dave Gewirtzman

I was born on May 16, 1928, in Losice, Poland. My father was a grain merchant, my mother a housewife. Losice had about 8000 inhabitants, 75% of them Jews. I have a younger sister, Renee and brother, Irving. My parents died some years ago, my father at the age of 102.

On September 1, 1939, the German army invaded Poland. On September 9th, our town was bombed. Fifty-five Jewish people were killed and 150 injured. Our old synagogue was destroyed. The Germans marched in on September 12th

Harassment, deprivation, and persecution of the Jewish population soon followed. In spite of all the difficulties and prohibitions, I managed to preserve and continue my education. In 1941, I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah in our home in the Ghetto where 6,000 Jews were squeezed into a space of a few city blocks.

Forewarned, we built a hiding place in the attic of our building. On August 22, 1942, the Ghetto was surrounded by an assortment of German and Polish policemen. The Jewish inhabitants were led to the railway station and shipped to the extermination camp Treblinka. I, my family, and a few others hid in the attic. An attempt by me, 14, and my sister, 11, to escape from there failed. We were jailed and at night two young people below our cell were shot, possibly by mistake, instead of us. A few days later we were taken to a labor camp where the rest of my family joined us later.

My sister found refuge with the same Polish policeman who had previously arrested us. My brother, age 9, was hidden in a haystack in an open field, where he spent 22 months. My parents and I, together with several relatives, were hidden under a pigsty until the summer of 1944 when the advancing Red Arm liberated us. Of the 6,000 Jews in the Ghetto, 16 of us came back. (Indeed, before the war, there were about 8,000 Jew in Losice but during the occupation the Germans deported a number of Jews from Western Poland into our town. In addition, some Jewish inhabitants of nearby smaller localities were forced into the ghetto as well as a number of escapees from nearby labor camps, making a total of about 8000. Not all of them were deported to Treblinka since

many, perhaps 1000, died of disease, starvation, and exposure (while in the ghetto.)

I left Poland alone at age 16 in the spring of 1945, with the intention of reaching Palestine. After a number of illegal border crossings, I was welcomed by the Jewish Brigade from Palestine, stationed in Tarvisio, Italy. My family found me in the winter of 1946 in a kibbutz near Rome. I went back to school, graduated from an Italian High School, and attended one year at the University of Rome.

In 1948 we came to the United States. I continued my education, graduating in 1945 with a degree in Pharmacy. I got married the same year and was inducted into the US Army. After two years of service (in Germany) I resumed a normal life. I owned and operated several pharmacies in the New York area, raised and educated two children, and am now a proud grandfather of six grandchildren.

Since retirement in 1996, I became involved in the activities of the Nassau Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center in Glen Cove, NY. I am a board member and chairman of the Education Committee. I lecture to high school and college students as well as adults about my Holocaust experiences and the lessons to be learned from them. In the spring of 2001, I met and teamed up with Jacqueline Murekatete, then a 16 year old survivor of the genocide in Rwanda. Noticing the similarity of her and my experiences, we decided to

lecture together about prejudice, racism, and anti-Semitism, all of which led to genocide. Though different in every possible way, age, race, gender, religion, and place of origin, we are united by a bond which is cemented by our common childhood experience of horror.

*We have spoken at most Ivy-league schools, in addition to other colleges and universities such as, Vanderbilt, Minnesota, Michigan, Florida, Massachusetts, Seton Hall, Pace, Hofstra, Albany, and many more. We spoke in temples and churches in Washington, DC, Birmingham, Alabama, the Berkshires, St. Petersburg, Florida; The Heritage Museum in New York, and I, at the University of Bologna in Italy, as well, to 600 high school students in the same city (in Italian). We were featured in articles in the **New York Times**, **The Washington Post**, **Newsday**, **People magazine**, and many other papers and magazines. We appeared*



on NPR radio, BBC, Radio Colombia, Voice of America, and other radio programs. On TV we were interviewed on NBC, ABC, CNN (Wolf Blitzer) and on the Lehrer Newshour on Public TV. We were honored by the ADL at the Kennedy Center in Washington, by the Swedish Consulate in New York, and in fall of 2004 we were given "The Global Peace and Tolerance" award by the United Nations in New York.

Europe. May 8, 1945. The guns were silent. Slogans proclaimed liberty, justice and freedom. Patriotic Red Army songs filled the air with heroic tales of victories. Joy and laughter reigned everywhere. The nations were at peace.

Was I?

Ten months earlier my family-- father, mother, sister and brother had crawled out of a hole under a pigsty where for close



to two years we were hiding from the Germans. There were 8000 Jews crammed into the ghetto of our town, Losice, in Poland. At the end of the war, sixteen came back alive. We were among them.

Due to frequent assaults on surviving Jews by Polish anti-Semitic bands, we moved to Lodz, a large city, where we hoped to find safety. In Lodz, I came upon a clandestine organization, Bricha, which smuggled young Jewish survivors through international borders with the aim of reaching Palestine. I picked a morning when my father was away on business, filled a backpack and took off. I was sixteen years old.

On the day the war ended in Europe, I crossed the border

into Czechoslovakia with a group of other Jewish survivors. After months of wandering through a devastated Eastern and Central Europe, we sneaked through the "Iron Curtain" and finally reached Italy, helped by the soldiers of the Jewish Palestinian Brigade who had fought there alongside the British Eighth Army.

The road to Palestine was blocked. The British who administered the country, were adamant in preventing Jews from reaching its shores. Immigration to the Western European countries was equally restricted. In the United States, the quota system served as a shut door for Jews. Still, thousands of new Jewish arrivals, escapees from new atrocities in Eastern Europe, poured daily into the Displaced Persons camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. Our lives in these camps, while no longer threatened, were aimless, without hope or purpose. Despair, indifference and stagnation set in. Had it really been worth it to make an effort to survive?

I was in luck. I took advantage of the opportunity to join a newly formed Kibbutz, "Kibbutz Behazit", in Lido di Roma, 15 miles west of Rome. It was formed by UNRRA, (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency), and the Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish philanthropic organization. Most of its

members were recently liberated concentration camp inmates and a number of former partisans who fought the Germans in the forests of eastern Poland. We all waited for the chance to go to Palestine.

I managed to locate and inform my family in Poland of my whereabouts. They eventually showed up in northern Italy and I brought them to Lido di Roma. Weeks later, the members of the Kibbutz left from the port of La Spezia on an illegal boat, "the Fede", hoping to reach Palestine. I did not join them. I no longer wished to separate from my family.

In America, my uncle Noah, my father's only surviving brother (out of six) insisted that we remain in Italy until he could manage to bring us to the US. We resigned ourselves to a long stay in Italy. I decided to try to resume my education. Liceo

Romano, an old established school in central Rome, was offering an intensive program of study for war veterans and refugees who had lost schooling due to the war. They offered the possibility of finishing the last two years of high school (Liceo) in only one year. I applied. The problem was then how to deal with my limited knowledge of Italian, the literature, and history. I had studied Latin in the past, but ancient Greek was "all Greek to me," and I was foolish enough to sign up for a classical, rather than a scientific course.

I was advised to seek the help of a tutor. He arrived the next morning.

"Buon Giorno. Sono professore Schimmi, but you can

just call me Schimmi. I am your teacher.

When do we start?"

Who was this man who stood in front of the door of our rented room early in the morning? Where did he come from? What made him think that we would hire him?

How did he find us?

He stood there, a man five feet tall, slight, wrapped in a worn, wrinkled, gray suit over a shirt that needed washing; a stringy, stained tie hanging from his neck; a wisp of thin, white hair crowning his head and a bit more of the same passing for a beard. A large forehead took up half of his face from which two penetrating, active, blue eyes seemed to absorb everything in sight.

He invited me for a walk along the shore. He inquired about my past, the purpose of my study. After some thought, he offered a guarantee that when the time came I would be ready and able to be admitted to the program to which I had applied. He would be in charge of teaching the classics.

The next day he introduced me to Professore Donati where I started a daily regimen for the study of math and science. A number of Italian boys and girls joined me in both Schimmi's and Donati's classes.

The time of growing up in the Ghetto, the two years in the hole under the pigsty, and the aimless wandering through war torn Europe, did not lend itself to thoughts and feelings about the opposite sex. Though 17, and advanced above my age in life experience, I was still a child where girls were concerned. Suddenly my hormones came to life as if infused by a shot of some stimulant. When I mentioned shyly that I am a "straniero", a foreigner, they answered: "Si, ma non strano", yes but not a stranger.

A furtive look from Angelina, a wink or two from Graziella awoke feelings I had never felt before. They flirted with me. They asked me to take walks with them, go to a movie and share a gelato. I believed they liked me... and they knew! They knew I was a Jew.

Schimmi arrived daily on his old bicycle. He taught us the Italian language, history, philosophy, Latin and Greek. He spent extra time with me, sometimes an hour often more. He never asked for extra pay. He told us about his past. A graduate in modern and ancient languages from the University of Rome, he later taught at the University of Pittsburgh in the US. During World War I, he returned to Italy to

fight the Austrians as an officer in the Italian army. Staunchly anti-fascist, he was in and out of jails during the reign of Mussolini, yet made a living by tutoring the sons of fascist officials. They couldn't have found anybody more suitable. Presently he taught whomever or whenever he felt like.

I adored him from the first day I met him. So did everybody else.

With Schimmi, on the beautiful shore of the Mediterranean, we recited together with Virgil "Arma virumque cano," while sailing away from the burning walls of Troy.

"O tempora O mores". We orated with Cicero about the treachery of Catalina while pacing over the square stones of the Forum. In the ruins of the baths of Caracala we listened to Aida lament "O Patria Mia." In the Sistine chapel at the Vatican we watched Michalangelo paint the **Last Judgment**. With Dante as our guide we read "Lasciate ogni speranza voi che entrate" at the gate of hell.

"Carpe Diem" was no longer a meaningless slogan. Life meant living, not just surviving. The sound of Roman church bells on Sunday morning, the bouquet of Umbrian foliage in the fall, the occasional off key Neapolitan voices left a permanent pleasant memory within me. Schimmi, sharing a bottle of wine in a cheap bar while debating communist

laborers about their misdirected idealism, made me respect ideas, even if controversial.

Italy restored my dignity, my hope, and my faith in humanity.

"Due to frequent assaults on surviving Jews by Polish anti-Semitic bands, we moved to Lodz, a large city, where we hoped to find safety"



Survivor Soulmates

Reviewed by Stephanie Lau, Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York

He is European; she is African. He is seventy-eight years old, while she is twenty-two. They may be different in race, color, and age, but they parallel in the experiences they have undergone; he is a survivor of the Holocaust in Poland and she survived the genocide in Rwanda. In this short seven-minute film, these *Survivor Soulmates* educate us about the Holocaust and the genocide by sharing their deplorable stories of loss, horror, strength, hope and their discovery of each other.

The film begins with a brief history of the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide, how many innocent people were persecuted because of their religion or ethnicity. When David Gewirtzman was eleven-years old, he lived in the ghetto in Losice, Poland. As Nazis occupied the city, David and his family endured by hiding in a rat-infested pit for two years. He explained that out of the 8,000 occupants in the ghetto prior to the Nazi invasion, only sixteen survived. David then escaped to the United States to begin a new life and educate adults and young adults about the Holocaust.

In Rwanda when Jacqueline Murekatete was nine years old, the Hutus extremity, the major ethnic group in Rwanda, murdered the Tutsi. The Tutsis were the minority ethnic group who Jacqueline was a part of. Despondently, she said, "We started hearing the Hutus saying the Tutsis were cockroaches; they were snakes and deserve to die." After being placed in an orphanage

for safety, she received desolate news that the Hutus killed her entire family. Then she was adopted by her uncle and moved to the United States.

David met Jacqueline after he spoke of his experiences at her high school, and she wrote a moving letter about her own experiences to him that touched his heart. The two "soulmates" had an immediate bond and feel a certain responsibility, as survivors, to make a difference in helping to prevent genocides. Jacqueline could not comprehend why the world was sitting and watching as these heinous acts continued, and both she and David collaborate to promote awareness, compassion, and understanding. In David's last statement he says, "Let's not forget about what happened but let's learn from it so that we do not repeat what our parents and grandparents have done."

The DVD, *Survivor Soulmates*, was produced by the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, New York. Teachers can contact the Center at www.holocaust-nassau.org and receive the "Teacher's Guide" which accompanies the DVD.

I recommend this video to those who wish to learn more about the Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda. Some images may be unsuitable for very young audiences, but for those who are interested in survivors' stories, this is an excellent and moving film.

Reactions to *Survivor Soulmates*

60 Years After the Holocaust: Darfur

By Benjamin Page, Lakeview High School, Battle Creek, Michigan.

"The Holocaust is repeating itself. The world has not learned." With these words, David Gewirtzman, a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust, sums up the world's attitude towards genocide. He is one of the fortunate ones who escaped the systematic execution of six million souls. To refute or ignore his statement is to deny an essential problem in collective American thought.

The Wannsee Conference and the horrific ambitions of the Nazi elite were not the only driving forces in the Holocaust. While the impassive stance the allies took towards the Holocaust during the war did not *cause* the genocide to begin, it did just as much bad by *allowing* it to continue. The victims thus suffered the consequences of inaction along with the ghettos, the slave details, and the gas chambers.

It is a common misconception that the allies could not have done anything – or that they simply knew nothing at all. And yet in 1942, the year the first death camps were opened, the US State Department was more than aware of what was happening in Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. The genocide was even discussed at the Bermuda Conference in 1943. And in 1944, when the air power of the allied forces had made the skies over Germany their

own, no efforts were made to put the camps out of action, even though they were well within the range of allied bombers.

Six decades have passed since the Holocaust. Surely by now the world has learned; surely the lesson that inaction is as deadly as the bullet and bayonet has been made clear to us by the Holocaust. The terrible and inescapable truth is that the world has not learned. Mr. Gewirtzman's statement stands affirmed.

Nowhere in today's world was this problem more apparent than in the Rwanda Genocide of 1994 and now in the ongoing conflict and genocide in Darfur. These are the places which have become synonymous with genocide to my generation. But despite this, the events in Rwanda and Darfur seldom spark the heartbreaking and galvanizing emotions that they should. The reactions of the world and of the individual are critical if we are to do something to stop these horrific events.

Ignorance is by no means the problem. Many people know of the African genocides of Rwanda and Darfur. As soon as these events were known to the west, the media took over, spelling out the tragedy of genocide. The newspapers, televisions, magazines – every conduit of information soon had something to

say about the Tutsis or the Baggara. And yet, upon glancing at CNN's reports or the blaring headlines of the *New York Times*, most Americans likely said, "Oh, that's terrible" and just as quickly went back to worrying about their own lives. To make matters worse, when coverage stops, even the most horrific of international events conveniently fades from the public mind.

We must then learn of the terrible consequences of inaction. For Europe, it was over six million men, women, and children. For Africa, it is estimated that over 1 million souls have been lost and the number continues to grow as the world only casually glances.

How are we then – not as individuals or nations, but as a world – to "educate" ourselves so that we learn? Whatever form our education takes to stop and prevent genocide, there is one underlining requirement. We must come together. When the people of the world come together, they will *learn* together: learn to stop the systematic killings, learn to see past such imagined borders of race, ethnicity, and religion, and ultimately learn to live with one another in peace. And we must do this with the confidence and belief that we can learn from mankind's most terrible atrocities.

Learning may not be the solution to genocide, but it is the first step towards bringing it to an end. Learning is the first step towards action.

I would like to give special thanks to my librarian, Margaret Lincoln.

Darfur: Another Battle for Humanity

By Linglu Zhou, Lakeview High School, Battle Creek, Michigan

"Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Can these powerful words, spoken by a Spanish-American philosopher, George Santayana, explain the cycles of restless violence that have plagued the international community, generation after generation? Have we not yet learned from our mistakes? In school, we are taught the ways of the past and the devastating consequences that have followed. In textbooks, we examine the deadliest wars and crusades; civilizations rise and fall as each page is turned. Yet, no matter how many times the lessons of history are taught, our society never seems to be able to grasp the moral of the story. We are afflicted with conflict, time after time; our lack of response, however, has never been able to improve.

Genocide – one of the deadliest forms of conflict that has troubled humankind – is characterized by the systematic murder of a specific group of people, often separated by religion, political viewpoint, or ethnic background. The world failed to prevent one of the darkest episodes in history, a genocide that has become known as the Holocaust. Fifty years later, genocide resurfaced amidst the Rwandan crisis, and, yet again, world leaders refused to assume responsibility. Today, genocide has returned to haunt ethnic groups residing in Darfur, Sudan. However, unless the

world intervenes, Sudan and the people of the world will only lose another battle for humanity.

The first genocide to scar our kind was, undoubtedly, the Holocaust, the term used to describe the extermination of millions of European Jews during the Second World War. Those who survived the atrocities told their stories. Left speechless by the accounts and the presence of the emaciated bodies, we felt great remorse for having done nothing to protect the Jews from such a fate. However, the Nazis' ability to thoroughly conceal concentration camps such as the notorious Auschwitz prevented us from detecting, and therefore preventing, the horrendous crimes. So we forgave ourselves. World leaders assembled to form the United Nations. They pledged, "Never Again."

"Never again" lasted no more than fifty years. This time, we witnessed genocide affect a different continent, Africa. But the motives, the crimes, the consequences – they were the same. The Hutu government made no attempt to conceal its genocidal actions, yet we remained apathetic. Rather than augmenting our



Survivor Soulmates DVD

military assistance, we withdrew most of our men, leaving behind a measly 270 troops to face the calamity. We watched the death toll rise rapidly, hoping vainly for the situation to solve itself. When it didn't, we realized the severity of the events taking place, but by that time it was too late. We pointed fingers and blamed miscommunication, but it all came down to one question: Could we forgive ourselves a second time?

Genocide seems to enjoy taunting the continent of Africa, as it has reemerged in this part of the world. This time, it has chosen the region of Sudan known as Darfur. The government of Sudan has been accused of supporting the Janjaweed militia in

their attempt to “cleanse” Darfur of its black African population.

The militias invade villages on horseback, murdering the men and raping the women. Many have begun to refer to the Janjaweed as the Nazis of the twenty-first century. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, we uncovered the remains of six million Jews that had been gassed, shot, or starved to death. When the killings in Rwanda subsided, the death toll had already reached 750,000 Tutsis. Could a similar fate befall the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa ethnic groups of Darfur? At least seventy thousand civilians have already died, and two million have been forcibly relocated to concentrated camps along the western border of Sudan, where most live on the edge of survival. Years ago, we learned that a mere 270 troops could not hinder the Hutu extremists in Rwanda. Today, our military assistance for the victims of Darfur remains just as hopelessly minimal.

The African Union has requested permission to increase the number of troops defending the area to two thousand, but members of the Security Council continue to hesitate and the hopes of the Sudanese people continues to dwindle. In an article for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Rwandan Paul Rusesabagina notes, “it almost feels like the United Nations and the great Western powers

are waiting for the granite memorials to go up and the Sudanese national holidays to be established before they demonstrate that the routine slaughter of innocent people in Africa is an issue worth caring about” (Rusesabagina E-1). Ignorance can be pardoned, but when one chooses not to act in the blunt face of genocide, he cannot be forgiven, especially when this same choice has cost his race millions of innocent lives before. We must persuade world leaders to act now. But what will it take and how long do we have before the clock strikes twelve?

Day by day, the story of Darfur becomes increasingly predictable and the resemblance it bears to genocides of the past is undeniable. The voices of the survivors like David Gewirtzman, who experienced the Holocaust, and Jacqueline Murekatete who escaped the Rwandan crisis, will not be silenced. The deaths of the seventy thousand Darfur victims that have already perished will not be muted. I urge you to be their advocate – write to your state representative; educate your peers, and stay informed. The fate of 600,000 innocent civilians lies in your hands. Pick up your pen and write the history that will save them.

I would like to give special thanks to my teacher, Carol Terburg.

“The Rag Doll”

By Ruth Minsky Sender, Holocaust Survivor and Author

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Lodz, Poland, 1936.

My name is Riva Minska. I am ten years old. I was born in Poland, as were my parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents, and their ancestors.

Lodz is a big industrial city with many factories, schools, libraries, theaters, shops. The city is full of people, full of life. Men, women, and children fill the streets with the sounds of their voices, with the sounds of their footsteps. Some look happy, some look sad. Some walk fast, some stroll.

I often wonder. What is on their minds? What is waiting for them at their destination?

My destination is The Medem School, a small, private, Jewish day school. Classes are conducted in Yiddish and in Polish. In the public schools classes are held only in Polish.

“We have to work harder than the students in public schools,” Mrs. Melman, our Yiddish teacher. “Anti-Semitism...” She sighs painfully. “The Board of Education is looking for reasons to close the Jewish schools.” She takes a deep breath. “We cannot let them win.”

I look around me as I pass many streets on my long walk to school. Sometimes I see the signs of anti-Semitism on walls of buildings or store windows; I bite my lips.

Why? Pounds in my head. Jews have lived in Poland for a thousand years. We are part of Poland in every way. Why should I leave?

“Ignore those ugly signs. Walk proudly.” I hear Mama’s soft voice.

School seems to be in turmoil this morning. Teachers, anxiety written on their faces, hurry students to their classrooms.

My first class is Polish. Our teacher, Miss Yoskowitz, moves a strand of hair away from her forehead. “Children.” Her voice is low. “We will have a surprise visitor today, from the Board of Education.” Her lips form a gentle smile. “Do not be alarmed. You are all bright students and lovely young people. Just be yourselves.”

She begins her lesson on Polish literature. “Today we will read ‘Pan Tadeush’ by Adam Mickewicz. The poem is about freedom.” She reads aloud: “Freedom, like good health is not valued while we have it. Only those who have lost freedom, who have lost good health, know its value.”

We listen silently. It is a beautiful poem, still...

Why would my freedom be in jeopardy? I wonder. I am young. I am healthy. Why should I worry?

There is a knock at the door. The air suddenly fills with tension.

“Come in, please,” our teacher calls, sounding a bit nervous. We stand up straight as the door opens. A middle-aged gentleman, tall, blond, well dressed, enters.

“Boys and girls, this is our guest from the Board of Education, Pan Dombrowski,” our teacher announces.

“Good morning, boys and girls.”

“Good morning, sir,” we all answer in one voice.

Our teacher points to her desk chair. “Please, sir, sit here.”

“Thank you.” He bows politely and sits down.

“Sit down, children.” Our teacher smiles as if to assure us that all is well.

My heart beats faster. Is he here to find an excuse to close up a Jewish school?

Our visitor’s pale blue eyes take in the classroom. “I see lots of student artwork and poems.” He looks pleased. “You seem to be a very creative group.”

“They love to do original work,” our teacher comments, her voice filled with pride.

Pan Dombrowski’s eyes narrow as he looks directly at the boy in the front row. “What is your name?” Pan Dombrowski’s voice sounds harsh.

“My name is Avrom Meyerowicz,” Avrom repeats in a firm voice. His cheeks take on color.

Pan Dombrowski makes a face. “You should have a Polish name.”

Miss Yoskowitz’s voice fills with controlled anger. “Avrom Meyerowicz is a beautiful name.” She looks directly at Avrom, her best student. “It is a good name.”

Avrom lowers his eyes. “Thank you.”

Pan Dombrowski’s cool glance stops at Avrom’s flushed face. “You may sit down.”

Avrom takes a deep breath as he sits down.

“Who are the artists here?” Pan Dombrowski asked, studying the artwork on the classroom walls.

Some students raise their hands.

“Good work.” He grins.

High above my desk hangs a framed print.

“Who did this painting? He turns to Miss Yoskowitz.

“Artist unknown.” She smiles, calls on me.

“Riva, would you please tell us what you see in this picture?”

My heart beats faster. I am nearsighted and cannot see small details. I try to hide the fact that I need glasses. Kids make fun of those who wear glasses; they call them “four-eye.” In class I take notes as the teacher speaks. When they write on the blackboard, I copy the notes from it after class. I manage. I am a good student.

My head pounds. The picture is too high on the wall for me to see the details.

Miss Yoskowitz sounds a bit annoyed. “The class is waiting.”

Cold sweat trickles down my neck. I swallow hard. “A beautiful sailboat.” My voice trembles slightly. “Its white sails move lightly in the breeze out to the blue open sea. The sun smiles brightly.” Silence fills the room.

I continue. I do not see the puzzled faces of my fellow students, my teacher, or our visitor. “Large, white seagulls escort the sailboat, bidding it a safe journey.” I take a deep breath, look toward my teacher. Her face flushes as she stares at me.

Pan Dombrowski smiles. “What imagination.”

Someone begins to laugh. Others join in.

The bell rings. The visitor leaves. I remain sitting, dazed and bewildered.

“We will have to talk,” Miss Yoskowitz whispers, then she, too, leaves.

Some students look amused as they pass me. I climb on my desk and stare at the picture. My knees buckle. I lean against the wall. A large bowl of colorful fruit stares back at me from the picture. My cheeks feel hot. I bite my lips and swallow the lump in my throat.

Miss Yoskowitz waits for me outside the classroom. She puts her arms around me, holds me close. “I did not know that you are near-sighted. I did not mean to put you in a position where you had to make up a story rather than admit that you could not see. I am sorry. I will put you in the first row and tell your mother that you need eyeglasses.”



Picture drawn by Sofia de Guzman

My eyes well up with tears.
 “It is all right, Riva.” Her hand caressed my hair. She grins. “It was funny. You have imagination.”

“Will the Board of Education close our school because of me?”

“They would like to find a reason to close all Jewish schools. But Pan Dombrowski had nothing to pick on today. He liked your imagination and was very impressed. I am sure we are safe, for a while.” She sighs.

I look up as my Uncle Baruch approaches. He is my favorite uncle and my science teacher. All the students adore him. He is mama’s youngest brother, her pride and joy. She helped him through school and Teacher’s Seminary. After graduating from the Medem School, he started attending a Polish university to study medicine. Only a certain number of Jews were accepted each year. Still, prejudice drove him away, and he became a teacher.

“What is wrong, Riva?”
 He raises my chin.

“I made a fool of myself,” I sob.

He looks at Miss Yoskowitz for an explanation.

“Riva needs eyeglasses. I just found out that she is nearsighted.”

“Eyeglasses make you look smart.” Uncle Baruch puts his hand on my shoulder. “Are you okay to go to your next class or would you rather stay in the teachers’ room for a while?” Uncle Baruch asks. His gently strong voice calms me.

“I will go to class, Teacher.” I never call him Uncle while in school.

“Someday you, too, will be a teacher.” He touches my cheek lightly.

“I would like to be a teacher and a writer.” I smile through my tears.

“You will be.”

The bell rings as I enter Mrs. Melman’s class. “I am sorry I am late, Teacher.”

She nods. I walk to my seat.

“Riva.” Her voice is warm and low “I think this seat closer to the blackboard will be better for you.” She points to an empty seat in the front row. “I made some changes in the class seating.”

My heart beats faster as I sit down. I glance sideways at the other students. No one is staring at me. They are listening to Mrs. Melman explain the homework assignment, as essay.

“I will let you pick your own topic. Use your imagination.”

Miss Yoskowitz’s words echo in my ears. “Our visitor was impressed by your vivid imagination.”

I rush home to our two-room apartment on the first floor of a crowded wooden structure housing seventeen families. Ten of us live here: Grandmother Rochl; Mama; my two older sisters, Mala and Chana; my older brother, Yankl; my three younger brothers, Motele, Laibele, Moischele; Tosia, our housekeeper; me.

The factory which Mama and her partner, Gershon, own and operate is in a four-story brick building only a few houses away. A widow with seven children, Mama works long days.

I run into the factory. Men and women work on large sewing machines that make loud buzzing sounds as the fabric is pushed quickly forward. Some women sit at a table finishing garments by hand. They smile at me as I enter.

Mama moves quickly away from the huge table covered with patterns of little girls’ coats and puts her arms around me. She kisses my head.

“Glasses will be very becoming. I made an appointment with the eye doctor.” She sees my puzzled expression. “Uncle Baruch called. He said you had an emotional day.”

“I made a fool of myself. I hope the Board of Education will not close the school because of me.” My tears well again.

Mama holds me close to her. It feels good.

I notice a pile of scrap fabric at the end of the cutting table. Mama made a rag doll for me when I was little from scraps of fabric. She would have liked to buy me a store-made doll, with silky hair, pink

cheeks, red lips, a pretty dress, but they cost too much. I still love this doll. My eyes light up as I rush home.

“I will let the doll speak for me.”

My pen rushes over the paper before me. Pages fill up quickly. Words pour from the depth of my heart.

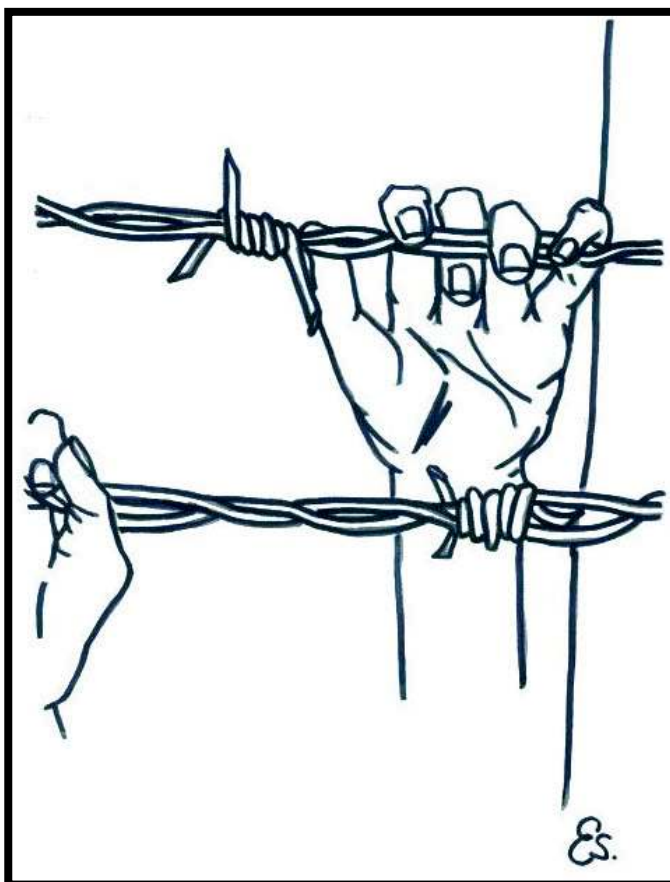
A deep sigh rips from my chest. My essay is done. I put the pages into a folder for Mrs. Melman.

Several days later I walk into school wearing glasses. My heart beats fast. Will the other children make fun of me?

“You look nice.” Genia, my best friend, greets me with a warm smile.

Mrs. Melman, too, grins as she walks toward her desk.

“How are we doing with our essays?” Mrs. Melman’s eyes move curiously over the faces of her students. “Is anyone



Picture drawn by Emma Sobota

finished?”

I raise my hand.

“Well, Riva, let’s hear your essay.”

She motions for me to stand in front of her desk as she pulls her chair to the side, watching me as I move slowly toward her.

My voice trembles as I begin to read, softly at first, then louder with feeling.

“What My Doll Told Me.”

“My name is Rag Doll. That is the name Riva gave me.

“Before I became a Rag Doll I was a large scrap of fabric from little girls’ coats, waiting to be sold to the man buying scraps from factories. I do not know what would have become of me.

“The nice lady who runs the factory, Pani Minska, took me out of the pile in the large box near the cutting table. Her hands were soft and warm. Her blue eyes had a strange twinkle as she whispered to herself; ‘Such pretty fabric, I will make a doll for Riva. Mala and Chana are too big for dolls. My poor children have to work to help support the family; Mala and Chana in a weaving factory, Yankle in the tailor shop. Such a heavy burden for teenagers. Riva is still a child. She needs a doll to play with just like other little girls. I wish I had the money to buy one of the pretty dolls that fill the store windows, but food comes first.’

She smiles. ‘In the Jewish folktale “The Golem” a giant made of clay sprang to life. I will make a doll from rags. Maybe it, too, will spring to life and bring joy to my child.’

“Her fingers move quickly. ‘I have to return to my work. I have seven young children to support. It is the busy season. Loans, made when there is little work, must be paid. When the season is over I will have to borrow again, to pay for food, to pay the rent, to pay for the children’s schooling. I know that Moishe, the grocer, inflates my bills when I buy on credit. But he lets me buy on credit until I have the money to pay the bills.’

“Her warm fingers stuff my body with cotton. Button eyes, a painted nose and lips bring me to life. As she puts a newly made cotton dress on my plump body, her eyes shine bright. ‘If I could only make some playthings for Motele, Laibele, and

Moishele. What toys can I make for little boys using rags?’ She thinks for a moment. “‘Stuffed dogs, stuffed cats,’ she calls out happily. ‘I can make stuffed animals. But where do I get the time? So much work, so little time.’ Tears flow from her eyes. ‘I wish their mother did not have to work for a living.’ She wipes her eyes quickly. ‘I must work. I will not take charity. I will not send my children to an orphanage. My dear husband loved his children. He died so young. I must be the mother and father, give them love for both of us. My children are the joy of my life. A smile, a hug, a kiss from my children brings sunshine into my life.’

“She hold me close to her as if I were one of her children. ‘Someday life will be easier. Someday.’ Her lips form a smile as she whispers, ‘As long as there is life, there is hope.’”

I look at Mrs. Melman. She wipes her eyes with a white handkerchief. The silence is suddenly broken by thunderous applause.

My face feels hot. My classmates are all standing, clapping with all their might. “Bravo, Riva, Bravo.”

Mrs. Melman puts her arm around my shoulders. Her voice quivers. “You must read this to all the other classes.”

Several classes are put together for a special program. Cold sweat trickles down my back. I am the special program today.

My body trembles as I notice Pan Dombrowski enter the room. He nods and sits down. My uncle smiles at me from the back of the room. The story is about Mama, his beloved sister. Will he be upset that I put her struggle on paper? I speak of her love and devotion. That should please him. I take a deep breath and read.

“Bravo, Riva, bravo.” Uncle Baruch holds me in his strong arms. I hear the applause from students and teachers. “I am proud of you. My sister will be proud of you. A writer was born today.”

His eyes glow with pride. “Mr. Dombrowski, too, seems touched. He whispers, “‘Maybe for a while he will leave us in peace.’”

Later, Mama reads the essay surrounded by her children. She holds me in her arms, looks lovingly around her, and whispers, “My blessings. My blessings.”

Response to the “Rag Doll”

By Jackie Giovanniello, Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York

The Jewish children in this story, in Lodz, Poland strive to keep up hope to maintain their freedom. Many go to a special school that teaches Yiddish and Polish called The Medem School. The Board of Education looks for reasons to close Jewish schools such as this one. The loss of their school is greatly feared. The people of Lodz, Poland discriminate against the Jews as a whole. They believe the Jews should leave because they want to keep a superior race, which they think is themselves. While much background information is given about the society during that time period, a more inspiring story is told.

Riva, the young girl narrating the story starts her school

day off very embarrassed. She regains her composure by writing an amazing narrative. When she is asked to write an essay for class, she chooses to write about her rag doll. Within the story of her rag doll, a story about her mother is told. It explains the love and care she gives to her children despite the troubles she goes through supporting them.

She puts time aside to make a doll of rags for Riva because she feels remorse for not being able to buy her one. I find it inspiring how the Jewish families in this story, like Riva’s, value family and education above everything else. They put their family members above themselves and have a very high appreciation for education.

A Conversation with my Grandpa

By Emily Bahr, Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York

My grandpa, Daniel Idzik, was born in Depew, New York, on January 20, 1935, the oldest of five boys. Depew was a Polish community outside of Buffalo where his grandfather had settled after he came through Ellis Island in the late 1800's. Both of my grandpa's parents were Polish, and he grew up with Polish customs and the Polish language. His high school was small with the 1952 graduating class having about 100 students. He was the "Homecoming King" and represented the school in many ways.

Always a hard worker, my grandpa pursued the American dream by getting a good education. After attending Buffalo State Teachers College (now SUNY-Buffalo) my grandpa continued to Harvard Law School. After a brief time in state politics, he joined a management consulting firm called Booz, Allen & Hamilton and moved with his family to Chicago.

He married my Grandma Ann on December 6, 1958 in Geneva, Switzerland. They had four children: Christopher, Rebecca, Laura, and Susie. Rebecca is my mother. When he became an international lawyer, they were always moving around because of his job to places such as; Chicago, IL; Buffalo, NY; Rye, NY; and London, England. My mother never lived anywhere for very long.

My grandpa has always been interested in politics and democracy. He believes in human rights and the power to vote. He reads a lot, sees things critically, and wants all people around the world to live in peace with governments they have chosen for themselves. He loves to travel and collect art. He always has fascinating stories, and I know that he has lived in interesting times and has seen lots of remarkable things. He is lucky enough to have traveled around the world.

How old were you when the Holocaust was taking place?

I was four years old when Germany invaded Poland in 1939--the early phases of the Holocaust started soon after that, in 1942, and didn't end until the close of the Second World War.

Do you remember the first time you heard about the Holocaust and what your reaction was?

I was about ten when Auschwitz was liberated. The photos and stories were horrific. I wondered how it was possible for people to engage in the calculated and mass slaughter of men, women and children. Stories and photos of men killed and wounded in war were one thing--and though they were disturbing as well, I guess that as a boy--just as most Americans--I knew that such things happen in war--sad and unfortunate--but we all recognized that it was critical to the United States and much of the world to defeat the Germans and Japanese; it was understood. The barbarity of the Holocaust was something else.

How did the Holocaust affect you and your everyday life?

Since I was in the US (in Buffalo) and there was very little in the newspapers or on the radio (no television then--and certainly no Internet) I, and most people in the United States, had no knowledge of the Holocaust-genocide programs.

Did you know what was happening in Poland?

When I lived and worked in Switzerland for an international student and university relief organization (World University Service) I spent time fairly frequently with German university professors, students and other intellectuals. None of them had been members of the Nazi party (otherwise they probably wouldn't have been in their positions), but I was constantly amazed that, without exception, they all claimed that they had no knowledge of the death camps.

Where were your relatives during the war?

All of my close relatives (grandparents, grandaunts and uncles) were also in the United States. I think they and I knew of the anti-Jewish programs which had been undertaken by Nazi Germany (not permitting Jews to continue in their professions, herding them into ghettos, keeping them out of schools, etc.) but there was no understanding of the horrors of the concentration camps.

Do you recall the Holocaust mentioned in newspapers?

The first recollection I have of the Holocaust was seeing photos in the newspapers and in newsreels (filmed news shown in movie theaters then) when Auschwitz was liberated. Newspapers did not, so far as I can recall, provide any significant news reports on the extermination of Jews even though, as I now know, Hitler made his intentions clear in speeches as early as 1939.

I know you were in Switzerland in the 1950's did you see war damage?

Switzerland was officially neutral during the Second World War, so there was no war damage there. I was in Switzerland from 1957 to 1960. By then, a lot of rebuilding had occurred in many countries. I could, however, see some of the damage on visits to Paris. (Even today, there are many buildings in Paris which still have bullet and/or artillery shell scars--and I expect, and hope, that the French will continue to leave them there, rather than patching them up, so that they will serve as a reminder of the past.)

Do you think any of this could have been prevented?

Could it have been prevented? Once Hitler got underway with taking over Czechoslovakia and Poland and the war began, the only



Daniel Idzik

way to have prevented the Holocaust was to defeat Germany. The allies could have done some things in my view--such as bombing the rail lines that fed the camps and perhaps making greater efforts to smuggle Jews to countries that could have provided safe havens, but that wasn't done.

What happened when you went back to Poland?

When Grandma Annie and I went to Poland in 1959 the effects of the war were still apparent. Warsaw was bleak--there were blocks which were empty--the rubble had been cleaned out, but nothing had been built as yet to fill vacant lots. Grandma Kathy, my brother Marty and his wife, Patty visited Poland five years ago, in 2002, and Warsaw was thriving. Krakow, which had not

been damaged in the war, remains beautiful.

Where in Poland did you go?

We visited Auschwitz and Treblinka. Auschwitz was a death camp. Jewish prisoners were forced to build Treblinka, which functioned solely as an extermination camp. People were gassed almost immediately following their arrival in crowded rail cars, except for the very few Jews who were forced to work at Treblinka--and none of them lasted too long. It was a devastating and very difficult experience--something that none of us can ever forget. Probably the closest you can get to sharing that experience, without visiting the camps themselves, is to visit the Holocaust Museum in Washington--that's grisly enough--the real thing is a terror to behold.

An Amazing Story of Survival

By Allison Weinberg, Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York

Jewish people had been separated and kept in ghettos in varying countries for years prior to the Holocaust. Millions of Jews were killed in concentration camps during the Holocaust. There were many others that ran away and hid in order to avoid being captured. Still, others found extraordinary ways to survive.

When I was visiting my grandmother in Florida recently, she introduced me to one of her neighbors, who told me the tragedies of his survival during the years of the Holocaust.

Jimmy Fish was born on December 12, 1923, in Kleck, Poland. He lived with his parents, two brothers, and a sister. His father drove a truck, and his mother was a seamstress. He had a relatively "normal" childhood, until he was fourteen years old.

At that time, Russia took over the city of Kleck, and confiscated everyone's belongings. The Russians did not believe in religion and Communism dominated the people of Kleck. Two years later, the Germans attacked Russia, and Jimmy and his

father were forced to work for the Russians digging trenches for the military. Jimmy and his father were separated, and at sixteen years old, Jimmy was alone, learning survival skills that would keep him alive during the war.

Soon after he was drafted to dig trenches, Jimmy escaped and was on his own. He ran at night and slept during the day. He was in a huge forest, running for his life, while German bombs exploded around him. He remembers waking up next to dead bodies, stealing food to survive, and often being beaten up by others who were also running for their lives.

After finding his way out of the forest, Jimmy hopped on and off of cattle trains going from city to city, stealing food, working odd jobs, and barely surviving the next few years. His identification papers were stolen, and he had to avoid being caught as a deserter. He learned to speak Russian fluently and denied his Jewish heritage. He changed his



Jimmy Fish, Holocaust Survivor

name frequently, obtaining fake papers to hide his identity and was arrested several times as a deserter.

When he was twenty years old, Jimmy was sent to Siberia to cut lumber. It was twenty degrees below zero there, and he was forced to work outdoors with deserters, who were recently released from jail. He and two other men were able to steal a canoe, and traveled to the city of Kemerow. There, he was eventually arrested and prosecuted because the authorities found out he was actually Polish, and not Russian. He was sentenced to eight years of hard labor, as a coal miner. After serving only one and a half years, shrinking down to eighty pounds and observing ninety three people killed when the walls of the mine collapsed, he was let out on parole. He was ordered to stay in the town of Kemerow and was given the job of loading trucks with lumber for the payment of one loaf of bread a day. He knew that he could not escape because people who were caught escaping were hung in the middle of the town square. He knew he would have to devise some kind of scheme to get out of Kemerow.

After his release, Jimmy sent a letter to his hometown, and found out that his father was alive. He instructed his father to send him a telegram of his imminent death, so that he might be allowed to visit. Jimmy's father did this, and the Russian authorities granted him thirty days to visit his father. He fled Kemerow, hanging onto the outside of cattle trains, escaping once again, with no intentions of returning. His papers read, "Gregory Kuchalski," as he changed his name each time he was caught. Jimmy was another made up name that eventually stuck. He was

originally born with the name, Gedalia Fish.

After re-uniting with his father, Jimmy found out that the Germans executed his mother and brothers with the rest of the townspeople in Kleck. His sister ran away and had survived. He and his father left and never returned.

From this point on, Jimmy lived in several refugee camps, in Bilirusia, Breslow, Czechoslovakia, and Austria. After entering Austria, he and his father were split up, and Jimmy was sent to Ebensee, in Austria, to assist in cleaning up the concentration camps for the Americans. What he saw there was horrific. He was twenty two years old when his work was done, and he moved from one refugee camp to another, living in tents, traveling from Germany to France, and eventually to Israel. He worked for eleven years building bombs for the Israeli army, met his wife there, had two daughters, and eventually emigrated to America, where he met up once again with his father and sister. He settled in Detroit and worked in a factory making cardboard boxes while attending night school to learn English. He eventually retired, and moved to Florida, where he lives today with his wife, Gittel.

Jimmy Fish's story is an extraordinary tale of survival. He lived through horrific conditions and had to grow up very quickly as a young teenager. He often thought of suicide, but had a strong will to live, imagining a better tomorrow. Jimmy Fish lived to tell his tale, but more than six million Jews did not. The generation of survivors is getting older, and eventually all will be gone. For these survivors, and for all that perished during the Holocaust, we must remember.

Definition of a Hero: A Holocaust Survivor Saves Virginia Tech Students

By Jared Goldman

What makes a hero? Is it the ability to pick up a bus, sling webs, or fly at the speed of light? Popular belief says, "Yes." Unfortunately, no extraordinary powers have ever been documented outside of a movie script. However, maybe a hero is defined as saving students from a mass murderer.

On April 16, 2007 at 7:15 am a 9-1-1 phone call was placed to police reporting a shooting that initially killed one and left one to die in the hospital hours later. This was the first of many shootings to come at Virginia Tech University. 9:05 am, the gunman is seen entering Norris Hall. As the gunman tried to enter room 204, he came face to face with a hero. This hero barricaded the door as his students escaped through the window. He was eventually shot five times through the door. Liviu Librescu was seventy-six.

A Holocaust survivor, scientist, and professor, Dr. Liviu Librescu lived a life of high esteem. Born in 1930 to a Jewish family in Ploiesti, Romania, Librescu was deported, along with his family, to a labor camp in Fosceni, Romania. Eventually surviving the Holocaust, Librescu went on to study Aerospace Engineering at the Polytechnic University of Bucharest. Graduating in 1952,

he went on for a master's degree at the same University. In 1969, Librescu was awarded a PhD in Fluid Mechanics by the Academy of Science in Romania. However, his career came to a halt when he refused to join Nicolae Ceausescu's communist regime. Librescu then asked to move to Israel and was fired from his job. By 1978, and after years of government refusal, Librescu and his family obtained an emigration permit. From 1979 to 1985 he was a Professor of Aeronautical and Mechanical Engineering at Tel-Aviv University. In 1985, Librescu left for the United States where he taught at Virginia Tech until his death.

What makes a hero? Well, hero is defined as a person of distinguished courage or ability, admired from his brave deeds and noble qualities. Liviu Librescu barricaded the door as his students escaped through the window. Sacrificing his life for the lives of others. He is the definition of a hero.

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An Interview about the Holocaust with Vera Lewis who lived through World War II

By Nabeelah Laher, International School of Prague, Czech Republic

Special thanks to John Crane

The Holocaust is one of the most difficult times in History for anyone to come to terms with, no matter how many times we hear about it or talk about it. I decided to Interview Vera Lewis, a painter and survivor of World War II. I could only imagine how hard it must have been for Vera as she lived through the most difficult times in history.

How did you first learn about the Holocaust?

She pauses for a second) “Reading, I wasn’t really interested though”

Vera Lewis learned about the Holocaust through newspapers, magazines and the radio. She said that she wasn’t so interested at the beginning

because, first of all she was too young to understand what was happening and second of all, she didn’t know how something like the Holocaust affect her if Great Britain went to war. She could remember seeing in pictures, people fleeing from Hitler in magazines but she never really thought much of it. She recalls that there were two magazines called, *Illustrator* and *Picture*. Vera could see pictures of refugees but it never really clicked in her head what was actually going on. She said the radio played a big part as she could hear some news coverage about the Germans going to Poland.

When did you first learn about this? How old were you? Where were you living then?

“I learned about everything at a much later time” Vera first learned about the Holocaust when she was 11 or 12 years of age, whilst living in Coventry, England.

What information did you receive?

They talked about it a lot in school and that’s how she got to learn some additional information. The most information she received

was from two Jewish girls that came to her school. The sad thing is, their parents had sent them there as they knew the two girls fate. “When these girls came, it suddenly became very real to me. I remember looking at them as though they were different from the rest of us. That’s how they looked anyways” Vera just remembers the girls telling her about how their parents had left them and gone to Poland. Vera said to me while shaking her head, “While I was in school I remember hearing Hitler on the radio saying: You cannot have butter but you can have guns”

This was something that, stuck out in her mind.

Did you learn more later? How much later?

Vera believed they began to learn more and more each day. When the army went through to the camps, Vera said stories began coming through to them about people going to their death.

What was their reaction to what they learned?

(Vera breathes in deeply and there’s a long silence while she sits back in her chair and thinks back in time) “I was shocked and in disbelief. Most of us were” Vera said they couldn’t believe that people were put through the most horrific things. At the time the Holocaust was taking place, England was at war and people knew that they had to worry about winning it before the could start trying to save people. Vera said even though she had been through some horrible things, nothing like that had thankfully happened to her so she was in a way, unsure of the stories. People were in great disbelief. “I know this is a very selfish thing to say, but at the time, I was more worried about people that belonged to my country”

What was known about the Holocaust in Great Britain before 1945?

Vera replied by saying the government knew a lot however they didn’t tell people in Great Britain. What was happening as they didn’t want to alarm them. “We had to worry about our country first which was at war” Vera Lewis made this statement because





Vera Lewis with her husband Ronald Lewis

she mentioned that, one of the biggest problems that people had to deal with, was the fact that no one could do anything about these horrific acts. Vera says you can't stop someone who is so determined like Hitler was. The government realized, if they told people what they knew it wouldn't be of much use anyways, as they couldn't help the Jews and others involved. However people knew what Hitler was doing and stories from the Red Cross kept appearing. Vera mentioned, the government was also afraid that if they said anything too horrific, their nation might be demoralized.

Did people talk openly about the Holocaust? What were their attitudes, their reactions?

(Vera takes a deep breath in, and shakes her head) "People were shocked and outraged. We couldn't understand why such intelligent people, because the Jews are known to be, would be sentenced to death when they could be of so much use" she said waving her hands around. Vera told me that people were upset about the fact that these innocent people hadn't done anything wrong. For Vera, the most upsetting time was the Burning of the Books, because Hitler was trying to take everything away from these people and have it all to himself. "Hitler wanted to spoil everything, the whole of Europe. He was incredibly selfish" she said in anger. Overall people just felt extremely helpless. People were depressed however they still spoke openly about it. Vera said when the soldiers went into the camps; it was a huge revelation to her and others. "Deep down we knew something was wrong but it seemed like no one wanted to believe it."

Vera was shocked to learn about such things and she didn't react as a grown up would. She couldn't comprehend being

hounded by people that frightened you. Vera justifies her emotions by saying, when a person is 11 or 12 years old; they are not mature or sophisticated enough to handle something like the Holocaust. Vera said she couldn't bare it and she was just overwhelmed with emotion.

Did you ever meet a Holocaust survivor?

Vera only knows two friends of hers, both of which family died.

Did you're parents or relatives/friends talk about this subject? What did they say?

"Yes, all the time" she laughs. Vera recalls that people were very keen to do what they could to help, especially her family. If there was any appeal, they would try and gather as many things possible so they could send it to the people in the camps. However, because their was a shortage of food in England, they couldn't really send any. This made Vera upset as it was one of the only things that would keep them going. Vera said the only worry they had when sending it with the army was that, they were worried if it would even reach the people in need as the German armies didn't play fair.

After having this interview, Vera Lewis says the one thing she hopes, is that we never have to relive history again. She's deeply saddened by what's going on in the world right now in places like Iraq and Baghdad. Vera says she can't see why people can't just talk and why war and killing people is the only solution. However she realizes that the only way to deal with it is to go to war in today's time. Vera said she wants Germans to know that they shouldn't feel ashamed or feel that they are to be blamed in anyway.

"While I was in school I remember hearing Hitler on the radio saying: You cannot have butter but you can have guns"