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A program of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation

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Pictured right:
Pinat Hatikvah, A Corner of Hope – an outdoor space dedicated to life after the Holocaust, situated on the Milwaukee Jewish Federation's Karl Jewish Community Campus in Whitefish Bay.

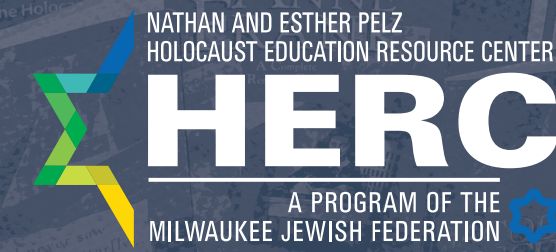
Our Mission

The Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) is dedicated to building a better world, embracing diversity, and confronting racism and hatred by teaching the lessons of the Holocaust.



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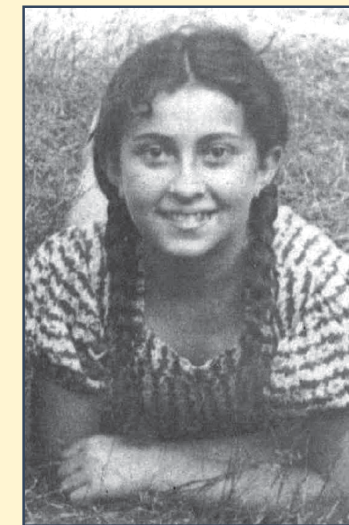


The Nathan & Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center

WINTER 2018 NEWSLETTER

Rose Keeps Smiling

Rose Cygler was born in the small town of Strzemieszyce, Poland, on March 18, 1923, to Yachet and Yosel Cygler. She was the oldest of three brothers and a sister, and enjoyed a happy and loving childhood. When the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, life changed quickly and dramatically. Many of their non-Jewish neighbors, whom they had grown up with, turned their backs on Rose's family. For more than two years, they lived under the oppression of the Nazis. In 1942, Nazi soldiers came to their door and assured them that if one family member "volunteered" to work in a labor camp, the rest of the family would remain safe. Rose, being the oldest, told her parents to stay with her siblings, and she "volunteered" to save her family. When, soon after the Nazi lie became apparent, her father was sent to Buchenwald concentration camp and her mother and siblings were murdered in Auschwitz.



12 year old Rose



15 year old Rose

After being transported to numerous work camps and surviving hard labor, starvation, and typhus, Rose was liberated from Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp by the English army on April 15, 1945. At 22 years old, she did everything she could to find her family. She heard that her father was in a hospital in Buchenwald concentration camp. On the train ride there, she met the man who was to become her husband, Arthur Chrustowski. They both went to see Rose's father, who died of typhus soon after.

Rose and Arthur married in Germany in September 1945. They traveled back to Poland together to see if they could find any members of their families, but, tragically, no one but them had survived. Several years later, in Germany, their first daughter was born, and in 1949 they emigrated to the United States and settled in Milwaukee. With no finances, no trade, no family, and only speaking Yiddish, they worked hard and raised a family of three daughters. Rose worked alongside Arthur to help support their family. When they were able to buy a grocery store, she worked long hours there while still cooking and taking care of their children.

The Holocaust survivors in Milwaukee became Rose and Arthur's extended family. They loved going out, traveling, spending time with friends, and en-

joying life. Rose got pleasure from cooking the many ethnic dishes she had learned from her mother and grandmother in Poland, and their home was always filled with friends and food. Her specialty was gefilte fish made from scratch, which she shared with her family and a few fortunate friends every holiday.

When their children were grown, Rose and Arthur bought a second home in Florida and loved spending winters there. Arthur passed away in 1998, and Rose, devastated, found the strength to go on without the love of her life. She joined the JCC and became a regular in the water aerobics class. She spent time with her family and went out often with her friends.



Newlyweds, 1946

As Rose approaches her 95th birthday, she is blessed with her three daughters, 5 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren, and many friends. If you see her walking down the halls of Chai Point, you will always see a big smile on her face!



Rose & Arthur's 50th Anniversary, 1995



A program of the
Jewish Community Foundation of
the Milwaukee Jewish Federation

We thank **Cantor Karen & Elliot Berman** for helping to secure the future of Holocaust education in Wisconsin.

"We believe that the most effective barrier to repeating the terrible events of the past is effective education in the present. That is how we can ensure that "we will never forget" and why we made a legacy gift to the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center. With this gift we honor the memory of Karen's mother and grandparents who survived the Holocaust, as well as those family members who did not."

For more information on Legacy giving to HERC, contact **Dr. Shay Pilnik** at ShayP@MilwaukeeJewish.org



From the Chair & Executive Director

As two members of the leadership team of the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center, we are proud to present you with the newest edition of our newsletter. We hope that, like all the programs and activities that we run throughout the year, you will find its content both thought-provoking and inspiring.

Thanks to our survivors, second generation speakers, Holocaust educators and the many volunteers and donors who have followed in their footsteps, our organization has witnessed tremendous growth in recent years: in public interest in the Holocaust, in our programs' quality and quantity, and in our outreach to over 21,000 students and adults across the state of Wisconsin. When surveying the gamut of programs that we have run since our last newsletter, it is hard not to be impressed by the power of HERC. From Linda Hooper's compelling presentation on the Paperclip Project before 400 Milwaukee area middle and high school students at Congregation Shalom, through Bill Marks' workshop and talk about the history of Holocaust reparations and property restitution, to our current series on the Holocaust in Greece—these are mere examples of the potency of our organization and its commitment to education.

Thanks to the generosity of our community and its support of HERC's critical mission—to build a better world, predicated on the values of tolerance and diversity, dignity and respect to all human beings—we have been able to make some significant additions to our staff that we would like to introduce to you in this newsletter. This team building process has taken years to materialize, but both of us are now pleased and confident that this superb team can face the challenges waiting our community and society.

Here at HERC, we appreciate every day how lucky we are to live in a country in which the values of democracy and freedom are cherished, though we do know that anti-Semitism, racism and hatred still lurk and must be confronted whenever they grow unchecked. We view the work we do, through our survivor speakers and volunteer educators, as our own local effort that is linked with similar Holocaust education programs taking place all over the world. We are here to be the mouthpieces of the victims of the Holocaust,

of survivors who can no longer bear witness to their stories of suffering and perseverance. For those who survived the Shoah, not only were they scarred for life, but as the world could not bear to remember, they could not bear to forget. After the Six Day War, remembrance of the Holocaust became central to American Jewish consciousness. When Elie Wiesel's book "Night" was published, it allowed many non-Jews to draw close to Wiesel and through him, to confront the Holocaust.

Today, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. is a focal point of Holocaust Remembrance, but many do not know of the long struggle to build this memorial. The museum will forever serve as a warning about the dangers of unchecked hatred. We recognize the profound impact of both national and international Holocaust education organizations. Yet, this is not enough—and it is thanks to local Holocaust organizations like HERC, that Holocaust education can reach both public and parochial schools, communities in the inner city and suburbs as well as small towns throughout our state. When all is said and done, we ALL bear the responsibility to carry on the legacy of "NEVER AGAIN." We hope that you recognize the value that HERC adds to our community and that you consider volunteering or supporting our critical mission.



Arleen Peltz



Dr. Shay Pilnik

Arleen

Arleen Peltz,
Chair

Shay

Dr. Shay Pilnik,
Executive Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

Wednesday, March 14

Monkey Business: The Adventures of Curious George's Creators: Film & Talk-Back

7pm | Congregation Shalom

From fleeing Nazi Germany on handmade bicycles to encounters with exotic animals in Brazil, the Reys lived the lives of adventure that are reflected in the pages of one of the most treasured children's book series of all time.
Co-Sponsor: Congregation Shalom

Sunday, March 18

The Journey that Saved Curious George: dThe True Wartime Escape of Margret & H.A. Rey

2pm | Congregation Shalom

In 1940, Hans and Margret Rey fled their Paris home as the German army advanced. They began their harrowing journey on bicycles, pedaling to Southern France with children's book manuscripts among their few possessions.
Co-Sponsor: Congregation Shalom

Tuesday, March 20

Celebrating the Legacy of Archbishop Theophilos Damaskinos

7pm | Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church

This special lecture marks the 75th anniversary of the historic letter written by Archbishop Damaskinos, Archbishop of Greece during WWII, protesting the Nazis' treatment of the Jews of Greece.

Co-Sponsors: Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago, Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

Wednesday, March 21

The Sidney & Nina Widell Memorial Series: A Staged Reading of Chiune Sugihara: Unsung Hero of the Holocaust

7pm | Cardinal Stritch University

The play looks at the life of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat who served a Vice-Consul for Japan in Lithuania, who saved several thousand Jews by issuing transit visas so they could travel to Japan. This program will be followed by the testimony of a Sugihara survivor, Chaya Small.
Co-Sponsors: Cardinal Stritch University, Jewish Home & Care Center Foundation, Ovation Communities

APRIL

Sunday, April 8

Holocaust Stories: In their Honor featuring Renata Laxova

10am | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Daniel M. Soref Community Hall
Join us as we listen to the survival stories of members of the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center's Speakers Bureau.
Co-Sponsor: Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

Thursday, April 12

Radical Evil: Film & Talk-Back

7pm | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Daniel M. Soref Community Hall

This film is a close-up look at the Einsatzgruppen – ordinary men who were responsible for murdering 2 million Jews with rifles and bullets in Eastern Europe during World War II.

Co-Sponsor: Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

Sunday, April 15

Community Yom Hashoah

3pm | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Daniel M. Soref Community Hall
Co-Sponsors: Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC, Milwaukee Jewish Federation

Thursday, May 17

Censored Realities: Holocaust Correspondence from Ghettoes & Camps

7pm | Jewish Museum Milwaukee

Co-Sponsor: Jewish Museum Milwaukee, a program of Milwaukee Jewish Federation

JUNE

Sunday, June 3

From the Holocaust to Civil Rights

4pm | Jewish Museum Milwaukee

Co-Sponsor: Jewish Museum Milwaukee, a program of Milwaukee Jewish Federation

For more information contact: Brittany R. Hager McNeely,
Director of Education & Engagement

414-963-2714 | BrittanyH@MilwaukeeJewish.org
HolocaustCenterMilwaukee.org

We would like to thank the following people for supporting the **Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center** in 2017.

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Knowledge Alone Isn't the Solution

By Dr. Dan Haumschild

We have heard the phrase 'never again' so many times. As a species, we commit atrocious acts with such regularity that these two words seem always to be on our lips, echoing back and forth across the globe. It seems unfathomable that such a simple command would be so difficult to obey, and yet the evidence runs in contrast to our expectation and the 'never agains' just keep on coming.

Popular rationale suggests that we keep repeating the past because we haven't learned enough about it, or that elucidation on historical instances of tragedy has not reached an adequate number of individuals to prevent them from hurtling toward their own catastrophes. Indeed, we often couple 'never again' with 'never forget'. This reasoning puts a lot of stock in memory, recollection, and history. These receptacles of the past, when accessed by the human race, will serve as a kind of tyranny firewall, if only we could build it fast enough so that everyone was protected.

I find this perspective unconvincing, however. It may seem odd for an educator with a vested interest in Holocaust and genocide education, but I wholeheartedly believe that knowing about the past does almost nothing to positively change the present or the future. It is my contention that we have popularly missed the boat on this recurrently-urgent issue. I believe, furthermore, that the coupling of 'never againing' by 'never forgetting' is partly to blame for this tragic misstep. Mostly, this has to do with how we collectively engage in the process of 'remembering'; for our emphasis tends to be oriented toward the acquisition of data and the subsequent memorization of facts, events, and numbers complimented by a fear of failure.

In my view, regardless of the amount of data one collects about the Holocaust they will be no more equipped to act in opposition to the next 'never again' moment. Imagine that someone could, in fact, learn everything there was to know about the Holocaust—all human experiences, all political gestures, all military strategies, all resistance movements, all of the death. What then? What is to be done with this memorized material?

Certainly a computer can do the work of collecting and collating far better than any human being, and yet we are loathe to rely on computational devices to ensure the progress of humanity. We know very well that the amount of data that a machine learns will not enable it to be a positive actor in our community. Yet when we think about genocide education for the benefit of humans we often treat the issue as if it is computational in nature, attempting to turn ourselves into reservoirs of boundless information that will serve



Dan Haumschild

as the firewall. But like any learning machine, the data that we consume about the past will not help us resist wrongdoing, writ large. The problem of genocide is not informational, it is interactive and interpersonal. Sheer knowledge of the past will not save us from reenacting it.

In Rwanda today, I see this strategy playing out. Citizens young and old are taught about the past via rote memorization and military-inspired techniques. Through this forceful uploading of information, the government expects that individuals will also act differently than before. But the method teaches as much as the data. Information is being transmitted, but so are models for following orders, obeying authority, and responding 'correctly' rather than critically to challenges. These day to day practices are strikingly similar to the practices of everyday life under the genocidal regime who wished to consolidate power. The information may be different, but the manner of dealing with this information remains the same. Perhaps this is why President Kagame won his third presidential term with 98.8% of the vote in 2017.

To resist the recurrence of genocide, we must establish better practices of interaction—with a text, with a teacher, with one another. Since genocide is a problem of community, we should use the classroom to establish models of critical thought, self-reflectiveness, and interpersonal engagement that distinguish themselves from the tragic eras of our past. Rather than focusing so steadfastly on the acquisition of the correct information, we should use what we know to challenge ourselves rather than soothe ourselves, to look for our blind spots, to recognize that we don't have all the answers, and to see that what is correct isn't always determined by someone with benevolent aims.

Today, we have more information—and certainly more access to information—than ever before. But when we are honest with ourselves we may realize that we have not made a clean break with the tendencies that were part of our past. We have not yet shed the habits of categorization, dehumanization, and bias that make us vulnerable, especially in times of crisis, to fear, fanaticism or the next charismatic, power hungry leader.

We know more, but we're still relying on the same programs, the same patterns, the same models of community. As teachers, then, we have to find ways to empower our students to use the information they obtain to do what is right rather than simply know what is correct.

Dr. Dan Haumschild is HERC's Holocaust Education Fellow at Cardinal Stritch University. He is an expert on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda.



A billboard in Butare, Rwanda commemorating 18th anniversary of the genocide.

Meet the staff

My name is Kari Altman and I am excited to be HERC's new Coordinator of Outreach & Public Relations. I live in Mequon with my husband Michael, and we are the proud parents of our sons, Jack and Justin. I grew up in the Milwaukee area, and graduated from University School of Milwaukee. I then became a licensed Wisconsin educator after graduating from the University of Wisconsin—Madison.

Throughout the years, I have taught elementary school students in both public and private schools. I currently teach second grade religious school every Sunday at Congregation Shalom in Fox Point. I have been happy to serve on a number of boards, including Congregation Shalom and the Milwaukee Jewish Free Loan Association, of which I am currently President. I also served on the Board of Directors of the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) for three years.

One thing I am particularly proud of is that I founded and have coordinated a new Holocaust Speaker Series, partnered by both HERC and Congregation Shalom. We have held three annual speaking events since 2015, drawing hundreds of attendees, as well as presentations by our speakers to many local schoolchildren. Our fourth annual event is being held on Sunday, March 18, when we welcome Louise Borden, the children's author of the book, "The Journey That Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H.A. Rey."



Kari Altman

As of Nov. 20, 2017, I began working for HERC as the Coordinator of Outreach and Public Relations. After volunteering for three years, I'm thrilled to now be a part of HERC's professional team! This position has already allowed me the wonderful opportunity to reach out far and wide, making sure that as many people as possible in our community and all over Wisconsin know about the educational programs and resources that HERC has to offer.

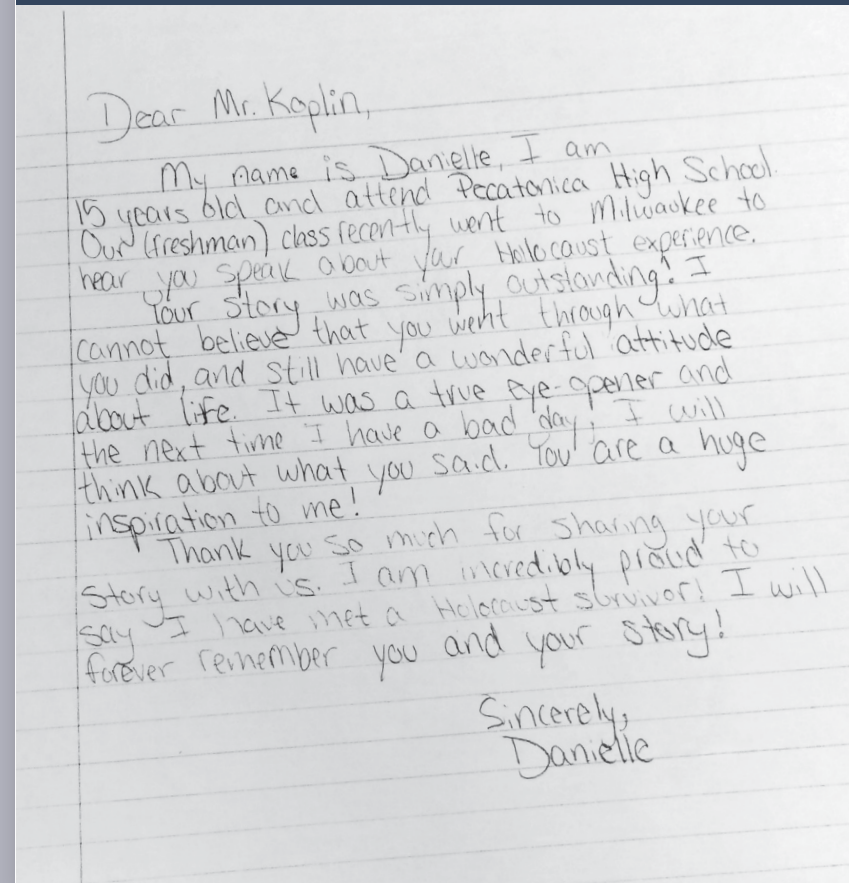
I'm Judy Tiffany O'Hara; originally from a very small town in NW Iowa. Due to my father's service in the Navy, a Pearl Harbor Survivor of Dec 7, 1941 on the West Virginia, and my being in the USMC and WI Army National Guard, for a combined total of 30 years between us, I have lived in 10 states and visited 17 countries. Now I am anxiously looking forward to my first visit to Israel this summer of 2018. Israel, a country my father continually spoke about and said, "Stand for Israel—ALWAYS!"

Working for the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center as their Administrative Assistant has provided me with opportunities to work with wonderful bosses; to learn new office skills; meet many, many amazing people, especially our community seniors with so much knowledge to share; help to honor Holocaust Survivors and their families; and work with programs that further Holocaust studies. Also, volunteering in the Ovation Jewish Home Gift Shop and Habitat for Humanity has allowed me to engage with individuals I have come to love and respect. Volunteering has given my life a richer purpose. Life is good—life is happy.



Judy O'Hara

FROM IGNORANCE & FEAR TO KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING



Speakers Bureau member Louis Koplin speaks to students from Milwaukee, Racine, Whitefish Bay, and Pecatonica at Congregation Shalom as a part of HERC's From Ignorance & Fear to Knowledge & Understanding: Jews, Judaism, and the Holocaust field trip.

Lager Shvester לאגער שוועסטער

by Steven L. Russek

During the summer of 2017, I was struggling a bit with my latest personal challenge when a flyer from HERC arrived at my home. You see, I had agreed to become a speaker for HERC and I was struggling with just how to share my mother Dora's z"l story of Shoah survival with complete strangers. No easy task!

The flyer announced that Elaine Culbertson would be at the JCC to talk about "Making Connections: How Family Stories Help Us Teach about the Holocaust." Elaine is the Executive Director of the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Teachers' Program. Well, I thought I had hit the jackpot; who better to learn from than a person dedicated to teaching teachers. My wife Myra and I were now looking forward to Elaine's talk.

Elaine's talk was perfect pedagogically; she used the story she built of her mother Dora Freilich's account of survival to teach others how to communicate this difficult subject. The talk was great. It was also hauntingly similar to my mom's story – they shared the same first name, they came from the same region in Poland (Elaine's mom from Pruzany and my mom from Grodno), they had arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau just weeks apart, both had survived by working on personal belongings of Jews murdered by the Germans, both had survived the evacuation to Ravensbruck, the subsequent Death March, and they had both then returned to Poland and had married in joint wedding ceremonies – it was bizarre, to say the least.

Myra and I introduced ourselves to Elaine after the talk. I shared the similarities between our mothers' respective accounts with Elaine. It soon turned into intergenerational Jewish Geography with a connectivity that I only experience with other Children of Shoah Survivors ... that unexplainable bond formed by shared, yet unspoken, understanding.

One thing led to another. I asked Elaine, "Where did your folks live when they immigrated to the US?" "East New York in Brooklyn," she said. I said, "Really? What street?" "Georgia Avenue," she replied. As I had not been born during the time period we were discussing, I called my older brother Mike and we compared our respective addresses on the spot. I was stunned! Our families had lived down the street from one another. We felt that they must have known each other, but we had no real proof, and everyone we might have been able to ask was gone. Elaine and I resolved to stay in touch and explore this further.

Months later, November I think, Elaine reached out to me and we spoke by phone. She asked, "Are you sitting down?" "Yes," I said. Elaine told me that in going through her mother's belongings during preparation for redoing her den, she came across information that her mom was interviewed in the early 1980s by researchers at Gratz College. Although she had access to the tape but no tape



Dora and Shimon Russek



Dora and Bernie Freilich

player, she was able to obtain a copy of the transcript. Elaine then recounted her mother Dora's testimony:

Dora Freilich: "I was with a girl that was not from my town and she was from Grodno, Poland, and she was in our ghetto [barrack] ... And her name was Dora, too, and we, for a little time, shared our life. We slept on the same bunk together and we shared our food together and she used to tell me, "You'll see. We live. I have an uncle in America, and he is a big actor, and we will come to him. He is my uncle and you will see, we will have it so good." Her uncle was an actor. ... He played in Papirosin. Jewish stage, yes. I don't think he's alive now. He played in Papirosin. ... And she said, "You'll see. He will be so good to us because he always sends us money. The families did help. He sends us for every yomtov and he sends us money and we have something to live on. We'll be with him. He lives in Brooklyn. ..."

Interviewer: "It sounded like heaven."

Dora Freilich: "It sounded like heaven. It gave me a little bit of hope, and there was very little left. ... Yablokoff. That is the name of the famous actor that I knew."

Well I was stunned. Herman Yablokoff was my mother's uncle, and they were reunited in a Displaced Person's Camp in 1946. It was now clear that the two Doras knew one another. The relationship between them was significant as Dora Freilich's testimony mentioned few women explicitly by name. After more conversation regarding the relationship between our moms and their experience, we resolved, once again, to stay in contact.

In the following months, I continued my preparation for my HERC talk. I reviewed my mom's Shoah Foundation video from 1996, where she recounts events related to avoiding selection in Block 25.

Dora Russek: "I could have told them [German officers] I was burning [fever from typhus] ... But at the moment, I said I have a problem with a leg, so, me, and another Dora, from Pruzany, not far from Bialystok, really, I meet her every winter in Florida, and two girls from Czechoslovakia, they called the Blockalteste [person in-charge] from the Revier [camp infirmary], I was there six weeks, why didn't they take me [to gas chambers], ... I have no answer to those things..."

Clearly, Dora Freilich had helped my mom survive and they remained friends in America. In another audio tape, from 1988, my mother recalls similar events and states, "They picked a girl from Pruzany, her name is also Dora, incidentally, I know her very well...we lived here on the same block in East New York coming to America."

Well, there you have it. Dora Russek (née Yablonik) and Dora Freilich (née Golubowicz) became Lager Shvester, Camp Sisters, in Birkenau. They brought hope and help to one another, became neighbors in America, and remained friends for years thereafter. Seventy-four years later Dora Freilich's daughter appears out of nowhere to help me tell my mom's story to strangers.

A tale of the Shoah ...

A LOOK BACK...



In December, HERC – in partnership with Cardinal Stritch University and Milwaukee Public Schools – hosted 40 middle and high school teachers from the Milwaukee Public School District in a free, full-day teacher training workshop led by Dr. Mary Johnson of Facing History and Ourselves.



HERC honored two outstanding volunteers, Betty Chrustowski and Dr. Richard Lux, in its sold-out November event—HERC Impacts the World—which featured renowned keynote speaker Maziar Bahari.



Students from Eastbrook Academy in Milwaukee with Holocaust Survivor Raye David following their HERC Educator led tour of Holocaust By Bullets in April.



Following the tremendous success of the Holocaust Stories: In Their Honor series, HERC launched a “spin-off” of this powerful program called Holocaust Stories at the Cathedral. In September, HERC’s immediate past Chair Bev Greenberg interviewed Susie Fono, who survived the Holocaust as a child in Nazi occupied Budapest, as a part of this new series hosted by the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in their beautiful atrium.



In September, students from Bader Hillel Academy and Milwaukee Jewish Day School worked together, exploring Jewish life before Kristallnacht in a program called Repairing the Glass.



At Congregation Shalom in April, Linda Hooper spoke to hundreds of community members and students about her experience as the principal of Whitwell Middle School in Tennessee, where her students embarked on the Paper Clips Project to better grasp the magnitude of the Holocaust.

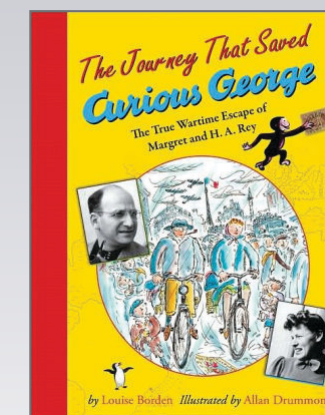


At a special luncheon in September, HERC thanked its members of the Speakers Bureau for their tireless efforts in sharing their personal testimonies to thousands across the state of Wisconsin every year.

...and AHEAD



Join us on Sunday, April 8 at the Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC as we listen to the testimony of Speakers Bureau member Renata Laxova, who was rescued during the Holocaust as a part of Sir. Nicholas Winton's Kindertransport.



that Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret & H. A. Rey.”



This year's Sidney & Nina Widell Memorial Lecture – to take place on Wednesday, March 21 at Cardinal Stritch University – features a staged reading of *Chiune Sugihara: Unsung Hero of the Holocaust*, which will look at the life of the Japanese diplomat who helped save several thousand Lithuanian Jews during the Holocaust by issuing travel visas. The play will be followed by the testimony of a Sugihara survivor, Chaya Small.