

Nathan & Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center

A program of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Arleen Peltz, *Chair*
 Bill Appel
 Bruce Arbit
 Danny Amstein
 Gene Bass
 Dr. Rachel Baum
 Ronna Bromberg Pachefsky
 Gitta Chaet
 Betty Chrustowski
 Dave Fantle
 Bev Greenberg
 Jodi Habush Sinykin
 Nancy Kennedy Barnett
 Becky Komisar
 Mary Jo Layden

STAFF:

Dr. Shay Pilnik, *Executive Director*
 Brittany R. Hager McNeely,
Director of Education
 Dr. Dan Haumschild, *Holocaust Fellow*
 Kari Altman, *Coordinator of
 Outreach & Public Relations*
 Judy O'Hara, *Administrative Assistant*
 Sara Sillars, *Educator*

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.



The Nathan & Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center

SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER

Defying Death, Embracing Love: Lessons in the Pursuit of Good Fortune

By Julie Gorens-Winston



Nate Taffel was born illegally in Radamysl, Poland, on May 17, 1928: He was illegal because he was Jewish, born in a country that did not recognize Jewish weddings and outlawed Jewish families with more than two children. Nate was the youngest of ten siblings with five different last names, born into love, surrounded by hate.

Nate's father was a successful farmer, and his family lived comfortably in a small Polish farming community until

1925, when it was time for his four older sisters to marry. Radomysl had single Jewish men and matchmakers, and Nate's family had land, so Nate's family set aside 10 hectares of land as a dowry for each daughter and moved to Radomysl, where

they opened a store exchanging wheat for flour. Nate's house was the biggest in Radamysl, with a kitchen so large that Nate could ride his tricycle from one end to the other. His parents bought him pigeons to play with, and his older sisters pushed him around in his little red wagon. Every holiday, his family, including his sisters and their families, gathered at his house to celebrate, and Nate was loved and cherished.

For a while, Nate's family's wealth and his father's farm expertise shielded them from corruption and anti-Semitism: 25 Zlotys to the Polish police covered the ticket for their "smelly" outhouse, and 25 more Zlotys protected their furniture from being confiscated. The Bishop of Radamysl asked Nate's father for advice when his cattle or horses were sick, and in exchange, the Taffel family Sukkah was protected while the other Sukkahs in town were desecrated by stone-throwing Polish neighbors. Ultimately, the Taffel's wealth and reputation were not enough to shield Nate from hate. Nate was taunted in school for being a Jew, and when he asked what it meant to be a Jew, his parents told him not to worry. They didn't know he listened behind his parents' closed bedroom door, as Jews from neighboring towns recounted the atrocities from which they fled. Nate's mother sent his brother on a "tour" to Argentina, while the rest of the family waited and hoped.

Hope was crushed in September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland and, after two weeks,

Poland surrendered. Nate remembers hiding in his basement, hearing the echoes of the Wehrmacht Army's steel boots as they marched down the street to his house, and he will never forget his first view of Nazi madness after he crept upstairs to witness his father being beaten by commanding officer for the crime of asking if he could be of assistance. At 11 years old, Nate learned what it meant to be a Jew.

Understanding the consequences of his faith did not quell Nate's curiosity. When the Nazis announced that Jews age 13 or older had to wear yellow arm bands with the Star of David, Nate took advantage of youth's anonymity and rode his bike around town, witnessing Jewish neighbors shot and killed for hiding their silver and jewelry and SS soldiers removing facial hair from orthodox men by burning their scalps and cheeks. He wondered about the purpose of the truck with the rear glass panel, which he later learned was the receptacle for the disabled, who were dumped inside and gassed. Nate escaped death for his first time after he rode his bike to say goodbye to his brother, Leon, who was sent to a hall to await transport, and the SS soldier complied with Leon's pleas not to shoot his younger brother.

For a while Nate was consumed by memories and hatred, until one day, he decided that he had not survived the Nazi's barbarity only to be killed on the inside by self-pity and spite, and so, Nate vowed that he would never forgive or forget, but that he would never again be consumed by hate.

In 1940, Nate's parents, hearing rumors that the Nazis were planning to liquidate Radamysl, decided to leave. Knowing that other Poles would report anyone who committed the crime of hiding Jews, they refused their store manager's offer to hide in his attic, and instead, at midnight, they snuck out in a covered wagon, bound for the Jewish ghetto in Tarnow, where Nate's sister lived. Soon after arriving, the Taffel family learned that the Jews who remained in Radomysl had been murdered or sent to death camps and that the Nazis were planning the same fate for the Jews in Tarnow. One night, Nate's brother-in-law woke Nate and his sister and told them to put on their coats because they were going on a trip. He warned them not to talk or cough as he hid them under canvas tarps on the back of a truck bound for the labor camp of Smoczka. As 12 year old Nate climbed into the truck, he spotted his parents behind the crack of a partially closed door, and he could neither cry nor say goodbye.

At Smoczka, Nate helped construct roads for the German Army. He worked tirelessly, despite his meager rations, two pieces of bread and one bowl of soup each day. Nate remembers his lucky day, when the SS officer's horse broke his leg, so the officer shot the horse, and that night, the Jews feasted on horsemeat. Every day, the Nazi guards lined up the workers and chose the weakest, to be shot and killed. One day the guard selected Nate, but his



Continued on page 6



Milwaukee Jewish Federation, Inc.
 1360 N. Prospect Ave.
 Milwaukee, WI 53202-3094

NON-PROFIT
 ORGANIZATION
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 MILWAUKEE, WI
 PERMIT NO. 5632

The Impact of Antisemitism | Continued from page 6

member of HERC's speakers bureau, Eva Zaret, who shared her incredible story of survival during the Holocaust. To her, and our delight, she received a standing ovation from the students who were clearly moved by her story.

Now in my third year as a volunteer educator for the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC), I was honored to be invited, alongside another one of HERC's volunteer educators Sandy Brusin, to visit Baraboo as one of these guest speakers and speak with the students about the impact of antisemitism. Throughout the day Sandy and I met with a total of ten groups of students to discuss prejudice, hatred, symbols, anti-Semitism, and the effects of victimization on targeted groups. Sandy and I each spoke of our own clashes with antisemitism, including defining antisemitism and anti-Judaism. We talked about the power of symbols and words even when they are not directly aimed at us. Sandy recalled vivid memories as a small child of her mother's tears when their family visited her father's grave which had been desecrated with swastikas. As a child Sandy wanted to know why the people who damaged her father's gravestone and his picture affixed to it hated her daddy. More tears were her only answer.

I spoke of my father's experience of liberating a labor camp in Breitenau, Germany and of the hundreds of dead which his division buried in mass graves. And of his flood of tears. I also told the students of my experience while walking down Michigan Avenue in Chicago, being called a "filthy

Jewish (expletive)" because I was wearing a yarmulke, and being spit on. My tears were of anger that day. We tried to instill in these students an understanding of what hatred does to the human soul and how symbols and words wound the human spirit. We answered questions like "Why the Jews?" "Did we personally lose anyone in the Holocaust?" "How many Jews survived?"

On the trip back to Milwaukee I recalled a poem I love by Edwin Markham which seemed to fit the day:

*"He drew a circle that shut me out-
 Heretic, a rebel, a thing to flout.
 But love and I had the wit to win:
 We drew a circle that took him in."*

I think I speak for Sandy and myself when I say that this day in Baraboo, as a volunteer educator for HERC, was an incredibly rewarding experience, a wonderful day, and truly "A Day of Peace." I hope that with time and continued work through HERC we will see that our words that day truly did draw "a circle that took him in."

From the Chair & Executive Director

As the leaders of the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center, representing both our dedicated staff and board members, we are pleased to share with you this spring newsletter. In it, we wished to highlight our accomplishments from the past season and invite you to attend our many upcoming powerful community programs. On both the community and school fronts, HERC has excelled this year in its capacity to grow and attract new students, teachers, volunteers, and donors. While Holocaust educational efforts in our community were initially conceived, as early as the 1960s within the confines of the Holocaust survivor community, the reality in the spring of 2019 is very different. We are now joined by survivors; children and grandchildren of survivors; American Jews whose ancestors settled in America long before WWII; and increasingly over the last couple of years, many non-Jews as well, all enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers and donors from all walks of life. For all of them, both HERC's founders and those who came recently on board, Holocaust Education and Remembrance are both a moral duty and call to action.

What compels ordinary residents of Milwaukee and Wisconsin to volunteer their time teaching for HERC, helping to promote our programs, or providing us with generous support? The answer to this question lies in HERC's unique educational approach – to look back at a dark past, in the present moment as the only way to guarantee the building of a better future world, in which all human beings are treated with respect and dignity. The past is what defines Holocaust remembrance. The future is what drives us forward. And the present moment provides us with both challenges and opportunities. There is perhaps no better example of this than one recent local incident, which infamously made it to both national and international news, when a group of about fifty high school students

from Baraboo, Wisconsin were photographed making the Nazi salute. While interpretations of why this happened have varied, it is hard to look at Baraboo as an isolated event at a time when antisemitic incidents across the nation and globe are surging on a level unprecedented since the end of the Holocaust. The shock that the Baraboo Nazi salute photo stirred in our community was alarming, no doubt. But at the same time, this was an incredibly powerful educational opportunity for the Baraboo community, when Holocaust survivor Eva Zaret and two of HERC's volunteer educators visited the school; spoke about the dangers of racism, bigotry, and hatred; and helped HERC to embark on an important relationship with this community.

By now, there is little doubt that we are living in a historic time, when bigotry and hatred are on the rise in our country. This sad reality may be frustrating, demoralizing, scary. At the same time, we must not forget that these challenging moments should motivate us to unite and work together in strengthening and expanding our capacity for meaningful Holocaust education. The power to change the world is in our hands and the most practical and valuable way to do so is through the power of education. Remember, Educate, Inspire. This is what HERC is all about.



Arleen Peltz, Chair



Dr. Shay Pilnik, Executive Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL Thursday, April 4 The Milwaukee Premiere of "The Last Cyclist"

7 pm | Nancy Kendall Theater – Cardinal Stritch University
Reconstructed and reimaged by Naomi Patz, "The Last Cyclist" is an absurdist cabaret written by Karel Svenk in the Theresienstadt Ghetto in 1944.
Co-Sponsors: Cardinal Stritch University, Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

Tuesday, April 9 Camp Sisters, Lager Shvester

7 pm | Congregation Shalom
Steve Russek and Elaine Culbertson will share the incredible story of how Steve's desire to better tell his mother's story led both of them to discover family connections which spanned decades.
Co-Sponsor: Congregation Shalom

Sunday, April 28 Holocaust Stories: In their Honor featuring Steen Metz

10 am | Daniel M. Soref Community Hall – Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC
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

Monday, April 29 "The Soap Myth" featuring Ed Asner

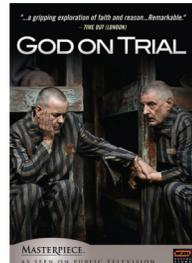
7 pm | Congregation Shalom
More than a half century after WW II at the desperate urging of a passionate survivor, a young investigative reporter finds herself caught between numerous versions of the same story.
Co-Sponsor: Congregation Shalom

Tuesday, April 30 "Daring to Resist" Film & Talk-back

7 pm | Rubenstein Pavilion – Ovation Jewish Home
In this gripping documentary, three Jewish women recall their lives as teenagers in occupied Holland, Hungary and Poland, when they refused to remain passive as the Nazis rounded up local Jewish populations.
Co-Sponsors: Jewish Museum Milwaukee, Ovation Jewish Home

MAY Thursday, May 2 "God on Trial" Film & Talk-back

7 pm | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC
A group of Auschwitz prisoners form a rabbinical court to debate whether G-d has broken his covenant with the Jews and how G-d can allow his people to suffer such misery and atrocities.
Co-Sponsor: Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC



Sunday, May 5 Yom HaShoah

3 pm | Daniel M. Soref Community Hall – Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC
Co-Sponsor: Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

Wednesday, May 8 'Don't Ever Say the End is Near & Hope is Gone:' Jewish Armed Resistance during the Holocaust

12 pm | Jewish Museum Milwaukee
Join Dr. Shay Pilnik for a lunch and learn as he discusses the challenges and moral dilemmas that these young brave men and women were facing, as they fought – starved, dazed and poorly armed – against one of the most murderous military powers in the history of humankind.
Co-Sponsor: Jewish Museum Milwaukee

Tuesday, May 14 "Defiant Requiem" Film & Talk-back

7 pm | Rubenstein Pavilion – Ovation Jewish Home
This feature-length documentary film tells the extraordinary, untold story of the brave acts of resistance by Jewish prisoners at Terezin during World War II.
Co-Sponsors: Jewish Museum Milwaukee, Ovation Jewish Home



For more information contact:
414-963-2710 | HolocaustCenterMilwaukee.org

We would like to thank the many wonderful supporters of the **Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center** in 2018.

- Andi Abraham
- Rabbi Steven & Gail Adams
- Joyce & Al Altman
- Kari & Michael Altman
- Anonymous Fund
- Anshe Sfard Kehillat Torah
- Bill Appel
- Lawrence & Sheila Appel
- Steven & Joy Appel
- Bruce & Tanya Arbit
- Brent & Kelly Arnold
- Art Arnstein
- Danny Arnstein
- Romaine & Melvin Backer
- Badger Ridge Middle School
- Melanie & Marcus Bandos
- David & Melissa Barnett
- Nancy & Jim Barnett
- Dr. Steve Baruch
- Don & Caren Bass
- Gene & Marilee Bass
- Beth Bauer
- Dr. Rachel Baum & Orrick Nahmmacher
- Colleen Beaman
- Stephen & Barbara Becker
- Al & Ruth Beder
- Jeff Beder
- Bill & Suzanne Berland
- Gene Berman
- Cantor Karen & Elliot Berman
- Brad & Kathy Bernstein
- Debbie & Aaron Bernstein
- Janice Bernstein
- Bernie & Beverly Berson
- Sanford & Shari Berson
- Bert & Patricia Steigleder Trust
- Bert & Marlene Bilsky
- Tauba Biterman
- Dave & Natalie Blais
- David & Marsha Blau
- Harriet Bocksbaum
- Barbara & William Bodner
- Anne Borkow
- Alan & Roberta Borsuk
- Dean Boyer
- Herbert Bratt
- Sandy Brehl
- Mary & David Brenzel-Chavez
- Mark & Cheryl Brickman
- Rabbi David & Sandy Brusin
- Felice & Barry Bruskin
- Allan & Susan Carneol
- Mitchell Carneol
- Gitta Chaet
- James Chafoulias
- Lauren & Margaret Charous
- Betty Chrustowski
- Clarice S. Turer Charitable Fund
- Christin Cleaver
- Edward & Mina Cohen
- Ronald & Maxine Cohn
- Adam Cooper
- Jo Ann Corrao
- Chris Cowles
- Carl Crawford & Hara Levy
- Sue DaBaco
- Dorothy Danforth
- Alan & Hedy Daniel
- Shelley Dean
- Robert & Cindy Deck
- Marsha & Sam Denny
- Jim & Penny Deshur
- Jerry & Marlene Deutsch
- Joe Devorkin
- Sara Dinin
- Merrick & Anita Domnitz
- Eileen & Howard Dubner
- Robert & Roxanne Dunkelberger Sanchez
- Elaine Durchslag
- Lynn Dziadulewicz
- Rodney & Helen Eglash
- Eve Eiseman
- Marilyn & Russell Eisenberg
- Bill & Karen Elliot
- Rebecca & Fred Emmerich
- Tobias & Miriam Enright
- Suzy Ettinger
- Debbie Fagan
- David & Cathy Fantle
- Randi Feiler
- Sandra Feiler
- Donald Feinsilver
- Howard & Beth Felix
- Bluma & Jon Fiscus
- Neena & Richard Florsheim
- Susie Fono
- Diane & Bill Forman
- Kristy Frank
- Howard Frankenthal
- Frances Franklin
- Freiss Lake School District
- Belle Anne Freund
- Irving Gaines
- Mark & Judy Garber
- Chad & Pamela Garcia
- Judy & Doug Garfinkel
- Devora Gelin
- Michael & Jan Gendlin
- Gene & Ruth Posner Foundation
- Cal & Rivka Gershowitz
- Roslyn Gill Heafitz
- Herbert Giller
- Sara Gimbel
- Jeffrey & Terri Gingold
- Ann Gladem
- Prina Goldfarb & Don Schoenfeld
- Judith Goodman
- Bob & Harriet Gordon
- Lisa & Jeffrey Gorelick
- Reesa & Irv Gottschalk
- Donald & Barbara Grande
- Marshall & Rene Gratz
- Bev & Marty Greenberg
- Marlene Gross-Ackeret
- Wendy Grossman
- Judy Guten
- Jodi Habush-Sinykin
- Jack Harris & Deborah Larkey
- Marcia Hecker
- Karen Hellman
- Jess Henrickson
- Herb Kohl Philanthropies
- Laurie Herman
- Sid & Suzanne Herszenon
- Lisa Hiller
- Barbara Himes
- Dr. Stuart Hoffman
- Dan Holahan
- Robin & Dina Irwin
- Harold & Adelyn Jacobsohn
- Dr. Peter & Jean Jacobsohn
- Alice & Jerome Jacobson
- Bonnie & Jack Jacobson
- Johnson Controls Foundation
- John Jones
- Diana Kahn
- Mary Kahn
- Rabbi Wes & Dr. Jessica Kalmer
- Harry & Elsie Kanin
- Kenneth & Julie Kapp
- Aaron Akiva & Elana Karan
- Debbie & Joe Kasle
- Moshe & Debra Katz
- Keith & Joanne Roberts Foundation
- Mary & Ted Kellner
- Henry & Joan Kerns
- Judi & Michael Ketten
- Alan & Betsy Kimmel
- Leo & Donna Kleiner
- Becky & Bill Komisar
- Martin & Gail Komisar
- Komisar Brady & Co, LLP
- Louis Koplin
- Alex Kor
- Pam Kriger
- Claire Kritzik Michelstetter
- Chris Laemmar
- Rabbi Yehoshua Landes
- Linda & Sheldon Lappin
- Muriel Lappin
- Lawrence Lauwasser
- Renata Laxova
- Donald & Barbara Layden
- Don & Mary Jo Layden
- Steven & Deborah Lechter
- Sheri & Lloyd Levin
- Micaela Levine & Thomas St. John
- Jacki Lewis & Richard Adduci
- Tobias & Cheryl Libber
- Ethel Lieberthal
- Jeffrey Lippow
- Dr. Paul Loewenstein & Jody Kaufman Loewenstein
- Richard & Roberta London
- Dr. Richard Lux
- Shelley London & Ehud Moscovitz
- Sheldon & Marianne Lubar
- Sari Luber
- Maureen Luddy
- Staci & Mark Maiman
- Jodi Majerus
- Susan Marcus
- Jonathan & Marjorie Margolies
- Robert & Wynne Markey
- Barbara Markoff & Jerry Kaster
- Marquette University
- Lorraine McGraw
- Marshall & Bonnie Medved
- Howard & Evelyn Melton
- Bernadette Mendoza
- Steen Metz
- Mark & Goldi Miller
- Dale Murai
- Mary & Terry Murphy
- Mark & Anita Nagurka
- Rosalie Neufeld & Tom Bush
- Neufeld Properties
- Judy O'Hara
- Dr. Monica Olague-Marchan
- Michael & Jennifer Opitz
- Miriam Orenstein & Marsha Loeb
- Judith Ormond
- David Pachefsky
- Ronna & Larry Pachefsky
- Richard & Leslie Paler
- Leonard & Gloria Parker
- Morris Parzen
- Lynne & Richard Pearson
- Dr. Neal Pease & Ewa Barczyk
- Adam & Laura Peck
- Peck Foundation, Milwaukee LTD.
- Bruce & Jeanette Peckerman
- Claudio & Sheryl Pelc
- Harry Pelman
- Arleen Peltz
- Arnie Peltz
- Joseph & Miriam Peltz
- Suzy Peltz
- Barry & Ellen Pelz
- Debra & Fred Pelz
- Jason Pelz
- Harry & Marilyn Pelz
- Dr. Shay Pilnik & Orlee Hauser
- Barbara Polland
- Carolyn Porter & Scott Perry
- Eric & Inna Pullin
- Edith Pump
- Shirley Raffe
- Ralph Evinrude Foundation, Inc
- Amos Rapoport
- Bonnie Rappaport
- Michael Reba
- Betsy & Bill Reilly
- Charles Rich
- Todd & Susan Richheimer
- Dr. Werner & Carol Richheimer
- Francis & Steve Richman
- Joshua Richman
- Joanne Roberts
- Rick & Joan Rocamora
- Evelyn & Harold Rosen
- Gerald & Anne Rosen
- Gayle Rosengren & Don Salm
- Edward & Micki Rosenthal
- Dorothy Rotter
- Dena Rubnitz
- Rachel Rudman
- Michael & Holly Russek
- Steven & Myra Russek
- Jeneene Safer
- Karen Samelson
- Scott & Peggy Sampson
- Michael & Lisa Sattell
- Eliot & Marylyn Scheurer
- Sandy Schmidt
- Alan Schneider
- Susie & Steve Schneiderman
- Howard & Susan Schoenfeld
- Judy & Gerald Schwerm
- Marsha Sehler
- Matt & Jenya Seigel
- Micki Seinfeld
- Dennis & Mary Anne Selby
- Neil & Edith Shafer
- Barbara Shafton
- Dr. Amy H. Shapiro
- Beth & Ronald Shapiro
- Rabbi Ron Shapiro
- Peter & Arlene Shelley
- Doris Shneiderman
- Brad & Marilyn Shovers
- Gladys Shukur
- Louis Siegel
- Debbie & Scott Silver
- Al & Barbara Simon
- Sharon Sinagub
- Les & Marcia Singer
- Lawrence Skor
- Mary Smith
- Susan & Oyvind Solvang
- Nita Soref
- St. Norbert College
- Jason Steigman
- Kenneth & Diana Stein
- Louise Stein
- David & Caryn Steinberger
- Florence Steinberger
- Jeff & Terry Stern
- Robert & Debra Stern
- James & Karen Strom
- Stephen & Rae Sweet
- Nate Taffel
- Carol & Michael Tarnoff
- Royal & Myra Taxman
- Libby Temkin
- Marilyn & Bob Teper
- Daniel Teplin
- Lillian Teplinsky
- Marty Thau
- Marvin & Barbara Tick
- Rodney & Dee Dee Ugent
- Leslie & Barry Usow
- Bruce & Anne Varick
- John & Fredlyn Viel
- Beth Ann & Anthony Waite
- William & Zeeland Walsh
- Elizabeth Ward
- Melanie & Russell Wasserman
- Sheldon & Wendy Wasserman
- Michael & Debra Watton
- Daniel & Shelley Weber
- WEC Energy Group
- Barbara Weiss
- Thomas & Esther Weiss
- Nancy Weiss-McQuide
- Judy & Steve Werlin
- Brenda & Craig Wichman
- Sue Wile
- Neil Willenson
- Gail Winograd
- James Winston & Julie Gorens-Winston
- Bernalee Winter
- Michael & Sylvia Winter
- Wendy & Marc Yanow
- Peggy Yee
- Irena Yundov & Jim Meldman
- Jean Yuspeh
- Marshall Zarem
- Eva Zaret
- Howard & Jane Zeff
- Dean & Debbie Zemel
- Frank & Lynne Zetman
- Andrea Zimmerman

A look back...

In early October, HERC hosted its first teacher training workshop with the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the Lux Center for Catholic Jewish Studies at Sacred Heart Seminary & School of Theology, providing middle and high school Catholic teachers with a free day of learning on the Holocaust and confronting antisemitism.



Interfaith leaders from across southeast Wisconsin came together with our community on Sunday, November 11, to remember 80 years since Kristallnacht.

Holocaust survivor Lee Marnett was interviewed by radio host Ben Merens on November 18 at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, as a part of the "Holocaust Stories at the Cathedral" series.



Holocaust survivor Eva Zaret shared her story of survival during the Holocaust as a partnership between HERC and the Young Leadership Division of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation.



In February at Congregation Emanu El B'ne Jeshurun, Michael Bornstein, one of the youngest survivors of Auschwitz, shared with nearly one thousand students and community members in Milwaukee and Baraboo, his family's experiences during the Holocaust, alongside his daughter Debbie Bornstein Holinstat.



Students from Bader Hillel Academy and Milwaukee Jewish Day School participated in Repairing the Glass, an exploration of Jewish life before Kristallnacht, facilitated in partnership with the Coalition for Jewish Learning of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation.



Sam Peltz, cousin of past HERC Chair Harry Pelz, shared with our community his incredible story of survival during the Holocaust as part of our "Holocaust Stories: In their Honor" series, a partnership with the Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC.



Students from local Milwaukee campuses gathered at Hillel Milwaukee for the third annual Holocaust Survivor Shabbat, where they heard from Speakers Bureau members Eva Zaret, Werner Richeimer, and Arleen Peltz.

...and ahead



Join us for the Milwaukee Premiere of "The Last Cyclist" on Thursday, April 4 at 7pm at Cardinal Stritch University's Nancy Kendall Theater.



On Tuesday, April 9 Steve Russek and Elaine Culbertson will share the remarkable stories of their mothers' survival during the Holocaust in the program Camp Sisters, Lager Shvester.



Join Dr. Shay Pilnik for a lunch and learn on Wednesday, May 8 when he will speak about Jewish armed resistance during the Holocaust at the Jewish Museum Milwaukee as a partnership with their exhibit Pictures of Resistance: "The Wartime Photographs of Jewish Partisan Faye Schulman".

The Impact of Antisemitism – HERC Educators at Baraboo High School

By Chris Cowles

In early November of 2018 a photograph emerged online of a group of young men from Baraboo High School in Baraboo, Wisconsin, dressed for prom, using the Nazi “Sieg Heil” salute and laughing. In the photo, which was taken months earlier, one student even seemed to flash what many have considered a white power sign as the photograph was taken. An uproar ensued as the photo, and angry responses to it, spread all the way to national and international media outlets. As a response to the incident, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial & Museum tweeted about the danger of “normalizing and accommodating hatred.” Interestingly, one of the early responses to this shocking image was that the students in it would not be punished, protected by their First Amendment rights.

In the weeks that followed, the Baraboo community, reeling from this shocking display and the surge of media surrounding it, worked to address the incident and provide opportunities for discussion and education. Invited by the Baraboo School District as an opportunity for its high school students to gain perspective on tolerance and diversity, speakers from very diverse backgrounds converged on December 18 to join about 800 students, teachers, and staff at Baraboo High School for a “Thunderbird Day of Peace.” The goal of this day was to create a circle of inclusiveness and understanding, not to criticize or berate. The group which gathered at Baraboo was not interested in punishment but rather in education and dialogue. The message to students was both simple and complex. Symbols which historically represent hate are more than distasteful – they are cruel, disrespectful to victims of hate, and often precursors to acts of hate and violence. How do you make teenagers understand the complexity and weight of such actions? To encourage these difficult discussions and student engagement, the media was intentionally

excluded from Baraboo’s Day of Peace to allow students to ask whatever questions they wanted without the fear of being quoted or misunderstood.

The day began with Arno Michaelis and Pardeep Kaleka, the first a former white supremacist and the second a Sikh whose father was murdered in Oak Creek at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin by a white supremacist in 2012. The two were, surprisingly, friends who met as the result of the tragic events at the Sikh Temple. In sharing their stories, Kaleka and Michaelis spoke of their journey to find trust and peace after hatred and how symbols and slogans are used to spur hate and violence. Throughout the day students also heard – in smaller rotating groups – from a lawyer who spoke about hate crimes, a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, and a Muslim individual each sharing their own experiences and perspective. Students also gathered to hear Holocaust survivor and a

Continued on back page



Chris Cowles, Volunteer Educator

Nate Taffel | *Continued from front page*

foreman pleaded that Nate was a good worker, and Nate’s life was spared. When construction of the roads was completed, Nate was transported to the labor camp, Mielec. Upon arrival, the camp tattooist, his equipment a piece of wood covered with cotton and nails, branded Nate’s forearm with the letters, “K” and “L,” for “konzentrationslager,” or “concentration camp.” Nate’s forearm swelled from infection, eventually healing, leaving an indelible reminder of unfathomable evil.

At Mielec, Nate was reunited with his brother, Leon, whose job was digging graves and watching the systematic, maniacal murder of mothers and babies, friends and relatives. His brother and the other grave diggers dug long shallow trenches, and when each trench was complete, the Nazis grabbed babies from their mothers’ arms, swung them by their legs, and threw them against the wall and into the trench, mothers frantic and screaming for their babies, babies who didn’t die on impact, screaming in pain for their mothers. Next, the Nazi monsters shot the mothers and threw them on top of their babies. Nate, spared from the horrors of digging graves, was assigned the jobs of cleaning offices and helping a German engineer design parts for planes shot down by Russians. Nate sometimes found scraps of food in the office garbage cans, and the engineer, who liked Nate despite his Jewish taint, let him take the scraps back to the barracks to share with Leon. While the extra scraps helped stave off starvation, the scraps could not protect them from the camp’s filth and bacteria. One day, Nate developed a toothache, and his gum swelled from infection. He found a Jewish dentist, who without any tools except an old pair of pliers, pulled Nate’s infected tooth, leaving a space where enamel could not cover memories of pain.

In 1944, Germany closed Mielec and transported the prisoners to Wieliczka, near Auschwitz, where Nate heard rumors that they would be taken by train to be gassed. But there were too many prisoners and not enough trains, so the prisoners waited until one day they were told to line up and take off their clothes. German engineers, self-appointed Gods of Death, surveyed the prisoners and marked their foreheads: a red “T” meant death, and a work symbol meant life. Nate and his brother each received the work symbol and were given striped uniforms and wooden shoes and transported to their next destination, Flossenburg.

Conditions at Flossenburg were worse than at Mielec. Without any way to bathe, Nate’s hair became infested with lice that grew and multiplied. The camp’s crematorium could not keep up with the pace of death, so corpses were stacked, awaiting incineration. One day, Nate’s friend found a human finger floating in his soup. When four Jews tried to escape by climbing over the Camp’s electric fence, they



Nate Taffel is about 5’4”, with bright blue eyes, and a friendly, warm demeanor that belies an inner strength built on a foundation of love strong enough to fight evil, defy death, and guide him to the life he now celebrates with his wife, Muriel, his children, and his grandchildren, his greatest blessings and the legacy of his survival. When he is not spending time with his family or recounting his story to adults and students throughout Wisconsin, he enjoys spending time with his buddies at Potawatomi, where Nate understands, luck does not discriminate in its pursuit of good fortune.

were shot, and as punishment for failing to report the escape plan, the SS chose ten prisoners at random to hang in front of the rest of the camp, ghastly reminders of defiance’s fate.

As the enemies closed in, the Germans loaded the Jews from Flossenburg into railway freight cars: When the Americans shot and disabled the train’s engine, the Germans replaced it, and when that second engine was shot, the Germans unloaded the trains and forced the prisoners on a Death March, prisoners marching in wooden shoes, desperately pushing their starved bodies forward, ignoring blisters oozing from souls, knowing that if they stopped or slowed, they would be shot. Nate stood behind his brother, holding him upright, pushing him forward until they arrived in the middle of a forest and faced an SS squadron, preparing to shoot their remaining prey. The SS squadron was stopped, not by the Americans, who were advancing, but by the Wehrmacht army, who were retreating, and who warned the SS to follow.

In 1945, Nate, not quite 17, stood in the middle of the woods, free, his first instinct to squelch his unbearable hunger. When Leon spotted a pig farm, they ran to the trough and began shoveling pig food in their mouths, stopping only when the German farmer spotted them, threw them each a piece of bread and ran away, afraid of the skeletal animals invading her sty. Soon after leaving, Nate met an American Jewish soldier, who gave him pants and a jar of jam, and Nate devoured the first sweet he had tasted in five years, stopping only when the soldier warned him he would be sick.

In 1946, Leon returned to Radamsyl to search for other surviving family members; he found none, and upon arriving at their old home, the Polish occupants threw stones at him and told him to leave. Nate was consumed by memories and hatred, until one day, he decided that he had not survived the Nazi’s barbarity only to be killed on the inside by self-pity and spite, and so, Nate vowed that he would never forgive or forget, but that he would never again be consumed by hate.

The Last Cyclist: Not the Play about the Holocaust You would Expect

By Dan Haumschild, Ph.D. Holocaust Education Fellow

During the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, the small town of Terezin was transformed into a Jewish Ghetto, a concentration camp, and a transfer stop en route to Auschwitz. A fascinating element of Terezin’s history includes the fact that the people who were imprisoned there were used by the Nazi regime to distract observers from the horrors that were going on throughout Europe. For example, Terezin had a symphony and spacious living quarters for notable public figures so that visitors from the Red Cross wouldn’t sound alarm bells. It also served as the set for a propaganda film that highlighted Germany’s ‘humane’ solution to the “Jewish Problem”. But the realities of Terezin were horrific: through its gates passed some 150,000 people, of which 130,000 were ultimately murdered.

Terezin’s unique status opened a sliver of opportunity for the many artists who wound up there. One of the most prominent, Karel Švenk, was a person of incredible comic talent and unwavering nerve. While imprisoned in Terezin, Švenk wrote and produced numerous cabarets, including the satirical comedy *The Last Cyclist*.

On Thursday, April 4 our community members will have the opportunity to experience the Wisconsin premiere of *The Last Cyclist*. This production was made possible through the generosity of Nancy and Jim Barnett and the Ettinger Family Foundation. This is a partnership between HERC, Cardinal Stritch University, and the Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC. The premiere will include a talk-back with playwright Naomi Patz who reconstructed the original play and reimaged its missing parts.

I sat down with Stritch’s Theater Director and Assistant Professor Mark Boergers to talk about *The Last Cyclist*, the unique partnership between these organizations, and the benefit of bringing this production to life.

DH: How does *The Last Cyclist* tie in to what Stritch likes to do within the theater department?

MB: This is really a nice step up for us. By partnering with outside institutions and by bringing in professional actors and production experts, we are giving our students an opportunity to learn in ways that are otherwise impossible. As far as our place in the community is concerned, plays like *The Last Cyclist* allow us to provide a wide range of artistic experiences for those who attend theater on the North Shore. Plus, this is a different kind of show that might not be available downtown; it really lives in an academic environment, in an exploratory, experimental environment that doesn’t have to worry about its subscribers. Instead, we’re being driven by the pursuit of curiosity and of study and craft and this complex production fits in really well to those goals.

DH: Why did you choose to work with HERC?

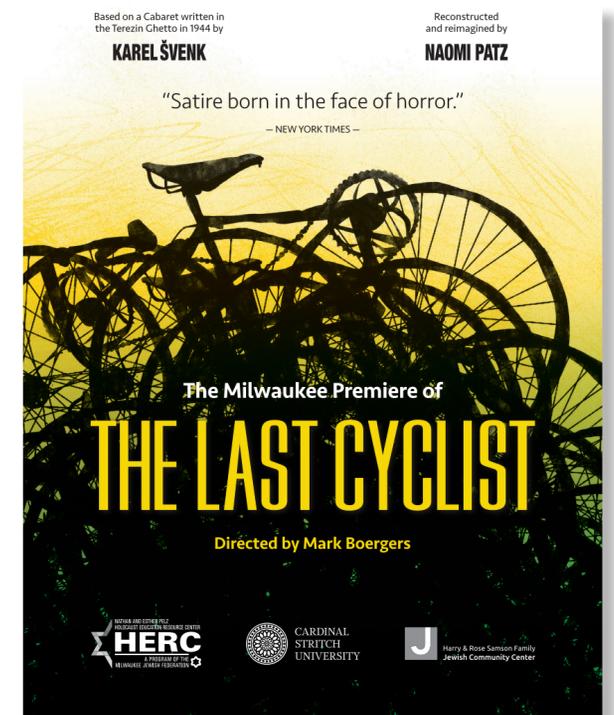
MB: HERC brought the play to us, which was great; but I have to admit that I was fairly skeptical at first because it is a complicated script to work on, especially in a college environment. I wasn’t really convinced that our students, on their own, could grasp what it means to do this play. Of course they could put the play up; but there is a big difference between simply putting it up and actually coming together as a group of artists to figure out, understand its nuance and then produce it within that framework. This play needs a lot of support in terms of dramaturgy, whether that be historical research or experiences for the artists involved, to ground it in its historical reality. HERC’s support has made it possible to move from a surface-level understanding to something far more deep, interesting and transformational, which is how this work is intended.

DH: How has your experience been in terms of working with HERC?

MB: It has been amazing to me how far the connections in the community can lead us and enable us to dig into this work. There are theater scholars, historical scholars and academics who have lent a hand; we have also been able to get in touch with specific artifacts and survivors who can help us glimpse at the realities of this history. It has been a far more global experience for all of our artists than it would be under normal circumstances.

DH: Are there any special elements within Stritch’s production that avid theatergoers can look forward to?

MB: I can say that the original play was written in and for a confined space, and for people who had very little at their disposal. Our goal is to both address that historical reality accurately — the craft of making things out



of bed sheets or items that were brought into the confined spaces of Terezin — and simultaneously play into their dream world and what their ever-expansive, brilliant minds were doing. In a large space like the Nancy Kendall Theater, we have a lot of opportunity to highlight both the limitations of this reality and the limitless nature of this artistic expression. Coupling these two sides throughout the production gives us an opportunity to pay tribute to the fact that their minds were not confined to the camps.

DH: What are some of the important themes or lessons that emerge within this play that audiences might be able to anticipate?

MB: Initially, one of the surprising things that pops off the page is the humanization of those people in the camps. These individuals are not simply victims. They have curious, artistic brains that are continuing to create this very high level artistic interpretation of what was going on in Terezin. To me, it is surprising because it works against expectations. When we say that we’re performing a play about the Holocaust, people assume it is going to be sad. Certainly it is, but it is a lot more than that because it also presents this beautiful space of creative flourishing that responds to the tragedy of the Holocaust.

WHAT The Milwaukee Premiere of *The Last Cyclist*

WHEN Thursday, April 4 at 7 pm

WHERE Cardinal Stritch University, Nancy Kendall Theater in the Joan Steele Stein Center for Communication Studies/Fine Arts 6801 N. Yates Road, Milwaukee

HOW \$75 per person Includes performance, talk-back with playwright and director, and dessert reception (dietary laws observed)

Purchase tickets at 414-963-2710 or HolocaustCenterMilwaukee.org/TheLastCyclist

Generously sponsored by: Nancy & Jim Barnett and the Ettinger Family Foundation

PROCEEDS BENEFIT HERC