



Nathan & Esther Pelz
Holocaust Education
Resource Center
MILWAUKEE
JEWISH FEDERATION

The Nathan & Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center

FALL 2015 NEWSLETTER

'I simply had to flow with the Stream':

The Story of Lee Marnett

The Holocaust survivors who take part in HERC's Speakers' Bureau often speak to young people about the horrors of the Holocaust and their testimony lights the way for future generations. They are, after all, those who had a first-hand experience of the destruction of European Jewry during World War II, the ones who can stand in front of a class and encapsulate it all in one sentence: "I was there." Fewer of these students are aware of the other "torch" that each Holocaust survivor was compelled to carry in the wake of the war: to keep alive the memory of the central and eastern European Jewish way of life, the unique civilization that went up in smoke through the chimneys of the death camps, that lay buried in the scores of mass graves scattered over eastern Europe.

The Holocaust was, after all, a twofold destruction – of the people and their culture, of men and women, the children and the elderly; and at the same time – of their traditions, lore, language, literature, food, and more. When I met with Lee Marnett for the first time, about a year ago, and listened to him offering a brief testimony at the BBYO teen program that precedes the Yom Hashoah community service, I immediately noticed his rare ability to capture both legacies. He shared with the younger generations the horrors of the Holocaust and embodied in his language, accent, expressions and jokes something of the flavor of the bygone world of the Litvaks – the Jews of Lithuanian descent. Born in the "Jerusalem of Lithuania," in the city that was given many different names by its different inhabitants (Vilne in Yiddish, Wilno in Polish, and Vilnius in Lithuanian), Lee Marnett brought

with him to Milwaukee the rich and colorful world of his ancestors. If you wonder how unique that world was, consider how many members of our community under the age of 60 are capable of beginning a sentence in English, demonstrating meaning with a quote from the Bible in the Hebrew Ashkenazi pronunciation, then effortlessly shifting to another comment in Polish or Yiddish, and, finally, concluding the sentence with a good joke in Russian. Lee Marnett can easily pull this off, not only because of who he is as an individual, but also as a result of the unique milieu in which he was reared. Can these two ever be separated? I truly doubt it.



Lee Marnett

Lee's childhood memories are somewhat unclear, but this shortcoming embodies his experiences. As a teenager who came to Milwaukee after losing his mother in the Vilna Ghetto during the war and his father in a DP camp after the war, Lee did not have the fortune to be surrounded by adults who could help him preserve the precious memories of his childhood. On the one hand, some memories of these bygone days he can

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THE NATHAN & ESTHER PELZ
HOLOCAUST EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER'S

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

HONORING

Don Layden and Bruce Peckerman

Wednesday, November 18, 2015 | 6 pm



Marcus Center for the Performing Arts | Bradley Pavilion | 929 N. Water Street | Milwaukee

Special Guest Performance of ETTY—a one-woman theatrical play based on the diaries and letters of Ety Hillesum, a young Dutch Jewish student living in Amsterdam during WWII, adapted and performed by Susan Stein and directed by Austin Pendleton.

We look forward to sharing this special evening with you!

RSVP by November 6th to BrittanyH@MilwaukeeJewish.org or 414-963-2710

From the Chair

Hopefully you are all enjoying the final quarter of 2015. As the new Chair of the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center I am so pleased to share that much has been accomplished under the direction of Dr. Shay Pilnik, Executive Director of HERC, Betty Chrustowski, the immediate past Chair, our Coordinator Brittany Hager McNeely and our marvelous Holocaust survivor speakers, volunteers and educators. Together our organization was able to serve 18,000 people throughout Wisconsin, the majority of them middle and high school students. Together we have shared the lessons painfully learned from the incomparable horrors of the Holocaust. Together, HERC's mission – to build a society resting on the values of tolerance and diversity, dignity and respect toward all human beings – is shared throughout our state and beyond, and in so doing will make our world a better place in which to live. Our precious survivors, our enlightening educators, and our dedicated volunteers and staff, TOGETHER will continue to educate about what happens when bullying, hatred, violence, and intolerance become accepted behaviors. Watching the recent murders on our college campuses, the march of Syrian refugees, murders within our churches, schools and movie theaters, and violence in our own city, tells us all how important HERC's message is and how needed our organization is in today's world. We need to be familiar with some of the most difficult chapters in our history, or we are doomed to repeat it. To that end, this year our goal is to reach over 20,000 people in more Wisconsin communities than ever before. To that end, we need more volunteers, educators, and donors to help us accomplish our mission.

Betty Chrustowski once told me that the most powerful lesson she took from the Holocaust can be summarized in two words – strength and life. These two words embody HERC's mission to help build a strong community and to establish a vibrant Jewish life here in Milwaukee, in the wake of the Holocaust. Betty has learned the lessons of the Holocaust firsthand from her

beloved dad Arthur of blessed memory and her amazing mother Rose. Betty has served HERC since its inception. Her leadership has guided the organization with compassion, dedication, and an unparalleled commitment. On behalf of HERC and our entire community I thank Betty for her tireless leadership and look forward to working with her to continue what she so brilliantly designed.



Bev Greenberg

Lastly, I would like to invite you to join us on Wednesday, November 18, 2015 for our major event *A Night to Remember*. This year's event honors the dedication and extraordinary volunteerism of Don Layden & Bruce Peckerman. The evening will be held at the Marcus Center for Performing Arts and will include dinner as well as the Milwaukee debut of the one-woman theatrical performance *Etty*. I want to thank the Chairs of this event, Joe Peltz and Mark Brickman, who along with Betty Chrustowski and many others have worked tirelessly to plan *A Night to Remember*.

I am so proud to be HERC's Chair and hope I will meet the high standards set before me by past HERC Chairs Bill Appel, Harry Pelz, and Betty Chrustowski. Together with our survivors, staff and volunteers, and educators, we will make a positive difference in the lives of many.

Warmly,

Bev Greenberg

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER

Tuesday, November 3

Holocaust Book Club: "Holocaust Representations in History: An Introduction"

7 pm | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Reading Room

Instructors & Authors: **Dr. Daniel Magilow & Dr. Lisa Silverman**

"Holocaust Representations in History" is an introduction to critical questions and debates surrounding the depiction, chronicling and memorialization of the Holocaust through the historical analysis of some of the most provocative and significant works of Holocaust representation.

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center, Sam and Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies and Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

Sunday, November 8

Kristallnacht Commemoration

4 pm | Jewish Home & Care Center Rubenstein Pavilion

Join community members in an interfaith commemoration of Kristallnacht.

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Jewish Home & Care Center

Wednesday, November 18

A Night to Remember honoring Don Layden & Bruce Peckerman featuring Etty

6 pm | Marcus Center for the Performing Arts Bradley Pavilion

In addition to recognizing our special honorees Don Layden and Bruce Peckerman for their dedication to HERC, *A Night to Remember* will feature the Milwaukee debut of *Etty*, a one-woman theatrical play based on the diaries and letters of Etty Hillesum, a young Dutch Jewish student who was deported to Auschwitz during the Holocaust.

DECEMBER

Tuesday, December 1

Holocaust Book Club: "Tunnel, Smuggle, Collect: A Holocaust Boy"

7 pm | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Reading Room

Instructor & Author: **Jeffrey Gingold**

Based upon the hidden and illuminating video and audio recordings of interviews with the author's father and grandmother, *Tunnel, Smuggle, Collect: A Holocaust Boy* tells the true and tormenting story of a 7-year-old boy during the Holocaust. Young Sam Gingold helps his family survive in the Warsaw Ghetto by smuggling food and medicines, and as the war continues, is forced to labor under Nazi rule in the walled city within a city. For the Gingold family, "survivor" is a living word.

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

JANUARY

Sunday, December 13

Holocaust Film: "The Third Half"

1 pm | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Community Hall

The Third Half is a story of several people gathered around the most important thing in the world – football, in the most turbulent time of the world's history – Second World War.

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

Sunday, December 20

Holocaust Stories: In their Honor Featuring Albert Beder

10 am | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Community Hall

Future programs in this series will feature:



Tauba Biterman:

February 28, 2016

Nate Taffel:

April 17, 2016

Raye David:

July 17, 2016

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

Monday, December 21

Echoes of Auschwitz: Feminist Jewish Activism in Post-Dictatorship Argentina

7 pm | Jewish Museum Milwaukee

Dalia Wassner from The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute will present on the reconciliation of the Holocaust within Argentine culture in light of post WWII events in the country.

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Jewish Museum Milwaukee

Sunday, January 3, 2016

Eichmann in Jerusalem, Before & After

4 pm | Jewish Museum Milwaukee

Dr. Yannay Spitzer, an assistant professor of Economics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, will discuss his grandfather's experiences as the chief judge at the Eichmann Trial, who later in his life became the fifth president of Israel's Supreme Court.

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Jewish Museum Milwaukee

Saturday, January 23, 2016

Holocaust Memorial Concert

7 pm | Congregation Shalom

Join the Bel Canto Boy Choir for an evening of remembering the Holocaust

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center, Bel Canto and Congregation Shalom

Wednesday, January 27, 2016

Holocaust Book Club: "The Zookeeper's Wife"

7 pm | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Reading Room

Instructor: **Dr. Neal Pease**

After their zoo was bombed, Polish zookeepers Jan and Antonina Zabinski managed to save over three hundred people from the Nazis by hiding refugees in the empty animal cages.

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

FEBRUARY

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Holocaust Book Club: "Perfidy"

7 pm | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Reading Room

Instructor: **Dr. Shay Pilnik**

In the Kastner affair, as it is known, a seemingly insignificant refugee from Hungary accuses an important member of David Ben Gurion's Mapai party of collaborating with the Nazis during the murder of Hungarian Jewry.

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

Sunday, February 28, 2016

Holocaust Stories: In their Honor Featuring Tauba Biterman

10 am | Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC Community Hall

Future programs in this series will feature:

Nate Taffel: April 17, 2016

Raye David: July 17, 2016

Co-sponsors: Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Harry & Rose Samson Family JCC

For more information contact:
Brittany Hager McNeely, Coordinator at 414-963-2710
or BrittanyH@MilwaukeeJewish.org

HolocaustCenterMilwaukee.org

A Look Back and Ahead

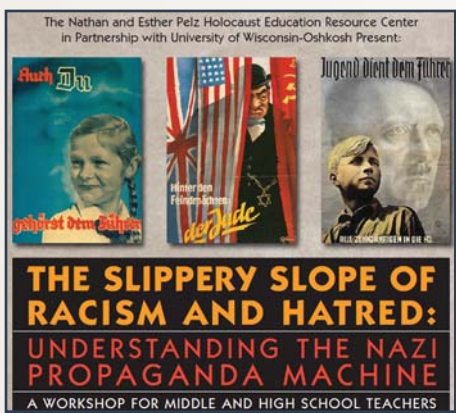
The Transformation of Holocaust Education

By Dr. Shay Pilnik

Reflecting on the growing interest among Americans in the Holocaust of European Jewry, the Holocaust Studies scholar, Michael Berenbaum, pointed to a peculiar, paradoxical development. Berenbaum noted that, “the more distant we stand from the Holocaust, the larger the event looms.” The case he made was fairly convincing: if we look at the impact the Holocaust had in the realms of theology, ethics, politics and other spheres, it is hard not to notice the compelling influence of the Holocaust on the way members of western civilization believe, think and interact one with another. A manifestation of absolute cruelty and evil, the Holocaust stands today as an enormous cloud, casting a shadow on the lives of millions who may otherwise have no immediate ties to the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis.

It may be surprising for some to imagine another period, like the 1950s for instance, when engagement in Holocaust memory and education was confined mainly to the survivor community. By contrast, we live today in the “post-Schindler’s List” age: an era that began in the mid-1990s and saw Holocaust awareness reaching movie theaters in dozens of thousands of communities as well as television screens in millions of homes. Spearheading this enterprise were thousands of Holocaust survivors who showed an incredible degree of dedication. They recognized the priceless value of telling the story of the Holocaust from the point of view of an individual whose life has been shattered by it and wished to share their experiences with the next generation. Thanks to the efforts of these survivors, Worldwide, in America, and in the Milwaukee community as well, and thanks to the leadership of both lay leaders and professionals, what started as an often spontaneous, disconnected effort of individual survivors to bear witness, turned, over time, into what we know today as Holocaust Education.

While we celebrate the hard work done by so many that brought us to this auspicious position, there are signs to indicate that Holocaust education, while not losing ground, is, fifteen years after the start of the new millennium, now situated in a tenuous position. Holocaust education as an enterprise has been, to a large degree, the brain-child, task, and life-calling of the Holocaust survivors. As some Holocaust survivors pass away and some get frailer and frailer, the field of Holocaust education is losing its most powerful educators and moral guides. Even worse, it is losing its icons, its faces and voices.



The Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center is blessed by about a dozen volunteer survivors, proud and active members of our Speakers Bureau. But what is going to happen next? Our parting with Holocaust survivors, we must bear in mind, is not only sad news. It is bad news, perhaps even scary news: at a lecture he gave in March about the Nazi education system and Nazi propaganda (co-sponsored by HERC and the Jewish Museum Milwaukee), **Dr. Greg Wegner**, a professor of history at the history department at UW-La Crosse, openly talked about a new era, a time when Holocaust survivors pass away and the growing signs of Holocaust amnesia and denial become increasingly apparent.

As some Holocaust survivors pass away and some get frailer and frailer, the field of Holocaust education is losing its most powerful educators and moral guides

Of course, recognizing the problem is only half the solution. The more difficult half lies in practice: what can we do in order to make sure that the Holocaust will continue to loom large when we become even further removed from it? Here in Milwaukee, The Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center is a local player addressing this global challenge. Our strategy may be encapsulated with what I would call “the three C-s”: Continuity, Creativity and Co-operation.

Our first task is to make sure that the testimonies of our survivors will remain with us when our Speakers Bureau members can no longer share them with our students in a face-to-face conversation. To that end, we have launched a multi-year editing process of all of our survivor testimony videos to be uploaded on our new website in the upcoming months. Since memory of difficult or traumatic historical events is often preserved within families, our center has also launched, in the past couple of months, with the leadership of our Speakers Bureau Chair **Arleen Peltz**, the Second and third Generation

Group of Holocaust survivors. This forum, bringing together people who share similar experiences even if they never met each other before, already had a number of meetings, and we hope that it will keep growing. We also hope that some members of this group, recognizing the challenges described above, will undertake the not easy task of turning the stories of their parents and grandparents into a powerful presentation, and join our Speakers Bureau.

Our strategy may be encapsulated with what I would call “the three C-s”: Continuity, Creativity and Co-operation

While the bringing together of our 2G and 3G members will provide us with continuity, we will be able to grow only if we keep looking for new and creative ways to engage different groups and constituents in Holocaust education. A good example of an “out-of-the-box” Holocaust education initiative is “DiverCity”, a project co-sponsored with the Jewish Community



Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation. This program, to be launched on October 25th, is geared toward students from four Milwaukee colleges: Alverno,

UW-Milwaukee, Cardinal Stritch, and Marquette. It will offer a tour of different ethnic and religious communities in our city, help students better familiarize themselves with the Greater Milwaukee landscape and overcome the anxieties and biases about unknown “others,” including Jews, Muslims, Hispanics, African Americans, or any other components of what makes up Milwaukee’s beautiful mosaic of communities and cultures. A program highlighted by a message of diversity and tolerance, it will begin at Pinat Hatikvah, HERC’s new educational space, situated by the northern entrance to the Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center, with a testimony of a child of a Holocaust survivor. This creative initiative, that may otherwise bear no direct connection to the Holocaust, becomes, in this way, a new type of Holocaust educational program: looking forward to a future of pluralism and friendships while remembering what the course of racism and hatred led to with the rise of the Nazis over 80 years ago.

In order to be open-minded, creative, and able to continue to expand our outreach, we must not drop the last C – co-operation. For HERC, Holocaust education maintains continuity and, at the same time, seeks new and creative ways to transform itself through the many programs and events we co-sponsor with our partners. Our two upcoming programs on the echoes of the Holocaust in Argentina are a good example of this kind of partnership. Co-sponsored with the Jewish Museum Milwaukee and in conjunction with its exhibit *Southern Exposure: The Jews of Argentina*, we will offer on December 21st a lecture by **Dr. Dalia Wassner** on Jewish female writers who lived under the Argentinian military dictatorship, reflecting on the world they live in by conjuring up the memories of the Holocaust, and on January 3rd **Dr. Yannay Spitzer**, who will speak about the life of his grandfather, Moshe Landua, the chief judge at the Eichmann Trial, who later in his life became the 5th president of Israel’s Supreme Court. The growing book club that I lead with **Jody Hirsch** at the JCC, the film series with **Laurie Herman**, and the Holocaust Study Institute, led by **Bonnie Shafrin** and **Dr. Richard Lux** of the Sacred Heart Theological Seminary, as a Holocaust course offered for Catholic high school teachers and culminating with a trip to Israel – these are only a handful of examples of the many other partnerships that HERC has created and fostered over the past year.



Thanks to our many volunteers, supporters and partners, the message of HERC will continue to reverberate. The heinous crimes committed by the Nazis and their collaborators cannot be undone. But if we can do our share to remember these crimes, cherish the memories of those who suffered, and help perpetuate them, we can hope that the better world we have built in the wake of the Holocaust will be a lasting one.

2015: An Overview



A standing ovation following Angela Schluter's March 15th talk on her mother's book "The Nazi Officer's Wife" at Congregation Shalom.



Middle and High School teachers from the Fox Valley area came together for a two day teacher training at UW-Oshkosh in March 2015.



HERC Speakers Bureau member Al Beder speaks to high school students before the April 17th community Yom HaShoah gathering.



Rabbi Jessica Barolsky of Congregation Emanu El B'ne Jeshurun speaks to students during an April 30th FIF Program.



Speakers Bureau member Sam Gingold lighting a candle at April 17th community Yom HaShoah gathering.



HERC Educator Mary Munson Murphy presents "Superheroes or Ordinary Men" to students during a May 28th FIF Program at Congregation Shalom.



Students wait to meet Speakers Bureau member Nate Taffel following his talk during a May 28th FIF Program at Congregation Shalom.



The 2015 Holocaust Essay Contest winners stand on the National Mall following their meaningful visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on June 22. Left to Right: Blair Wales, Jacob Herber, Ted Capp, Connor Mix



On June 25th, members of the HERC Speakers Bureau gathered for an afternoon of food, music, and good company at the Four Points Sheraton.

The Executive Director's Notes

This is the second issue of the HERC newsletter in its colored, revamped format. You will find in it articles, updates and images that showcase the growth of our organization and the carrying out of our crucial mission – to build a better world, resting on the values of tolerance and diversity, by teaching the lessons learned from the Holocaust to communities near and far. In the past school year, HERC reached out to thousands of students and teachers in communities extending from Auburndale and Pulaski in the northern part of our state to Burlington in its southern part. We were able to reach our goals by relying on our long-time survivor speakers and on our new and constantly growing group of Holocaust educators. I cannot think of one aspect of the unique HERC world that did not see growth and expansion this year, and I look forward to seeing this trend continuing with our next calendar of programs which is geared toward both students and adults.

Together with this physical growth in outreach and geographical expansion, I am also pleased to announce the recent launching of our **new website**, utilizing a cutting-edge platform and containing a whole range of pedagogical tools related to the Holocaust, including a video library containing testimonies of our local Holocaust survivors. Our new website, new team of educators, the teachers' workshops, the new forum of Second Generation of Holocaust survivors, the launching of a study abroad trip to Poland and Lithuania with

UW-Milwaukee and UW-Oshkosh, the preparations for another round of the Holocaust Study Institute with the Lux Center at Sacred Heart Theological Seminary — these are all initiatives that will come to fruition thanks to our many supporters and volunteers.

While the list of dedicated friends of HERC to thank here is fortunately, too long, I wanted to seize this opportunity to thank the woman who has been at the helm, stirring our organization in the past three years. The energy, commitment and professional standards that Betty Chrustowski has introduced to HERC have been the engine behind so many of our new initiatives. The fruits of her work, I am sure, will continue now to yield, under the leadership of our new Chair Bev Greenberg. We are pleased to thank Betty for her rare dedication and hard work that helped bring us to this auspicious point.



Dr. Shay Pilnik

Dr. Shay Pilnik

Reflections on Etty

By Lucas Greenwalt

With a total of six million Jewish martyrs that would perish at the hands of the Nazi machine, it is a bewildering concept that the diary of one victim can have such a monumental impact more than 70 years after the end of the second World War. I have read first-hand accounts like Anne Frank's diary, *The Pianist* by Wladslaw Szpilman, in addition to an abundance of scholarly material about Nazi Germany throughout the course of my college career. However, it was the diary of Etty Hillesum that would grant me a sincerely enlightened perspective of the Holocaust. It was through her diary that I gained the feeling that I was no longer abstractly staring at a black and white photograph of a concentration camp. I certainly was not reading an academic article, written in the luxury of an air conditioned office adorned with a wall of fancy degrees. Rather, I developed a unintentional bond with this 29 year old woman that was at first incredibly difficult to understand. The eloquence of her writing combined with an essence of mystery surrounding her behavior made her an individual of great curiosity to me.



Etty Hillesum

The unfortunate truth is that Etty Hillesum would not live to see the fall of the Third Reich. In November of 1943, Esther "Etty" Hillesum would meet a premature demise at Auschwitz; a place that I can best describe as a metaphorical cesspool composed of elements of man's greed, animosity, and complete disregard for basic morality. While not much is known about her time at Auschwitz, Etty did manage to keep a detailed diary prior to her deportation from the Netherlands. It is people like Susan Stein who utilize the words of the diaries and letters to preserve the legacy that Holocaust victims have left behind for us.

I had the wonderful opportunity to interview Susan, who I consider to be an expert on "All things Etty." Susan has been able to condense over 800 pages of Etty's writings into a one-hour play, where she assumes the role of Etty. Utilizing minimal outside sources to enhance her acting, Susan's play has reached an astonishing audience of over 45,000 people to date. Stein was able to grant me a combination of insight into Etty's life, and possible explanations to some of the bazaar choices she made. It was after talking with Susan that I came to the conclusion that my attachment to Etty was not unusual. Rather it is quite possible that this is what Etty had intended from the beginning.

Susan speculates that if Etty had taken the opportunities to go into hiding, her chances of survival would have been relatively high. Yet, Etty voluntarily

accepted her impending fate, choosing to stick with her family and share the fate of her people. The thought of Etty Hillesum in a parallel universe dying peacefully as an elderly woman, is an extremely pleasant image. It is this mirage that sparked within me feelings of hatred, anger, and hostility towards Etty's choice. Knowing that millions of victims did unimaginable things for the opportunity of survival, makes Etty's decision appear selfish and naive. However, even though Etty's choice is something that Susan still does not fully understand, it has something she has come to accept. She believes that Etty's life served to achieve a higher purpose.

There is a difference between accepting death and truly wishing to perish for the sake of one's religion. Susan wonders if Etty were here today, would she do everything the same with the knowledge that we now have. Etty's choice was not to run blindly into death, but instead to record what was happening, understand why it was happening so quickly, and ultimately to live on through her writings. At its conception Etty's diary served as a combative tool to assist her in her therapy for depression. It was merely an outlet for her emotions. But Hillesum's need for understanding and her eventual evolution of emotional maturity can be viewed through the rapid transformation in her writings. Between March of 1941 and October of 1942 Etty undergoes a complete metamorphosis from her former state of youthful lust, impulsiveness, and at times narcissism. To Etty, life or death was not the point. It was her determination to not be a walking promotion of defeatism.

To conclude, do I believe Etty intended to live on through her diaries? There is not the most microscopic grain of doubt in my mind that this was her intention. Having already accepted the possibility of death, Etty chose to implant a small piece of herself into the pages of her writings. Readers are not merely getting a collection of text. They are receiving a gift in the form of a small section of Etty's mind. It was because of this that I often had problems remembering that she was deceased. It felt to me as though she was a living, breathing person sitting right next to me. Etty's writings are nothing short of a work of magic that was created under the most morbid of circumstances. On September 7, 1943 Etty discarded a postcard out of the window of a transport train. It was discovered by a local farmer, who took the liberty of sending it. In this postcard was the last known correspondence of Etty "Esther" Hillesum. Her message to the world was that "We left the camp singing."

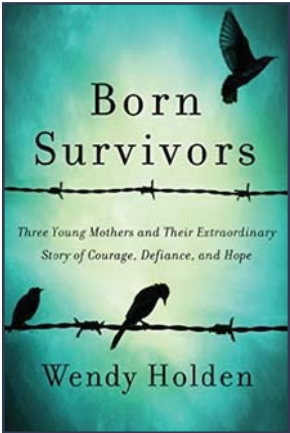
For those seeking more information on Etty Hillesum, or would like to contact Susan Stein please visit www.ettyplay.org

The play "Etty" will be performed at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts on Wednesday, November 18th. For more information see the ad on page 1.

Book Review

“Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and Their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope”

By Brittany R. Hager McNeely



In her 2015 book *Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and Their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope* author Wendy Holden recounts the story of three young Jewish women in Nazi occupied Europe who were torn from their idyllic lifestyles and thrown into the horrors of the Holocaust. Holden follows each of these women through their separate yet parallel courses through various ghettos and camps, never losing sight of the unique characteristic of these three women’s experience.

Born Survivors is the story of three women each of whom, despite horrific conditions, managed to carry and give birth to a child in the midst of

the malnutrition, disease, filth, and abuses imposed upon them by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust. Mothers Priska, Rachel, and Anka were in a group of over 1,000 prisoners who were first in the Frieberg labor camp before being packed into cattle cars and transported across Eastern Europe for sixteen days, ending their journey at Mauthausen just a few days before its liberation in 1945. Throughout their struggle the three women never came into contact with one another nor were they aware that they were not alone in their situation.

Despite the women’s lack of knowledge of one another, Wendy Holden has artfully woven together these three stories in a way that leaves the reader feeling personally invested in the fates of these expectant mothers facing the most dire of conditions. Not unusual to many Holocaust survival narratives, Holden’s book illustrates the extreme, inhumane conditions in which people fought to survive and in which many ultimately perished. However what makes this research on the Holocaust so unique is that it not only tells the stories of the three mothers and their harrowing experiences, but it also tells the story of their children who, against all odds, would live to become the youngest of today’s Holocaust survivors.



Left to Right: Eva Clarke, Mark Olsky, & Hanna Berger Moran

Earlier this year I had the pleasure of attending the North American book launch of *Born Survivors* in Skokie, Illinois and was delighted to hear not only from the author of the book, but from the born survivors themselves. Eva Clarke, Hana Berger Moran, and Mark Olsky, a doctor and long-time Wisconsin resident, reaffirmed Holden’s depiction of the three children who met for the first time at the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Mauthausen on May 8, 2010. “We have been brought together by chance but we now have a permanent bond and feel such a sense of togetherness. I am absolutely delighted to call them my sister and brother.” The connection between the three “siblings” is no doubt a reflection of their shared experience, but also a result of the bond they share in remembering the incredible courage of their mothers in ensuring that their children would not only be born, but that they would live to survive.

From the Outgoing Chair



Betty Chrustowski

As I look back at my past three years as the Chair of the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center, I am proud of the accomplishments and the hard work of our remarkable and dedicated volunteers and professional staff. During this time, our energy and thoughts were focused on one goal ... to ensure that future generations will remember our history so that the victims will never be forgotten and these unspeakable crimes will never be repeated. HERC trains middle and high school teachers on how to educate their students about HOW the Holocaust happened. We hope that these initiatives will encourage our present and future generations to be more tolerant and appreciative of individual differences. I thank all those who took this journey with me, and helped us to reach new goals and heights. I was privileged to work with two highly qualified and dedicated Executive Directors, a fabulous administrative staff, and an incredible core of educators. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of this amazing organization, and as Bev Greenberg takes over I hope that her life will be as enriched by the experience as mine was.

Warmest Regards,

Betty Chrustowski

These notes were written by Tessa and Sophie,
8th Graders from St. Robert’s School

Dear Mr. Beder,
Thank you so much for talking to us about the Holocaust and you life story. It meant a lot to me and I think it touched all of us dearly. I am so proud that I was able to meet a Holocaust survivor and I will remember you and your story for the rest of my life. ~Tessa

Dear Mr. Beder,
your experience inspired me and made me realize that what happened to so many really happened and is so sad. But what really inspired me was when you talked about how you got out. You got through such a hard time and now seem very happy and live a good life. You have children grandchildren, and great grandchildren. If I would have been in your shoes, I don't know if I would have been as strong as you. You came on top of your situation and tell so many about your inspiring story which I know can be hard. We may not know eachother but I want to let you know that I'm proud of you and how strong you are. Have a wonderful day and an amazing life and I feel blessed to have met you.
♥Sophie

Meet the Educator: Stacey Wakefield

My name is Stacey Wakefield. I was born and raised in Los Angeles but I am proud to call Hartland, Wisconsin home for the last seven years. I am a former teacher and school counselor who has put her knowledge and education to good use raising two beautiful daughters who humble me every day by reminding me how much I still have to learn. I am also the granddaughter of a survivor and a lifelong student of the Holocaust. The Holocaust Education Resource Center is a phenomenal organization which allows young people to connect to such an important piece of our history in a real and personal way. I could not be more excited and honored to call myself an educator for this organization.



Stacey Wakefield



Mike Tarnoff



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

"I made a legacy gift to the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center because I believe that the terrible inhumanity of the holocaust should never be forgotten and that Holocaust deniers must be vigorously opposed now and in the future."

— Mike Tarnoff

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I simply had to flow with the Stream: The Story of Lee Marnett

easily summon: the days in heder, with the scary melamed who, in the presence of his father Yitshak, would test his knowledge of the *parashah* (the Torah portion) by holding him by his ear ... or the long Sabbath mornings, when he would walk from his home on Stefansky Street for about an hour to visit his grandfather Abe, while being taunted and beaten by Polish kids who would jeer at him: "we don't like Jews!"

On the other hand, Lee's memory is fuzzy. Having no knowledge of his exact age best demonstrates this: "I came to America with no birth certificate; I had actually no recollection of when I was born. According to the doctors who told me to open my mouth and looked at my teeth, I was born at some point between 1933 and 1934." While the task of recovering his memory, recuperating from the war traumas, and building his future was daunting, with his strength of character and perseverance, Lee made it. "It's your attitude, not your platitude that determines your altitude; the wind in your sail — not the weight on your tail," he offers endless quotes and phrases of wisdom. Indeed, Lee is an optimistic man. He insists that those who could not cast aside the horrific experiences of the ghettos and camps would in many instances wind up in mental institutions.

His story has the plot-line of a Cinderella story, no doubt. And the happy end is happy enough, with a powerful conclusion, recounting how the orphan who fairly quickly found in Milwaukee a new home and an adopting family ultimately became a successful owner of an office equipment company. But no matter how adorned and sugar-coated the story he tells can be, Lee had to undergo torments that truly made Cinderella's experiences pale.

He vividly remembers the Nazis marching into his hometown in the summer of 1941. "The Germans came in and occupied Vilna, and threw us into the Ghetto. They gave us two hours to get our stuff together. They put 15, 20, 30 people in one room. At that time, my parents were with me. My father got a shayn - a certificate to work." This meant that while mass shootings went on in the Ghetto, his parents' lives were not in immediate jeopardy. They took advantage of this interval to come up with a plan for how to save their son. "My parents had an old-time Polish friend of the family on the farm, whose name was Kazimir. He lived about a mile and a half from Ponary (the ravine outside Vilna turned by the Nazis into a mass grave). I stayed with him for half a year. My parents knew about the liquidations that went on in the ghetto every day and sent me to him till things stabilized. Kazimir risked his life by bringing me back to the soap factory where my father worked, and then we both marched back to the Ghetto." Later on Lee's dad was sent to a labor camp in Estonia and Lee was sent to that area later as well, together with his uncle and cousin. He tells me that he could not feel any fear – "all I remember is that I simply had to flow with the stream, saying to myself: 'what will be, will be.'"

From the camp in Estonia, where they would carry bricks from dawn to dusk, Lee and his father were sent to the concentration camp Stutthof in the eastern part of the Reich. Upon Liberation by the Americans in 1945, Lee and his father wound up in Iffeldrof, a small German town. Lee considered himself lucky, first, for surviving the Holocaust, and second, for having his dad with him as they gazed forward to a looming, unknown future. Yet, this feeling of comfort, the hope to rely on the presence of a parent, did not last for long. Lee's father fell ill and was taken to a hospital by ambulance. Lee had no clue that this would be the last time he would see his father. His attempts to find out what had happened to him all came to naught. Like in all past instances, all he could do is accept the new reality and move on with his life.

"Kazimir risked his life by bringing me back to the soap factory where my father worked and then we both marched back to the ghetto."

In the aftermath of the war, Lee's itinerary included multiple destinations: attending high school in Munich, leaving to Austria, later a journey to Italy through the Alps, an attempt to illegally immigrate to Palestine that he joined but later abandoned, and, finally, arrival in Milwaukee. Here in the city, he first lived at an orphanage on 21st and Vliet Street (with the aid of United Jewish Relief, and Milwaukee's Jewish Family Services) and, later, at the home of his adoptive parents, the Ugents, the wonderful couple, that as Lee relates, his kids would call grandma and grandpa decades later. While Lee seems fairly aware of the Cinderella-like plot-line of his story, and like other Holocaust survivors, takes great pride in his building of a new life here in America, lovingly called by Eastern European Jews "*di goldene medine*" (the Golden Land), he cannot forget the cruelty that he had to face as a young child. "The Jewish Tradition," he reflects, alluding to a phrase from the Jewish prayer-book, "accounts for the time-honored exile and suffering of the Jewish people as divine punishment, exacted upon the Jewish people *mipnei hataeinu*" (because of our sins). What exactly was this sin, what was exactly my sin, of a little boy from Vilna, this I still cannot really find a plausible answer for..."

By Dr. Shay Pilnik

Nathan & Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center

A program of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation

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Pinat Hatikvah, A Corner of Hope



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Holocaust Education
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“Thank you so much for sharing your story. I’ve never heard an actual survivor share their story in person and the fact that you were as confident as you were was really inspiring. You taught us all so much about the history of the war and about life in general. Thanks again for teaching us and letting us in on your piece of history.”

—Rebecca, Student at McFarland High School



Our Mission

The Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) is dedicated to the building of a society resting on the values of tolerance and diversity, dignity and respect toward all human beings. HERC teaches both students and adults the lessons learned from the Holocaust which led to the extermination of six million Jews and five million non-Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II. HERC is dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. It is only through learning about the dangerous and destructive course taken by the Nazis – of hatred, bigotry, and racism – that we can inspire our future generations to sustain a peaceful and just society for all.