j-VOICE MONTHLY | SPECIAL FEATURE

# WHAT'S A NICE GOY LIKE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?

HALINA WIND PRESTON Holocaust Education Committee

By Dr. Margaret Weiss Crouch

*Dr. Margaret Weiss Crouch is a Holocaust educator. She provides teacher training, curriculum development, speaking engagements, newspaper and professional journal submissions, site education in Germany and Eastern Europe, and survivor interviews. She was formerly the director of education for the Philadelphia Center on the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights; associate director of the Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches; and an English and humanities professor for nearly 20 years. She has a bachelor's degree in English and master's and doctorate degrees in education. She wrote the curriculum for undergraduate Holocaust courses for her dissertation with Franklin Littell as her advisor for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. She received her training at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and Yad Vashem in Israel. She was an interviewer for Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, is a member of numerous Holocaust education organizations, including the Halina Wind Preston Holocaust Education Committee since 1990, and is a charter member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

"What's a nice goy like you doing in a place like this?" I'm the goy. I get that occasionally, but it doesn't offend me. The people who say it are always dear Jewish friends with an arm around my shoulder and a smile on their face. A place like this is Holocaust education. I grew up in a small WASP town and knew no Jews. Almost everybody attended the only church in town, which did not accuse the Jews of deicide, so I didn't know about antisemitism. I never studied World War II because the high-school year always ended just as we got to World War I. History in college for English majors was English history. So how did this goy get into this place? Dorothy Finger.

In the early 90s I was teaching grammar and writing at Goldey Beacom College, grading 90 freshman compositions every two weeks, hoping for a comma so I could take a breath. I was asked to teach a new humanities course, Twentieth Century Europe. I got the course because I was the only person on the small faculty who had ever been to Europe, even if only to three countries while visiting a colleague whose husband had been transferred to Geneva by DuPont. It didn't matter that I hadn't been alive for about the first half and *nobody* had yet lived the last eight years. I chose a textbook and started to read it for course preparation. There was *one page* on the Holocaust. I had never heard of it. How could that be? My colleagues had. I knew I had to know, so I called the JCC and asked if anyone could come speak to my class about it. Dorothy came.

She told her story. My students were speechless and took a minute to compose themselves to ask questions. They *had* studied the Holocaust but had never heard a survivor. When the class was over, I told Dorothy that I had never heard of the Holocaust. She put her arm around my shoulder and said, "You can't call yourself an educated person and not know this history." I got into my car and sobbed.

She put me on the Halina Wind Preston Holocaust Education Committee, which she and Halina organized in 1978, and mentored me until her death in 2018. As I learned more and became friends with Ann Jaffe and Arnold Kerr, I knew I had to go see these places myself. So my son and I spent the summer of 1993 visiting camps, ghettos, and Nazi sites in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and the Netherlands on our own and in Poland with a guide whom Dorothy had recommended. We visited five of the six extermination camps in Poland, plus Plaszow, the Warsaw Ghetto, Krakow, Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbruck, Theresienstadt, Nuremberg, Munich, Berlin, Bad Arolsen, the Anne Frank house, and other cities and towns with a pre-war Jewish population. I've been back to these places many times with teacher education groups and Yad Vashem, where I studied for three summers. I have been a guide and educator to many of them for various groups, including the March of the Living 65th anniversary of International Holocaust Remembrance in 2010. I will never forget that event. There were thousands of student groups, many from Germany. I asked the German teachers how they approach the subject. They answered, "Very carefully, " because many of their students had pro-Nazi grandparents, and an accusatory approach would teach nothing. Instead, they offered a lens to view Holocaust events to the students' own lives, such as discussing possible reactions to discovering that suddenly many of their neighbors are gone as a way to introduce its history. I also talked to students while we waited over an hour for our featured speaker, Elie Wiesel. Most of the students had brought their own bag lunch and ate what they wanted and threw the rest into huge trashcans overflowing with discarded food. The irony of those heaps of unwanted food in a place that intentionally starved people who would have been happy just to lick the wrappings still haunts me.

My approach as a Holocaust educator is to clearly know the who, what, where, and when to understand the why and how. The Holocaust is so complex and unimaginable that it's often processed superficially. Germany was bombed out and bummed out from World War I. The Germans had lost the war and their self-respect, facing bombed-out cities, hyperinflation, reparations, unemployment, hunger, a guilt clause they denied, and a democracy they didn't understand. Hitler promised to restore German honor with four pledges:

- Food and jobs
- A sense of community of pure Aryans determined by blood and nationalism
- Restored political and military powers lost in the Treaty of Versailles that would enable expansion and reunification
- Protection from socialism, communism, big business, industrialization, and urbanization, meaning Jews, considered an inferior "race," not biologically Aryan and therefore never could be.

Hitler got many of these conspiracy ideas that Jews wanted to dominate the world by manipulating the economy, controlling the media, and inciting religious conflict in the forged antisemitic *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, published in Russia in 1903 and 1905 and introduced to Hitler in the early 1920s as he was developing his worldview. Its exact origin is unknown, but the 24 chapters (protocols), allegedly minutes from the meeting of world Jewish leaders (the Elders), describe the secret plans of the "Jewish Bolshevists." The fraud was exposed in 1921 in England, in 1964 in the US, and in 1993 by Russia, which admitted that one of its far-right nationalist organizations had written this libelous forgery. Unfortunately, this discredited publication is often overlooked as a major contributor to German antisemitism via Nazis lies and remains an influential antisemitic text in print, TV, and the Internet, where it continues today to spread worldwide hatred of Jews.

To get his four promises, Hitler needed war. "War is life," he said. Hence, he declared two wars, a *military* war (World War II) to gain resources and land to live on and an *ideological* war (the Holocaust) to eliminate the alleged biologically inferior race who weakened the Aryan gene pool. The war against the Jews could be legalized by World War II. It was state sponsored, therefore, not a crime, and systematic in that the entire Nazi bureaucracy focused on killing every Jew everywhere. The economic and social upheaval of the Weimar Republic fermented the later desire for German order and security at almost any cost. If Germany had to get rid of its Jews to do so, many Germans were willing to sell their own souls. Religious and cultural antisemitism had been around for years; it was an easy leap for many to Nazi antisemitism.

Why the Jews? Many scholars can't agree when Hitler began hating Jews because he had previous positive relationships with some, but he mentions in *Mein Kampf* his admiration for Vienna Mayor Karl Lueger's antisemitism and rhetoric while Hitler was living there from 1908 to 1913, trying to become a famous artist. Hitler served as a corporal in the German army from 1914-1918 and blamed the Jews, the socialists, and the communists for Germany's loss of World War I and the resulting punishment of the Treaty of Versailles because of civilian betrayal that no longer supported the military, thus the stabbed-in-the-back conspiracy. In 1919, while spying for the military on possibly hostile political movements, he defined Jews as a race rather than a religion with his ultimate goal of a new German government based on the removal of the Jews altogether. One of those political movements was the German Labor Party, which he joined in 1920, and changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party to attract more members. On November 9, 1923, he and his Nazi cronies attempted to overthrow the Weimar Republic in the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich and establish a new government based on race. He was arrested on charges of high treason and sentenced by sympathetic judges to five years, of which he served nine months, and dictated the first volume of his autobiography, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), to Rudolf Hess in 1924.

Hitler lost both his run and the runoff in the 1932 presidential elections to incumbent von Hindenberg. Noting Hitler's popularity with the German people, Hindenberg offered him the vice-chancellorship, which he refused. Hindenberg hated Hitler and considered him unfit to be chancellor. With Hindenberg's cabinet in chaos and the parliament unable to form agreeable coalitions, he relented and appointed Hitler chancellor when government officials promised to keep a tight rein on him. He was appointed, *never elected*, chancellor on January 30, 1933. Four weeks later the Parliament building burned down due to arson. The Nazis blamed the communists, without evidence, of trying to overthrow Germany's national renewal and demanded emergency legislation. The Reichstag Fire Decree suppressed the press, banned political meetings and marches, and suspended the rights of freedom of speech and assembly, allowing the police to arrest any Nazi political opponents, thus dissolving constitutional protection of political, personal, and property rights and laying the groundwork for a dictatorship. This is evidenced in March when the Nazis opened their first concentration camp at Dachau, Germany, to re-educate enemies of the state. His dictatorship was solidified in August 1934 when President von Hindenberg died and Hitler became both president and chancellor. He combined his titles to Fuhrer and became the absolute dictator of Germany with no legal or constitutional limits on his authority.

There were two victim groups targeted for persecution. Enemies of the state were those who did not conform to the racial or political theories of the Nazi police state: religious leaders, especially Catholics whose allegiance was to the Pope rather than Hitler, and Jehovah's Witnesses, who refused military service and the Nazi salute and whose only recognized authority was to Jehovah God; political dissidents, such as socialists, communists, trade unionists, Freemasons, pacifists, even the Boy Scouts; the intelligentsia of scientists, lawyers, teachers, doctors, industrialists, and writers; non-Jews sheltering Jews; and behavioral asocials, such as homosexuals, criminals, beggars, vagrants, alcoholics, prostitutes, and juvenile delinquents. As a teacher, I could have been one of them.

The second group was social or racial inferiors who threatened the biological purity of the Aryan race, primarily the Jews, the only victims of a total genocidal onslaught; the asocial Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), considered a plague and an alien race; the subhuman Slavs, such as the Poles, Russians, especially the Soviet POWs; and the mentally and physically handicapped, dubbed "useless eaters" unworthy of life because it cost limited capital to feed them with no payback to the master race.

The Nazis had spent considerable time and effort trying to figure out how to define the Jews not by religion but as a race since many Jews were secular and some only part Jewish or unknown Jewish. The Nuremberg Laws of September 1935 determined their citizenship. People with three or more Jewish grandparents were considered racially Jewish. Jews in Germany were no longer citizens but subjects of the state. The second Nuremberg law protected German blood and honor by forbidding marriage, children, or sex between Jews and non-Jews. There was plenty of pseudoscience available to "prove" eugenics to eliminate individuals considered biological threats to Germany's health.

Some people consider Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, November 9-10, 1938, as the beginning of the Holocaust. One survivor said that Kristallnacht was not the beginning but the end for the Jews. Thousands of shattered

windows littered the streets from hundreds of burned synagogues and their artifacts. About 7,500 Jewish businesses, homes, schools, cemeteries, and hospitals were destroyed by violent antisemitic mobs under the watchful eyes of the Gestapo in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Emboldened by the reaction to the murder of a German official in Paris by a 17-year-old Polish Jew whose parents had been deported from Germany to Poland, which refused to accept Jews and left them homeless, police and firefighters did nothing. But some non-Jewish friends and neighbors were happy to help fuel the flames. Jews were blamed for the riots and fined more than $400 million in 1938 rates. Insurance claims paid to Jews were confiscated by the Reich, so the Jewish communities had to clean up the rubble themselves. More than 30,000 Jewish men were sent to concentration camps, and 91 Jews, probably more, were murdered.

Hitler had been working on his ideological war before he became Fuhrer. By 1939 he was ready to declare his military war. The Nazis concocted a preposterous ploy to justify his military war, a continuation of World War I to him, but this time as the winner. On August 31, 1939, German Nazis staged a fake attack on the German radio tower in Gleiwitz (Gliwice in German) on its border with Poland. German troops dressed in Polish uniforms seized the station and broadcast an anti-German message in Polish. The Germans dressed some dead concentration-camp prisoners in Polish uniforms to "prove" the Polish assault and blame the imminent war on the Poles. Germany invaded Poland the next day. Hitler finally had his military war, which would now divert attention from the war against the Jews, which the Nazis could wage in relative secrecy until 1941. Round-ups, deportations, ghettos, camps, torture, shootings, and gas chambers were either unknown or ignored.

By 1941 Germany had hoped the Jews would leave, but not enough wanted to abandon their family, property, business, home, or country. Once Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and acquired Poland's 3.3 million Jews and another 3 million after invading Russia in 1941, an approach more drastic was needed against the Eastern European Jews. The *Einsatzgruppen*, the mobile killing squads, followed the German army and rounded up and shot many of the Jewish inhabitants of the conquered territories. In September 1941 the Germans decided that the Jews of Kiev, Ukraine, would all be killed in retaliation for the death of some Germans and a number of blown-up German administration buildings in town. The Jews assembled, thinking they were being resettled, with suitcases and their valuables. Instead, they were taken to the Babi Yar ravine, forced to hand over their valuables, stripped naked, and shot into the ravine with machine guns. Almost 34,000 Jews were shot in small groups into pits, covered with a thin layer of dirt and sand and layered in the pit. A few people actually survived, crawled out, and walked away. The bodies were dug up and burned two years later to hide evidence, using bulldozers and bone crushing machines. In 1974 a memorial was erected, and in 1991, after Ukraine independence, the victims were identified as Jews. There were many smaller massacres, collectively killing more than a million Jews and tens of thousands of other innocent people. These murders took their toll on some of the willing executioners, who drank heavily to dull their conscience. They were ordinary men, not coerced psychopaths or sociopaths, who said they were obediently following orders to kill enemies of Germany. Most perpetrators have not been tried or punished.

On one of my visits to Poland, we were walking in a small village and attracting a lot of attention from residents who came out to investigate. We told them we were looking for a forest where we understood a massacre had occurred during the war. They all shook their heads, even though some admitted they'd lived there at the time. We headed into the woods and encountered a young man who spoke English. We explained our mission, and he asked us to follow him. He took us to a monument that he had paid for himself in memory of his grandparents who had been shot there. He showed us bullets embedded in trees. We wondered whether it was the kippot or the guilt that anesthetized the villagers' memory.

A more efficient mass-murder plan was needed, so on January 20, 1942, 15 senior Nazi officials met in Wannsee, Berlin, to finalize the Final Solution of the Jewish Question to eradicate some 11 million Jews. Reinhard Heydrich, SS General and key architect of the Final Solution, presided; Adolf Eichmann, a lieutenant colonel who managed the mass deportation of Jews to ghettos and extermination camps in the German-occupied East, took notes. Hitler had given the oral order in the summer. Since neither the war nor the massacres were going well, it was decided to shift to organized, systemic murder on an industrial scale. Orders were given to explore new methods of mass murder using poison gas, since it had been used successfully in the euthanasia program. Emigration and expulsion hadn't worked; now it was time for extermination.

---

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) has thus far documented 42,500 ghettos and camps during the Holocaust, not all at the same time and some for very short periods of time. There were different kinds of camps:

- Concentration—originally as a jail for German re-education of enemies of the state
- Labor—to build roads and camps and rebuild Germany and its economy
- Transit—to transfer prisoners to permanent or extermination camps
- Extermination—to execute the Final Solution of the Jewish Question to murder Europe's Jews.

There were six extermination camps, all in Poland. They were also labor camps. Every camp was a death camp; people died in all of them, either from murder or conditions. I have been to 12 camps, including five of the six extermination camps. Each is different; all are heartbreaking; some have been destroyed; some forgotten; and some turned into museums. I will share some memories of camps I have visited and the stories of some Delaware survivors.

Many people visit DACHAU because it's in Germany rather than Eastern Europe and think it is representative of life in the camps. It is not. Dachau was the first concentration camp, opened in March 1933 near Munich to re-educate political prisoners who did not conform to the racial or political theories of the Nazi police state. Jews did not come until later, including 10,000 men after Kristallnacht, most of whom were released in a few weeks, many proving they had made arrangements to emigrate from Germany. There were crematoria and a gas chamber, but the latter was never used. German doctors performed painful medical experiments here to test the survival of the German military, such as high-altitude experiments to discern the maximum for pilots, freezing experiments to check the lowest temperature to treat hypothermia, and experiments for potable seawater. Drugs and treatments were also studied after being administered to prisoners injected with contagious diseases and antibodies or intentionally injured. Few of these medical criminals were ever indicted or disciplined. In fact, many continued their medical careers with no punishment. American forces liberated it April 29, 1945. It has been rebuilt as a memorial and a museum; tours are available. Because it is a replica of the original camp and I had already seen many of the intact camps, I had trouble connecting with it. The blankets and the bunk beds looked way too comfy for reality.

CHELMNO, located near Lodz, was the first of the six extermination camps built in Poland, operating from December 1941 to January 1945. Prisoners arrived by truck and were told by an SS officer

in a white lab coat to head to another truck for a shower to prepare to be laborers. Once the truck was packed with 50-70 prisoners, the truck's exhaust asphyxiated them, but gas vans were too limited and too slow. The SS destroyed it in 1944-1945. There is nothing there, but it still gave me an eerie feeling.

BELZEC, SOBIBOR, and TREBLINKA were given the code name Operation Reinhart in memory of SS General and key architect of the Final Solution Reinhart Heydrich, who was murdered in the spring of 1942 by two Czech agents working for the British in Prague. Its purpose was to murder the 2 million Jews living in the German-occupied General Government in Poland. The staff was chosen from those who had participated in the euthanasia program (T4) in Germany. These three camps were labor and extermination camps using carbon monoxide. Belzec was at first a labor camp, later an extermination camp built by Poles then Jews and experimented with automating the gas vans at Chelmno. Arriving Jews handed over their valuables, undressed, and ran through "the tube" directly into the gas chambers, deceptively labeled as showers. Bodies were buried in mass graves, later exhumed and burned in open-air ovens made from wooden train tracks. It operated from March-December 1942, when it was razed and planted with trees to look like a farm, as were all three. I have not visited it.

I visited Sobibor with my Polish guide. It had been destroyed. A year later when I was studying at Yad Vashem, our guest speaker was Berek (Dov) Freiberg, a Sobibor prisoner. He arrived at Sobibor at age 15 and described the camp, which included gas chambers, mass graves, and barracks for forced laborers. Trains of 40-60 cars arrived; passengers were told it was a transit camp and to hand over their valuables, undress, and run through "the tube" to the showers (gas chambers). Women's hair was shorn for many German uses, including the manufacture of socks for the SS so that when they walked around on German passenger trains, they didn't generate static electricity. After the tube carbon monoxide was piped in. In autumn 1942 Jewish forced laborers exhumed the mass graves and burned the bodies. Bone fragments were then crushed into powder to hide evidence. Dov then told in riveting detail how in early 1943 the 600 remaining prisoners noticed that exterminations were decreasing and planned an uprising. On October 14, 1943, half those prisoners escaped; 100 were caught; and 50 survived the war. He spoke with such excitement and animation that made the movie *Escape from Sobibo*r, which he cautioned is not historically accurate, trite. He published *To Survive Sobibor* in 2007 and died in 2008. Sobibor was in operation from the spring of 1942 until the fall of 1943.

I've been to Treblinka four times. It looks like a forest. Every time I have found ashes and bone fragments. I don't have to dig, just rustle the grass by walking. This is very upsetting because this is sacred soil. Part of Treblinka is a dedicated memorial of 17,000 rocks and stones of varying sizes in memory of the 900,000 victims; 216 of the rocks bear the names of cities and towns where Jews had lived. From July through September 1942, the Nazis deported about 265,000 Jews from Warsaw and 35,000 from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka. Thousands of people were spared the trip because they had already starved to death in the ghetto. When I was lecturing on the bus to the 2010 March of the Living survivors, 2Gs, and 3Gs (second and third generations), I passed around maps and gave a history of the camp. When the bus arrived, Eddie Weinstein, a Treblinka survivor, grabbed the mike and said, "The map is almost accurate; Margaret is almost right. Now I'm going to show you what it was like here." He jumped off the bus, and we all ran after him. We followed him to the train tracks, which were not in their original location. He pointed out where a fake railroad station complete with a wooden clock and fake terminal signs had greeted victims to assure them that this place was safe. He showed where other buildings had been, all accompanied by personal memories and stories, including Kanada, the building used to store dead prisoners' clothes, because that's where he hid for three days recovering from the gunshots received when he arrived after marching for three days to get there. We ran the quarter mile after the octogenarian to the quarry where he had chiseled out rock for German concrete and construction. He was the last survivor of Treblinka and died in 2010. Treblinka was in operation from the fall of 1941 to the fall of 1943.

MAJDANEK is a representative camp to visit to get an overview of an extermination camp. It is a state museum with abundant and clear signage. There are no tours that rush visitors or distract them while reading or pondering. Very moving is the huge, circular mausoleum at the end of the former Black Path containing the ashes of some of the victims, recovered from a compost pile mixed with dirt and rotten vegetables at the time. I will never forget the hills and holes left from the Harvest Festival on November 3, 1943, when the Nazis shot 18,000 Jews while blaring music to muffle the screams and shots of mass murder from the nearby city of Lublin. The holes are the pits where the victims were buried. The crematoria were too slow for all those bodies, just adequate to cremate the daily victims gassed with Zyklon B. It was in operation from October 1941 to April 1944.

AUSCHWITZ was the largest camp consisting of three camps: concentration, extermination, and slave labor, plus more than 40 sub-camps. At times all three camps were all three *kind*s of camps. Auschwitz had been an artillery barracks for the Polish army so already had the buildings and infrastructure to serve as the main administrative operation for the SS. Two- to three-hour tours are available, now virtual. Visitors can stay as long as they like. It took me a whole day to visit all the blocks (buildings). The *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Works Makes Freedom) gate marks its entrance. When the first transport of over 700 Polish political prisoners accused of resistance arrived in June 1940, Captain Karl Fritsch greeted them with his welcoming speech, "Let me make it clear that you have come not to a nursing home but to a German concentration camp from which there is but one way out—through the crematory chimney. Those who do not like it may go right now to this high-voltage wire fence. If there are any Jews in the transport, they have no right to live longer than two weeks, priests one month, all others three months." Block 10, Mengele's medical experiments, was difficult as was Block 11, where prisoners had to stand with no air until they suffocated. There are a Black Wall for executions, gallows, and one gas chamber and crematorium. Shoes, suitcases, glasses, artificial limbs, hair, prayer shawls, and personal possessions confiscated from arrivals are on display. It is a very complex state museum. Auschwitz operated from 1940-1945.

AUSCHWITZ II, BIRKENAU, is 2 miles away and was built by Auschwitz I slave labor and operated from 1942-1945. Other victims besides Jews were mostly Poles, Gypsies, and Soviet POWs. Most victims arrived in cattle cars loaded with 100 people each in the 50 or so cars. They jumped off the trains to the commands of the SS and vicious dogs, both ready to attack. If selected for work, they were registered and received a tattoo, shaved head, and ill-fitting uniform. Eventually most died from murder or living conditions, which were deplorable, including beatings, starvation, freezing or sweltering, exhaustion, disease, and unsanitary conditions that caused typhoid and typhus. Barracks were either horse-stable wooden or brick. Bunks were stacked three high, lined with rotting straw and one blanket, shared by two or three prisoners. Toilets were outside with as many as 58 holes in rows. Electric barbed-wire fences, dogs, blinding searchlights, and sharpshooters in towers prevented escape. Daily routine was wake-up call at 4 AM; dress; make the "bed"; a mad dash to the toilet; a hopeful breakfast if there was anything left; roll call, which could last for hours for spite

or if someone was missing; marching to work detail, which could be over 10 miles; maybe a snack for lunch; marching back to camp; and dinner of bread, maybe some meat or cheese, or soup made from scraps, rotten meat or vegetables, grass, or nettles. The trick was to strategize position in line. Those first got only broth dipped from the top; those last may have stared into an empty pot. Many prisoners were consuming 350 calories a day, the equivalent of 17 ½ Hershey Kisses. The average person needs 2,000 to 2,500 calories. One survivor told me that he sat on his bread before eating it to flatten it because he was too emaciated to open his mouth wide enough to chew. Those arrivals not selected for work were sent to one of the four gas chambers, disguised as showers, calmly asked to undress and place their clothes and shoes in a neat pile for retrieval after their shower, and asphyxiated with Zyklon B and burned in crematoria, pyres, or pits. The Nazis were able to kill about 2,000 people every half hour. Elie Wiesel and his family were deported to Auschwitz from Hungry (originally Romania) in 1944 when he was 15 years old. His mother and younger sister were murdered; he and his father were transported to Buchenwald, where his father died. On October 7, 1944, when three Jewish women assigned to Crematorium IV learned that they too would be murdered, they began smuggling gunpowder from the munitions factory where they worked to revolt and blow up the gas chambers and crematoria. They set Crematorium IV on fire, but the SS murdered about 450 prisoners during and after the revolt and hanged the smugglers. In November 1944 until January 1945, the Nazis blew up the other gas chambers and crematoria to hide evidence. Additionally, the Nazis burned many of the wooden barracks. In mid-January 1945 as the Soviet army approached, the SS murdered thousands in the three camps; a few days later they sent nearly 60,000 prisoners on death marches, shooting anyone who couldn't keep up. Many also starved or froze to death. More than 15,000 died. The Soviet army found more than 7,000 ill and dying prisoners when it liberated Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, a date which is now considered International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is estimated that of the 1.3 million people deported to the Auschwitz complex between 1940-1945, at least 1.1 million were murdered; 90 percent were Jews.

I've been to Auschwitz eight times. It always rains at Auschwitz. When survivors talk about trying to walk in the sticky mud in clogs, which got stuck, and ended up walking in bare feet, they're reciting a vivid memory. On one of my trips there in 1994 with Yad Vashem, we were accompanied by an Auschwitz-Birkenau survivor, Paula, who walked us around the camp and described her life there. As we were heading back to the bus, she looked up at a guard tower and mentioned that she'd always wondered what the guards could see. There was no one else around, so some of the guys asked if they could help her to the top. She was thrilled. She looked around and noted that she had no idea how big it was. So we all climbed up for a look. It started to rain, and we scrambled down and ran to the bus. Immediately there was the largest and most beautiful rainbow we'd ever seen. There wasn't a dry eye on the bus.

Paula also wanted to see the Krakow house she lived in before the war. We found the two-story rowhouses and entered the back courtyard. She was content not to peek in the windows but told stories of the bakery her father owned attached to their house. We did peek in those windows, and it was exactly as she remembered it. The houses had balconies, which were soon occupied by the inhabitants, wondering what this crowd was doing in their yard. When they saw the kippot, they feared this group of Jews had returned to reclaim their houses, which the present owners may have confiscated after the Jews were rounded up. A young boy came down and spoke Polish, which only Paula understood. He was very animated, and the rest of us were perplexed. He motioned for his grandmother to come down. Paula explained that she had lived there and just wanted to see her house again. The woman figured that Paula was a Holocaust survivor and started talking wildly and lifting and cradling her apron. Paula told us that the woman would go into the woods to gather apples in her apron for her son to take to the Jews hiding there. Our Yad Vashem guide muttered to us that he didn't believe her. The woman yelled something to her daughter on the balcony, and the daughter came running down with a picture frame, which she showed to Paula, who passed it on to our guide. He didn't understand the Polish, but he recognized the emblem and more. One of those Jews in the woods had nominated this "high-minded Gentile who risked her life to save Jews" for Righteous Among the Nations, which meticulously investigates each application. Our Yad Vashem guide looked a bit sheepish as he said, "Yep. That's my signature."

AUSCHWITZ III, BUNA or MONOWITZ, is a few miles from Birkenau and provided slave labor for German industrial companies. It produced synthetic rubber and chemicals for IG Farben, including Zyklon B. Because of the time it took for prisoners to march to and from Birkenau, it also became a concentration camp of mostly Jewish workers. Most of the 25,000 to 30,000 workers died from the harsh working conditions or in Auschwitz II's gas chambers. The SS lived and operated in the homes they had confiscated from the locals. The Allies bombed part of Monowitz or near it four times between 1943-1945, causing the death of some prisoners and guards and some plant damage. As the Red army approached in January 1945, 60,000 remaining prisoners in the Auschwitz system were put on death marches; the 850 sick prisoners were left to die in a few days. It operated from 1942-1945. It is generally not available for touring as its history is not preserved and the area is now under various private use. One of my trips to Auschwitz was with the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust survivors. Norbert Wollheim was treasurer and accompanied us. He had been enslaved at Auschwitz III for two years. In 1951 he sued IG Farben for his pain and suffering and his work, which he estimated to be $25 a week at the time. It took two trials and almost four years, but he won! Additionally, IG Farben had to establish a fund of $6.43 million to compensate other Jewish laborers. At age 25, before he was sent to Auschwitz, he interrupted his plans to get himself, his wife, and their infant son out of Germany and was instrumental in organizing the Kindertransport that rescued approximately 10,000 German. Austrian, and Czech children to England and Sweden between December 1938 and September 1939, when the war began, accompanying four or five of the 20 transports himself. After he returned, his plans were aborted when he and his family were deported to Auschwitz in 1943 and his pregnant wife and their three-year-old son were immediately murdered and he was sent to Monowitz, put on a death march in 1945, and escaped to Schwerin, Germany, where he was freed by American troops. He immigrated to the US in 1951 and was an enthralling survivor speaker. His testimony is on audio at the USHMM.

PLASZOW is a smaller camp in Poland remembered mostly by Steven Spielberg's 1993 movie *Schindler's List*, based on Thomas Keneally's 1982 historical fiction novel. Spielberg's set-design crew did an excellent job recreating that part of the camp, but not all the book nor all the movie is historically accurate. The words fiction and novel are not fact. It's easy to remember the huge hill where Oskar Schindler watched the prisoners' mistreatment and torture under the sadistic SS command of Amon Goth, who relished humiliating, torturing, and murdering Jews, sometimes with the help of his two dogs, trained to shred humans on command. Schindler recognized that some of those people were actually his workers in his nearby enamelware factory. He is credited with saving over 1,000 Jews, most of them his workers, and was honored by Yad Vashem in 1962 as Righteous Among the Nations. When I visited Plaszow in 1993, it had been dismantled after the

war except for that huge hill, but the movie didn't show its real use: The SS shot Jews into the pits below. In 1944 as the Soviet army approached, the SS dug up the bodies and burned them to hide evidence. Remaining prisoners were sent to Auschwitz. Plaszow was in operation from June 1942 to 1945. The other piece of evidence I saw was a number of grassy caves that I couldn't identify. They were air raid shelters for the SS. There were none for the prisoners. Since my visit the Krakow History Museum has placed a number of commemorative plaques throughout based on testimony and archaeological digs in 2017 with plans for a new museum.

SACHSENHAUSEN, RAVENSBRUCK, and BUCHENWALD are all in Germany. Sachsenhausen, near Berlin, was established in 1936 as Berlin's principal concentration camp for political opponents, including Martin Niemoller, the German theologian and Lutheran pastor, famous for his poem, *First They Came for…* The number of Jewish prisoners swelled from 11 in 1937 to 11,000 in 1945. Approximately 6,000 of the 30,000 Jews arrested after Kristallnacht decreased to about 1,300 after many were released. The others went to Dachau and Buchenwald. Additional prisoners, Poles, Jews, Soviet POWs, and women were brought in for forced labor in 1942. It was liberated in 1945 by Polish and Soviet troops and used by the Soviets as an internment camp for political prisoners until 1950. In 1961 the GDR destroyed many of the original structures in East Germany to promote its own communist ideologies. This memorial site has ample signage and descriptions of the roll-call area, barracks, prison, kitchen, infirmary, execution trench, and burial grounds.

Ravensbruck was built by Sachsenhausen prisoners for women prisoners, who arrived in 1939. Most were political prisoners along with Poles, Jews, and Gypsies. The commander was male, but the SS guards were women, who were also trained there. One guard tried to ease punishments but didn't last long. It was a forced-labor camp of armaments production. As the prison became crowded, "selected" prisoners were shot there or sent to euthanasia killing centers for medical experiments or the gas chambers. One heinous medical experiment performed by Nazi doctors removed muscle from women's legs and inserted tetanus and or gangrene plus glass and dirt to learn how best to treat German soldiers' shrapnel wounds. These women hopped around the camp and were called Ravensbruck Rabbits. About 100 women were forced to work in brothels in other camps to reward male prisoners who met or exceeded various quotas. Between 1939-1945, when the Russian army liberated it, about 132,000 women and children, 20,000 men, and 1,000 youth were imprisoned there, with tens of thousands of deaths. Since Ravensbruck is in Germany, my son and I assumed we could find it on our own. We bought a train ticket from a cashier who insisted there was no train there but finally admitted there was because we knew that; then we asked the conductor on this local train to alert us when there. After many stops in the middle of nowhere, the train stopped for about 10 minutes. There was no station sign and no conductor. We were the only passengers on the train, which began moving again accompanied by the absent conductor. When we asked when we'd get to Ravensbruck, he told us it had been that last stop and now the train was heading back the 50 miles to Berlin. Shortly we passed the Ravensbruck sign; the train had stopped before it, so we couldn't see it. We asked why he didn't tell us. He just shrugged. It appears that in the early 90s, some Germans were not ready to face their history and saw no need for us to either. We stayed on the train with our same ticket and headed back to Berlin. It did no good to get off in another field; it would be too far to walk. This second trip the conductor identified the stop and pointed us in the direction to the camp. We were literally in a farmer's field. We started the half-hour walk, passing through a quaint Russian town with all signs and conversation in Russian. The residents were happy to help us with hand signals because *their* army had liberated it. When we got to the camp, it was closed. It was Monday, when most museums in Europe are closed. We had paid our "dues," and we were going in. We walked the perimeter until we found a lower wall, about four feet high, that I could see over but not climb over. My son scaled it and somehow managed to hoist me over, and we were in. Most of the exhibits are outside, so we had the museum to ourselves. Being alone in such a place provides quiet to contemplate and cry with no spectators. The signs were detailed and graphic. I got some concept of why this was part of Hitler's Hell.

Buchenwald is near Weimar and was one of the largest concentration camps in Germany. Male political prisoners arrived in 1937, women not until late 1943. Almost 10,000 Jews were sent there after Kristallnacht in 1938; most were also shortly released. Buchenwald served as punishment for the work-shy—Jehovah's Witnesses, Gypsies, repeat criminals, and military deserters—and later resistance fighters, non-compliant government officials, and foreign forced laborers. Medical experiments to test vaccines and treatments for contagious diseases killed hundreds. Buchenwald and its 88 subcamps supplied outside industry and armament factories through forced labor, especially in stone quarries and construction. Those too weak to work were euthanized by phenol injection or gassed at other facilities. As the Soviets were liberating camps in Poland in 1945, about 10,000 prisoners, mostly Jews, arrived at Buchenwald after marching from Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen. As US forces approached, the SS sent about 30,000 prisoners from Buchenwald and its subcamps on death marches; about one-third of them died from exhaustion or gunshot. Underground resistance blocked Nazi orders and saved many lives. The Nazis had imprisoned about 250,000 registered people and murdered at least 56,000 male prisoners, 11,000 of whom were Jews. As meticulous as Nazi records were, significant numbers of prisoners were never registered, particularly as numbers swelled or the Allies approached and evacuations were immediate. Elie Wiesel and his father were transported from Auschwitz to Buchenwald in January 1945; his father died shortly thereafter. Elie was imprisoned in the "little camp," horse stables designed for 50 horses but housing 2,000 men and used as barracks downhill from the main camp and set up as a transit camp for forced laborers. He can be seen in a commonly distributed photo taken days after liberation. US forces liberated the camp April 11, 1945, at 3:15 PM. The huge clock in the watchtower is permanently set at that time. They found about 21,000 prisoners still alive. My visit to Buchenwald was about my tenth camp, so I recognized many of the objects and much of the routine, much of which was quite similar in other concentration camps. The one thing I didn't recognize was a huge walled pit of crushed stone along one of the buildings. It was used as punishment for prisoners forced to walk for hours in the crushed stones in new shoes designed for German soldiers to test the shoes' durability. It is now part of the Little Camp Memorial. Much of the camp has been rebuilt and is easy to navigate.

THERESIENSTADT (Terezin) is really two different places, the Little Fortress and the town itself. The Little Fortress was a garrison and former military prison built for the Habsburg monarchy in the 18th century as protection between two rivers and the perfect prison for the Nazis once they invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939 and acquired more Jews. The Little Fortress, like Auschwitz I, was already built for torture and terror. It contained prison, punishment, and solitary confinement cells; showers; barracks; roll call area; sick room; disinfectant room; workshops for repairs and construction; and an execution site for shootings and hangings. Over 150,000 prisoners went through between 1941-1945. Imprisonment was cruel and harsh. However, the guards and their families could enjoy a swimming pool. The Big Fortress was the town itself of Terezin, which the Nazis turned into a ghetto, concentration camp, and labor camp after evicting the inhabitants in

1941. The Nazis concocted a propaganda stunt to disguise the murder of the Jews deported from Germany by deploying celebrities, vets, and elderly and disabled Austrian, German, and Czech Jews, as well as families, to Theresienstadt (the German name for Terezin) under the guise of a spa retirement community, since the Nazis thought that it would be unimaginable to Germans that such disadvantaged people would be used for forced labor. It was a holding pen of poor conditions of overcrowding, starvation, and death until the survivors could be deported to extermination camps. Those fit enough created a rich cultural life with a library, concerts, lectures, literature, and education for the 15,000 children who passed through Theresienstadt. When the Danes insisted on an International Red Cross visit in June 1944 to check on their 456 Jews, the Nazis sprang into action to bolster the hoax by increasing deportations from Theresienstadt and forcing prisoners to beautify the garden, paint houses, wash sidewalks, build new barracks, and create a social center concert hall, synagogue, and a monument to honor dead Jews. The children performed *Brundibar*, a children's opera. The Nazis made a propaganda film showing how well the Jews were living under the benevolent protection of the Third Reich. When the Red Cross left, most of the children were deported to Auschwitz and the improvements destroyed. It is also the setting for the 1978 four-part television mini-series, *The Holocaust*, which Elie Wiesel called semi-fact and semi-fiction in *The New York Times*, writing that it was "untrue, offensive, cheap, and an insult to those who perished and to those who survived." Theresienstadt operated until the Russians liberated it in 1945, finding 11,000 remaining prisoners. I've been to Theresienstadt twice, once by myself and once with Charlotte Opfermann, who lived there as a teenager with her mother in separate housing from 1942 until liberation. Since this camp is now a museum, a group of us was standing around the glass-enclosed camp diorama when Charlotte asked to see the museum director. Charlotte was over 6 feet tall and usually got what she wanted. She asked him to remove the glass lid. He did. She started moving the color-coded symbols of various buildings, blue pieces for the boys' houses, red for girls', much to the horror of everyone. She told him she had lived there for three years and would never forget the layout of the camp. We left on good terms. She insisted on going back the next day to give more explicit instructions, but all the pieces were exactly as they belonged. The director thanked her and told her she was the only survivor of the ghetto he had met.

DRANCY was a transit camp in Paris which processed over 70,000 mostly French and foreign Jews between 1941-1944, usually to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Fewer than 2,000 of them survived the Holocaust. A huge multistory U-shaped building, previously a police barracks, faced a mammoth courtyard previously enclosed by barbed wire. Conditions were brutal, such as starvation and lack of medical care, particularly for Jewish children, whom SS Lieutenant Klaus Barbie deported there before sending them on to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they were all killed. Sometimes children remained at Drancy alone after their parents were deported. In the Great Raid of *Vel d'Hiv* (an indoor cycling sports track) in July 1942, French and German police rounded up about 13,000 French and foreign Jews and packed them into the arena with no food, water, or sanitary conditions. The glass ceiling caused stifling heat, and ventilation was sealed to prevent escape. After five days they were sent to Drancy. French president Jacques Chirac in 1995 recognized the role of the French government and police in the deportation of French Jews. When I visited Drancy, it was back to its original purpose of an apartment complex with several memorials to its victims, a museum, and a cattle car. It's a beautiful courtyard with an ugly history of overcrowding, fear, dread, and horror.

---

It's hard to understand how anybody survived the Holocaust. Not all victims were in a camp. Some were in hiding in forests or plain sight; some were hidden by non-Jews; some were partisans; and some were rescued. The Delaware survivors all have unique, personal stories. Most of the survivors are of blessed memory.

Halina Wind Preston was born in the Polish town of Turka in 1922. Her father was an Orthodox watchmaker well respected by many townspeople. They lived in a storefront house and rented out an apartment upstairs to help pay private-school tuition for their children. Fayga (Halina) was the only girl in her class and had Christian friends, some of whom urged the school board not to let her graduate because she was a Jew. She graduated. Antisemitism was ubiquitous. At age 19 she was living as a Polish Catholic with a friend in Lvov, Ukraine, where her parents had sent her for her safety. When the friend's family found out she was Jewish, they gave her a new address: Jail. She escaped one night and lived for 14 months in the sewers in the dark with the stench; dripping, sometimes raging, water; and rats and dreamed of New York, where her brother lived as a rabbinical student. Three Polish sewer workers brought them food, water, and clean clothes every day except Sunday and moved them to safety when necessary. A baby was born and had to be suffocated for fear its cries would reveal the group. Twenty-one entered; 10 survived; she was 22. When the war was over, she found her house in her village looted and empty. She was the only Jew who survived. Her parents and a brother had been killed at Belzec, one of the six extermination camps. After the war she traveled to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to testify on behalf of the three sewer workers to be included in the Righteous Among the Nations to honor them and to provide them with a monthly stipend, much needed once Poland fell under communism. She sent care packages of clothing as additional supplement. She married another survivor and co-founded our Halina Wind Preston Holocaust Education Committee. She was a Jewish educator. She died in 1982 at age 60. I regret that I never met her because I was not yet involved in Holocaust education, but she comes alive every time her son, David Lee Preston, a former journalist and news anchor, writes about her. He is the source of this short biography. While cleaning out some of her personal papers, David found four diaries, 167 pages, of poems and prose in Polish about war, God, and hope that she wrote while living in the sewer and is in the process of having them translated. I hope he writes about them as I am eager to know her thoughts. She was the force behind the Garden of the Righteous, located behind the Jewish Community Center in Wilmington, when in 1981 Delaware survivors planted trees to honor their rescuers and formally dedicated it in 1983 after a landscape makeover. It is the first monument in the US dedicated to Christians who saved Jewish lives by risking their own during the Holocaust in Europe. Franklin Littell, Methodist minister and Holocaust scholar, was the featured speaker. He is dear to my heart because he was my advisor on my dissertation, a project he arranged for me with the USHMM to survey Holocaust curriculum by investigating what colleges and universities, departments, topics, textbooks, and resources were being used in undergraduate Holocaust courses, evaluate them by consulting with scholars and survivors, and write the curriculum for the Museum. I also worked for the Annual Scholars Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches, which he cofounded. The Garden was again rededicated in 2013. A 6-foot bronze sculpture in memory of the 1.5 million children who perished during the Holocaust was dedicated in 1985 at the request of Dorothy Finger, also a child survivor.

George Preston was born in 1914 in predominantly Jewish Rovno, a section of Poland that is now Ukraine. His mother died when he was 17 from an unknown illness, and his father was shot into a local pit by the Nazis and some local helpers in 1941, murdering about 18,000 of the 22,000 Jews from his hometown. In 1942 he was 28 years old and working in northern France for an

engineering firm. He was arrested and beaten and sent by cattle car to a slave labor camp in Poland, where he built railroad cars and endured more beatings. Next, 50 cattle cars stuffed with 100 passengers each took him in 1943 to Auschwitz-Birkenau. where he received his tattoo and slept in a bunk with five other prisoners sharing one blanket and witnessed unimaginable murders. In 1944 he worked for Siemens in Auschwitz III making dies for German subs. He became ill with typhus from the lice and was hospitalized with no medical treatment. Warned by a Jewish doctor that an imminent transport would relocate all the sick prisoners to the gas chamber, he went back to work. In January 1945 he was sent on a 50-mile death march with 10,000 other prisoners in freezing weather to Gliwice, where they were loaded onto flatcars on their way to Buchenwald. When they passed through Czechoslovakia, people threw food and water to them. Three-quarters of the passengers were dead by now. He was assigned to move trucks loaded with quarry stones. Once Allied bombings began on Weimar, he was forced to dig through the rubble to find German bodies. Soldiers in an American army tank entered the camp and liberated them April 11, 1945. George weighed 80 pounds. President Roosevelt died April 12, so they held a memorial service for him. Three days later George was back in France. In 1965 he was a witness in Frankfurt against a particularly sadistic Auschwitz guard who was then sent to prison for murder. George spoke eight languages but didn't talk much about the Holocaust. He was an electrical engineer for the DuPont company. When he invited me to his house for one of his mandolin concerts, I'd ask him questions, and he'd drop me kernels and leave their chronological order to me to figure out. However, he was an excellent musician and artist. He died in 2006 at 92. I was able to reconstruct this bio from one of Rabbi Michael Beals's Torah portions based on David Lee Preston's 1985 award-winning article, *Journey to My Father's Holocaust*, a trip father and son took together to retrace George's life in Europe. My thanks to Rabbi Beals and David.

I adored Dorothy Finger. She changed my life. She was born in 1922 in a small village in Poland, now Ukraine, the only child of merchants from a family of 100. She was the only survivor. When the Germans attacked Poland in 1939, the Russians were still Axis powers and nationalized Dorothy's family's store. The Germans took over in 1941 after attacking Russia, forcing her father into hard labor and beatings. Soon he was loaded into a cattle car destined for Bergen-Belsen, but he smothered along the way. Dorothy was 13. She wore a yellow star and was ostracized by her neighbors. She and her mother sold possessions to neighbors for food and gave them other valuables for safekeeping. She and her mother and a group tried to run to the next city and were robbed three times. It was bitter cold and snowing when they finally found a ghetto. At 13 she walked 5 miles back and forth to a farm where she worked. Two more ghettos followed, then a labor camp where she carried buckets of stones, crushed them, and added tar to build roads, nearly going blind from the fumes. She was repeatedly beaten and given only a little soup and bread a day. Her mother sent her a note in the labor camp: "My dear child: I know that I am going to be killed here, but you are young and strong and I hope you will survive. Some day when you are free, you must tell the world how we Jews suffered and what those barbarians did to us." Dorothy thought that note helped her survive. Her mother remained in the ghetto and was shot in a field while escaping. Immediately the Nazis began liquidating the camp, and she ran with nine or ten others in the cold winter in a thin dress into the forest and subsisted on berries, nuts, and potatoes stolen from nearby fields. She was the youngest. Unfortunately, the smoke from their fire revealed their hiding place, which brought Nazis, neighbors, and dogs. Once a bullet grazed her ear, and she thought she was dead. In February 1944 Dorothy hid from the SS by hiding in a partially frozen pond. She covered herself with leaves and twigs and heard one Nazi say that if anyone was in there, it wasn't worth a wasted bullet because the person would freeze to death anyway. When they left, she climbed out in her summer dress, which froze and thawed on her for another year. She caught typhus from the lice and was unconscious much of the time from the high fever. She lost her hair, had frostbitten toes, and couldn't straighten her legs so crawled for weeks. With another SS roundup approaching, her companions tied a rag around her and dragged her to save her when she couldn't run. She could walk by spring. Russian tanks liberated them in 1944; she was 14. She stayed in a displaced persons camp until she came to Wilmington to live with her uncle. A year later she returned to her village to reclaim her possessions. Her neighbors denied having anything of hers. Another neighbor, however, gave her some wool fabric from her parents' department store. She had a suit made from it in Wilmington and considered it her only connection with her parents. She told me that when the Holocaust was over, she couldn't talk about it. Later, no one wanted to listen. It wasn't until she read her diary 25 years after liberation that she knew she had to talk about it. She told me if she didn't recognize her own handwriting, she wouldn't believe this stuff happened either. She became a nurse. We often went to lunch; then I'd take her shopping. Howard Johnson's was a favorite. After we were seated and served the "appetizer" rolls, we chatted and tried to ignore them. Finally, she grabbed a roll, took a bite, and said, "I starved in the forest for two years. I'm going to eat the damn roll." I joined her. She died at 88 in 2018. I miss her something awful.

Ann Jaffe is another survivor I love. She is still an active member of the HWPHEC speakers' bureau. She was born in 1931 into an Orthodox family in a small remote village of 1200, 350 of whom were Jews, in eastern Poland. She had five siblings, including a baby brother, to play with as well as Jewish and non-Jewish neighborhood children. She was 10 when the Nazis arrived to prepare to occupy the town. She was barred from school and not allowed to walk on the sidewalk, but dogs were. She wished she were a dog so she wouldn't have to walk in the gutter. The Nazis hung signs with the new laws, including not to help any Jews. The invaders took all their valuables, including their cow, bike, warm clothes, and anything made of metal and forced them to wear a yellow star. What really upset her was that friends and neighbors turned against them and were happy to keep law and order by forming their own militia and rounding up Jews to kill. When they conducted a roll call, if anyone was missing and not back within 48 hours, these "friends" would randomly choose 10 Jewish men and kill them. A few months later when the Nazis returned, they dug a mass grave. Because of the town's remoteness, it was easier to shoot the Jews than transport them to camps. Ann's family was rounded up and put on the truck but spared because Ann's mother was a seamstress, and as a "useful Jew," could make some dresses for the Nazi officer's wife. They hopped off the truck and returned to their house that had been completely looted, including the sewing machine, which her mother finally got back. They were later transferred to a nearby ghetto where they shared a three-bedroom apartment with two other families and lived on a cup of soup and a piece of bread a day. Ann's father was helping a Christian man grow medicinal plants and veggies for the Nazis when another transport truck with their name on the list arrived. Ann's father saw the gardener, who managed to get them off the truck by declaring her father a "useful Jew," and they returned to the ghetto. In November 1942 partisans appeared from the forest, killed the ghetto guards, and set them free. Ann's family ran into the forest after them with nothing but the clothes on their backs and a shawl Ann had taken from their first roundup, which probably saved the baby from freezing to death in the brutal winters that followed. The partisans helped them build a bonfire and told them never to let it go out and left. Fire was both friend and foe: It provided bodily warmth and facilitated cooking,

but its smoke also identified their location. There was little food but plenty of fear. The children raided nearby fields and gardens and begged for food from residents. Poles were threatened with death for helping Jews, so some were conflicted with turning them in. After almost two years in the forest, a Polish farmer told them that the Soviets had liberated Poland on July 4, 1944. She was 13. They lived in numerous DP camps for five years awaiting immigration into the US to join relatives. An older brother had left their forest hideout and was killed by the Nazis. Their village had been burned to the ground, and only 32 of the 350 Jews living there survived the war. Ann didn't trust any non-Jews because they knew what was happening and did little or nothing to help. Her father had to help her overcome her hatred before it destroyed her by helping her to replace the hate on her tongue with kindness in her heart. I interviewed Ann for the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (Spielberg) in 2000. Because the questions were so detailed and complex, we jogged her memory for some names of people and places. I had visited Bad Arolsen International Center on Nazi Persecution in Germany (International Tracing Service) in 2000 and found records for about five DP camps where she had stayed, some for such short periods of time that she had forgotten them. Ann is one of the kindest people I know. She encourages positivity, especially to the thousands of students she speaks to every year. She was instrumental in the passage of the Delaware Holocaust Education Bill, which makes Delaware the 14th state to mandate Holocaust education in grades 6-12 in public and charter schools by sharing her experiences during the Holocaust with both the Senate and the House. She was a Jewish educator. I love going to her house for lunch; she makes the best soups. She offered to hem some clothes for me (sewing saved her mom) and gives me clippings from her hundreds of plants inside and outside her home (gardening saved her dad). She has saved *me* many times when I wonder whether Holocaust education is clicking with students. She is a wonderful friend, and I adore her.

Arnold Kerr was born in Suwalki, northern Poland, in 1928, the second of four boys to a fur dealer/real estate owner who traveled extensively throughout Europe for his work. The Polish army rented one of his buildings before the war for their headquarters. The town was a border town of 30,000 so shared German, Russian, and Lithuanian influences. He had a nanny! He attended Hebrew school until age 11 when the war broke out in 1939. His father took a shipment of furs to Warsaw and never returned; he was killed at Trawniki, a slave-labor camp, leaving Arnold's mother and her children to fend for themselves. They fled to Vilnius, Lithuania, occupied by the Russians until German occupation in 1941 and stayed for a year. All Jews were then sent to two ghettos set up in the old town center where they suffered from starvation, shootings, and hard labor. Arnold hid in a closet during round-ups. The Nazis liquidated the ghetto in 1943 and sent all able-bodied males to labor camps in Estonia, where Arnold's 17-year-old brother was shot after digging a mass grave. Arnold was 15. Next, he was sent to Stutthof, a camp near Danzig on the Baltic Sea, where the prisoners were mainly non-Jews, so most of his bunkmates were Danes, who were very friendly and shared the food they regularly received from home. Such was not the case with the guards. It was a brutal camp with a vast network of forced-labor camps with his camp working in Danzig on submarines. The typhus epidemic in 1944 was treated with lethal injection or Zyklon B. As the Russians approached in the winter of 1945, he and thousands of other prisoners were put on a death march to Rieben, another camp on the Baltic, which the Russian army liberated the day after his 17th birthday. He was the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust. His mother and two younger brothers were murdered at Auschwitz. He completed high school in one year at a DP camp in Germany and a civil engineering degree from the Technical University of Munich. He came to the US in 1954 and earned master's and doctoral degrees and worked as an engineering professor, lastly at the U of D. I interviewed Arnold for the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (Spielberg) in 1998. I asked him why he went back to Germany after the war for college. "Simple," he said. "They owed me." Most of those Visual History interviews last two hours and four tapes. Arnold's took about 10 hours and six tapes because he had been in so many camps. The Foundation has a strict protocol of names, dates, places, and descriptions for each camp to deter deniers. The videographer ran out of his professional-grade tapes, and we had to rush through his after-war experiences. Arnold's wife Berta cooked us dinner at 10 PM. Once when I was a guest lecturer at the U of D and heading to my car, Arnold and I approached each other and stopped for a chat. He was looking *past* me and not *at* me. Realizing this, he asked me to turn around and look in the gutter. There lay a piece of peanut-butter bread face up. He said it was all he could do not to pounce on it, remembering his days of starvation. Arnold reciprocated and guest lectured in *my* classes. He died at 84 in 2012. His daughter, Regina Alonzo, is a very active member of the HWPHEC, having served as chair for many years. She is a valuable asset to our present chair, Steve Gonzer.

Terry Dannemann was born in Poland in 1925. Her father died when she was 5, and her mother remarried. When Terry was 14, Germany invaded Poland and started World War II. A week before, Germany and Russia had agreed to partition Poland between them along the Bug River. The Polish army was quickly defeated by superior German troops and weapons. When Germany broke its 1939 pact with Russia and invaded it in 1941, Germany claimed the rest of Poland. The Nazis invaded Terry's home and the family's businesses, mandated white armbands with a blue Star of David for all Jews, and introduced strict laws for Jews. A blue-eyed blonde, she was often assumed to be a Christian and ignored; other times she and her sister sang Hebrew songs in the street as proud Jews. Her stepfather was rounded up and committed suicide at the local police station rather than endure the painful life and death he knew awaited him. When she heard that the Gestapo was on its way, she and many others ran and hid in the forest for a few days until they felt safe to return home. A local farmer who knew and respected their stepfather offered to take them to a town whose Jews had already been deported and hide them in the ghetto, where she was reunited with her friend Ruth. Her brother stayed behind and hid in a sewer, but his fate is unknown. As the Jews disappeared from the ghetto, the town filled with the SS for training. A cousin found them and suggested that as blue-eyed blondes with forged papers they board a train with Polish workers headed to Germany. Unfortunately, their mother couldn't accompany them. They tried not to speak nor look away in fear from any Nazi as anyone suspected of being Jewish was shot. Fearing their identity papers were not legitimate looking, they played dumb blondes who had lost their papers. The annoyed guard actually replaced them, and the two friends were on their way to Germany to find work. They worked on a farm outside Heidelberg and worked on being good Polish Catholics. Ruth had a German accent, so they pretended she was mute. Terry's letters to her mother were never answered, so she stopped sending them to avoid their being traced. One day the Gestapo appeared on the farm and captured a young girl, claiming she was Jewish, and shot her. Terry and Ruth considered themselves very lucky. In May 1945 they heard explosions that they thought were bombs and saw the Nazis frantically running around. Not knowing what was going on, they hid in a cellar. A soldier called down, an *American* soldier, with lots of other American soldiers nearby. They were liberated! They saw a Jewish American soldier and introduced themselves. He said he hadn't seen any Jews who weren't in a camp. He told them it was the last day of Passover and invited them to a Seder. Terry

learned that her family and home were gone, and she assumed she was the only survivor. She took a job in Heidelberg with the American Red Cross to help those in need. She and Ruth decided to come to the US and went to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to serve as translators for Ernie Dannemann, who was helping displaced persons get to the US. A few months later Terry and Ernie were married. She and Ernie owned 16 fabric stores from New York to Virginia, including Delaware. She worked for 20 years on earning a degree in political science. She died in 2007 at 82. I knew Terry only through their fabric store and had no idea that she was a Holocaust survivor.

For in-depth interviews with these survivors or to learn about other Delaware survivors, Righteous Gentiles, or liberators, view the CD *No Denying: Delawareans Bear Witness to the Holocaust,* produced by Steve Gonzer. It's available in every library in Delaware.

The United Nations General Assembly in November 2005 designated January 27, the day of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, commemorating the genocide of 6 million Jews and millions of others by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II.

I must come clean. I'm not a pure-bred goy. My recent DNA shows that I am 6% Sephardic Jew. Ashkenazi I could understand as my German family immigrated here from Hungary in 1905 after relocating there for farm work. Plus, my maiden name, Weiss, is German, often Jewish. Whether maternal or paternal, a recent ancestor or the whole family kicked out of the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, my research hasn't found anything. Oy.

Thanks to the USHMM, publications available at the camps, David Lee Preston, Rabbi Michael Beals, Steve Gonzer, Delaware survivors, and Jaidy Schweers in preparing this article. The USHMM permanent exhibit is now virtual only as is anything else you ever wanted to know about the Holocaust. When it safely reopens, please plan a full-day visit.