FEATURED GUEST SPEAKER WOLF BLITZER

Wolf Blitzer is CNN’s lead political anchor and the anchor of The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer, which airs weekdays at 5 p.m. ET, providing viewers with in-depth reports on the political, international and breaking news stories of the day. In addition, he anchors Wolf, airing weekdays at 1 p.m. ET, focusing on the most important news from Washington and around the world. Blitzer has been with the network for more than two decades. Most recently, Blitzer spearheaded CNN’s Peabody Award–winning “America Votes 2008” coverage, providing up-to-the-minute results from key races across the country. He also served as moderator for the U.S. Senate debate in New Hampshire, between Scott Brown (R) and incumbent Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D).

Blitzer was pivotal to CNN’s election coverage throughout “America’s Choice 2012,” serving as lead anchor on key primary nights, caucus nights and the Obama and Romney award–winning election night coverage. He moderated three of CNN’s Republican presidential debates, including the first-of-its-kind Tea Party debate. During the 2008 presidential election, Blitzer spearheaded CNN’s Peabody Award–winning coverage of the presidential primary debates and campaigns. He also led CNN’s Emmy–winning “America Votes 2004” coverage and “America Votes 2004.” Furthermore, he anchored the network’s coverage during the inaugurations of Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush.

Blitzer is also at the helm of the network’s breaking news coverage, reporting on stories from around the country. Most recently, he reported on the shootings from at Washington Navy Yard, the devastation of the Oklahoma tornadoes, the Boston terrorist attacks, and the tragedy surrounding the mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut.

In addition to politics, Blitzer is also known for his in-depth reporting on international news. Over the decades, Blitzer has reported on a wide range of major breaking stories around the world that have shaped the international political landscape.

Throughout his career, Blitzer has interviewed some of history’s most notable figures, including U.S. Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Blitzer has also interviewed many foreign leaders — the Dalai Lama, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and former South African President Nelson Mandela among them.

In March 2014, he was awarded the Sol Taishoff Award for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism by the National Press Foundation. The previous year, he was recognized as the eighth recipient of the Urbino Press Award from the Italian Embassy for his excellence in journalism. In 2011, Blitzer received the distinguished Leonard Zeidenberg First Amendment Award from the Radio & Television Digital News Foundation, and the Panetta Institute for Public Policy’s Jefferson–Lincoln Award.

Blitzer has authored two books, Between Washington and Jerusalem: A Reporter’s Notebook and Territory of Lies — cited by The New York Times Book Review as one of the most notable books of 1989.

Blitzer earned a bachelor of arts degree in history from the State University of New York at Buffalo and a master of arts degree in international relations from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. In addition, Blitzer has numerous honorary degrees from educational institutions across the country.

HONOREES

ROSE AND PHILIP FRIEDMAN

Philip Friedman was born and raised in the former Soviet Union. After spending 12 years in numerous positions in the electronics industry, he emigrated to the United States and settled in New York City. In 1984, Mr. Friedman started Computer Generated Solutions (CGS), a diversified IT solutions and services company providing software, consulting, systems integration, training and help desk support. Today, with close to 7,000 professionals and a global presence spanning North America, South America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia, CGS maintains a leadership position delivering end-to-end, award-winning solutions in over 48 countries around the globe.

In 1996, Mr. Friedman was named Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young, Inc., Inc. magazine, Merrill Lynch and the City of New York. In 2007, Mr. Friedman was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. In 2007 and 2008, he was appointed to represent the State of New York on the Presidential Business Commission and to serve as an honorary chairman on the National Business Advisory Council.

Mr. Friedman’s contributions to the US economy and society were twice recognized by the United States Congress. In 2011, Mr. Friedman received an honorary doctorate from Yeshiva University. Mr. Friedman is the immediate past president of the American Committee of Shaare Zedek Hospital. He also serves as a trustee, member of the Executive Committee and vice chairman of Yeshiva University. In addition, he serves on the board of the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice, and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Tom Lantos Institute. Mr. Friedman recently joined the board of the American Society for Yad Vashem. He is a Fellow of the Foreign Policy Institute and an advisor of the US Chamber of Commerce International Policy Committee.
THE SWEDISH SCHINDLER: HOW COUNT BERNADOTTE SAVED THOUSANDS OF JEWS FROM DEATH

BY SARAH HELM, NEWSWEEK

T he midday ferry from Copenhagen drew up alongside the quay at the Swedish port of Malmö on April 28, 1945. Moments later, women — many in striped garb — began to move down the gangplank “all in thin rags, shoes made of paper and wood and odds and ends,” wrote a reporter. More women followed, carried off the boat on stretchers: French, Polish, Norwegian, Dutch and many others. It was just over 70 years ago and 10 days before the Second World War in Europe would come to its official end. The women had come from Ravensbrück, a women’s concentration camp 50 miles north of Berlin. Although most camps had, by now, been liberated by advancing British, Polish, Norwegian, Dutch and many other nationalities. Yet that victory saw no reason not to exploit his overtures. Thou ses of Norwegians, as well as Swedes, were being held in the camps, and Himmler was offering up Scandinavian prisoners first. Perhaps others would follow if Sweden played its cards right? By February 1945, Himmler had asked the Swedes to send a mediator to discuss the prisoner release. Seasoned Swedish officer Folke Bernadotte wasn’t up to the task, but other thought the Count’s royal blood and confident air would appeal to Himmler. And Bernadotte was only too willing. The Count met the SS chief for the first time on February 10, 1945, in a secluded lakeside SS clinic at Hohenlychen, about 50 miles north of Berlin, and just five miles from the women’s camp of Ravensbrück. On arrival, Bernadotte presented his interlocutor with a rare Norwegian [Scandinavian] artefact, which delighted Himmler, always fascinated by the Nordic race. Himmler seemed at ease with Bernadotte and told him jokes. Bernadotte listened, observing Himmler’s “well-manicured hands” as he waited for a chance to nail the deal over the first Scandinavian releases.

As Bernadotte left, the outline plan agreed to, Himmler asked if he had a good driver, as there were Allied fighter planes in the air as well as tank tramps and barricades. Assured about the driver, Himmler replied: “Good. Otherwise the Swedish papers will come out with headlines saying, ‘War Criminal Himmler Murders Count Bernadotte.’" By the second week of March, a task force had left southern Sweden, driven across Denmark and crossed into Germany. The man who once led the Swedish Boy Scouts, Bernadotte, had been captured while helping the French resistance. Baseden learnt heavily on the arm of a comrade before being ushered into a tent for debriefing.

Many women carried Red Cross boxes; others carried babies. A Dutch woman, Anne Hendriks, carried her two-month-old sleeping in a box. French ethnologist Germaine Tillion carried lists bearing the names of those murdered at the camp, including her mother, Emilie. On seeing white-coated Swedish doctors, the skeletal survivors screamed, “I don’t want to burn. I don’t want to burn,” cried one, imagining SS doctors. Swedish nurses fainted at the sight of the ravaged bodies.

As the women settled down they heard about the man who had initiated their rescue: a blue-blooded Swede called Folke Bernadotte. Sometimes Bernadotte appeared among them, tall and smartly dressed, with a gentle manner and an air of efficiency. They called him their savior. Yet, outside Scandinavia, the story of his White Bus rescue — the biggest of his mission; the Second World War — is little known, perhaps because after the war Bernadotte was appointed UN media tor to the Arab-Israeli conflict and was shot dead by Jewish extremists, comp licating his legacy.

TWENTY-ONE THOUSAND LIVES

Not only were at least 7,000 Ravensbrück women brought on Bernadotte’s buses, but up to 14,000 prisoners from other concentration camps too — men and women of many nationalities and creeds, including several thousand Jews. Postwar infighting in Scandinavia about who should take credit for the rescue, as well as Allied reluctance to acknowledge that the neutral Swedes could have pulled off such a coup, played some role in obscuring the value of Bernadotte’s mission. Despite his pedigree — he was the grandson of King Oscar II, the last monarch to reign over both Norway and Sweden, and descendant of Napoleon’s marshal Jean Baptiste Bernadotte — Count Folk Folke Bernadotte was untypically humble. After a failed attempt in business and a period as a head of the Swedish Boy Scouts Association, Bernadotte became vice president of the Swedish Red Cross, a position that would allow him to execute his rescue mission.

By October 1944, the Count had persuaded the Germans to free Allied airmen shot down over Sweden — a coup that earned him an invitation from the planet, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had just liberated Paris. By the time he arrived at Versailles, Eisenhower showed Bernadotte his plans for victory in Europe, but, as the Count noted in his memoir, the American general made no mention of how to save German prisoners.

The eastern death camps, built by the Nazis in Poland to exterminate the Jews according to their “Final Solution”, had already been liberated by the Russians, exposing the Jewish genocide to the world, but, by the autumn of 1944, at least a million prisoners were still held in camps on German soil — including Buchenwald, Dachau and Bergen-Belsen. Allied chiefs in London and Washington had little interest in protecting these pris oners as they pursued their military objectives, believing the only way to help inmates was to secure a total victory.

Yet that victory was still many months away and reports of atrocities were mounting — many such reaching Bernadotte’s ears when he stayed in Paris. France had already lost thou sands to the camps, and families were pleading for action. Though it was too late to halt the Jewish extermination in the east, there was still a chance to save thousands of Jews and non-Jews held in these German-based camps. With the International Committee of the Red Cross para lyzed, pleas were increasingly direct ed at Bernadotte and his Swedish Red Cross.

MEETING HIMMLER AT THE LAKE WISBORG

To most Allied observers, the idea of a prisoner rescue was fantastic. The dangers of entering the war zone were self-evident. Intelligence on the camp locations and about who was held in them was limited, and Hitler would not permit releases — particularly of Jews. But Bernadotte had its own interest in the rescues, which was, to some extent, self-serving. By 1944, with Allied vict ories on the near horizon, neutral Scandinavia was an attractive portability position to hold, and a rescue operation offered the chance to play a heroic role in the final days. The Swedes were also in a unique position; they had unusually good infor mation about what was happening in the camps, and good cause to believe that prisoners might be released — not by the Führer, but on the authority of Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer of the SS, who ran the camps.

Though it was Hitler’s resolution to fight on until the last moment, by the end of 1944 Himmler’s aides were let ting it be known that the SS chief knew the war was lost and was looking for a way out. Intermediaries said that Himmler was available for talks about a peace deal with the Allies, excluding Stalin. He would also free prisoners as bait to bring the Western Allies to the table. The problem was that London and Washington had “no truck with Himmler,” as Churchill put it. The Swedes, on the other hand, saw no reason not to exploit his overtures.

On April 28, Himmler met with Bernadotte. "We have no mention of how to save German prisoners," Bernadotte’s ears when he stayed in Paris. France had already lost thousands to the camps, and families were pleading for action. Though it was too late to halt the Jewish extermination in the east, there was still a chance to save thousands of Jews and non-Jews held in these German-based camps. With the International Committee of the Red Cross paralyzed, pleas were increasingly directed at Bernadotte and his Swedish Red Cross.

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(Continued on page 13)
A s a Catholic Pole, Elka shouldn’t even have been in the ghetto of Częstochowa, in southern Poland. But the nanny was so devoted to the 12-year-old Jewish boy she had raised since infancy that she refused to leave. She ended up being sent to the Treblinka death camp — where she was murdered with the Jews.

Today the boy, Sigmund Rolat, is an 85-year-old Polish-American businessman and philanthropist on a mission. He aims to build a memorial in the heart of Warsaw’s former ghetto to his beloved Elka and the thousands of other Polish Christians who risked their lives for Jews during World War II.

While the project has the blessing of Poland’s chief rabbi, it has also sparked strong opposition. Many scholars and some Jews fear that a monument to Polish rescuers at Warsaw’s key site of Jewish tragedy will bolster a false historical narrative of Polish rescue during World War II.

Opponents of the memorial, however, argue that the former Warsaw ghetto should remain prima-rily a site of Jewish mourning, not a site of Polish national glory — given how little help actually reached Poland’s 3.3 million Jews, most of whom perished. They stress that saving Jews was the rare exception and that rescuers had to fear not only the Germans but also betrayal by other Poles.

Yad Vashem says even after the war, Polish rescuers sometimes asked the Jews they had helped not to tell anybody, not wanting their neighbors to know.

“Polish anti-Semitism was ubiquitous before the war and unscrupulous,” reads an open letter against the memorial project written by three Polish scholars — Bozena Keff, Helena Datner and Elżbieta Janicka — and signed by many others. “That was the context for the Righteous, who acted despite and not with the consent of the majority.”

Michal Bilewicz, a psychologist who specializes in anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, describes Polish behavior toward Jews during the war as extremely complex and difficult to convey. Many assume that Poles collaborated with the Nazis, but this is wrong: Poland’s underground state and army even had a unit to help Jews.

“They did not collaborate with the Nazis. But at the same time large numbers of these people were anti-Semitic,” said Bilewicz, an associate professor at the Center for Research on Prejudice at Warsaw University. “They were more violently anti-Nazi than they were anti-Semitic, but they hated Jews. Sometimes they even said ‘there is only one good thing about Hitler: that he resolved the Jewish issue in Poland.’”

This still-painful and unresolved relationship to the darker side of Poland’s wartime history leads to frequent controversies.

When the Polish film Ida won an Oscar this year, Polish nationalists denounced it as “anti-Polish” for depicting Polish peasants who killed a Jewish family during the war, without any hint that the country was under German occupation or any acknowledgement of the existence of some rescuers.

“The (Polish) reaction was completely hysterical,” said Grabowski, the historian. “What Comey said was basically and entirely true: that otherwise good people under very particular circumstances during the war started murdering Jews and felt absolutely no remorse or guilt. He mentioned the Germans, Hungarians and Poles, and he also could have mentioned the French and Italians and Ukrainians. His only sin was the sin of omission.”

Bilewicz attributes what he calls Polish “hypersensitivity” in such debates to a “lack of acknowledgement of Polish suffering during the Second World War” — widespread ignorance outside of Poland to the huge civilian losses, the destruction of Warsaw, the fact that many non-Jews were also sent to concentration camps.

Rolat, the Holocaust survivor sponsoring the project, faced a recent set-back when an international art jury picked an unusual concept from the many proposals: a forest nursery next to the Polish history museum whose trees would later be replanted in locations linked to Jewish life.

Rolat says that project cannot be implemented because it would not be permanent and would require continuous maintenance funds. He has vowed to still build something beautiful and appropriate, insisting that one can never do enough to show gratitude to people like his nanny — a woman whose last name he doesn’t even know.

“Elka was as important to me as a child as my mother was,” Rolat said. “And she died only because she was a Catholic Pole, Elka should have been sent to the Treblinka death camp.”

POLAND’S FRAUGHT HOLOCAUST HISTORY FUELS DEBATE OVER REMEMBERING HEROIC RESCUERS OF JEWS

BY VANESSA GERA, AP

September/October 2015 - Tishri/Cheshvan 5776  MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE

The debate comes against the backdrop of a dramatic, more positive change in attitudes toward Poland’s Jewish history since the country’s repressive Communist era. The democratic European Union nation is increasingly celebrating the large Jewish population that flourished in Polish lands for centuries until the Holocaust — the new POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews is a key example of this efflorescence.

Under Rolat’s plan, the memorial would be next to the POLIN Museum and near a monument to the Jewish fighters of the 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising.

But there is still stiff resistance by the Polish government and mainstream society to acknowledge the uncomfortable truth that Poles — who were tortured, imprisoned and murdered in huge numbers by the Germans — also took part, willingly at times, in the murder of Jews.

Nobody questions the nobility of the Polish rescuers, who risked immediate execution along with their entire families. Israel’s Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem has documented more than 6,500 such Polish families.

Opponents of the memorial, however, argue that the former Warsaw ghetto should remain primarily a site of Jewish mourning, not a site of Polish national glory — given how little help actually reached Poland’s 3.3 million Jews, most of whom perished. They stress that saving Jews was the rare exception and that rescuers had to fear not only the Germans but also betrayal by other Poles.

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All we've achieved is that our reputation as soldiers and Germans has been completely besmirched. People say: "You carry out all the orders when people are to be shot, whether it is right or wrong." No one objects to the shooting of spies, but when whole villages, the entire population, including the children, is wiped out, or the people are sent away, as in POLAND or RUSSIA, then, my God, one can say it is pure murder, it is exactly what the Huns of old did. But then of course we are the most civilized people in the world, aren't we?" — Lieutenant General Friedrich von Broich (German POW — Trent Park)

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Seventy years on from the end of the Second World War, the full, shocking scale of the Nazi-inspired Holocaust in Ukraine is finally being revealed — thanks to pioneering work by a French Catholic priest to research the truth of the industrial-scale killing.

Father Desbois is seeking to identify the sites of mass graves and erect memorials, but also to help relatives track where their ancestors were slain.

Around 2,000 mass graves of Jewish victims have been located where men, women and children were shot and buried by the Germans and their collaborators.

But there may be up to 6,000 more sites to uncover, with victims of this "Holocaust of bullets" — so called because unlike in Poland and Germany, where gas chambers were used as the means of slaughter, here most were summarily shot and buried nearby.

In many cases, the Jews were ordered to dig pits and then to strip naked before they were mown down by their murderers.

Some were buried in the unmarked plots while still alive.

Blood oozed through the soil at the sites of these graves, according to accounts assiduously collected by the French Catholic priest, Father Patrick Desbois, who began his search by reviewing earlier by other Jews who had been present at the killings, ordered all the Jews in the village to wear an arm-band on their right arm with the Star of David.

"The cloth was white and the star black. The Jews had to give up their milk from their cows."

The Nazis "began by shooting old people and children, they left people between the ages of 18 and 45 to make them work."

"Three kilometers away, they killed them, people fell like flies. I didn't see them but I heard the shots. I saw a young Jew who brought corbies in a cart to the Jewish cemetery. It was during the winter of 1942, there was blood and the ground was wet."

After one of the mass killings, in the evening, he recalled: "We began to smell the odor and then, as it smelted of death, they forced people who had carts and horses to bring sand there. "They also put chlorine, that allowed them to lower the level of the pit by one meter, and the blood stopped running."

Locals went there "because the Jews had undressed there and people saw the Germans taking the civilian clothes of women and men, they came to see if they could find something — money, rings, gold watches."

The priest's grandfather, a French political prisoner, went home after his imprisonment, during which he survived eating dandelions and grass. Desbois said: "He never spoke. He explained: "Thirteen German priests were present at the killings to speak: many others followed them."

He was the first of the elderly villagers to speak: many others followed him, here and in other locations. Yaroslav described how the Jews arrived on foot and were forced to undress before being marched to "the side of a grave" in Rava Ruska. "Yaroslav brought me in the forest with 50 farmers, very old people who were present at the killings," Father Desbois said.

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"They described one by one what happened. One person said a German arrived alone on a motorcy- cle. "He rode around the village. At the time, everyone wondered why. It turned out, he was planning the site of what would become Rava Ruska's Jewish mass grave."

On this occasion, some 1,500 Jews were marched to the huge pit, dug earlier by other Jews who had been killed with explosives.

The group seen by Yaroslav were then shot, their bodies layered on top of each other and covered by local youths from the village who had been requisitioned by the Germans.

Their clothes were ransacked for cash and valuables.

After the burial "the earth moved". The child died in pools of blood in front of the parent's eyes."

In separate testimony, an elderly witness called Yaroslav showed Father Desbois to a site outside the town, and told him how he witnessed the horror of mass killing as a 13-year-old boy in 1942. He was the first of the elderly villagers to speak: many others followed him, here and in other locations. Yaroslav described how the Jews arrived on foot and were forced to undress before being marched to "the side of a grave" in Rava Ruska.

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In separate testimony, an elderly witness called Yaroslav showed Father Desbois to a site outside the town, and told him how he witnessed the horror of mass killing as a 13-year-old boy in 1942. He was the first of the elderly villagers to speak: many others followed him, here and in other locations. Yaroslav described how the Jews arrived on foot and were forced to undress before being marched to "the side of a grave" in Rava Ruska.

"Yaroslav brought me in the forest with 50 farmers, very old people who were present at the killings," Father Desbois said.

"They described one by one what happened. One person said a German arrived alone on a motorcycle.

"He rode around the village. At the time, everyone wondered why. It turned out, he was planning the site of what would become Rava Ruska's Jewish mass grave."

On this occasion, some 1,500 Jews were marched to the huge pit, dug earlier by other Jews who had been killed with explosives.

The group seen by Yaroslav were then shot, their bodies layered on top of each other and covered by local youths from the village who had been requisitioned by the Germans.

Their clothes were ransacked for cash and valuables.

After the burial "the earth moved". The child died in pools of blood in front of the parent's eyes.
SURVIVORS' CORNER

SURVIVOR DEFIED DEATH IN HOLOCAUST FOR THE LOVE OF HER SISTER

BY JONAH MANDEL, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Suzanna Braun, who experienced the horrors of the Holocaust and defied death at least three times, believes she survived because of her determination to save her sister — and some divine intervention.

The first time she beat death was sheer luck.

Suzanna was just two weeks shy of 16 when she, her sister Agi and her parents were rounded up in their hometown of Kosice, in what is now Slovakia, and sent to the death camp in Poland, Auschwitz-Birkcnau.

There, the women were separated from the men. As her father was taken away to the gas chambers, she buttressed his last words to her: “Take care of your sister.”

Agi, four years older than her sister, was already in ill health.

Now 86 and living in a retirement home in Shoshet, a small village west of Jerusalem, Suzanna recalls every detail of how the women were stripped and herded into the “shower” where there was a faint odor of gas.

Locked behind a steel door with soap in their hands, some women waited for water. Others, who had heard the rumors, began panicking.

It was only when the doors opened that they realized they had cheated death.

“They were out of gas,” she told AFP.

Wearing dresses from Gypsies killed before them, they were loaded onto trucks and driven to Estonia to join thousands of other women on a death march aimed at killing or weakening as many as possible.

After her mother was shot dead during the march, Suzanna did not speak for a month. But it hardened her resolve to look after her only surviving relative.

Suzanna, who experienced the horrors of the Holocaust, holds a photo of herself and her sister, Agi.

“I didn’t think about anything, only how to save my sister. Because father asked me to take care of her.”

At one point, they were forced to cross a wide river, but Agi could not swim, so Suzanna made makeshift wooden floats to carry her to the other side.

They survived the march but were taken to Stuhrhof camp in Poland, where Agi was put into the infirmary and Suzanna would sneak in food for her at night.

When the Nazis realized Russian forces were heading toward the camp, they attempted to kill as many inmates as possible with lethal injections containing strychnine and gasoline.

As the Nazis orderly was going from woman to woman injecting the poison, Suzanna told her sister and three other women to turn their arms over so the injection would hopefully miss a vein.

The poison took effect quickly.

“My hand stopped working,” she said showing a pale, rounded scar.

Looking around, Suzanna seized a wad of hay from their bedding and began putting pressure on her arm, she recounted.

“It exploded like a geyser.”

Quickly she started digging into the flesh with stalks of hay to gouge out the poison. She managed to do the same for her sister and another woman.

“It was like providence,” she said.

Covered in blood, she dragged her sister to a nearby hill and rolled her down it. A Nazi officer was passing, so she played dead, and he kicked her down the same hill.

She then got her sister to an abandoned cowshed, where she nourished her with leftover milk until Russian forces arrived the next day.

Not long after, at a hospital in Danzig, Agi’s life was once again saved by medical staff who amputated her gangrened feet.

“They took my foot, not my brain but rather divine providence worked for me,” Suzanna said of her survival.

“And I cooperated with that providence, with the sixth sense.”

The two eventually immigrated to Israel, where Suzanna married, had a daughter and now has two grandchildren.

Agi, who married but remained childless, eventually died in 2013, aged 88.

That was when Suzanna decided to go public with the sisters’ story by going back to her hometown along with filmmaker Yarden Karmin to document her story. The documentary is called In The Third Person.

“This entire story is being told because I wanted to commemorate her,” she said. “My last task is not to live well, but go to the cinema and other frivolities, but to tell the story.”

All along it was about saving her big sister.

“I wasn’t afraid to die. It wasn’t about me,” she said, explaining that the film was a way of preserving her memory.

“I wanted something to remain after her.”

FROM PSEUDONYM TO SPEAKING OUT: ANNE FRANK’S BEST FRIEND

BY STAV ZIV, NEWSWEEK

Jacqueline van Maarsen will never forget the sight of Anne Frank, lying on the floor in front of her bed. The Franks had vanished, and the normally tidy home was in disarray.

Van Maarsen, Anne’s best friend, was accompanying another girl into the apartment to fetch a kitchen item that had been lent to the Franks, she recalls. Anne and Jacque had promised to leave one another a note, should either of them need to disappear, but such a message was nowhere to be found. Nor could they locate the red and beige plaid diary with a clasp on the side that Anne had received for her 13th birthday just a few weeks prior.

Van Maarsen couldn’t have known then that the diary was in an attic across the city’s streets and over its web of canals, and was to be Anne’s companion for the next two years in what she called “the Secret Annex.”

She couldn’t have guessed that it would eventually be read by millions of strangers or that more than seven decades later she would be speaking about the Holocaust as the childhood friend of one of its most famous victims.

On a Friday afternoon at the end of May, an 86-year-old van Maarsen spoke about her friend, and about why it is she travels around the world to do so as an octogenarian. She and her husband Ruud Sanders had arrived in New York City to attend the Champions of Jewish Values International Awards Gala, where van Maarsen received the Champion of the Human Spirit Award “for her dedication to promoting Jewish values and keeping the memory of Anne Frank alive.”

Van Maarsen settled into a spot on a small sofa in the corner of the Hotel Elysee’s upstairs lounge, with her husband seated beside her. A yellow-tinted light filled the room above wooden furniture and a maroon carpet with gold patterns, contrasting with the bright daylight filtering through the windows overlooking Manhattan’s East Side. Van Maarsen is slight, with a short crop of hair and glasses that seem to float unframed on the bridge of her nose.

Born in Amsterdam after her parents moved there from Paris, van Maarsen remembers at a young age being prohibited from using streetcars and going to the cinema, so we make a cinema ourselves,” van Maarsen recalls.

The restrictions on Jews began her,” piling on after the German invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940. As Anne describes in her diary entry from June 20, 1942, “our freedom was severely restricted by a series of anti-Jewish decrees.” Jews were to wear a yellow star, and children could attend only Jewish schools. They were prohibited from using streetcars and cars, going to the theater or movies, using swimming pools and athletic fields and visiting Christians in their homes. Anne wrote, “Jacque always said to me, ‘I don’t care do anything anymore, ‘cause I’m afraid it’s not allowed.’”

But Anne’s attitude was, “We can’t go to the cinema, so we make a cinema ourselves,” van Maarsen recalls. The girls would cut out pictures of film stars and sort the postcards they collected. They played Monopoly and chatted about all sorts of things; Anne especially liked talking about their classmates, van Maarsen says. Once, Anne declared that they should

(Continued on page 15)
WHY DO HOLOCAUST CEREMONIES IGNORE JEWISH RESCUERS?

BY GEDALYAH REBACK, ARUTZ SHEVA

For those who have attended Holocaust commemoration events or have visited Yad Vashem, they are likely familiar with the Righteous Among the Nations, a long list of acknowledged non-Jews who exerted immense effort to protect and save Jews during the Holocaust. They are often heralded as examples of coexistence despite an atmosphere of underlying anti-Semitism. In the process, they are shown as paradigms for continued mutual tolerance. But, what about the Jewish heroes? That is a question that Alan Schneider, director of the B’nai Brith World Center in Jerusalem, and several others have asked after reaching the conclusion that in the effort to showcase a sense of diversity and pluralism in Holocaust commemoration, the heroics and bravery of Jewish rescuers have actually been downplayed or overlooked.

“Our focus on Jewish self-rescue is something relatively new. There had been some research and some books but it’s a miniscule part of the historiography of the entire Holocaust. “We know that thousands of Jews were involved in rescuing other Jews. There has been a focus over the years on the means of murder employed by the Nazis — the Nazi murder machine and the Nazi army. These have been issues of very intense research,” says Schneider, who says that research has come at the expense of following patterns of Jewish resistance to and subversion of Nazi orders to deport or execute Jews. "Unfortunately, Jewish self-rescue has not been a great point of interest by historians.”

The reasons are many, says Schneider. “It's interesting, Patrick Henry’s book dealt largely with Jewish self-rescue,” referencing the Whitman College professor’s We Only Know Men, “and this non-Jewish professor reached the conclusion that Jews did more than any other national group in Europe to help rescue themselves. Comparing the conditions Jews tried surviving under to what others were living under, he reached that conclusion. Compare Russian prisoners of wars or Polish officers who never revolted over the whole course of the war, to Jews who were in concentra tion camps and ghettos and did revolt. "That’s not the conclusion the average Jew today would necessarily reach.”

Part of the mission of the Jewish Rescuers Citation is to reinstate the idea that Jews are not only capable, but prone to be hardened heroes. “We are raising these stories and bringing them to attention to help Jews reach this conclusion. This notion that Jews went to their deaths like sheep to the slaughter is just not true. This phrase was very common just a few years ago. That was not actually the case, across the board, and there were many cases of resistance — armed resistance.”

Jews fought in Allied armies in great numbers and as partisans, Schneider acknowledges, but that isn’t the priority of Schneider’s initiative. “We’re focusing on Jews who undertook rescue activities. In most cases, it was impossible to both rescue (Jews) and fight the Nazis. If you’d fight, the Nazis would obviously try to weed them out of the forest wherever they were hiding.”

Schneider points to a specific incident that pushed one Chaim Waltz to launch the initiative for the recognition in the first place. “Chaim Waltz of Holland was rescued as a child by three men: two non-Jews and one Jew. He didn’t know much about it until he heard a lecture by Yehuda Bauer that it is more typical of Jews to recognize contributions of others and not their own heroes.”

He cites the mandate of Yad Vashem to recognize the Righteous Among the Nations and the thousands of names it has added to that database.

“It got Waltz thinking that his two (Continued on page 14)

ARCHAEOLOGISTS DELICATELY DIG UP NAZI DEATH CAMP SECRETS AT TREBLINKA

BY ALAN BOYLE, NBC

Archaeologists have unearthed unprecedented physical evidence documenting the extent of the killing at the Nazis’ Treblinka death camp in Poland — and they let filmmakers document the finds as well. The grisly results are revealed in Treblinka: Hitler’s Killing Machine, an hour-long documentary. But they’re revealed in a way that pays respect to the estimated 900,000 Jewish victims of that killing machine.

“The ethical dimension of the work that I do is really important to me,” Caroline Sturdy Colls, an archaeologist from Staffordshire University who led the excavation, told NBC News. Treblinka is a name as infamous as Auschwitz and Dachau in the Holocaust list of horrors, but the site in eastern Poland is different: There were no inmates liberated by Allied troops, no photos showing disused and cremation. Following up on what she’s found, she said, “I was interested in the point of the mission of the Jewish Rescuers Citation is to reinstate the idea that Jews are not only capable, but prone to be hardened heroes. “We are raising these stories and bringing them to attention to help Jews reach this conclusion. This notion that Jews went to their deaths like sheep to the slaughter is just not true. This phrase was very common just a few years ago. That was not actually the case, across the board, and there were many cases of resistance — armed resistance.”

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“It got Waltz thinking that his two (Continued on page 14)

Archaeologist Caroline Sturdy Colls and her colleagues excavate a trench at the Treblinka concentration camp.

Those maps helped them zero in on an handful of sites. “Without that technology, I never would have been able to do this work at Treblinka, because no one wanted excavations there,” Sturdy Colls said. “Nobody wanted the ground to be disturbed unnecessarily.”

Archaeologist Caroline Sturdy Colls and her colleagues excavate a trench at the Treblinka concentration camp.

At three widely separated sites, the investigators dug down to find bones from previously unknown mass graves on the grounds of the labor camp. Some of the bones showed evidence of cut marks, which Sturdy Colls said would be consistent with tales of victims being chopped up before burial.

Discovering the bones made for an emotional moment — but covering them back up was unexpectedly emotional as well. Sturdy Colls is accustomed to crime scene investigations where the evidence is handed over to pathologists for further study and final disposition. This case was different: The archaeologists’ prime directive was to disturb the remains as little as possible. “What we were doing there was closing the lid again on that grave site...it didn’t cross my mind that it would be me reinterring the remains,” she said.

GHOUlish STARS of DAVID

At another site, the archaeologists found the first physical evidence of the brick bathroom where hundreds of thousands were killed. They uncovered the building’s foundation, as well as yellowish tiles that were stamped with six-pointed Stars of David.

That ghoulish touch, which matches witnesses’ descriptions of the site, was part of the Nazis’ plan to lust their Jewish prisoners into compliance before they were killed.

Sturdy Colls plans to return to the site this year for further investigation, with the aim of documenting Treblinka’s history in an exhibit and a book. Following up on what she’s found so far will take “at least another two years,” she said.

She expects the study to counter the lingering claims of Holocaust deniers — and show that, despite its best efforts, Nazi Germany couldn’t erase the evidence of a monstrous human tragedy.

“They did a very good job of hiding it, but in actual fact, they didn’t ‘sterilize’ this landscape,” Sturdy Colls said. “They weren’t that efficient.”
HUMANITARIAN MARY JEAN EISENHOWER

Mary Jean Eisenhower was born in Washington, D.C., during her grandfather Dwight D. Eisenhower's first term in office as president of the United States. She was christened in the Blue Room of the White House and grew up in nearby Gettysburg, Pa., in a home with property abutting the Eisenhower farm, where President Eisenhower eventually retired. She attended several schools in Pennsylvania until her father, John, was named as US Ambassador to Belgium. She lived in Brussels with her family from shortly after her grandfather’s death in 1969 through 1972. Mary Eisenhower is chair-eman emeritus of People to People International, which was founded September 11, 1956 by her grandfather. Mary says that she joined PTPI hoping to carry on her grandfather’s dream, but that now it has become a dream of her own. President Eisenhower founded PTPI with the financial backing of his friend Joyce Hall, founder of Hallmark Cards, who insisted it be headquartered in Kansas City. Mary Eisenhower established the PTPI Friendship Fund in 1999 following an inspirational visit to an orphanage in Morocco. The fund is designed as a way for people to help the friends and facilities they visit throughout the world and to help the PTPI Chapter network assist each other. To date, the fund has provided assistance to causes such as the Global Humanitarian Eradication of Landmines; Children’s Mercy Hospital in London, England; earthquake relief in India; disaster relief to victims of September 11, 2001, and their families; support of schools for the underprivileged in China and Sri Lanka; a home for leukemia victims and their families in Cuba; Operation International Children; New Horizons (a library project in Vietnam); The survivors of Rwanda; Japan tsunami relief, Haiti, and Friends of Egypt, among others. One hundred percent of all funds received through the organization go to the efforts and projects as specified by the donors. Following September 11, 2001, Mary’s focus intensified toward getting young people from around the world together to learn about each other and conflict management. Her vision resulted in “Peace Camp 2003: An Evolution of Thought and Action” and “The Global Peace Initiative.” Both efforts have brought people from diverse areas, more than 30 nationalities, together in Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey, to discuss issues and reach a better understanding of their unique and individual cultures. The program remains active today.

Mary is continuing her humanitarian work as the chief development officer for Outreach International, a humanitarian organization devoted to permanently eliminating poverty throughout the world.

THE AMERICAN AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIETIES FOR YAD VASHEM CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO ATTEND THEIR ANNUAL TRIBUTE DINNER COMMEMORATING 70 YEARS SINCE LIBERATION Honoring ROSE AND PHILIP FRIEDMAN Featured Speaker WOLF BLITZER

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REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

THE ANGUISH OF SEPARATION: CHILDREN AND THEIR RESCUEES

BY PROF. DINA PORAT

On May 8, 1945, when the German occupation of the Low Countries finally succumbed to the Allied Forces, great joy spread throughout the world. Throughout the European continent, barely freed from the clutches of the Nazi regime, military parades and celebrations followed one another in close succession. Yet one group of people did not participate in the general euphoria — the Jews of Europe. For them, victory came too late. The day of liberation, the one for which every Jew had longed throughout the years of the Holocaust, was a day of crisis and emptiness.

With the advent of liberation, piercing questions arose in the minds of the survivors: How would they be able to go back to living a normal life, to build homes and families? And having survived, what obligation did they bear toward those who had not? The overwhelming majority of survivors took no revenge on the Germans, but set out on a path of rehabilitation, rebuilding and creativity, while commemorating the world that no longer existed.

During the Holocaust, many Jews lived with the feeling that they were the last to survive. Nevertheless, after liberation, survivors went far and wide in search of family members, friends and loved ones who might also have stayed alive, against all odds. Many decided to go back to their prewar homes, but they encountered utter destruction. In some places, especially in Eastern Europe, Jews met with severe outbreaks of anti-Semitism — more than 1,000 Jews were murdered in the initial postwar years by the locals. The most appalling episode was the Kielce pogrom — a violent attack in July 1946 by Polish residents against their Jewish neighbors — in which 42 Jews were murdered, some of them the sole survivors of entire families, and many others were injured.

The Kielce pogrom became a turning point in the history of She’erit Hapleita, or the surviving remnant, as Holocaust survivors began to be known. A mass migration entitled Habricha (The Escape) saw as many Jews as possible finding their way to territories controlled by British and US troops in Germany, as a step before leaving Europe. These refugees joined the tens of thousands of Jewish survivors liberated in Central Europe, and together they amassed in the DP camps across Germany, Austria and Italy. Offshoots of these camps were established at the sites of former Nazi concentration camps, among them Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald.

The activities of She’erit Hapleita in the DP camps were a powerful foundation for the survivors’ efforts to return to life after the war. They formed new families and an independent leadership, set up education and foster-care facilities for children and youth, published dozens of newspapers and magazines, collected testimonies, held ceremonies and events and enjoyed Samuel’s visits. Wilhelmina would share all family stories with Samuel, especially on holidays.

In many cases, however, it was only decades after the end of the war and the anguish of parting after liberation, that survivors revisited their past, and once again sought out contact with their rescuers. Many of them still turn today to the Department of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem with requests to recognize their rescuers, lest their inspirational and exceptional kindness be forgotten forever.

RETURN TO LIFE AFTER THE LIBERATION

BY IRENA STEINFELD

In 1942, three-year-old Bernard Tuch of Antwerp, Belgium, was brought to the home of the Willems family, who lovingly sheltered and cared for him. After liberation, when they learned that his parents had not survived, Bernard’s uncle came to reclaim the little boy. However, Bernard refused to leave the home of his rescuers. The uncle, who wished to be united with the only other survivor of their family, turned to the courts, and the family was forced to restore the child to his relative. Bernard later recalled how his uncle, who thought it best for the child to sever all ties with the Willemses, refused to give them access to him. Sadly, a short time later Bernard’s uncle — a young and traumatized survivor himself — found it too difficult to care for him, and regretfully asked Bernard’s rescuers to return the child to his relative. The uncle, who wished to reclaim the little boy, however, refused to experience the excruciating pain of separation again. In certain cases, there were disputes, including legal ones, related to the continued custody of children. Some rescuers refused to return the children, believing with all their hearts that the parent would not take part in the general postwar years by the locals. The remaining third of the survivors emigrated to the US, Latin America, South Africa, Canada and Australia.

Ha’apala, as well as emigration to other countries, was a pivotal stage in the survivors’ postwar recovery process. Holocaust survivors contributed, each in their own way, to building a better world in the new societies, for their children and for future generations that would never know the horrors of the Holocaust. As survivor Rivka Chirurg, who lost dozens of family members in the Lodz ghetto and at Auschwitz, said: “If more than 20 people, even a third generation, gather around my Pesach Seder table, I know I have done my share.”

Moments of liberation by the US Army of a transport carrying some 2,500 prisoners from Bergen-Belsen to Theresienstadt.

The day of liberation, the one for which every Jew had longed throughout the years of the Holocaust, was a day of crisis and emptiness. In the wake of internationa...
A witness from Bakhiv, Temofes Ryzvanuk, then 14, told Father Desbois how Germans beat the Jews with whips to force them to dig the holes in which they would be buried.

“We were so afraid of the Germans. They had things on their caps, they were terrifying. “My father’s brother said: ‘Don’t be afraid, no one is going to kill you. They’re only killing Jews. And they realized that they were going to be killed.’

“They stripped them naked, men and women. When they had killed them, they put them beside each other, head to head, to pile in as many as possible, to save space. The Germans had automatic rifles and when they got close to the pit they heaved. I remembered one of the holes in which they would be buried.

“Twenty-five years ago, I learned that in Rava Ruska there was a camp where 25,000 Soviet prisoners were killed by the Germans,” he said in his latest search for a thriving on with 42 percent of its population Jewish.

“There was a memorial for the Soviet prisoners. But there were no memorials for the mass graves of the Jews.”

He has now ensured there is a memorial here — erected in May this year — and that the graves, and the memory of what happened, is protected.

But it was his experience in Rava Ruska — which was also on the main railway line to the death camp of Belzec in Nazi-occupied Poland where up to 600,000 were exterminated in gas chambers — that led him to expand his search across the country.

“We want to show that we will come back,” he said.

“We will come back to the last grave where they killed the Jews.... We have a duty to victims because each and every one of them had a name. We have estimated that there may be another 6,000 sites still to find, report- ed British Weide.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, he heard from Nikola Kristitch, who was aged eight in 1942, when he saw a vision of hell that haunted him for the rest of his life.

He was hiding in the trees when he saw dead children being thrown by hand into a pit — a mass grave.

Adults “were completely naked and walked with the rabbi at their head. He gave a sermon, to all those who were already there. And the cars kept coming, there were more and more people and they went into the pit in rows. They all lay down like herrings. They lay down and there was one submachine gun and two Germans, they had the skull and crossbones on their caps. They fired a burst at the people lying there, and then more went in and another burst.

“They kept shooting them until nightfall. And we watched. Then the Germans went back again to get the villagers to cover the grave.”

“That night, the people covered it in, but the ground was still moving, for another two days. The ground heaved. I remembered one of the girls, a young girl. Her panties were around her ankles.

“A German fired at her and her hair caught fire. She screamed and he took an automatic rifle, got into the village and killed her.”

The bullet ricocheted off his knee and he bled everywhere. He band- aged his knee, that was half undressed, and then he emped his round. He even killed Jews who still had their clothes on, he couldn’t wait. He was so crazed with rage. He fired at everybody, he was crazy.”

A sign of what was to come under the Nazis was seen in the Lviv pogrom of June 1941 immediately after the Nazis entered the city after pushing out the Red Army.

“A Ukrainian mob crazedly backed by the new occupiers, striped and beat Jewish women in the streets who were subjected to public humiliation. This was not an orgy of anti-Semitic violence, including beatings and killings, which led to the deaths of 4,000 Jews in Lviv.”

“The topic of the Holocaust was almost banned in Soviet times,” Mikhail Tyaglyy, historian of the Ukrainian Center of Holocaust Studies, told MailOnline.

For modern Ukraine the subject is difficult, too, because it means admitting a role for nationalists in col- luding with the Nazis, in part because some preferred a German occupation to Stalin’s as the lesser of two evils.

Soviet history neglected the anti-Semitic aspect of the Jewish killings, lumping these deaths together with total loss- es in the USSR.

“We are touching the topic of Ukrainian nationalism here, and it is a complicated matter. The situation in Ukraine was not so different to what was going on in other Soviet regions which were occupied by Nazis — everywhere they relied on local nationalists, who often blamed Jews for sup- porting the ‘Maoist-Laborite Bolshevik regime,’ as they said at the time.”

Such attitude easily inspired pogroms as we had in Western Ukraine.

“It is true that radical nationalists helped Nazis in guarding and per- formed other tasks. But Nazis did not trust mass killing of Jews to locals.”

Tyaglyy added: “It is vital for all Ukrainians to keep memories of what happened in Ukraine, to come back to it, because this experience can teach us many important lessons needed nowadays.”

He said: “There may be differences in calculating the number of Jewish population in Ukraine before the war; it is about including or not including the Eastern regions of Poland after Molotov-Ribbentrop... but in gen- eral we can say that at least a half - if not more - of all Ukrainian Jews were killed in the Holocaust in our territory.”

Historian Zisels, co-president of Association of Jewish Organizations and Societies in Ukraine, said that six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust in Europe.

“Of these, 1.5 million to 1.6 million were Ukrainian Jews,” he said, “In other words, in four were Ukrainian Jews.”

He added: “There are certain stereotypes about participation of Ukrainian nationalists in pogroms in the early war years which were plant- ed by Soviet history.

“It is true that the local population did cooperate with German Nazis in the occupied territories, but the major- ity of them were ethnic Russian.

“Russia makes a point about Ukrainian nationalists because it is keen to divert suspicion from itself.”

The notion of Ukrainian nationalists colluding with the Nazis was a vivid horror played on by Soviet propagan-da, and now seized on again by the Russian authorities in branding “Fascist” those who currently want to be outside Moscow’s sphere of control.

Hitler had planned to eradicate over half of Ukraine’s population so that the country’s rich farmland could be repopulated with Germans in their so-called quest for Lebensraum.

By 1944, some three million non-Jewish Ukrainians had been mur- dered by the Germans in addition to those killed in the Holocaust.

The priest is unapologetic over his campaign in Ukraine.

“Why do we come back to Ukraine?” he asked. “Because one day we will have to go back to Iraq, because one day we will have to go back to the last mass grave in Darfur.”

Unless the lesson is learned from the Holocaust, “tomorrow will be the same story.”

Historian Mikhail Tyaglyy said the truth about the Holocaust in Ukraine must be taught to young people.

“It is important to all times and all generations. Radical extremism and anti-Semitism still exist, and this is why it must be taught. “If we look at modern German soci- ety we can hardly see any signs of anti-Semitism and xenophobia there, but it became possible because of long-term wise educational, cultural and social policies of the German state within the last decades.”
WHEN A DUTCH JEWISH WOMAN TAUGHT SS OFFICERS HOW TO DANCE

BY CNAAN LIPHSHIZ

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

E ven before Nazi racial laws turned her into a wanted person in her native Netherlands, Roosje Glaser had limited patience for rules. A light-hearted and sometimes frivolous Jewish dance instructor who loved jazz music and the company of handsome men, Glaser ignored the 1940 Nazi takeover of Holland and the murderous anti-Semitism it brought. When she couldn’t ignore it, she mocked it.

An amateur photographer whose Aryan looks allowed her greater mobility than other Jews, had Glaser not only flouted Nazi laws that forced Jews to wear yellow patches, but used to pose for photographs with unsuspecting German occupation soldiers next to cafe signs that read “no Jews allowed.”

Her flamboyant defiance eventually got Glaser sent to Auschwitz. But at the death camp, that same trait helped her survive as a dance instructor to the SS until she staged a clever escape. The remarkable life story of Roosje Glaser, who died in 2000, was only recently documented in a new biography about her written and published in Britain this year by her Dutch nephew.

“When the one hand, it seems that at times she didn’t understand the severity of her situation,” said Paul Glaser, the son of Roosje Glaser’s brother and author of Dancing with the Enemy. “On the other hand, she survived by seizing a series of opportunities that show she knew what she was doing.”

Roosje Glaser’s first act of defiance was to remove from her passport, the letter J, which authorities stamped on the documents of Jews after the Nazi takeover, Paul Glaser said at a lecture he delivered about the biography at the Limmud FSU Jewish learning conference in Moscow earlier this year.

In violation of Nazi racial laws, Roosje Glaser continued to run her successful dance school. She even made it into the cinema reel in 1941, as part of a Nazi-era item that was meant to show that Amsterdam’s cultural scene was unhampered by the occupation. But her jealous ex-husband, who had turned into an ardent Nazi, informed the Nazis of her Jewish roots.

Summoned and marked by authorities, Glaser was unable to find a venue for the graduation ball of her dance class of 1942. So she had the graduation in a barn in the countryside. Pictures of her dancing with her students are the last taken of her as a free person before she was sent to Auschwitz.

T he director of Yad Vashem’s Archives Division, Dr. Haim Gertner, said the finding is “a very special and rare collection. Most Eastern European communities did not keep orderly lists of residents before the war, and the Nazis did not often list the names of the people murdered in these areas.”

“For this reason, the fate of many Lithuanian Jews, including those from Kaunas, is unknown to us. This collection that we are now photographing, thanks to the assistance Yad Vashem receives from the Genesis Philanthropy Group, allows us to recreate the list of the city’s Jewish residents before the war and give these people a face on the Holocaust a face and a story,” Gertner said.

“Scanning these documents, uploading them to our database and displaying them on our public will help us tell the story of this community during the Holocaust.”

ID CARDS OF THOUSANDS OF JEWS DISCOVERED IN LITHUANIA

BY YORI YALON

Yed Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum archivists found some 26,000 previously unknown identification cards belonging to Jewish citizens in the national archives in Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania.

The cards represent about two thirds of the Jewish population in the city before the Second World War. They were found as part of a wide-ranging effort to locate any and all documentation of Jewish heritage in the former Soviet Union and Baltic region.

Found among the ID cards in Kaunas was that of poet and author Leah Goldberg, who moved to Israel in 1935.

The cards were kept with a collection of all ID cards issued by the local population authority in Kaunas, to Jews and non-Jews, from 1920 to 1940.

Each resident received a copy of their card, while the original was kept by the local authorities for internal use.

The identification cards contain personal information, including first and last name, father’s name, date of birth, profession, nationality (Lithuanian or Jewish) and a photograph and signature of the resident.

The cards were moved during the war and returned to the city’s archives following liberation.

T hese new records will provide information about Jews who were killed in the Holocaust and their stories lost.

One of the cards belonged to a woman named Brocha Gdaloviciene-Polianskye. It was issued in the 1930s, and Yad Vashem staff do not know what happened to her in the Holocaust, but are now beginning to research her fate.
Bernadotte saw his chance to win refused. When Himmler returned, Count to act as his intermediary of the room, Schellenberg told wrote in his memoir. While he was out "not only grave but nervy," as he This time, Bernadotte found Himmler man, and another meeting at Schellenberg, Himmler's right-hand "We leave the camp. "We are too slow to take cover ... and suddenly we are pushed out. For a moment I taste the bitter irony of being killed by our own allies on the road to freedom but they are gone and I live. Looking around I see a terrible scene. Behind me a woman is bleeding to death."

The BLACK COMPROMISE

There were terrible moral dilemmas, too, about agreeing to the rescue — particularly the rule that for now only Scandinavians be saved had meant leaving desperate wretches behind. Bernadotte had not, at first, been allowed by Himmler to rescue Scandinavians — mostly female and some Norwegians. If Hitler got to hear that Jews were being released, he said, Himmler would be obliged to call off the entire operation. Bernadotte apparently submitted to his orders, and yet Swedish historian Sune Persson cites Swedish documents showing that from the start of the operation Bernadotte "was actively working on the Jewish cause" and had soon secured the release of more than 400 Danish Jews from Theresienstadt camp.

Himmler had banned Bernadotte from rescuing women held at Ravensbrück. There was gassing under way at the women's camp — a fact Himmler didn't want discovered. Whether Bernadotte knew this was the reason we don't know, but, yet again, he took the view that his rescue efforts were essential to Himmler's terms or not at all. Compromises — painful though they were — had to be made if men and women were to be saved. Over the Easter weekend Bernadotte flew back to Berlin to try to improve those terms, but his plane stalled in thick black smoke as the Allies launched a day-light raid over the capital. As soon as the all clear sounded he landed and made contact with Walter Schellenberg, Himmler's right-hand man, and another meeting at Hohenlychen was soon arranged. This time, Bernadotte found Himmler "not only grave but nery,” as he wrote in his memoir. While he was out of the room, Schellenberg told Bernadotte that Himmler wanted the Count to act as his intermediary directly with Eisenhoever. Bernadotte refused. When Himmler returned, Bernadotte saw his chance to win more concessions and secured the

Reichsführer's agreement that he should go at last to Ravensbrück. By the time he reached the camp, the main gas chamber had been dismantled, though gassing was continuing in mobile trucks.

"NOW YOU WILL BE FREE""

The first prisoners taken from Ravensbrück were once again Scandinavian — among them Nelly Langholm, a Norwegian from Stavanger who had been in the camp for two years. "We couldn't believe it," she said. "We had to walk to the gates. We saw the buses and there were these Swedish men in grey uniforms with red crosses on their arms. I think they told us, 'Now you will go to Sweden. Now you will be free. Can you imagine?'"

Over the following days, rumors ran that more buses would come, but none appeared. Ravensbrück was now almost unapproachable and many of Bernadotte's men were heading home. But the Count wanted to bring out more prisoners. The atroc- ities committed at Bergen-Belsen, reached on April 15 by the British, had been flashed around the world, fueling fears for the women of Ravensbrück. Bernadotte sought a final meeting with Himmler. Himmler did not reach Hohenlychen until the following morning, appearing tired and nervous and "tapping his teeth," Bernadotte presented his latest propo-osal: to take more prisoners, includ- ing all the French women, from Ravensbrück and bring them to a safe-passage. Other convoys were said to have been respon- sible for the deaths of hundreds of women, and the gas chambers were still in full swing. Bernadotte's buses continued to arrive and the women mobbed them, as reports spread that the SS would eventually blow up the camp.

"We suspected they were going to take us to the crematorium despite rumors of liberation," said Batsia Zajacjewicz, a Polish Jew who worked as a Siemens laborer. And Ela Solewicz, another Polish Jew, remembered a sudden order given in her block that "all Jewish women had to leave the camp."

The next day, the Jewish women were taken to the gates. Guards "tore off our marks and numbers," said Batsia, referring to their yellow triang- les — in Ravensbrück Jewish pris- oners did not wear stars. This way nobody would know that Jews were being released — no word could reach Hitler's people, who, even now, might somehow halt the rescue.

The ripping off of numbers and marks — and the reluctance of Jewish survivors to say that they were Jews on arrival for fear of further hor- ror — would also make it harder later to count the precise number of Jews who were saved from the camp on the white buses.

Later, reports said 17 Ravensbrück women died in Jean's convoy. RAF planes were said to have been responsi- ble. The British ambassador in Stockholm voiced "regret" but remind- ed the Swedes of earlier warnings of "safe-passage." Other convoys were hit, but Bernadotte's buses continued to arrive and the women mobbed them, as reports spread that the SS would eventually blow up the camp.

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THE SWEDISH SCHINDLER: HOW COUNT BERNADOTTE SAVED THOUSANDS OF JEWS FROM DEATH

(Continued from page 2) to a holding center at Neuengamme camp before transferring them across the Danish border and on to Sweden. The Allies had been alerted to the operation by Stockholm and no objec- tions were raised. No safe passage was granted to the Swedes either, though the British had requested that the buses be painted white with red crosses on their roofs, so that RAF fighter pilots might identify them. Bernadotte's task force was nevertheless strafed by Allied planes, and his own car was hit, though the Count made a dive safely into a ditch. It soon emerged that German trucks were also being painted white, with red crosses, in an attempt to fool the Allies.

A SHOT THROUGH THE WINDOW

A llied reluctance to acknowledge that the neutral Swedes could have pulled off such a coup did not prevent the UN from recognizing Bernadotte's skills by appointing him as the Security Council mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1947–48. The UN peace plan, which Bernadotte was charged with imple- menting, was, however, immediately considered a betrayal in Israel—large- ly because it did not envisage Jerusalem as Israel's capital. In order to kill the plan, Jewish extremists — members of the Stern gang, or Lehi — killed the mediator. On the orders of Yitzhak Shamir, one of the Stern gang leaders and a future Israeli prime minister, the assassins shot Bernadotte in the back of the head with a single gun through the back window of Bernadotte's car and pumped six bul- lets into the Swedish diplomat, killing the man at the murder at the time, but, over the years, the name Bernadotte became controversial in Israel, and among some of Israel's supporters around the world. The awkward fact that the man who, as UN mediator, was killed on the streets of Jerusalem for betraying Israel, had rescued thousands of Jewish lives from the Nazis, was diffi- cult for some to assimilate. Certain commentators — even in Sweden — have found cause to downplay Bernadotte's courage during the rescue mission. Some have questioned whether he ever intended to rescue Jews at all.

At a memorial ceremony, held to mark the 70th anniversary of the libera- tion on April 30 this year, Ravensbrück survivors remembered Bernadotte. Among them was Selma Van der Perre, a Jewish Dutch woman, who told me: "Without Bernadotte I would probably not have got out alive."
WHY DO HOLOCAUST CEREMONIES IGNORE JEWISH RESCUERS?
(Continued from page 7)

non-Jewish rescuers were recognized, and while the Jewish rescuer came to the ceremony, that he was not even mentioned — let alone receiving recognition. When asked if he thought there was a certain sentiment that non-Jews saved more than Jews, Schneider continued that Jews have given him and other organizers a number of reactions or excuses for the trend to recognize gentile saviors but not Jewish ones.

"We've got to recognize that Jews were bound to rescue fellow Jews," based on ideas like "k'ol Yisrael eravim zeh b'zeh" ("All Israel is responsible for one another") or "al ta'amod b'dam re'ekha" ("Don't stand on the blood of your brother"). But of course there is another reason. Schneider claimed that Jews have given him and other organizers a number of reactions or excuses for the trend to recognize gentile saviors but not Jewish ones. "When asked if he thought there was a certain sentiment that non-Jews saved more than Jews, Schneider continued that Jews have given him and other organizers a number of reactions or excuses for the trend to recognize gentile saviors but not Jewish ones.

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Anne was one of the first classmates to disappear, before the situation became dire. Her parents, Otto and Edith Frank, had already been making arrangements to go into hiding, but a call-up notice for her sister Margot from the SS hastened their departure by several days. Their partners in hiding, the van Pels family (called the van Daans in Anne’s diary), also arrived earlier than planned, as “the Germans were sending it out-called up notices right and left and causing a lot of unrest.”

Van Maarsen found herself in a unique situation among her classmates at the Jewish Lyceum. Her father came from an observant Jewish family, but he was not as religious, and married a Roman Catholic woman, van Maarsen and Sanders explained at the Hotel Elysee. At first, her mother became Jewish for the purposes of the congregation in Amsterdam, and when the Nazis arrived, the family was entered into their list of Jews. But as it became increasingly clear just how grim the future was for Jews in occupied Holland, van Maarsen’s mother managed a feat that would save all of their lives. She convinced the German authorities that she wasn’t Jewish (which was true) and was able to get the names of her husband and daughters off the list as well.

“I never knew how it exactly went,” van Maarsen says, though she recently found out her mother may have spoken to Hans Calmeyer, a German lawyer who headed the interior administration office in occupied Holland that dealt with cases of doubtful ancestry. Calmeyer is said to have saved a few thousand people by approving applications unusually doubtful ancestry. Calmeyer is said to have spoken to Hans Calmeyer, a non-Jewish friend and nobody talked about the Jews and I didn’t tell the people what had happened to my family.”

After the war, Otto Frank appeared at the van Maarsen’s door. Van Maarsen remembers that it had been certain Anne and her family were in Switzerland, based on a rumor the Franks themselves had started before going into hiding to cover their tracks. Otto knew already that his wife had perished at Auschwitz, van Maarsen recalls, and soon found out that his two daughters, Anne and Margot, had died at Bergen-Belsen.

“He was very sad and wanted to talk to me all the time about Anne. And I didn’t like that. I didn’t want to remember these bad times, it was so sad,” says van Maarsen, who was just 16 at the time. “He was crying quite a lot. It was very difficult for me,” she adds.

She was finally able to read the promised but never sent goodbye letter that Anne had written to her and copied into her diary. After Otto learned of Anne’s death, he began reading her diary, which two of their helpers in hiding, Miep Gies and Bep Voskuijl, had retrieved and put in a drawer after Anne and the others were arrested on August 4, 1944.

“I was astonished that he had a certain moment I don’t know — he wanted to publish the diary. And I thought, ‘Who can be interested in this? Who can grasp the often unfathomable events of the war,’ nobody wanted to think about the war anymore,” van Maarsen says. “But I wrote a letter to him and I said maybe Anne’s diary will one day be famous, which I didn’t think, but I just wrote it for him to be friendly.”

Indeed, on June 25, 1947 — just over 68 years ago and a couple weeks after what would have been Anne’s 16th birthday — the first version of Anne Frank’s diary was published in Dutch. Translations in German and French followed in 1950, and an English translation was published in the United States in 1952, with a preface by Eleanor Roosevelt. The diary has been translated into two dozen languages and sold more than 30 million copies. For many years, van Maarsen preferred the anonymity of the pseudonym Anne had assigned her in the diary, Jopie. “I didn’t want to talk about it,” she says. “I didn’t want to lose my own identity, because people are interested in me because of this friendship.” She studied in Paris to become a designer bookbinder — a profession that allowed her to work alone in her workshop — and married Sanders, whom she knew as a neighbor when she was a child.

She remained quiet about her identity as Anne’s best friend, “but at a certain moment I felt... it was necessary because things happen around [her memory] that I didn’t like,” she says. “I had the idea that some people were taking too much profit off of her celebrity. So I started to write about it. I knew that it would start but I thought I have to do this because Anne would have been furious if she had known, that she would be misused.”

For the last several years, she has been writing books, traveling to speak — particularly with students and young people — about Anne and the Holocaust, and giving interviews to the media. “I do it to show what can happen when racism and anti-Semitism is pushed too far, and I hope it helps,” she says. “I know that it has impact when I tell my story and it has all to do with Anne,” she adds. “That’s why people get interested.” In other words, her friend Anne sparks interest all over the world and allows her to speak about the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and prejudice.

“People love Anne, I found out... This little girl, the whole world knows her now, and I know she would have loved it,” van Maarsen says. “Everything I do is in memory of Anne, because I’m not the kind of woman, and never was the kind of girl, that wanted to have attention,” she adds, remembering the extrovert and introvert that became friends seven and a half decades ago. “We were so different, I know that Anne would have loved it, but I didn’t like it.”

Van Maarsen explained that the frequent travel and list of commitments are worth it if she can reach a younger generation and help them grasp the often unfathomable events of the Holocaust.

Nowadays, that work often takes her to Germany. In the Netherlands, she says, the Jewish community is not particularly interested in Anne Frank. “They think, ‘We have our story, it’s the same story, why Anne Frank?’”

For van Maarsen, everybody knows Anne — I can use her for my speeches.”

“I always have a full house, not because I’m Jacqueline van Maarsen, but because of Anne. I know quite well Anne attracts people,” she adds, “It’s very important I can talk about the Holocaust again and again.”

The American Society for Yad Vashem mourns the passing of lifelong friend and supporter Barbara Arfa, beloved wife of Harvey and devoted mother of Executive Board member and Founding Chairperson of our Young Leadership Associates Caroline Arfa Massel.

Barbara was born in 1947 in Munich, Germany. She was the only child of Regina and Salo Gutfreund, z’l, survivors of the Holocaust and early supporters of the American Society for Yad Vashem. Barbara always marveled that in spite of the horrors her parents had faced during the Holocaust, they created a world of happiness, love and Yiddishkeit. Throughout her life, Barbara showed her beloved parents the utmost respect.

Barbara was trained as a journalist at Columbus Graduate School of Journalism. She eventually made her career as president of men’s outerwear company Gruner & Co., Inc., which had been founded by Barbara’s father, Salo Gutfreund, z’l, survivors of the Holocaust. In 1949 when he purchased a vacated British government raincoat and parachute factory in Israel, Barbara went on to run the company and was joined by her husband Harvey, a real estate attorney, in 1992. Their daughter, Caroline, joined the company in 1994.

Barbara dedicated herself to Holocaust remembrance and education. In addition to her work for Yad Vashem, Barbara and Harvey supported Holocaust education at The Ramaz School in New York City. They also supported many other Jewish causes. The family has set up the American Society for Yad Vashem – Barbara Arfa Holocaust Education Fund to continue her commitment.

Barbara was respected and admired by all who knew her. She was meticulous in everything — in her integrity in business, in her desire to help others, in the way in which she set up her home, and most of all, in her love and caring for family and friends. She always carried herself with dignity and elegance.
I WANTED RECONCILIATION, SAYS HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR WHOSE BIOPIC LED TO SS GUARD INVESTIGATION

BY HENRY MCDONALD, THE GUARDIAN

A Holocaust survivor whose biopic documentary has led to an investigation into an elderly woman alleged to be a member of the SS has revealed that his intention was only to reach out and reconcile with the woman who guarded him in Belsen concentration camp.

Tomi Reichental’s story Close to Evil has prompted German federal prosecutors to question 93-year-old Hilde Michnia about her alleged role as an SS guard at Belsen. She is also suspected of forcing prisoners on an evacuation/death march in 1945 on which 1,400 women perished.

But Reichental, who lives in Dublin, told the Guardian that he took part in the Irish documentary directed by Gerry Gregg principally to seek out an elderly Jewish child prisoner who was sent to Belsen at the age of nine.

“After the screening, I reached out to reconcile with one of my jailers in Bergen-Belsen. I started out being open to the idea that the SS guard Hilde Lisewitz (later Michnia) must be a different person to the young woman that was convicted of war crimes in 1945. I was prepared to meet Hilde, who had been a perpetrator and who I thought had seen the light and changed her values. I was prepared to reconcile with her and shake her hand, because in my naive thinking she was also a victim of her own time. That I did not meet Hilde was not the big letdown, but rather the fact that Hilde is still stuck in the 1940s: this is what disappointed me.”

He continued: “As Jews we have a tradition of atonement, it is a rich and noble concept. I am not a rabbi, nor am I a very observant Jew. But I am a product of my background, and for me atonement as a person’s effort to acquire a new heart and a new spirit. ‘Atonement as I see it is about repentance and reparation. Hilde had no interest in any of this. By her action of not meeting, in denying the murder of inmates in Bergen-Belsen, she has chosen to justly and distort her own role during the Third Reich.”

Hamburg social worker Hans-Jürgen Brennecce conformed that he had filed charges through the federal prosecutor after seeing the RTE documentary in the British city of Luneberg in January this year. He approached Gregg at the screening of the film in a local cinema as part of events to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

“After the screening, Hans-Jürgen Brennecce, a man whose father was also a Nazi criminal and who speaks about him honestly in our film, sent a letter to the German state prosecutors outlining why Hilde Michnia still has a case to answer. That letter has now had a response and Michnia is being investigated,” Gregg said.

A Slovakian Jew, Tomi Reichental lost 35 members of his wider family circle in Nazi concentration camps. He was one of the minority of Slovak Jews to survive the Shoah: 80% of the country’s Jewish population was murdered during the Second World War. However, during filming across Germany and Slovakia, relatives of senior SS officers — including those of Hans Ludin, one of Hitler’s inner circle and a convicted war criminal — contacted Reichental. Ludin signed off the deportations of Slovakia’s Jews, including Reichental’s family.

As the documentary progresses last year, Reichental developed a warm friendship with Ludin’s grand-daughter Alexandra Senfft. She belongs to a group in Germany of descendants of SS and senior Nazi functionaries who are seeking to come to terms with the wartime sins of their fathers and grandfathers. They had learned in the German media in 2014 that Reichental was traveling across Europe filming about his life’s journey from Belsen to the leafy suburbs of south Dublin.

“Embracing Alexandra Senfft, the granddaughter of the Nazi war criminal Hans Ludin who was implicated in sending 35 members of my family to death in the gas chambers, was not an act of forgiveness. Instead it was an embrace of a ‘kindred spirit.’ Alexandra sought me out in order to demonstrate our common humanity. She wants to proclaim the truth and urge people not to forget. My mission is the same, we must remember. She now has also met my brother, she is now a good friend and a new member of our larger family.”

In the film there is a poignant scene where Reichental agrees to go with Senfft to the spot in Bratislava where her grandfather was buried after being hanged for war crimes in December 1947.

A bequest to the American Society for Yad Vashem helps keep the memory of the Six Million alive...

Please remember us in your trust, will, estate plan or with the planned gift. It’s your legacy... to your family, and your people. For more information, or for help with proper wording for the bequest to ASV, please contact Jonathan Gedula at 212-220-4304.