

STORIES From THE RESCUERS

Narratives of the Holocaust

FEDERAL INTERAGENCY HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM

MAY 7, 2008

11:30
A.M.

THE LINCOLN THEATER
1215 U STREET NW, WASHINGTON, DC
U STREET / CARDOZO METRO STATION

HOSTED BY



DEREK MCGINTY

**FIFTEENTH ANNUAL
FEDERAL INTERAGENCY HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM
WEDNESDAY MAY 7, 2008**

This is the 15th annual Federal Interagency Holocaust Remembrance Program. It is sponsored by 25 different federal departments and agencies. The first program held in 1994 had five sponsors, and the principal speaker was the Deputy Secretary of Education. More information about the program and its history, as well as additional photographs of past speakers and programs are available at:

www.holocaustremembrance.org

(This site is privately funded and maintained. It is not endorsed or authorized by any of the sponsoring agencies.)

This year's poster appearing on the front cover was created by Media Fusion – Steve Schaeberle, Graphic Designer; Stacey Dapoz, Editor – NASA Headquarters, Communications Support Services Center.

The top of the poster represents the members of the United States 442nd Regimental Army Unit. Made up entirely of Japanese-Americans, for their size and length of service, the 442nd was the most decorated unit in U.S. military history. Earning more than 18,000 decorations for bravery, 9,500 Purple Hearts, and seven Presidential Unit Citations, the 442d helped to liberate Dachau Concentration Camp in 1945. One of our speakers, Joseph Ichiuji, was a member of the 442nd.

The bottom of the poster represents the heroism of another participant in today's program and symbolizes that battles are fought and bravery demonstrated by those outside of as well as inside the military. The jar, lit by the light of hope, is one in which Irena Sendler buried the names, family associations, and rescue locations of the thousands of Jewish children she helped save from Nazi extermination. Ms. Sendler buried the glass jars in her back yard in the hope that the information they contained might someday lead to the families being reunited.

Before the Harlem Renaissance, there was "U," and at the center of it all stood the star of Washington's Black Broadway, the Lincoln Theatre. The vaudeville and movie house opened its doors in 1922, welcoming the best and the brightest of Washington's African American community for live acts and first-run movies that couldn't be seen elsewhere. Jazz greats like Duke Ellington, Pearl Bailey, Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, Lionel Hampton, Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstine, Billie Holliday and Sarah Vaughn all played the Lincoln's stage.

Today, the Lincoln is once again home to mainstream and emerging talent, and is playing a significant role in the revitalization of "U" Street. The theater is a cultural crossroads offering cutting edge works that reach across the District's diverse cultural landscape, and provide a space for audiences to reflect and connect. The Lincoln is a cultural beacon for Washington and the world.

Our special thanks to the Bringing the Lessons Home program, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for all their help this year, as in years past.

PROGRAM

Musical Prelude

The United States Army Band, "Pershing's Own"
Captain David Paroby, United States Army, Conducting

Introduction of Participants

Derek McGinty, Moderator
Joseph Ichiuji
Majlinda Myrto

Candle Lighting

Joseph Ichiuji, Majlinda Myrto
and
Inscription of Hope
The United States Army Band
featuring
Staff Sergeant Leigh Ann Hinton

Righteous Among the Nations

An excerpt from the documentary "In the Name of Their Mothers" – about Irena Sendler and the Polish women who rescued thousands of Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto.

Letter from Irena Sendler, Yad Vashem Honoree, read by His Excellency Robert Kupiecki
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Poland to the United States.

Discussion with Survivors

Joseph Ichiuji
Majlinda Myrto

Musical Selection

Es Brent (It Burns)
The United States Army Band
featuring
Staff Sergeant Leigh Ann Hinton

Closing

Derek McGinty

Musical Postlude

The United States Army Band

Irena Sendler



Irena Sendler (Irena Sendlerowa) was born in 1910 in Otwock, a town 15 miles southeast of Warsaw. At the time of the German invasion of Poland, Irena was living in Warsaw and working for the city's Social Welfare Department. Though Poland had the most severe anti-underground legislation in occupied Europe – an entire household was subject to execution if they were found to be hiding Jews – Irena quickly became a member of the underground, and was active even before the establishment of the Warsaw Ghetto.

In December of 1942, Żegota, a council created to aid Polish Jews, nominated Irena under her cover name Jolanta to head its children's department. Her status as an employee of the Social Welfare Department warranted a special permit to enter the Ghetto, and Irena used her status to aid Jewish children. Irena provided false documents to help the children travel and relocate, and was instrumental in smuggling thousands of Jewish children out of the Ghetto. She placed them with sympathetic Polish families, Catholic orphanages and Catholic convents. Irena hid lists containing the names of the thousands of children she saved and their new identities in order to facilitate their being reunited with their families at the War's end.

Arrested in 1943 by the Gestapo, Irena was tortured and sentenced to death. Żegota saved her by bribing the German guards escorting her to execution. Officially, she was listed on public bulletin boards as among those executed. From hiding, she continued working to save Jewish children until the end of the War.

In 1965, Irena Sendler was recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Among the Nations, a status confirmed in 1983 by the Israeli Supreme Court. On October 10, 2003, Ms. Sendler received the Order of the White Eagle, Poland's highest civilian decoration. In 2007, Irena Sendler was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Joseph Ichiuji

Joseph Ichiuji was born on February 14, 1919, in Salinas, California. Mr. Ichiuji attended Pacific Grove High School and worked in a fish cannery to supplement the family's income.



Drafted into the Army in September 1941, Mr. Ichiuji had already completed basic training when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. However, when the United State government classified Japanese-Americans as enemy aliens, Joe was discharged. Humiliated for being kicked out of the Army for no reason other than his ethnicity, he returned home to help his family pack to be involuntarily shipped, under armed guard, to an "internment camp."

When the government decided it was "safe" for Japanese Americans to serve in the European campaign, it asked for volunteers for an all Japanese-American unit. Joe was among the first to volunteer. He wanted to prove his loyalty. From 1943 through 1946, Joe served as a field artillery specialist in Battery A, 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, 422nd Regimental Combat Team, the most decorated regiment in U.S. military history (see inside front cover).

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team is best known for rescuing the "Lost Battalion." In October 1944, Mr. Ichiuji's unit met the Germans in the heavily defended Vosges Mountains in France. After a brutal 10-day battle, U.S. forces liberated the towns of Bruyeres and Biffortine. After just two days of much needed "R&R", the exhausted, the undermanned unit was re-deployed to the front lines to rescue a "Lost Battalion," unit of more than 200 Texans completely surrounded by the Germans. After six days of desperate combat, suffering nearly 1,000 dead and wounded, the 442nd broke the German lines, and rescued the Texans. This rescue mission became known as one of the top 10 battles in U.S. history. In April 1945, Joe's unit was among the first of the allied forces to liberate one of the slave labor camps at Dachau. Joe found it ironic that he was in Europe liberating Jewish inmates from a concentration camp while his family were prisoners in a U.S. internment camp.



Discharged from the Army in 1946, Mr. Ichiuji moved to Washington, D.C., to attend college on the GI Bill. He earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in Business Administration from Benjamin Franklin University, and joined the federal government as an accountant with the European Cooperation Administration, (now the Agency for International Development) the agency providing post-war recovery and economic assistance to European countries.

In 1979, Mr. Ichiuji retired after 37 years of federal service. After retirement, he became active with many organizations, including the Japanese American Citizens League, the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation, the Go For Broke National Veterans Association, Japanese American Veterans Association, National Japanese American Veterans Council, and the Agency for International Development Alumni Association.

Joe Ichiuji and Asako (Susie) his wife of 61 years, live in Rockville, Maryland. They have two children and four grandchildren. Mr. Ichiuji continues to speak about his internment and his war experiences to school children as well as various federal government agencies and other organizations.

Shyqyri Myrto

Shyqyri Myrto was born in 1922 in Kavaja, Albania. A Muslim, he became friends with Josef Jakoel, who was Jewish, while both were 15 year old students in the same school in Vlora, Albania.



In April 1939, Italian troops under the fascist government of Benito Mussolini invaded and occupied Albania. After Italy surrendered to the Allies in September 1943, the German Nazi army invaded and occupied Albania. Josef Jakoel was living in the town of Vlora, Albania, just north of Albanian's border with Greece. Individuals fleeing the German occupation of Greece told those in Vlora about the tragedy they had witnessed. Not feeling safe in Vlora, Josef contacted Shyqyri who lived in Kavaja, a town located 50 miles north. Josef wanted to bring his sister, Keti, to Kavaja, and asked Shyqyri to shelter them from the Germans.

In October, 1943 Shyqyri Myrto brought Josef and Keti to Kavaja. Albanian families were very large at the time, and Shyqyri was able to hide Josef and Keti in his house where they shared rooms with the Myrto family members. The Jakoel's dressed in traditional Albanian costumes, and sometimes even ventured outside of the house in full view of the Germans.

One night, having learned that the Myrto family might be hiding Jews, the Germans raided the Myrto house. Shyqyri and Josef escaped and took refuge in the Myrto's country house. Keti did not try to escape; she stayed with the women of the family in a room where males were forbidden to enter. She was dressed in traditional Albanian clothes like the other females members of the household. The Germans, respecting Muslim tradition, did not enter the room. Keti, like her brother, escaped capture.

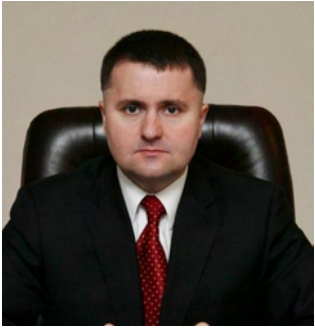


Majlinda Myrto

In November 1944, Albanian resistance groups with military aid from Great Britain liberated Albania from the Germans. With the withdrawal of the German army, Josef and Keti Jakoel were able to come out of hiding. Shyqyri continued to live in Kavaja with his family. After a short time, Josef and Keti went back to live in Vlora.

In 1991, as Albania's communist regime began to crumble, Josef, Keti and their families emigrated to Israel. Shyqyri's daughter-in-law, Majlinda Myrto, one of our speakers, and her husband, Arjani, immigrated to the United States in 1993. Shyqyri Myrto was able to visit the U.S. and Israel, but died in Durres, Albania in 1998. Before he died, Shyqyri Myrto was honored with the Anti-Defamation League's Courage to Care Award. Josef Jakoel died in 1992 in Kiriat Vialik, Israel; Keti died there in 2000.

Ambassador Robert Kupiecki



His Excellency Robert Kupiecki Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Poland to the United States of America was born in Warsaw in 1967. He holds a Master's Degree in History and a Ph.D. in political science with a specialization in international relations. He is also a graduate of the National School of Public Administration and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

Ambassador Kupiecki began working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1994, and has held a variety of positions of increasing responsibility. A recognized expert in the field of security policy, Ambassador Kupiecki has led Polish delegations in their discussions with NATO, the UN, and The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. From 1999 to 2004, Ambassador Kupiecki served as Deputy Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to NATO and the Western European Union. He also played a major role in Poland's accession to NATO.

The author of numerous books and articles on modern history and international relations, Ambassador Kupiecki has been awarded the following decorations --- Officer's Cross of Merit of the Republic of Lithuania, Gold and Silver Medal "For the Services for the Country's Defense" and Silver Medal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovakia. Ambassador Kupiecki is married, and has two children. He speaks Polish, English, and Russian.

Derek McGinty



Derek McGinty is the co-anchor for Washington's Channel 9 News Now. From March 2001 to June 2003, he was co-anchor of ABC News' overnight broadcast, World News Now, and anchor of World News This Morning. Until recently, Mr. McGinty was the host of "Eye On Washington", a politically-based roundtable talk show that provided analysis and perspective on top stories from our Nation's Capital.

Prior to joining ABC, McGinty worked for two years as a reporter and anchor for WJLA. Before that, he was a correspondent for the nationally broadcast program, "Public Eye with Bryant Gumbel" on CBS. McGinty previously hosted the nationally broadcast "Straight Talk with Derek McGinty" for PBS. At WETA, he had a similar role for the station's Emmy-nominated "Here and Now," a weekly half-hour local program focusing on issues, events, and people in metropolitan Washington, DC.

From 1991 to 1998, Derek became increasingly popular on a nationwide basis with "The Derek McGinty Show" on WAMU. His guests have included DC Mayor Marion Barry, former Secretary of State James Baker, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, jazz musician Wynton Marsalis, rapper Ice-T and author Robert Ludlum. In 1994, the show received the highest programming honor in public radio, when it won the Gold Award for Public Affairs Programming from the Corporation of Public Broadcasting.

Prior to his work at WAMU, McGinty co-hosted "The Daily Drum," a news and interview program covering local politics on WHUR-FM. Derek was a reporter/editor for UPI's Washington metro desk and a news editor at WTOP Radio. He began his professional career as a desk assistant for ABC Radio News in the Washington bureau. Articles by McGinty have appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The New York Daily News, and Washingtonian Magazine.

A native of Washington, DC, Derek is a graduate of American University, where he received a bachelor's degree in communications.

Inscription of Hope

Again this year, the candle lighting in memory of the victims of the Holocaust will be accompanied by a musical selection, *Inscription of Hope*. With music by contemporary composer Z. Randall Stroope, the song is based on words written on a Cologne, Germany basement wall by Jews who were hiding there. It is widely performed as a choral work.

*I believe in the sun
even when it is not shining
and I believe in love
even when there's no one there*

*and I believe in God
even when he is silent
I believe through any trial
there is always a way*

*but sometimes in this suffering
and hopeless despair
my heart cries for shelter
to know someone's there*

*but a voice rises within me
saying "hold on, my child*

*I'll give you strength,
I'll give you hope just stay a little while"*

*I believe in the sun
even when it is not shining and
I believe in love
even when there's no one there*

*and I believe in God
even when he is silent
I believe through any trial
there is always a way*

*May there someday be sunshine
may there someday be happiness
may there someday be love
may there someday be peace.*

Es Brent (It Burns)

This poem was written by Mordechai Gebertig following a pogrom in the Polish town of Przytyk in 1936. Gebertig was born in Krakow in 1877, and worked as a carpenter while writing songs. In October 1940, he and his family were sent to Lagiewniki, a sub-camp of Auschwitz. He was shot by the Germans on *Bloody Thursday*, June 4, 1942. Es Brent was sung in the ghettos and camps, and is one of the most frequently performed songs commemorating the Holocaust.

(Sergeant Hinton sings it, part in the original Yiddish, and part in English. An English translation of the full text follows:)

*It burns, brothers, it burns!
Our poor shtetl* pitifully burns!
Angry wind with rage and curses
Tears and shatters and disperses.
Wild flames leap, they twist and turn,
Everything now burns!*

*And you stand there looking on,
Hands folded, palms upturned,
And you stand there looking on –
Our shtetl burns!*

*It burns, brothers, it burns!
Our poor shtetl pitifully burns!
Tongues of flames with force and power
Have our villages devoured –
And the wild wind howls and churns
Our shtetl burns!*

And you stand there looking on...

*Shtetl is Yiddish for a small town or village.

*It burns, brothers, it burns!
God forbid the moment may affirm,
When our city which now holds us
Will as ash and flames enfold us,
Signs of slaughter leaving all –
With black and empty walls!*

And you stand there looking on...

*It burns, brothers, it burns!
Help can only come if you return
Love which shtetl once inspired,
Take up arms, put out the fire.
Douse it with your blood – be true –
Show what you can do!*

*Don't just stand there looking on,
Hands folded, palms upturned,
Don't just stand, put out the fire –
Our shtetl burns!*

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