



MCHEnews

MIDWEST CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION MAKING A DIFFERENCE SINCE 1993

SPRING/SUMMER | 2025

In Their Own Words

MARKING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF LIBERATION

In the spring of 1945, the Allied armies advanced decisively into German-controlled territory. Along the way they encountered what was left of the Nazi camp system. The Soviets, moving from the East, liberated Auschwitz, the only remaining death camp, on January 27, 1945. The British and the Americans, moving from the West, liberated concentration camps like Bergen-Belsen, Dachau and Buchenwald beginning in April.

These German concentration camps, never designed to hold such large numbers, were for the first time the primary holding facilities for European Jews. Though not engaged in active murder, these camps became scenes of mass death as prisoners succumbed to extreme conditions of overcrowding, starvation, lack of facilities and disease. By the time Allied forces liberated the camps, most of the remaining prisoners were critically ill and stacks of dead bodies covered the camps.

Although the standard image of liberation is one of Allied troops approaching barbed wire fences and freeing the people within these camps, many survivors' experiences looked very different. Some were liberated from their places of hiding, or along roads during a death march. Others were liberated from smaller camps centered around factories. A few even became liberators themselves.

For most survivors, liberation was a period of euphoria — they had lived to

see freedom. However, the enormity of their loss and the prospect of their future soon weighed heavily on them. Their moods quickly shifted to contemplation and sorrow when, for the first time in many years, they were able to focus attention not on immediate needs of survival, but instead could reflect on what they had endured, what they still had to face, and what they would do next.

The following stories demonstrate the wide variety of ways liberation was experienced by members of our local survivor community. We invite you to explore all of our survivors' experiences at mchekc.org/survivors/.

Maria and Fred Devinki

Maria and Fred Devinki survived the Holocaust hiding near Wodzisław, Poland, in a hole beneath an outbuilding on a farm. Nine people hid in a space that was ten feet by six feet and too shallow for adults to stand.



Maria and Fred Devinki in 1945 – months after their liberation.



The hiding space (now exposed and uncovered) where Maria and Fred hid with their family for 27 months.

For the Devinkis, unable to leave their hiding place during the day for fear of being seen, their only clues that liberation was near was the sound of Soviet planes overhead in January of 1945. News of liberation was delivered by the farmer who hid them. After years of Nazi occupation, they met this announcement with skepticism and fear.

Maria remembered, "He said, 'You can come out. Everything is ok. I don't know what's any Jews around or any of your family or any of your friends, but the Russians are in your city.'

"We was afraid. We didn't trust him. We were so scared of everything. Everybody talked to us, but nobody was honest with us. We said, 'No, we stay here, don't worry about us. You don't have to bring us food if you don't want to. Just leave us alone.' He said, 'I want you to come up and see for yourself.'

Maria's youngest brother risked going outside to check and reported back that Soviet troops were nearby. Of the nine people who went into the hiding place, only five survived to see their liberation 27 months later.

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Lessons to Lessen Hate

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE | JESSICA ROCKHOLD



Amidst the uncertainty and change of the current moment, MCHE's mission and vision remain steadfast and constant. Each day

we teach lessons to lessen hate. Societal norms are shifting, and we do not know what to expect from day to day. Our community looks to MCHE for clarity and ethical leadership — for responsible statements about how the lessons of the Holocaust apply to our current moment without obfuscating the truth of the Holocaust.

Our core values are anchored in the legacy handed down to us from survivors who believed in the power of education, in the best practices of the professional field of Holocaust education, and in the commitment of our team and lay leadership to honoring the past and protecting the future.

We do this at MCHE by:

- **Countering Exclusion** — We stand against antisemitism, hatred and bigotry in all of its forms. We condemn the use of images, language and signals meant to incite hate. We uphold the ideals of diversity, equity and inclusion. We are all safer in a pluralistic and accepting society. As the government and corporations walk back or cancel their Holocaust remembrances, LGBTQ+ recognitions, Black History month observances, and other organized remembrances, we know that burying the history of peoples who have been victimized is a step toward doing it again and that countering exclusion is a critical lesson of the Holocaust.
- **Defending Our Institutions** — We teach about the fragility of democracy. The rise of the Nazi party teaches

us that democratic structures are not guaranteed and that a shift away from them undermines civil rights for all citizens. A study of the Nazi dismantling of the democratic structure in 18 short months demonstrates the clearest historical example of these vulnerabilities in the system and offers insight into how to defend our institutions from internal and external threats.

- **Building Media Literacy** — We analyze Nazi propaganda to help our learners understand the messaging of exclusion and hate, but also to build the skills for recognizing and interpreting this messaging. In a world where many get their news from social media platforms devoid of fact checking, we help our learners build competency in media literacy — a critical application of the lessons of the Holocaust to the 21st century.
- **Examining U.S. Policy** — We interrogate the role of the United States in the Holocaust. As Americans, we must understand the successes and the failures to intervene on behalf of the Jews of Europe. An examination of decisions surrounding immigration policy, refugee status, war aims, and the gap between knowledge and understanding as it related to policy decisions are critical elements of our national history that must inform the thinking of citizens and societal and governmental leaders in our approach to those same issues in the world today.
- **Probing Ethical Dilemmas** — We empower learners to consider the ethical and moral dilemmas presented by the Holocaust and to reflect on how that understanding can be applied to the world. Professor Yehuda Bauer implored us:

Thou shall not be a perpetrator; thou shall not be a victim; and thou shall never, but never, be a bystander.

We utilize primary sources and testimonies to engage our diverse learners of many different backgrounds, ethnicities, faiths and beliefs in difficult discussions of these issues — building an understanding of the history, but also competency in civil discourse and engagement.

- **Fighting Misinformation** — We believe in facts and support our learners in intensive study to discover truth. By utilizing primary sources and teaching the skills necessary to interrogate sources we fight back against misinformation and dangerous rhetoric. Holocaust denial is spreading expansively online. Years of hard work eliminating full denial and keeping Holocaust revisionism and obfuscation at the fringes of society has been turned back in the last several months. Empowering people to find truth and to defend it is a critical application of these lessons.
- **Uplifting Moral Courage** — We look to rescuers and resisters for lessons of ethical and moral courage and uphold the words of Martin Niemoller, a Lutheran minister imprisoned in the concentration camps who, reflecting on his own failure to act, said:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out — because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me — and there was no one left to speak for me.

Our commitment is the same today as it has been for 32 years — to lead from the front, to speak when we see wrong, to call it by its true name, and to unwaveringly teach these lessons to lessen hate.

MCHE Part of International Community

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE | STEVEN E. COLE

Since becoming involved with the work of MCHE more than a decade ago, I have been able to witness our organization's impact in the Midwest. At the same time, my involvement has provided a way to meet and learn of the work of individuals and organizations in other parts of the world that are doing their part to make sure the lessons of the Holocaust are kept alive and taught.

Speaking to German Students

Among its many activities, a flagship program of MCHE is our Second Generation (2G) Speakers Bureau. A program created by MCHE and replicated nationally; it sends speakers to schools to share with students the events of the Holocaust as they impacted our families.

As a member of our 2G Speakers Bureau, it's been rewarding to present to students in the Midwest the story of my mother, Ilsa Cole, and how she and her family were impacted by the escalation of antisemitism in Germany in the 1930s that led to the Holocaust. It was then astounding earlier this year to be given the opportunity to present her material via Internet Video to German high school students at the same school she attended!



The exhibition *We, The Six Million* was created by German university students and traces the Holocaust experiences of their local Jewish community.

We, The Six Million

Another fortunate opportunity was providing family information to research students at RWTH-Aachen University in Germany. This has resulted in MCHE being granted the rights to reproduce and distribute an English version of a traveling exhibition that resulted from that research.

MCHE will set before Americans throughout the country, explanations of the lives and fates of Rhineland German Jews as documented by Germans!

What could be a better rebuttal to Holocaust deniers?



Obermayer Awards

It has also been exciting to learn of the work and interact with leaders of the Obermayer Awards. In a nationally-acclaimed ceremony conducted each January in the Abgeordnetenhaus of Berlin, the home of the Berlin Parliament, the award recognizes the work of contemporary Germans who create the highest quality remembrance programs. Their work ensures that communities and students there remain well-versed in the atrocities and losses of the Holocaust.

It has also been inspiring to see that MCHE is a prominent member of the Association of Holocaust Organizations — a worldwide group of over 370 organizations and individuals working for the advancement of Holocaust education, remembrance and research. This relationship gives us access to programming ideas and best practices so as to continue and enhance the effectiveness of the work of our terrific team.

Shared Commitment

Broadly, as MCHE works in the Midwest to apply the lessons of the Holocaust to counter indifference, intolerance and genocide, it is inspiring to see that we are part of an international community committed to keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive and accurately represented.

To sustain our important work locally, I urge you to support MCHE through your membership, donations, provisions in your estate plan, and your participation in our programs.



German newspaper coverage of Steve speaking to students at St. Ursula's Gymnasium in Geilenkirchen on January 22.

Dr. Shelly Cline Celebrates 10 Years of Service

Dr. Shelly Cline joined the MCHE team in March 2015. We recently interviewed our Historian and Director of Education about her work.

As an academically trained historian, what made you choose to utilize your degree in public history?

Initially, I really did think academia was going to be my path, and there is something very exciting about teaching people at a time when their worldview is still forming and shifting. And so, when I first moved into this public history space, I wondered how that would change — how it would be to reach audiences that are more set in the ways that they think. They're living their fully formed adult lives, and so how can my work impact that? I came to realize how much education still needs to be done for the general public. There's clearly a need to understand how genocides occur, how ordinary people are involved, and how democracy can be dismantled.

You are a modern Europeanist, but you wish you had learned more about the interwar period and have been very active in adding that history to your areas of expertise. Why has that history become so important to you and how you teach the Holocaust?



Just a normal day in the office.

When I was learning to be a historian, that early period really was glossed over. I think before we assumed, not that the Nazi regime was a foregone conclusion, but that there was so much focus on those years as opposed to how we got there. The more I started looking at the Weimar period, the more resonance I see that it has for our world today.

Starting to tell a Holocaust story in 1933, in many ways, is really jumping in the middle of things. So, it's become essential to me for people to understand how Germany transformed and how the lives of average citizens changed before we start to ask questions about what they did during the Holocaust. It's an incomplete picture to get them at the moment when we start to see persecution of Jewish people happen as opposed to how their own state transformed.

What is your proudest accomplishment at MCHE?

The thing I'm most proud of is our European trip in 2023 — working to plan the pre-education sessions, the way we worked to build our travelers into a cohesive team, and creating this impactful experience for our travelers.

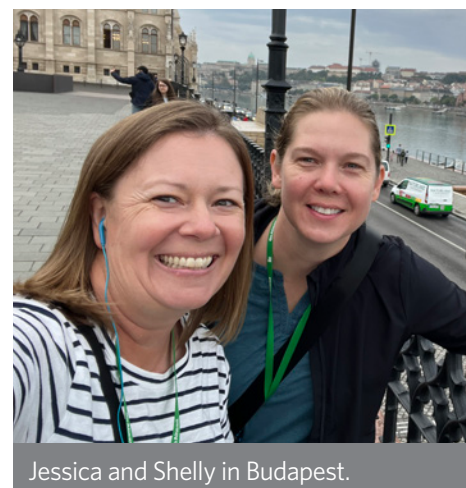
You are known to have a bit of wanderlust. Why is traveling so important to you and what location has had the most impact on your understanding of the Holocaust?

Traveling is important to me because there's nothing like being in the space and seeing, not just the location, like the site of Auschwitz, but also where it's located in relation to the surrounding town. What are the people there like today? How is this history still a part of the fabric of the community? So I think that when you go to a place you're not just the closest you'll ever be to that history because you're in the space it happened, but you get a chance to see how that

continues to impact that space today.

Or seeing the reuse of space in Ravenbrück where the barracks of the SS women were turned into youth hostels. Being in what's left of the space was important.

Going to Auschwitz to see it in comparison to other camps is also impactful. Obviously, being there is its own thing. But then, once you've been to Auschwitz, every other camp you go to you're thinking about size and scope and purpose in comparison to that particular location.



Jessica and Shelly in Budapest.

Going to Vilnius did really impact my understanding of how the Holocaust is memorialized in Eastern spaces. What we think of in the West as the meaning of the Holocaust and then going to a space in the East and seeing that Holocaust obfuscation, both in terms of how Ponar was remembered, and then in the State Museum, that at the time was called "Museum to Genocide" that had no mention of the Holocaust. That was really impactful for expanding my view of how other parts of Europe deal with their Holocaust history.

MCHE has a small team that is very close to each other. What does it mean to you to be part of this group?

This is difficult work that we do, and I think that one of the things that makes



A coffee break in Krakow during the 2023 European Study Tour.

it possible is the support of the people around me, and the small but mighty team that we have. I'm particularly grateful to Jessica for her leadership and the trust she has placed in me to use my natural creativity to enhance our programming and contribute to the vision of MCHE.

Something people may not know about you is that you have a special affinity for teaching Western Civilization. What was your favorite Western Civ book to teach and why?

How fun! John Stuart Mill's On Liberty is my favorite book to teach because even though it is a philosophical treatise written in 1859, it has so many modern applications. You can use his line of thinking to pretty much make any sort of difficult decision, and it also reminds us of why it's important to hear ideas that we don't agree with. What is the importance of discussion? Why do we have to keep discussing ideas so that they don't die?

You can use Mill's harm principle to choose your actions in almost any situation. You have the freedom to take any action and say anything you want, so long as it doesn't harm another individual. It is a brilliant work about balancing the rights of the individual with that of the common good.

When I think of all the teaching you have done at MCHE over 10 years, the thing that I associate most with you is the Lunch and Learn Series. Why is that program so special to you?

I started the Lunch and Learn classes the year after I came to MCHE, so it's in its 9th year. I was used to teaching college students who had to do my readings because their grade depended on it. Initially I wondered, were people really going to do the homework and come prepared to discuss the readings? And I was thrilled to see so many dedicated learners who wanted to come together once a week as often as I would allow to learn and discuss.

It's really encouraging and special to see so many people come back, year after year, to engage in the program. It is a diverse group with people from various backgrounds, from different professions, and with different political leanings. Yet everyone comes together session after session to engage in this material and to debate, in some cases, really important and potentially divisive questions. It's extraordinary in our world today to see people listen to each other, respect each other's viewpoint and position, and move forward together with a common goal.

One thing that makes Lunch and Learn special is that these are people who don't have to be there. They read all the

If you would like to acknowledge Dr. Cline's work over the last decade, we invite you to submit a tribute in her honor at mchekc.org/tribute.

long academic articles that I give them, and they genuinely want to learn. They see the value in education, not just because it's of a personal interest to them, but because they do see modern applications and they want to implement that second part of our mission to apply the lessons of the Holocaust to today.

Nobody gets where they are on their own. Would you like to reflect on the people who have mentored you and helped to shape the historian that you are?

There are two women in particular that have shaped my professional life — Dr. Dale Urie, who was my Western Civ mentor, who inspired me to be a historian and to go to graduate school. And it was Dr. Urie who taught me how to teach. And then Dr. Fran Sternberg, who has basically taught me everything I know about the Holocaust. I also met her as an undergrad, and she then helped guide my dissertation, and still is a tremendous resource today.



Shelly establishing the full context for the Nazi seizure of power.

My Family's Encounter with Their Holocaust History

By Rosanne Kohlman Rosen

"A person is only forgotten when his or her name is forgotten."

— Gunter Demnig, the artist behind the *Stolpersteine* project, citing this quote from the Talmud.

Growing up in Kansas City, I loved hearing my mom's cousins and aunts gather round the table laughing and telling and retelling stories of their youth. We had a large extended family on her side.

However, learning about my dad, Alfred Kohlman of blessed memory, and his childhood memories was different. He was 16 years old when he fled Germany without his parents and traveled to the United States first landing in New York City and then making his way to Kansas City where he had a small group of relatives.

He would not talk about his life in Germany and never shared any memories or stories. The only thing my sister, Janet, and I knew was that he left school at 13 and, at the urging of his grandfather, learned a trade that could be valuable when he immigrated to America. He became a baker's apprentice and his first job in Kansas City was at Wolferman's Bakery. My sister and I assumed this meant he worked in a bakery in Germany to learn the trade, not that he had any traditional schooling.



Rosanne and her sister Janet Sear lay calla lilies as their father's name was read.

An Unexpected Email

Fast forward to July 2022. My sister received an unexpected email from a student at the Landau (Germany) Vocational School asking if she was related to Alfred Kohlman of Neustadt an der Weinstrasse. Landau is a neighboring community where his favorite aunt and uncle lived. The school had initiated a project to lay *stolpersteine* outside their front door to remember the nine Jewish students who had studied there and were forced to leave because of Nazi policies.

We were invited to attend the ceremony which would take place the morning of November 9 to commemorate *Kristallnacht*. The Mayor of Landau at the time wanted a *stolpersteine* dedicated to every Jewish person who had lived in Landau and either perished at the hands of the Nazis or fled to safety elsewhere.

It was an amazing experience to walk in our father's footsteps and try to imagine what his life might have been like before his childhood was interrupted. The *stolpersteine* ceremony itself was incredible as everyone — from the workers who were placing the stones to the two students who had researched our dad's life — treated the ceremony with respect and reverence for what was forced upon the Jewish population of Germany and Landau.

Following the dedication, the school held an assembly where each Jewish student's history and status after the war was researched by a current student. Janet and I gave a presentation about our dad and the local media was there to publicize the event. We attended an evening *Kristallnacht* ceremony on the grounds of where the synagogue was burned on November 9, 1938. About 150 people stood in the cold pouring rain to remember what happened and to pledge respect for people of all backgrounds.



Stolperstein commemorating the life and experiences of Alfred Kohlmann.

Landau and Neustadt

We were fortunate that one of the professors, Wolfgang Gramlich, who had just retired, spoke fluent English and has a passion for genealogy. He was our guide for three days in Landau and Neustadt. He took us to our dad's boyhood home where we saw our grandparents' *stolpersteine*. Originally a tobacco shop with the home on the second floor, it now sells costume jewelry. In an ironic twist of fate, my father sold costume jewelry for 50 years.

We asked if we could go upstairs although we were not allowed to do that. We saw his grammar school, the site where the Neustadt synagogue once stood and where he held his Bar Mitzvah, and visited the homes of other Jewish families and several cemeteries. Jewish cemeteries in the area are maintained by a Protestant minister who has much reverence for maintaining the grounds and respecting the Jewish tradition. He brought yarmulkes for the men who entered the cemetery. We saw our great grandparents' headstones, said the Mourner's Kaddish and placed rocks on each of them.



Dr. Maximilian Ingenthron, mayor of Landau, presides over the community's *Kristallnacht* commemoration.

Wolfgang showed us where the train tracks were that transported my grandparents from Drancy to Auschwitz. The tracks are no longer used today. He became emotional talking about how they must have felt when they were on the trains passing the community where they had lived for many years.

Never Forgotten

Our experience in Landau was also emotional. Wolfgang had researched many of the *stolpersteine* so we paid respect to the Landau Jews who either

fled Germany or perished. We saw the homes of many of our relatives. We walked the halls of the original Landau Vocational School which dad attended. We tried to imagine what it must have been like for him at that young age.

My father's paternal side lived in another nearby community of Kirchheim. We visited the Kohlmann cemetery and saw the names of a few hundred relatives we had never known anything about. A statue had been erected memorializing the names of Kohlmann family members who were killed by the Nazis. We were not even aware that Kirchheim was part of our heritage. We learned so much yet had so many questions we never had the chance to ask our father.

Neustadt is in the wine region of Germany and the landscape is beautiful — it reminded me of visiting the Napa region of California. Dad traveled through Kansas selling jewelry. I wondered what he might have been thinking as he traveled the flat landscape of western Kansas, especially at a time

Demmig's goal with the Stolpersteine is to combat hatred, intolerance and antisemitism. He wants to educate people about the Holocaust and encourage them to remember the victims. The Stolpersteine are small brass plates that are embedded in the ground in front of houses where Holocaust victims once lived. The plates have the names and life dates of the victims inscribed on them. Demmig believes that the Stolpersteine help to give the victims a place again in history.

when traveling between towns the only noise to occupy your mind was the static of an AM/FM radio. Was it the beautiful countryside of his childhood, the gratefulness he was in America, or was he like many other survivors and knew that every day was moving forward and doing what was best for his family.

Our family will never forget the name of Alfred Kohlman. Thanks to the Landau vocational school, his name will never be forgotten in Germany either. He existed, he lived, he fled, and he thrived.



A monument in the Kirchheim Jewish cemetery listing names of people who perished during the Holocaust.



Janet and Alan Sear and Rosanne holding their father's *stolperstein* before the installation.

If you are the direct descendent of a survivor and would like to share a story of your own encounter with your family's Holocaust history, please contact the MCHC team at info@mchekc.org with a brief synopsis of your story for possible profiles in future newsletters.

MCHE Cadre Educators Introduce Holocaust Electives in Area High Schools

From our founding, MCHE has prioritized teacher professional development and education. For each teacher reached, we reach hundreds or thousands of students. To this end, MCHE has taught courses, provided resources, sponsored travel to trainings offered by other organizations, and since 1995 maintained the Isak Federman Holocaust Teaching Cadre.

Named after MCHE co-founder Isak Federman, the cadre is a group of deeply committed secondary educators who have worked extensively to further their own education and to create deeply meaningful opportunities for their students to learn.

In the last year, three members of the cadre have created new semester-long Holocaust electives in their schools. We invited them to share why they made this commitment.



Jenny Buchanan,
Lee's Summit North High School

I teach a semester-long course on the

Holocaust, as its lessons remain painfully relevant today. Antisemitism, bigotry and hatred continue to permeate our world, and it is essential that we honor this history by educating our students. However, with the increasing demands placed on educators, it has become more challenging to explore the events and lessons of the Holocaust in depth. Fortunately, in Missouri, a mandate will take effect in the 2025-26 school year, requiring Holocaust education in our schools. This initiative is expected to foster a more comprehensive understanding of Holocaust history and encourage the development of additional elective courses.

A Holocaust elective provides students with a unique opportunity to explore the extremes of human behavior — ranging from the most heinous acts to the most courageous and compassionate choices. This complexity is often what draws students to the course. Throughout our studies, we delve into this juxtaposition

while also examining Jewish faith and culture, acknowledging other victims of the Holocaust, and exploring the music, art and geography of Europe during that period. By dedicating a semester to the Holocaust, students can cultivate a broader perspective of the world around them and, ultimately, recognize that hatred in any form impacts society as a whole.



Angie DalBello,
Mill Valley High School

In 2022, I had the honor of being chosen by MCHE and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial

Foundation to be part of ABMF's inaugural group of teachers to travel to Poland. It was truly a trip of a lifetime that had a profound impact on me. In Poland I was able to see sites firsthand that I had only read about. In addition to learning so much content and seeing sites in-person, I got to learn from other teachers about how they teach the Holocaust. It is nice to have a community of fellow Holocaust teachers that I can collaborate with.

I came to realize that other schools and districts around the country had Holocaust and/or genocide courses.

Previously I told myself there were too many hurdles to overcome to make a Holocaust class come to fruition. After getting to know the other teachers I felt empowered to advocate and propose a course in my school district. I'm proud to be teaching a new elective course (3 sections!), History of the Holocaust.



Ashley Young,
Smith-Cotton High School

I chose to teach a semester class on the Holocaust because I want to provide

students with knowledge about the darkest chapter in modern history. Students need to have a firm understanding of how the Nazis were capable of conducting the Holocaust so that they are better capable of identifying hatred and intolerance and addressing it.

Additionally, I want to bring awareness to various forms of prejudice and how to combat those in a modern context. My Holocaust class has been very rewarding as an educator. Previous students stay in contact and communicate with me when they cross paths with intolerance in their own lives.



CLIENT CONNECTED PROJECT In Fall 2024, Ms. Buchanan's class participated in a Client Connected Project. These projects are authentic problems that students solve in collaboration with professionals. Working in conjunction with MCHE's Laura Patton, the Lee's Summit North students researched local survivor testimony and developed a public display highlighting both their learning and the testimonies. Their project honoring survivor couples is currently on display at MCHE.

SURVIVOR PROFILE

Elizabeth Nussbaum

Elizabeth Nussbaum was born in 1927 in Szerencz, Hungary. She lived there with her parents and several siblings until the spring of 1944 when the Nazis occupied Hungary. She and her family were forced to report to the local synagogue before being moved into the Miskolc Ghetto.

Six weeks later the family was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Elizabeth lost her entire family in Birkenau. Reflecting on her arrival at Auschwitz, she says, "I'm sure that an hour later they weren't there anymore."

Elizabeth was in Birkenau for several months performing various forced labor tasks. It was in Birkenau that she became friends with Olga Stark (Rothstein), who would become her lifelong friend. After approximately three months, Elizabeth was transferred to Dachau where she was liberated in April 1945.

After liberation Elizabeth was briefly in Munich before moving to the Barletta Displaced Persons camp in Italy where she met her future husband, Sam Nussbaum. They lived there for three years before immigrating to Kansas City in 1948 where they rebuilt their lives.

Elizabeth recorded her testimony for the first time in December 2023. That testimony and Elizabeth's map in the *Through Hell to the Midwest* project are both available on MCHE's website.



Elizabeth Nussbaum, Spring 2021. Photo credit: Roy Inman. Used with permission.

To learn more about Elizabeth's story, visit <https://mchekc.org/testimonial/elizabeth-nussbaum/>.

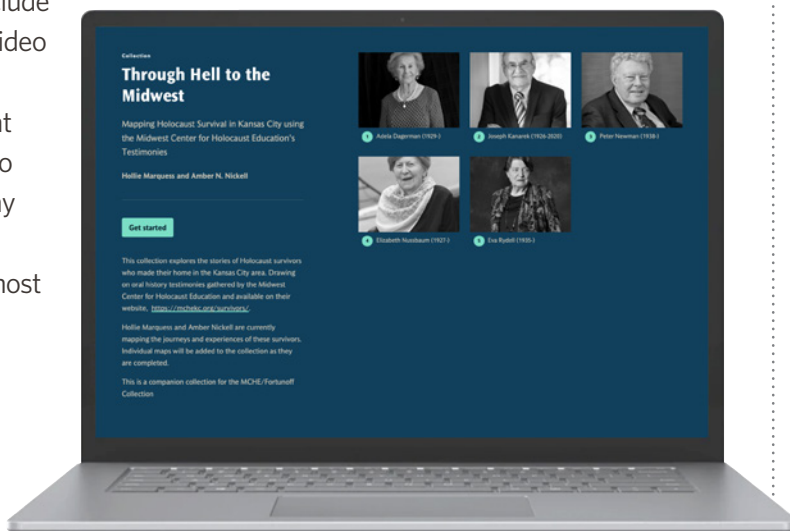
MAPPING PROJECT EXPANSION

Through Hell to the Midwest

The innovative digital humanities project *Through Hell to the Midwest* launched in 2024 with maps built from the testimonies of Kansas City area survivors whose video testimonies were collected in 1994.

Having completed the maps for each of those survivors, Dr. Amber Nickell and Professor Hollie Marquess from Fort Hays State University have expanded their project to include survivors whose video testimonies were added by MCHE at a later date, or who provided testimony to other archival institutions. The most recent additions to the map reflect testimonies that were collected as recently as December 2023.

We invite any survivor or survivor relative who knows of testimony housed in another archive, such as the Shoah Foundation or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, to contact the MCHE team at info@mchekc.org. We can work with your family to explore access to that testimony and to include your survivor relative in this mapping project.



SAVE THE DATE

Survivor Book Fair



The community is invited to join us in celebrating the legacy of testimony provided by our local survivors. This book fair, featuring books written by or about local survivors, includes a chance to purchase books and meet the authors or children of the survivors.

Books we expect to be available include those featuring the testimony of survivors Maria Devinki, Ben Edelbaum, Fela Igielnik, Judy Jacobs, Alice Kern, Klaus Frank, Jack Mandelbaum, Erika Mandler, and Bronia Roslawowski. MCHE will sell *From the Heart*. Survivors may be present to meet visitors and sign their profiles in the book.

This come-and-go event will take place on June 8 from 1:30-3 p.m. in the Social Hall at the Jewish Community Campus. Watch for more information on our website at mchekc.org. This program is co-sponsored by Jewish Experiences.

Yom Hashoah Commemoration

Sunday, April 27, 2025 | 1:30 p.m.

The White Theater at the Jewish Community Campus

On April 19, 1943, the remaining inhabitants of the Warsaw Ghetto launched their last act of armed resistance in response to the expected final liquidation of the ghetto. For 27 days the ill-equipped Jewish fighters held out against the Nazis. By May 16, when the Germans succeeded in suppressing the uprising, at least 7,000 had been killed in the fighting. Approximately 42,000 ghetto inhabitants were then deported. This year marks the 82nd anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the largest Jewish uprising during the war.



The Memorial to the Six Million – an early project of the New Americans to commemorate the resilience of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters and to memorialize their loved ones lost in the Holocaust.

In 1951, the Israeli Knesset established *Yom Hashoah* as 27 Nisan, commemorating this act of resistance. The Kansas City survivors, organized as the New Americans Club, were early adopters of this commemoration, which our community continues to this day as the *Yom Hashoah* memorial service.

The 2025 community *Yom Hashoah* service is chaired by Mark Eisemann, son of Holocaust survivor Dr. Gustave Eisemann, who fled Germany in 1938.

In reflecting on the importance of coming together as a community to remember the Holocaust, Mark notes, "It is an honor to be this year's *Yom Hashoah* chair. The Holocaust is such a defining moment in Jewish and world history that it is important for the Jewish and broader community to take a day each year to recall, reflect, retell and, most importantly, internalize those events. We do so to commemorate what was lost and celebrate those who survived, but with a broader purpose of inspiring vigilance in confronting antisemitism, authoritarianism and prejudice today."

The *Yom Hashoah* commemoration is a free event which is open to the public. Anyone unable to attend in person is invited to watch the livestream event on the MCHE Kansas City YouTube Channel beginning at 1:30 p.m. that day.

KANSAS AND MISSOURI HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATIONS

KANSAS HOLOCAUST COMMISSION

The Destroyed Shtetl of Eysishok

The State of Kansas Holocaust Commemoration will take place on April 28, 2025, in Topeka, Kansas.

Dr. Lindsay MacNeill, historian at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, will speak about the destroyed shtetl of Eysishok — the community commemorated in the USHMM Tower of Faces. Governor Laura Kelly will sign a proclamation declaring the Days of Remembrance.

The commemoration is open to the public and school audiences, but registration is requested at mchekc.org/KSCommemoration/.

A video of the commemoration will be available on the MCHE Kansas City YouTube Channel in the days following the program.

MISSOURI HOLOCAUST COMMISSION

Exhibition Explores 'How Was It Possible'

"Some Were Neighbors: Collaboration & Complicity in the Holocaust" addresses one of the central questions about the Holocaust: How was it possible?

Created by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, this 21-panel exhibit examines a variety of motives and pressures that influenced individual choices to act.

Sponsored by the Missouri Holocaust Education and Awareness Commission for

Holocaust Education Week, the exhibition will be on display April 7 - 11, 2025, at the Missouri State Capitol on the third floor Rotunda. Admission is free and the exhibit is open 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



Clara Grossman

Clara Grossman and her family were deported from their homes in Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau. After a few weeks in Auschwitz, she was selected for a transfer to Stutthof where she performed forced labor. She was liberated in the midst of a death march when the Nazi guards disappeared overnight.

"Then one day we, after *appell*, they said that we will gather everybody in another hour, and we will have to get out of the camp ... So we lined up and we started walking. It was terribly cold. And it came towards the evening and we saw a big barn, two big farmhouses. And that's where we spent the evening. So the next morning, start marching again and was kept going back and back and back to the line and suddenly we looked around and there was no soldiers around us, no one were guarding us. So, we couldn't believe it and kept looking and looking and said, 'What happened?' And they just sort of took off.

"We walked into this farmhouse, and no one was there. It was empty. We were there for like five days. And then, one day we heard the bombing and the war noises coming closer and closer. Then one day five Russian officers on horseback came in, and we put out the white flag. And we said, 'We are from a camp nearby.' One of the officers came, gathered us in one



Clara Grossman shortly after the war.

room and he said, 'Look, I would advise you girls to leave. The troops are coming through here.'

"We gathered as much food as we could, you know, carry with us and started walking into Lublin. We were still shaved, no shoes, hardly any... just rags, head filled with lice. We were filthy dirty... And it took us, you know, quite a while — at least two to three months to, you know, somehow, a little bit pull ourselves together."



Marianne Dennis in Berlin in 1942.

Marianne Dennis

Marianne Dennis was a very young child who experienced the war years hiding in the open in Berlin. Her experience of liberation included the nightly bombing raids that occurred before the Soviet army entered the city.

"We were liberated by the Russians who came in Berlin. And I really don't remember, other than that the Russians were coming closer and closer, and when they did march into Berlin we were in a place in a cellar. It was not a bunker or official place for hiding. And, needless to say, we were hungry.

"I remember when the Russians marched in and when they overtook all the streets and everything, and we were very lucky that there were Jewish officers there, and we told them that we were Jewish and in hiding. And we had food. They brought us food. They brought us clothing. We told them people we knew that were Nazis and they went

and arrested them. And we had gotten wonderful care from them."

Jack Mandelbaum

Jack Mandelbaum was moved through a series of forced labor facilities after his deportation from Dzialoszyce in 1942. At war's end he and his friend Moniek were in Dörnhau concentration camp. They liberated themselves and Langenbielau, the women's camp down the road.

"In this particular camp, one morning we woke up and the Nazi flag was gone. And we didn't know what was happening, and all the guards were gone. So, we opened up the gates. My friend and I left the gates, and when we went out on the roadside — still in our uniforms — and we found abandoned Wehrmacht trucks, motorcycles, bicycles, armaments.

"Everything was abandoned — on the roadside abandoned. And we found an abandoned military supply wagon with two chestnut horses strapped to the wagon. And we jumped on that wagon that was loaded with sugar and cans of marmalade. And we drove, not knowing where we were going. But we just followed the road. And we wound up in a women's concentration camp where they didn't even know that the war was over. This was on May 7, 1945. So, actually we, my friend and I, became the liberators of this women's concentration camp."



Jack Mandelbaum shortly after the war.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUSTAINING MEMBERS • CURRENT AS OF MARCH 1, 2025

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HOT CHOCOLATE TO SPREAD KINDNESS



Eliana, Noah, and Danielle Schwartzbard held their 5th annual hot chocolate stand on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to raise funds to support MCHE. As members of the fourth generation, they are extending the legacy of shared memory and have shown a deep commitment supporting our work.

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2025 MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE

Our thanks to MCHE benefactors Karen and Mike Herman for their third year of support for the Herman Family Initiative — a challenge grant that matches the first \$50,000 brought in by new and increased memberships in 2025. We are grateful that they chose to give their planned gift in their lifetimes so they can see the legacy they are creating.

We invite you to join now or increase your current membership at year-end to **DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT!**



Understanding Antisemitism

SYMBOLS OF HATE

The Swastika

Although this hooked cross is now synonymous with the hate and genocide perpetrated by the Nazi government, the symbol predates that regime by many centuries. The swastika appeared in numerous cultures dating back 7,000 years. It remains a sacred symbol in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Odinism. Native American tribes such as the Navajo used it as a symbol of the cycle of life and good fortune. Prior to Hitler, it was used throughout Europe as a sign of good luck, prosperity and renewal.

In the 19th century, it was adopted by Pan-German groups and in the early 20th century by racist groups who saw the swastika as a symbol of "Aryan" culture. It was officially adopted by the Nazi Party in 1920. In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws changed the German constitution to designate the swastika flag as the national flag of Germany.

Although the swastika is now outlawed in Germany, it is still used elsewhere as a symbol of racism, antisemitism and hate, with an intent to instill fear.

The Roman Salute = Nazi Salute

Often referred to as the "Roman salute,"

this gesture has no historical ties to ancient Rome. It was widely adopted by Italian fascists under Benito Mussolini. He promoted its association to connect his regime to the previous era of perceived greatness in the Roman empire. The salute was later adopted in the 1930s by the Nazi Party in Germany where it was usually accompanied by the greeting "Heil Hitler."

Because of its association with mass murder, fascism and racism, it has been banned in many countries, including Germany, Austria and Poland. Neo-Nazis and other white supremacists continue to use the salute. As the most common white supremacist hand signal in the world, it serves as a call to action for those who support racism and the authoritarian use of power.

What is Fascism?

The swastika and the Roman/Nazi salute were both adopted by 20th century fascists and are now used to demonstrate support for fascist ideas. Fascism is a political ideology that is based in populism and promotes nationalism and social regimentation — often through the authoritarian use of power. It promotes feeling and emotion over reason and facts. It relies on a strongman leader that

This new section of the MCHE Newsletter, Understanding Antisemitism, responds to increasing incidents and requests for more information from the public. Written by Dr. Shelly Cline, Director of Education and Historian, our goal is to provide concise information about the symbols, tropes and manifestations of antisemitism today.

By providing historical context and defining elements of antisemitism, MCHE seeks to empower our community to recognize them as expressions of hate and authoritarian power and name them for what they are. Our reactions matter.

"The symbols of today enable the reality of tomorrow. Notice the swastikas and other signs of hate. Do not look away, and do not get used to them."

— Historian, Timothy Snyder

promises national restoration, which he alone can achieve. Political opponents are branded as enemies and traitors.

Historian Ian Kershaw notes that "trying to define 'fascism' is like trying to nail jelly to the wall." Each fascist movement is unique — no regime will look exactly like the previous ones.

To learn more, we recommend the works of historians Dr. Ian Kershaw and Dr. Robert Paxton.

Save
the Date

THURSDAY
JUNE 26, 2025
6:30 P.M.

MCHE Annual Meeting and Elections

LIGHT RECEPTION, 6:30 P.M. | ELECTIONS & PROGRAM, 7:00 P.M.
SOCIAL HALL AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPUS
5801 W. 115TH STREET | OVERLAND PARK, KS

HONORING OUTGOING MCHE BOARD PRESIDENT
STEVEN COLE.

MCHE members are invited to submit nominations to the MCHE Board of Directors and Council of Advocates before April 15. Register to attend or submit a nomination at mchekc.org/annualmeeting



Steve with the MCHE team in Budapest, 2023

SPRING/SUMMER PROGRAM CALENDAR

Please visit mchekc.org for program information and registration.

APRIL

April 7-11

Missouri Holocaust Commission Exhibit:
"Some Were Neighbors: Collaboration & Complicity in the Holocaust"

April 27

Kansas City *Yom Hashoah* Commemoration

April 28

State of Kansas Holocaust Commemoration:
The Destroyed Shtetl of Eysishok



MAY

May 8

MCHE Academic Awards Ceremony



JUNE

June 8

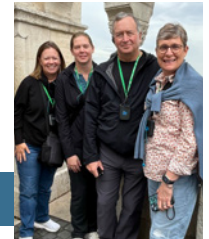
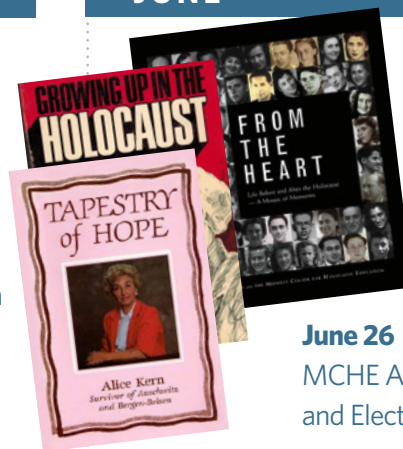
Survivor Book Fair

June 23

Operation Barbarossa Commemoration

June 26

MCHE Annual Meeting and Elections



JULY

July 9-10

KC to DC Experience for Educators



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