



LEGACY

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2011

2011 DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

ESCAPE FROM SOBIBOR

A full house is expected at the Yavapai College Performance Hall at 6:30 P.M. on Tuesday, May 3, 2011 when Thomas 'Toivi' Blatt is the featured speaker at the Greater Prescott Days of Remembrance Event – a commemorative ceremony to remember those who perished during the Nazi reign of terror from 1933 until 1945. This year's event is particularly noteworthy because Mr. Blatt is one of only six remaining survivors from the successful Jewish prisoner revolt at the Nazi death camp of Sobibor.

When the Nazis occupied Poland in 1939, Thomas was just a twelve-year-old boy living with his family in the small Jewish village of Izbica outside of Lublin. After the German invasion, Thomas's life became an unending struggle to survive the persecution and brutalities of the Nazis and their Polish collaborators. Thomas's ordeal is described in horrifying detail in his personal story published in 1997: From the Ashes of Sobibor. The story includes attempts to hide from the Nazis during repeated 'roundups' of Jews in Izbica, an attempt to flee with falsified Aryan documents, a near death experience with typhus, and finally the deportation to the Nazi death camp at Sobibor. Upon arrival at Sobibor, on April 28, 1943, Thomas's parents and younger brother were immediately sent to the gas chamber but Thomas was selected for a work detail to process future transports of Jews from throughout Europe.

Unlike other Nazi concentration camps that employed slave labor for the Nazi war effort, Sobibor was built specifically to kill Jews. The only labor at Sobibor was used to maintain the camp and to process the thousands of Jews arriving at the death camp weekly. Thomas Blatt was chosen for that work, providing a brief respite from certain death. For among the Jews at Sobibor it was known that there was no way out of Sobibor except "through the chimney with the wind."

However, the fate of the Jewish labor force at Sobibor was not to be determined by the Nazi's extermination plans, but rather the Jews themselves. Emboldened by news of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and determined to defy the Nazis, the Jews of Sobibor devised a plan to

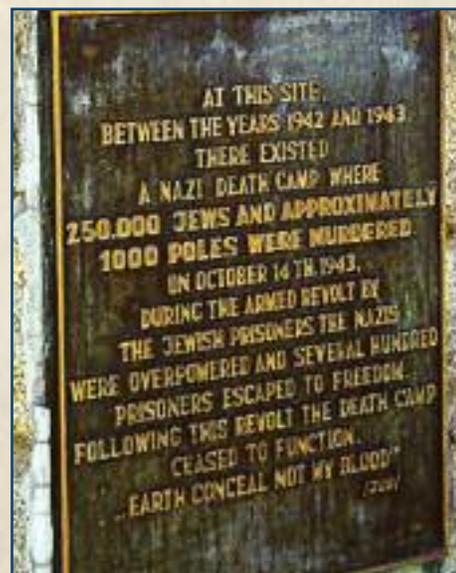
overpower their Nazi tormentors and allow for the escape of all 600 prisoners. With the assistance of a few Jewish Soviet prisoners of war, the prisoners of Sobibor killed eleven Nazi SS officers on October 14, 1943 and escaped from the camp.

The heroic story of the uprising at Sobibor was immortalized in the 1987 award-winning British film, "Escape from Sobibor," which aired on CBS to an audience of over 31 million viewers. Thomas Blatt was the technical advisor for the film and continues as a spokesman for those who perished at Sobibor.

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How many of the 600 made it safely over the barbed wire and through the mine fields to the safety of the forest? How many Jews survived the war to bear witness about the atrocities of Sobibor? What happened to the death camp at Sobibor?

To hear the answers to these questions and more, come to Yavapai College Performance Hall and hear Mr. Blatt's eyewitness account of the largest and most successful concentration camp uprising of WWII. Experience this truly remarkable story of courage and survival as told by one of the last surviving members of the escape. The event is free to the public and reserved tickets are available for the event beginning April 18th at the box office of the Performance Hall. For more information call the *Performance Hall Box Office at 776-2000.* ★



Plaque in memory of the 250,000 Jews murdered at the Sobibor Death Camp in Poland during World War II.

“DEEDS OF GIVING ARE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD.”



NATIONAL HONOR FOR POLK HUNDREDS ATTEND TRIBUTE DINNER



On the left, Sheila Polk accepts Tribute Plaque from Sara Bloomfield, Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

At a gala dinner at the Biltmore Resort in Phoenix, on February 27th the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of Washington, D.C. paid tribute to Sheila Polk for her work in developing specialized ethics programs for judges and prosecutors based on the “Lessons of the Holocaust.” Polk, Yavapai County Attorney for the past ten years, was first exposed to the ethical lessons of the Holocaust during a Leadership Mission to Washington, D.C. in 2006 sponsored by the Jewish Community Foundation. The experience impassioned Sheila to bring this powerful teaching

tool to those within her profession. Polk has spent the past five years collaborating with the Museum’s educational staff in developing contemporary ethical discussions for professionals of the justice system that transcend ordinary approaches to ethics.

The results of these efforts have been extraordinary. The course, **Law, Justice and the Holocaust: How the Courts Failed Germany**, was first presented to Supreme Court Chief Justices from all fifty of the United States and the six U. S. territories at the Annual Educational Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico in August of 2009. Following that inaugural presentation the demand for the program has been overwhelming. The program staff of the Holocaust Museum has presented the judges’ course to the entire judiciary of the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Colorado, New York, and Maryland, with presentations pending for more than twenty additional states.

Upon accepting the Tribute Plaque, Polk reflected on her first visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2006, stating: “By the time I had finished the course on ethics in law enforcement, I went from believing the Holocaust had nothing to do with me as Yavapai County Attorney, to believing that the Holocaust has everything to do with my role as County Attorney, with my role as a prosecutor, and with me as a person.”

Representing law enforcement from Yavapai County were Chief and Mrs. Jody Fanning of Cottonwood, Chief and Mrs. Mike Kappel of Prescott, Chief and Mrs. Jim Maxson of Prescott Valley, Sheriff and Mrs. Steve Waugh and Lieutenant and Mrs. Steven Francis both from the Sheriff’s Office of Yavapai County. ★

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Every time I sit to write my message for the Legacy newsletter, I am struck by the power of persistent and dedicated efforts of individual people. The world really does change when an individual decides to change it - this issue is filled with examples of such people.

The manner in which ethical leadership is taught to our nation’s prosecutors and judges was changed when our County Attorney, Sheila Polk, traveled to Washington, D.C. in 2006 to experience a program about the “Lessons of the Holocaust.” In 2003, Gerda Samuels decided to make a difference to our troops fighting overseas – eight years later Gerda is still at it and her caring provides comfort for those in harm’s way. The featured speaker for this year’s Days of Remembrance has spent a lifetime ensuring the world would never forget those who perished at the death camp of Sobibor.

If nothing else, I hope this issue of Legacy leaves you with this message: One person CAN make a difference.

David S. Hess, M.D., President

Please know that your comments and feedback are welcome and can be sent by email to info@jcfgp.org.



EVERYDAY HERO

18 MONTHS LATER: A LEGACY OF CARING

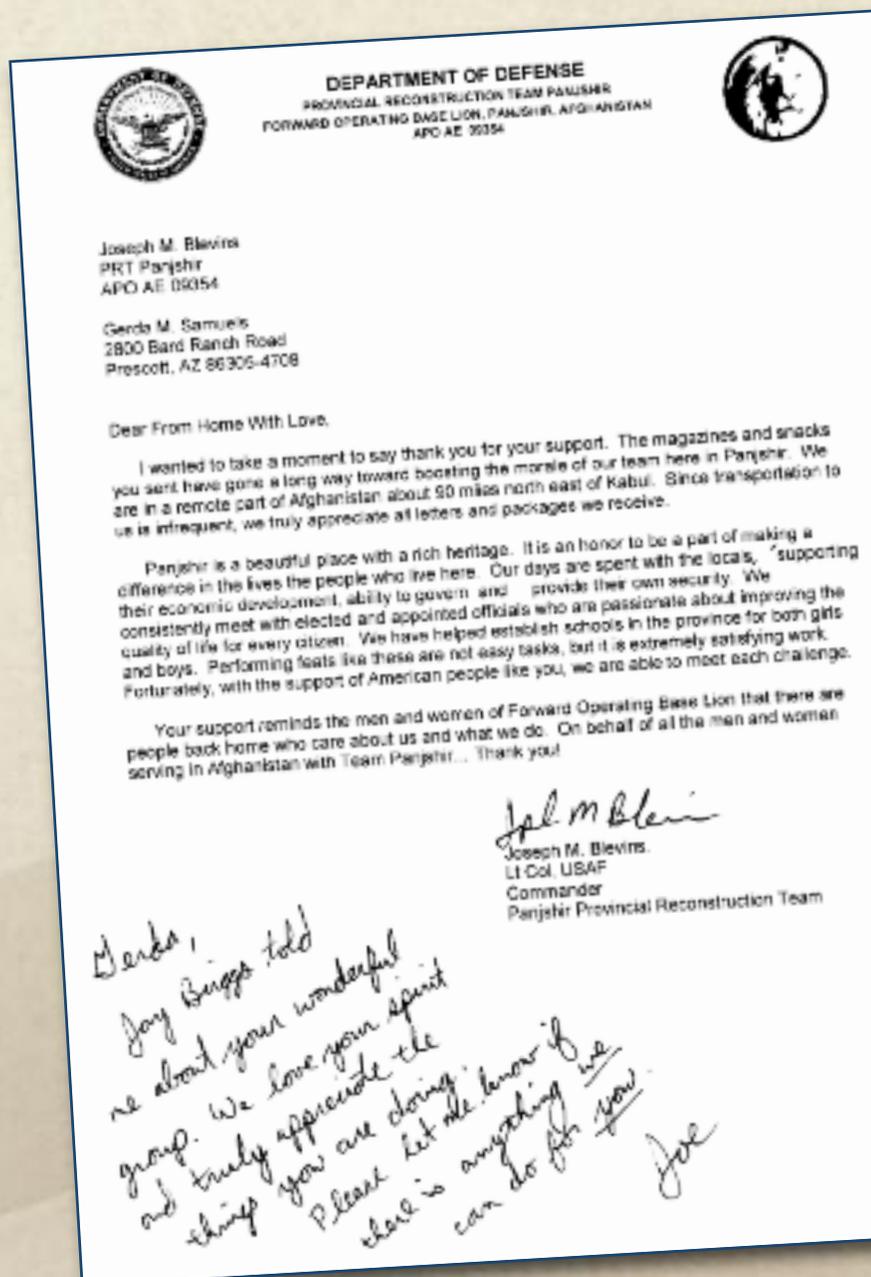
In the fall of 2009 the Foundation launched a regular Legacy newsletter feature highlighting a community 'Everyday Hero'. Our introduction to that first article read: "The Foundation will highlight an unsung hero who is making a difference in our community. They are everywhere, doing wonderful things without ever seeking attention. It is these individuals who are the real role models for our youth and our society. Common people doing uncommon things – just simply because it is the right thing to do. The Foundation believes they represent the best of what we are and what we can be."

After 18 months, the Legacy editorial staff decided to revisit our first Everyday Hero – Gerda Samuels. As told in the initial story, Gerda and her husband Allan began sending care packages to the soldiers in Afghanistan in 2003 - a program Gerda would eventually call **From Home with Love**. It wasn't hard to find Gerda for our follow-up, she and her volunteer crew were busy packing another shipment for our troops. What had begun as two or three packages a month in 2003 had now grown to the current shipment of 68 packages destined for Afghanistan. On this page you will find a wonderful thank you letter sent to Gerda and her helpers from a commander in Afghanistan, and a touching photo of our troops eagerly opening the packages upon their arrival.

Gerda is a wonderful example of how one person who cares can make a difference. The Foundation is honored to once again name Gerda Samuels our Everyday Hero!! If you want to learn more about Gerda's efforts or become one of her 'helpers', you may contact **Gerda at (928) 717-0140 or by email at gerda2800@cablone.net.** ★



American troops in Afghanistan eagerly open packages from Gerda's From Home with Love project.





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A grant to Trauma Intervention Program in 2009 allowed Una Loge and her dog, Buster, to qualify as a Support Dog Team.

FOUNDATION CALL FOR GRANT APPLICANTS \$50,000 TO BE AWARDED TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

For over 5000 years the concept of charitable giving has been an integral part of Jewish life and belief. For the past 235 years, the desire to improve the common good and help one's neighbor has been the fabric of American democracy. With this dual heritage in mind, the Jewish Community Foundation has supported local charitable organizations that provided necessary services to the community's needy, underprivileged, or homeless. Over the past few years the Foundation has provided more than half a million dollars in funding to various community organizations, initiatives, and projects.

Each year the Foundation provides funding to community organizations through its grants application process. Grant applications are accepted until April 8th with the recipients being named in early July 2011. For the current application cycle, the Foundation will be awarding \$50,000 to worthy organizations in our community. If your organization is interested in applying for a grant, more details can be found at www.jcftp.org or contact Saul Fein at the Foundation at 717 – 0016. ★

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