

NAVAL OCEANOGRAPHIC OFFICE

DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE OF THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

7 MAY 97

Our men cried.
We were a
combat unit.
We'd been to
Anzio to
southern France,
Sicily, Salerno,
the Battle of
the Bulge, and
we'd never, ever
seen anything
like this.

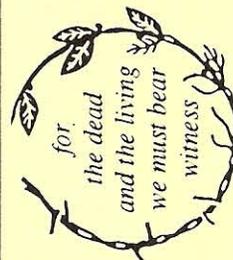
-American liberator
in the words of poet
Barbara Helfgott Hyett

Our challenge today is to insist that time will not become the Nazis' friend, that time will not fade our sense of specificity, the uniqueness of the Holocaust, that time will not lead us to make the Holocaust into an abstraction. Our challenge today is to remember the Holocaust, for if we remember we will, as our soldiers did, look its evil in the face. For memory is our duty to the past, and memory is our duty to the future.

-George Bush

On April 12, 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces of Europe, wrote the following words in a letter to George Marshall, his Chief of Staff, describing his first visit to one of the camps liberated by U.S. forces:

The things I saw beggar description . . . The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so. I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to "propaganda."



Eva Galler, was born Eva Vogel, in Oleszyce, Poland, in 1924. When World War II started, she was 15 years old. Eva and her husband Henry were married 50 years ago in Sweden after the war. They knew each other in their home town, but were separated when Mr. Galler fought in the Polish Army as a lieutenant and Mrs. Galler was sent to the Ghetto at Lubaczow. Mr. and Mrs. Galler were the only survivors from their families, who were all sent to death camps.

When the war started, Jews were not permitted to attend school. Mrs. Galler was not able to graduate from high school in Poland, but in 1985, at the age of 62, she graduated from the University of New Orleans with a degree in history and a minor in sociology.

Henry Galler, born in Oleszyce, Poland, in 1921, learned tailoring in his father's textile business. Mr. Galler left Oleszyce after the Hitler-Stalin pact and subsequent U.S.S.R.-German "Treaty of Frontier Regulation and Friendship" of 1939, which partitioned Poland. Mr. Galler was arrested by the Russians and sent to Siberia. After the 1941 German invasion of Russia, Mr. Galler volunteered for the Russian army and was sent to artillery training for eight months before being sent to the "Eastern Front." He spent the remainder of the war fighting the Germans as a lieutenant in the 1st Division of the Polish Army, the Kosciuszczko.

After the war, Mr. Galler returned to Oleszyce to discover that his entire family, including three brothers and three sisters, were killed. One year after his return to Oleszyce, he reunited with Eva, and they immigrated to Sweden and married. Mr. Galler studied tailoring for four years, and became a Swedish citizen during their seven-year residence in Sweden.

Mr. and Mrs. Galler moved to the United States in 1954. They lived in New York until 1962, when they relocated to New Orleans. The Gallers have three accomplished daughters, a physician, an MBA, and a law professor at Hofstra Law School, New York.

DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY

- I. Opening Remarks Steve Faber
- II. Invocation **Chaplain J. D. Craycraft**
Navy C.B. Base
Gulfport, MS

- III. Captain's Address **CAPT Dieter K. Rudolph**
Commanding Officer
Naval Oceanographic Office

- IV. "A Perspective of a
Survivor of the
Holocaust" **Eva Galler**
- "A Soldier in
the Polish Army" **Henry Galler**

- V. Closing Remarks **Steve Faber**

Besides soldiers, witnesses to the horror included journalists - and another future President.

We saw the cremation room there. Details of Jews worked here every day. It was their job to shovel hundreds of gas victims into the ovens. Each oven was approximately coffin size, but capacity was listed at six bodies. They used Jews for this detail because they were certain to die anyhow. And the Nazis did not want the thousands of other prisoners to know about their "future" test their work in the quarry lack spirit.

We saw the initial arrival point for new prisoners to Mauthausen. Here they were stripped and chained to a wall for 24 hours, exposed to the weather, hot or cold.

We saw cell blocks in which men lived, if such a word may be used for such conditions. For purposes of description, let us say the cell blocks resembled the tar paper barracks we had in the United States, but just half their size. Normal capacity of these blocks was 300 human beings. It was so crowded they had to sit up all night. Their latrine facilities were just outside. They could not stray far from the cells or they would be shot. Often, after a year or so,

they didn't even bother to use the outside latrines. We saw their hospitals. There were two of them. One held 90 patients and was ultra modern. This one they showed important visitors. The other hospital held 5,000. Ward were just like the prison blocks except there were bunks in tiers five high. In each bed were five human beings, each stuck half of them dying from malnutrition. Each had lost from 50 to 100 pounds. Their legs had lost all control and looked like heavy ropes. Their toilet was their bed. There were running sores on many of them. Sometimes Nazi surgeons ended their misery by squirting gasoline against their hearts.

We saw their bodies, hundreds of them. Prisoners said at times there were thousands laying around camp. We saw them piled up like cordwood - big and little piles of dead. All of them were emaciated and discolored and covered with insects and worms. These were human beings. Their crime was not being German.

-Fred Friendly,
noted journalist,
dispatch,
May 24, 1945