

Naval Oceanographic Office

In August of 1942, the skies are blue, the trees are green.
At 16, the apples fill the orchard, the garden is peaceful
and still, a taste for love hovers over my head, and yet,
under that apple tree I sit, in dread of death...

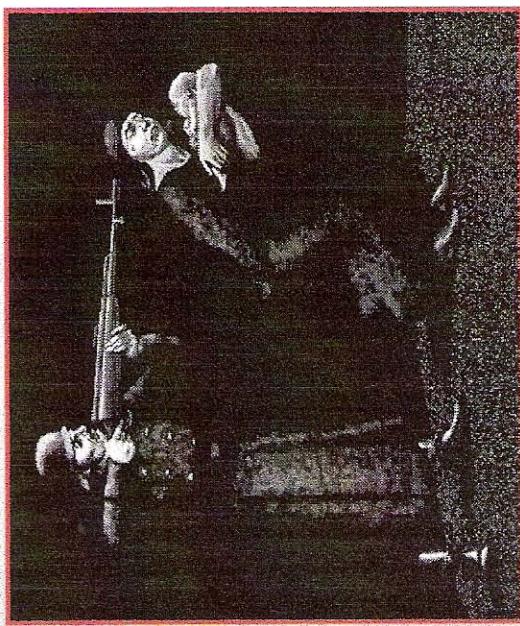
What will it be? A shot, a blow? Will it be quick or slow?
Will they torture and taunt me? Will I be brave? Oh, yes!
Nature smiles at me, her languid, indifferent smile in the
fragrant air, the breeze is gentle and sweet, and yet, my
anger bitterly screams
how hard it is to die
how hard it is to die
not knowing what love means, not knowing what life is at
16.

And you, my classmates, my comrades, my confidants,
my future lovers, what did you do? Where did you go?
What did you think? When death trapped you at 16...

...and who will mourn you?

- Janine Oberrottman
Holocaust survivor

“Next Time”



Next Time It Could Be You...

Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust Observance



22 April 1998

1998 Days of Remembrance Ceremony

Shep Zittler was born in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 1917. His family numbered 14 in 1936. Six months before the war began, he was drafted into the Polish army. The anti-Semitism was very high, as exemplified by the office sign held by the army lieutenant, which read "From Jews and dogs, the entry is forbidden." Mr. Zittler was fighting his enemy, the Germans, in the presence of his second enemy, the Poles.

Poland lost the war with Germany after 16 days. Because Mr. Zittler was classified as Lithuanian (and Lithuania was not at war with Germany), he was sent to a labor camp, where he was held captive for 5 years and 7 months. Mr. Zittler and nine additional captives were together for the duration, and they vowed through the duration that they would not have any children, for why should their children suffer as Jews?

Mr. Zittler was liberated by Russians in April, 1945, after the labor camp he was in had been marching continuously for 3 days. After the war, Mr. Zittler learned that his youngest sister had married, and had given birth to a son. The son had stayed with Mr. Zittler's parents in the ghetto, where all family members perished. Of the 14 family members, only Mr. Zittler and one sister, who had moved to Palestine prior to the beginning of the war, survived the Holocaust. Mr. Zittler was sent back to the Polish army (after being betrayed by a Jewish captain at an England camp). Eventually, he went to London, where he spent 3 years at a job selling suits.

Mr. Zittler moved to New Orleans in 1948, where he took a job selling wholesale clothes and dry goods. He married, and had one son. After the death of his first wife, Mr. Zittler married Anne, his present wife. His son, Justin, is now a lawyer. Mr. Zittler is presently very active in Jewish organizations, and was the first president of the New Americans Social Club, which originated as a group of survivors protesting American Nazi demonstrations. Mr. Zittler is presently characterized as "a good man, active in every Jewish cause, a staunch Zionist, a fighter for individual human rights and for a strong state of Israel."

I. Opening Remarks

Mr. Richard Balser

LCDR Walker Marsh
Navy C.B. Base
Gulfport, MS

II. Invocation

CAPT Larry Warrenfeltz
Commanding Officer
Naval Oceanographic
Office

III. Captain's Address

Mr. Shep Zittler

Guest Speaker

IV. "Wartime: Soldier and Prisoner of War"

Mr. Steve Faber

V. Closing Remarks

Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis waged a war within a war — the Holocaust — murdering six million Jews and millions of other innocents. But within the Holocaust, the greatest institutionalized slaughter the world had ever seen, they waged yet another war against children.

Nearly one-and-a-half million children perished in the Holocaust — more than a million of whom were Jewish. They did not die as innocent victims of conventional warfare, but were murdered as part of a deliberate policy by the Nazis to exterminate a people. They were murdered by killing squads, in actions (organized mass executions), through starvation and disease, and in the killing centers like Auschwitz-Birkenau by poison gas, lethal injection, or more terribly, through medical "experiments" under Nazi doctors.

In 1933, new to power, the Nazis passed laws prohibiting Jewish children from participating in organized sports and social activities with their "Aryan" neighbors and friends. They were banned from museums, movies, public playgrounds, and even swimming pools. Finally, they were expelled from public schools.

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the plight of Europe's children became desperate. Jewish children, like their parents, were targeted for death. As the Nazi armed forces overran much of Europe, mobile killing squads known as *Einsatzgruppen* followed in their wake, executing whole Jewish communities, including children.

Many of the remainder were forced into ghettos. Here the fate of babies and very young children was sealed from the beginning. They were marked for immediate death because they could make no contribution to the German war effort. Older children and teenagers had a better chance of surviving because they might be selected for slave labor rather than death.

Children without parents or protectors had virtually no hope. Many, orphaned because their parents had been murdered by the Germans or transported to a camp, simply died on the streets of exposure, starvation, and disease. In 1942, the Nazis began emptying the ghettos and deporting victims to concentration camps. Children were special targets, jammed into rail cars, everyone, and the young especially, suffered from suffocating heat in the summer and freezing cold in the winter. With no food or water, many did not even survive the journey to the camps.