

National Days of Remembrance

VOICES OF RESCUE FROM THE HOLOCAUST

The following biographies provide more information on the lives of those interviewed in the film *Voices of Rescue from the Holocaust*. The film is included on the 2012 *Planning Guide and Resources for Annual Holocaust Commemorations*, which can be requested on the Museum's website.

2



Emanuel Tanay



Stefa Kupfer

3



Agnes Adachi



Helen Waterford

4



Norbert Wollheim



Preben
Munch-Nielsen

VOICES OF RESCUE

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Emanuel Tanay
Rescued Jew, Poland

Emanuel Tanay was born in Vilna, Poland, in 1928. As a child, he moved with his family to the small town of Miechow, north of Krakow, where both of his parents were practicing dentists. After Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the Germans established a ghetto in Miechow where Emanuel and his family were forced to live. Emanuel, his mother, and his sister escaped from the ghetto before it was destroyed in 1942. Under an assumed identity, he went into hiding in a monastery in Krakow along with members of the Polish underground. Emanuel left the monastery after about a year when a teacher began to suspect he was Jewish. Emanuel then became involved in the smuggling of goods to Krakow and Warsaw. In the fall of 1943, he fled with his mother and sister first to Slovakia, then to Hungary. After the German occupation of Hungary in 1944, Emanuel again attempted to flee but was caught and imprisoned. He was liberated in January 1945 in Budapest.

Emanuel immigrated to the United States where he attended medical school and became a forensic psychiatrist and an expert on murder. He was called as an expert witness at thousands of trials, including the trials of Jack Ruby, Ted Bundy, and Sam Sheppard. Considered an expert on the genocidal mind, he was sent to Vietnam by the US government to evaluate perpetrators of mass atrocities. Today he is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the Wayne State University Medical School in Detroit, Michigan.

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Stefa Kupfer
Rescued Jew, Poland

When World War II began with the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, Stefa Kupfer was ten years old and living comfortably with her parents and sister in Sanok, Poland, where her father owned a hardware store. Just prior to the invasion, Stefa's father fled to Soviet-controlled eastern Poland, hoping to avoid being sent to a concentration camp by the Germans. He was killed, however, in the early days of the war. While her mother worked in the store, Stefa cared for her younger sister. Rather than following the German orders that all must register with the occupation government, Stefa, her mother, and her young sister went into hiding in the basement of the home of a Polish woman, Mrs. Orlewska.

In order to feed Stefa's family, Mrs. Orlewska often sold her own jewelry to purchase food and never asked to be repaid. The Kupfers were also aided by other Poles, some of whom had known Stefa's father and knew that the family was Jewish. As the Soviet troops approached, Stefa, her mother, and her sister left their hiding place and went to a public bunker in the middle of the city. From there they were taken to the home of a professor, with whom they stayed until they were liberated by the Soviet Army. The family returned to their home to find it had been destroyed when the ghetto was leveled. Their hopes of taking up their old life were dashed completely by the open hostility shown to returning Jews by their former neighbors. Eventually, Stefa left Poland and immigrated to the United States.

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US HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM



Agnes Adachi Jewish rescuer, Hungary

Shortly after German forces occupied Hungary in March 1944, the authorities ordered Hungarian Jews to be concentrated in ghettos. In mid-May, the government and the German Security Police began systematic deportations. The following month, Swedish businessman Raoul Wallenberg arrived in Budapest. Wallenberg had been recruited by the US War Refugee Board (WRB) and given the status of a diplomat by the Swedish legation. His assignment was to do what he could to save Hungarian Jews. Among the staff Wallenberg assembled to support his work in Budapest was a young Jewish woman named Agnes Adachi, who had been granted Swedish citizenship. Agnes helped Wallenberg distribute certificates of protection issued by the Swedish legation to Jews in Budapest. Wallenberg also used WRB and Swedish funds to establish more than 30 “safe” houses that together formed the core of the “international ghetto” in Budapest.

Throughout the autumn of 1944, Wallenberg repeatedly and often personally intervened to secure the release of bearers of certificates of protection and those with forged papers, saving as many as possible. When Soviet forces liberated Budapest in February 1945, more than 100,000 Jews remained, mostly because of the efforts of Wallenberg and his colleagues. Wallenberg was last seen in the company of Soviet officials in mid-January 1945. He reportedly died in a Soviet prison in 1947, though the exact circumstances of his death are still unknown.

After the war, Agnes immigrated first to Sweden and then to the United States. In the 1980s, she worked tirelessly with Congressman Tom Lantos, a fellow survivor from Hungary, to find out what had happened to Wallenberg and to tell the world of his work to rescue Jews. In 1979, Yad Vashem declared Raoul Wallenberg one of the Righteous Among the Nations.

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Helen Waterford Rescued Jew, Netherlands

Helene Katz (now Helen Waterford) was born in 1909 in a town on the Main River, near Frankfurt, Germany, to a Russian-Jewish father and a German-Jewish mother. She married Siegfried Wohlfarth in 1933. A year later, the couple left for Amsterdam, where Helene gave birth to a daughter, Doris. By 1937, she had become an interior decorator.

The Germans occupied the Netherlands in May 1940. When the Wohlfarths were told to report to the train station in July 1942 to go to a work camp, they decided to go into hiding. They sent Doris, then four years old, to live with another couple. Aided by the Dutch underground, in particular their non-Jewish friend Joe Fisch, Helene and Siegfried hid together in a variety of places, mostly private homes. Fisch was eventually caught and arrested by the Gestapo. He was responsible for the survival of at least six Jews.

On August 25, 1944, Helene and her husband were arrested. They were sent first to Westerbork and then to Auschwitz, where they were separated. Siegfried did not survive. Helene worked at forced labor in the I.G. Farben factory. As the Soviet Army neared, Helene was forced to march to Kratzau work camp, a subcamp of Gross-Rosen in Poland, where she was liberated by the Russians on May 9, 1945. She was reunited with her daughter and together they immigrated to the United States in 1947, where Helene met and married her second husband.

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Norbert Wollheim

Jewish rescuer, Germany

Norbert Wollheim was born in 1913 in Berlin, Germany, where he grew up in an assimilated Jewish family. When the Nazis came to power, Norbert was forced to leave the university and to give up his plans to become a lawyer. After *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, Norbert worked tirelessly to rescue over 6,000 Jewish children from Germany via Kindertransports (children's transports) to Great Britain and Sweden. His parents, who also lived in Berlin, were deported in December 1942. Norbert, his wife, and their child were deported in March 1943. Immediately upon their arrival in Auschwitz, his wife, Rosa, and their son, Uriel, were sent to the gas chambers. Norbert was sent to the I.G. Farben-Buna works for forced labor. In late January 1945, as Soviet troops advanced on the camp, Norbert was forced to march with other prisoners into Germany. After three months of cold and hunger, he and two other prisoners escaped. They were liberated by American soldiers in April 1945.

After the war, Norbert became deputy chairman of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in the British Zone that helped to rebuild Jewish life in Germany. He testified at the I.G. Farben trial in 1947 and later filed suit against the company, seeking back pay and compensation for his forced labor at Buna. His lawsuit was the first case of a former slave laborer against a company in Germany. In 1953, the German court ruled in his favor and during the appeals process, I.G. Farben agreed to a settlement with several thousand of the survivors of its factory at Auschwitz.

Norbert and his second wife, Friedel, and their two children immigrated to the United States, where he became a chartered tax accountant. Norbert died in New York in 1998.

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Preben Munch-Nielsen

Protestant rescuer, Denmark

Preben Munch-Nielsen was born to a Protestant family in the small Danish fishing village of Snekkersten. Raised by his grandmother, Preben commuted to school each day in the Danish capital of Copenhagen, about 25 miles south of Snekkersten. In April 1940, the Germans occupied Denmark. Preben joined the resistance in Copenhagen as a courier. Danish Jews were not persecuted until the autumn of 1943 when the German police began searching for and arresting them. The Danish police refused to cooperate.

The resistance movement began to help Jewish refugees, hiding them in houses near the coast and bringing them to waiting boats at an appointed time. Under cover of darkness, Danish fishermen took up to 12 Jews at a time across the straits to nearby neutral Sweden in their tiny fishing boats. The four-mile trip took about 50 minutes. Preben helped transport 1,400 refugees, most of them Jews, to Sweden. In November 1943, Preben himself fled to Sweden when the Germans seized the Danish government. He returned home in May 1945.

The Danish resistance movement, assisted by many ordinary citizens, coordinated the flight of over 7,000 Jews to safety in Sweden. Thanks to the remarkable mass rescue effort, at war's end Denmark had one of the highest Jewish survival rates of any country in Europe.