



Published: 04.14.2007

How silence feeds tyranny

As it was in Nazi Germany, so it is always; now Holocaust survivors pass on that lesson

By Stephanie Innes

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Auschwitz survivor Sol Rosner offers a simple lesson to be learned from the Holocaust: Speak up against injustice.

"Don't take it. Don't walk away from it, because it will come back to bite you. That's what happened in Nazi Germany," Rosner says during a new 37-minute local documentary, "Why We Remember." It premieres Sunday on Tucson 12, the city's government access TV station.

Rosner, a Jewish native of Czechoslovakia, did hard labor at camps in Poland and in Austria. His parents, sisters and brother were among the 11 million people who died during Adolf Hitler's extermination program during World War II. Six million of those who died were Jews.

Rosner is one of seven local Holocaust survivors featured in the Tucson film.

In one of the documentary's final clips, Rosner speaks of going outside to get the newspaper in the morning, looking at the sun in the sky and on the mountains and thanking God "for bringing me here."

About 125 to 150 Holocaust survivors live in Southern Arizona, but their numbers are dwindling.

Rosner died at age 77 last year while the documentary was still in production. He was one of six local Holocaust survivors who passed away since last year's Yom HaShoah — Holocaust Memorial Day — that will be recognized locally Sunday.

Those losses provided the impetus for the documentary, produced by Gene Einfrank and Mitch Riley of Tucson 12.

"We wanted to capture their stories and make them permanently accessible," said Josh Protas, director of the Jewish Community Relations Council for the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona, which is creating an educational Web site about local Holocaust survivors and worked with Tucson 12 on the documentary.

The film follows Holocaust survivors as they speak to students, and recounts stories of others, including liberators and the "righteous gentiles," who helped the resistance movement. One of those resisters is Hermina Aussems, who lived in the Netherlands during the war and smuggled medicine and other supplies to Jews as a young mother in her 20s.

In the documentary, Aussems says that as a punishment for sneaking

"They hanged my brother. I saw it. That was my last relative." Irving Senor, Auschwitz survivor

Local Holocaust commemoration events

- The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona is scheduled to hold its annual Yom HaShoah Community Holocaust Commemoration at 2 p.m. Sunday at Temple Emanu-El, 225 N. Country Club Road. A video presentation will precede the service at 1:30 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. The theme is "Legacies of Justice" and the featured speaker will be Hebrew University professor Shlomo Aronson, currently a visiting professor in Israel studies at the University of Arizona. Several local survivors also are expected to share their stories.

- The local Tucson 12 documentary featuring seven Tucson Holocaust survivors, titled "Why We Remember," premieres at 7 p.m. Sunday on Cox Channel 12 and Comcast Channel 75. Repeats are scheduled at various times daily through May 14. Showtimes can be found at www.tucson12.tv online.

- A book reading with local Holocaust survivor Gabrielle Schneider is scheduled for noon on Monday, April 23, at the Tucson Jewish Community Center, 3800 E.

bread to imprisoned children, she was forced to spend the night in a cell meant for four people that was jammed with 72 women — 17 of whom died overnight.

"We stood. You could not move. It was pitch black," Aussems says.

Other survivors speak about the last time they saw their parents and siblings, about trying to turn off their emotions, and about surviving on nearly no food — one ladle full of soup and a piece of dry bread daily.

They also speak about letting go of hate.

"If you hate, you only destroy yourself," Rosner says.

"I really don't want to be an angry man," says Andrew Schot, 76, a Jew from the Netherlands who lived in hiding, spent time in a forced-labor camp and lost his brother and father to the Nazis. "I've seen others that even 60 years later are still angry. They are angry at the world, and I don't want to be part of that. I want to go on."

"They hanged my brother. I saw it. That was my last relative." Irving Senor, Auschwitz survivor

River Road. Her self-published book, "Andor Kept His Promise from the Grave," includes reflections on Schneider's experiences during the Holocaust and will be available for \$18 at the reading, along with prints of her paintings, which focus on the Holocaust.

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