

By Lori Pankonin, The Imperial Republican Co-publisher

Concentration camp stories and the whole World War II Holocaust concept are devastating and painfully heart wrenching to say the least. During the holidays, I enjoyed that age-old movie, "Sound of Music." Brooke, our oldest daughter, had each and every song in that movie memorized back in her preschool days. It was her favorite entertainment for a time and the memories returned with each scene.

It was scary to watch the von Trapp family hide from the stern soldiers as they fled Austria. However, it was basically happy family entertainment and the devastation of the Hitler regime wasn't the main focus.

In the meantime, I've been mesmerized by the presentations of Holocaust survivors who have their number burned into their skin and are alive to tell about the torturous memories. The Holocaust museum in Washington D.C. certainly isn't a happy place but it's so important that those stories aren't forgotten. The room full of little shoes especially broke my heart.

It's so inhumane and unbelievable that millions of starving Jews agreeably marched into their death chambers. The movie, "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," was recently recommended so I was glad to find it available to rent. Knowing it had something to do with the Holocaust found me wondering why it was that I kept going back to find it.

No part of concentration camps leaves one feeling good, however it's amazing how children and their beautiful innocence can portray a genuine story about sincere friendship despite the barbed wire fence between them. The young buddies were adorable and excellent little actors.

Ironically, the day before watching this eye-opening version of the story, newspapers chronicled the death of Miep Gies in Amsterdam, Netherlands. At age 100, Gies was the last of the six "helpers" who smuggled food, books, writing paper and news of the outside world to Anne Frank and her family, as well as four other Jews.

They hid for two full years until police broke through the apartment door concealed behind a moveable bookcase, arresting the Frank family and taking them to concentration camps. It was Miep Gies who seized the diary pages of Anne Frank from the attic and locked them away in a desk. They were never read until she gave them to Anne's father, who was the only surviving family member.

The diary chronicled Anne's life as a budding teenager from her 13th birthday in 1942, just weeks before being forced into hiding, until just before they were captured in August, 1944.

Published in 1947, "The Diary of Anne Frank," was the first popular book about the Holocaust read by millions of children and adults in 70 languages. It was also the basis for an Oscar winning movie and a Pulitzer Prize winning play, both entitled "The Diary of Anne Frank."

Had Gies not saved those pages back when she was in her early 30's, an amazing amount of history would have been lost. She admitted that had she read the pages before the war was over, she would have had to burn them because the information would have no doubt caused her and the other helpers to be sent to concentration camps themselves for secretly helping Jews.

Although hatred was evident, how refreshing to know that kindness did prevail, be it in the real life story of Miep Gies who kind-heartedly helped another human family despite their beliefs, or

the screen-written characters of young innocent children.
May kindness and peace again prevail in our world.

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