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What are the names and stories of the people who seriously risked their own lives to harbor Jews during the Holocaust?

1. What I already know and don't know about my topic.

The time was World War II and Nazi Germany had conquered most of Europe. There was a plan to exterminate all of the European Jews, a plan known as the "Final Solution". The leader and creator of this plan was Adolf Hitler. Concentration camps were established by the Nazis where Jews were deported to and either forced into labor or killed. The largest of these concentration camps was known as Auschwitz. Six million (of a total of nine million) European Jews and a total of eleven million people were murdered during this horrific historical event. These are the most significant facts I remember after learning about the Holocaust.

Beginning in kindergarten and continuing until I graduated high school, I attended Hebrew school and Sunday school at my synagogue in Sioux City, Iowa. Throughout these years, I learned about the Holocaust and what happened to the Jews during that time. Because I attended Sunday school, I already know and can recall facts about the Holocaust, such as the ones mentioned above.

I also already know that most people who were not targeted obeyed Hitler and did not help the Jews and other victims escape the Holocaust. However, some resistance did exist and there were people who took serious risks to help save the lives of many Jews. What I do not already know is who these special people are. These are people who were not targeted by the Nazi party until they decided to endanger themselves as well as their families by harboring Jews to help save them from the Holocaust.

2. Why I want to answer this question.

This past summer I traveled to Israel with my family. It was one of the most memorable and amazing experiences of my life. Probably the most unforgettable site I saw in Israel was Yad Vashem ("Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority"). It is a Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem. I stepped into the museum, and goosebumps did not once leave my body for the three hours I was there. I get goosebumps every time I think about being at Yad Vashem, seeing the amazing exhibit, and taking into consideration all that Yad Vashem explained.

The amount of information in the museum is extraordinary. It would take several days to read every piece of information the museum displays. One thing I did not get the chance to read when I was at Yad Vashem was the names and stories of rescuers of the Holocaust. In other words, I did not get a chance to read about those people that took risks to help save Jews, save people just like me. They are heroes, and I want to learn their names and more about them so I can honor them in my own thoughts and prayers.

3. Story of the Search:

I decided to start my search at the Yad Vashem website. Since I have actually experienced going through the museum, I was aware of the good information it provides.

I assumed they would have information about the rescuers on their website since the actual museum does. It turns out the Yad Vashem website has a special site where they honor the rescuers. According to "Righteous Among the Nations" on the Yad Vashem website, Yad Vashem has honored 21,758 individuals for assisting Jews during the Holocaust. They give these rescuers the title of "Righteous Among the Nations". Each individual with this title "represents the preservation of human values in the midst of absolute moral collapse. The Righteous Among the Nations are a source of hope, a role model, and an inspiration" (www.yadvashem.org).

This is exactly how I view the rescuers, which is why I wanted to know more about the actual rescuers and their stories. Since there are thousands of rescuers, it is unrealistic to say that I can learn the names and stories of all of them. However, knowing even the names and stories of a few people will satisfy my question. Being able to think about a few people's names at night and saying thank you in my prayers is still better than none at all. "He who saves one human being is as if he saves an entire world," states the Yad Vashem website. I keep this quote in mind when I think about remembering just a few of over twenty thousand rescuers.

I decided to narrow my search down to a few specific rescuers by first searching in the University of Northern Iowa Rod Library. I used UNISTAR on the Rod Library website and came upon two books that I thought might be helpful in answering my question. I wrote down the titles and call numbers of the two books and went on a hunt through the library to find them. I made my way up to the third floor of the library only to find that "Anne Frank Remembered: The Story of the Woman who Helped to Hide the Frank Family" was not on the shelf. Someone had checked it out – definitely a bummer.

I still wanted to learn about who hid Anne Frank so I decided I would search for that later. Fortunately, the second book on my list was not checked out. After a few minutes of searching and a little help from a student library helper, I found "The Importance of Oskar Schindler" and checked it out of the library.

I skimmed through it over the next few days. Wow. Considering I'm trying to find the name of a person who risked his/her life to save Jews during the Holocaust, I couldn't have chosen a better book about a better person. Oskar Schindler, a German businessman, saved over 1,100 Jews during the Holocaust. He created a list of people that he claimed essential to the war efforts to work in his factory. To get permission and make this list, Schindler had to bribe numerous German officials which was extremely dangerous (Roberts 72-73). By having these Jews work in his factory, he helped them avoid concentration camps... he helped them avoid death. According to Roberts, "A person could be arrested, imprisoned, or even sentenced to death for helping Jews in any way" (Roberts 50). Schindler was helping over 1,100 people, regardless of what could happen to him. Heroic act? Worth remembering this man's name? I believe so.

My professor, Kim Groninga, gave me the idea of watching the film "Schindler's List" to further my knowledge of this heroic man. I took her advice and watched an amazing story for three hours and five minutes. By the end of the film, my heart was frozen. Tears rolled down my face as I thought about Oskar Schindler. The story behind the list was now clear to me, which made me appreciate this man even more. In "Schindler's List", Schindler, technically a Nazi, was very compassionate toward Jews and showed deep sensitivity when they were liberated (Spielberg). I now had a great start in identifying a few people that rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

I decided to find information about the person that helped hide Anne Frank by searching the internet (since the book was checked out). I came upon www.shoah.dk which was very helpful. According to Louis Bulow, an Austrian-born Dutch woman by the name of Miep Gies was responsible for helping hide Anne Frank and her family during the Holocaust. "Miep helped the Franks and four other people evade the Gestapo by bringing food, comfort and news of the world to them in a tiny hideout in the canal-side building that housed the family business" (Bulow). Gies was risking her life daily to help these people – another story of a courageous and heroic person. Unfortunately, the Franks' hiding place was eventually discovered and the family was arrested by the Nazis. Gies later discovered Anne's diary that was left in their hiding place and saved it. Because of Gies, Anne Frank's name and courageous story of survival is known around the world. Anne Frank did not survive the Holocaust, but her story lives on forever thanks to Miep Gies. Although Gies did not successfully save Anne from the Holocaust, her will to risk her own life and attempt to save Jews, as well as preserving Anne's diary to make her name known, resembles one of the most courageous acts in history. Another name worth remembering? Without a doubt.

My final efforts to answer my question involved attending a film that was again suggested by Groninga. The film, "Unlikely Heroes", was presented by the Holocaust Remembrance and Education Program of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts at the University of Northern Iowa. It was a part of the 2007 film series about resistance during the Holocaust, so it appeared as though it connected well with my question. Although I enjoyed watching this documentary, it wasn't quite what I expected. The film showed seven different stories that dealt with resistance during the Holocaust, but unfortunately

the stories were about Jews that provided resistance. Now don't misunderstand me... I'm deeply interested and appreciative of Jews that provided resistance as well. But my question for this paper is not about these Jews. Instead, my question relates to finding out who the non-Jews were that were in no risk of being imprisoned or losing their life until they decided to help the Jews. This film had amazing stories and I am glad I watched it, but it was not as beneficial as I thought it would be for my specific question.

3. What I Learned:

Oskar Schindler and Miep Gies: two names of people that risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. These two names are stamped in my head and will not be forgotten. When I am praying and thinking about rescuers of the Holocaust, I will have no trouble thinking of these two people. Was I successful in finding out the names of all the non-Jews that risked their lives to save the Jews? No. Was I successful in finding out at least a couple names that I can think about at night and show appreciation in my prayers? Yes.

I also learned about the stories of Jews that helped resist the Holocaust by watching the second film. I did not intend on learning stories about Jewish resistance, but nothing is ever a waste. It may not relate to my specific question, but those seven people I learned about still hold a place in my heart.

Learning the names and stories of Oskar Schindler and Miep Gies has answered my question if you look at it a certain way. I could say that my question is not answered because I do not know everyone's name that fits the category. This is one hundred percent true. However, before I started this paper I knew zero names. I knew a variety of information on the Holocaust, but I did not know specific names of the courageous non-

Jews. Today I know two. Tomorrow I may know three. My search does not and will not end here. So today my question is answered and tomorrow it may be answered even further. There is no point at which I can say I know everything I need to know for my question to be answered entirely. I have no intention of memorizing 21,758 names. But in my opinion I find myself successful for learning two of those names and eventually even a few more. I see this paper as a jumpstart for answering my question to a greater extent.

Works Cited

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