

Around Town

by Dorothea Snyder

Day Of Remembrance

"After being liberated, those of us who survived made an oath, promising that we would go to the far corners of the earth to tell and retell the story of the Holocaust."

In a voice trembling with emotion, Joseph Schwartz addressed 250 Providence public school students in the City Council Chamber during the City's Holocaust Remembrance Program on Monday morning.

"We the survivors witnessed the greatest tragedy that occurred 45 years ago ... from the whole civilized nations of the world. We the survivors do not forgive. We do not forget. We must devote the rest of our lives to rid the world of bigotry, prejudice and hatred. The biggest tragedy of the Holocaust was that no segment of civilized society spoke out against the injustice that allowed political and military leaders to exterminate millions of Jews and other undesirable people."

"We must work to protect the rights of every individual. We have committed responsibility for this. We must not let the Holocaust happen again regardless of race, color and creed."

Mayor Joseph R. Paolino, Jr., who opened the program's ceremonies, said, "This is a day set aside to remember, a day to reflect upon one of the darkest hours in the history of the world ... The Holocaust. Between 1933 and 1945, six million Jews were murdered as part of a systematic program of genocide under the cloak of a military campaign. Millions of others also perished as victims of the Nazi regime, and countless more were subject to cruelty and slavery."

"We must remember the truth, awful as it is, reflect upon it, confront the details, and pass the stories down. We cannot change history, but we can take responsibility for the present and our future. We must assure that such horrors never happen again to any group, to any people."

"I know you think such a thing could never happen again. The only way to guard against future genocides is for all people to express absolute intolerance of bigotry in all its forms."

"Today, as we learn about the Holocaust and remember those who lost their lives, each of must dedicate ourselves to the brotherhood of all people in our schools, in our community, and in our world."

"I welcome all of you to City Hall because today is an education for all young people to understand all the pain and suffering that took place many years ago."

The students listened to The Reverend Edward P. Doyle of Providence College

who was a Catholic chaplain to Army troops liberating death camps. "The question remained in our minds: Why? Why such inhumanity to man? Time and time again, why? Religion has taught us to love G-d and love thy neighbor." Concluding, he said, "Let there be peace on earth and never again!"

Francine Fink, a child of Holocaust survivors, was born in a deportation camp at Bergen Belsen in 1948. She said, "We have learned from our parents that the greatest crime is indifference to the suffering of others. Because of who we are, we will never be captive nor allow others to be captive in the face of anti-Semitism, in the form of any other racial, ethnic or religious hatred, for we know too well that the ultimate consequence of apathy and silence will be embodied forever in the flames at Auschwitz and in the mass graves at Bergen Belsen."

"Our voice will be heard, our presence will be felt, we whose roots are embedded in ashes will never forget above all else that we are our brother's keeper."

Before introducing four students who presented essays on their thoughts of the Holocaust, Superintendent of Schools Joseph A. Almagno said, "The burning question is what must we do so that this horror and smillar horrors will never happen again. We must instill in our youth a knowledge of the past in order that they be prepared for the future."

"The Providence Public Schools will always include the Holocaust, as it does now, as an integral part of the history of mankind. For this we know for sure, only an educated people can remain free."

Concluding ceremonies for the City's Holocaust Remembrance program ended with a symbolical candle lighting ceremony led by Joseph Schwartz, a presentation of the Days of Remembrance Proclamation, and words from Secretary of State Anthony Solomon who told the students, "We must remain committed to remembering the suffering so that generations today and in the future will never forget ... that we pray one day, we can honestly say that never again will the world permit such human destruction."

Mayor Paolino and the city of Providence sponsored the Holocaust Remembrance Program in cooperation with the Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island and the Providence School Department. Bea Rosenstein was the event's chairwoman, assisted by Stephanie Gurwitz, Jewish Federation, and Joyce Stevos, Providence School Department.



Jenny Klein lights a candle during the candle lighting ceremony. Seven candles were lit, one in memory of the Holocaust victims and one in memory of Christians who helped the Jews during the war. From left are participants Joseph Schwartz, Superintendent Almagno, Councilman Danny Lopes, Sheila Hess, Toni Smith, a fifth-grader at Flynn School, and Leonard Holland (R.I.N.G.-Ret.).



Joseph Schwartz, a Holocaust survivor, speaks intently to the students.



Mayor Joseph R. Paolino, Jr. and the Providence School Department, in cooperation with The Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, sponsored the City's Holocaust Remembrance Program.



Addressing the students is The Reverend Edward P. Doyle of Providence College, who was a Catholic chaplain to Army troops liberating death camps.



Photos by Dorothea Snyder

The child of Holocaust survivors, Francine Fink took the students on a journey into the past.



Superintendent of Schools Joseph A. Almagno, center, is shown with the four student essayists whom he introduced during the program. They are: Brendan O'Connor, Classical High School; Damita Davis, Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School; Michael Tellier, Edmund W. Flynn Elementary School; Margolitt Neusner, Classical High School. (See page 11 for their essays.)