

Dr. Maurice Vanderpol
Holocaust Legacy Partners Presentation
Tuesday, March 15th, 2011

“We will go on. We will live. We will go on.” ~ Dr. Maurice Vanderpol

Prepared for:

Literature of the Holocaust
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Goal of Holocaust Legacy Partner Program & Role of the Holocaust Legacy Partner

For years we have struggled with a way to ensure that the personal memories of Holocaust survivors are preserved for future generations at such time when these courageous individuals are no longer here to share them. In response, the Holocaust Legacy Partners (HLP) program was created by The Holocaust Center, Boston North to perpetuate the personal memories of Holocaust survivors and to ensure that the Holocaust never becomes just an academic historical event. Of course, nothing is as effective and powerful as actually meeting and hearing a survivor speak, but we believe that Holocaust Legacy Partners come as close as possible to preserving the eyewitness' voice. Survivors are partnered with individuals who care deeply about keeping memories alive to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust are not lost or forgotten. Using oral histories, photos, and personal experiences, Holocaust Legacy Partners pledge to provide eyewitness testimonies of Holocaust survivors who are no longer able to speak for themselves.

About Michael Leonard

Michael Leonard has taught Ethics, Social Justice & Philosophy at St. John's Preparatory School in Danvers, MA since 2003. In October, 2010 he was appointed Holocaust Legacy Partner to Dr. Maurice Vanderpol. Today is Mike's first presentation! He can be reached by email at mpleonard@stjohnsprep.org

About Dr. Maurice Vanderpol

Following is a summary excerpt from his survivor testimony:

I was born in Amsterdam, Holland on July 12, 1922. My childhood was secure and normal. As a Dutch Jew, I did not experience any anti-Semitism or violence before the Nazi German occupation on May 10, 1940. I was forced to wear a yellow star and carry an ID card stamped with the letter J to identify me as a Jew. In 1941, when all Jewish students were forced out of the universities, I continued my studies in a secret medical school. With every new anti-Jewish measure, I would say, “we will go on, we will live”. In 1942 with the increased deportations to the death camps, I obtained a false ID from a friend named Egon van Blommestein, and then went into hiding with my mother and brother. On May 5, 1945 I walked out onto the street a free person, but did not believe that this day had actually come. In the confusion and terror of the occupation, my father was separated from the rest of the family and escaped to New York. Sadly, he died before we were able to reunite. My mother, brother, and I moved to New York and Boston where we worked to rebuild our lives and I completed my medical studies. In 1949, I married Netty Vanderpol, a Terezin survivor. We have two children and four grandchildren. As a symbol of our survival and the unbroken link of family, I gave my then 8 year old grandson a little kettle that was given to me by my grandfather.

DR. MAURICE VANDERPOL TIME-LINE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
July 12, 1922	Maurice Vanderpol born in Amsterdam, Holland.
January 30, 1933	Adolf Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany
March 22, 1933	The first concentration camp was opened at Dachau in Germany
April 1, 1933	Germans were told to boycott Jewish shops and businesses
November 24, 1933	‘Undesirables’, the homeless, alcoholic and unemployed people were sent to Concentration camps
May 17, 1934	Jewish persecution began with an order prohibiting Jewish people from having health insurance
1935	Maurice Vanderpol’s Bat Mitzvah -- receives special gift from paternal grandfather, Opa Mo – “Little Kettle.”
September 15, 1935	The Nuremberg Laws took away Jewish rights of citizenship stating that Jews were no longer German citizens, could not marry non-Jews, and could not have sexual relations with non-Jews
March 13, 1938	Following Anschluss which joined Germany and Austria, Jews in Austria were persecuted and victimized
October 5, 1938	Passports of all Austrian and German Jews were required to be stamped with a large red letter ‘J’
November 9, 1938	Kristallnacht, “the night of the broken glass” resulted in the murder of approximately 100 Jews. 20,000 German and Austrian Jews were sent to camps, hundreds of synagogues were burned, and windows of Jewish owned shops were smashed
November 12, 1938	Jews were fined one billion marks for damages caused by Kristallnacht
November 15, 1938	Jewish children were not allowed to attend non-German schools
October 12, 1939	Jews living in Austria and Czechoslovakia were sent to Poland.
Early 1940	Jews in German occupied countries were persecuted by the Nazis and many were sent to concentration camps.
May 10, 1940	Nazis invade Netherlands, Belgium & France (western border of Germany).
May 20, 1940	New concentration camp, Auschwitz, opened.
June 1940	Austrian Nazi Dr. Seyss Inquart (“notorious”) installed as highest ranking Nazi commander in Holland. Queen Wilhelmina flees Netherlands to establish government-in-exile. At start of German occupation, no drastic changes to Dutch laws or civil rights. Some Dutch citizens resort to suicide as mean of avoiding anticipated pain and struggle (i.e., Dr. Vanderpol’s childhood dentist and family – young man, wife, two young children – found dead due to suicide).
June 1940	Maurice Vanderpol graduated high school and enrolled in medical school at Amsterdam University. (No undergraduate colleges in Holland; straight to professional training)
July, 1941	The Einsatzgruppen (killing squads) began rounding up and murdering Jews in Russia. 33,000 Jews were murdered in two days at Babi Yar near Kiev
July 31, 1941	“Final Solution” was implemented by Reinhard Heydrich.
December 8, 1941	First ‘Death Camp’ was opened at Chelmno
Late 1941	By late 1941 (into early 1942) greater measures taken against Dutch Jews. Intent on part of Nazis was to fracture relationships between Dutch Jews and all other Dutch citizens (“Dutch Christians”) counter to culture). Examples of measures taken: (1) report # Jewish grandparents; (2) Jewish students removed from university (3) wear “Jood” star; (4) identity cards; (5) no sidewalks, limited grocery stores, movies; (6) curfew; (7) report ownership of precious goods; (8) eventual construction of Detention Center (mostly young Jewish boys and men → Mauthausen Concentration Camp (mid to south-eastern Germany) → Rowing Club

raids (in response to uncharged death of German officer). *“Extraordinary restrictions... made to feel like less than animals... like harmful insects...”*

- Late 1941** Maurice Vanderpol forced to discontinue medical studies (completed 1st year), due to increase restrictions placed on Jewish citizens in Amsterdam.
- Late 1941** Dean of Amsterdam University Medical School establishes “secret, underground” medical school for Jewish students – “School for Gymnastics & Massag” – Conducted in professors’ homes, for credit
- January, 1942 Mass-gassing of Jews began at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Early 1942** Due to increased deportations to death camps, Maurice Vanderpol obtained false identify card from friend, Egon van Blommestejn. Surgical incision made in right elbow to match scar description. Photo and authenticating stamp forged.
- Summer 1942 Jews from all over occupied Europe were sent to Death Camps where they were gassed to death
- (Late?) 1942 – 1945** Maurice Vanderpol, his brother (two years younger) and mother (father unable to return from Antwerp, Belgium) go into hiding. “Diving down.” Two different locations over three years. Small number of items preserved: Jood star, and “Little Kettle.”
- 1st Location – The Hague (western city on North Sea) – Upper floor of house. Code: if door bell rang, listen for cough. If cough, then go to roof, climb to (informed) neighbor’s roof and into their house. Did happen once: Dr. Vanderpol ended up in sleeping couples bedroom, thanked them, ran out front door... directly into Egon van Blommestejn! Both walked out of neighborhood with same identify card!**
- 2nd Location – Amsterdam (?) – Blue Collar Neighborhood – 3rd floor apartment (five-floor building). Four Jews, incl. Dr. Vanderpol and Mother (brother lived in another city) lived with former housekeeper of great aunt. Dutch Christian felt obligated to help Jews of Old Testament (Israelites). 2nd floor not suppose to know of hidden Jews; 4th floor sister of woman. Built concrete double wall, entered through back of front room closet; 6ft long, 1ft wide. Used once. Also hidden, illegal radio (for BBC broadcasts; antenna in mouth)**
- During hiding, increased measures on Jews: (1) people disappeared; (2) no power/gas/cooking; (3) little food (edema and near starvation → not enough energy in body to sustain common colds, virus**
- January 29, 1943 Order was issued to send Gypsies to concentration camps
- April 19-May 16, 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising took place following news of an order to liquidate the ghetto as a birthday present for Hitler and to deport the Jews to Treblinka. A group of 750 Jews, realizing they had nothing to lose, held the German troops for nearly a month with smuggled weapons before being rounded up and shot or sent to death camps
- May 14-July 8, 1944 44,000 Hungarian Jews were transported to Auschwitz
- June 6, 1944** **Invasion of Allies (Utah & Omaha Beach, etc). Brought great hope to Vanderpol's to fight to survive for a bit longer.**
- October 30, 1944 Auschwitz gas chambers were used for the last time.
- January 27, 1945 Many remaining camps were closed and evidence of their existence destroyed. Those who had thus far survived the camps were taken on forced Death Marches
- April 30, 1945 Faced with impending defeat, Hitler committed suicide
- May 5, 1945** **German’s surrender Holland. Maurice Vanderpol “walked out onto the street a free man.” Borrowed bike; rode in direction from which he thought Allied Forces would come. Small village, two girls being “tarred and feathered” for dating Germans. After war’s end, spoke to father in NY, planned to reunite. Father died before Dr. Vanderpol and brother to fly to NY. Never saw father alive again.**
- May 7, 1945 Germany surrendered and the war in Europe was over

November 20, 1945	Surviving Nazi leaders were put on trial at Nurember
1949	Maurice Vanderpol married Netty Vanderpol, a Terezin survivor.
1999	Maurice Vanderpol gave ‘Little Kettle’ to 13 year old grandson, Alex
Dec 2009 – Apr 2010	Maurice Vanderpol accepted Michael Leonard as his Holocaust Legacy Partner and transmitted his personal survivor story.
April 21, 2010	Maurice Vanderpol, in honor of his family’s Friday Night Dinners (from his childhood), and in celebration of his newly-found singing talent, held a voice recital at his home in Needham, MA.

Dr. Vanderpol and his wife Netty have two children and four grandchildren.

Topics for Discussion

- Family Life before & after Holocaust
- Experiences of Anti-Semitism
- Education & Occupation
- “Friday Night Dinners” → April 21, 2010 Recital
- Opa Mo (paternal grandfather) and the “Little Kettle”
- Tattoos
- Faith & Religion
- Forgiveness
- Humor
- Parting Message (“Essential Teachings”)

Lessons of the Holocaust – “Why study about the Holocaust?”

1. ***To recognize the Holocaust as an indelible part of Jewish history.*** It is better to face the reality of the Holocaust as part of Jewish heritage than of their destiny. To forget the six million would be the same as saying they never existed.
2. ***To acknowledge that the Holocaust is not just a Jewish issue.*** It was a crime against all humanity. As such, and with the intent to ward off history repeating itself, it is necessary to examine the events and circumstances of this modern period in an attempt to at least try to prevent history from repeating itself.
3. ***To reply to Holocaust Deniers.*** There are people today who deny that the Holocaust ever happened. Well-educated teachers from prestigious institutions erroneously claim that the Holocaust was merely Zionist propaganda to arouse public empathy for the rebirth of a Jewish homeland.
4. ***To reinforce the observation that if a lie is told often enough, people will start believing it.*** The big lie that the Jews were racially inferior and not fit to live helped rally the nation of Germany behind Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party resulting in the systematic extermination of six million Jewish lives and countless others.
5. ***To honestly acknowledge the human potential for profound evil.*** The horrific events of the Holocaust are beyond human comprehension. It has been said that after Auschwitz anything is possible. As long as we fail to fully react to the unimaginable human potential for genocide, we risk blindly ignoring our morality, and are subject to repeat history.
6. ***To educate ourselves about the meaning of human dignity, morality, citizenship and law.*** Proper analysis of this major historical event raises complex questions which defy simple solutions. What would I have done? What could I have done? How could civilized people be capable of such inhumanity? Where was the rest of the world? Perhaps the very act of thinking may be the crucial tool to prevent and condition people from committing evil acts.
7. ***To confront personal prejudices.*** Study of the Holocaust has helped many people confront their own prejudices, the first step in combating discrimination. Analysis of this period helps to make people more sensitive to current world-wide violations of human rights and raises the question of personal responsibility.
8. ***To reinforce the basic human need of freedom and dignity.*** As long as one person is deprived of freedom and dignity, as long as one person is the victim of prejudice and ignorance, no one is truly free.

Sources

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