

Student symposium on violence stirs emotion

By BARBARA UNDERWOOD

Wednesday was a day of violence at Detroit Country Day School.

Upper school students attended a day-long symposium on violence that was organized and sponsored by the student council. In separate presentations, the students heard about violence in athletics, entertainment, the home and a Nazi concentration camp. Some of the students came to the symposium with an awareness of each kind of violence. But often during the day the normal restless rustlings and whisperings of more than 300 students ceased abruptly as they gave their complete attention to what was being said.

And several times while Martin Water, a concentration camp survivor, was telling of his experiences, the students reacted with involuntary gasps of horror at what he was saying.

Water concluded the day's program and his own presentation by answering students' questions. Their prolonged applause at the conclusion of his session was a tribute to a man who says he has no hate in his heart despite losing his entire family and barely escaping with his own life.

Water, a Detroit resident, showed the students his prisoner number, B2768, tattooed on his left forearm when he arrived at Auschwitz concentration camp on Aug. 11, 1944.

He and other Polish Jews were taken to Auschwitz after spending more than four years in the Warsaw ghetto. He told of the three days and three nights spent jammed in locked cattle cars before arriving at Auschwitz.

An incident typical of the atrocities the prisoners endured and witnessed after their arrival occurred when a Nazi guard told four men to get brooms.

"There were four guys and three brooms," Water recalled. "Three of us grabbed brooms. The fourth one was hit and his face split open."

He related incidents of similar brutality and at one time said the recent television special, "Holocaust," was a "poor imitation" of what actually occurred.

WATER was liberated from the camp by Russian soldiers in January 1945. Although he spent less than six months in the camp, he weighed only 75 pounds when he was released.

Early in his presentation, he emphasized that he was "not demeaning the present generation of Germans."

"I mean them no harm," he said. When a student asked him how he could avoid feeling bitter, Water said, "I do not believe in castigating children for the guilt of their parents."

"I have no animosity. I can't hate. Those things are gone. I can't go around hating people and I can't blame the present generation."

Another student asked Water if he believed he was a stronger person as a result of his experiences.

"Yes," he stated. Although he is a small man, Water said he never was a weakling, but he believes the camp experience "gave me more character." He was 23 years old when he was liberated from Auschwitz.

HE CAME TO the United States in 1948 as part of the German quota and settled first in New York.

"I went to school the next day to learn the language," he said. He has lived in Detroit for 10 years.

Water said he chose the United States instead of Israel because he "always believed in democracy, not because there was gold in the streets, and here a man has a chance."

Israel at that time was a land of pioneers and I was too small and weak when I was liberated. I was not strong enough to be a builder."

Water said he felt no guilt at having survived when so many others didn't and that he could not blame the Jews who survived as a result of masquerading as non-Jews.

"They tried to save themselves, I

can't blame them," he said. "I couldn't do that. Look at me. I can't blame those who tried to survive as long as they did not endanger their families and others."

A STUDENT asked Water if he ever reached the point where he did not want to live.

"No," he replied. "It was important to have a positive way of thinking. The minute someone gave up, he died. I kept telling myself, 'You've got to make it, you have to survive.'"

"I always believed I would see my family again. I guess that was a guiding force. Unfortunately, I never did."

What happened in Germany before and during World War II could happen again "any place in the world and in the United States," Water said.

"No country is immune to what happened in Germany. All that is needed

is one bigot and some disenchanted people and you've got it made. In one election in Germany, 75 per cent of the voters did not vote and Hitler was elected vice-chancellor.

"GERMANY was a very civilized country. If it could happen in Germany, it could happen any place in the world. It could happen in the United States. We dare not forget."

Asked his reaction to recent Nazi activities in the Detroit area, Water said, "Freedom is a wonderful thing. You never know how wonderful until you lose it, but how far can freedom go?"

"Someone should put a stop to it (Nazi activity)," he added. "They openly advocate the destruction of people. It is very disenchanted. We should do whatever we can and not

adopt the tactics they do." Water played a part in his own liberation and that of his fellow prisoners. As Russian troops came closer and closer to the camp, the prisoners were forced to march through the countryside.

He organized a group of nine prisoners who escaped into the woods and because Water had "read James Penimore Cooper books as a kid in Poland," he knew how to follow footprints in the snow and led the group to some Russian soldiers.



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Southfielder joins cast of musical

Chris ZeVan, a new resident of Southfield has joined the cast of "I Do, I Do," in a production being staged by the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford. She will choreograph the show.

Ms. ZeVan recently moved to Southfield from Minneapolis. She has performed as a singer and dancer in a number of Broadway shows including the original production of "Sweet Charity."

Her extensive choreographic experience includes dinner theatre, regional theatre, television, industrial shows, and conducting workshops in dance as related to musical theater.

Ms. ZeVan is also an actress and has appeared onstage in many leading roles and on television in several commercials.

"I love it here in Michigan and am looking forward to becoming even more involved in the many excellent

theatre and dance-related activities available in the area," she said.

For the production the guild has assembled three directors and a cast of two who have almost 100 years of community, educational and professional theater experience among them.

They include Kay L. Grismer of Detroit, Howard Egan of Farmington Hills, director Marc McCulloch, and musical director Jack Pierson of Livonia.

Performances of the musical will be at 8:30 p.m. on Nov. 24, 25 and Dec. 1, 2, 8 and 9; at 2:30 p.m. on Nov. 26 and at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 3 at 15136 Beech Day in Redford.

Tickets will be \$4 per person with discounts available to students, senior citizens and groups for some performances.

For reservations or further information call the guild at 422-4766.

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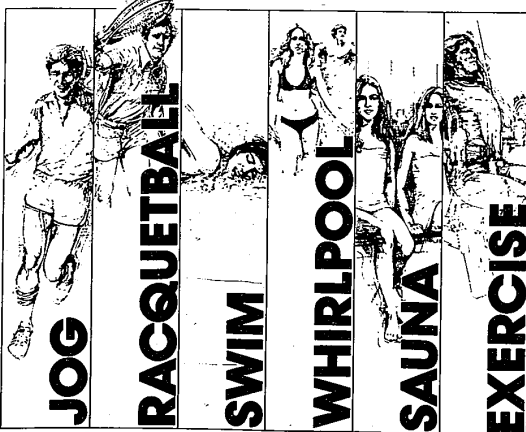
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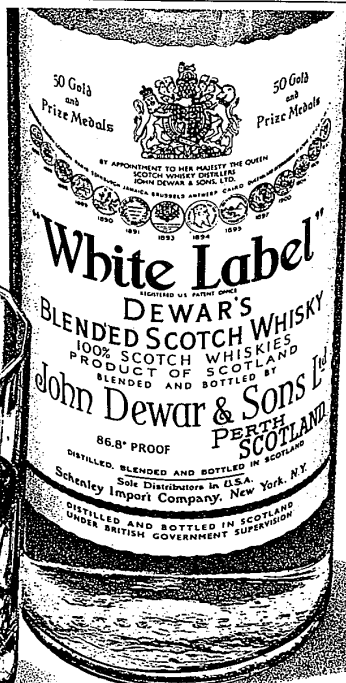
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