

POINTS OF VIEW

Horrors of Holocaust must never be forgotten

The Holocaust never happened. "The Diary of Anne Frank" is a hoax.

Fifty years after the liberation of the concentration camps, including Bergen-Belsen where Anne Frank died, these remarks are being said worldwide. I have personally heard them. Even in Japan, anti-Jewish literature is a popular commodity.

Sitting in the pristine first-class compartment of a German high speed train in April, I stared at the adjacent tracks. How many Jews rode them to their deaths? Seventy-five or more Jewish men, women and children crammed into each boxcar designed to humanely hold eight horses at the maximum.

How many Jews arrived dead at the death camps? I rode the German train to witness what would take place at the concentration camps 50 years after the liberations.

On April 15, 1945, British Army soldiers entered KZ (Konzentrationslager) Bergen-Belsen. What they saw seared their memories forever. Over 40,000 weakened human beings, gaunt, skeletal, near dead.

Ten thousand rotting corpses. All of them victims of German barbarity.

Within three weeks 28,000 more died. One month later Bergen-Belsen was burned to the ground to eradicate the typhus epidemic that ravaged the camp in the final months of the war.

'A giant graveyard'

All the visitors see there today is a giant graveyard. Grass covered mounds with stone facades state bluntly in German, "HIER RUEN 6000 TOTE APRIL 1945." "HERE LIE 6,000 DEAD." "HIER RUEN 2500 TOTE APRIL 1945." "HERE LIE 2,500 DEAD."

The mounds are scattered all around the infamous landscape. Fifty years after the bodies were bulldozed into mass graves a few thousand people gathered to remember hell on earth. Almost all of them were survivors and their families. Where were the German people?

When I arrived at Dachau (only 20 minutes ride from downtown Munich) for the ceremonies on April 30, the few buildings left had the antiseptic appearance of a sanitarium. The German government demolished the many barracks years ago. There is no impact when you arrive.

No sense of the shootings, beatings, prisoners torn apart by attack dogs,

GUEST COLUMNIST



FRED NEWMAN

death by diabolical medical experiments "contracted" by the German Army, Air Force and Navy and carried out by world renowned German physicians and scientists. No sense of evil. The Germans have done a good job hiding it.

Auschwitz is different

This was in stark contrast to a visit to Auschwitz, Poland some 15 years earlier. Auschwitz had been left as the Red Army liberators found it in early 1945. I saw two tons of human hair in a room sheared from victims before they were gassed to death. Hair was sent back to Germany to make suit fabrics. A role of fabric sat in a glass case in

a corner. Another room was filled with tens of thousands of eye glasses. Another full of shoes. Then there was the narrow brick wall in a small courtyard where 10,000 people, most of them Jews, were shot to death at point blank range, one at a time.

The barracks, once crammed with prisoners who literally slept on top of one another, were intact. The prisoners are long gone, forever.

Rain poured down on KZ Dachau, April 30, 1995, 50 years and one day after 61's of the 42nd "Rainbow" Division stumbled onto a trainload of grotesque dead bodies sitting by the Dachau camp. The horror still comes through in their eyes when they describe the scene.

Fifty years after the liberation I counted only 2,000 people who gathered to remember the hell on earth at Dachau. Almost all of them were survivors, Jews and non-Jews, their families and some of the U.S. Army liberators.

Like the Bergen-Belsen commemoration, conspicuously absent were the millions of ordinary Germans who are said to be facing up to their infamous past. Their absence speaks for itself.

Darkest of times

Six million Jews were murdered in

the Holocaust. Among them were my great grandparents and more than 40 of my relatives. All Germans who did not resist the extermination of the Jews are responsible for the Holocaust.

The German generations that follow World War II are responsible, more than any other people, for insuring that those darkest of times are not forgotten.

This is not happening. I bear witness to that. So the question lingers: "With the passing of the survivors and their liberators, will the Holocaust simply disappear?" Facing this directly, Jew and non-Jew alike must tell his and her children about the Holocaust, about Dachau, about Bergen-Belsen and all of the death camps.

This must continue in every generation. A non-Jewish friend told me that her brother went through the Holocaust Memorial Center in eighth grade. He was depressed for a week. But he will also stand up to anyone who ever says to him, "The Holocaust never happened."

Fred Newman, a Farmington Hills resident, represented the Holocaust Memorial Center at the Concentration Camp Commemorations.

Media was right on the money in anti-term limit stand

BY TIM RICHARD

STAFF WRITER
The media told you so, the media told you so, the media told you so.

Whether liberal, moderate or conservative, most of us in the media — especially the literate portion known as the press — said in 1992 that the term limits ballot proposal was constitutionally flawed.

The flaw was that the Michigan proposal attempted to limit the terms of members of the U.S. Congress — U.S. representatives to three two-year terms, U.S. senators to two six-year terms.

The League of Women Voters said so, too, and submitted a brief to the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of those

who challenged the proposal.

Not only was there a constitutional flaw, we said, but it is stupid politics to prevent our own state's members of Congress from attaining positions of power in an institution that adores seniority.

Now the U.S. Supreme Court has said we were right. In the case of U.S. Term Limits vs. Thornton, it ruled an Arkansas ballot proposal violated the U.S. Constitution. The Arkansas measure was passed in 1992, the same time as Michigan's, and contained exactly the same provisions about congressional elections as Michigan's. Altogether, 23 states saw their congressional term limit plans knocked in the head.

It means Joe Knollenberg and Nick Smith won't have to quit after the 1996

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election, Lynn Rivers and Dick Chrysler after 1998, and so on down the line.

An Arkansas circuit judge, the Arkansas Supreme Court and now the U.S. Supreme Court all agreed the congressional term limits effort was flawed.

Justice John Paul Stevens, an appointee of President Gerald Ford and hardly a flaming liberal, wrote the majority opinion with this reasoning:

"The U.S. Constitution set the qualifications for members of Congress — age 25 for representatives, 30 for senators, inhabitants of their states." "Allowing individual states to adopt their

own qualifications for congressional service would be inconsistent . . ."

"The term limits efforts were designed to restrict access to the ballot — and the justices saw through that feeble argument, saying it was "an indirect attempt to accomplish what the (U.S.) Constitution prohibits Arkansas from accomplishing directly . . ."

"The Constitutional Convention specifically rejected a term-limits proposal in 1787."

The U.S. Supreme Court decision does not, of course, touch term limits imposed by state constitutions. Michigan, for better or worse, has limited its governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney general and state senators to two four-year terms, and its state representatives to three two-year

terms.

But in reporting on the Legislature, I have twice noted that first- and second-term House members of both parties refused to compromise on important bills, most notably on school finance reform. The senior, experienced reps had to achieve compromise, allowing the first- and second-term folks to pander to the voters shamelessly as tax fighters.

In the future, we are likely, under term limits, to see frequent deadlines by green, doctrinaire liberals and conservatives in Lansing. But that is a column for a future year.

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1881.

Journalists should be caring

Here's the mission statement I wrote a while ago for hometown newspapers like this one:

"Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than do the big daily newspapers and TV stations."

"They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else."

"We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

I got to musing about this in connection with last week's story about the bankruptcy and liquidation of the Foundation for New Era Philanthropy. That's the Pennsylvania outfit that could cost Michigan charities like the Detroit Institute of Arts and Southfield Christian School millions of dollars. It turned out that New Era's claim to big yields — through earnings on investments plus matching anonymous donations — was nothing more than a fraudulent pyramid scheme.

The Birmingham Eccentric's headline on the local angle of the story said, "Local organizations caught in New Era web." The article went on to describe how, in particular, the hometown Johnson Foundation might be out as much as \$4 million when New Era went under.

Created by well-respected Birmingham real estate investor Paul Johnson, the foundation has a distinguished local record of charitable giving. Losses of the New Era sort sadly diminish the small but enormously valuable amount of capital set aside for philanthropies, and so the Eccentric wanted to cover the story both as an accurate newspaper and as a caring citizen of the community.

Joe Bauman, editor of the Eccentric, went about the job just right. He called Johnson's office to get a quote and, finding that he was out of town for a wedding, faxed him a letter describing the story he planned to write. "As the community newspaper for Birmingham," Joe's fax said in part, "we believe it is important to get your input on the story so that the local angle is completely, fairly and accurately perceived."

Eventually, Scott Melby, a spokesman for Johnson, called the newspaper and gave a thoughtful and insightful interview which helped local readers to understand how things stood. Joe's memo to me pointed out that Johnson is familiar with the Eccentric, hopefully seeing it as a "legitimate, accurate newspaper . . . not out to ridicule him about being caught



PHILIP POWER

up in the scam. We simply wanted the factual story."

That's the way community newspapers like this one try to carry out their responsibilities.

On the other hand, I wasn't at all surprised to learn from Joe that some reporters from the Detroit newspapers had turned up, uninvited, at Johnson's front door on the day the story broke. The door was shut in their faces, without comment.

This is just a small local example of what is becoming a large national problem: the gulf between the big national news media and the folks whom they are supposed to inform and serve.

The Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press surveyed 515 journalists and 2,000 readers. Released last week, the survey revealed a yawning gap between the way journalists and their customers view politics, social issues and the news business. "The public is saying the national media is part of the problem," said Andrew Kohut, the center director. "They identify more of the 'gotcha' journalism and out-of-control journalism with national news organizations."

This survey validated one of the more striking observations about our business made by somebody in a position to know. Mary Caperton Bingham, widow of the late Barry Bingham, whose family used to own the Louisville Courier-Journal, got up to give a speech last month. She collapsed and died just before she was to give these lines:

"I think another and understandable reason for the public's growing distrust and dislike of the media — and not only of the talk-show rabble-rousers, and the primates on the far religious right, but of the formerly respected mainstream media — is the media's self-righteous pomposity and their sneering and contemptuous coverage of all public figures."

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His Touch-Tone voice mail box is (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1880.

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