

Filmmaker Kempner Speaks About the Holocaust Resistance

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Her father was an American serviceman who had immigrated from Lithuania to the U.S. before the war. Many members of Kempner's family died in German concentration camps.

Kempner's father gave her a Hebrew first name, Aviva, because he wanted the triumph of having a Hebrew name on a German birth certificate.

Kempner moved to Detroit with her family at age four. Throughout most of her childhood, Kempner knew nothing of the Holocaust.

It was only through books that she finally learned about the tragedy. She said that by the mid 1970s, she had a solid interest in the Holocaust, but no scholarly knowledge.

Kempner particularly noted that the spirit of youth movements in the late 1960s and 70s was key in motivating her to learn about her past.

It was like a "bolt of lightning," Kempner said. "There really is something that I've gotta do to find about this."

Eventually, her studies led her to make a film about Jewish resistance.

Kempner got some initial funding from an uncle who was a successful businessman and survivor of Auschwitz. She got further funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Making the film required a lot of research and interviews with surviving partisans from Vilna.

"What's interesting," Kempner said, "is that the partisans all thought they were going to die, but joining the resistance they were making a choice about how to die."

According to Kempner, the resistance in Vilna was noteworthy for a number of reasons. These include the fact that Vilna was "the New York of eastern European Jewry," a cultural center in Europe.

Vilna was particularly interesting because it was one of the only movements that took place in both the ghetto and the woods.

Other factors included that the resistance there was led by poets and artisans, some of the leaders survived and could be inter-

viewed, and some of the greatest resistance songs came out of Vilna.

Kempner also talked about the artistic challenges she faced in making the movie. The first challenge was finding appropriate footage.

There was a temptation, she said, to use German propaganda footage of partisans, but she took a moral stand against using it because the people in the films were later killed by the Germans.

Another challenge was that many of the scenes needed to be shot on location, but the movie was being filmed before the fall of Communism. Unfortunately, Kempner and her crew were denied access to Lithuania.

An artistic decision made early by Kempner and co-director, Josh Waletzky, was to let the partisans tell their stories in Yiddish or Hebrew and use English sub-titles. This helped the partisans to feel more comfortable telling their stories.

She considers it important to present the moral dilemmas faced by the partisans. "If we can study these moral dilemmas, maybe we can make a better world," Kempner said.

Kempner said that her mother was very upset with her at first for working on what was a taboo subject. Kempner remembered her mother asking, "Why are you doing this? This is my past."

Eventually though, Kempner's mother softened her objections and even saw the film.

One lesson that Kempner took away from her experience is that it is very important to preserve oral histories. She urged the audience to draw on their own oral histories and backgrounds and tell their stories in order to preserve them.

"I'm writing history by making film," Kempner told her audience. Kempner is currently promoting her film *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*. Greenberg was the first Jewish baseball star.

When asked about future projects, Kempner said she may do a film about Fredrick Law Olmsted, the designer of Central Park in New York City, a feature on great rabbis of the 20th century, or a film about the devastating effects of alcohol on American Indians.

CAMPUS POLICE REPORT

By Matthew McKeown

Capital Times Editor

April 8, 2000

11:39 p.m.: Assisted Middletown P.D. with traffic control for a vehicle accident at Main and Vine Sts.

April 10, 2000

12 p.m.: A citation was issued for a moving violation on College Avenue.

12:10 p.m.: A citation was issued for a moving violation on Route 230 before the plaza.

3:02 p.m.: Hit and run accident. A vehicle was struck on the driver's side while parked in the rear parking lot.

7:43 p.m.: Received a report on an insect infestation at a residence on Weaver Ave. Attempted numerous times to contact housing via phone and pager without success.

April 11, 2000

10:30 a.m.: Provided background information to a U.S. Treasury Dept. investigator regarding a former employee for employment purposes.

8:34 p.m.: Assisted Lower Swatara P.D. with a theft investigation involving a PSH student. The suspect, a Meade Heights resident, stole the chicken sign from Harry's Hot Wings.

April 12, 2000

11:02 p.m.: Assisted Middletown P.D. with a fight at Water and Pine Sts.

April 16, 2000

9:40 a.m.: Received a report of a vehicle on fire on Olmsted Dr. at Susquehanna Bldg. Lower Swatara F.D. extinguished the fire and the vehicle was towed.

11:45 p.m.: Received a report of an unknown person downloading inappropriate materials onto the computer in the honors lounge.

April 17, 2000

10:58 a.m.: A citation was issued for a speed-related moving violation on Route 230 west of College Avenue.

11:15 a.m.: A citation was issued for a speed-related moving violation on College Avenue.

April 18, 2000

8:40 p.m.: Follow-up investigation. Spoke with an individual in regards to the theft of the chicken from Harry's Hot Wings.

7:30 p.m.: The elevators in Olmsted Bldg. and the library malfunctioned. The manufacturer and M&O notified.

10:30 p.m.: A police warning notice was verified for a student.

11 p.m.: Received a report of students refusing to leave W305 Olmsted Bldg. Found the lab open and student workers gone. The students were ordered to leave.

April 19, 2000

10:32 a.m.: A citation was issued for a moving violation on University Drive at Alumni.

12:40 p.m.: Theft: Stereo equipment was removed from a vehicle at Olmsted Bldg.

3 p.m.: Theft: Stereo equipment was taken from a vehicle at Olmsted Bldg.

4 p.m.: Weaver and Rosedale were closed for a gas leak as per Lower Swatara.

5:55 p.m.: A citation was issued for a moving violation on College Avenue.

9 p.m.: Recovery of stolen property. Property recovered and returned to owner. Case closed. In reference to the stolen chicken from Harry's Hot Wings.

April 20, 2000

12:05 a.m.: Institutional vandalism. Report of a large hole in the wall of room 202C in the library.

12:56 a.m.: Report of loud music near a residence on Mars Drive. A warning was given.

1:54 a.m.: Assisted Lower Swatara P.D. with a fight at Shane's Flight Deck.

2:34 a.m.: Received a report of persons being loud on Weaver Avenue. Warnings were given.

6 a.m.: Theft of sign. "Caution Pedestrian Crossing" sign is missing from Penn State Way.

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