

Monumental Bar Mitzvah

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We learned that around the time Irzyk's unit had discovered the camp, about two hundred survivors were hiding in the woods.

From an Internet search we discovered that one survivor, Rabbi Murray Kohn, now 81, was living in Vineland, New Jersey. He agreed to be interviewed for the documentary, and we flew out to meet him at his home. But when we neared his house, we learned that the rabbi had fallen the night before and broken his shoulder. Knowing that we had come from Florida, he agreed to be interviewed in a hospital gown in his hospital room.

It was incredible for me to be in the presence of a Holocaust survivor for the first time. I had heard many accounts, but actually talking to someone who lived through the Shoah was a totally different experience. Before, when I watched documentaries about the Holocaust, there were questions I wanted to ask. Now I could. When I asked him how he had survived Auschwitz, he said, "If I knew the answer, I would be God... or a genius."

Rabbi Kohn believes that Allied soldiers such as General Irzyk should not be called "liberators," because they were not *looking* for the camps, and he disagrees with depictions of Allied "liberators" as heroes. Instead of saying they "liberated" the camps, he insisted that people should say they "discovered" them. He also believes that finding the concentration camps should have been one of the Allies' highest priorities. After almost worshipping the soldiers of *The Band of Brothers* and other films, I was taken aback by the rabbi's point of view. It almost sounded as if he didn't appreciate the soldiers' sacrifices.

What struck me was that the rabbi's anger had not softened in the 65 years since the war had ended. At times during the interview he would refer to me as "young man," and I felt a little like I was being lectured to. The rabbi teaches about the Holocaust at nearby Richard Stockton College, and informing the world about his life has clearly become his mission.

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After a long drive, my dad and I arrived at the University of Pennsylvania. As part of our trip we had also scheduled an interview with David Eisenhower, the grandson of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had served as the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces during World War II. Mr. Eisenhower treated me as an adult and answered my questions in detail.

He told us that when General Eisenhower learned about Ohrdruf he

arranged to meet Generals Patton and Omar Bradley there on April 12. Ike had also sent out orders for the press to record the carnage because he anticipated there would be deniers and wanted visual evidence of the atrocities. After viewing Ohrdruf he ordered all soldiers in the area who were not on the front lines to view the camp so they would know what they were "fighting against."

When I asked David Eisenhower what he would say to Holocaust deniers such as Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, he became visibly angry.

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