

THIN EDGE OF THE WEDGE

By Phyllis Zimbler Miller

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A bare stage.

(Note that in performances where the stage directions of "lights up" and "lights down" are not possible, the actors should move forward or backward on the stage according to who is speaking.)

Lights up on RADIO ANNOUNCER sitting at a small table to one side of stage.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
September 1, 1939. The German Army
has attacked Poland.

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on JUDITH. She speaks in Yiddish-accented English.

JUDITH
I am Judith and I am eight years
old, the youngest of three children,
when the Russians occupy my hometown
in Lithuania at the start of World
War II in 1939. My father had died
in 1938. He did not live to see the
Nazis invade western Poland, followed
by the Russians occupying eastern
Poland.

She looks off to one side as if fearful she will be overheard.

Judith picks up a small cloth bag at her feet.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
The Russians send a whole school
class away for two weeks in the summer
to help us learn to become good
Communists. I am away at this camp
when the Nazis march into Lithuania
in June of 1941. The non-Jewish
children are informed that no harm
will come to them. We Jewish children
are immediately separated from our
non-Jewish friends.

She puts down the cloth bag as the lights on stage dim.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
One evening, a counselor wakes me to
find a strange man standing above me
and holding out a letter in Yiddish
from my mother.

Judith holds out her hand to accept an imaginary letter.
She reads it aloud.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

"Dearest *Tochter*: I have given this man my diamond ring in exchange for bringing you home. You must obey him completely."

Judith climbs into an imaginary sack.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

He puts me into an empty sack and fills it with hay and potatoes. He warns me that making a sound could cost my life as well as his. Then he drives his horse and wagon all night. Every time the wagon stops, I feel that this is the last breath I will ever take. When we arrive at his house, he ties me up in the basement to ensure I will not run away.

She rises from the floor,

JUDITH (CONT'D)

When we finally reach my home, my mother hugs me and breaks out crying.

Judith is overcome with emotion. Then she looks straight at the audience.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Later we hear that all the Jewish children who have been at Russian summer camp with me have been shot by the Nazis.

Lights down on Judith.

From the audience Phyllis rises.

Phyllis faces the audience and holds up her left hand as if she is examining her engagement ring.

PHYLLIS

I have often looked at my engagement ring and wondered whether I would have had the courage to act on my instincts as Judith's mother did. Would I have given my diamond ring to a Lithuanian peasant praying that he could be trusted to risk his life to save my child?

Phyllis pauses.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Why does Judith's story continue to haunt me so many years after I first heard it?

*

Phyllis pauses as if contemplating the answer to these questions.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

I am Phyllis, and I was born in the U.S. in 1948 to American Jews three years *after* the end of World War II and two months *before* the birth of the State of Israel. Can my concern for the survival of the State of Israel as well as my horror over Nazi Germany's murder of six million Jews and so many others explain why I am so worried that history may be repeating itself? Given recent news events, is Western Civilization once again experiencing the "thin edge of the wedge"?

She pauses.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

On my honeymoon in Israel in September 1969 -- 30 years after Germany started World War II by invading Poland on September 1, 1939 -- I was a 21-year-old college graduate American Jew who had grown up in Elgin, Illinois. Elgin had a small Jewish community whose Eastern European parents and grandparents immigrated to the United States many years before the Nazis took over Germany and then Europe. I knew very little about the Holocaust or how many European Jewish communities had been destroyed by the Nazis during World War II.

She puts on an Israeli cap -- a *kova tembel* -- on her head.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

In Israel my new husband and I took a bus tour to Mount Zion in Jerusalem. We were thrilled to be visiting the city to which for thousands of years Jews had prayed to return. The tour group visited the Chamber of the Holocaust, Israel's first Holocaust museum.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

We walked through the series of cave-like rooms, the walls covered floor-to-ceiling with stones, each stone commemorating one of the more than 2,000 Jewish communities destroyed by the Nazis. I stopped in front of one stone that commemorated the destruction of Greek Jews.

Phyllis looks confused.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Greek Jews? I had no idea that there had been Greek Jews. And I certainly had no idea that more than 2,000 Jewish communities had been destroyed by the Nazis.

Phyllis steps closer to the audience.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

What do 2,000 Jewish communities even mean? Imagine a village or a neighborhood in a city where Jewish children play and go to school, Jewish men and women work at their trades such as barrel making or grape growing, scholars write opinions on religious matters, musicians tune their instruments to play at weddings, old people sit outside their homes watching over their grandchildren. Then imagine millions of those people all vanished -- turned into smoke and ashes.

She takes off the Israeli cap -- the *kova tembel*.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

One year later, in September 1970, my second lieutenant husband and I were assigned by the U.S. Army to be stationed in Germany -- the country whose Nazis systematically murdered 6 million men, women and children of our fellow Jews in addition to murdering others considered "undesirables" including the Romani, homosexuals, mentally and physically handicapped people, Jehovah's Witnesses, and political opponents.

Phyllis opens up an imaginary atlas.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Just before my husband got on a plane to fly to Germany, we found out we were going to be stationed in Munich. I had no idea then that Munich had been the birthplace for the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party.

She closes the imaginary atlas.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Yet from the moment we landed on a chartered military flight in Frankfurt and then took the train to Munich, I began to be exposed to the Nazi history I dreaded.

She picks up an imaginary suitcase and steps up as if boarding an imaginary train.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

I knew that railroad cattle cars were used to transport Jews to their deaths in the concentration camps. I also knew that men, women and children were crammed into these cars often for days with no food, no water, no toilet facilities, and very little air. Many, many people died on those trains during the days it sometimes took to reach the destinations of death.

She pauses for emphasis.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Now as we rode a German train in September 1970 from Frankfurt to Munich, I stared out the window at the railroad cars that passed us, wondering were these the same cattle cars that had transported the Jews to their deaths.

She nods before speaking again.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Two months after we arrived in Munich, I read about an event that the Nazi government had organized before the start of WWII -- mass public attacks on Jews throughout Germany and Austria.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

This event that I had never heard of before became known as *Kristallnacht* -- Night of Broken Glass -- also known as *Reichspogromnacht*. During the attack, the Nazis in Germany and Austria burned synagogues, vandalized Jewish stores, and rounded up Jewish males, sending thousands to concentration camps. Suddenly I realized that I was learning about *Kristallnacht* while in Munich, Germany, on the exact date of the anniversary of that dreadful night of November 9-10, 1938.

Phyllis contemplates this before continuing.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

For propaganda purposes the Nazis claimed that the attacks carried out on *Kristallnacht* were spontaneous. Yet when I later got a job in an Army office, I worked with a German woman, Miss Winkler. She told me she had been 17 in Munich when her night school teacher sent all the students home early that evening before the attacks began.

Phyllis looks around at the audience.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

In Arnold Geier's book *HEROES OF THE HOLOCAUST* he recounts that on November 8, 1938, **one night before *Kristallnacht***, a German man appeared at the Berlin apartment of Geier's grandfather. The man said: "Herr Geier, do you remember when you saved a soldier on the battlefield many years ago during the Great War? I am that soldier. I work with the Chief of Police in Berlin and have kept track of you for a long time. Tomorrow night, police and SS will round up adult male Jews all over Germany. I have seen the list, and your name is on it. Do whatever you wish. My debt to you is paid."

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on ELFRIEDE MORGENSTERN.

ELFRIEDE MORGENSTERN

I am Elfriede Morgenstern, and I am nine years old in Frankfurt, Germany, the morning after *Kristallnacht*. My mother's parents, Jews born in Poland rather than Germany, have already been taken by the Nazis and shipped back to Poland to be murdered in the Nazi extermination camp of Auschwitz. My mother, my six-year-old sister Sylvia and I are woken by pounding on the door by Nazi brown shirts demanding my father. Lucky for him he is away on business, and a neighbor who barely knows us -- Frau Storch -- confirms that Herr Morgenstern frequently travels on business. Minutes later my father pulls up in his car in front of the house. He has heard about the attacks on Jews and returned to check on us. Frau Storch runs to his car and pleads for him to get away.

Lights down on Elfriede Morgenstern.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

The Nazis' concentration camp Dachau was opened in March 1933 less than two months after Hitler, head of the biggest faction in the German parliament, was appointed chancellor and then transformed Germany into a dictatorship. When my husband and I were stationed with the U.S. Army in Munich, we were very close to Dachau. The first time we visited, the exhibits of the small museum shocked me. From the exhibits I learned that the few concentration camp names I knew were only the tip of the iceberg of a huge network of extermination camps, concentration camps, labor camps and accompanying sub-camps.

She glances off to one side as if watching some people.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

On one visit to Dachau, I glanced over to the interior gate leading to the crematorium.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Poised in the gate stood three people -- a man on each side of a woman -- all three in silhouette. These three people were a heartbreaking reminder that the Romani were the only other group besides the Jews slated by the Nazis for total extermination.

Phyllis struggles to regain control of her emotions. She stands with her head bowed, then she raises her head.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

The months that my husband and I lived in Germany were often punctuated with reminders of the Holocaust. Every time we rode the trolley cars and were out among Germans we would look at those men and women of a certain age, wondering if they had been part of the vast system that murdered so many.

She pauses for a moment, holding up in both hands an imaginary coffee table book.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

On our departure from Germany, our neighbor -- the German wife of an Army officer -- gave us an illustrated book of European capital cities with a lovely inscription encouraging us to return to Europe. As she handed me the gift, she said, "I'm sorry I didn't get to know you better. I was ashamed of what the Germans had done to the Jews."

Phyllis walks downstage a few steps.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Back in the U.S. in late summer of 1972 I became an editor and reporter at the Jewish Exponent newspaper in Philadelphia. And once again I would unexpectedly be immersed in the Holocaust. Only this time, instead of living in Germany 25 years after the end of World War II, I would be interviewing Holocaust survivors and saviors as well as publishing firsthand accounts. My knowledge of the history before and during WWII would be filled in by these personal accounts.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on Radio Announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

In September 1935 the Nazis pass the two Nuremberg Laws. **The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor** forbids marriages and extramarital sexual relations between Jews and Germans. **The Reich Citizenship Law** declares that only those of German or related blood are eligible to be German Reich citizens. The Jews are classed as state subjects without citizen rights. Then the following month these racial laws are extended to include the Romani and black people. This supplementary decree defines the Romani as "enemies of the race-based state" of Germany in the same category as Jews.

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

One year after the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws, the major democratic countries of the world including the United States sent their top athletes to compete in the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin. Do you know the children's game "Red Light, Green Light"? By attending the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, the United States and other major countries gave Hitler a green light to continue with his world domination plans.

Phyllis turns the imaginary radio knobs.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on Radio Announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

September 30, 1938. Following Germany's annexation of Austria six months ago in March 1938, the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia is given away to Germany in what is called the Munich Agreement.

(MORE)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
British Prime Minister Neville
Chamberlain announces "peace in our
times."

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on Czech Jew SOL.

SOL
I am Sol and I am age 14 in Prague
at the time of the announcement of
the Munich Agreement, for which
Czechoslovakia has no say. My father
says to the family, "Go pack." My
mother says, "Where will we go? Our
visas for Canada have not been
approved." My father says, "To
Romania. My cousin there will supply
a residency permit." I ask, "Why do
we have to leave? We don't live in
the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia."
My father replies: "The Nazis will
not be happy with eating only a
little. Their appetite is ravenous.
Czechoslovakia is no longer safe for
Jews."

Lights down on Sol.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS
Only six months later in March 1939,
the prophecy by Sol's father about
the ravenous Nazi appetite was proved
correct. Nazi Germany swallowed up
the rest of Czechoslovakia and there
was no military response from other
countries for this newest Nazi land
grab.

She pauses.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)
Although Austria and Czechoslovakia
were now part of Germany, in the
summer of 1939 the Nazis had not yet
invaded Poland and started WWII.
Most of Europe held its breath --
expecting war to soon break out --
while the top leaders of the Jewish
community in the land of Israel worked
to save European Jews.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on RUTH KLUGER, wearing a stylish late 1930s female European hat and speaking with a Romanian accent.

RUTH KLUGER

I am Ruth Kluger, and I spend my youth in the Kingdom of Romania and graduate from the University of Vienna before immigrating to the land of Israel. In the summer of 1939, before the start of WWII, the leaders of the Jewish community send me back to Europe on a mission to Romania to save as many Jews as possible before the gates of Europe close completely. I become the 10th member and only woman of Aliyah Bet, the underground Zionist immigration organization. I am faced with agonizing, horrible decisions. With hordes of refugees clamoring to get to the British-controlled land of Israel, I have to decide who should be saved with the pitifully few boats available. I solicit funds among wealthy Romanian Jews to help pay for the ships that will rescue other Romanian Jews. I always beg the people from whom I solicit funds to get out themselves. As far as I know I am never able to convince a single one of these wealthy individuals to leave Romania.

Lights down on Ruth Kluger.

Lights up on Radio Announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

September 3, 1939: Triggered by Nazi Germany's invasion of Western Poland on September 1, Britain and France have declared war on Nazi Germany. There are also reports that the Soviet Union is now moving to occupy Eastern Poland.

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

June 14, 1940: German forces occupied Paris unopposed.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

This followed the earlier evacuation of retreating Allied forces to Great Britain and the June 10th entrance of Italy into the war on the side of the Nazis.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on Radio Announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

August 28, 1940: Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara -- the Japanese consul general in Lithuania -- is reported in the past month to have saved thousands of Jews fleeing Germany-occupied Western Poland and Russia-occupied Eastern Poland and Lithuania. He and his wife Yukiko are reported to have issued transit visas for travel through Japanese territories without first receiving authorization from Japanese officials to do so.

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

In the fall of 1940 the Nazis "re-settled" 400,000 Polish Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, an area so small that there were 7.2 people to a single room. Hunger and disease killed thousands even before the deportations to death camps.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on Elfriede Morgenstern.

ELFRIEDE MORGENSTERN

In April 1941 my father, who has gotten to safety in the U.S. thanks to sponsorship by a relative, manages to get visas for my mother, my sister and myself to leave Germany. By then the Nazis have confiscated all our assets and forced us into a small room in another person's apartment. I wonder how my mother manages to every so often give my sister and me a potato or some vegetables.

(MORE)

ELFRIEDE MORGENSTERN (CONT'D)

It is only later that I learn that Frau Storch has continued to help us. She has found out where we have been moved, and secretly late at night once a week either she or her teenage son, at the risk of their own lives, brings potatoes or vegetables from their small plot of cultivated land. This ongoing courageous act enables my family to survive while still in Germany.

Lights down on Elfriede Morgenstern.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

On June 21-22, 1941 -- two months after the visas for Elfriede, her mother and sister came through -- the Nazi invasion eastward broke the August 1939 non-aggression pact with the Russians.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on Sol.

SOL

When the Nazis break the non-aggression pact with Russia in June of 1941 I am now 16 and in Romania. I am playing in the road with other boys. Suddenly a truck with a loudspeaker drives down the street blaring: "Flee! Flee! Go east, farther into Russia."

Sol leans down as if to grab a bundle.

SOL (CONT'D)

The roads are clogged with people, wagons and animals. My family and others stop to sleep in the forest. As the sun rises, I leave to look for food. Upon my return empty-handed, I discover no one is at the campsite. I have been abandoned! I hurry to catch up with the refugees moving east -- searching for my family.

He looks up in the sky and ducks as if to avoid being bombed.

SOL (CONT'D)

As I run down the road, German *stuka* planes appear in the sky over the refugees. The planes machine gun these civilians. Blood and body parts are everywhere. I hide behind a tree. When the *stukas* finally take off, there is nothing moving on the road. I race back into the forest and then approach a farmhouse. I risk knocking on the door, speaking in Russian and asking for shelter. The farmer feeds me and offers me a place to sleep, warning me not to leave -- the Germans are everywhere. But I have to look for my family.

Sol pauses.

SOL (CONT'D)

Two German soldiers spot me and drag me off to the Nikolav work camp. I work on the railroad construction in the unbearably hot summer with no water provided. My arm is injured and, in the company of another Jewish boy, I stop to rest. The soldiers come up and I believe that the other boy and I will be shot as are the other prisoners who cannot work. Instead the soldiers motion for us boys to follow the soldiers. The Germans drink from clean water reserved only for them. The other Jewish boy and I are to load these water bags onto the truck.

Sol looks around.

SOL (CONT'D)

Just then three Russian girls can be seen. The Germans ask me, "Do you speak Russian?" When I say yes, they say, "Ask those girls to come over." I say to the girls, "You'd better come over so you won't be shot." They refuse. I tell the Germans, "They won't come over." The Germans get incensed and charge over to the girls. I tell the other Jewish boy, "This is our chance. Let's run into the corn fields to hide!" The other boy says, "We'll be shot." I say, "We will be shot anyway."

(MORE)

SOL (CONT'D)

I run, dragging the other boy into the fields where the corn stalks stand higher than our heads. When the Germans finish raping the Russian girls, the Germans unsuccessfully search for us. The tall corn does indeed save us.

Lights down on Sol.

Lights up on Judith.

A loud KNOCK sounds. Judith startles.

JUDITH

A few weeks after I return from the camp after the Nazis invaded Lithuania, in the middle of the night, there is a knock at our door. Our windows are smashed. The Gestapo drags us outside and throws us into trucks. Our Christian neighbors cheer and throw rocks and stones at us.

Judith trembles as she wipes at her eyes.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Hundreds of trucks carrying us Jews cross the bridge to Shlabotka. I witness the students of a yeshiva carrying Sefer Torahs in their arms. The students are thrown into a large pit and shot. As long as I live, I will never forget the screams of these boys, as well as the screams of the men, women, and children who are also thrown in the pit and shot.

Judith moves as if climbing off a truck.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

When the trucks come to a stop at a group of homes, we are taken off the trucks and told to occupy the homes. As we run towards the homes, the Nazis shoot at us -- several hundred people are murdered.

Judith pauses.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

My older sister Rachel, my brother Abe, my mother Mina and I are now imprisoned in a ghetto surrounded by barbed wire and heavily guarded by Nazi SS troops. Five or six families live in one room. Hundreds die of starvation in the ghetto.

Lights down on Judith.

Lights up on Radio Announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

September 30, 1941: The Nazis continue to advance into Russian-occupied territory. The Nazi SS *Einsatzgruppen* death squads have shot thousands of Jews in Babi Yar, a ravine outside Kiev in the Ukraine where thousands of dead and wounded Jews are reported to have been buried.

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on Judith.

JUDITH

In the ghetto of Shlabotka, the Nazis dig trenches and slide the bodies down a shaft into the trenches, where the bodies pile up. Once a week the Nazis fill the trenches with dirt. We children stand and watch the bodies slide down. It becomes our gruesome game of counting the bodies and running to tell our families who we recognized as dead. Occasionally the Nazis add to their fun by including a few live people.

Judith looks away for a moment before continuing.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I become quite good at cutting the barbed wire of the ghetto, running into the city, and standing in long lines to buy bread with the valuables we managed to hide from the Nazis. I am always afraid that some of the neighbors might recognize me. One day someone does.

JUDITH AS NEIGHBOR

Aren't you the Jewish girl who lived on our street? What are you doing here?

JUDITH

As I stand terrified of being found out, another person speaks.

JUDITH AS SECOND NEIGHBOR

She doesn't look Jewish. What church do you belong to, little girl?

JUDITH

I mention the name of the Catholic church near my home.

JUDITH AS SECOND NEIGHBOR

You see, why frighten the little girl?

Lights down on Judith.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

There is a Jewish teaching that states: "Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved the entire world."

She pauses.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

What does it mean to save a life? It appears that this second neighbor did not know Judith and therefore did not realize she was Jewish. Yet what if the second neighbor did know Judith was Jewish, and purposely threw the first neighbor off the track in order to save Judith?

Phyllis pauses again.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

How many tiny acts of kindness saved Jews and others -- tiny acts done by righteous individuals whose names we will never know?

Phyllis nods.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

I learned of a young Greek Jewish man saved by just such a small act of kindness. He was in a Nazi detention camp in Greece where the Jews awaited the cattle car transportation to their deaths in Auschwitz. He was taken outside the camp by a German guard to work, and a young non-Jewish Greek woman purposely distracted the German guard with flirting. The young Jewish man seized the moment to escape. The name of his savior will never be known.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on Judith.

JUDITH

When I get back to the ghetto from my close call at the bakery with my former neighbors, I see that the area is heavily guarded and huge German shepherd dogs are roaming about. The Germans have discovered the barbed wire that I cut.

Judith drops to the stage floor.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I lie in the nearby woods all night. The next night I crawl back through the barbed wire, using my pliers to once again cut the wire.

She stands.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Upon my return, my mother forbids me to ever go on such a mission again. But she is overruled by the others, who all feel that, because I am so small, I can get around easily and unnoticed. I continue bringing food back to the ghetto.

Lights down on Judith.

Lights up on Radio Announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

December 1941.

(MORE)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

After the U.S. declaration of war against Japan following Japan's bombing attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, Nazi Germany declared war on the U.S. Now in response to the Nazi declaration of war on the U.S., the U.S. has declared war on Nazi Germany.

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on IRENA SENDLER, Polish accent.

IRENA SENDLER

I'm Irena Sendler and I am a Polish social worker in the Polish underground and head of the children's section of *Zegota*, the Polish Council to Aid Jews.

She hesitates as if the memories are too strong.

IRENA SENDLER (CONT'D)

I smuggle children out of the Warsaw Ghetto and provide them with false documents and shelter with Polish families or in orphanages. The Nazis suspect me of involvement in the Polish underground and I am arrested by the Gestapo. Before that I manage to hide the list of names and locations of the rescued Jewish children, preventing this information from falling into the hands of the Gestapo. Although I am tortured and imprisoned, I never reveal anything about my work or the location of the saved children. I am sentenced to death, and then on the day of my scheduled execution, the *Zegota* bribe an SS officer to obtain my release.

Lights down on Irena Sendler.

Lights up on Polish Jew JACK PRICE, wearing a cloth cap.

JACK PRICE

I'm Jack Price -- born Izak Prjas --- and in July 1942 I am outside the Warsaw Ghetto on the Aryan side when the ghetto is surrounded and the final "settlement" -- liquidation -- to the death camp of Treblinka begins.

(MORE)

JACK PRICE (CONT'D)

I try to get back to my family but cannot because police surround the ghetto.

He pauses.

JACK PRICE (CONT'D)

I have been imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto with my family since it was established in October 1940. Although only 11 years old at the time, I supported my family by smuggling food from the Aryan side. Now I realize I might never see my family again. I am on my own. I join the Polish underground, where some members of the underground know I am Jewish. The majority of members do not know this -- especially as I am blond and do not look Jewish. My job is to purchase guns from the German soldiers for the Polish underground. This is possible because some of the German soldiers who have been drafted do not agree with the war. We make contact with German soldiers, feel out the situation. Numerous times mistakes are made.

He looks around at the audience.

JACK PRICE (CONT'D)

You only make a mistake once. You don't live to make a mistake again.

Lights down on Jack Price.

Lights up on Radio Announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

July 1942, Paris. French policemen are reported to have rounded up Jewish men, women and children. These Jews have been temporarily interned for several days in a cycling stadium without food or water before deportation to their deaths in Auschwitz.

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on Polish Countess.

POLISH COUNTESS

During World War II my husband, Count Stefan Humnicki, and I, Countess Sophie Lubomirska-Humnicka, are allowed to remain on our estate in Poland. The Nazis have taken over much of the private property in Poland, yet they allow my husband to keep his land to provide food for the Germans. When a request is made to grow vegetables and we do not have enough workers, a German officer agrees to assign Jews to do the work.

She pauses to get the courage to go on.

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

One day in August 1942 my husband is away when I am awakened by a phone call from an informant in the district capital -- "They're slaughtering the Jews here and recalling all those working on private farms." My nephew and I drive there to find the Nazis carrying out an "action" of the "final solution." Hundreds of the dead and dying Jews litter the streets. Thousands of other helpless Jews -- men, women and children -- are forced to lie on the cobblestones in the squalor of the heat and dirt, terrorized by constant shooting at them and mass killings.

She trembles, then goes on.

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

I manage to convince a German officer not to take my Jews or I will be unable to harvest the produce I have been ordered to deliver to the Germans. He agrees to allow me to keep my Jews for now and I ask for his permission in writing.

She pauses.

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

He scribbles, signs, hands me the paper. I clutch it as if it is a life line. It is ... at least a lease on life for 50 human beings.

She looks around, establishing eye contact with audience members.

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

My husband and I feed Jews who come to our door as the roundups continue. We give them money and advice on how to get into the nearby forest. My husband is able to obtain "Christian" identification papers for some of our farm workers, who then slip away from the estate. I live in constant fear for my husband's life. But I simply cannot let people be killed for the one reason -- which is no reason -- that they are Jews. I am compelled to do whatever I can to save them.

Lights down on Polish Countess.

Lights up on Sol.

SOL

Since escaping from the German work camp, the other Jewish boy and I continue to move always eastward. In the forest one day we hear the sound of heavy artillery. In August 1942 the German army has started the attack on Stalingrad. In the confusion of battle we two boys slip through the German lines and get to the Russians.

He pauses.

SOL (CONT'D)

I speak in Russian to the officer. The officer replies in Yiddish, "Are you a Jew?" The officer is also Jewish and offers us boys transport to Moscow. The other boy accepts in order to join his cousin. But I want to fight. The Russian officer sends me to a Russian army training school for the Czech Brigade.

Sol straps on an imaginary parachute.

SOL (CONT'D)

I volunteer for parachute training school. On graduation day the Czech army-in-exile officer announces: "You will be parachuted behind enemy lines into Slovakia and you will engage the enemy troops wherever you find them."

Sol gets in line to board the plane.

SOL (CONT'D)

I try to board the same plane as a buddy. The flight coordinator refuses -- there is no room. I have to take the second plane. German anti-aircraft guns fire away at the two Russian planes as we cross into Slovakia. Suddenly the plane with my buddy on it explodes into a fiery ball. Once again I have evaded death.

Lights down on Sol.

Lights up on Judith.

JUDITH

Then comes the day near the end of 1942 when my sister, my mother and I are sent to Auschwitz. My brother has already been sent to Dachau. We are packed into trucks and taken to a train station. Men and women are separated and packed into coal cars. We can hardly move our hands and feet. Those who try to escape are shot. We ride all night until the cars come to a standstill. After being pushed out of the cars, we enter through the gates of Auschwitz. A woman appears; her name is Irma. She is in charge of our section. Her first order is to have all children shot. Then she changes her mind. "Bullets are too expensive," she says.

Judith stands as if in line, shivering.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

We are ordered to remove all our clothes and shoes. Gold teeth are yanked out. A striped cotton garment becomes our only clothing. It is winter, and I stand in the snow without shoes. We are then assigned barracks -- five people to one bunk bed -- 500 to one small barrack. Every morning we are lined up in the barracks for the selection of who will be sent to the gas chambers.

Judith draws from her pocket an imaginary crumb of bread.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

One loaf of bread made mostly out of sawdust is to be shared by 10 people. Each crumb is precious as our lives depend on it. Sometimes those given the bread run off, leaving the others without any.

She pauses, overcome by this memory. Then she goes on.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

A soup made from potato peelings is served in a rusty dish. Once in a while, a piece of meat might be found floating in it.

Judith stands up taller, facing the audience.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

My mother will not touch the nonkosher meat, but allows us children to eat it for the sake of survival. In no way does she want to give Hitler satisfaction by eating nonkosher food. Hitler used to say in his rallies that, even if he does not succeed in killing all the Jews, he will succeed in destroying Judaism.

Judith looks around herself.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

In Auschwitz many of those not sent to the gas chambers die from sickness and starvation, and bodies pile up outside the barracks. Not until thousands of bodies accumulate are these removed. We keep asking ourselves how long will this suffering continue? Where is the world? Where is America?

Judith pauses, as if expecting the audience to answer.

Lights down on Judith.

Lights up on the Polish Countess.

POLISH COUNTESS

In late November of 1942 the Nazis come for the Jews working on our estate.

(MORE)

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

In the early hours of a cold and frosty morning, some Nazis, aided by the Polish police from a nearby village, unexpectedly come with a number of farm carts. Shouting and cursing, the armed men break down the door and drag, push and herd the men, women and children onto the waiting carts.

She pauses to catch her breath.

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

They are taken away to where the Germans bring all the Jews in that region who have been rounded up. From the nearby railway station they are then sent in freight cars to the district capital, and from there they go on their last journey to the gas chambers of the nearby extermination camp of Treblinka. I learn that two of the estate's teenage girls have gotten away. But a few days later they are caught by the Nazis and shot. One of my relatives finds the foreman of the estate's Jewish workers hiding on the estate after he jumped off the speeding train just before it reached Treblinka. We arrange "Aryan papers" for him and he leaves for Warsaw.

Now her expression softens.

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

One of my trusted employees inspects the former quarters of the Jewish workers and finds a young Jewish boy hiding in the bread oven. We persuade the child of 10 or 12 years to come out from his hiding place. When he sees me with tears in my eyes, he says quite calmly, "Please don't cry. I know I must die."

She trembles.

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

I take the boy into my arms and determine that Aron Perelman will not die.

(MORE)

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

At tremendous risk I hide him in a room shut off during remodeling. Only I and one trusted manservant see to the boy. We get the boy in good shape physically, but he cannot get over the shock of having watched his parents being murdered. During the following months we are several times warned through the local grapevine that our house is to be searched by the Germans. Each time Aron is taken to the forest until the search is over and then brought back.

Lights down on Polish Countess.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

On the eve of Passover, April 19, 1943, the remaining Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto fought back, holding off the Nazi military forces until May 16. Ghetto occupant Chaim Kaplan did not live to see this uprising. He and his wife are believed to have been murdered in Treblinka in December 1942 or January 1943. But his diaries, written during his time in the Warsaw Ghetto and buried for safekeeping, did survive. These were translated into English and published by Jewish scholar Dr. Abraham K. Katsch.

Phyllis "reads" from a book.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

"Some of my friends and acquaintances who know the secret of my diary urge me, in their despair, to stop writing. 'Why? For what purpose? Will you live to see it published? Will these words of yours reach the ears of future generations? How?' ... and yet in spite of it all I refuse to listen to them. I feel that continuing the diary to the very end of my physical and spiritual strength is a historical mission which must not be abandoned.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

My mind is still clear, my need to record unstilled, though it is now five days since any real food has passed my lips. Therefore I will not silence my diary!"

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on Radio Announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Fall 1943, Denmark: Nazi plans to deport all Danish Jews to Germany have been prevented. In a massive act of defiance against the Nazis by ordinary Danish citizens, more than 7,200 of Denmark's 8,000 Jews are first hidden from the Nazis and then ferried in Danish fishing boats to neutral Sweden.

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

In another act of humanity -- although Italy's Fascist leader Mussolini had allied Italy with Nazi Germany and, starting in September 1938, implemented anti-Jewish racial laws -- Italian military authorities generally refused to participate in the mass murder of Jews or to permit deportations from Italy or Italian-occupied territory. But things changed in early September of 1943 after the Italian military surrendered to the Allies. The Germans took over control of Italian territories, and in mid-October 1943 the SS began roundups of the Jews in Rome with deportation to Auschwitz. Because Italian police did not participate in these roundups and most Italians objected to the deportations, many Italian Jews were able to go into hiding. Some even hid in the Vatican, although Pope Pious XII never publicly condemned Nazi policies and actions toward the Jews. Of the 2,091 Rome Jews deported to Auschwitz by the Nazis, only 102 survived.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on JEWISH CHILD IN ROME.

JEWISH CHILD IN ROME

We Jews of Rome have no warning of the Nazi roundup. With minutes to act, my father sends each of the members of my family separately outside the apartment in the hope that each person will find sanctuary somewhere.

She stoops to pick up an imaginary milk bottle.

JEWISH CHILD IN ROME (CONT'D)

We each carry an empty milk bottle as if going to get more milk. Only after Rome is liberated -- on June 4, 1944 -- do we learn that we have all survived by finding sanctuary with different non-Jewish Italians.

Lights down on Jewish child in Rome.

Lights up on Sol.

SOL

In Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia I take part in fierce fire fights with the Germans. As I lead a group of 12 men on skis, I take a wrong turn and come face to face with two German soldiers pointing guns at me. I speak to them in German and convince them I can be useful.

Sol starts to walk as if he has a gun with a bayonet pointed at him.

SOL (CONT'D)

As I am being escorted to their headquarters at gunpoint, I purposely jump over a cliff. I roll down a mountain as the Germans fire after me, the snow cushioning my body from major harm.

He straightens as if checking himself for breaks.

SOL (CONT'D)

I am hidden by a farmer in a hayloft as the Germans approach the farm.

(MORE)

SOL (CONT'D)

A German tries to bribe the farmer's eight-year-old daughter with a piece of chocolate to tell him whether there are any partisans hiding on the farm. Although very hungry, the little girl refuses the chocolate bribe. At the moment the German soldiers raise their rifles to poke into the hay where I hide, a group of partisans outside the farmhouse attack the Germans. I am destined to live yet another day, and I join these partisans.

Sol hesitates to get control of his emotions.

SOL

As dawn breaks we watch the Germans surround the nearby village and murder every man, woman and child. We partisans are too few to stop this massacre.

Lights down on Sol.

Lights up on Radio Announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

August 25, 1944: Paris has been liberated -- two-and-half months after Allied troops landed on June 6th on the beaches of Normandy.

Lights down on Radio Announcer.

Lights up on Ruth Kluger.

RUTH KLUGER

I am able to go to liberated France before others can. We start to steal Jewish children back from convents -- to see what happened to Jews in France. While Paris is now liberated, those Jews still alive in other Nazi-occupied countries are struggling to survive.

Lights down on Ruth Kluger.

Lights up on Judith.

JUDITH

In the summer or early fall of 1944 we are once again hauled into trucks and transported from Auschwitz to another concentration camp --Stutthof. There, whatever hair remains on our heads after being shaved at Auschwitz is torn out by hand. A number is tattooed on my arm with a needle. Electrical barbed wire surrounds the camp. Every morning, as in Auschwitz, we stand in line for roll call amongst the dead bodies.

Judith looks over to the side of the stage.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

One day as I stand in line I see something thrown over from the men's section. I run over and pick it up. It is a note telling us that the Allies are winning. I quickly swallow the note.

She looks up as if at a guard.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

The guard sees me, and because I will not reveal what the note says, the camp commandant forces me to remain in the yard all night without clothes on. He amuses himself by burning my legs with his cigar.

She yelps as in sudden pain, then forces herself to go on talking.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Then comes the day my mother is taken to the gas chambers. I cling to her as she is herded along with the others. A guard approaches me.

JUDITH AS GUARD

You are too young to die.

JUDITH

He raises his gun.

JUDITH AS GUARD

If you can get out of my range before I count to 10, you can live.

Judith pauses, this is so hard.

JUDITH

It is terrible leaving my mother like that. I run so very fast, hearing my mother's last cry to me: "Run faster, *meine Tochter!*"

Again Judith pauses to get control of herself.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

With total defeat on the horizon, the Nazis decide to liquidate the concentration camp where I am imprisoned. It is hard to believe that the camps stand untouched for so long. The Allies know exactly where these are, but the Allied planes just fly over the camp. We keep hoping that the Allies will drop bombs on the camp so that we might all die quickly and end our suffering.

Judith looks towards the stage ceiling as if waiting for a bomb to drop.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

In the winter of 1944-45 the death marches begin. The Nazis determine to get rid of the evidence of their mass murder in the death camps. Sick, frail, and starving prisoners are evacuated from the camps on foot with no food or water given to us. Anyone who cannot walk is shot. By now my sister Rachel has contracted typhus. Next to the gas chambers, typhus is the worst killer in the camp. I practically carry my sister the whole way on the death march. All of a sudden the sky lights up with the Allies bombing as they fly over us. Able to walk no longer, I fall into a ditch with my sister still clinging to me.

Judith collapses on the ground.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Everyone marches on as the Nazis walk right by our ditch. I wait for the expected shots that will end it all, but they don't come. I drag my sister through the deep snow to a coal bin of a nearby house.

(MORE)

JUDITH (CONT'D)

We wake in the morning to find three men staring at us, an Englishman, a Frenchman and a Russian. They take us into the house and fed us some real food. For the first time in four years I have a bath. The three men have been captured by the Germans and are now prisoners of war working on a farm owned by a top Nazi SS official.

Judith looks around herself.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

We find out that a price has been put on our heads and a description of the two of us has been circulated. The Russian prisoner of war cuts off the yellow stars which have branded us as Jews. He then tells us to pretend that we are Lithuanians who have escaped from the Elbe River. He tells us to change our names. I become Uta and my sister becomes Anna. He directs us to a nunnery nearby knowing that, when the SS official returns to the farm, the SS official will immediately take us to the *Umschlagplatz*, where everyone on the death march is taken to be massacred.

Here Judith's face changes to an expression of almost happiness.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

The nuns welcome us and give us shelter. My sister is extremely sick with typhus. In her delirium she speaks to me in Yiddish, and we are recognized as Jews. The nuns keep our secret and are wonderful to us. They take great care of Rachel, nursing her back to health. All the while we are learning about Catholicism, and how we must accept Jesus as our messiah. We have to kneel and pray every day in the chapel. How much longer can we survive as Jews? We plan an escape.

Now Judith rattles an imaginary door knob, then climbs out an imaginary window.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

The nuns, sensing our plan to leave, lock our door at night, telling us that they are only protecting us. We manage to escape through our window. By then, I have also come down with typhus, and my sister is now dragging me along. She takes me to the hospital in Danzig and leaves me in the hall, hoping that someone will take pity on me and give me medical treatment. By then I know my catechism so well that the hospital thinks I am a wonderful Lithuanian Catholic. My sister Rachel finds work in a nearby town and once a week visits me in the hospital.

Judith again looks to the ceiling for bombs, and then drops to the floor as if crawling under a bed.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Danzig is then very heavily bombed. Only the section of the hospital where I am remains undamaged from the bombing. After I recover from typhus, with nowhere else to go, Rachel brings me to the farm where she works. The woman who owns the farm, Anna Arstrom, has 10 children. At night she locks us up in the attic. At mealtime once a day, a large round bowl is placed in front of us and our hands tied behind our backs. This is the way she feeds us and amuses her children. If this woman is not pleased by our work on the farm, she beats us.

Judith looks off to one side.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I hear moans in the woods and find a wounded German soldier lying on the ground. Without stopping to think about it, I tear off part of his shirt, tie it around his wound and drag him towards the farm.

She acts out dragging a heavy load behind her.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Running to get help, I keep thinking, "Thank God that I'm still human.

(MORE)

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I'm not an animal." All during my imprisonment I had kept pleading to God, "Help me to stay a human being. Help me retain my compassion for humanity."

Judith hangs her head as if being yelled at.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

When I tell my sister what I have done, she becomes furious. He, no doubt, has killed many Jews himself, and here I have saved his life. She thinks I am so stupid. She says that she hopes I told him that a Jew saved his life.

Lights down on Judith.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

While Judith and her sister Rachel struggled to survive in Poland, Hungarian-born Hannah Senesh was executed on November 7, 1944, for her efforts to save Hungarian Jews. In 1939 at the age of 18 she immigrated from Hungary to the land of Israel. In 1943 she enlisted in the British Army and trained as a paratrooper. Parachuted into Yugoslavia, she was caught and brought to Budapest for interrogation, torture and incarceration. She was executed by a German firing squad. Afterwards these lines of her poetry were found in her cell: "I could have been 23 next July/I gambled on what mattered most/The dice were cast. I lost."

Phyllis pauses again.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

As the Russian army closed in on Auschwitz in January 1945, a young Dutch Jewish woman who had been used by the Nazis for "comfort" was sent with Romani prisoners to the gas chambers. The original gas distribution mechanism had been turned off.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Instead the Nazis dropped gas pellets from the ceiling into the chamber. The Romani collapsed in death on top of the young Dutch Jewish woman, forming an air pocket that saved her life.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on Judith.

Judith stands as if at the rail of a large boat.

JUDITH

Due to the advancing Allied forces, German nationals in Poland are evacuated to Nazi-occupied Denmark. Among those evacuated in March of 1945 is Anna Arstrom, who forced my sister and me along as servants for Anna's 10 children. The boat used for the evacuation is a huge battleship. The passengers are German soldiers and citizens. Rachel and I are amazed to see on the boat three other Jews who have survived the same death march as we have. All five of us are frightened to let on that we know each other for fear of our identities as Jews being revealed.

Judith clutches an imaginary plank in her arms.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

As we sail, Allied torpedoes hit the boat and it sinks. Rachel and I cling to a wooden plank in the water for several hours. While we are struggling to stay afloat in the choppy waters, torpedo boats continue shooting. Finally another German boat collects survivors. We then sail to Copenhagen.

Judith's expression shows relief at being saved.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Upon arriving in the harbor of Copenhagen, we are taken to temporary camps for German citizens until the Germans can be resettled in Denmark.

(MORE)

JUDITH (CONT'D)

My sister and I are assigned to a room with 20 Lithuanian men, who really frighten us. But for the first time we are free to walk the streets of Denmark. We are now considered German citizens.

Judith walks a few steps and stops, looking at something.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I see a Danish woman working in a flower garden. I stop to watch her. I am suddenly compelled to ask her, "Are there any Jews in Denmark?" Assuming that I am a German, she becomes very angry at my question.

JUDITH AS DANISH WOMAN

"You Germans tried to kill them, but we saved many of their lives. Soon the war will be over and the Jews will be free and you Germans will be in concentration camps!"

JUDITH

Her husband comes out of the house yelling at her and pulls her back inside. I am much too frightened to tell her that I am Jewish.

Judith pauses, the memory overpowering.

Lights down on Judith.

Lights up on Ruth Kluger.

RUTH KLUGER

In 1945 I am the first Jew from the land of Israel to enter the concentration camps a day or two after they are liberated by the Allies. In the concentration camps we try to give the victims back their human dignity -- the hardest thing to do -- and help them to organize themselves. We know that the Russians are moving on, we feel that the Jews will be trapped, so we create an organization called *Bricha*. We smuggle Jews over borders into the American Zone.

(MORE)

RUTH KLUGER (CONT'D)

I find 47 Jewish children in a Russian bunker in East Berlin -- the youngest eight months old. The Russians would not have allowed me to go there, but I do not ask. I put the children in a truck, cover them with blankets and fling gifts to the Russians, although these gifts do not stop them from firing at the truck as I speed away.

Lights down on Ruth Kluger.

Lights up on Judith.

JUDITH

The day of my liberation, May 5, 1945 -- three days before Victory in Europe Day -- is the most wonderful day of my life. The Red Cross asks if any of us are not German citizens, and, if so, to come forward. Rachel and I are still hesitant, and when we tell the Red Cross officials that we are Jews, the Germans with whom we have been living said that we are lying. The Red Cross officials also look at us quizzically. We sign our names in Hebrew. Our troubles are over.

Now Judith walks a few steps rapidly.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

I return to the Danish woman who has reprimanded me to tell her I am Jewish. She breaks down crying. Her son had been hanged in Copenhagen for saving two Jewish families.

Judith pauses as if remembering herself at that moment.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

At the end of the war I am 15 years old and weigh 47 pounds. I spend a year and a half in a Danish hospital. I cannot say enough about the Danish people. They saved countless lives during the war while constantly risking their own lives.

Judith looks at the audience.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Anna Arstrom is tried by a Danish court for her treatment of my sister and me. At the trial she says that she did not know that we are Jews. The judge says, "If she did this to two Catholic girls, can you imagine what she would have done to two Jewish girls?" After completing a jail sentence, she is deported to Germany.

Now Judith pauses as if lost in thought.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

My mother went to the gas chambers believing that my brother died in Dachau and that her two daughters were unlikely to survive. Yet the report we received of my brother's death in Dachau was incorrect. He is liberated from Dachau by the Allies.

Lights down on Judith.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

Six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis. Yet this was only approximately half the planned death count. In January 1942, mid-way through WWII, fifteen high-ranking Nazi party and German government leaders met in a villa in the Wannsee area of Berlin to discuss the ongoing progress of the "final solution" of the Jews. The Nazi party leaders now requested the German government leaders to help arrange for Jews to be transported from all over Nazi-occupied Europe to the "extermination" camps in Poland operated by the SS. Following this meeting, Adolph Eichmann circulated the Wannsee Protocol to the participants.

She pauses in reflection.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Two years after the end of the war a single copy of the protocol was found by Robert Kempner, the assistant chief U.S. counsel at the Nuremburg war crime trials.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

My husband worked for Herr Kempner's son Lucian when we were stationed with the U.S. Army in Munich. My husband also worked with another Department of the Army civilian, Henry Einstein, who got out of Germany in time as a teen and returned with the U.S. Army. He was a clerk for Herr Kempner at the Nuremburg trials.

Phyllis pauses.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

According to the Wannsee protocol, the Nazis intended to murder a total of 11 million Jews. This number of 11 million included Jews in European countries such as England and Ireland that were not yet under Nazi control.

Phyllis pauses, trying to wrap her head around the enormity of 11 million murdered Jews.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

As a journalist for a Jewish newspaper, I had the opportunity in October 1975 to interview Nazi hunter Beate Klarsfeld. She corrected me that she was not a Nazi hunter but a Nazi exposé. She did not physically attempt to catch Nazis. Rather she "identified" Nazi war criminals, exposing them as alive and living openly in society, frequently in top positions in West German society. "It is a fiction that all Nazis live in South America," she said. "We try to explain that this is not true. They are living in Germany." A non-Jew born in Berlin three weeks before Hitler entered Prague in March 1939, as a adult in Paris Beate met and married French Jew Serge Klarsfeld, whose father died in Auschwitz. Her decision to fight for justice to be meted out to Nazi criminals was made when she was fired from her job with the **France-German Alliance for Youth** for writing the truth about the Nazi past of then West German Chancellor Kurt-George Kiesinger.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Beate Klarsfeld relentlessly pursued justice against notorious Nazi war criminals, including Klaus Barbie, the "Butcher of Lyons" in France.

She pauses.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

My husband and I were forever changed by our experiences of living in Germany among the remnants of Jewish communities. We decided to start keeping kosher when we returned to the United States and to become more observant Jews. For us it was one thing we could personally do to demonstrate that Hitler had not destroyed Judaism even though he had murdered 6 million Jews.

Phyllis pauses.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

When our two children were born we got each her own passport. We wanted them to be able to leave the U.S. with anyone who could save them if the U.S. suddenly took a turn to the far right. And we taught our children to always keep a current passport as adults.

Lights down on Phyllis

Lights up on Polish Countess.

POLISH COUNTESS

At the end of the war my husband and I flee from the advancing Russian troops, leaving Aron, the little boy we have so desperately hidden from the Nazis. Then 30 years later I in Brazil and Aron in Israel are unexpectedly reconnected through another of my Jewish workers who miraculously survived.

She takes a letter from a pocket of her dress.

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)

The letter Aron writes me from Israel says in part: "I have found the person dearest to me, the one who was like

(MORE)

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)
 a mother, the one for whom I had searched in vain for nearly 30 years. The news of your husband's death hits me hard, may he rest in peace. I want so much to do something to keep the memory of this brave, fine man alive. Dearest Countess, if only I could see you and really express my feelings, my gratitude."

Now she smiles.

POLISH COUNTESS (CONT'D)
 I think of the avenue in Israel lined with trees, one for every person who helped save a Jewish life during the Holocaust. There must be a great many with Polish names, names of many less fortunate than my husband and I, those who paid with their own lives for trying to save the lives of their neighbors, believing that we are all each other's keepers.

Lights down on Polish Countess.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS
 The emotional toll on the survivors and their descendants may be forever beyond our understanding.

Lights down on Phyllis.

Lights up on FELICE, an American Jew.

FELICE
 I'm Felice, born in the U.S. after WWII to a Holocaust survivor. Between my mother's past and her present there is a wall. It is of barbed wire, of course, but to me it is heavier than any wire and thicker, too, for I am not allowed to see through it. Then on a business trip to Europe when I am an adult, my mother and I have to spend a day in Germany. On the way back to the airport my mother has the driver turn down a street. And then my mother screams, "Do you see it?" I ask, "See what?"

(MORE)

FELICE (CONT'D)

"The trees covered with blood!" My mother continues: "In the last days of the war we had to evacuate the camp we were in. We were all starving. I was a girl of 15, and I found an empty can on the street we were being led through. The can once had vegetables in it. Nothing was left, but there was still the scent of the food that had been there. The old woman in front of me saw me with the can and begged me for it. I told her no. She tried to pull it out of my hands, begging, 'Give it. Give it. I'm dying.' The guards saw her. They shouted 'Get the old one. Shoot the old one!' In that second one of them shot her. She fell against a tree, the blood spurting from her head, soaking the trunk, the ground. It was there, there in that street we drove through! And the trees are covered with blood. Still."

Felice pauses.

FELICE (CONT'D)

"But, Mama," I say, "that is paint. Red paint. You've seen trees cut down before." My mother looks at me for a long moment. "Do you understand now," she says. "For me, it will **always** be blood."

Lights down on Felice.

Lights up on Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

How do you ever recover from survivor's guilt or the guilt of things you may have done -- or not done -- to stay alive or save others during the Holocaust? How does this affect you and your descendants? The guilt can be something as seemingly "simple" as a brother still being accused today by his sisters that he was not willing to sell his silver candlesticks to try to buy their mother a way out of Germany. Or it can be guilt over something much less "simple."

She looks at the audience.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

The mother of someone I knew was the oldest of five children who arrived with their mother at Auschwitz. She and the younger sister next in age to her were "selected" by Dr. Mengele -- the Angel of Death as he was known -- to walk in one direction, the others sent to ride in a second direction. My friend's mother asked Dr. Mengele if her sister could ride rather than walk. He smiled his agreement. The next day my friend's mother learned that she had sent her sister to her death. How do you ever recover from that realization?

Phyllis pauses, overcome by this.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Or how do you ever forget that moment when you arrived at Auschwitz and did realize what was happening and tried to save your sister? When Sala Landowicz, her mother and three younger sisters arrived there, Sala figured out the selection procedure of who was chosen to be gassed immediately and who was given a reprieve. Sala's youngest sister still wore her hair in braids. Somehow Sala managed to cut off these braids to make her sister appear older. This effort failed -- Sala's youngest sister was sent to the gas chambers. And Sala's mother, though a young woman, chose to go to the gas chambers with her youngest child. Sala and her two other sisters survived.

Phyllis looks around at the audience.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoeller was imprisoned during the war in Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps. He is credited with saying: "First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out -- because I was not a Socialist.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out -- because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out -- because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me -- and there was no one left to speak for me."

Phyllis hesitates, considering her next words.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

Some people say that I am obsessed with the Holocaust. Am I? Or am I obsessed with the thought that these horrific crimes against humanity can happen again -- anywhere -- anytime -- to any group of people?

The other actors come to stand besides Phyllis.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

All it takes is allowing the thin edge of the wedge to grow so wide until ... there is no turning back.

Lights down.