

ARBEIT MACHT FREI

# Shoah

*Ambassadors*

A story of understanding

**M**any of us breezed through our history classes, memorizing a few dates and learning a handful of events, but most of the details had probably faded by graduation.

However, some historical events are so significant and the effects so long-lasting that they transcend classrooms and live with us forever. Foremost, among these, is the Holocaust. The atrocities committed by the Nazi regime left a scar across the globe that continues to haunt the remaining eyewitnesses. No novel, film, or museum can truly capture the horrors of what they experienced firsthand.

Throughout the intervening years, many courageous Holocaust survivors have shared their stories with us, but sadly, their numbers are dwindling. If we are going to access these memories directly, before the final grains filter through the hourglass, the time to do it is now.

This is the goal of our new PBS documentary, Shoah Ambassadors. We intend to bridge the chasm between the generation who endured the nightmare of World War II and today's bright-eyed, tech-savvy youths, who may only have a limited grasp of what their elders suffered.

Working closely with the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills, Michigan, Emmy Award-winning director/producer Keith Farnie and Visionalist Entertainment Productions, five select Holocaust survivors will be given an opportunity to share their personal histories with two young adults. These two young ambassadors, utilizing their own creative expression, will then become the caretakers of this history.

Throughout the film, we will watch as empathy and respect grows among youths who have previously experienced the Holocaust only through newsreels and reenactments, but who now hear the details of those dark days from those who actually lived them.

Our intention is that these survivors may thus pass the torch of remembrance to a new generation. Today's young people may not have lived through the Holocaust themselves, but they must now become the caretakers of history so that the triumphs and tragedies of these Jewish icons may never be forgotten.

## Time Frame

**July – September:**  
Principal filming

**October – November:**

- Edit film
- Create 4-color collectors' booklet that will feature our Holocaust survivors, ambassadors, production photos and a special "thank you" to community leaders

- o Four pages will be used by the Holocaust Memorial Center to tell the story of the museum

- o Several pages will be dedicated to pictures of Michigan's Holocaust survivors

**December OR January:**

- A special community leader media premiere will be held locally before the film launches on PBS

**Date: TBD**

## Areas of focus

- Holocaust survivor stories
- Generational differences and similarities
- Adversity
- Friendship



**Shoah**  
*Ambassadors*

## Production story elements

- Several sit-down interview sessions at the Holocaust Memorial Center with survivors and ambassadors
- Interviews with American veterans who remember liberating concentration camps
- Interviews with leading historians at the Holocaust Memorial Center
- Film the Holocaust survivors and ambassadors in their daily lives whenever possible
- Possible filmed performance and/or presentation of the Holocaust survivors' stories through the art mediums of the ambassadors



# Shoah

*Ambassadors*

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*Ambassadors*

A Film By



Visionalist  
Entertainment Productions

In Association With





January 14, 2020

Keith Famie  
Filmmaker  
Visionalist Entertainment  
28345 Beck Road  
Wixom, MI 48393

Dear Keith,

It was great meeting you to discuss your film treatment for film “**Shoah Ambassadors.**” Works that inspire today’s young learners though the first-hand accounts of those who have been witnesses to history have long been a part of our mission and part of our educational imperative for Detroit and Southeast Michigan.

Based on the success of your previous film on Father Solanus, I’m sensing a growing interest from PBS viewers in exploring personal histories of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century – from the World War II Generation through Generation Z – all interested knowing more about who we are by learning more about where we’ve been.

Your concept of documenting some of our communities’ most experienced citizens relating their remembrances of the Holocaust to young people is an excellent one – especially those who have lived through the tragedies of human conflict. Your proposed partnership with the **Holocaust Memorial Center** in Farmington Hills offers an outstanding resource for subject matter expertise, in a lively and essential setting.

Finally, in addition to a Detroit release, I would also recommend we look at creating and funding a national distribution plan to release “**Shoah Ambassadors,**” released on PBS stations nationwide, as we have for your film on the fight against cancer.

Let’s come together to identify a partnership that would allow us to continue our work on important topics like this one. I look forward to speaking with you again soon. In the meantime, let’s align on a plan to bring this film to public television.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Fred'.

Fred Nahhat  
Senior VP, Production  
Detroit Public TV



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February 17, 2020

Dear Keith,

Thank you for contacting the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus about your proposed film "Shoah Ambassadors."

We are pleased to work with you as you proceed with this important production. Our mission is to engage, education and empower by remembering the Holocaust. This documentary will help share the important histories of Holocaust survivors in a new way that will engage younger audiences. We look forward to providing educational resources and to help ensure the lessons and horror of the Holocaust is never forgotten.

Best regards,

  
Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld  
Chief Executive Office

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February 20, 2020

Mr. Keith Famie  
28345 Beck Road  
Suite 404  
Wixom, Michigan 48393

Dear Keith,

As a child of a Holocaust survivor, I recall questioning my mother about her horrific experiences under the boot of the Nazis and their collaborators. How did you survive? Why did you survive? What obligations and responsibilities do I have to help assure that my generation and future generations will never forget ... and never allow this to happen to anyone ever again?

On many occasions, my mother would agree to speak with teenage girls at local Catholic schools. After all, when she was their age, she was already working as a slave laborer, had contracted typhus, lost all of her hair and was on a subsistence diet. Without fail, each group of girls would bond with my mother – crying together, stroking my mother’s hair, and finding opportunities to exchange notes and holiday cards. These girls vowed to never forget.

My mother and most of those who survived the Holocaust have passed away. Eyewitnesses no more, except via videotaped testimonies. The ability for our newest generations of teens and young adults to hear, to feel, to be touched by those who made it through hell and back will soon be gone – forever.

That’s why I am embracing Keith Famie’s new film, “Shoah Ambassadors,” and its intention to creatively and impactfully engage young adults – to have them capture and tell the stories of Holocaust survivors.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of witnessing Keith and his associates capture and thoughtfully (and engagingly) tell the stories of “Our Greatest Generation,” the remarkable “Maire’s Journey,” “The Embrace of Aging” and “Our Vietnam Generation.” As the former chair of the Detroit Public Television (DPTV) Board of Directors, I know that Keith’s documentary work is respected and appreciated across DPTV’s media platforms and garners attention from PBS affiliates around the country.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer this letter of support and encouragement for “Shoah Ambassadors.”

Sincerely,

Arthur Horwitz  
President

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Rabbi Daniel B. Syme

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7400 Telegraph at 14 Mile  
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January 31, 2020

Mr. Keith Famie  
28345 Beck Road  
Suite 404  
Wixom, MI 48393

Dear Keith,

I have just finished reading the prospectus for your new film, "Shoah Ambassadors," and want you to know how moved and inspired I was.

Today, even after the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, our country, our world is still mired in hatred and violence. This last generation of Holocaust survivors offers us an opportunity to tell the real story of Nazi genocide to a new generation of young people, of all faiths, colors and creeds.

I hope that many people who care about our common future will support this project to the fullest. I look forward to its release.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Syme", written in a cursive style.

Rabbi Daniel Syme



February 11, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Keith Famie for many years and have great respect for him as an award-winning film producer and as a friend. I am pleased to add my support for Keith as he pursues funding for his proposed film: "Holocaust Ambassadors."

Keith is a kind, intelligent and creative person; and I know that his proposed film is ever so much more important at this critical time in our world.

My company has produced documentary films ever since 1980 when it was formed. We have won numerous film awards, including an Academy Award for Best Short Documentary Film, "Young at Heart" in 1987. Over these years, I have had the timely and important.

I strongly urge you to support Keith Famie's "Holocaust Ambassadors."

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Marx". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sue Marx

970 OAK AVENUE BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN. 48009  
email: suemarx@suemarxfilms.com  
cell: 248-701-7743  
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# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

### TIMELINE OF PRODUCTION

#### **July – September**

- Principal filming

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- Edit the film
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### AREAS OF FOCUS

- Holocaust survivor stories
- Generational differences and similarities
- Adversity
- Understanding

### PRODUCTION STORY ELEMENTS

- Several sit-down interview sessions at the Holocaust Memorial Center with survivors and ambassadors
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## *Ambassadors*

### *Shoah Ambassadors Youth Profile*

We have selected two young adult students as our ambassadors.

- They have not been to any Holocaust Memorial Center
- Both individuals live in Michigan
- They each possess a unique artistic talent

### *Youth Storytelling*

Our ambassadors will become the story tells of the Michigan Holocaust survivors using their own creative medium, all of which will become part of the film's story.

### *Selecting Holocaust Survivors*

Working with the Holocaust Memorial Center, we will go through the list of Michigan survivors to access the survivors that might have an interest in being featured in the film. They have to be willing to let one of the young adults step into their lives.

# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

*PBS Documentary Film in  
production by Visionalist  
Entertainment Productions*

**Name:** Curtis Bates

**Age:** 19

**Race:** African American

**Hometown:** Detroit, MI

**Talent:** Lyricism (rap) / Vocals

**Reason for selection:** We met Curtis through Amy Nederlander, the Co-Founder and CEO of LIFE Leaders Inc., which is a Detroit based organization that provides training in leadership, interpersonal & business skills, and access to opportunity to those looking for guidance. Amy boasted about Curtis' good character and artistic abilities in lyricism and vocals, which made him a desirable candidate. Curtis will play a key role in this film as he will bridge a mutual understanding of the intricacies and adversities experienced as a black male in our white-dominated, westernized culture with the marginalized survivors of the Holocaust, where both experience and continue to experience race and religious discrimination. Detroit has a strong pride for its multifaceted foundation in music, especially within the African American community, making his narrative and artistic medium crucial to our story and the survivors residing in Michigan. Curtis has never been to the Holocaust Memorial Center, so we will be capturing his organic emotional reaction to the museum. He will then utilize his creative capabilities to tell the story of the Holocaust survivors that he meets with as well as the information he gains from the center. Curtis currently works as a food service assistant and enjoys playing basketball, exercising, and listening to music. His goals are to excel in his music career and venture off into other businesses, including clothing, TV, movies, food, and real estate.



# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

*PBS Documentary Film in  
production by Visionalist  
Entertainment Productions*

**Name:** Hailey Callahan

**Age:** 22

**Race:** Caucasian

**Hometown:** Rochester, MI

**Talent:** Sculpting, ceramics, glass blowing, glass staining, slip casting, piano, etc.

**Reason for selection:** We chose Hailey as an ambassador because of her artistic abilities in multiple art mediums, such as ceramics, glass blowing, glass staining, slip casting, piano, etc.



Having grown up dyslexic, Hailey found her passion through art, where she is incredibly talented. Her artistic knowledge will bring inspiration, creativity, and new perspectives to this production. Her main focus of art is sculpting model cars, which is what she will begin her career doing at Fiat Chrysler. As we all know, Detroit is the Motor City, which makes Hailey a great representative of Detroit's artistic creativity and shared community relationship with the automotive industry. This makes Hailey a unique, yet familiar character in this narrative. Hailey has also never been to the Holocaust Memorial Center, so we will be capturing her first emotional reaction with the museum, where she will then utilize her creative expression to tell the story of the Holocaust survivors that she meets with, as well as the information she gains from the center. Hailey just recently graduated from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, MI. She enjoys playing the piano, golfing, wakeboarding, and snowboarding. Her main goals are to be successful and to travel the world.

# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

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### Mania Salinger

**Name at birth:** Manya Tenenbaum

**Date of birth:** February 23, 1924

**Where were you born?** Radom, Poland

**Where did you grow up?** Radom, Poland

**Name of father, occupation:** Tobias, owned a shoe factory

**Maiden name of mother occupation:** Szajndla Kasztan, homemaker

**Immediate family (names, birth order):** Parents and three children: Rella, me, and Jacob

**How many in the entire extended family?** 50 cousins, my father's family lived in town

**Who survived the Holocaust?** My sister Rella and myself. My mother and brother Jacob were sent to Treblinla to their deaths.

In Bergen-Belsen, I was dying. I desperately needed water. I said to G-d, please help me live. This was springtime, I figured it was around Passover. I said to G-d, if I survive, I promise I will always remember this miracle and will make Passover the most special holiday for me, and so I do till today.

I left my barracks and was looking for any kind of water. I looked up and noticed that there were no Germans in the guard towers. I started to tell people that the Germans were gone. Then the British soldiers came to liberate us. We ran to the fence to greet the British troops.





(In the photograph, Mania, front row, center, is pictured when the first British troops entered Bergen-Belsen.

This photograph taken from a film, courtesy of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London, England, was taken by cameraman Sergeant Mike Lewis, a Jewish British soldier). I was liberated by British soldiers on April 15, 1945 at Bergen-Belsen, I was then transferred to the American zone. Later, my sister Rella Wizenberg found my name on a list and we were reunited.

**Name of Ghetto(s):** Radom, Poland

**Name of Concentration Camp(s) and/or Labor Camp(s):**

Labor camps, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen

**Spouse:** Martin Salinger, an American GI who I met soon afterwards and we married, he was an angel, we were married 35 years. Remarried to Micky Hearn.

**Child(ren):** Susan, Joan, and Debra

**Grandchild(ren):** Three

**What do you think helped you survive?**

A German soldier saved my life, among 25 to 30 girls. I had knowledge of German.

**What message would you like to leave for future generations?** Know the details about Holocaust. I have lots of guts, I was lucky. (Mania's autobiography is called, Looking Back by Mania Salinger)

To learn more about this survivor, please visit this site.

<http://www.holocaustcenter.org/inclex.php?option=comcontent&task=view&id=244>



# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

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### Edith Maniker

**Name at birth:** Edith Grunbaum

**Date of birth:** March 12, 1931

**Where born?:** Leipzig, Germany

**Where did you grow up?** Leipzig, Germany  
till 8 years old

**Name of Father, occupation:** Abraham,  
printer and compositor, translated Hebrew texts  
into German and German into Hebrew

**Maiden name of mother, occupation:**  
Trude Schmulevitz, homemaker

**Immediate family:** Parents, sister Paula  
(seven years older), and I

**Extended family:** About 50, on both German  
and Polish side



**Who survived?** Six children who escaped on the Kindertransport, one cousin from Polish side: my older sister Paula and I, our first cousins- Yetta daughter of our aunt Vera; Harold, Zigmar and Zella of our aunt Clara

I was 7 years old when Kristallnacht occurred. My family lived on the fourth floor of an apartment building and my grandmother lived on the third floor. I remember my aunt and uncle coming to our apartment as their home had been burned down. We all stood in the dark watching the big bonfire in the middle of the street. They were burning Torahs, talesim, (prayer shawls) and prayer books. People were standing around the bonfire singing and dancing, I was 7 years old. My father was safe that night as the custodian of the building told the officials that there were no Jews living in the building. I remember being very confused that night.

My uncle started making preparations to try to get the grandchildren out of the country. The first cousin to leave was my cousin Vera whose mother was born in Poland. They were deporting Jews back to Poland and they didn't want Vera to go back to Poland.

He was able to manage to get my older sister Paula out of Germany on June 1939. It was the only time I saw my father openly cry. I went to England in July 1939. I wasn't happy about getting on the train alone. My parents said I would be joining Paula on a nice vacation in England and that in a couple of weeks, they would be joining them. I believed my parents.

I was never made to feel poor, my grandmother was a seamstress and I went to England with hand made dresses. Our furniture was disappearing, I never questioned it, they either sold it or it was taken from them.

I boarded the train in Leipzig; the train was full of children. We went to Holland and then boarded a boat to England. I was taken with this man's older daughter's home, the Jacobson's.

I lived with them from July till August, 1939. On September 1, 1939, I was evacuated to the country with the Jacobson children in anticipation of a German attack on London as World War II then started.

We stayed in the little town of Oakham, County of Rutland. We stayed with two single ladies who took us to church every Sunday. We went back to London in December as no bombing occurred then. The bombing started in June 1940. We were evacuated to the home of Lady Clementine Waring in Devon.

We lived in the servants' quarters; we had tea with her ladyship once a week. The cook took me under her wings and was very kind to me.

In 1942 we were sent back to London, I later learned that the American navy came to that little town, 25 miles from Plymouth, to practice for invasion of Europe.

I went back to London to the Jacobson's and then later to an orthodox Jewish hostel. I was later reunited with my sister Paula. We stayed with a kind family, Mickey and Florrie Hart. The house was bombed, luckily we made it out of the rubble all right. The refugee committee helped get us a small room in London. I was 13 and went to school and my sister was 20 and went to work.

Then the German V-1 rockets started, I can relate to the Israelis nowadays when they get bombed. We would hear a drone with its loud motor. When the motor turned off, the bomb began to drop. It was pure dread. I became very nervous about sounds. I got out of London and was sent to a hostel in Cambridge. My sister joined me three weeks later with our cousin Zilla. Zilla was a 7 month old baby when she left on the Kindertransport. I went to a trade school and learned shorthand and typing. My sister worked and earned money.

In July 1947, we left for America, my cousin Zilla, my sister Paula and me. Zilla was adopted by a family in New York; we came to Detroit where we had an uncle. We stayed with our aunt and uncle,

after seven weeks, we moved out, my sister got a job in a clothing store, I got a job as a counter girl at a cleaners.

I lost my grandmother, my parents, my aunts and uncles. Six of us grandchildren survived, the others perished.

I had to become an adult before I realized how brave my parents were. My parents didn't know what would happen, they gave me to strangers. Can you imagine? My hero is my aunt. My uncle was sent to Sachsenhausen, she received a cardboard box with his ashes in it. She went to the Dutch border, gave up her 7 month old baby and two other children to a stranger in order that they might live. Can you imagine?

I'm still looking to find out what exactly happened to my parents and my family.

**Spouse:** Aaron (Art) Manier, retired engineer

**Child(ren):** Allen, neurosurgeon, Terry, nurse, Marci, organizational development

**Grandchild(ren):** Four: Lisa, Sarah, Mandy, and Ariella

**What do you think helped you to survive?**

The Jewish refugee committee and the English people that I lived with. Also, I had extremely kind teachers that were good to me.

**What message would you like to leave for future generations?**

I like to quote one of my survivor friends, "Don't let anyone teach you how to hate and don't you teach anyone how to hate." We all have a different story but the bottom line is we survived.

To learn more about this survivor, please visit this site.

[http://www.holocaustcenter.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1](http://www.holocaustcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1)

# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

### Fred (Alfred) Lessing

**Name at Birth:** Alfred Lessing

**Date of birth:** May 16, 1936

**Where were you born?** The Hague, Netherlands

**Where did you grow up?** Delft, Netherlands

**Name of father, occupation:** Nardus (Nathan) Lessing, musician

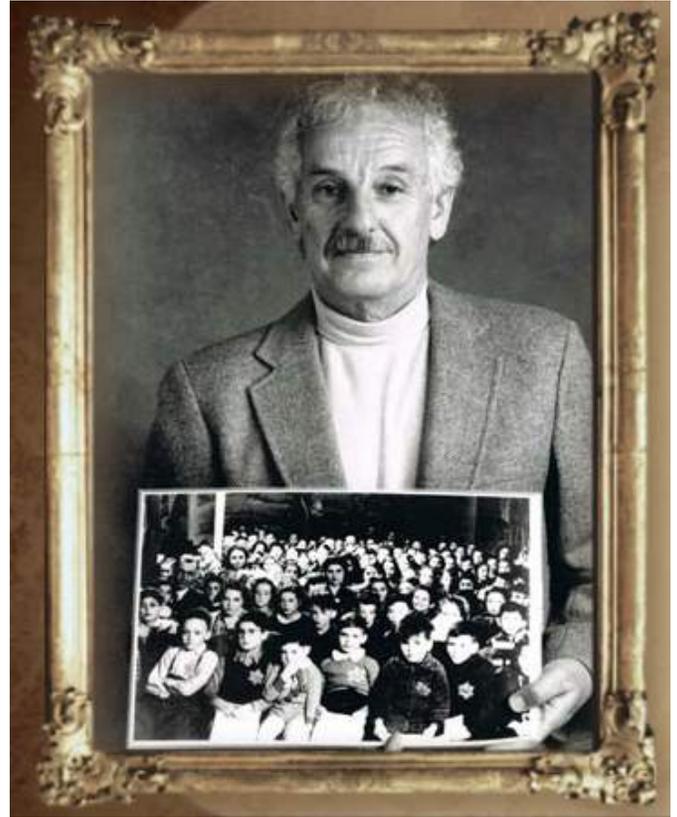
**Maiden name of mother ,occupation:** Engeline Elizabeth Van Leer-Lessnig, secretary

**Immediate family (names, birth order):** Nardus (Nathan), Lien (Engeline), Ed (Eliazahr), At (Arthur, Abba), Fred (Alfred)

#### **Who survived the Holocaust?**

All except one uncle, two aunts and one second cousin. Four first cousins in Indonesia survived in Japanese concentration camps; one first cousin was in America, three first cousins in Holland but with non-Jewish father and thus were not hunted or harmed.

On October 23, 1942, when our names came up for deportation, my family, instead of boarding the German trains to "resettlement in the east," we went into hiding. I was 6 years old. My parents felt that hiding together, like Anne Frank's family, was too dangerous and so, under mostly my mother's direction and organization (my father looked too Jewish to operate out in the open), we split up and so there are really five stories that together tell the story of my family's miraculous survival in hiding.



I was hidden out in the open, masquerading with dyed hair, changed name and forged identity papers as a Christian child, displaced from Zeeland, where the dikes had been bombed and the land flooded, and whose parents were looking for a new home and needed someone to look after little Freddie for a short time while they searched.

In order to find people to tell this totally fabricated story to who might be willing, for some money, to look after - though in reality to hide - me, my mother pretty much rang random doorbells, though sometimes she followed up leads provided by non-Jewish friends.

I would then stay with and become part of that family, always guarding with my life the terrible secret of my real identity. In this way I was secretly hidden by quite a number of different unsuspecting families in various cities in Holland. From time to time my mother would appear, either to reassure and comfort me or else to move me to another address.

I somehow knew that each time my job was to assimilate myself as quickly and fully as possible to the new family's rules, lifestyle and religion and to be or become the cutest, sweetest, most helpful, polite and well behaved little Christian kid in the whole world so that no one would ever suspect or betray me.

And no one ever did.

This was my life in hiding from 1942 until 1944 when I came down with a serious case of pneumonia. My mother, whose name Engeline contains the Dutch word for angel, seemed like a real angel, to always appear when I most needed her, and she did this time as well.

She found a doctor who was, she told me, "good" - i.e., would not betray me as a Jew, which he would know from seeing that I was circumcised when he examined me. She got me into the hospital where over the next six weeks I recovered.

But she herself was arrested at the railroad station on her way back to her hiding place by a Dutch Nazi policeman who was a specialist in forged document recognition. Like all caught Dutch Jews she was taken to prison in Amsterdam and from there sent to Westerbork, a holding and transit camp near the Dutch border with Germany, and from there to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

She saved her own life by telling more lies. She claimed, apparently convincingly, that she was an American citizen and eventually got out of Belsen as part of an extremely rare prisoner exchange.

Meanwhile an aunt of mine took me from the hospital by train into, for the first time, the country (province of Gelderland), where in a tiny two-room summer cottage near a kind of manor house on a dirt road in farmland, I was met by my father and two brothers!

For me the worst was over. I would no longer be alone. Before her arrest my mother had reserved this cottage for two weeks in May 1944 because she wanted us to be together, even if briefly, since it looked to her that the war would go on forever and we would sooner or later all be caught.

And of course she was and never made it to the cottage. But the four of us did and we stayed, not for two weeks but for a whole year, until our liberation in May of 1945. It was an incredible and hard to describe year. I call it "the ultimate male bonding survival encounter," a year of continued hiding, of dissimulation, of constant danger and some very close calls; a year of daily searching for food and fuel, of carrying water to the cottage and emptying the outhouse next to it, of stealing the landlord's canning jars to trade for food with the farmers, and of begging door to door for food from the farmers and of tramping for miles through farm fields towards the sound of a threshing machine to beg or buy for a quarter a small bag of grain.

It was also a year of waiting for and watching the gradual approach by air and by land of our Allied liberators. This was scary but also very exciting stuff for young boys and best of all it meant, the closer the war's front approached, that we would be liberated, that it - the war, the terror, the hiding - would come to an end.

And it did. We were liberated towards the end of April 1945 by the Canadian Army and the indescribable joy of that event was never in my lifetime to be exceeded except when we found out that my mother was alive and then when in late September she came home to us back in Delft.

Three years later (4th, 5th, or 6th grade) we immigrated to "Amerika" and I started a whole new life as an American boy. As with most Holocaust survivors, about forty years would pass before I could revisit, re-view, re-experience and share what had happened to me during what was now named the Holocaust.

The photograph that I am holding in my portrait became a kind of portal through which this recovery of my childhood was initiated. It entered my life in 1987 when I was 51 years old.

It shows a large room full of Jewish children and a handful of adults all wearing their yellow stars. Because I found myself in it - my right index finger points me out - this picture both intrigued and frightened me. Researching its origin led me, gradually and with much anxiety, back into my own Holocaust experience of 45 years earlier, an often painful and life-changing journey.

After many years of futile inquiry and research to locate other survivors in or information about the photo, I reached the inevitable conclusion that they are all dead, a miniscule contingent among the one and a half million murdered Jewish children. But I am still here! I can - I decided I will - speak for them. I will be a witness.

In 2002, at the Child Survivors conference in Seattle, I, at long last, found another survivor from the photo. His name is Pete Metzelaar and he lives in Seattle. He had not known about the photo. But in the photo that's him next to me on my right. It doesn't change anything. But now there are two of us speaking for our murdered classmates. Because Pete too is a witness and a speaker.

### **Where were you if you were in hiding?**

Various places in Holland, e.g., Amsterdam, Utrecht, Tilburg, Voorthuizen

**Occupation after the war:** Professor, psychologist

**Spouse:** Rosalyn S. Sherman-Lessing, professor, psychologist

**Child(ren):** Aaron, business,  
Joshua, engineer  
Ben, graduate student  
Shana, graduate student

**Grandchild(ren):** Six, Shea (1995), Ryder (1997), Maire (1999), Trey (2002), Josiu (2001), and Izabella (2003)

**What do you think helped you to survive?**

Luck, street smarts, the family not hiding together, my mother's intelligence, intuition, and courage.

**What message would you like to leave for future generations?**

Question all authority. Be in touch with and pay attention to your natural inborn feelings. Respect children. Delete the word hate from your vocabulary and life.

To learn more about this survivor, please visit this site. <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/lessing/>

# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

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### Irene Miller

**Name at birth:** Irena Miller

**Date of birth:** April 17, 1932

**Where were you born?** Warsaw, Poland

**Where did you grow up?** Warsaw, Poland

**Name of father, occupation:** Israel Miller, furniture maker

**Maiden name of mother, occupation:** Bella Fel dhandler, housewife and worked with my father in furniture making

**Immediate family (names, birth order):** My parents, older sister and I



**How many in the entire extended family?** My mother had eleven siblings, eight of whom lived in Warsaw with their families, four others lived in France and Belgium and survived.

**Who survived the Holocaust?** My parents, sister, and I

**Where were you if you were in the Former Soviet Union?** After the German invasion, my family, while trying to escape to the USSR, was stranded for several weeks in a "no man's land." My father managed to cross the border and secure the necessary papers allowing my sister and me legal entry to an immigrant camp near Bialystok. My mother was left behind and later was loaded on a train by the Germans. My mother escaped from the train and returned to Warsaw. She eventually made it across the Russian border.



Several months later my family was loaded into cattle cars and deported to Siberian labor camps in a journey that lasted six weeks. We wound up in a brick-making camp. We suffered from hunger and exposure, lacking suitable clothing in the frigid climate of Siberian winters.

In 1942, the USSR recognized the Polish Government in Exile and my family was set free to leave the camp. We headed south to Uzbekistan, hoping for milder climate and a more plentiful food supply. Instead, we found ourselves in an impoverished village where we had no work or food.

To prevent the children from starving, my parents placed us in an orphanage for Jewish children. While there, my father died of dysentery. After the war, my family returned to Poland and I was placed in an orphanage in Cracow where I remained until I was 17.

The family immigrated to Israel, where I married an American man. A few years later I moved to the United States.

**Occupation after the war:** Hospital Administrator

**Spouse:** Not married now. My husband was a physician

**Child(ren):** Dr. Dan Saperstein, psychologist, writer. Naomi Saperstein, writer, university teacher, died in a car accident. Avuer Saperstein, disabled

**Grandchild(ren):** Three

**What do you think helped you to survive?**

Inner strength and a zest for living. Being with other children who were not with their parents

**What message would you like to leave for future generations?**

Only in a country where all minorities have full rights and freedom can Jews as a minority lead a private and communal life according to its tradition and values. Become active towards this objective, don't just be a bystander with good intentions. Learn about your history and heritage as a Jew and be proud of who you, we are.



# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

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### Rene Lichtman

**Name at Birth:** Rene Lichtman

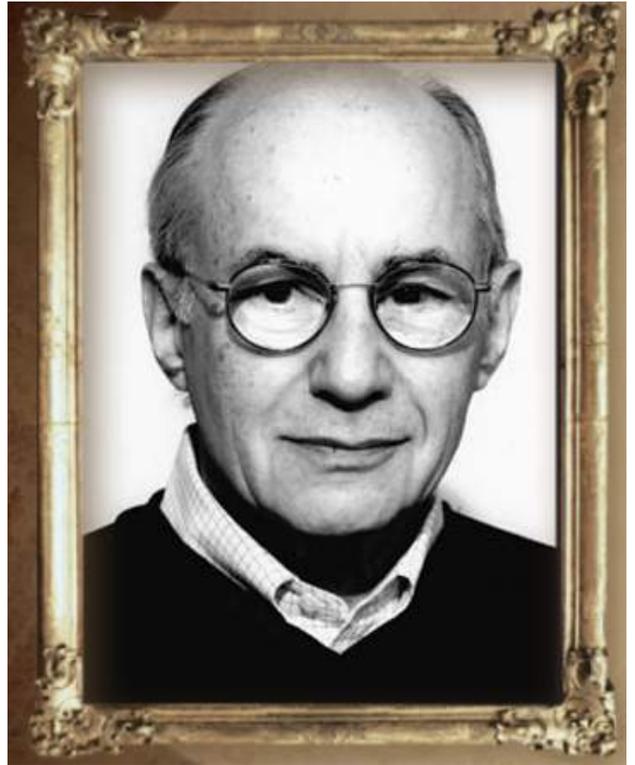
**Date of Birth:** December 4, 1937

**Where were you born?** Paris, France

**Where did you grow up?** Paris, France (until age 13)

**Father's name, occupation:** Jacob Lichtman, tailor. He was killed while serving in the French army after the German invasion of France

**Mother's name, occupation:** Helen Zajdman (Seidman), homemaker



**Immediate family:** My parents and I

**Extended family:** Large extended family

**Who Survived:** Me and my mother; an uncle, aunt, and four cousins.

My parents came to Paris from Poland in the 1930's. I was 2 1/2 years old when the war broke out. I stayed in a small private house, or "day care" that was run by a French woman, Anne Lepage, outside of Paris in the small town of Le Vert-Galant. When the war broke out, Mrs. Lepage and her husband offered to hide me. Mrs. Lepage was very protective of me, to try to ensure that I would not be discovered as a Jewish child. She shielded me not to go outside and to stay away from her neighbors.

My mother visited me periodically during the first part of the war. In 1942, however, my mother went into hiding herself with neighbors in her apartment building in Paris. Mrs. Lepage thought my mother

had died and had me baptized. When the war ended, I was 6 ½ years old. My mother survived and came for me. It was a difficult transition leaving my "French mother" to return to my Jewish birth mother.



In 1945, I began school in Paris and slowly learned what it meant to be Jewish. I also continued my relationship with my French family.

In 1950, my mother came to the US and remarried. I moved to the USA in 1950, at age 13, where I became "an American kid." I would visit my "French mother" periodically. Eventually, both of my Christian Rescuers passed away. I have visited their graves to pay my respects. I have found some degree of closure.

**Occupation:** Artist and health education

**When and where married:** 1971

**Spouse:** Cathay Lichtman

**Child(ren):** Joshua, David, Risa

**What do you think helped you survive?**

I think the love of my French mother in the early years. Also the hard work of my strong, natural mother, who worked in the sweatshops of New York to help support us, was an important role model for me.

**What message would you like to leave for future generations?**

Be tolerant and get to know other people so you won't fall for stereotyping. We were stereotyped, and that led to anti-Semitism. Also, don't be a bystander. The people who saved both my mother and I were normal people who took a position. I think they knew the danger they were taking to save our lives.

To learn more about this survivor, please visit these sites:

<http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/lichtman/>

<http://www.holocaustcenter.org/index.php?option=comcontent&task=view&id=6>

# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

### FILM'S RELEVANCE

While we may assume the atrocities of the Holocaust are known by all US citizens, recent surveys show just how little Americans actually know about this dark period of world history that touched so many of our Jewish brothers and sisters.

We are certain by bridging our greatest generation with our current generation (Gen z), acting as ambassadors of the Holocaust survivors' stories through this film, we will be able to broaden the understanding for not only our current generation, but for generations to come as well.

# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

### About the Producer & Team

Keith Famie, now 60 years old, has been creating - from concept to production - award-winning documentary films that have enabled so many people from various walks of life to see their story come to life at sold-out community leader premieres, film festivals and broadcast on PBS. He founded his company, Visionalist Entertainment Productions, in 1997 with the vision and mission to help others tell their stories that can then help the rest of us better understand our own journey through life. Quite often, the subjects are complicated and emotional to produce. Two of our most recent productions are ***Those on the Front Lines of Cancer***, a three-hour film now starting to air throughout Michigan as well as nationally, hosted by JoAnne Purtan and ***Those on the Front Lines of Alzheimer's & Dementia***, a two-hour film also hosted by JoAnne Purtan.

Over the years, Keith and his team have had the opportunity to feature Holocaust survivors as well as the Holocaust Memorial Center in several films, including:

- Detroit Our Greatest Generation
  - Featured: Guy Stern & Sonny Elliot
- Our Polish Story
  - Story of the Home Army
  - Filming at Auschwitz Birkenau and Majdanek
- Embrace of Aging
  - Featured: Lola Taubman
- Maire's Journey
  - Filming session with Henrietta Weisberg at the Holocaust Memorial Center in front of the train car sponsored by Henrietta & Alvin Weisberg.

Award-winning cinematographer, Kevin Hewitt, has been working with Keith for the last twenty-plus years. Besides filming with Keith and his team at Auschwitz Birkenau, Kevin has also filmed at that location for other productions.

Keith's full bio and body of work, attached.

# Shoah

## *Ambassadors*

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### Howard Lupovitch

HISTORIAN

**Occupation:** Associate Professor at Wayne State University

**Bio:** Professor Howard Lupovitch is a fourth-generation Detroit, and a graduate of the University of Michigan and Columbia University, where he earned a PhD in History. He has taught at Cornell University, Colby College, the University of Western Ontario, and the University of Michigan, where he was also a Fellow at the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic

Studies. He is currently Professor of History and the Director of the Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies at Wayne State University. Professor Lupovitch is the author of *Jews at the Crossroads: Tradition and Accommodation during the Golden Age of the Hungarian Nobility* and, more recently, *Jews and Judaism in World History*. He recently completed a history of the Jews of Budapest and is currently writing a history of the Neolog Movement.



# Keith Famie

Director/Producer



Director/Producer Keith Famie was, for many years, known as a celebrity chef and a metro Detroit restaurateur. He was selected as one of America's "Best New Chefs" in 1989 by Food and Wine magazine; Esquire Magazine chose his restaurants as "Best New Restaurant" in America on two separate occasions.

Famie was also a finalist on the 2001 reality television series, "Survivor, the Australian Outback."

Keith hosted his own Food Network series, "Keith Famie's Adventures," traveling the world documenting cooking styles from the plains of Africa to monk monasteries of Taiwan, to the lifestyle of Key West. In 2004, the Adventure Chef embarked on a new journey - documentary filmmaking. "I didn't want to be the 'Adventure Chef' guy anymore. I wanted to help people tell their stories."

Since that life-changing decision, Famie has been awarded eleven Michigan Emmys and been nominated several other times for his rich, human-interest storytelling, from ethnic documentaries to military tribute films. He and his team at Visionalist Entertainment Productions create informative, entertaining films that touch a wide audience.

In 2013, Keith produced a seven-part series called "The Embrace of Aging, the male perspective of growing old," which aired on PBS Detroit in 2013. And in 2015, Famie received his 11th Emmy for "The Embrace of Aging, the female perspective of growing old," the second 13-part film series in this trilogy.

In 2016, Visionalist Entertainment launched the eight-part series "The Embrace of Dying" how we deal with the end of life on DPTV/ PBS. "Maire's Journey," was completed after almost three years, a touching story about a 24-year-old cancer patient and the amazing journey she made in her afterlife. The film toured several film festivals. In November of that year, a two-hour film titled "Death Is Not the Answer," which looks at the complicated and emotional subject of depression and suicide, aired on DPTV/PBS in December 2016 and was nominated for two Michigan Emmys.

In 2017, Famie and his team at Visionalist Entertainment debuted a short 18-minute film "A day in the life of Elijah." The audience steps into the life of the 6'3" 17-year-old Elijah Craft from Detroit who shares his quest to learn to read as a senior in High school after being tested to find out he was at a third-grade reading level. Elijah's love for his mother and dedication to better himself is heartwarming and inspirational. This was awarded the Merit Award at the Global Shorts International film festival in Los Angeles. Famie and team also debuted on DPTV/PBS "Enlisted" which explores the reasons why young people join the military.

In 2018, "Those on the Front Lines of Alzheimer's & Dementia", aired on PBS and was nominated for a Michigan Emmy the following year. In the fall of 2019, "Those on the Front Lines of Cancer", released on PBS locally as well as nationally; it was also nominated for a Michigan Emmy. In the winter of 2019, we released "Blessed Solanus Casey's Journey to Sainthood" on PBS. Also published in 2019, was Keith's new book, *Living Through the Lens*, <http://www.keithfamie.com>. 2020 production plans have changed course slightly due to the unfortunate Covid-19 outbreak, but we are still off to a busy start with production plans underway for three documentaries, including "Shoah Ambassadors", "End of Life Transitioning" and "Chromosomally Enhanced". For more information, please visit <https://www.v-prod.com>.

Outside of documentary production, Keith is involved in many charitable projects. In 2015, he was awarded the 2015 Diamond Award by the Association for Women in Communications Detroit Chapter. In 2017, Keith was presented the Media Award by the Gilda's Club of Metro Detroit. Over the years, Keith has been actively involved in several well-respected, Michigan-based 501(c)(3) organizations that support everything from children with cancer and hunger relief to veterans' issues.