

Everyday Objects:
Artifacts from Washington State Holocaust Survivors

Using primary sources to learn about the Holocaust

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Autograph Book

"This book belongs to Hester Waas."

January 25, 1939 - Hester was 12 years old when she received this journal.
Hester had her family members and friends sign the book with messages and drawings.

Hester's 15 year old brother Isaac wrote:

6 February 1939. There is in the world one pleasure for everybody whether happy or sad...Her name? Mother Nature!

Hester's brother and parents were deported to Auschwitz in 1942 and did not survive the Holocaust.

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Hester, 18 years old in 1945, taking care of the three van Westering children.

Hester Waas (now Hester Kool) grew up in the small coastal town of Zandvoort on the North Sea of The Netherlands.

Hester was thirteen years old when the Nazis invaded and occupied The Netherlands on May 10, 1940. The Nazis put in place new anti-Jewish laws, including forcing Jews to wear a yellow star sewn to their clothes. In an effort to concentrate the Jewish population, the Nazis ordered all Jews to move to restricted areas within Amsterdam. In May 1942 Hester and her family moved from her home town of Zandvoort into her aunt's apartment in Amsterdam.

Hester and her family lived in Amsterdam for only a few months. In July 1942, the Nazis began mass roundups of Jews within Amsterdam. In one of these roundups, the Nazis ordered Hester's father, mother and brother, along with many other Jews, into the city's Opera House. Hester had a special work permit – her name was not on the Nazi's list of Jews to collect and deport.

The group was forced to stay in the Opera House for several days. They were all transported to Westerbork, a transit camp in The Netherlands, and then to Auschwitz. Hester's father, mother and brother were killed in Auschwitz.

"Shortly after my parents left, I was approached by my girlfriend, Rosa Cymbalist, who, to my surprise, worked for the Dutch Resistance. She found a place where I could go into hiding. I took my yellow star off and got a new identification card with a new name, 'Helen Waasdorp.' My girlfriend was my first rescuer. She was all of 15 years old. I will always remember her courage."

Hester was told to take the train to the city of Overveen in The Netherlands. There she was to meet Mr. van Westering, the local church organist, at the church in Overveen—he would then decide if he could take her in. "Because I did not 'look' or 'sound' Jewish, he accepted me." Hester went to live with the van Westering family.

"The van Westerings had three children and my duties involved taking care of them and cleaning the house. I was not allowed to leave the house. I ate alone and slept in a room in the attic. I was very lonely.

"I do not have fond memories of my time in hiding. In fact, I could not wait to leave. Many social workers were involved because he [Mr. van Westering] claimed he was my foster father and wanted me to stay. He said I was a part of their family. I never felt a part of their family. I only worked there and was not included in conversation or meals. I still feel bad about remembering this time because even though I am grateful for being rescued, my feelings toward him are not good."

After the war ended, Mr. van Westering worked hard to prevent Hester from leaving his home.

"My girlfriend was my first rescuer. She was all of 15 years old."

"I ran away to the home of my aunt, uncle, and cousin in Amsterdam. The thought of being caught filled me with fear. I was afraid of Mr. van Westering."

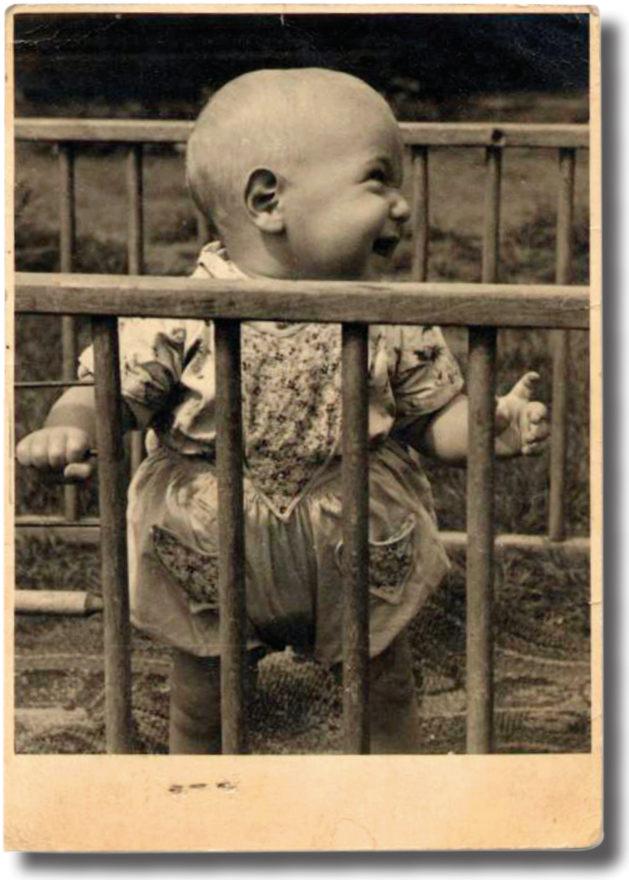
Hester stayed in Amsterdam for two years before immigrating to the United States in 1947. "There was nothing left for me in Holland. I wanted to start a new life."

One month after arriving in New Jersey, Hester married her husband, Sam Kool. Together they are now proud parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.

Twenty years after her arrival, Hester and her husband ran across an old suitcase amidst their belongings. "There was my book," Hester recounts, "waiting for me to remember."

Hester began telling her story in 1995, encouraged by her children's questions and by seeing an image of Zandvoort at an Anne Frank exhibit. "It is important that kids hear from a survivor about what happened to us."

Hester, age 20, with her grandfather in New York, 1947. Hester had been in New York only about one week when this photo was taken. Hester's grandfather had come to the U.S. from Holland several years earlier.



Baby Picture

"Until we received this photo in 1946 we did not know he existed.
He is Hans Phillip Weinberg, the only son of Ruth and Walter Weinberg."
– Judith Adler, Seattle resident

Hans was 10 months old when this photo was taken in 1943.
For Judith Adler, this single picture is the only evidence that she once had a cousin, Hans.
The baby was murdered during the Holocaust.

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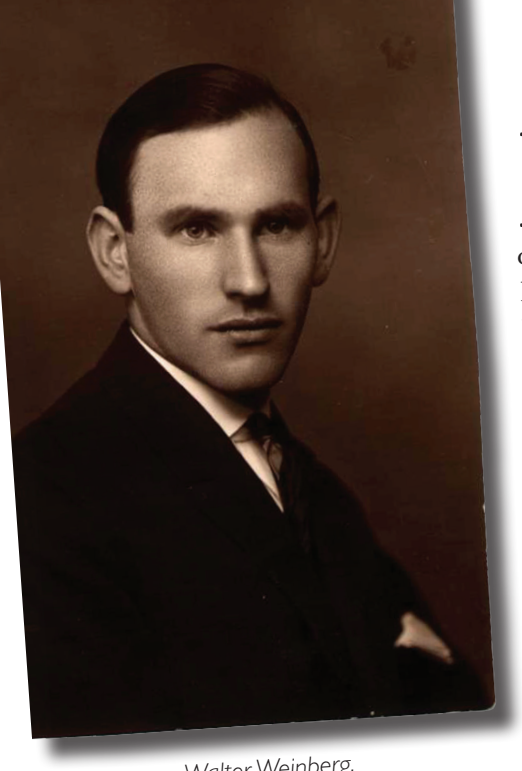


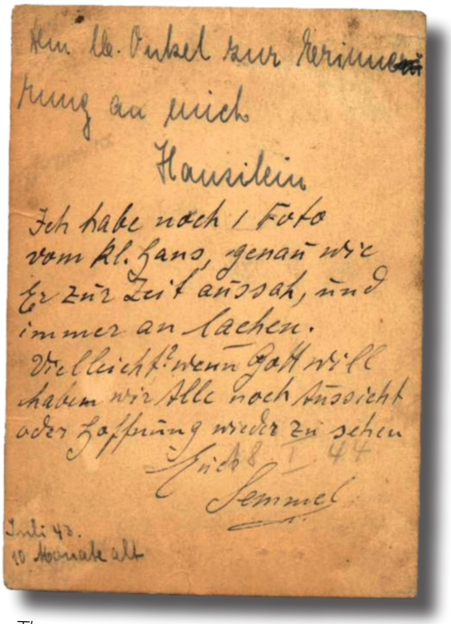
Walter Weinberg.

In May 1939, six months after *Kristallnacht,* or "The Night of Broken Glass,"* Walter Weinberg boarded the *St. Louis* in Germany with a visa bound for Cuba. The ship carried over 900 passengers, almost all of them Jews fleeing the Third Reich. When the ship arrived in Cuba, the Cuban government refused entry to the passengers. The Captain of the ship, Gustav Schroeder, sailed to Florida, but the U.S. State Department and the White House would not allow the passengers to enter the U.S. Finally, after thirty-one days at sea, four countries agreed to admit the passengers: Holland, Belgium, France and England.

Walter landed in Belgium and was reunited with his wife, Ruth. Both were interned in Westerbork, a camp established by the Dutch government for illegal Jewish refugees. From Westerbork, the Nazis deported Ruth and Walter to Theresienstadt, a ghetto and concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. In the ghetto, Ruth and Walter found Walter's Uncle Semmel and his aunt, Ida.

Ruth Weinberg.

Hans Phillip was born to Ruth and Walter in either Westerbork or Theresienstadt. When Walter learned he was to be "resettled" to the East, Ruth had the option of remaining in Theresienstadt with the baby or following her husband. She decided to take the baby and go with her husband. "Resettlement" turned out to be a euphemism, or code phrase, for deportation to concentration camps. The Nazis deported Ruth, Walter, and Hans to Auschwitz, where they were murdered.



The reverse side of Hans Phillip's photo.

Ruth gave this picture to Uncle Semmel before she left Theresienstadt. After Germany's defeat in 1945, Uncle Semmel sent the photo to his brother, David Weinberg, in Chicago. The photo was eventually passed on to David's granddaughter, Judith Adler, a Seattle resident.

The inscription on the back of the photo is in Ruth's handwriting: "To my Uncle to remember me by." The name beneath the photo is "Hansilein." Uncle Semmel writes, "I still have one picture of little Hans exactly as he looked at that time, and always laughing. Perhaps, God willing, we will all have the chance or the hope of seeing one another again."

The Memorial Book at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum describes the fate of Walter and Ruth Weinberg with one word, *"verschollen"* – disappeared. There is no mention of the baby. This photo is the only evidence that Hans Phillip Weinberg lived.

***Kristallnacht** - November 9 & 10, 1938. Organized destruction of Jewish homes, shops, and synagogues throughout Germany and Austria. The violence included arrests of individual Jews, instigated primarily by Nazi party officials and the SA (Nazi Storm Troopers).*

On display at the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center. Photograph by Harve Bergmann.

Badges

Pictured is a piece of cloth from a bolt of fabric.
Printed on the fabric are yellow "Stars of David" and the word "Jude" (Jew) printed in the center of each star. These Stars of David were to be cut (notice the outline) and sold to Jews. In many areas (see reverse side for a list) the Nazis required Jews to sew stars like these onto their clothing so they could easily be identified.

The original bolt of fabric was four feet wide by six feet long. It was most likely made sometime in 1942 in Poland. Mr. Thomas Blatt, author and survivor of the death camp Sobibor, found this piece in Poland in 1984. He brought the piece back to the United States for conservation.

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Members of the Arrow Cross (Hungarian Nazis) came to our house. They told us to stand in our backyard. They told us that in a few days large posters would be glued onto the walls outside the houses. We had to read and obey them. On them were the "Jewish Laws."

The first law told us to wear the yellow star. We had to wear it whenever we went outside. Where should we get those yellow stars? The Arrow Cross told us. We had to march to the store. Soldiers were all around us. We had to use our own money to buy yellow stars. We had to sew one onto each piece of clothing we had on.

Imagine how embarrassed we were when we had to go outside. People looked at us wherever we went. We knew in our hearts that something much more terrible would soon come.

- Noemi Ban, in her memoir, Sharing is Healing: A Holocaust Survivor's Story (2006). Noemi Ban is a member of the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center's Speakers Bureau.

Fanny Wald, a local Holocaust survivor, wearing an armband. Poland, circa 1940.

This star was worn in the Lodz Ghetto in Poland. On display at the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center. Photo by Harve Bergmann.

"J" stands for Jood (Jew) in Flemish/Dutch, also for Juif (Jew) in French, the two languages spoken in Belgium. This star was worn by Martha Schnabel-Bloch (1889-1991), the grandmother of local Holocaust survivor Robert Herschkowitz.

Jood—Dutch for "Jew." This star was worn by Elli Metzelaar, the mother of local Holocaust survivor, Peter Metzelaar, in Amsterdam, Holland.

One time my mother and my cousin got caught not wearing the armband. The reason you didn't want to wear them was because anybody can throw rocks at you or hit you, because who was going to protect you? Nobody was out to protect the Jew. So if people went to an area where they were afraid to walk with the armband, they might take it off.*

Well, the police did catch my mother and my cousin not wearing it. My mother they beat with a ball, a rubber ball, but inside was a piece of steel and her arms were beaten up, were all swollen. My cousin was about seventeen years old, they made her clean an outhouse with her hands.

- Henry Friedman in the video "Never Again I Hope" produced by the Holocaust Center (1994). Henry Friedman is a member of the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center's Speakers Bureau.

***Yellow stars** were used by the Nazis to identify Jews in France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Alsace, Bohemia, Slovakia, parts of Poland, parts of Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania.
White armbands with a blue star of David were used to identify Jews in parts of Poland, east and upper Silesia.
Yellow armbands were used to identify Jews in parts of Greece, Serbia, Belgrade, and Sofia.

On display at the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center.
On loan from the family of Siegfried Fedrid. Photo by Harve Bergmann.

Blanket

Siegfried (Fred) Fedrid was born deaf to Jewish parents who were also deaf.
In 1944, Fred was deported to Auschwitz where he obtained this woolen blanket.
He managed to keep this blanket while in Dachau and Dachau's sub-camps.
Later, in America, Fred explained that this single blanket could keep him and five other men warm.

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A seven year-old Siegfried "Fred" Fedrid pictured with his mother, an aunt, and other cousins in Vienna, circa 1927. Fred was the only survivor.

Siegfried "Fred" Fedrid was born in April 1920 in Vienna, Austria. Fred was born deaf to Jewish parents who were also deaf. In 1936 Fred graduated from the School for the Deaf in Vienna. At 16 years old, he began an apprenticeship in a custom tailor shop. He trained there until 1938, when the Nazis forced the owner of the shop, a Jewish man, to close his business.

In October of 1941, the Gestapo arrested Fred and his family. They were sent to the Lodz Ghetto in Poland. The Lodz Ghetto, surrounded by barbed wire fence, was crammed with more than 150,000 Jewish people. The Germans established factories in the ghetto, and the Jews were used as slave labor.

That winter in the ghetto was bitterly cold. Fred's father, suffering from starvation, froze to death. Fred's mother died of starvation several months later.

While the working conditions were terrible, Fred was lucky to have a job as a tailor – a job meant food and life. For long hours he was forced to work in a factory altering uniforms from dead soldiers to fit current recruits.

The Nazis liquidated the ghetto in the summer of 1944. Fred was deported to Auschwitz, and from there he was taken to Dachau in Germany. He was liberated by the American army at the beginning of May 1945 near Dachau.

When Fred returned to Vienna to look for his friends and relatives, he found no one. Further, he was told that the Nazis had sold all of the possessions he and his parents had left behind. He had lost everything.

"He wanted people to know that deaf people are capable, intelligent, and able to support themselves financially."

Fred was hired at a custom tailor shop, lived in a rented room, and supported himself.

"It was very important to him to never rely on handouts or government subsidies to live. He wanted people to know that deaf people are capable, intelligent, and able to support themselves financially," writes his daughter Eleanor Corner in an article published by the Jewish Deaf Community Center in California in 1999.

Fred immigrated to New York where his aunts and uncle lived. There he met his future wife Doris Rosenstrauch, also a deaf Holocaust survivor.

This metal pin was worn by Fred Fedrid in a displaced persons (DP) camp after the war. The pin bears his number and is imprinted with the word "Taubstumm" meaning "deaf and mute." It is unclear whether Fred received this pin from soldiers while in Dachau, or if American liberators fashioned the pin for him.

On display at the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center.
Photo by Harve Bergmann.

Bowl from Allach

This bowl was used by a woman who was a slave laborer in Allach,
a labor camp in Germany. Allach was a sub-camp of Dachau.

The woman survived Allach, and when the camp was liberated in 1945,
she took the bowl with her to Feldafing, a displaced persons (DP) camp in Germany.
There she met Magda Schaloum, and gave her the bowl to use.

Magda, born in Hungary, was a survivor of Auschwitz, and slave labor camps Plaszow, Augsburg and Muldorf. She used this bowl as a cooking pot while in Feldafing, and brought it to Seattle in 1951.

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Magda Schaloum is a member of the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center's Speakers Bureau.

Magda in 1947 at Feldafing, a displaced persons camp in Germany.

Magda Schaloum was born in Gyor, Hungary. The Nazis occupied Hungary in early 1944 and anti-Jewish laws were quickly put into place. Mass roundups and deportations of the country's Jewish population to Auschwitz began just a few months later. In June 1944, the Nazis deported Magda, her mother, and brother to Auschwitz.

"When we got to the train station, they put us in a cattle wagon. When we were inside, I looked out the window and saw my father standing just outside. He was holding in his hand a package and trying to come up to the train. I ran to the door and I thought, well, let me give him a last hug. And of course they wouldn't let me get off the train. He couldn't come up so he stayed there crying and we were standing at the window and we couldn't do anything. And then the train started to move. That was the last time I have seen my father."

– Magda Schaloum, from "Never Again I Hope," a video project produced by the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center (1994).

After arriving in Auschwitz, Magda and her family were separated. Magda was sent to a series of slave labor camps, including Plaszow (near Krakow, Poland), Augsburg, and then later to Muhldorf, both in Germany.

Her stay in Muhldorf was short. The Nazis rounded up the prisoners, including Magda, and loaded them into train cars. The Nazis planned to transport the prisoners to an unknown location, and murder them.

As the train cars began to travel, the Nazis plan was interrupted by Allied troops that intercepted the train and liberated the prisoners.

Magda Schaloum came to Seattle in 1951. She brought with her this bowl. "Why give up something that could be useful?" she explains.

This bowl from Allach has an imprint on it (see the photo above).

Under the lip of the bowl are engraved the letters **BMW.** A capital letter "E" is to the right of this. BMW is the logo for ***Bayerische Motern-Werke.***

BMW operated factories in the sub-camps of Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps, including Allach. The factories produced and built parts for Nazi warplanes.

In Allach, Jewish inmates were forced to work in the BMW factories. In 1944 there were as many as 5,000 prisoners working at the BMW factory at Allach, Germany.

Today BMW is best known for their cars.

On display at the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center.
Photo by Harve Bergmann.

Bowl from Lenzing

When I was liberated, I still had my dish and didn't let it go.
I took it to America and all the way to Seattle…It's just a simple dish.
-Survivor Ilse Huppert Wolf

Ilse Huppert Wolf received this bowl in Lenzing, a sub-camp of the concentration camp Mauthausen in Austria.

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I worked eight hours making synthetic fibers from cellulose using liquid sulfur. I secretly made a length of silken rope to tie my bowl around my waist so I would not lose it. One had to have a bowl in order to receive the daily ration of food. We worked three shifts. We were hungry. Walking back and forth from the factory to where we slept I was so hungry I looked to pull up a dandelion. I was so happy to find one.
-Survivor Ilse Huppert Wolf

Ilse Huppert Wolf was born in Vienna, a city known for being an important center of Jewish culture and education. Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938; the Germans quickly put into place anti-Jewish laws. Jews were increasingly excluded and forbidden to hold certain positions and jobs. The German SS* and police began systematic deportations of Austria's Jews to ghettos and camps. In 1942 Ilse was deported to Theresienstadt, a concentration camp in what is now the Czech Republic.

After two years of imprisonment in Theresienstadt, the Nazis deported Ilse in a cattle car to Auschwitz, in Poland. She, along with 500 girls, was transferred from Auschwitz to the slave labor camp Lenzing, in Austria. Lenzing was a sub-camp of the concentration camp Mauthausen.

Lenzing was run by the Nazis. The prisoners there were forced to work in a factory owned by the company Lenzinger Zellwolle A.G. Today, **Lenzinger Zellwolle A.G.** is one of the biggest manufacturers in the world of cellulose fibers for textile and non-textile uses.

Ilse was in Lenzing from November 1944 until May 5th, 1945 when she was liberated by American soldiers.

Ilse was one of the lucky few. The German SS and police deported over 47,000 Austrian Jews to camps during the Holocaust. Almost all of them were murdered.

This enamel bowl was issued to Ilse Huppert Wolf at Lenzing. On the bottom of the bowl are the words ***"Kol Waffen SS"*** and ***"Lublin."***

The "Waffen SS" was a powerful select group of the SS that were armed. The Waffen SS eventually numbered close to half a million and took over the role of the German Armed Forces.

The bowl was probably made at a camp in the Lublin District, possibly Majdanek in Poland. In this area three major killing centers were built— Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka.

The bowl, along with a spoon and a section of rope, were given to the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center by the late Mel Wolf, in memory of his wife Ilse Huppert Wolf.

***SS – Schutzstaffel.** *An elite Nazi force. The SS controlled the German police and the concentration camp system. Among other things, the SS was responsible for security, identification, and population policy. The SS was known to be excessive in their force and brutality.*

On display at the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center. Photograph by Harve Bergmann.

Bowl from Sobibor

THOMAS BLATT'S BOWL FROM SOBIBOR DEATH CAMP

Each of us was given our own eating pot. Each day at five I picked up my pot from under the pillow of my bunk and joined the others in line for supper. When my turn came, the cook poured out about 16 ounces of black liquid that tasted like sweetened warm water, I received dark bread with a warning that it should last me until the next evening.

-Thomas Blatt

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Thomas Blatt, age 17

Thomas "Toivi" Blatt was born in Izbica in the Lublin district of Poland in 1927. After the Nazi occupation of his town in 1939, Thomas escaped from the ghetto in Izbica, but was caught and imprisoned at the age of 15. He managed to escape prison again and return to family in Izbica.

On April 28, 1943, the Nazis deported Thomas and his family to the Sobibor death camp. His family was murdered shortly after they arrived at Sobibor. Thomas was selected to be a part of the camp's labor force.

In Sobibor, Thomas became associated with several prisoners, including captured Jewish officers from the Soviet Army, who were planning a revolt.

We knew our fate. We knew that we were in an extermination camp and death was our destiny...We had no dreams of liberation; we hoped merely to destroy the camp and to die from bullets rather than from gas. We would not make it easy for the Germans.
-Thomas Blatt, in his memoir From the Ashes of Sobibor: A Story of Survival (1997).

By October 1943, 250,000 Jewish people had been murdered at Sobibor.

"For all those left behind."

On October 14, 1943 the prisoners of Sobibor revolted. This revolt had been carefully planned for months by a select group of prisoners, including Russian prisoners of war, within Sobibor. The plan was to quietly kill Nazi officers one by one. The prisoners could then overtake the remaining guards and escape.

300 prisoners (out of the 600 who attempted to escape) broke out of the camp. Unfortunately, many of these escapees lost their lives on the minefields surrounding the camp.

The camp was closed shortly after the revolt and the Germans burned it down in an attempt to get rid of any evidence.

The revolt "made my improbable survival possible," explains Thomas.

Of the 300 prisoners who escaped Sobibor, only 53 lived to witness the liberation of the region by the Soviet army in 1944. Thomas Blatt, age 17, was one of them.

Before the revolt took place, Thomas buried his eating bowl in the sand of his barracks with valuables placed inside. Late in 1944, he recovered his bowl. Why? "For all those left behind."

Thomas Blatt was a member of the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center's Speakers Bureau for many years. He is the author of two books, *From the Ashes of Sobibor* (1997) and *Sobibor: The Forgotten Revolt* (2004). Thomas was also a consultant for the 1987 movie "Escape from Sobibor." He currently resides in Santa Barbra, California.