

Program Marking the Introduction of Legislation to Honor American Rescuers of the Holocaust with a Congressional Gold Medal

Sponsored by
The Institute for the Study of Rescue and Altruism in the Holocaust,
a nonprofit corporation



Schedule of Events

Monday, April 17, 2023

People arrive in Washington, DC

6:00 pm Dinner get-together with families of diplomats and friends



Tuesday, April 18, 2023

8:00 a.m. Leave hotel for US Capitol.

9:30 - 11:00 VIP Tour of US Capitol, organized by Congressperson Judy Chu, with stop at the Raoul Wallenberg bust in Emancipation Hall of the Capitol Visitor's Center. (Photo opportunity.)

12:00-12:45 Program to introduce Congressional Gold Medal legislation to honor American rescuers of the Holocaust.

11:30 PM - Set up

12:00 PM - Welcome – **Eric Saul**, Executive Director, Institute for the Study of Rescue and Altruism in the Holocaust;
Presentation of plaque to **Representative Judy Chu** by **Carolyn Bryant**

12:05 PM - **Representative Judy Chu** (D-Pasadena) remarks;
presentation of plaque to **Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi**

Other Congresspeople, Co-Leads and Sponsors

12:10 PM – **Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi**

12:15 PM – **Anna Eleanor Seagraves-Fierst**, great granddaughter of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt; presentation of plaque to Anna Eleanor Seagraves-Fierst

12:20 PM – **Ambassador Eric Rubin**, American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)

12:25 PM – **Ambassador Peter Rosenblatt**, nephew of American rescuer Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt, officer of the American Jewish Committee

12:28 PM – **Laurene Sherlock**, granddaughter of American rescuer Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt

12:33 PM – **Abigail Bingham Endicott**, daughter of American rescuer Consul Hiram “Harry” Bingham, IV; she will sing a song dedicated to rescuers of the Holocaust

12:36 PM – **Artemis Joukowsky**, grandson of Martha and Waitstill Sharp, Unitarian Service Committee rescuers

12:39 PM – **Gary Krupp**, Director of the Pave the Way Foundation, author, philanthropist, Knight of the Equestrian Order, Vatican

12:42 PM – **Dan Smith RuBoss**, nephew of rescuer Vratislav Stula, of Czech Aide, representing American rescuer Dr. Donald A. Lowrie, International YMCA, founder and leader of the Nimes Committee

12:45 PM – Close

Note: The bill introduction ceremony will be videotaped and will be available to the participants and will be posted online. Still photography will also be available.

1:00-2:00 Lunch at US Capitol (no host). Cost will be \$12 -15.

2:00-3:30 Speaker's program in Emancipation Hall, at the Capitol Visitor's Center. The moderator will be Eric Saul, Director of the Visas for Life Project. The speakers will be:

- **Abigail Bingham Endicott**, daughter of Hiram "Harry" Bingham, IV
- **Laurene Sherlock**, granddaughter of diplomatic rescuer Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt
- **Gary Krupp**, Director of the Pave the Way Foundation, author, philanthropist
- **Rabbi Abraham Skorka**, former chief rabbi of Buenos Aires, close friend of Pope Francis
- **Val Kogan**, representing Carl Lutz, introducing **Agnes Hirschi**, stepdaughter of rescuer Carl Lutz (video recording)
- Showing of **Carl Lutz** documentary film
- **Christy Marella**, educator, Rosa International Middle School, New Jersey
- **Others TBD**

6:00 Informal dinner (no host), for those who wish to attend.

Note: There may be an embassy that wishes to host a reception in honor of the Visas for Life/State Department/AFSA program. If this is the case, we will attend this evening reception.

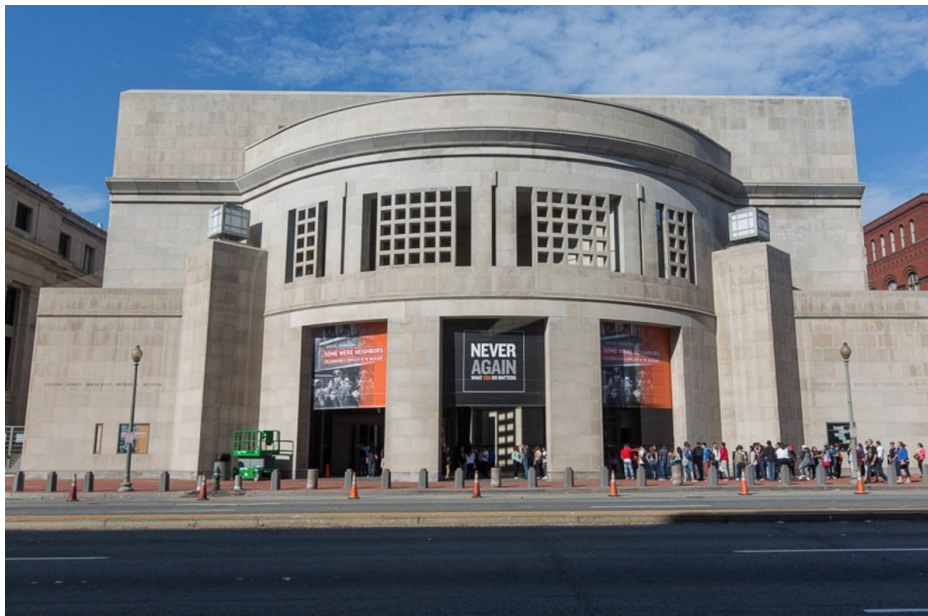


Wednesday, April 19, 2023

10:00-11:30 Tour of the White House

We are requesting a meeting with senior White House and administration officials. There will be a photo opportunity at the White House with our Visas for Life families.

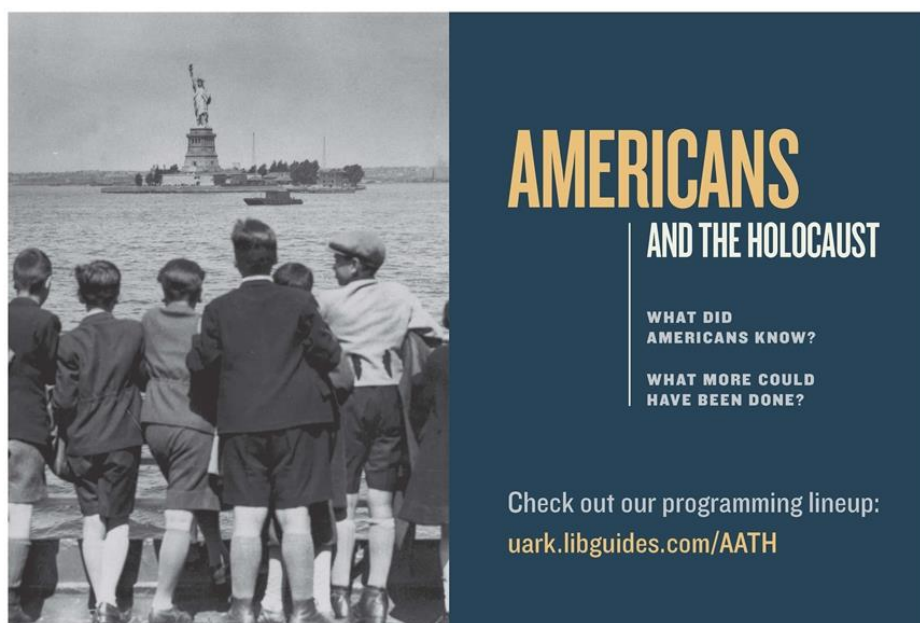
12:30-1:30 Lunch at the cafeteria at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (no host)



1:30-3:30 Tour of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's special exhibit, *Americans and the Holocaust*.

Meeting with the Director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum or senior administrator.

6:00 Informal dinner (no host)



This exhibition was made possible by the generous support of lead sponsor Jeannie & Jonathan Levine. Additional major funding was provided by the Billberg-John & Allen 2nd, Elias Spungen & Rob, Nancy & Jim, and Jane and Daniel Och. The Museum's exhibitions are also supported by the Lester Robbins and Sheila Johnson Robbins Traveling and Special Exhibitions Fund, established in 1990.

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Thursday, April 20, 2023

10:30 AM Yom Ha Shoah annual commemoration at the US Capital
(Emancipation Hall)

“For the first time since 2019, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the national commemoration will take place at the US Capitol—on Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 10:30 a.m. ET. As we lead the nation in remembering the six million Jews who were murdered, honoring the survivors, paying tribute to the rescuers, and celebrating the liberators, we are reminded of the power of their history to inspire people everywhere to confront antisemitism, all forms of group-targeted hate, and genocide.”

End of Program

The following embassies will be invited to attend the ceremony. These are areas of rescue where Americans operated.

Czechoslovakia

France

Germany

International Red Cross

Israel

Italy

Sweden

Switzerland

Turkey

Vatican

The following Members of Congress will be sponsoring the bill to issue a Congressional Gold Medal to American rescuers and rescue agencies in the Holocaust. They will be invited to attend the ceremony.

Representative Judy Chu
D-California, 27th District (Pasadena)
Kristen Torres, Kristen.Torres@mail.house.gov

Representative Steve Cohen
D-Tennessee, 9th District (Memphis)
Citron, Rachel Rachel.Citron@mail.house.gov

Representative Josh Gottheimer
D-New Jersey, 5th District (Bergen, Passaic, Sussex, and Warren counties)
Olesky, Jackson Jackson.Olesky@mail.house.gov

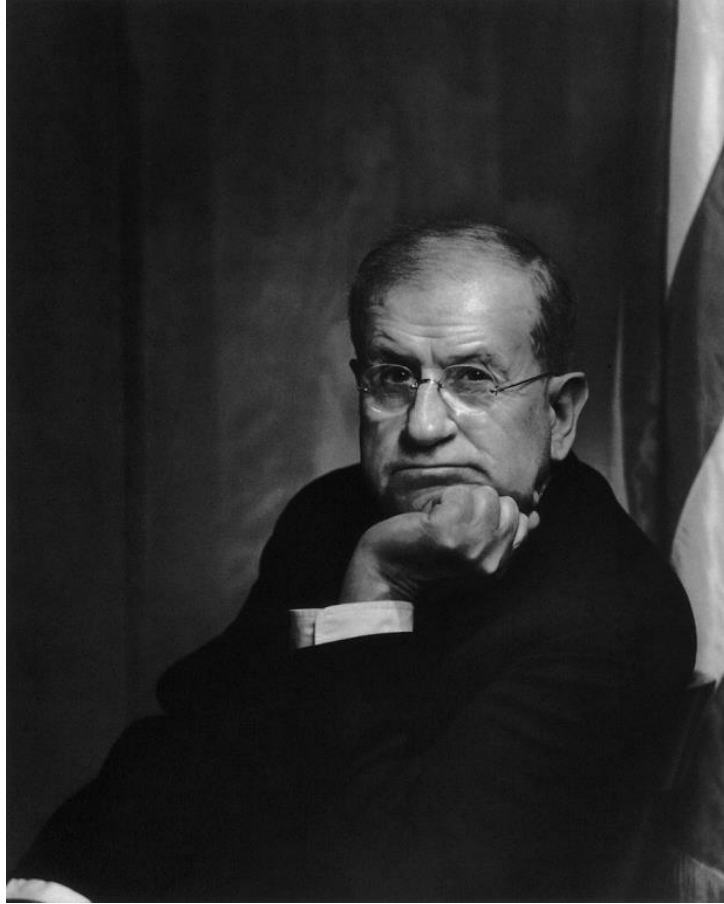
Representative Jamie Raskin
D-Maryland, 8th District (Montgomery, Carroll, and Frederick Counties)
Marshall, Rachel Rachel.Marshall@mail.house.gov

Biographies of American Rescuers Whose Families are Attending.



Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady of the United States

Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin Roosevelt, was an early advocate for establishing rescue activities to save European refugees from Nazi-occupied countries. Her advocacy helped establish the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC), in New York City. Mrs. Roosevelt intervened on behalf of Varian Fry and the ERC with the State Department on a number of occasions. Mrs. Roosevelt also supported the Wagner-Rogers bill in Congress. She committed herself to supporting and endorsing every attempt to aid in rescuing refugees from Europe.



Harold Ickes, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, World War II

U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, was a strong advocate for providing refugees safe haven in the United States or its territories. Specifically, he recommended settling refugees in Alaska or in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Neither proposal was implemented. Ickes served as Secretary of the Interior, 1933-1946. Ickes supervised a successful project with the War Refugee Board to rescue nearly 1,000 refugees from an Italian internment camp. The refugees were brought to the U.S. Emergency Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario, Oswego, New York.

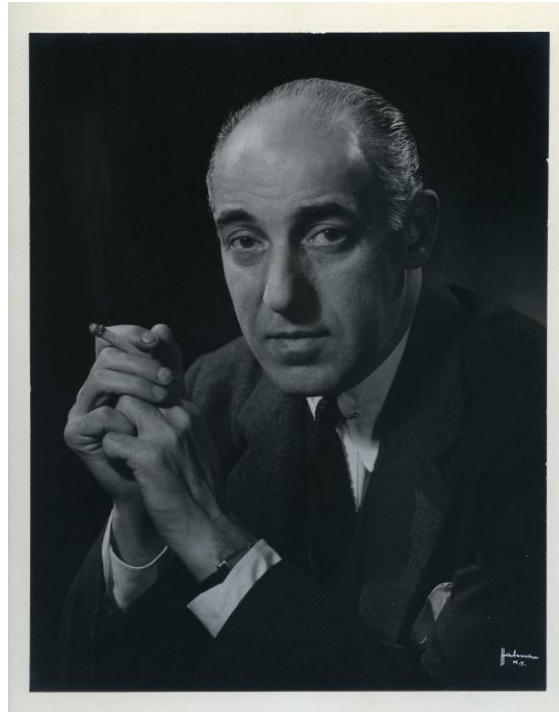


“Thomas Ludwig John D'Alesandro Jr. (August 1, 1903 – August 23, 1987) was an American politician who was a U.S. Representative from Maryland's 3rd congressional district (1939–1947) and subsequently 39th Mayor of Baltimore (1947–1959). Thomas was the father of Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, the first female Speaker of the House, and Thomas D'Alesandro III, also a Mayor of Baltimore.

“A Democrat, D'Alesandro served as a member of the Maryland State House of Delegates from 1926 to 1933. After serving in Annapolis, D'Alesandro was then appointed as General Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue, a post in which he served during 1933–1934. He then was elected to serve on the Baltimore City Council from 1935 to 1938.

“D'Alesandro was then elected to the 76th Congress and to the four succeeding Congresses, serving from January 3, 1939, until he resigned on May 16, 1947.

“While in Congress, D'Alesandro strongly supported the Bergson Group, a "political action committee set up to challenge the Roosevelt Administration's policies on the Jewish refugee issue during the Holocaust, and later lobbied against British control of Palestine" despite his equally strong support for Roosevelt's other policies. (Wikipedia)



Laurence A. Steinhardt, US Ambassador to USSR 1939-1942, and Turkey 1942-1945

Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt was the only Jewish senior member of the U.S. State Department prior to and during World War II. In 1939, President Roosevelt appointed Laurence Steinhardt Ambassador to the Soviet Union. This was a crucial and sensitive appointment, particularly in light of the recently signed Nazi-Soviet pact. With the outbreak of war and the Nazi invasion of Poland, Steinhardt took secret steps to help Eastern European Jews escape the Nazis. He was instrumental in negotiating the first lend-lease agreement with the Soviets and transferred the Embassy to Kuybyshev when Stalin moved the Soviet government thence from threatened Moscow. Early in 1942, Steinhardt was made Ambassador to Turkey, and for the next three years played a vital part in helping to win the Turkish republic to the Allied cause. Steinhardt was further instrumental in completing lend-lease agreements with Turkey. While in Turkey, Steinhardt was responsible for helping Jews throughout Eastern Europe. He worked with Jewish rescue and relief agencies and other diplomats, including Papal representative in Ankara, Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII, in helping to save Jews. Steinhardt also cooperated with the newly established U.S. War Refugee Board, and Ira Hirschmann, saving nearly 50,000 Jews. On March 28, 1950, Ambassador Steinhardt died in a U.S. embassy plane crash, while serving as U.S. Ambassador to Canada. This was his sixth ambassadorial post spanning a diplomatic career of 17 years serving the administrations of President Roosevelt and President Truman.



Hiram Bingham IV, US Vice Consul in Marseilles, France, 1940-1941

Hiram Bingham was the American Vice Consul in charge of visas, stationed in Marseilles, France, in 1940-1941. Shortly after the fall of France, Bingham, against the orders and policy of his superiors, issued visas, safe passes, and letters of transit to Jewish refugees. Many visas were falsified in order to protect the refugees from internment. Bingham helped set up the contacts and issued visas for the Emergency Rescue Committee, headed by Varian Fry. Bingham also worked with other rescue operations in Marseilles, including the American Friends' Service Committee (Quakers), the American Red Cross, the Unitarian Service Committee, the Mennonite Committee, and Jewish relief organizations. Bingham also worked with the Nîmes (Camps) Committee. He was, in part, responsible for saving several thousand Jews. Among them were many anti-Nazi activists, labor leaders, and Communists. He also rescued Jewish artists, intellectuals, writers and scientists, such as Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, André Breton, Heinrich Mann, and Jewish Nobel Prize winners. Bingham visited the concentration camps and facilitated issuing visas to Jews trapped in the Les Milles French concentration camp. In May 1941, Bingham helped the Quakers, the Nîmes Committee and the OSE rescue several hundred Jewish children by issuing US visas. These children left France in June 1941. In 2002, Bingham was presented the American Foreign Service Association Constructive Dissent award by the US Secretary of State. In 2005, Hiram Bingham was given a letter of commendation from Israel's Holocaust Museum. In 2006, a US commemorative postage stamp was issued in his honor.



Charles “Carl” Lutz, Consul for Switzerland in Budapest, Hungary, 1942-45, and Gertrud Lutz, Budapest, Hungary

Carl Lutz (1895-1975) was the first neutral diplomat in Budapest to rescue Jews. He is credited with inventing the *Schutzbrief* (protective letter) for Jewish refugees in Budapest. Carl Lutz held dual Swiss and American citizenship. After March 19, 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary and the new government of Döme Sztojaj closed the Hungarian borders to Jewish emigration. In tough negotiations with the Nazis and the Hungarian government, Lutz obtained permission to issue protective letters to 8,000 Hungarian Jews for emigration to Palestine. Using a ruse and interpreting the 8,000 “units” not as persons but as families, he and his staff issued tens of thousands of additional “protective letters.” He established 76 Swiss safe houses throughout Budapest and, with the help of his wife Gertrud, liberated Jews from deportation centers and death marches. In 1942-43, in cooperation with the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Lutz had helped 10,000 Jewish children and young people to emigrate to Palestine. Lutz worked with hundreds of Jewish volunteers who helped him process the protective letters and distribute them throughout Budapest. Lutz was told that as long as he stayed in Budapest, his protectees would survive. He is credited by Jewish relief agencies with saving 62,000 Jews from the Nazi Holocaust. Carl Lutz was made Righteous Among the Nations by Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Authority in 1965. In addition, he has been declared an honorary citizen of the State of Israel.



Sandor (Alexander) Kasza-Kasser, Secretary General of the Swedish Red Cross in Hungary, 1944-45

In April 1944, Kasser was appointed by Valdemar Langlet to be the Secretary General of the newly formed Swedish Red Cross in Budapest. As a volunteer, Kasser was given the responsibility to organize for Langlet the administration of the Swedish Red Cross in Hungary. Kasser designed the Swedish Red Cross protective papers. Initially, about 400 of these protective papers were issued to Jews in Budapest. He provided Jewish refugees with jobs in the Red Cross and he rented hospitals which were used to hide Jews. Kasser worked extensively with Raoul Wallenberg on numerous rescue missions to save Jews from Arrow Cross roundups and from death marches. He received the Righteous Among the Nations award from the State of Israel in July 1997. His wife, Elizabeth Kasser, was a Jewish volunteer for the Swedish legation in Budapest. She served primarily as an interpreter for Raoul Wallenberg. They became American citizens after the war.



War Refugee Board, US Treasury Department, 1944-45

The United States War Refugee Board (WRB) was created in response to the disclosed failure of the US State Department and other branches of the US government to aid and protect refugees in World War II. Until 1944, the US State Department, in fact, obstructed virtually all of the immigration of refugees to the safe haven of the United States.

By the end of 1944, the WRB played a crucial role in saving the lives of thousands of Jews and other refugees. Thousands of Jews were evacuated from Nazi-occupied territory, as were more than 20,000 non-Jews. More than 10,000 refugees were protected within Axis Europe by clandestine activities financed by the WRB. Further, the WRB took measures to protect refugees holding Latin American passports and visas. Diplomatic pressure by the WRB, reinforced by its program of threatening Nazis with post-war prosecution, was instrumental in saving thousands of Jews in Transnistria who were moved to safe areas in Romania. The WRB similarly placed diplomatic pressures on Nazi and Arrow Cross officials and helped end the deportation of the Jews of Budapest, Hungary. Thousands of Jews in Budapest survived the war, in part due to the efforts of the WRB. Raoul Wallenberg was acting as an agent of the War Refugee Board. At the time, the WRB's most publicized project was the evacuation and resettlement of 982 Jewish refugees who were brought from Italy to an old Army camp in Oswego, New York. The War Refugee Board was in part responsible for saving more than 200,000 Jews in Eastern Europe and the Balkans.



Varian Fry (right) with Daniel Beneditte in Marseilles, 1940-41

Varian Fry, Director, Emergency Rescue Committee, France, 1940-41

In 1940 American citizens formed the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC) to rescue individuals from France before they could be arrested and deported to French and German concentration camps. Varian Fry volunteered to head the rescue operations. In 1940, he was sent to Marseilles, in Vichy France. He was given a list of 200 refugees and \$3,000 with which to save them from the grip of the Gestapo. After coming to Marseilles, Fry opened a refugee relief agency under the cover name of the American Center for Relief (Centre Américaine de Secour) in the Hôtel Splendide in Marseilles. Fry immediately set out to provide financial support for refugees and to secure all the necessary papers to escape France. These papers included immigration visas, transit visas and destination or end visas.

Fry's activities on behalf of Jewish refugees were conducted largely in secret. These activities soon caught the eye of French officials and numerous protests were posted to the American consulate in Washington and France. The US State Department was fearful that Fry's unauthorized activities would violate US neutrality and cause a major diplomatic incident. US Secretary of State Cordell Hull sent a memorandum to the American embassies in Paris and Marseilles warning them of Fry's activities on behalf of refugees. In the fall of 1941, under pressure from the French government, Fry was ordered to leave France. In his 13 months in Marseilles, between August 1940 and the fall of 1941, Fry and his 50 operatives were able to rescue more than 2,000 people from France.



Reverend Waitstill and Martha Sharp, (USA), Southern France, Czechoslovakia

The Unitarian Service Committee recruited a young Unitarian minister, Waitstill Sharp, and his wife, Martha, to go to Czechoslovakia in early 1939 for an extended period of time. They remained in the country after the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia, and they were effective in their programs for relief and emigration. The success of the Sharps' activities increased momentum for the founding of the Unitarian Service Committee, which was officially launched in the Spring of 1940, for the purpose of helping endangered refugees. Robert Dexter became executive director of the organization, which set up an office in neutral Lisbon in the Spring of 1940.

Waitstill and Martha Sharp then represented the Unitarian Service Committee in the Marseilles area. They helped distribute relief supplies and medicine to needy refugees. They also helped Spanish Civil War refugees as well as Jews who were interned in the French camps. In 1940, the Sharps helped save a number of Jewish children by taking them to Spain. They also worked with the world YMCA, Czech Aide, the Emergency Rescue Committee, and the Nimes Committee, also known as the Camps Committee.



Mary Jayne Gold, Volunteer, Emergency Rescue Committee, Marseilles, France, 1940-41

Mary Jayne Gold was an American heiress who played a crucial role in rescuing European Jews and others, including artists, musicians, writers, and intellectuals, in escaping Nazi persecution in Marseilles and in Southern France.

In Marseille, she met Miriam Davenport, an American art student, and Varian Fry, an American journalist and intellectual. Fry, the head of the Emergency Rescue Committee, had \$3,000 and a list of refugees under imminent threat of arrest by the Gestapo or French Authorities.

Gold soon became one of the principal volunteers for the Emergency Rescue Committee, serving from 1940 to 1941. She went on numerous missions to help Jewish refugees. In addition, she financed some of the operations of the ERC. Along with other volunteers, she helped in sheltering refugees and organizing their escape through the mountains to Spain or by smuggling them aboard freighters sailing to either North Africa or ports in North or South America.

Before Fry was expelled from France, one of his last missions was to help release prisoners at the French concentration camp at Vernet. Fry had tried in vain to get them released and sent Mary Jayne Gold on a successful mission that resulted in them being freed.



**Dr. Donald Lowrie, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA),
Nimes Committee, Czech Aid**

Dr. Donald Lowrie worked for the North American and later the world service of the YMCA. Lowrie also worked with a number of other relief agencies in the French internment camps. He helped set up the YMCA relief activities in the unoccupied zone of Vichy. He worked closely with a Czech diplomat in Marseilles, Vladimir Vochoc, to distribute illegal passports. Lowrie also obtained visas from other diplomats, including Cambodian, Portuguese and Mexican. These documents helped Jewish refugees flee to Switzerland.

Lowrie coordinated the work of a number of relief agencies present in the internment camps and directed aid to the neediest individuals. Along with Tracey Strong, he set up YMCA relief headquarters for the Unoccupied Zone on the rue Pythéas. Like Varian Fry, Lowrie also engaged in clandestine and illegal activities with a group called Czech Aid. He worked closely with two

Czech refugees, Vratislav Stula and Slavomir Brzak. Both of them were in extreme danger.

Lowrie's best-known efforts, however, occurred in connection with a large-scale American attempt to rescue Jewish children abandoned when their parents were deported in 1942.

In November 1940 Lowrie helped set up the Coordination Committee for Relief Work in Internment Camps, commonly called the Nîmes Committee, because its monthly meetings were held there. The committee of twenty-five agencies devoted itself to relief work, primarily in the internment camps but also on behalf of individuals in Marseille. The Nîmes Committee collectively made reports on camp conditions, which Vichy must have taken seriously, because André Jean-Faure, the government's camp inspector, attended all meetings. Whether Vichy actually took notice of committee suggestions, perhaps as a concession to public opinion, or simply intended to keep track of the committee's activities is unclear.

There were a number of Jewish volunteers who worked in the YMCA. In addition, the YMCA cooperated with many Jewish rescue organizations.



Roderick W. Edmonds, Master Sergeant, 106th U.S. Infantry Division, 422nd Infantry Regiment, U.S. Army, World War II

During World War II Master Sergeant Roderick W. Edmonds was captured and became the ranking U.S. non-commissioned officer at the Stalag IX-A prisoner-of-war camp in Germany, where – at the risk of his life – he saved an estimated 200-300 Jews from being singled out from the camp for Nazi persecution and possible death.

On their first day in Stalag IX-A, January 27, 1945—as Germany's defeat was clearly approaching—the German commander, Siegmann, ordered Edmonds to assemble the Jewish-American soldiers and to present themselves the next morning so they could be separated from the other prisoners. Instead, Edmonds ordered all 1,275 POWs to assemble outside. The German commandant placed his pistol against Edmonds's head and demanded that he identify the Jewish soldiers under his command. Instead, Edmonds declared, "We are all Jews here," and told the commandant that if he wanted to shoot the Jews, he would have to shoot all of the prisoners. He then warned him that if he harmed any of them, he would be prosecuted for war crimes after the war ended—since the Geneva Conventions required prisoners to give only their name, rank, and serial number; religion was not required. The commandant backed down.

For his defense of Jewish servicemen at the POW camp, Edmonds, a Christian, was awarded the title Righteous Among the Nations, Israel's highest award for non-Jews who risked their own lives to save Jews during the Holocaust