

ARNOLD SAMUELS

Eyewitness to
the Holocaust



“The Weimar Republic, with all its liberal trappings and blessings, was regarded as an imposition of the enemy. ...and into that void after a pause there strode a maniac of ferocious genius, the repository and expression of the most virulent hatreds that have ever corroded the human breast—Corporal Hitler.”

– Winston S. Churchill

Anyone who lost aunts, uncles and cousins in the Holocaust never forgets. So it seemed fitting that the shades were drawn on an otherwise sparkling winter’s day at Ocean Shores, Wash. It was February 6, 2015. Arnold Samuels, 91, pointed toward a binder of photos he took 70 years ago when he arrived at Dachau, the Nazis’ first concentration camp. Ordinarily, he’s so playful that what happened next was startling. He closed his eyes, held his head and made a low keening sound—an anguished “Awwwwwww”—as the memories flooded his brain. “People need to see them,” he finally said. “But they give me nightmares. I just couldn’t visualize how a cultured nation could do that to other human beings.”

A cuckoo clock chirped. Its cheerfulness seemed hollow.

“Take a look at the pictures!” Samuels implored. “You say to yourself, ‘Why?’ It’s just un-understandable.”

U.S. Army Private First Class Samuels, a German Jew whose family had escaped to America, was back in Bavaria in the spring of 1945. Since entering combat with the 70th Infantry Division’s Artillery around Christmas, he had gone on many reconnaissance missions behind enemy lines. His flawless, idiomatic German yielded crucial information about Nazi defenses. Sometimes he wore civilian clothes and carried phony German identification papers. Now, however, the Americans were meeting little resistance as they mopped up what was left of the Third Reich.

On April 29, two infantry divisions converged on Dachau, 15 miles northwest of Munich. They discovered a hell on earth. To call it bestial, someone said, was to give beasts a bad name.



Arnold's fake German ID papers when he was working behind enemy lines. All photos from Arnold Samuels Collection unless otherwise noted.

When Samuels arrived two days later to help with the interrogations, “there were still bodies all over—all over. Unbelievable. Oh God, unbelievable! You’ve never seen anything like it and you can’t describe it. Never leaves your mind. Never, never, never! The inhumanity of man to man is unbelievable!”

Samuels was one of the liberators because he had been liberated. He had arrived in America a few days after the Fourth of July, 1937. Two years later, his Aunt Johanna and Uncle Leon weren’t so fortunate. Refused sanctuary by Cuba and the U.S., both perished in the Holocaust. Leon Joel was also Billy Joel’s uncle. Six degrees of separation don’t get more tragic than that. The famous singer-songwriter and the gregarious former Ocean Shores City Council member are united by the broken branches of their family trees—and the un-understandable.

Arnold Samuels—originally Kurt Daniel Samuel—was born on December 15, 1923. A month earlier, Adolf Hitler and his Brownshirts, the paramilitary wing of the fledgling Nazi party, had failed in their attempt to overthrow the Bavarian government and spark a national revolt. Bavaria was a hotbed of re-



Arnold's father, Willi Samuel, in his beloved Mercedes in front of the "Chocolate House" café in Hammelburg in the early 1930s.

sentment over the steep reparations the victorious allies imposed after Germany's defeat in World War I. Hitler preached that the Weimar Republic, with its ruinous hyperinflation, was rife with Jews, Bolsheviks, Socialists and other traitorous "parasitic vermin" who spread liberal "defeatism and degeneracy." They had "stabbed Germany in the back."

Hitler's abortive coup landed him in prison, supposedly for five years. He was coddled by sympathetic guards, entertained a stream of visitors and dictated his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, to Rudolf Hess, his slavish follower. Prison burished his celebrity. Freed after only nine months, he was now a nationally known right-wing leader with a growing band of fanatical followers, many little more than street thugs in spit-shined new jackboots.

Wilhelm "Willi" Samuel, Arnold's handsome bald father, was the son of a kosher butcher in Bad Königshofen im Grabfeld, a spa town in Bavaria. Willi was studying at a trade school in England in 1914 when Europe erupted in war. He was interned by the British as an enemy alien for the next four years—one of some 24,000 German citizens held captive in



Arnold, his brother and parents lived downstairs, his grandfather and aunt upstairs.

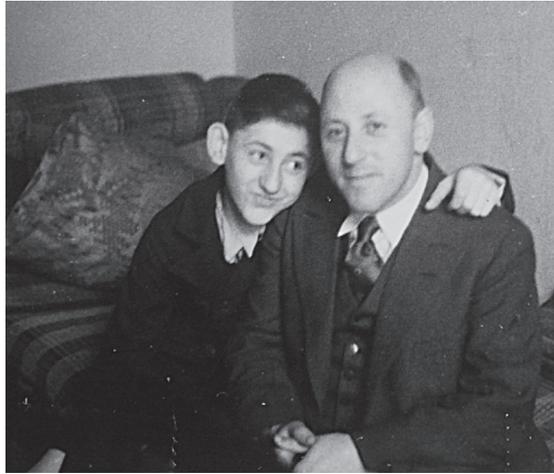
camps. Willi emerged from the ordeal near-fluent in English but told his family he was treated poorly.

In 1920, Willi Samuel married Blanka Sichel, the sturdy daughter of a grain merchant in the pretty little town of Hammelburg about an hour away. Willi joined his father-in-law's business, roaming the countryside to meet with farmers and supplying wheat—"Weizen"—to breweries. Samuel Sichel and Willi Samuel had their office in the quaint building where both families lived. Sichel

by then was an elderly widower who shared an upstairs apartment with Arnold's Aunt Fanny. A pious man, Sichel was the doyen of Hammelburg's small Jewish community, some 50 families in a largely Catholic farm town of 3,000.

Willi and Blanka Samuel's firstborn was Gerhard. Two years later came Kurt, an inquisitive boy with a mischievous grin. The Samuels were generous people who loved music, books and bowling. Willi owned a Mercedes-Benz cabriolet and an elaborate new radio that struck his youngest son as magical. When Arnold remembers what it was like to be Kurt, he sees himself roller-skating through town, playing cops and robbers and roaming the hills with his brother and their school pals. When the grapes were ripe in the vineyards, school closed for a week so the kids could help with the harvest. On Sundays, Kurt's job was to take his white-bearded Grandpa Sichel to the beer hall to spend the morning with the other town elders.

Sometimes he would accompany his grandpa to the warehouse. “He was nearly blind, but he loved to smell the grain. As it flowed through his fingers he could tell whether it would make good beer.”



There had been little distinction as to race or religion in Hammelburg, especially among the kids. Gerhard and Kurt attended Catholic kindergarten, where the nuns were uniformly strict. Kurt's best friend was Markus Hofstetter, a Christian whose genial father was the town barber. In the winter of 1931, when the boys were 8, they went sledding two miles outside town. Markus lost control of his sled and careened down a steep hill. “I was almost right behind him,” Arnold remembers. “He flew onto the road, right into the path of a truck. I threw my sled down, got him out from under the vehicle and ran back to Hammelburg to tell his father, who was a medic in World War I.” Soon the town ambulance scooped up poor Markus and rushed him to the nearest hospital. A shattered leg had to be amputated. That likely saved his life when the other boys went off to war. Few came back.

Everything changed in 1933, the year Kurt turned 10. When Hitler became chancellor on January 30, he moved quickly to crush all democratic impulses. The Communist Party was banned; trade unions forbidden. With a metastasizing vengeance, *der Führer* set about rearming Germany in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. Anti-Semitism became the official state ideology. The concentration camp outside Dachau, a charming village, opened on March 22; the Gestapo, a fearsome police force, was formed a month later. And on May 10 in Berlin 40,000 spec-



Grandpa Sichel with Arnold's mother and aunts: From left, Blanka Samuel, Meta, Rosa and Fanny. Rosa and Fanny perished in the Holocaust together with Fanny's daughter and Rosa's two grandchildren.

celebrate the moment when the birthplace of the printing press became the epicenter of thought-control. "Jewish intellectualism is dead!" Goebbels declared. "The German folk-soul can again express itself. These flames do not only illuminate the final end of the old era, they also light up the new." Then the crowd sang "The Nation to Arms." What some called a "literary holocaust," or as *Time* magazine put it, a "bibliocaust," was a prelude to human smoke.

"A gloominess came over my parents," Samuels remembers. "My father told me years later that he had remarked to Christian friends at the bowling alley that anyone voting for Hitler should have his hands cut off. It appears no one ratted him out at the time, but all of a sudden the gentile kids didn't play with us anymore. They had joined the Hitler Youth—the Hitlerjugend—and the Hitler Youth taught them 'You can't play with Jews!' The girls had to join the BDM—the Bund Deutscher Mädel, the league of German girls. Our Christian friends and classmates fell away from us and we were isolated. Some of

tators gathered in a plaza as "thousands of students proudly wearing their university colors walked through the foggy streets by glittering torchlight" and consigned to a mammoth bonfire armloads of books written by Jews. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's reptilian Minister of Propaganda and National Enlightenment, soon arrived to

them started fights with Jewish kids and called us 'Judenstinkers.' I really didn't understand it—the politics of hate. Then in school we were separated from the other kids. I had to sit at the back of the class. I couldn't sit with my friends on the same benches. Hitler had a helluva machine going when he got into power. People were struggling. They wanted Germany to be great again. He mesmerized the masses. Especially German youth. Everyone got in line. It was 'Heil Hitler! Mein Führer! Our great leader!' ”



Everything changed in 1933, the year Arnold turned 10. Hitler came to power and anti-Semitism soon became the official state ideology.

Heinz Kissinger, seven months older than Kurt Samuel, was growing up two hours south in Furth. The future U.S. secretary of state recalls that he and his friends were barred from the swimming pool, the dances and the tearoom. “We couldn't go anywhere without seeing the signs *Juden Verboten!* (No Jews!)” Fate would have it that Henry Kissinger and Arnold Samuels, their names Americanized, would become colleagues in postwar Germany.

Things got so bad, even in Hammelburg, that in 1934 Willi and Blanka Samuel sent their sons 50 miles away to live with a sympathetic family in a town where there was a Hebrew school. But the pox was relentlessly spreading. “The main object in those days was to get rid of the Jews,” Samuels remembers. “In every little town, the mayor and rulers of the town would hang a banner across the main street that declared *Diese Stadt ist judenfrei!* ‘This city is free of Jews!’ And the faster they

could put those banners up, the higher rating they got in the Hitler regime.”

In 1935, when Samuels was 12, the triumphant Nazis assembled en masse at Nuremberg and promulgated their new laws on “Aryan” racial purity. Jews, Gypsies and ethnic Poles were deprived of German citizenship and prohibited from sexual relations or marriage with “true Germans.”

That was just the beginning. Soon Jews were barred from the professions, made to carry special ID cards and publicly humiliated. Crackpot Nazi eugenicists measured their noses and skulls. An “Aryan” woman under the age of 45 could not work as a servant for a Jewish family, underscoring the Nazi characterization of Jewish males as loathsome lechers.

One of the most compelling studies of German anti-Semitism is Götz Aly’s 2011 book, *Why the Germans? Why the Jews?* Aly notes that Siegfried Lichtenstaedter, a retired Bavarian civil servant and author “who spent much of his life pondering his dual identity as German and Jew,” believed “Nazism was propelled by the least pleasurable of the seven deadly sins: envy.” It “dissolves social cohesion. It destroys trust, creates aggression, promotes suspicion over proof, and leads people to bolster their sense of self-worth by denigrating others. ...Upset by others’ success, they dismiss those they envy as immoral, egotistical and despicable, while they themselves pose as respectable moral authorities.” Working underground during the war, Samuels met a German university professor who at great risk was doing what he could to undermine the Nazi regime. Samuels said he couldn’t fathom anti-Semitism. And the professor said, “You know, Kurt, we love you for your talents and we hate you for your success.”

One night in 1936, Willi Samuel had a surreptitious visitor. It was Herr Stumpf, who owned the garage where Willi took his Mercedes. “Herr Stumpf was a gentile,” Arnold remembers, “but they were good friends and secretly had remained so even though Stumpf had to join Hitler’s SA Brown-shirts and parade through town with a swastika banner. ‘Willi, get out of Hammelburg,’ he said. ‘I can’t protect you anymore.’ In gratitude, my father gave his car to Stumpf and transferred



Cantor Heinz Heller, Arnold's uncle, became a fixture at Tremont Temple in the Bronx.

title of his property to the Nazi party in exchange for papers allowing him to pursue leaving Germany.”

Willi Samuel began corresponding with relatives in America. His sister Paula and brother-in-law, Heinz Heller, a cantor and teacher in Königshofen, had made it to New York in the summer of 1936. (Heinz became “Henry” and was a beloved cantor at Tremont Temple in the Bronx until his death in 1964). Then practically overnight, Arnold remembers, his father closed his office. “They packed up as much as they could as fast as they could and we took the train

to Hamburg. To my brother and I it was an excitement—an adventure! We didn’t realize we were in such danger. Hey, we were getting out of Hammelburg! And Hamburg seemed safer. The Nazis had a lower profile in the big cities—at least for a while, especially during the 1936 Olympic Games when they made nice and wanted the world to think the new Germany was peaceful. But the Gestapo was working in Hamburg underground. Now it was everywhere. After *Kristallnacht* in 1938, when the SA smashed the windows of Jewish stores, burned synagogues, murdered hundreds of Jews and rounded up thousands of others, the Nazis took all my grandfather’s property in Hammelburg. They smashed his windows and his big grandfather clock that I always had my eye on as a child. They put him in jail for two weeks. Then for some reason they let him go to a nursing home in Würzburg, where he died as a lonely man within a year. Aunt Fanny, whose husband had died for the fatherland in World War I, moved to Holland where her

daughter was a doctor. When Hitler invaded Holland, they just disappeared. We never heard from them again. Now I know what happened to them because I have done a lot of research. They all went to the concentration camps. My family was one of the lucky ones. We made it out alive. There's an old German saying, 'The fatherland thanks you for your sacrifices.' To a Jew it became 'The thanks of the fatherland is to shoot you.' "

Arnold turned 13 in December of 1936. He was studying for his Bar Mitzvah when Mussolini declared that Italy, Germany and Japan had formed an "Axis" to oppose the Jews' alleged handiwork, International Communism. Hitler's armament factories were working overtime. In New York, the best kind of friend an endangered family could hope for was too.

Morris L. Ernst, at 47 was one of the most influential attorneys in the United States and a cosmopolitan civil libertarian, serving on the board of the American Civil Liberties Union. Ernst in 1933 had famously defended James Joyce's groundbreaking novel *Ulysses* against obscenity charges. He aided advocates of birth control and sex education and championed consumer rights. The natty, pipe-smoking lawyer was also a contributor to the *New Yorker* magazine. Ernst counted as a friend U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis and had a wide network of acquaintances and admirers in politics, publishing, entertainment and the literary world. These included



Morris L. Ernst, who saved the Samuels.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, J. Edgar Hoover, Walter Winchell, H.L. Mencken, Henry Luce, E.B. White and Groucho Marx. A widower, Ernst in 1923 had married Margaret Samuels, a Phi Beta Kappa Wellesley graduate who was a writer, teacher and librarian. Margaret's father, Emanuel Samuel, had

come to America as a teenager in 1883. He became a successful businessman in Mississippi, adding an “s” to his surname, as Arnold would later.

Here’s the family connection that rescued four people from almost certain death: Emanuel Samuels was Willi Samuel’s uncle. Put another way, Arnold Samuels’ grandfather Max was Emanuel Samuels’ brother. Moreover, Margaret Ernst’s brother, Frank L. Samuels, was a Yale graduate with a successful real estate practice in Manhattan.

Strict immigration quotas had been established by Congress in the 1920s “in the name of preserving ‘the ideal of American homogeneity,’ in part to stem the flow of Jews who had fled Poland and Russia.” Germany was allotted 25,957 slots per year. But high-ranking officials in the State Department were anti-Semites who encouraged strict enforcement of the “likely to become a public charge” clause. “LPC” was designed to discourage immigration of the penniless and downtrodden, especially during the Depression. *In the Garden of Beasts*, a chilling book about the American ambassador to Berlin navigating State Department intrigue during the early years of the Third Reich, Erik Larson writes, “Jewish activists charged that America’s consulates abroad had been instructed quietly to grant only a fraction of the visas allowed for each country, a charge that proved to have merit.”

The Ernsts and Samuels cut through the red tape and loaned Willi Samuel money to help with travel expenses and Nazi palm-greasing. Not counting forfeited property, it cost Willi Samuel upwards of \$5,000—\$82,000 in today’s dollars—to get his family out of Germany, he told his sons after the war. Crucially, Morris Ernst also vouched with Immigration that Willi would have a job. And once settled in, Willi was assured his family could soon follow.

Arnold, his brother, mother and family friends hugged Willi and posed for photos dockside before he boarded the *S.S. Manhattan* at Hamburg, immigration documents secure in a breast pocket. He waved from the ocean liner’s railing as they shouted “Auf Wiedersehen.” On January 25, 1937, when Willi disembarked in New York City, the Ernsts and Hellers greeted

him with outstretched arms.

In March, as Willi Samuel was getting a start selling cleaning supplies in Brooklyn, Stanley Baldwin, the British prime minister, was meeting with a delegation of peace advocates. "I know some of you think I should speak more roughly to Hitler than I do," he said, "but have you reflected that the reply to a stiff letter might be a bomb on your breakfast tables? ...The peace of the world lies in the hands of these dictators. For all I know, they may be insane, and unlimited power drives men mad."

In April, the Luftwaffe tested its new warplanes by pounding the Basque town of Guernica for its ally, the Spanish nationalist government. The charred bodies of women and children were but collateral damage to the Nazis—"guinea pigs in an experiment designed to determine just what it would take to bomb a city into oblivion."

On July 8, as a new concentration camp opened at Buchenwald, Blanka Samuel and her sons sailed past the Statue of Liberty. Fate and the long arm of the Gestapo conspired against other family members.

In May of 1939 with war looming and trains leaving for the death camps, Arnold Samuels' Aunt Johanna and Uncle Leon were desperate to escape the Third Reich. Four months earlier, Leon Joel's brother Karl, sister-in-law Meta and nephew Helmut had made it to Cuba. "Hurry," they wrote.

Leon and Johanna Joel and their 10-year-old son, Gunter, departed Hamburg for Havana on the German liner *St. Louis*. All but a handful of its 938 passengers were "Hebrews," as the newspapers put it. What came to be called "The Voyage of the Damned" made headlines around the world. When the ship arrived in Havana, only 28 passengers were allowed to disembark. Cuba, like the United States, was slow to recover from the Great Depression. The Cuban branch of the Nazi Party stirred up anti-Semitism. "Corruption and internal power struggles" were also rife, and "many Cubans resented the relatively large number of refugees (including 2,500 Jews) whom the government had already admitted into the country, because they appeared to be competitors for scarce jobs." The same sentiments



It's June 17, 1939. The *M.S. St. Louis* has just docked at Antwerp. The man in the middle, surrounded by happy passengers, is Morris Troper, European director of a Jewish refugee assistance organization. His wife Ethel is wearing a hat. The smiling, round-faced woman at left is Arnold Samuels' aunt, Johanna Joel. Safety was short-lived. Johanna and her husband Leon died in the gas chambers at Auschwitz in the fall of 1942.

prevailed in the U.S., where anti-Semitism ran wide and deep. Forty-one percent of respondents to an opinion poll believed Jews had "too much power in the United States." Father Charles Coughlin, the Michigan priest who railed against Jewish bankers, had a radio audience of millions and gave the Nazi salute at one speech. After an anti-war America First rally in Boston, someone defaced a poster on a lamp-post, changing the "United States of America" to the "Jew-nited States of America." While American media "generally portrayed the plight of the passengers with great sympathy, only a few journalists and editors suggested that the refugees be admitted into the United States," the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum notes, adding:

Sailing so close to Florida that they could see the lights of Miami, some passengers on the *St. Louis* cabled President Roosevelt asking for refuge. Roosevelt never responded. The State Department and the White House had decided not to take extraordinary

measures to permit the refugees to enter the United States. ...A *Fortune* magazine poll at the time indicated that 83 percent of Americans opposed relaxing restrictions on immigration. Roosevelt could have issued an executive order to admit the *St. Louis* refugees, but this general hostility to immigrants, the gains of isolationist Republicans in the Congressional elections of 1938, and Roosevelt's consideration of running for an unprecedented third term were among the political considerations that militated against taking this extraordinary step in an unpopular cause.

After his re-election in 1936, Roosevelt had moved to loosen restrictions on Jewish immigration and promote Palestine as a Jewish homeland. That he was ill for several days as the *St. Louis* drama unfolded clouds his role in the affair. The political calculus was indisputably tricky. As the *St. Louis* sailed back to Europe, its passengers "hanging between hope and despair," the State Department was attempting to make sure they weren't returned to Germany. Jewish welfare organizations managed to secure entry visas with England, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. In a photo on the Holocaust Museum's website, Johanna Joel can be seen smiling in a crowd of passengers as the *St. Louis* ar-



A cartoon in the *New York Daily Mirror* dramatizes the plight of the *St. Louis*.

rives at Antwerp on June 17, 1939. “That’s my Aunt Johanna,” Samuels says, pointing to her happy face. “They were mishpuchah—family. I’ve always wondered what the Statue of Liberty thought when those people were turned away.”

Leon, Johanna and Gunter Joel found temporary refuge in France. But together with some 500 other Jews who had staked their hopes on the *St. Louis*, they fell back into the Nazis’ clutches as

Hitler conquered Europe. Johanna and Leon died in the gas chambers at Auschwitz in the fall of 1942. Their son escaped to Switzerland, aided by the underground, and eventually made it to America. Gunter’s musical 16-year-old cousin, Helmut Joel—his name anglicized to Howard—was already here, his family having gained entry to the U.S. after a stay in Cuba. “I was lucky because my parents had some money left. That’s why I’m still alive,” Howard Joel said in 2001 as his famous son, Billy, explored the fate of family members sent to the concentration camps.

We now know that Arnold Samuels and Howard Joel, whose battalion was also part of Patton’s Third Army, were at the liberated Dachau the same week. But the two young Jewish GIs, related by marriage and their revulsion at what they saw, had no way of knowing they were simultaneously staring into the abyss of the un-understandable.



Arnold and his brother with their parents in America in 1940.

In the summer of 1937, when the Samuels were reunited in Brooklyn—a borough of 2.7 million in a city of 7½ million—they moved into a small but decent second-floor apartment in a largely Jewish neighborhood. Willi's new job as a salesman supplying hotels with toilet paper, towels and soap was a far cry from his days as successful grain merchant with a Mercedes-Benz. They took in a boarder, and Mrs. Samuel did piece work in the apartment, sewing leather gloves. Though happy to be alive, the adjustment was still difficult—but less so for their boys. Kurt and Gerhard, at 14 and 16, had been practicing their English. They made new friends quickly and were enrolled at Erasmus Hall High School. The German teacher there was eager to become more fluent. “He made a deal with us,” Samuels says. “After school, he spent an hour teaching us more English and we taught him more German. We developed our vocabulary by making lists of words—10 each. When we got home, we'd get the English-German dictionary and look up the translation into German. Then I interrogated my brother with my 10 words and he interrogated me with his 10 words.” The English phrases they learned on the streets of Brooklyn turned out to be ones they couldn't share at home. “They were always bad ones!” Samuels says with a chortle. The boys soon found odd jobs. Arnold delivered meat for a kosher butcher—at 50 cents for a morning's work, plus leftovers to take home.

When both boys posted stellar test scores, they were accepted at Hebrew Tech, an ambitious private school, only to see its funding run dry. They landed next at one of the nation's top public high schools—Stuyvesant, which offered rigorous, college-prep courses in math, engineering and the sciences. It was an all-boys school, which suited Arnold fine. He liked girls, one especially, but found them “too distracting” when he was trying to listen to the teacher. Arnold was excited to study electronics. When he was around six his father had brought home a wondrous new radio. “One night when my folks came home from bowling, they found all the tubes and coils out of the radio box. Dad woke me up and demanded, ‘What did you do to my radio?’ I said, ‘I was looking for the man that always talks in that thing!’ My Dad always said, ‘That's when I found out you



Arnold—still Kurt—graduated from New York’s famed Stuyvesant High School with honors in 1941.

were going to become a radio man.’ ” It was the beginning of a lifelong fascination and vocation that took him around the world. At Stuyvesant Samuels was a straight-A student. He joined the amateur radio club, qualified for extracurricular courses at the RCA Institute’s School of Radio Technology and attended workshops underwritten by Westinghouse at Columbia University. He experimented with UHF and VHF broadcast signals and RCA’s latest tubes. During the futuristic 1939 New York World’s Fair, Arnold represented Stuyvesant High at Westinghouse’s exhibit. He had the run of the fair for free, and Westinghouse paid the carfare.

At the Flatbush Jewish Center a year earlier, he had met a girl who was very distracting. Her name was Phyllis Krasner. She was only 15—nearly two years younger than him—but she was smart and vivacious, with an infectious laugh. When she stopped by the Westinghouse exhibit to say “Hi,” Arnold was hooked. She was now a knockout. Moreover, her family loved classical music, one of his passions; her mother’s gefilte fish and fried chicken were heavenly. His parents thought they were too young to be so serious. Sometimes they met in secret.

Arnold—still Kurt—graduated from Stuyvesant with hon-

ors in 1941.

He was a slender young man, six feet tall, with dark, tousled hair and a contagious smile. While attending night school classes at the RCA Institute he landed a series of jobs repairing radios



Arnold represented Stuyvesant High at Westinghouse's exhibit during the 1939 New York World's Fair.

at small shops before being hired at Goldsmith Bros. department store, which sold a lot of radios, phonographs and records.

After Pearl Harbor, the Samuel brothers volunteered for the military. "They told us, 'Oh, you can't volunteer. You're not citizens. You're enemy aliens. But we can draft you when we want you.'" Arnold returned to his studies. His brother was called up first. Gerhard, now called "Jerry," was sent to the South Pacific as an aerial photographer. When Kurt was drafted by the Army at the beginning of 1943, he became "Arnold" and added an "s" to his surname. The Americanization of two German boys was now complete. Both became naturalized citizens. There were 550,000 Jewish soldiers in the Army. Minorities served in the U.S. military in higher percentages proportionally than Caucasians. "We knew what we were fighting for," Samuels says, "and some of us had actually lived under the Nazis." Despite that, slanderous "stereotypes portrayed typical Brooklyn Jews as quintessential draft-dodgers," Deborah Dash Moore writes in her 2006 book, *GI Jews*. "As one professor at City College joked, 'The Battle Hymn of the Jews is *Onward Christian Soldiers*, we'll make the uniforms.' "

During basic training at Camp Croft near Spartanburg,



Arnold in basic training at Camp Croft near Spartanburg, S.C., in 1943. He entered combat with the artillery of the 70th Infantry Division in 1944 in France.

South Carolina, Samuels met Henry Kissinger. “But so what?” Arnold says with a chuckle. “He was then just another schmuck like the rest of us.”

Based on his test scores and schooling, Arnold was selected for the Army Specialized Training Program—ASTP—in electrical engineering at Georgia Tech in Atlanta. After a year there, he applied for flight school but was rejected on the grounds he had not been a U.S. citizen long enough. Frustrated, he nevertheless ended up in a job for which he was

well suited—that of a field artillery “surveyor.” At Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, he was trained to assess target data—angles, elevations and distances. “It was a good thing I was handy with a slide rule and liked trigonometry. Once trained and assigned, we were considered the artillery commander’s pets, since the effectiveness of artillery is totally dependent on the accuracy of the survey team’s computations.” Attached to the 70th Infantry Division—the “Trailblazers”—Samuels arrived at Marseilles, France, on December 10, 1944.

It was rainy, muddy and cold. And for two weeks at least, uneventful save for the night a Nazi reconnaissance plane dropped a flare to monitor their advance. “Everyone ran out of their tents and urinated on the flare to extinguish it,” which struck Samuels as hilariously symbolic of something. Maybe that war was insane. Things soon became deadly serious.



A GI in Arnold's 70th Infantry Division guards a group of captured German soldiers carrying their wounded from Winggen, France, on January 6, 1945. *National Archives*

Their goal was to secure Alsace-Lorraine along the border between France and Germany, then punch through the heavily fortified, 400-mile-long Siegfried Line. The Germans were fighting ferociously—often willing to die before surrendering. “The battle through France was swift, at least for a while,” Samuels remembers, “with the Germans retreating and regrouping along the whole front.” Then crack SS mountain troops, supported by artillery and tanks, dug in and began to infiltrate the advancing 70th Infantry. Its casualties mounted. Samuels was temporarily assigned to the legendary 3rd Infantry Division, which had seen heavy combat since 1942.

“I went on reconnaissance missions practically every day with my buddy Jimmy Mitchell. One day, snipers spotted us. Then came an 88-millimeter German artillery round. And mortar rounds—“Screaming Meemies” we called them. They exploded into a million little shrapnel. We lost our Jeep and barely escaped, really shook up. Another time when they started



Arnold holding a stray Dachshund the GIs dubbed "Schnapps." The patch on his shoulder is that of the legendary 3rd Infantry Division, to which he was attached as the U.S. Army advanced into Germany.

shelling us, I jumped into a pile of horse manure! I'll never forget that! I crawled in and ducked myself under the goddamn horse manure and, boy, I came out smelling like a rose! It was the first time in my life," he cackled, "that I ever thanked a pile of shit!"

"Because of my background, they often sent me behind enemy lines in civilian clothes. Sometimes we met with informants. One night, the Gestapo got wind

of us. One of the farmers who was anti-German hid me in the attic under the straw that they used for the cows. The Gestapo came in, looking all over with their flashlights. But they couldn't see me and I got away! Sometimes I stayed behind enemy lines for days. And I wrote Phyllis not to worry if she didn't hear from me. I carried a pistol in a shoulder holster and my phony German papers identifying me as Joseph Wagner, a writer from Hammelburg born in 1919. Of course it said nothing of my race. If they had caught me and decided I looked Jewish and in any case wasn't in the military like every other young true Aryan, that would have been a death warrant.

"By February [of 1945] we were in Forbach, a coal-mining area, and advancing on Saarbrücken, along the Saar River in southwest Germany, when we got in a fierce standoff with a fanatical German general who didn't realize the war was lost. I slipped into Saarbrücken and found out where the military installations were. The next day, all hell broke loose: Our planes

bombed their strongholds for what seemed like hours.” Still, the Nazis held on until the middle of March.

When the Americans finally occupied the city, Mitchell and Samuels poked around the basement of a camera shop. An unopened crate yielded dozens of fine German cameras. They each kept one and gave the rest to the supply officer.

After the fall of the Saar area and the capture of the famous bridge across the Rhine at Remagen, the Allies advanced rapidly. Thousands of German troops were surrendering to the Americans, a fate far preferable to falling into the hands of the vengeful Russians closing in on Berlin from the east.

Samuels found himself near Hammelburg, his home town, which was now in American hands. Weeks earlier, General Patton had ordered a disastrous raid on a POW camp just outside Hammelburg. His son-in-law was a prisoner there. The rescue mission met with heavy German resistance, fell into an ambush and ended up as a debacle. Samuels views Patton as a bold and talented commander, “except if you were a GI he didn’t particularly worry about your life. His rescue mission got its butt kicked.” (Patton’s nickname was “Old Blood and Guts,” which some GI’s derided as “Our blood, his guts!” Some of them even “had parties” after he was fatally injured in an auto accident a few months after the war was over, according to Samuels.)

Samuels requisitioned a Jeep and headed for Hammelburg. He encountered the mayor, who expressed thanks that the Allies hadn’t reduced his town to rubble. “Then I walked up the road and saw a guy, still in Nazi uniform, coming down on a motorcycle. He was a messenger. As he got closer, I saw that he resembled my boyhood friend Markus Hofstetter, who had lost his leg after the sledding accident. I said, “*Markus, bist du es?*” [Markus, is that you?] He came to a stop, looked at me and said, “*Kurt! Du bist hier!*” [Kurt! You are here!] He threw his motorcycle down and we hugged and kissed and cried. You weren’t supposed to fraternize but how could we stop such emotions? The word got around Hammelburg like lightning—‘Willi Samuel’s son is here!’ The next person in my arms was Herr Fuchs, my dad’s old friend. Then I saw my favorite teach-

er, Herr Seufert, who was never a Nazi.”

Samuels soon returned with several other GI's. He took them sightseeing and to the beer hall. To call what happened next sobering would be the understatement of the 20th century.



What struck Samuels as singularly chilling was the sign above the wrought-iron gate to the inner camp at Dachau: *Arbeit Macht Frei*. “Work Makes [You] Free.”

Pfc. Samuels had heard what the 45th and 42nd Infantry Divisions saw when they first arrived at Dachau. Yet when he pulled into the courtyard on May Day, 1945, he was still unprepared. Chalk-white, skin-and-bones former human beings were stacked like cordwood and protruding from the ovens. Samuels turned a corner and saw a silo filled with ashes. The stench of death was inescapable. Some American soldiers had been so incensed by what they saw that they mowed down a row of SS guards before their colonel rushed over, fired his pistol in the air and told them there'd be none of that. Elsewhere in the camp, two emaciated inmates had summoned the strength to arm themselves with shovels. No one tried to stop them as they beat to death one of their cowering former guards—a member of the pitiless SS Totenkopfverband who administered the concentration camps, strutting about with the death's-head emblem on their caps. This guard was one of the most hated. He had castrated a prisoner.

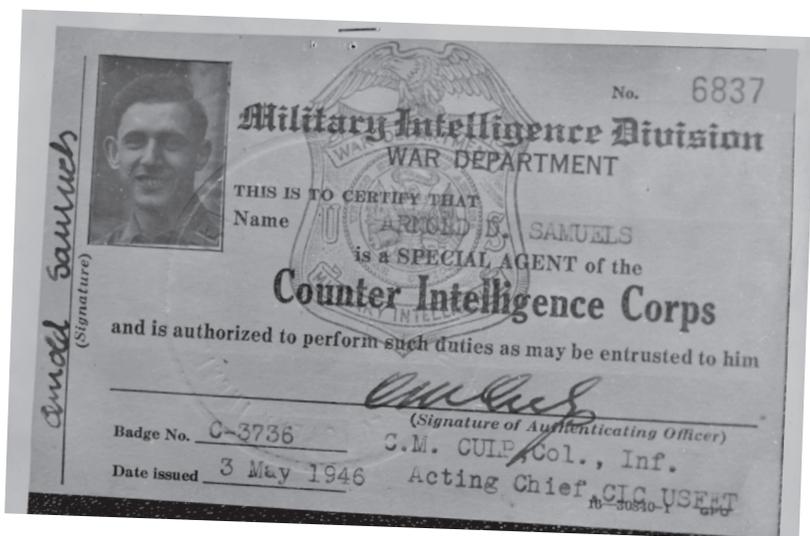
What struck Samuels as singularly chilling was the sign above the wrought-iron gate to the inner camp: *Arbeit Macht Frei*. “Work Makes [You] Free” was the biggest Big Lie in the checkered history of humankind—a cruel, perverted mockery of civilized speech. Most sent by the boxcar load to Dachau



One of the horrifying photos Arnold took when he arrived at Dachau to help with the interrogations.

and its subcamps were worked to death; some became guinea pigs for unspeakable medical experiments; others, including women, children, the elderly and the already sick or infirm, were shipped off to be exterminated at camps that specialized in wholesale murder. At least 32,000 died at Dachau.

“I was sick to my stomach,” Samuels remembers. “I wept. I had not said the ‘Shema Yisrael’ prayer for a long time—the prayer I learned as a child. But I found myself praying: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.’ The survivors I spoke with were living skeletons—sick, diseased, too starved to really eat. Some were stunned that an American GI was speaking German. Most could hardly talk or fully comprehend they had been liberated. But some were able to help us separate the SS from the ordinary soldiers. We found some of the killers who were trying to pass as innocent civilians. They all had the same slogan: ‘I followed orders. And if I didn’t follow orders I would be in here (Dachau), too.’ I took pictures. But I never showed my parents the pictures of what they might have looked like had they been in the camps like so many of our relatives. Never dared! Never dared to show them those pictures! They’re too horrible.



Arnold's ID card with the Counter Intelligence Corps.

... But no matter how many pictures you see, you can't imagine what war is really like until a friend shot dead right beside you crumples to the ground."

Henry Kissinger, meanwhile, was writing his parents that he had visited places they all once knew so well, including the apartment where they had lived when he was a boy—happy memories clouded now by the rubble of war and the years of "cruelty ... and nihilism" that had poisoned Germany since their escape to America. "Those who live by the sword shall perish by the sword," he wrote, adding that on a hill overlooking the ruins of Nuremberg "I said farewell to my youth."

Hitler killed himself in his Berlin bunker on April 30 as the Russians savaged the capital of his "Thousand-Year Reich." His goal had been to "murder every single person of Jewish ancestry on the European continent."

The Nazis estimated they needed to exterminate 11 million human beings to make the world safe from "the universal poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry." Six million Jews perished, together with almost two million Poles, three million Russian POWs and hundreds of thousands of others—Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, infants with birth defects, the

mentally ill and otherwise infirm. These were the *Untermenschen*—“subhumans,” inferior people deemed unworthy of life.

Ironically, Hitler’s delusional, hate-filled last will and testament was discovered by another German-born U.S. soldier, a



Arnold snapped this photo of Sgt. Henry Kissinger at his desk in their office at Bensheim. The Counter Intelligence Corps detachment in the region, which included 20 towns, was headed by Kissinger, who had just turned 22.

Jewish GI named Arnold Weiss. Like Kissinger and Samuels, Weiss had been selected for the Army’s Counter Intelligence Corps, the CIC, as the war wound down. The job now was to identify war criminals and create a de-Nazified postwar government to restore infrastructure. At Nuremberg, where top Nazi leaders would face trial before an international tribunal, most of the 900-year-old city had been bombed beyond recognition. The U.S. Office of Military Government—OMGUS—fired more than 2,000 complicit municipal officials and workers. It installed new managers and hired and trained a new civilian police force. By the fall of 1945, 25,000 children were back in school with new teachers.

Promoted to sergeant, Samuels was sent first to the Military Police school in Heidelberg, the storied university town that had been a regional stronghold of the Nazi party. The city had escaped allied bombing because it was not an industrial center. It became a postwar hub of U.S. Army operations.

After several intense weeks of law enforcement training and undercover work ferreting out important Nazis and collaborators, Samuels was sworn in as a special agent of the Counter Intelligence Corps. He became an operative with the Army

of Occupation, assigned to Bensheim, a picturesque, tree-lined town of some 17,000 between Darmstadt and Heidelberg. Though some of its oldest structures had been destroyed by incendiary bombs, much of its medieval architecture had survived. The Allies established a displaced persons camp there. Hardcore Nazis desperate to escape detection tried to blend in with the floodtide of refugees. Some tried to bluff their way into new jobs by denying any involvement with slave-labor factories or the death camps.

The CIC's detachment in the region, which included 20 towns, was headed by Kissinger, who had just turned 22. Three months earlier, when the 84th Infantry Division captured Krefeld, a major port along the Rhine, no one in its Counter Intelligence detachment spoke German. Private Kissinger did. He astonished his superiors by creating a new civilian government in the space of eight days, displaying remarkable maturity and diplomatic skills. The CIC snapped him up. With his knowledge of the German character, Kissinger proved to be a crafty interrogator. "He would tell each suspected Nazi, 'We know you're not important, you're just a small fry,' until the suspect's pride would cause him to erupt that he was in fact a high-ranking local Nazi."

"Kissinger commanded respect," Samuels says. "You could tell he was going to be someone important—a teacher like his father, or a diplomat. In the CIC we had a lot of power, and the frightened local Nazis did everything they could to downplay their importance. Henry's interrogation techniques impressed me. I never heard him use a foul word or threaten any of the people we interrogated. He got more information from suspected Gestapo men and other significant Nazis and collaborators than the CIC agents who used shouting and profanity. I emulated him. When I interrogated suspects—and some of them were vicious bastards—I did my best to be nice. What do they say? 'You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar'? Same way in the Counter Intelligence Corps. Though we were both Jews, we were careful not to make it seem as if we were extracting revenge. We were both sergeants by then, but Henry was in charge of the whole detachment. To all ap-



Phyllis and Arnold on their wedding day in 1946.

pearances, we really had no ranks. I never wore a uniform because the Germans are very rank-conscious. If you would show that you're only a sergeant, they'd never talk with you.

"We belonged to the Officers' Club and had ready access to military vehicles. Kissinger had a nice villa and gave parties. We had ration cards for whiskey and champagne. He had confiscated a white Mercedes from a local industrialist who was

in bed with the Nazis. Henry had all that power, but he wasn't arrogant about it. After all the horrible things we'd seen, the luxuries and power were nice, but we never forgot our job: We were there to identify the war criminals and screen applicants for jobs in the postwar government. We got our region back on its feet and identified several Nazis who were prosecuted at Nuremberg and Dachau. When Henry left to become a teacher at the military's Intelligence School at Oberammergau in 1946, I was placed in charge of the Bensheim area. And he gave me his Mercedes."

Arnold resisted a wink. His smile said it all. He might have been thinking about the jaunty cabriolet his father gave up when they fled Hammelburg.

On his furlough in Brooklyn, Arnold and Phyllis were married on June 30, 1946, by Arnold's uncle, Cantor Henry Heller. Arnold had been told his bride could join him in Germany. When

he returned to Bensheim, however, he learned there would be at least a six-month wait for housing. It was clear, too, that he lacked the leverage Kissinger had enjoyed. With the war won, by-the-book bureaucracy was coming down from higher-ups who had never seen combat. In his absence, another agent had taken the Mercedes for a high-speed spin on the Autobahn, crashed it and died. It seemed like an omen.

Samuels transferred to another region and went undercover to foil an escape scheme at a camp where Nazis awaiting trial were being held. "That November I was told that due to the postwar housing shortage, policies had been changed. It was unlikely my bride would be able to join me anytime soon. I told my captain—a helluva nice fellow—that it was time for me to go home." Samuels was discharged from the Counter Intelligence Corps on March 1, 1947. "I was offered a job with what became the CIA, but I just wanted out. I'd had enough cloak-and-dagger stuff to last a lifetime."

The young couple moved in with Phyllis's family. Arnold decided to go into partnership with a boyhood friend and start a radio repair business in the basement of an apartment house. After a year, however, his friend decided to take advantage of the GI Bill and go back to college. "I should have, too," Arnold says. "That was the biggest mistake I ever made."

Arnold found a new business partner. They borrowed money for inventory to start selling radios and TVs and moved into a small storefront. The rent was \$50 a month. "Television sets were just coming on the market—tiny things with seven-inch tubes. We used to leave one on in the front window, turning it around so the screen faced the street. When Milton Berle's variety show came on the air in 1948 the whole neighborhood brought their chairs and sat on the sidewalk watching 'Uncle Miltie.' But as TVs grew more affordable, I was barely making a living. The big outfits like Sears and Roebuck and Macy's opened outlets in Brooklyn and I couldn't compete with them."

When Arnold and Phyllis's first son arrived in 1950, Arnold was working two jobs and attending weekend classes at New York University for a teaching certificate in electronics. "It was

a rat race. One day in 1952 I saw an ad from the Voice of America seeking technicians. Since I had a first-class commercial radio operator's license, they gave me a top rating and offered me a job overseas. Phyllis was all



Arnold with two boyhood friends, Alfred Stuhler, center, and Markus Hofstetter, right, at a reunion in Germany during the 1980s.

for it. We didn't have much to lose. And it sounded like an adventure." It was. Nearly 30 years' worth.

Arnold, Phyllis and their growing family—there would be three sons in all—spent the next five years in the Philippines. Samuels helped maintain the huge transmitters that beamed Voice of America programs to Southeast Asia and behind the Iron Curtain. The U.S. was intent on counteracting communist propaganda as the Cold War heated up. Voice of America's programming featured news shows, dramas and American jazz, which was hugely popular in the Soviet bloc. "We were America's propaganda machine. The communists tried everything to jam our signals." Arnold soon was named security officer for the region. Life was good. The fishing was great, the beaches lovely. Arnold joined the Lions Club, became a Mason and, in his spare time, one of the most active amateur radio operators in the Pacific as "KH6COY." In 1957, he accepted a transfer to the relay station at Honolulu. Five years later he was hired by a defense contractor to manage the U.S. Army Strategic Communications Command's strategic station on Wake Island, a beautiful coral atoll in the mid-Pacific. "Free housing, free car, no crime and a lagoon where the kids loved to swim." Mother Nature was the wild card. When a typhoon devastated Wake a year later, the Samuels were back in Hawaii.



In 1995, when Arnold visited his old hometown, Hammelburg honored his grandfather by erecting a handsome sign in front of a park where the family's grain warehouse once stood. It is now *Samuel Sichel Platz*.

Arnold had landed a job as quality control officer with the U.S. Air Force. He did another stint in the Philippines before retiring in 1980 with a government pay-grade equivalent to lieutenant colonel.

Before they left Wake, the Samuels met an airline pilot working part-time for the real estate company that was developing a resort community along the north beach of Grays Harbor in Washington State. "We looked at his brochures, and the wife said to me, 'You know, honey, we've been around the moon now for the last 30 years and it's about time we bought a little bit of terra firma.'" Sight unseen, they invested \$1,800 in an undeveloped lot. On a trip back to the states a decade later, they visited Ocean Shores for the first time and liked what they saw. Before the day was out, they had consummated a deal to sell their lot and buy two more so they'd have more room for their retirement home along a canal a mile and a half from the ocean. On Wake Island, they'd been flooded twice in the middle of

the night. “I don’t want to be that close to the ocean ever again,” Phyllis decreed. They built a comfortable rambler, joined everything and made hundreds of



Arnold and a fellow member of the VFW selling Buddy Poppies at Ocean Shores.

friends over the next 20 happy years.

In 2000, Arnold lost his best friend of 54 years. Cancer claimed the vivacious Phyllis. He sublimated his grief by becoming even more active. He was elected to the Ocean Shores City Council as a write-in candidate and served four years. At 91 he still seems to be everywhere at once. He’s the honorary photographer for the weekly *North Coast News* and helped establish an all-volunteer FM radio station. He buys cookies from the Relay for Life ladies at the bank—they’re some of his favorite “mermaids”—and makes the rounds of the Eagles, Elks and VFW. He’s a stalwart among the aging congregation at Temple Beth Israel, 25 miles inland at Aberdeen. During the holidays, he’s a Salvation Army bell-ringer. “Being active is what keeps you alive,” Arnold says. “And I drink two glasses of wine a day.” He wrote 235 personalized Christmas and Hanukkah letters in 2014, faithfully maintains a diary and is constantly tidying his scrapbooks and photo albums. His kids and grandkids live a long way away. “Maybe someday when I’m gone, they’ll go through all of this stuff and just throw it away. I hope not, because there’s history here and important lessons.”

In 1995, when Arnold visited his old hometown, Hammelburg honored his grandfather by erecting a handsome stonework sign in front of a park where the family’s grain warehouse once stood. It is now Samuel Sichel Platz. He sends the Jewish congregation in Würzburg \$50 a year to take care of his

grandfather's grave, which was once desecrated by the Nazis.

Samuels is proud of America's role in rebuilding post-war Germany. "We didn't repeat the mistakes we made at the end of World War I." But he believes the war-crimes trials were a waste of time and money. Thirty-six Dachau officials, including the camp's commandant and a sadistic doctor, went to the gallows, together with some of Hitler's top generals, the Reich's slave labor czar and the nauseatingly anti-Semitic editor of the Nazi house organ. Samuels, like Winston Churchill, had favored summary executions. "We knew these bastards were guilty but we made a political deal out of it, a big spiel, to show the world that we are a democracy ruled by law. They should have been shot the next day!"

Told that a Pew Research Center study in 2014 found a sharp increase in anti-Semitism, particularly in Europe, Samuels was unsurprised. "I wonder whether the world learned anything from Hitler and the Holocaust? Look at all the wars still going on—people killing one another over religion, which is supposed to bring people together and foster good will, not hate. My dad used to say, 'Religion is the root of all evil.' If the whole world would live by the 10 Commandments and The Golden Rule we'd have peace. Everything else is hocus pocus. The only way I can fight hate and pessimism is to be optimistic and try to do my part. But I worry, especially about the politicians."

When Arnold Samuels opens his front door on spring-time mornings, five of his doe-eyed deer friends are usually



Arnold sleeps with this mermaid.

waiting on the lawn for the apple slices he serves up. His other faithful companion is a petulant Siamese cat named “Shadow” who is 18 and looks it. There’s a sign just inside the front porch. It says “Shalom.”

Sciatica is slowing him down. He knows he’s heading down the stretch. “No regrets. I’ve had a good life. I don’t feel that I’ve done anybody any harm. I helped a lot of people. I donated a lot of money to a lot of causes. I feel I’ve done my thing for God, country and Ocean Shores!”

He laughs and says we need a nice glass of wine at the Elks Club.

John C. Hughes
Legacy Washington
Office of the Secretary of State
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I AM WAR

Arnold Samuels believes this editorial is one of the most poignant—and prescient—he has ever read. It was written in 1939 by Edwin Van Syckle, a young editorial writer for The Aberdeen Daily World in Washington State. “I Am War” was reprinted nationwide and nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. The newspaper reprints it annually on Memorial Day.

Yes, you know me; but there are grass and flowers covering the scarred fields where we met before. You daintily balance your tea cups, and relish your wine, and you talk small talk with your neighbors over back yard fences. You have replanted your groves, and the grain waves in the gentle winds. You work and play and dance, and trifling things amuse you. So you are prone to forget me. But you should not.

For I am War. Remember? I have called on you before. I have taken from your huts and your castles, your great buildings that gleam so magnificently in the sun. You came to me from your hills and your plains, and the secluded valleys where you felt so safe and secure. I demanded it. I took you from your firesides, the peace of your quiet lanes, the mills and factories, from the oceans and all the lands that you call home. And some I did not let return. Thousands, millions, did not return.

For I am War. I kill. I ravage and despoil. I am the waster of flesh and brains ... and youth. For if I do not take you I will take your son. And I will leave only a stench on the battlefield. I do not care if he is brave or cowardly. I will sprawl his body by some tiny pool made by the rains. And the curly head you fondled and the smile that lifted your heart will be smeared with blood.

Yes, it will be ghastly.

I will torture you with anguish and fear. I will rend your body until you wish death to ease the pain. I will tear the white throats of your children. On the pavements they will lie and gaze into the heavens with staring but not understanding

eyes. I will leave your cities in shambles, and your peoples will strew the streets in death.

Your homes will be ruins, or gaping craters where they once stood. You will search in vain for those who lived there, for one small trace; and you will hope to God it cannot be found. A whole generation of you will die. Or it will come back in torment, and scarred and broken, with faces hardened by agony and bitterness. And the memories torturous, the hatreds, the broken faiths, the spending of your substance, the losses that even God cannot replace ... they will scourge you for generations and generations to come.

Yes, you will remember me. For I am War.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN INFANTRYMAN

Bill Mauldin, the legendary cartoonist for Stars and Stripes newspaper during World War II, won a Pulitzer Prize for his work depicting the life of two fictional GI's—"Willie and Joe." Mauldin was an accomplished writer as well. This piece gives us an idea of what an infantryman in Europe faced daily in 1944:

Dig a hole in your backyard while it is raining. Sit in the hole while the water climbs up around your ankles. Pour cold mud down your shirt collar. Sit there for 48 hours, and, so there is no danger of your dozing off, imagine that a guy is sneaking around waiting for a chance to club you on the head or set your house on fire. Get out of the hole, fill a suitcase full of rocks, pick it up, put a shotgun in your other hand and walk on the muddiest road you can find. Fall flat on your face every few minutes as you imagine big meteors streaking down to sock you. ...If you repeat this performance every three days for several months, you may begin to understand why an infantryman sometimes gets out of breath. But you still won't understand how he feels when things get tough.

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