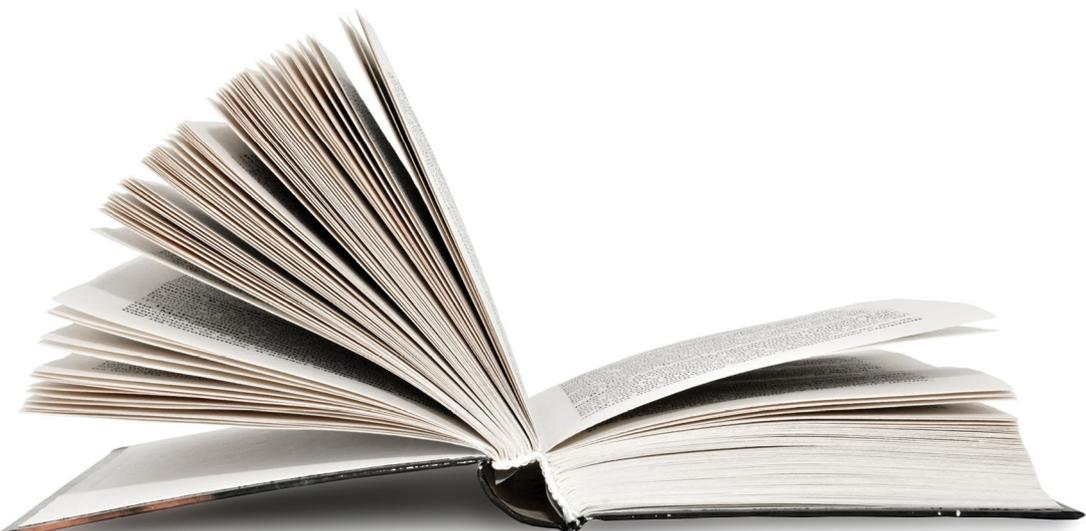


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# A Storyteller's Anthology

**Inspiring Character  
Portraits For Our Time**

**Douglas Feavel**

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Inspiring Character  
Portraits for Our Time

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*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are saved it is the power of God.*  
(1 Corinthians 1:18)

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*To Barbara, the “wife of my youth” (Proverbs 5:18b), closest companion for more than a half-century, and life partner in family, ministry, and adventure. By faith, she has accompanied me without complaint or hesitation, in both poverty and riches, from our start in Appleton, Wisconsin, through many states and countries to our current base in Vincennes, Indiana. As a bonus, she consistently overlooked my ADHD-related meltdowns, as well as patiently edited this book instead of sunning at the beach.*

## Preface

### *Author's Note:*

*In this section, I share why this book of stories was written.*

The role of “storyteller” in the title is fulfilled primarily by me and secondarily by those who inspired me. Its genesis is found in three secular (non-biblical) stories that came to my attention, and held my interest, over half a lifetime ago. They were coincident with the refreshing, new course my life took after entering into a relationship with Jesus, through which I acquired a sustained focus for my future – and for this book. The three stories were *The Bulletproof George Washington* by David Barton of WallBuilders; *A Man Called Norman* by singer Mike Adkins; and *The Gift That Lives On*, found first in *The Quest for Character* by Chuck Swindoll, and later in numerous other good sources. I occasionally shared these stories in private settings, but they were mostly just tucked away in my mind. During this interim period, I began to discover that storytelling was regaining some of its former appeal.

Occupying an antiquated position in the digital age, storytelling is rarely employed today, but when offered in the right setting, it is still appreciated. In the not-too-distant past, it was the most prevalent method of values education and of communicating history, traditions, and beliefs. In her collection of essays and lectures, *Mystery and Manner*, short-story virtuoso Flannery O'Connor accurately stated storytelling's subsequently diminished circumstances: “There is a certain embarrassment about being

a storyteller in these times when stories are considered not quite as satisfying as statements, and statements not quite as satisfying as statistics; but in the long run, a people is known, not by its statements or its statistics, but by the stories it tells.”

In her book *The Story Keeper*, Lisa Wingate writes: “Our stories are powerful. They teach, they speak, they inspire. They bring about change. But they are also fragile. Their threads are so easily broken by time, by lack of interest, by failure to understand the value that comes of knowing where we have been and who we have been. In this speed-of-light culture, our histories are fading more quickly than ever. Yet when we lose our stories, we lose ourselves.”

I heartily endorse the sentiments expressed about stories by both of these authors, as I hold that there are attributes to be highly valued in stories. By blending inspiration and information, stories bridge the past with the present; by sharing them, storytellers transform often dull, objective history into a living, subjective heritage. Stories have an inherent power to transform lives, and the most powerful ones are stories about transformed lives.

The preface to this book is essentially a story about my storytelling. My transition into a storyteller began quite unexpectedly. Just weeks before I concluded my thirty-seven years in business, I was presciently exhorted with the following counsel by a passing acquaintance: “Your latter years will be better than the former years, the best is yet to come, and by the way – you will be teaching.” Within weeks of hearing this, circumstances had me exiting a long career in technology some years earlier than anticipated, and beginning, without hesitation, the predicated adventurous new life. I’ve not felt the desire for a glance in the rearview mirror.

I had long held an abiding post-business goal of finding effective ways to *pay forward* the blessed life I had received. I refer to it as *doing something socially redeeming*. This is why I find the word *retirement* personally inappropriate as I often serve, sometimes full-time, in an assortment of volunteer roles within ministries, outreaches, and nonprofits; subsequently, I’ve also replaced the word *socially* with the more consequential word *spiritually*. Most of my first three post-business years were invested in work that supported Israel – often while living in Jerusalem. Upon returning to the States, my next role became – just as foretold – a series of teaching engagements within a variety of forums. I thought this would take place largely at the

graduate level, most likely teaching business or marketing at the university in my community. Thankfully, in hindsight, this was not so. Instead, my teaching experiences led in a different direction along two parallel paths. One path was as a volunteer instructor at a state correctional institute, a county jail, several churches, and four recovery centers. The other path was as a paid substitute K-12 teacher taking on all grade levels, subjects, and area schools – both public and parochial.

Prior to my first opportunity as a volunteer instructor, I was asked if I would be willing to teach practical finances to state correctional inmates who were getting close to release. Relying on my business experience, I agreed, even though finance is not a personal favorite or a strongpoint of mine. Immediately, I heard the follow-up: “Great, but we have no instructional material. Can you provide some?” After reflection, I decided I would do this the hard-but-best way. I invested the next month in developing my own ten-session curriculum from scratch. What emerged was my Personal Financial Management and Freedom Course. After a few initial sessions, I concluded that the most important principle in finance was actually character, because all the other principles could only be successfully adhered to, and ultimately work, if character was at the core as the driving force. I recognized that I needed to find a complementary way to bring the element of character into the realm of financial training.

Quick to follow the volunteer instruction was a move into substitute teaching. My emotional state during the first six or so *shock* weeks in the public school environment can only be described as a few degrees shy of suicidal; it was very depressing. The lack of character in most of the student body was tangible. Just as with the volunteer experience, I again recognized that I needed to find a subtle way to bring the character principle into the realm of K-12 education. I accepted it as a personal challenge to push through the depression toward some undefined framework of victory. Other than attending a state university for four years, I had no public-school experience of my own to draw on, as I had previously and subsequently received only parochial education.

On the front end, I felt my unique contribution to both of these educational realms was my years of real-world experience. I would be able to insert practical, rubber-meets-the-road guidance. Finding the ways and means to do this was a task I had acknowledged from the beginning. Where I was

blindsided a bit was in discovering that life experience alone was an insufficient supplement. I had to also better understand the nature of character and incorporate it as a fundamental teaching element. Failing to do so might mean just going through the accepted classroom motions – or as my son says, “just mailing it in.” My volunteer-venue students desperately wanted a do-over in their lives. By contrast, the K-12 substitute-venue students needed serious help preparing for their lives outside of school. They would soon be beyond the artificial education sanctuary, filled with self-esteem modules, dumbed-down curriculum and standards, behavior justifications, passive credentialing, and grade inflation. Choices made as minors during those years were fairly forgiving; their post-school environment, however, would be full of critical choices – many of them coming with far less grace in their consequences. Choice and character are continuously close companions in life; throughout this book I will consistently draw parallels about their relationship.

I began by modestly drawing on the aforementioned three character stories as resources for rewarding, inspiring, or counseling the students, as well as for gainfully filling any available minutes left in the scheduled lesson times. I soon observed a heightened level of interest. No matter the age, background, or gender of the students, they all recognizably enjoyed hearing an inspirational story about positive human character – even better if the story was true, included a hero, and had ready application for their lives. There seemed to be no measurable exceptions within the student bodies. I wondered whether I had found something approaching universal acceptance.

The stories proved to uncover an unmet demand, regardless of the listening audience. During the sharing of these stories, I witnessed grown men, incarcerated for hard crime, progressively soften while sometimes even struggling to hide tears as they gave the telling their full attention. I also witnessed unruly students excitedly requesting a story and promising to bring their behavior in line to earn it. These reactions weren't due to the power of my undistinguished voice or modest physical presence, but rather to the combination of empathy, inspiration, and eternal truth in which good stories are centered. I once read an unattributed quote that put it this way: “If you give a man a fact, he will learn; if you give him a truth, he will believe; if you give him a story, it will live in his heart forever.” If, after gaining their attention, I was also able to capture their soul, then I could

impart some lasting truth, what I call *sticky-points*. The profound influence of the stories I shared was bi-directional, moving first the hearers and then the teller. I tell my stories by heart, which is ordinarily taken to mean from memory, and while this is true for my telling, I also intend it to mean that my heart is vested in the stories as well.

Having gained such early and encouraging positive feedback, I became more motivated to find healthy, solid food for their aroused, intrinsic appetites. I began investing extra time building my story inventory through related archival research and personal reading. I sought good ideas from quality sources, and then reflected on them at length in order to glean core values that were enduring and applicable. I've humorously compared my objectives and circumstances with Scheherazade's in *One Thousand and One Nights*. She was the legendary Persian queen who told stories of historical fiction to the king night after night in order to prolong the duration of her courtly position and retain her physical head. I also relate my work to the theme of *heroicstories.org*, which is "Restoring Faith in Humanity ... One Story at a Time."

Once I had secured an adequate number of character stories, I integrated them into every subject, audience, course, and venue I could, including each of the ten modules of my financial freedom course. In time, I developed two more proprietary courses: Employment Principles and Character Building; the second was completely centered on these stories. With the increased number of instructional applications, I was further motivated to continue expanding the quantity of the stories I told. It's said that Abraham Lincoln very seldom created his own stories. That assumption is based on his quotation: "You speak of Lincoln stories. I don't think that is a correct phrase. I don't make the stories mine by telling them. I'm only a retail dealer." I confess that mine don't really belong to me either; I feel that they are bigger than me and that I'm only borrowing them in order to pass them along for others to personally enjoy or to share with others. I'm emphatically in agreement with Lincoln's supposition when it comes to my stories.

In summary, the initial trial-and-error phase of storytelling revealed two negative and two positive ubiquitous truths regarding human nature and modern education respectively. The negative ones were that far too many settle on unwholesome role models as their personal heroes while they simultaneously lack discriminating mentors; and that positive character is

on the decline and rarely formally practiced, taught, or upheld as a behavioral model. The positive truths were that people of all ages love true stories – even more if they're also entertaining; and that well-constructed stories have the power to guide and motivate where other approaches fail and are only modestly successful or enduring.

As an aside that may also prove helpful to other instructors disposed to follow my lead, I insist upon two conditions being fulfilled prior to sharing a story: All assignments have to be finished, and good behavior has to be exhibited. Once the story is queued, two follow-up conditions come into play: No one can do anything other than listen during the telling (for example, desks must be cleared; no reading, doodling, or chatting; and most certainly no earbuds – some schools actually permit the use of personal MP3 devices); and all questions or comments are to be held until the story has concluded. After completing the story, if sufficient time remains, I have the students pull out a blank sheet of lined paper and write a brief essay on what they received from the story; that is, what left an impression on them. Those who hit the mark – which is purposefully left wide – may receive a small reward and may be permitted to share their comments if they so desire and if it fits the schedule.

Within a skillfully crafted, well-presented story, a substantial amount of teaching can be presented – and presented in a manner more certain to be solidly embraced and remembered. A good story is an open door to opportunities. Sometimes the story does not just encapsulate or deliver the message; at times, the story is the message, by which I mean it is deliberately left open to multiple personal interpretations and practical take-aways. How does information become easy to remember? Move it out of the realm of pure facts such as names, events, and dates. Those are the kinds of things we encounter – and don't like – in a final exam. Transform the message into a song, poem, or story.

I continued to marvel over how well the students receive even an unpolished, recently completed story, and how the demand for more remains high with no obvious saturation point. I also became more cognizant of a personal stake that I hadn't fully realized before. It was that the people I admired most, and those who had the greatest past and current influence on me, were prominent storytellers. It was their ability to create and to share

a worthy story that contributed substantially to their becoming figures of great renown and monumental worldwide influence.

The Bible contains a wealth of true stories, as well as a handful of fictional illustrations. It contains over five hundred stories. Overall, by percentages, it's a mix of 75 percent stories, 15 percent poetry, and only 10 percent unadorned teaching principles. It's not so much the story of God, as is so frequently stated; it's much more the story of man. In the Preface to his book *The Gates of the Forest*, Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel tells a story that ends with the statement: "God made man because He loves stories." There's a movement growing in popularity, especially among missionaries, to teach and preach the Bible evangelistically in the form of stories. This is variously called *Bible telling* and *chronological Bible storying*.

Several musical artists whom I appreciate have produced songs that enduringly exemplify the nonfiction storytelling genre. Some of the creative works of Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan serve as fine twentieth-century examples. In earlier centuries, this genre was more commonly in use, thus producing many more great examples. A song can act as an inspirational storytelling venue, even though it's not always accorded the same status as the written and unaccompanied spoken formats. Many epic adventures and heroic accomplishments have been bestowed on the ages through deceptively few words in folk ballads such as *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, *John Henry*, *The Hurricane, 1913 Massacre*, or *The Grand Coulee Dam*. In this volume of *Storyteller*, I haven't adopted any folk songs into spoken or written stories, but the potential and the temptation remains inherent in many of them. (Author's note: I've abbreviated the book's title and subtitle throughout to simply *Storyteller*.)

Gary Alan Taylor of Red Letter Christians defines stories as "the currency of human contact." He reasons that:

We tell stories about ourselves that reveal a great deal of what we as a people believe and value. If you want to understand a culture's values, listen to her stories. The prevailing American narrative [for example] consists of Godly Puritans at Plymouth Rock, Captain John Smith at Jamestown, George Washington on the Delaware and brave white settlers heading west into the sunset to claim the land God set aside for them. But, if we pause long enough to really listen to these stories,

we realize that most are told from only one point of view, that of the powerful. The idiom used to communicate America's history invokes terms like 'progress', 'virgin land', 'manifest destiny', 'errand into the wilderness', 'frontier', 'savage', 'new world' and 'civilized'.

Just as Taylor has generally noted above, the stories within *Storyteller* also seek to reveal and stress beliefs and values, but specifically, those of a handful of individuals who have been caught up in pivotal situations within their respective cultures, times, and geographies. I've avoided the mental traps criticized and enumerated above by an emphasis on the following: personal character, an international scope, universally valued criteria, a broad historic time frame, and simple insights into ordinary, mostly unknown men and women whose deeds are only worthy of our attention and emulation because they have left us a legacy of unselfishness, not one of domination. Boris Johnson expressed these sentiments well when he wrote that the life of Winston Churchill proves "history is a tale of singular individuals and shining deeds."

My approach to examining the biblical principles, lifestyles, and people that are offered within the stories is fairly *secular* – not what the world loves to label churchy or preachy. Referring to those foundational Bible stories found in the book of Genesis, Jewish filmmaker Darren Aronofsky said, "If you can realize the mythological power of these stories and these characters, you can learn from them in a lot of ways, and it also makes them [into] living texts." I concur with his statement in its original context referring to the book of Genesis, as well as in a broader sense as applied to any good story dealing with human nature, when it's immersed in a noble challenge and faced with a moral choice. My primary mission in writing *Storyteller* was to document living stories of this type, so their inherent instructional and inspirational value would be easily accessible to the reader. You will meet herein founders, students, rescuers, altruists, missionaries, attorneys, volunteers, soldiers, writers, presidents, martyrs, immigrants, survivors, inventors, pioneers, and more, all heroes who have sacrificially earned the right to counsel future generations on character. They have made their impressions on me. I've by no means fully developed the good character I unceasingly hope to – the kind of character displayed by these men and women. Within a process I call *forever becoming*, I'm continually learning

from them. These are people of decisive action, not philosophers, intellectuals, or academics. That's not to say, however, that my subjects are not capable of great intuition and thought, because they have proven they were most certainly so endowed. They are, above all, morally tested, with many having simultaneously undergone physical trials.

I draw personal inspiration from the protagonists and their stories because they have been meaningful in my life; now I've chosen to share them with you more formally in a book. The reader will find each protagonist to be a worthy hero. This gripping collection of true stories regales their legacies of sound character and wise counsel, because the stories have the potential to be of great benefit to today's generations.

My story selections are fairly eclectic; that is, they range widely in topic, time, and location. That probably says as much or more about my head and life than it does about the book's style. My interest in the lives of the protagonists and my selection of stories developed both naturally and randomly. The title originated from the murmuring I'd overhear as the students gathered before class: "The storyteller is here!" The short stories in this collection were originally presented to audiences orally, but now they are captured for inspirational reading. Each was developed from experience and refined while teaching in elementary schools and high schools, in prisons and recovery centers, in small groups and around campfires, and from pulpits and Sunday school basements to boardroom podiums. These nonfiction stories are not dusty antiquities or boring academics; they'll be among the most exciting and memorable of your life.

It seems that authoring a book is a common ambition, as the *New York Times* (not a newspaper I generally like to quote or find to be an unbiased source) reports a survey result that 81 percent of Americans believe they have a book in them that should be written. In the process of writing *Storyteller*, I was asked several times by others with slight stirrings to write their first book: "How do I know I have a book in me and when it's time to write it?" While I am far from an experienced and knowledgeable author, my response is: "If you can't not write it, then you have one and it's time to do so." I understand my statement is grammatically poor, but the point is that if you simply must get it out of your head, then you are ready to write. And I simply must. Benjamin Franklin put it this way: "Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing."

No one had the honesty (which I appreciated) to say to me, "You can't

write a book,” even though many probably had that thought. My college composition professor surely, and understandably, would have shared that sentiment if she’d known what I was up to (see, I just ended a sentence with a preposition). I do recall that she was very hard on me, even though I don’t recall her name. I’d always received good grades in what we used to call *English class* in K-12, but anything positive I received in college didn’t come so easy. I didn’t care for her methods then; I do now.

I made two encouraging additional observations in the process of committing my stories to writing and incorporating them into book form. The first was when I noted that stories and storytelling in general appear to be on the edge of revival. I can’t say with certainty that more stories are being written and read, but I have definitely noted that as a genre, stories are receiving more attention, as many people in the media are stressing their value. The following quote from Donald Miller’s book *How to Tell a Story* is a typical example of my observation: “Story is no longer a tool only for artists. The rest of the world is beginning to understand that entire cultures are being shaped by the story tellers; and business leaders, pastors and parents are starting to wonder how they can incorporate more stories into their communication methodology. And they will all be benefited for doing so.” I didn’t know about this trend or intend to be part of it, but if I am, I’m fine with it because I believe in the pleasures, benefits, and purposes of the story genre.

I read several good books on nonfiction writing as preparation for *Storyteller*. One of the best was *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser, the thirtieth-anniversary edition of a recognized classic with sales of well over a million. Within its pages came my second additional observation. He made this simple but encouraging statement: “Writing is related to character. If your values are sound, your writing will be sound.” The reader will easily observe that throughout this book my values are closely interwoven with the character stories I tell and that are now recorded in print. Saul Bellows famously said, “You never have to change anything you got up in the middle of the night to write.” I hope he is correct, as these stories represent a fair amount of scribbling in the dark on notepaper stored next to my bed. I’ve observed that what comes to a mind awakened from sleep in the quiet of the night has real clarity. I intended for my stories to contain sufficient truth to inoculate them against fading.

I wrote the first portion of this book in John Steinbeck's hometown of Pacific Grove, California. It was one of the most productive of the many writer's-escape venues I inhabited while working on *Storyteller*. In his novel *Cannery Row* – written in and about his hometown – Steinbeck says, “And perhaps that might be the way to write this book – to open the page and to let the stories crawl in by themselves.” My book is precisely the product proposed by Steinbeck, because the stories herein flow naturally out of my experiences, especially those as a teacher and instructor engaged in a variety of venues; but they also flow simply from my journey of self-discovery as I garnered the stories over a long period of time and then shared them orally for a decade. Beyond rough outline form, this marks the first time they've been fully committed to writing, permitted to crawl in one by one, and then combined to form a book. I will try – and probably fail – to stay out of their way as much as possible.



Irena Sendler

## Separated by Good or Evil

*For I will contend with him who contends with you. (Isaiah 49:25)*

**H**istory teacher Norm Conard had a well-earned reputation for extracting excellence from students in his Creative Social Studies class. At the start of the 2000–2001 school year in south-central Kansas’s small Uniontown Senior High, he challenged his incoming class to select an optional, long-term research project in observance of National History Day. Projects from his classroom had placed forty times in previous NHD competitions. At his urging, fifteen-year-old sophomore Elizabeth Chambers (who preferred to be called Liz) was the first student to accept the volunteer assignment. She was a troubled and somewhat rebellious teen, abandoned as a five-year-old child by her parents. This project became the start of her scholastic and social redemption. Mr. Conard said he hoped it would help her to understand the difference one person can make and that he knew she could become one of those special people.

Liz’s search for a project theme led her to a small magazine clipping printed six years earlier in *U.S. News & World Report* and stored in a classroom file. The article briefly mentioned, among a list of many people, an

unknown Polish woman by the name of Irena Sendlerowa, her maiden name Anglicized as Sendler (married name was Zgrzembki). As Liz investigated further, it soon became apparent that buried within the list was the seed of a grand story about a Holocaust rescuer, one lost and untold for more than half a century. One number associated with Irena in the article seemed too incredible to be true. Liz and Mr. Conard assumed it was a typo, so the first call Liz made was to the source agency in New York to confirm the data. Without hesitation, Liz was informed that it wasn't a typo; the number was accurate. If so, how could the world not know about this? How could Irena not be famous when her work overshadowed that of so many acknowledged rescuers, such as the well-known Oskar Schindler? Liz had the beginnings of a personal mission, the likes of which Mr. Conard had encouraged her to pursue. She soon gained such affinity for the victims Irena had helped that her sleep was disturbed until her enthusiasm was better channeled into the project itself.

Mr. Conard enlisted a bright freshman, Megan Steward, to help Liz; not long thereafter classmates Gabrielle Bradbury, Sabrina Coons, and Janice Underwood also joined her. The students titled their overall work "The Irena Sendler Project." The most pleasant and surprising outcome of their research took place when the students sought to locate Irena's grave; they discovered she was alive and still living in her hometown of Warsaw, Poland. This was now more than dusty history; it became living legacy. The students utilized their findings to create a play based on Irena's WWII exploits. They titled it *Life in a Jar*, a name inspired by the method Irena had used to conceal vital, confidential documents.

The study group's play was submitted to the Kansas History Day competition in May of 2000, and it won first place. The statewide win earned them a trip later that year to the National History Day in Washington, D.C. They began performing their play in the local community with the admission revenues sent to Warsaw to assist Irena. By the time of her death, there'd been two hundred and fifty student performances of their play, beginning in Kansas, moving through the United States, then to Canada, and finally to Poland and the rest of Europe. The play is still performed, with 60 percent of the earned revenue donated to the Irena Sendler Life in a Jar Foundation. The foundation promotes Irena's legacy and encourages the education community to teach and to research the unsung heroes of history. After Irena

became familiar with the play, she remarked: “You have changed Poland, you have changed the United States, you have even changed the world [by bringing this story to light]. [Because of your work] Poland has seen great changes in Holocaust education, in the perception of life during that time, and you have provided a grand hero for Poland and for the world. I love you very, very much. Your performance and work is continuing the effort I started over fifty years ago; you are my dearly beloved girls.”

Before graduating from high school, Liz’s core team collected over four thousand pages of original, primary research on Irena’s life and on the children she worked with during the Holocaust and World War II. More than a hundred colleges and universities have used their material for classroom instruction. *National Public Radio*, *C-SPAN*, and the major networks all pursued the dual-interest story of Liz’s study team and Irena Sendler’s rescue work. Both stories contain universal themes: the former about a young girl’s inspiring work in Kansas today, and the latter about a young girl’s inspiring work in Poland yesterday. Both girls enlisted and led a small, trusted team of other young ladies to assist with their epic tasks. After several years of media attention focused on the students’ project, Irena’s life was fully brought to the world’s attention – just as it had long deserved to be.

Initially, there was only one obscure website linked to Irena, but by 2008, there were three hundred thousand. Inspired by and based on the students’ research, author Ana Mieszkowska wrote a book about Irena in 2005 titled *Irena Sendler: Mother of the Children of the Holocaust*. Since then, several children’s books have been published about Irena’s life. In May 2008, Hallmark Company announced production of a movie based on the book titled *The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler*. The film premiered on national television in late April of the following year. Sometime thereafter, a documentary was also completed, titled *Irena Sendler: In the Name of Their Mothers*.

The Uniontown students – now mature and well into their marriages, families, and careers – continue to promote Irena’s story and to research the related details. By the time of Irena’s death, they’d completed six trips to Warsaw. On one of those visits, Irena wisely told the students: “You cannot separate people by their race or religion. You can only separate people by their good or evil. The good always triumphs over the evil.” Irena told them what she really wanted out of the larger story was for “the Jewish

community to know there was resistance and spirit among the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto.”

In 2007, when Irena was ninety-seven years old, the students' contributions were catalysts in her nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. She came in second, narrowly losing to Al Gore's book and slideshow titled *An Inconvenient Truth*, the veracity of which has been debunked by over three hundred thousand scientists. Conversely, the more information we continue to firmly establish about Irena's life and legacy, the brighter her truth shines. Truth does not change and it grows stronger in the light, whereas lies can only exist in the dark.

Irena died on May 12, 2008, at the age of ninety-eight; it was, appropriately, the day of Liz's twenty-fifth birthday. The members of the project then began working with the Association of Children of the Holocaust in Warsaw to create a memorial statue in Irena's honor. It was unveiled on May 12, 2010, on Liz's twenty-seventh birthday and the second anniversary of Irena's death.

After the war, Holocaust survivors wanting to build new lives had no interest in dwelling on their painful pasts. The Jewish world's attention was rightly focused on establishing their families and careers, the new State of Israel, the Nazi trials, and the global threat of spreading communism. Irena Sendler and her story were further lost to the world because the Russian communists gained postwar control of Poland and forcefully united previously divided Poland and then merged it into the USSR block. They undertook their own forms of persecution against the surviving Jewish citizens and greatly mistrusted the patriotic Zegota, the non-Jewish underground resistance movement with which Irena was associated. The Former Soviet Republic has a well-deserved reputation for burying and/or revising any history not deemed supportive of their ideology or that exposed their infamous deeds. Irena's story, and her Christian faith, became victims of these global factors.

It was several decades before any of the rescuers began to be generally acknowledged. The related attention was initiated by the research conducted at Yad Vashem (translation: “remember the names”), the State of Israel's official Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem. It was they who had compiled the list that started Liz on her academic journey. The students' detailed research revealed this forgotten hero and the story that follows about her brave deeds during the Holocaust of World War II. Liz and her team rescued the rescuer.

(In telling this story, I sometimes break the whole into two parts: the preceding part, with its primary focus on the students, as part one; what follows, with its primary focus on Irena, as part two.)

What's in a name? Surprisingly, a lot more than is readily anticipated. If you were a Polish citizen of Jewish descent, it meant everything – life, love, liberty. The Nazi-led German army's occupation of Poland in 1939 was the longest, and very likely the most brutal, that any non-Germanic country suffered during the international conflict. The same is true regarding their mistreatment of the population, especially its Jews. The Nazis' stated objective was to eliminate all of Poland's native Slavic people: Jews, Gypsies, and handicapped first, and then the remainder. This madness included wiping out all vestiges of Polish national culture. (See Rose Valland's story for additional perspectives on the Nazi brutalization of non-German culture during the war.) Poland's Jewish population was the largest in Europe, and subsequently, the Polish Jews suffered the greatest numerical loss of all subjugated countries.

Irena was born February 15, 1910, in Warsaw, the capital of Poland. She was an attractive young maiden of twenty-nine when the German military machine subdued her homeland and enslaved or murdered its population. She was already a capable medical nurse and social worker. Any citizen in need was potentially her client, and she extended no exclusions toward the Jews, even well after the Nazis prohibited assistance to them with the passage of their inhumane and intolerant Nuremberg decrees. Helping a Jew came at a cost: All members of an offender's household risked the death sentence if just one member's pro-Jewish actions were revealed. Władysław Bartoszewski of the Polish Resistance said, "No work, not printing underground papers, transporting weapons, planning sabotage against the Germans; none of it was as dangerous as hiding a Jew. You have a ticking time bomb in your home. If they find out, they will kill you, your family, and the person you are hiding." The occupying Germans were not the only threat to those who helped. Much of the population was already prejudiced against the Jews – the country had a long and ugly history of violent pogroms.

Irena joined the Polish underground resistance movement *Zegota*, and became the head of their children's department, operating under her secret nom de guerre, *Jolanta*. Her initial pro-Jewish effort was to forge new identification papers for Jewish families in order to assist them in obtaining

passports to leave the country, or to hide their true identities if they chose to remain in Poland. Three thousand families were helped in this manner. After a year, these avenues were no longer available, as the Nazis forced the massive number of remaining Jews into ghettos that were filthier and more overcrowded than city slums. The Warsaw Ghetto contained the greatest concentration of Jews in the world, and now four hundred thousand were crowded into an area of one and one-third square miles.

Irena immediately sought commissioning from the Germans to check for signs of typhus, a deadly disease the Nazis feared would spread outside of the ghetto. The Nazis were unconcerned about preserving life within the ghetto; they just didn't want the contagion to exit the confines and place them at risk. It was the Nazi view that if a Pole like Irena died during the containment process, it was far better than risking a German life. Under the pretext of conducting regular inspections of the unsanitary conditions related to the frequent typhoid outbreaks, Irena voluntarily visited the ghetto at least once daily. On her visits, she brought in hidden food, medicines, and clothing as contraband gifts for the internees. Eventually, she enlisted a small team to assist her and help multiply her efforts. Eight-year-old Irena had become all too familiar with typhus, after her own physician-father died during an epidemic while caring for the infected Jewish populace of a village outside Warsaw. Now, regardless of her best efforts, she noted that five thousand ghetto residents were dying monthly from the disease and from starvation.

In August of 1942, Irena witnessed a large group of ghetto children being led out by armed Nazis. She was sickened, knowing their fate was likely to be death by Zyklon B poison gas. Irena reacted to the overwhelming number of deaths and murders by becoming righteously angry. She determined that she had to advance her rescue plans another dangerous step forward. Her focus became helping the Jewish children escape the ghetto so at least there would be Polish-Jewish posterity who might outlive the evil regime.

It was, of course, a very emotional and difficult task convincing parents to separate from their children and give them up to a Gentile, Catholic stranger. If her reasoned persuasions were successful in releasing babies, toddlers, and young children from their families, there then remained the daunting task of finding sufficient non-Jewish people who were willing to take them into their homes and institutions. Many Polish citizens were pro-German collaborators who wouldn't hesitate notifying the Nazis in order to further

secure their own tenuous lives. Little did they realize that after the Jews, they would be next; Hitler's mad plan was the annihilation of the entire Polish Gentile population. For other native families, even when sympathetic, the risk was considered too great.

Continuing to smuggle supplies into the ghetto, Irena developed several processes for smuggling out the children. She employed any creative, secretive means she could reasonably conceive. The older children were less challenging, because they could be led out through sewers and secret passageways. Babies were more difficult. She disguised them as packages; or placed them in suitcases, tool chests, and backpacks; or hid them in ambulances, wheelbarrows, rugs, furniture, trash barrels, and even coffins. Irena would bring along her pet dog because she had trained it to bark incessantly whenever a uniformed Nazi was nearby. This created both an advance warning and a distraction if she was ever stopped for questioning. While her dog was barking loudly at them, the Nazis could not easily hear any sounds from the babies hidden in her package, vessel, or vehicle. As an additional safety measure, infants were sedated so as to prevent them from crying or thrashing about. Irena secretly spoke German, but she never let on; this tactic often proved advantageous during the smuggling operations.

All of the rescued Jewish children were given new identities and false documents, and then placed with willing Polish families, orphanages, and the convents, schools, or rectories of Catholic priests and nuns. Some of the children were subsequently moved to rural farms and others were sent to Israel or to neighboring countries. There developed a kind of underground railway facilitated by the organized resistance movement. Using thin cigarette papers, Irena created written documentation of the children's real family names, which were cross-referenced with their false names and with their adoptive family identities and locations. She then hid the papers in glass jars with tight lids and buried them under an apple tree – a tree so close to a Gestapo facility that it helped defray suspicion and discovery. This effort was risky but necessary in order to preserve the original identities and the locations, as well as the new identities and locations. Irena assured the parents and older children that, when the war was over, the borrowed children would be returned to their rightful families if at all possible. The lists were to be the means for fulfilling this promise.

In 1943, Irena was finally reported by a malicious informer. Without

warning or trial, she was arrested by the Gestapo, locked in the notorious Pawiak prison, severely tortured, and eventually sentenced to death. Some years later, a holy card was found in her former jail cell. On it was written: "Jesus, I trust in you." The card was promptly returned to her, and Irena kept it until 1979, when she gave it to Pope John Paul II as a gift during a personal visit to his Vatican residence at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Italy. While in jail, there were repeated efforts by the Gestapo to force Irena to reveal the names and locations of the hidden children. She was beaten and had both arms and legs broken. Even under this extreme torture, she never disclosed any information about the children's new identities and never even confirmed the existence of the glass jar.

Her friends in the Zegota underground movement were able to save Irena's life mere moments before her scheduled execution. The German guards assigned to shoot her were approached, bribed, and told to report her dead. Thereafter, Irena's name was listed on the public bulletin boards among those executed. For the remainder of the war, she lived anonymously, in hiding. Once her wounds healed (although the healing was never total, as she always retained some permanent damage), Irena – with ongoing assistance from the underground – continued ministering to the Jewish children whom she had saved from the ghetto. Further direct work in the ghetto itself was no longer possible for her, and soon the ghetto was destroyed after a valiant but unsuccessful Jewish uprising.

Engaged in this manner for five years, before and after her capture, Irena was able, with the help of her own team of young girls, to save and sustain more than twenty-five hundred children by the close of the war in 1945. This was in addition to the three thousand family members assisted by the passport project. Immediately following the war's end, she unearthed the glass jar and attempted to return the children, as promised, to their families. Sadly, all of the parents and most of the unrescued older siblings had been murdered nearby at the hideous Treblinka death camp. The good news was that through the information contained in the jars, the children – who nearly all survived the war – were easily located. Although they were now orphans, the children learned their true family identities and related Jewish heritage.

A famous Talmudic proverb says, "Whoever saves a single soul, it is as if he had saved the whole world." Irena's life fulfilled that saying beyond

anyone's expectation. Because of her work as a rescuer, she has been awarded the status of "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem.

Many of the children Irena saved are still alive today. One lady, who was only six months old when Irena rescued her, remarkably became Irena's caregiver during her final years. Irena died in Warsaw, the same city where she was born and where she fearlessly worked throughout the Holocaust. Despite all Irena had done, this is what the humble hero said about herself: "I still hear the cries of the babies and their mothers ... I am not a hero, I could have done more; this regret will follow me to my death." Today, twenty-five hundred living testimonies (or ten thousand-plus, with the children and grandchildren of the next two generations) say otherwise. In modern Poland, she is referred to as the Angel of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Jesus – whom Irena openly served – commanded: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* (Matthew 22:37). Her life is a beautiful example of what it means to truly "love your neighbor" and to be "your brother's keeper" (Genesis 4:9). Jesus illustrated these precepts for all in the parable of the good Samaritan. Irena knew the parable and accepted what it meant, even at the risk of her own life. Irena said her parents instilled in her a caring principle so strong that if she were to see someone drowning, she was to attempt saving them even if she didn't know how to swim. She said, "Every child saved with my help is the justification for my existence on earth, and not a title to glory." Upon her death, Irena stood before God. She was able to respond without guilt if asked the questions God asked Cain: *Where is ... your brother? What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground* (Genesis 4:10).

For longer than half a century, Irena's engaging life story was lost to several generations. Had it not been for Liz's diligent efforts, its inspiration and appreciation could have remained lost to humanity forever. Irena's legend is growing exponentially, with her name and life readily displayed in films and books, and on statues and websites. It's appropriate to remember the contributions of Mr. Conard, Liz, and her friends that started the process in motion. The girls wanted to make a difference with their project and help to repair the world. They've met both objectives, and they're still on the job. Even though Irena has been gone for several years, her apple tree remains a growing and silent witness to the many lives delivered from unspeakable horrors.

*And I will save your children.* (Isaiah 49:25)

\* \* \* \*

Author's Note: In her landmark book, *Conscience and Courage*, Eva Fogelman says the Holocaust and the Nazi reign made up a time in the history of man that still challenges our understanding. She writes that this is so because evil was rewarded and good was punished; bullies were idolized, and the meek were trampled down; and in this mad, upside-down world most people lost their bearings, fear disoriented them, and self-protection blinded them. Only a few did not lose their way but took direction from their moral compass. The Bible tells us that unredeemed man calls good evil, and evil good. Irena Sendler was one of those few, out of the many, who exhibited uncompromising compassion and maintained virtuous character in the face of wickedness and intimidation. This is one of the reasons we need, for the sake of ongoing humanity, to be informed about the rescuers and other exceptional people like Irena who hail from a multitude of generations and lands. This is the contribution that Liz made to us. Both Irena's and Liz's lives are proof lessons about the positive difference one person can make.

Most Holocaust survivors completely buried their personal memories of the events until the 1961 Adolf Eichmann trial forced them back into the light. In doing so, it helped to instruct a new generation about reprobate society during the Holocaust. The role of rescuers, like Irena, Chiune Sugihara, and Raoul Wallenberg, went nearly unrecognized for the decades between the war and the conclusion of the trial. Part of the overall challenge is that rescuers have a unique and often uncomfortable fit between the victim and the perpetrator, and part was the extreme degree of secrecy that the rescue operations required in order to preserve the life of the rescuer and the rescued. Even under the best of circumstances, altruism can be a misunderstood virtue, with its motivations questioned, twisted, or denied. One favorable provocation may have been patriotic opposition to the Nazi bullies; another may have been reaction to rampant anti-Semitism. Facing sustained risk and absent any gain, no one rescued without having exceptional courage and a charitable spirit toward others.

Further complicating our informed understanding of history were the murky circumstances and the lost, suppressed, classified, or destroyed records

in postwar, battle-weary Europe. These conditions made the rescuers still more difficult to identify. Regardless, Yad Vashem set itself impressively to the challenging task of uncovering the names and circumstances of those who rescued Jews during the war. Primarily through its efforts, more than eleven thousand rescuers have been identified and honored, with still more under investigation. The more prominent of these rescuers – including Irena – are on permanent display in the museum for the public to study and admire. They are also the honored recipients of a tree planted in their memory outside the museum on the Avenue of the Righteous. I have stood there numerous times, but never without feeling a mix of joy and sobriety over the good and the evil that mankind is capable of performing. How appropriate for Irena to be remembered by the Jews of Israel with a tree, after she had used a tree to remember the Jews of Warsaw.

As Irena witnessed, and as has often been true in the past, the Jewish people are currently experiencing persecution throughout the world, even in their ancient homeland of Israel. Today, there are still Christians like Irena Sendler who minister comfort to them, some doing so at the risk of their lives. There are organizations located in Jerusalem that provide support to the few who are on the frontlines helping, as well as general assistance to the multitudes who are suffering. Based on my direct participation, three that are worthy of mention are International Christian Embassy–Jerusalem (ICEJ), Christian Friends of Israel (CFI), and Bridges for Peace. On a broader geographic scale, there are organizations today that continue to minister in the manner of Irena Sendler, but to a larger constituency than just the Jewish people. Their outreach includes ministering to Jews and Christians throughout the world who are suffering persecution of any form. Five of these that are worthy of mention – based on my personal experience or observation – are Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), Open Doors, Spirit of Martyrdom (SOM), World Relief, and Samaritan’s Purse.



Arland D. Williams

## Lost in the Water

*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed (Psalm 27:13)*

**T**wo bridges stand today as monuments to this story. One is located in Mattoon, Illinois, at the T-intersection formed where Lakeland Boulevard dead-ends into Charleston Avenue. It's visually insubstantial, and can barely be described as a bridge. It is more like a viaduct over a broad excavation – essentially a large, open ditch. The formation beneath the street grade is punned as a *chunnel* – a composite of *tunnel* and *channel*. Its primary purpose is to carry east-west-bound vehicle traffic over the north-south-bound yards underneath. Early in Mattoon's history, the city fathers demonstrated significant foresight by excavating a channel below the urban grade to avoid ensnaring the increasing volume of vehicle traffic with the diminishing volume of rail traffic, thus preventing delays to either transportation method.

The wisdom of this design and subsequent investment is commendable and not to be taken lightly. By comparison, a similarly sized city a hundred miles from Mattoon failed to take such action, and today suffers sixty-five trains per day intersecting catty-corner and snake-like across the city,

while completely severing and shutting down all urban activity including emergency vehicles. Nonetheless, in contrast to its vital role, the Mattoon Bridge is not very imposing, rising to a maximum height of less than ten feet, and can be crossed with barely a notice.

The other bridge could not be more different from the first. It crosses the mighty Potomac River at a wide portion not far from where it passes the stately Mount Vernon Plantation, and then, downstream, it pours its considerable waters into the Atlantic Ocean. The bridge's primary purpose is to carry high volumes of surface traffic between Washington, D.C. and Arlington, Virginia, while functioning as the terminus and origin of I-395. It has, over the years, grown into a series of multilane, bi-directional bridges of varying architectural styles and purposes, with some carrying rail and others vehicular transportation. This series of bridges was collectively known by the nondescript name "Fourteenth Street Bridge." Regardless of the insignificant name, there is no way a bystander could fail to notice them. Many pedestrians are drawn to the nearby riverside parks, inclined to relax while idly observing the frenzied activities and attractive designs on this network of bridges.

On January 13, 1982, at approximately 4:20 p.m., the status of these two very different bridges began developing something in common, eventually becoming linked immemorially. Beginning around noon, the nation's capital experienced an uncharacteristically severe midwinter blizzard. In response, the area's manifold federal offices closed early. Before the sun set, the day would record storm-related accidents that shut down or gridlocked the entire metro area's subway, road, and air traffic systems at the cost of many lives. It was to be a day of tragedy as well as a day of related magnanimity.

On the west bank of the Potomac River, less than one mile south of the bridge and tucked up tight against the shoreline, is Washington National Airport (now Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport). It was here, in close proximity to the nation's capital, that Air Florida prepared a Boeing 737 for takeoff to its intended destination in sunny Tampa, Florida, via Flight 90. The passengers were boarded on time, but the plane was delayed on the runway at length as it underwent the occasional de-icing procedures required to offset freezing, slushy buildup while awaiting the hoped-for break in the nasty weather – the break that never arrived that day. After some time and for an uncertain reason, the plane was given departure clearance.

Days later, the air transportation authorities realized that several critical standard safety procedures had been ignored or misapplied.

The 737 only traveled westward one mile before failing to lift and clear the Fourteenth Street Bridge. The crash resulted in the death of four motorists after seven vehicles were damaged, along with significant portions of the bridge. The Boeing landed on the far side of the bridge, broke through the thick surface ice, and quickly sank (all but the tail section) beneath the cold waters. Only six of the seventy-nine occupants escaped the submerged and mangled wreckage, emerged to the surface gasping for air, and then clung helplessly in the oily water to a broken tailpiece.

Rescue attempts from the water were not possible as the river was solidly frozen, and the only capable icebreaker was already engaged in a rescue downriver. Rescue attempts from the bridge, which were already compromised by the concurrent vehicle-related injuries and the bridge damage, were not possible either. Professional emergency teams were blocked from arriving due to the snarled traffic backups. Rescue attempts from the shore using ladders and makeshift ropes were admirably attempted, but proved wholly inadequate even as those assisting struggled for balance in the two feet of fresh snow. All potential air support was suppressed by the blinding weather, the same conditions that had already downed the 737.

The six survivors were in grave danger of perishing in clear view of the large host of assembled bystanders. Their bodies had all been injured to some extent during the crash, and two were near-blind after being exposed to the jet fuel accumulated on the surface. But their most immediate threat was hypothermia. This condition takes hold in minutes, with death resulting when a combination of basic life-sustaining metabolic processes shut down due to a severe decrease in body temperature.

A small National Parks Department helicopter with a two-man crew risked departure from Anacostia Park and successfully traveled the three air miles to the bridge in near-zero visibility. Upon approaching the survivors, they released personal floatation devices with little success. Their attention was focused on removing the survivors from the water, but their efforts were limited by the capacity to proficiently rescue only one victim at a time. The extraction harness was a simple loop on the end of a suspended rope.

It was first offered to a man who handed it to nearby flight attendant Kelly Duncan, who was then partially lifted and partially dragged to the

shore, where emergency help had gathered to assist. The harness was offered a second time to the first man. He again handed it to another passenger, who was also successfully removed to the shore. On the third return, the chopper crew correctly estimated that their rescue window was drawing to a close, so they fashioned a second makeshift rope and attempted a two-person rescue. Again, the first man declined the opportunity and instead assisted two other survivors, a man and a woman, each suffering a broken hand. Once he had both the man and the woman reasonably secure within the two harnesses, the man in the harness grabbed hold of a third victim, another woman, in an attempt to drag her with him to safety. During this impromptu three-person rescue procedure, both of the women slipped back into the open water. The resulting complications consumed precious time, and ultimately forced the two helicopter-based rescuers to engage in exceptionally courageous separate actions.

From the shoreline, Lenny Skutnik shunned his heavy outer clothes, dove into the water, swam out, and pulled one of the totally exhausted women to shore. Simultaneously, paramedic Melvin Windsor stepped out without protective restraints onto the chopper's landing skid, in order to grab the other woman by her wet clothes and pull her from the water to the relative safety of one skid. This action, while ultimately successful, resulted in the skids becoming submerged. Such a condition held a potentially disastrous outcome for all aboard, had it not been avoided by pilot Donald Usher's quick, evasive maneuvers.

By the time the rescuers were able to execute another return, the first man was no longer visible. After a thorough search, it became certain that as he awaited this last opportunity for extraction – the one that was undeniably his alone to accept – he'd suffered the lack of muscle coordination and sluggish thinking characteristic of advanced hypothermia. Consequently, when the tail remnant of the plane finally broke through the ice and sank, he lacked the strength and willpower to push away and resist its dangerous undertow. He slipped beneath the surface unto sure death, and into anonymity at the muddy bottom of the river. His sequence of selfless actions was soberly and admiringly recorded by the news reporters via their cameras and notepads, later to be commemorated in numerous publications, one film, and a song. There was not a single eyewitness among the many

gathered who failed to be deeply impressed by the dauntless scene played in real-time before them. Heroic action was in fashion that hour.

The five rescued survivors were hospitalized, and all lived. There was a disturbing catch, however; no one had been able to get a good look at the final survivor, the one who came to be known as the “sixth man in the water.” Even those whom he saved were not able to identify him beyond a simple “I saw a man’s hand pass the rope to me.” The man’s face was also blocked from the view of both those on the bridge and on shore, and daylight dimmed even as operations were still underway. The best description came from the pilot, who confirmed it was a man and that he appeared to be “middle-aged and maybe balding.”

Once attention shifted from the five survivors, there were seventy-four victims who needed to be located and identified. Of these, one was the unknown sixth man. Many wanted to know who he was, but there didn’t seem to be any means to satisfy their curiosity. Several days later, a coroner made a conclusive discovery: Only one of the male victims had lungs completely filled with water. It was determined from this unique status that he must have surfaced and then drowned. This body was associated with the role of the sixth man, and was later identified as that of Arland D. Williams Jr., the mystery rescuer.

“I was the last man in the water. I was the one who saved your sons and daughters. And when they finally sent down the last shred of rope, I saw my last hope wave good-bye.”

~ Commemorative song by Sarah Hickman

At the time of the crash, Arland was a forty-six-year-old federal bank examiner living in Atlanta, but born and raised in Mattoon, Illinois. After undergoing a recent painful and unwanted divorce, he was once again dating his high school sweetheart, Peggy, who still lived in Mattoon. His objective was to finally marry her. His chosen profession had him diligently engaged in cleaning up the notorious savings and loan financial scandals of the early 1980s. This employment required frequent air shuttle between locations, from his home in Florida, to his children and office in Atlanta, to the District of Columbia, and back to his hometown in Illinois. To those who knew him well, he was just *Chub*; not because he was overweight – he was not – but because he seemed so average, naturally content, and even-natured.

The move into banking was a natural for him, as his father, Arland D. Sr., was a bank president in Mattoon. The most uncharacteristic part of his life was his decision to leverage his high school ROTC into four years of college at the famous Citadel, The Military College of Charleston, South Carolina, and then to proceed with his two mandatory years of army service, which he spent as a stateside officer during the era of the Vietnam War. The Citadel is well known for its all-encompassing educational severity, as demonstrated by less than a third of the candidates being able to complete the associated requirements. Ironically, and perhaps prophetically, the demands that concerned Arland most deeply were those related to swimming and water safety, as he'd had a lifelong fear of water.

Not all who heard the news of Arland's heroic self-sacrifice received it with joy. His father and his son and daughter have understandably expressed regrets that Arland traded his life for others. It's not that they aren't proud of him; they are very proud. It's because of the seemingly unfair trade, in that a stranger gained, while they suffered deep personal loss. All three relatives believe some of the tragedies later afflicting the family are traceable to Arland's unfinished roles as father and as son. Such is nearly always the double-edged destiny of heroic action, especially when it ends fatally, as it so often does.

I learned Arland's story firsthand during my tenure in Mattoon. After leaving the area, I shared it regularly. I always concluded the telling with the primary sticky-point that in order for Arland to have been so altruistic during a time of grave, sudden, and unpredictable personal crisis, he must have already been well prepared to do so. By this I don't mean he had any inclination or premonition his life would take such a final dramatic turn on that particular winter's evening; he certainly did not. There is no way to prepare at the last moment for a crisis circumstance, especially an unanticipated one. What I intend to communicate is that the uncompromising, decent, thoughtful way he lived his life every day had unknowingly prepared him to take the high and unselfish route when an unexpected and unusual event suddenly engulfed him. Daily, he had to be doing right in the frequent, small things as well as in the occasional, large things. He fed his heart and head healthy food on a regular day-in-and-day-out basis. If

he had fed them with the garbage of cheating, cutting corners, and compromise, then his natural reaction would have been to continue looking out for himself, first and last.

Great Britain's conservative champion, three-term, and only female prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, stated this supposition as: "Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become your character. And watch your character, for it becomes your destiny. What we think, we become. My father always said that. And I think I am fine." Yes, she was, and so was Arland.

It would not have been sin or selfishness for Arland to have accepted the rope at any opportunity between the first and the final time, and no one would have thought any less of him for such an act. But it was his nature to serve others before himself. If we could have observed his life, we could have predicted the altruistic outcome, because every day we would have seen him putting in the good stuff. What you put in is what comes out in a crisis. No one can put in junk and expect any satisfactory outcome.

After about four years of sharing my personal conjecture on why Arland acted heroically during the terror of uncontrollable moments of horror, someone from the audience approached me afterward and stated that he'd known Arland well. My first thought was that my summary point was about to be challenged. Rather, I received the following confirmation: "I knew Arland, and when I heard about what happened I thought, *Why, there's no surprise. That's exactly the way I remembered him living his life. He was always putting others first and doing the right thing.*" An old computer industry expression sums it up simply as GIGO, or "garbage in, garbage out." In other words, if you input questionable or challengeable data, then expect questionable or challengeable results as the processed output.

Scripture offers a number of succinct ways to communicate the same principle. Here are four illustrations: First, it's not what a man takes into his body that corrupts him, but what he takes into his heart. Next, we must be faithful in the little before we can be found faithful in the great. Third, as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. And finally, anyone may give his life to save family or friends, but true love will do it for a stranger or even an enemy.

"So the man in the water had his own natural powers ... he

could hand life over to a stranger, and that is a power of nature, too. The man in the water pitted himself against an implacable, impersonal enemy; he fought it with charity; and he held it to a standoff. He was the best we can do.”

~ Publication by Roger Rosenblatt

Reflecting again on those two bridges, the small one in Mattoon was immediately dedicated in Arland's honor after the accident, and it became the Arland D. Williams Jr. Memorial Bridge. It's the little bridge with the big name and the big story. In doing so, Mattoon named its only available structure in memory of Arland; it was essentially all they had to work with, as the small prairie town lacked anything of greater significance. Two decades later, Mattoon built a new elementary school and named it after Arland as well.

Several years thereafter, President Reagan dedicated the previously damaged Arlington-to-D.C. bridge in Arland's honor, making it the other Arland D. Williams Jr. Memorial Bridge. All too often tax-funded public structures like bridges, buildings, highways, and monuments are named after or by some politician for personal aggrandizement and political party gain. Every so often a name hints at an awesome story in which a person of integrity, like Arland, resides and is remembered. His name is what both bridges have as a common bond. His final acts of generosity are what turned GIGO into “goodness in, goodness out.”

*That I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.*  
(Psalm 27:13)

Rick Rescorla

# I'm Taking Them Out!

*Set a man ... who may lead them out and  
bring them in. (Numbers 27:16-17)*

**H**is childhood ambition was to become an American soldier like the ones who had helped his country during the war and whom he later viewed in Hollywood films. Cyril Richard Rescorla was born in Hayle, England, in 1939, at the start of World War II. He grew up during the Battle of Britain and the American-led Allied Expeditionary Force. Early on, Rescorla adopted the name of *Rick* instead of *Cyril* because he thought it sounded more American; everyone knew him as Rick thereafter. Some of his earliest and most cherished recollections are of the GIs from the States who were stationed nearby. He grew to manhood, believing in the goodness of our global vision, especially our opposition to Communism.

Rick was naturally big, strong, and well coordinated. He was so good at rugby, the shot put, and boxing that many expected he would become a professional athlete. Instead, he joined the British Army as a paratrooper at seventeen. He saw four years of modest-duty action in the colonies of Cyprus and Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) as a sometimes soldier, policeman, or

mercenary. It was in these capacities that he came into firsthand contact with Communist-fomented insurgencies, and he converted from sympathizer to avid anti-Communist. He was not, however, fully satisfied with the direction of his life until after he turned twenty-two and immigrated to the States, signed up with the army infantry, and joined the fight beginning to stir in Vietnam. Rick served in the reformed 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, which came to be known as the Airmobile. This was a newly conceived approach to limited warfare. It used a combination of helicopters, forward landing zones, and fast, hard-hitting mobility combined with air support as needed. These tactics were adopted for use in the jungles against an enemy who used guerrilla tactics. While serving in the Airmobile, Rick earned the rank of lieutenant and became the commander of the Bravo Company.

Vietnam was the former French colony of Indochina. Throughout the twentieth century, it was never fully independent and had become a pawn between the capitalistic West and the Communist East. France had unsuccessfully fought local insurgent troops there for two decades. After they abandoned the effort, the United States entered in their place. The purpose changed from maintaining Colonialism to containing Communism. The Ia Drang Valley had been an infamous deathtrap for the French, and now it was the site of America's first major battle in their Vietnam War, and possibly the bloodiest one of the entire conflict. At Plei Me, a Special Forces camp in the Highlands near the valley, the four hundred Americans positioned there were surprise-attacked by wave upon wave of a Viet Cong force totaling four thousand men. Rick's actions throughout the siege are legendary for the bravery he displayed. When it was over, America had not seen so high a body count, even in the Korean War.

There were two separate groups to be evacuated by airlift at the battle's end. Rick was the last man in his group to board a departing chopper. After takeoff, word came that the other group had been cut off from their extraction point, LZ X-ray. Rick requested to be flown into the entrapment. He strapped on as many ammo belts as he could, placed an M16 in his right hand and a grenade in his left, and jumped ten feet to the ground. His actions so inspired the men that they were able to survive a bloody firefight and make it through a hellish night until the morning reinforcements arrived.

In a separate tactical action just days later and again in the Ia Drang Valley,

Rick's brave rescue effort helped save another group from annihilation after they too were pinned down, surrounded, and cut off by the enemy deep in the jungle no man's land at LZ Albany. Rick had now thrice demonstrated himself to be a war hero. He was highly decorated with the Bronze Star and the Silver Star for heroism as related to these three exceptional combat actions in the Ia Drang. His actions largely made the difference between the French and the American outcomes in the Ia Drang Valley of Death.

Rick continued serving full-time in the army as a career officer, advancing to full colonel before deciding to retire. The men under his command were especially well cared for, but he could not sleep well because he keenly felt the weight of every man lost under his command, and he was consumed by thoughts of those who had died. A close friend said that a little bit of Rick died along with each man he lost. He was close to every man under his command, and he was serious about their well-being. Many commanders chose not to identify with their men, believing it kept them in a more clear-headed decision-making mode. Not so with Rick. Those who knew him said that if there was a life to be saved, Rick couldn't ignore it. So he chose retirement just prior to the standard twenty-year active-duty mark.

Details of his story are in the books *Heart of a Soldier* by Pulitzer prize-winner James B. Stewart, and *Touched By A Hero* by Rick's wife, Susan, as well as in the Hollywood film *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young*, directed by and starring Mel Gibson. In 2006, a life-sized bronze statue of Rick was commissioned and placed at the Walk of Honor at the National Infantry Museum in Fort Benning, Georgia. The statue is based on a much-publicized iconic photo of Rick on patrol in the Ia Drang Valley. (The reader is encouraged to view the photo or the statue, as there is something compelling and timeless about them.)

After leaving the military, Rick attended the University of Oklahoma on the GI Bill. He earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in literature, followed by a doctorate of law. During this more leisurely time in his life, Rick – who was multilingual and certainly a modern Renaissance man – began his lifelong private practice of writing songs, novels, and plays; these works were generally founded on his international experiences. For a short season, he worked as a college professor in South Carolina. Then Rick moved to New York City, where he accepted an appointment as vice president of safety and security at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter (MSDW), which was the world's largest financial institution at the time, as well as

the largest tenant in the World Trade Center (WTC). It occupied thirty floors, from the forty-fourth to the seventy-fourth. Rick immediately set about using his skills, experience, and education to introduce programs and procedures that would later be employed in saving many lives twice over.

It was in this last career that Rick again distinguished himself in the role of rescuer, although now as a civilian, not as soldier. Recognition didn't come from combat-related bravery, but rather for his accurately anticipating both of the two terrorist attacks on the WTC and subsequently dedicating himself to the associated goals of damage prevention, readiness preparation, and employee protection. He cautioned anyone who would listen that the WTC complex (consisting of more than just the two well-recognized Twin Towers) was a prime terrorist target, and he predicted an attack would come. He tried without success first to convince his employer to move to a safer location, and then tried to convince the Port Authority in charge of the WTC to better secure and provision the buildings, especially the unsecured truck delivery section under the Center.

On February 26, 1993, the anticipated terrorist attack arrived in the form of a truck filled with explosive urea nitrate-hydrogen gas. It was driven into the open basement of the North Tower, known as Tower One, with the expectation that the ensuing explosion would drive it into the South Tower, known as Tower Two. Rick was on the scene and not only survived the impact, but his related plans and on-the-scene heroic actions also saved the lives of hundreds of his coworkers and other tenants. Rick loved to sing, had a ready sense of humor, and was almost always wearing a smile. In the heat of the evacuation, Rick incorporated these personal characteristics to enhance his extradition efforts. Coworkers reported Rick calmly issuing the necessary instructions, even jumping on a desk at one point and pulling down his pants in order to get their attention and counteract the panic. Rick was acknowledged as a hero for the fourth time. *Rescuer*, if not *Hero*, had become his new middle name.

In 1998, just five years after that first attack, Rick was filmed in a documentary in his office on the forty-fourth floor of the Center. Therein he detailed probable future terrorist warfare methods and objectives. This was long before Osama bin Laden and other Islamic militants had become infamous for their threats and deadly activities. In the video, Rick correctly predicted there would surely be a second attack on America and

that it could once again be directed at the WTC because it was such a large and purely American symbol. The success of the earlier attack was more likely to embolden the enemy than to deflect his attention. Rick's reputation had grown in light of his accurate and successful contributions related to the first WTC attack. So Rick took advantage of this and utilized the years between the Trade Center attacks to further train the MSDW staff in regular safety drills, as well as continue to badger the Port Authority about improving the emergency lighting, security, fire protection, and stairwells within the buildings. He was an unpopular man with the Authority, who thought him a crazy pest, but he forced them to provide many necessary safety and security measures in areas beyond those where he had direct authority or responsibility.

Rick and his new bride, Susan, booked a vacation flight to Europe, set to leave on September 12, 2001. During the time away, they intended to plan Rick's retirement. The day before their departure date, just three years after the interview for the documentary, the forecasted second attack came. What transpired then became both his life's finest chapter and his final one. Months afterward, the History Channel made a film about Rick's performance that day entitled *The Man Who Predicted 9/11*. The film follows Rick's dramatic timeline between 8:45 a.m., when the first plane hit North Tower One, and 9:58 a.m., when South Tower Two fell (after being hit at 9:03 a.m. by a second airliner just seventeen minutes after the North Tower One was hit).

Here's a brief summary of that final one-hour-and-thirteen-minute period in Rick's life. After the first hit, Rick called Susan to tell her not to worry because he was fine and would get everyone out of his building safely, and then the line went dead. After hearing the intercom announcement from the Port Authority telling everyone to stay inside his building, Rick responded in a mix of strong Cornish and American slang expressions. In summary, what Rick said was, "I'm taking them out!" Acting without authorization, he immediately began evacuating the occupants. After the second plane hit his building just above the MSDW floors, all possible escape for the 1,355 other business occupants was instantly gone. Because Rick had refused to follow the Port Authority recommendation, he had gained seventeen vital minutes of security, permitting 3,700 MSDW staff to have already safely exited the tower.

Various employees of MSDW later reported seeing him active across all thirty of the floors occupied by their company. Just as in combat, he was everywhere – calm, pleasant in the face of others' panic, and reassuring by his personal presence and charismatic demeanor. Rick was heard singing *God Bless America* as he went about directing his one-man evacuation. Because of Rick, almost every employee of his company made it out of the building; only five didn't. Think about that legacy: They left and they lived! Otherwise, the toll of the dead on that day of horror would have far exceeded six thousand instead of being limited to about three thousand.

Rick remained in the tower, and he was soon back in the stairwells, moving along the aisles, shouting into his bullhorn to gain attention, locating anyone lost or injured, giving sure directions, comforting the hysterical. As he led more survivors out, Rick continued to sing so that they would remain assured and more easily follow his lead, even when the dim lighting and smoke obscured their view of him.

When it appeared that everyone was out, Rick returned with the professional rescue workers for a final look. That's where he was last seen. He was inside Tower Two – the first one to fall – when five hundred thousand tons of steel and concrete collapsed and buried this five-time hero, ending his selfless life and concealing his body forever. Rick died exercising the virtues he'd learned and he'd lived: duty, honor, and courage. Rick died a victim of his own predictions, but he died as he had lived – watching out for others before himself.

Although he was still on the job that fateful day, Rick's body was already ravaged by a prostate cancer that had penetrated deep into his bone marrow. Few people knew of the serious condition that forced him to live in pain and diminished his physical strength. The treatments and medicine caused him to gain weight. For a man who always exercised and kept his body fit, it was an embarrassment he chose not to explain. It was not the illness and it was not the Islamic murderers that took his life that day; he laid it down in a Christlike manner for others, many of them strangers. Jesus said, *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends* (John 15:13). It was not the Muslim extremists who left the most profound impression for us to remember about that day; it was Rick Rescorla. Rick, the model soldier, chose to stay until his mission was accomplished: the first one in, the last one out, with no one left behind.

Here's a revelation about a characteristic trait found in those rare, brave public defenders and servants like Rick. It's their modesty. There are three identifiable clues in his life to sustain the point. The first is that he didn't offer or accept performance excuses related to his illness to the point of keeping it secret. The second is that although he and Susan had been together for several years, it was not until she was unpacking some of his personal items after a move that she discovered a box full of his military medals and became aware of his status as a decorated war multiple hero. Rick had never mentioned these to her and had deliberately kept them out of sight. Through annual visits, Rick had always kept in close touch with his family and friends in Hayle, England, and neither did they know much of his heroic record. The third is Rick's abiding conviction that he could have done more for his men and for his coworkers, even though he accepted more responsibility for those whom he served than was reasonable for anyone else to ever expect of him. Heroes rarely think of themselves as having been heroic; they often believe they should have done more. (See the Irena Sendler story.) Rick never read his commanding officer's book about their Ia Drang Valley actions – even though it was his photo on the cover – and he never watched Mel Gibson's interpretive movie. He said he didn't do these things because he wasn't a hero. At his 9/11 memorial service, everyone disagreed with Rick's self-assessment. He was called a warrior, friend, leader, and the bravest man they ever knew. That's exactly the kind of attention Rick would have avoided.

The life of Colonel Cyril Richard "Rick" Rescorla, JD illustrates that in a crisis, there isn't much difference between soldier and civilian, war and peace, defense and offense, professional and volunteer, survivor and victim, prevention and reaction. A hero's objectives and motivations within the crisis are always the same: the protection of others more than self. When we see someone in uniform, such as a soldier or a sailor, a nurse or a paramedic, a firefighter or a police officer, we should tell them, "You're appreciated for your good work." In doing so, we may be thanking yesterday's hero or encouraging tomorrow's hero-in-the-making. Someday, perhaps that uniformed hero might save you, me, or someone close to us. (As of my writing, the police and other figures of authority in our society are being maligned and attacked – even physically assaulted – by segments of the

general population and even by community leaders and officeholders of the federal executive branch.). Perhaps that uniformed hero may even be you.

*That the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.* (Numbers 27:17)

\* \* \* \*

Author's Note: Immediately following are a few lyrics from a Johnny Cash-Dave Matthews song titled *For You* as it was used in the film *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young*. The film covered battle actions in the Ia Drang Valley. I offer it as a poetic tribute to Rick's heroic and selfless life – both his military and his civilian periods.

I will drink the cup, the poison overflowing. I will lift you up, watch over where you're going. The first one in the last one gone, I'll be the rock to stand upon for you.

Haym Salomon

## Saving the Fourth of July

*And as I have purposed.* (Isaiah 24:14)

**I**s there a Fourth of July in Great Britain? I often begin a school day by presenting the class with a brainteaser to get their attention and move them into thinking mode. One involves framing up the time of the war for America's independence against the British Empire. Then I follow through by asking the question with which I opened this story. The most frequent response is something akin to "No, we won the war and celebrate the victory on the fourth of July, but they lost, so they have nothing to celebrate. It's an American holiday." My wrap-up is that the correct answer is, "Yes, they do because England uses the same calendar as we do and therefore they have a third and a fifth of July with a fourth always coming in between."

There was a time when a positive outcome to the Revolutionary War was far from certain for the North American colonies. For seven of the eight conflict years, it looked like the Fourth of July would become a British holiday celebrating the retention of their subservient thirteen colonies. Many patriots contributed their best to bring about the reality of our sovereign and free outcome. Possibly more great men and women of high ideals were

in motion at that time than before or since in the history of the world. The story at hand focuses on just one of these men, a man largely overlooked by history, yet one who helped save our Fourth of July as a day to annually celebrate independence and national birth. This was a new nation with a beginning and a purpose like none other except for our recent ally, and God's own chosen land, Israel, in 1948.

As an aid to fully appreciating the first portion of the story, it would be helpful to locate a one-dollar bill in United States currency, then keep it handy as the story unfolds. That Federal Reserve Note is our smallest printed denomination, but it represents a substantial amount of history, incorporates a timely message for today, and contains a hidden testimony to a hero within its intricate design.

In 1776, the First Continental Congress requested that Benjamin Franklin head a small group of men tasked with designing an official governmental seal. Due in part to the disruptions related to war, the project took four years to finish and another two to gain approval; thus, it was completed about the time of the war's end, in 1782.

On the back of the dollar bill are two circles. Each circle represents one side of the double-sided Great Seal of the United States as designed under Franklin; together, the circles comprise the whole seal. On the left circle – the back of the Great Seal – there's a pyramid. The front is lighted, but the western side on the pyramid's left is dark. This illustrates that the country was just beginning and the vast West had not yet been explored. The pyramid was left uncapped to further signify that the work of building the new nation wasn't finished. Inside the capstone, floating above the pyramid, is an all-seeing eye representing a watchful and all-abiding God. It was Franklin's belief that man couldn't finish the job of building a new nation without God's help, so he placed the eye at the top of the seal. Stated in Latin above the pyramid is *ANNUIT COEPTIS*, which translates, "God is favoring our work." In Latin below the pyramid is *NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM*, which means "Something new has begun." At the pyramid's base is the Roman numeral equivalent for 1776 (MDCCLXXVI).

In the center of the bill, displayed between the two halves of the Great Seal and helping to link them, is the familiar statement, "IN GOD WE TRUST." On the right circle, which is the front of the Great Seal, there's a design that has come to be known as the presidential seal whenever it is

used alone. It continues to be used in an identical format in many formal governmental locations and circumstances.

One reason the bald eagle was selected as our nation's symbol is that it is said to wear no crown of tufted feathers on its head. This was a reminder that we had broken away from the king of England, the crowned head of the worldwide empire. The flag shield in front of the eagle is unsupported, signifying that this new country could now stand on its own. In the eagle's beak is the familiar Latin phrase *E PLURIBUS UNUM*, meaning "Out of many, one." The eagle holds an olive branch in one talon and arrows in the other. The image is intended to promote the message that the new country wants peace, but it will never be afraid to fight to preserve and protect that peace. The eagle prefers to face the olive branch on its left, but in times of war, his gaze will turn toward the arrows on its right. The arrows, of course, symbolize war.

Please note the prominent use of the number thirteen and its numerous appearances. There are symbols arranged in nine groupings, all of which contain a quantity of thirteen elements. The number thirteen corresponds to the number of colonies whose representatives signed the Declaration of Independence, participated in the war, and signed the Constitution along with its Bill of Rights. The quantity thirteen appears consistently on the dollar bill in all of the following images: the stars located above the eagle, the arrows in the eagle's talon, the stripes in the flagged shield, the letters in the phrase *Annuit Coeptis*, the rows in the pyramid, the letters in the phrase *E Pluribus Unum*, the fruit encircling the star, and finally, both the leaves and the berries in the olive branch in the eagle's right talon. Several of these groupings of thirteen may be coincidental, but certainly most are deliberate placements.

Returning to the thirteen stars located above the eagle, we'll focus on the mystery behind their exact arrangement. When more closely examined, the stars are seen as placed in an exact design known as the Star of David (aka the Shield of David, Magen Da'vid, and the Jewish Star). The star was specially ordered by George Washington as an honor and remembrance for a hero of the Revolutionary War. This unique design leads to the second portion of the story.

(In telling this story, I sometimes break the whole into two parts. The

preceding, with its primary focus on the dollar's imagery, as part one; what follows, with its primary focus on Salomon, as part two.)

The man whom Washington wanted to honor was Haym Salomon (sometimes spelled Solomon). He was a Jew of successful means living in Philadelphia during most of the war years. He had the ability to create substantial wealth somewhat comparable in methods to Warren Buffett, and he invested it as political capital, making him the Koch Brother or H. L. Hunt of his generation. When Washington asked Haym what he'd like as a reward for his services on behalf of the new nation, Haym said he wanted nothing for himself. Haym expressed that, as an alternative, he would appreciate something commemorative on behalf of his people, the Jews. The two patriots settled on placing the Star of David on the Great Seal. The Jewish people had no homeland at this time, having been cast out of Israel in a forced dispersal to wander the globe for two thousand years. After a millennium and a half, the Jews finally found peace and acceptance in the newly established United States.

In the pantheon of America's heroes and Founding Fathers, Haym Salomon (1740–1785) has legendary status. His life was a brief and tumultuous forty-five years, but his lasting impact on America is substantial. The shame is that most modern Americans aren't familiar with him, when we should know his story as well as that of Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Revere, and the rest of our country's forebears.

Haym was not always forgotten. He was last remembered in a special way in the 1970s, when the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp series titled *Contributors to the Cause* – the cause being America's movement for independence. One of the stamps hailed a man as the financial hero of America's founding; the man was Haym Salomon. Interestingly, this stamp, like the others in the series, was uniquely printed on both the front and the back sides. The glue side of the stamp actually contained the following words printed in pale green ink: "Businessman and broker Haym Salomon was responsible for raising most of the money needed to finance the American Revolution and later to save the new nation from collapse." The front of the stamp read simply: "Financial Hero."

Haym was an immigrant to our country, arriving only a few years before the war. He was born in Lissa, Poland, in 1740, to an Ashkenazi (Northern European/Germanic) Jewish family. His ancestors moved there

generations earlier to escape the bloody Catholic Church Inquisitions in Spain and Portugal. Haym spent his first thirty-two years moving around Western Europe, where he developed fluencies in several languages and gained a wide range of experience in finance. He also came to hold a strong belief that America would be a temporary safe haven for the Jews. Such a haven was sorely needed, because the Jews had been driven and persecuted throughout the world for some eighteen centuries. As a the son of a Jewish rabbi, he also believed in the Torah (aka the Old Testament), which promised that one day in the future, Jerusalem would rise from the dust, the Jews would return to their ancient homeland, and Israel and Jerusalem would once again be the international home and capital city of the Jewish people, who would no more have to wander and suffer Gentile discrimination and denial. Salomon determined to do all that he could to finance the Revolution so that America could survive until the time when those promises would become reality. (His dream – the dream of every Jew – was fulfilled in 1948 with the reestablishment of the Jewish national homeland of Israel, with Jerusalem as its capital.)

In 1772, Haym immigrated to New York City and quickly established himself as a successful merchant and broker of foreign securities. Striking up a close acquaintance with the famous Sons of Liberty, Haym became an active patriot in the emerging cause for liberty. When war broke out only three years after his arrival (1775), Haym won a contract as his part in the war effort. He was to provide supplies to the American troops in New York. One year into the war (1776), he married Rachel Franks, whose brother, Isaac, was a colonel on George Washington's staff. The marriage was the beginning of a close relationship with Isaac, leading soon to another relationship directly with Washington. (See the related story on young Colonel Washington.)

In the third year of the war, British occupation forces set fire to New York (1777) and arrested Haym as a spy. He was tortured aboard a naval ship and then imprisoned for more than a year. They released him (1778) because the British wanted to use his language skills to communicate with the German Hessian mercenaries whom they'd hired. Haym had other ideas and covertly encouraged the Hessians to desert instead. He was rearrested (still 1778), but this time his property was confiscated and a British military court condemned him to death by hanging. He escaped

with the help of the Sons of Liberty and fled, penniless, to the American capital city, Philadelphia, where his family was able to rejoin him for the first time in two years.

Once in Philadelphia, Haym rebuilt his business and resumed his trade. Just a few years (1781) after his arrival in the capital, he had, again, advanced from penniless fugitive to respected businessman, philanthropist, and defender of both his peoples – the Americans and the Jews. He risked his fortune, pledged his good name and his credit on behalf of the Revolution, and defended religious liberty for Jews.

In 1781, Congress established its first Office of Finance in an effort to try to save the war and the United States from fiscal ruin. Haym began interfacing with the appointed superintendent of finance, William Morris, and soon became the most effective man in America in meeting federal government and military expenses. He was responsible for raising most of the money needed to finance the American Revolution, as well as those funds that were later required to save the newly independent nation from collapse.

The Congressional Record of March 25, 1975, reads, “When Morris was appointed Superintendent of Finance, he turned to Salomon for help in raising the money needed to carry on the war and later to save the emerging nation from financial collapse. Salomon advanced direct loans to the government and also gave generously of his own resources to pay the salaries of government officials and army officers.” Incredibly, Haym was able to maintain a thriving private business; perform many official duties for the United States, France, Holland, and Spain; give interest-free personal loans to James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and General von Steuben; and fund both the Continental Army and the Continental Congress.

Later that year (in August of 1781), a unit of the Continental Army trapped British General Cornwallis in the Virginia coastal city of Yorktown, between the York and James rivers. Washington and his main army – along with General Rochambeau of the allied French army – wanted to march from Hudson Heights, New York, to Yorktown in an effort to combine all forces and deliver a heavy blow in the hopes of ending the decade-long war. Unfortunately, Washington’s war funds were completely depleted and Congress was broke as well. He needed at least \$20,000 (value circa \$55 million today) to finance the campaign. When told there were no funds and no credit available, Washington unhesitatingly issued one simple order:

“Get me Haym Salomon.” Haym came through by raising the money and by funneling it to the cause.

Washington conducted the Yorktown campaign, which proved to be the final battle of the long eight years of war. The Revolutionary War formally ended on September 3, 1783, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, but this did not end the financial problems of the newly established nation. It was Haym Salomon who still managed, time after time, to raise the money needed to bail out the debt-ridden government and thus, hold it together.

Haym had to manage these successes despite operating within the context of a society and an age that mistakenly considered all Jews as wicked shylocks and selfish moneygrubbers. He and his Jewish people were regularly socially discriminated against and even physically harassed. He died at age forty-five in 1785, a mere two years after the war. Haym left behind a wife and four young children with debts larger than his estate. All his wealth and property had either been destroyed by the British or given to the Americans.

Private individuals like Jefferson and the federal government owed him a total of eight hundred thousand dollars, about forty-two billion dollars in today’s purchasing power. Although Haym never asked for repayment of these loans, his son petitioned Congress to recover some of the money owed to the family and much needed by it. Various petty government committees refused to recognize the family’s claims and never made good on any of the loans, many times “losing” the necessary documentation regularly provided as authentication of the obligations owed Haym’s family.

Despite personal setbacks, Haym Salomon’s name is forever linked to the idealism and success of the American Revolution, as well as to the substantial history of contributions made by the Jewish people to the cause of freedom worldwide. (There were other Jews aligned with him, including the Rothchilds, Franks, and Sassons.) Few people today know it was Haym Salomon who saved the financial well-being of several Founding Fathers, the Continental Army, and the nation through his generous contributions; fewer still know that he died broken in both health and finance because of those selfless and patriotic acts.

Ever wonder how the United States and Israel became such close allies? There are many good and sound historical reasons, but one of the earliest is Haym Salomon’s legacy. It was a precursor to the bond that has held for

over two centuries between the United States and the Jewish people and, more recently, since 1948, between our country and the modern State of Israel. Some wonder whether it is fact or fiction that the Jews are God's chosen people and Israel His chosen land. This story, and so much more history, offers proof that these are both fact.

As Haym Salomon hoped and believed and worked toward, America did immediately become the safe haven for the Jewish people, and, 170 years later, the country of Israel was reborn as well, with Jerusalem as its capital. Haym was buried in Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel Cemetery, in a grave that is sadly, but typically unmarked. Since we don't know which grave is his, we cannot pay our respects or erect a memorial marker at his graveside. Nevertheless, as Americans we can remember and honor him for the debt we owe by standing firm in our support and prayer for a strong and secure Israel, as well as an undivided Jerusalem, under the rule of Haym Salomon's spiritual descendants, the Israeli people.

In downtown Chicago, at the intersection of Wabash and Wacker, stands a statue of three men: Washington, Morris, and Salomon. Its plaque reads: "Haym Salomon – Gentleman, Scholar, Patriot. A banker whose only interest was the interest of his Country." Historians who have studied Haym's life all agree that without his contributions to the cause, there would be no America today and hence, no Independence Day to celebrate. That's how and why a Jewish immigrant from Poland saved our Fourth of July holiday celebration.

*So it shall stand.* (Isaiah 14:24)

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## About the Author

**D**ouglas Feavel retired after thirty-seven years in technology marketing and management positions. He obtained a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and a master's degree in Christian education from Bethany Divinity College. He and his wife, Barbara, have been married for nearly fifty years. Appleton, Wisconsin is their hometown, but Vincennes, Indiana is their current base. They volunteer at non-profits in teaching, outreach, and ministry roles domestically and abroad when not with their children and grandchildren. Speaking engagements may be arranged through [contact@dougfeavel.com](mailto:contact@dougfeavel.com), and bulk purchase discounts are available through [www.anekopress.com/contact-us](http://www.anekopress.com/contact-us).

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