

The Story of my Search

Superman, Batman, or Ironman are most likely what you are going to hear a child say when you ask them what they think a hero is. Growing up I've always thought of heroes as ordinary people who risk their lives to save others. Throughout this project I have found this statement proven to be true. Simple people opening up their homes to others in a time of need can make them a hero in someone's eyes.

Prior to this project I only knew the American side of the Holocaust. In past class projects we only focused on the Americans being the heroes liberating the camps. I knew somewhat about Hitler targeting the Jewish families trying to make a perfect race.

When I got the topic of the Heroes of the Holocaust I was interested in learning about the heroes besides the Americans. I thought about Anne Frank's story and how ordinary people hid Jewish families in their homes risking their own lives. After researching for a few days and coming too many dead end sites online with not enough knowledge on a family who helped hide Jews, I finally found the Ten Boom family. The Ten Boom family was ordinary Christian watch makers. They helped hide Jewish people who were on the run from the Gestapo in their home. The Ten Boom family members that lived in the house and risked their lives were Casper (Father of Corrie and Betsie), Corrie, Betsie and her husband, and their son Christiaan. Casper's other two children, Nollie and Willem, did not live in the house but did visit often and helped hide the Jewish people.

Before I could start my project I needed to answer a few questions I had such as; What did the layout of the house they hid Jewish people in look like? Where did they hide the Jewish people on the run at in their house? How did the Jewish people do their daily routines while

hiding? How did the Ten Booms alert the Jewish people that someone was entering the house and they needed to hide? How did the people in hiding know it was safe to come out?

Research Findings

The first question I researched was what the layout of the house looked like because my 3D project is a replica of the Ten Boom families house and watch shop. The ground level of the front of the house that is seen by the street is the watch shop and behind that was the work room of the watch shop. Above the watch shop and work room was the living area also known as the “liberation room”. Above the living area were 3 bedrooms and a washroom. The first bedroom at the front of the house was Betsie and her husband’s room. The second bedroom was Casper’s. The next room was the washroom. The third bedroom was Christiaan’s. On the backside of these levels of the house was a staircase. On the other side of the staircase on the bottom floor was the kitchen/dining room. Above that was Casper’s Office. The most important area of the house for the Jewish people in hiding was Corrie’s room above Casper’s office. In Corrie’s room there was a false wall made of bricks. There was a dresser/closet that had the back of it cut so it could slide up enough that a person could crawl under. The dresser/closet was pushed up against the false wall where a part of the wall was missing so a person could slide up the back of the dresser/closet and crawl under and into the hiding place.



Replica of Ten Boom house with labeled rooms.

Once I had the layout of my project built I started researching my next question; where did the Ten Booms hide the Jewish people? I realized I had already answered this question when I built the house and put a second wall in Corrie's room, which was the false wall the Jewish people hid behind.

After seeing how small the space was behind the false wall and learning there was only a few blankets and a bit of food I wondered how the Jewish people did their daily routines while hiding. After researching this I found out that the Jewish people living with the Ten Boom family would go about their daily routines like the Ten Boom family would, just out of way of windows and doors to the outside. There was not much space in the hiding place for the Jewish people to sleep so they slept on the floors of the Ten Boom families bedrooms.



Picture of inside and outside of the hiding place replica.

The next question that popped into my head was if the Jewish people weren't constantly in hiding, how did the Ten Booms alert the Jewish people to go into hiding when someone was entering the house? There was a "buzzer in every room with a door or a window on the street". There was an alarm system located in the stairway that would make a buzzing sound that could only be heard from the inside of the house and not the outside. The family would have practice drills trying to have everyone who needed to be hidden, hidden within a minute.



Picture of a buzzer hidden by a curtain and the alarm system in the stairway.

The next question I wondered was how would the people in hiding know when it was safe to come out? The Ten Boom family used the alarm system not only for going into hiding but as well as coming out of hiding. The signal to go into hiding was one long buzzing sound and the signal that it was safe to come out was three long buzzing sounds.

While decorating the replica of the Ten Boom's home I tried to make it as identical to their actual house as I could. I made the dresser/closet that goes into the hiding place with a slide-able door like there was in their real house. I also made curtains and attached them to the windows that faced the street like they had in the real house to hide the buzzers and made the alarm system that was in the stairway.

The Ten Booms were part of the Dutch underground which was a group of Christians that risked their lives hiding Jewish people for short bits of time trying to get them into new safe houses. They helped save at least 200 Jewish people that went through their house in a year. There were usually about six to seven people illegally living in the Ten Boom house at a time. The Gestapo did a weekly raid on February 28th, 1944 and found Dutch underground materials and extra ration cards the Ten Booms were hiding. They were unable to find the six Jewish people that were hiding but arrested the Ten Boom family that lived there along with Nollie and Willem Ten Boom who were in the house visiting. Four days after the Ten Boom's arrest a member of the Dutch underground transferred the six hiding Jewish people to a new safe home.

Reflections

This research project taught me that I shouldn't be too specific when doing a search because it can lead to multiple dead ends or lack of information. When I broadened my search I found it was easier to get more information on my topic. Something else I learned was that by

using books as references I was able to find some articles and information online that did relate to my topic. In the book *Night* by Elie Wiesel, Elie told his story of living during the Holocaust in the concentration camps with his father. Throughout the book Elie tells about his struggles with his religious faith. He also talked about the internal conflicts of keeping himself and his father alive or just worrying about keeping himself alive. The idea of one group of people making someone lose sight of their religious faith and give up their morals of helping others in hard times disgusts me. Reading this book has made me realize just how bad the Holocaust was for some people. It also taught me that if you keep working and have hope of staying alive it can help you overcome obstacles. I have realized by doing a project on the heroes of the Holocaust that some people would risk their lives to help save others' lives. The Ten Boom family is a perfect example of ordinary people being heroes. They risked their own lives helping Jewish people on the run to get to safety fully knowing that if caught they would either be arrested or killed. When Casper was arrested he was asked by the Gestapo policeman if he knew he could be killed for helping the Jews and he replied, "It would be an honor to give my life for God's ancient people." The Ten Booms did not lie when asked if they helped in the Dutch underground they fully admitted to helping Jews.

Work Cited

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