

Promoting tolerance and diversity, inspiring positive action

By Bethany Martin, May 1, 2024



1 / 3 Show Caption + U.S. Army Tank-automotive Armaments Command (TACOM) Garrison Manager, Carrie Mead expressed her gratitude for speaker Irene Miller sharing her personal story at the 2024 Holocaust Day of Remembrance observance event on April 18, 2024. Mead asked Miller her thoughts on the effects of living in a digital age regarding control over books and media, and how that differs from Nazi control during the Holocaust. (Photo Credit: Jaime Acton) [VIEW ORIGINAL](#)



2 / 3 Show Caption + Brig. Gen. Michael B. Lalor presented Irene Miller, Holocaust survivor, author and educator with an appreciation note and TACOM coin as a thank you for presenting her story and supporting the TACOM Holocaust Day of Remembrance observance event on April 18, 2024. (Photo Credit: Jaime Acton) [VIEW ORIGINAL](#)



3 / 3 Show Caption + Speaker Irene Miller poses with TACOM Chief of Staff, Col. Kevin Polosky (far left), Command Sgt. Major Kendra St Helen and Brig. Gen. Michael B. Lalor (far right) after her presentation to answer additional questions and sign copies of her book for attendees. (Photo Credit: Jaime Acton) [VIEW ORIGINAL](#)

Detroit Arsenal, Mich. — On April 18, the Detroit Arsenal held a special event in the building 200 auditorium to observe both Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 2024 Holocaust Days of Remembrance.

The event, attended by U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command senior leaders and personnel, was organized by the Integrated Logistics Support Center. Irene Miller, who is a Holocaust survivor, author and educator from West Bloomfield, Michigan, was the distinguished speaker.

Holocaust Remembrance Day, according to the National Archives, is an international memorial day designated by the United Nations to mark the anniversary of the Jan. 27, 1945, liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration and death camp.

The Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute notes, “The Days of Remembrance was established as the nation’s commemoration of the Holocaust, during which we remember the six million Jews who were murdered. The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims; Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), people with mental and physical disabilities, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi Germany.”

The dates for these special observances vary each year between April and May, depending on the Hebrew calendar. This year’s Days of Remembrance, which is a weeklong commemoration of the Holocaust, is being observed May 5-12, with Remembrance Day being observed on May 6.

During her speech, giving a face to the darkest chapter of human history, Miller discussed her experiences as a 6-year-old child being forced to flee her family home when Warsaw was bombed by Germany in 1935. She also described her yearslong journey of suffering, including how she and her family were first captured and then endured starvation, harsh conditions, labor camps and untreated illness at the hands of the Nazi Party.

Miller revealed how she, along with her mother, father and older sister, had first sought refuge in a neighboring apartment before hiring a Polish guide to smuggle them into the Soviet town of Bialystok during the winter of 1939-1940 by traveling in a wagon full of hay that covered their faces to avoid being seen by Nazi soldiers. Miller recounted her last leg of the journey, saying, “It was in the middle of the night, extremely cold. We were wearing layers and layers of clothing to keep warm and also to minimize the amount of luggage.” Their guide, however, did not take them over the border, instead abandoning them in no-man’s-land with thousands of others fleeing the war.

After being temporarily separated from their parents, Miller and her sister were reunited with them and spent the next six to eight weeks traveling via a cattle train car to a Siberian labor camp. Miller’s father died of illness sometime after the family was transported to Uzbekistan. For years, Miller and her family suffered in labor camps, until the end of the war, when they finally traveled to Israel.

Although Miller and her family suffered greatly during the war, her philosophy of life helped her survive those difficult years and provided her with the resilience needed to thrive in her post-war life. “I don’t want to leave you with the thought and the feeling, here is this poor woman with such a tough life. I don’t think of myself that way. Not only am I fortunate enough that I survived, [but] more importantly to me, I was fortunate enough to establish a very meaningful life and significantly contribute to my community.”

Highlighting important lessons from the Holocaust, Miller said it is everyone's responsibility to promote tolerance and embrace diversity.

"My whole adult life, I try to live by the Jewish ethical principle called in Hebrew 'tikkun olam,' which literally means repairing the world. But implied in it is that we each have a responsibility to do everything we can to make this world a little better for everyone." Miller explained that she achieves this goal through how she relates to people in her life; she fully respects everyone equally, and sees every human being as good, regardless of the color of their skin, their religion, whether they are poor or rich, or where they came from.

What's more, there are many ways that Miller gives back to the society around her. She has been a docent and speaker for the Detroit Institute of Arts for almost 25 years, and she is a court mediator who helps people resolve conflicts without having to appear in front of a judge. In addition, she serves on the board of directors of the American Jewish Committee, the oldest civil rights organization in the U.S. And Miller travels throughout the U.S. and Canada in order to participate in speaking engagements for all age levels.