

For Middle and High School Students of History

Fall 2022

A Partner of HISTORY®

Issue XLVI



Rebecca Frankel (middle) with **Ruth Rabinowitz Lazowski** and **Rabbi Philip Lazowski**. Rebecca Frankel is the author of the *New York Times* best-selling book *War Dogs: Tales of Canine Heroism, History, and Love*, and *Into the Forest: A Holocaust Story of Survival, Triumph, and Love* which was a 2021 National Jewish Book Award finalist. A longtime editor and journalist, Rebecca was executive editor of *Foreign Policy's* print magazine and managing editor of *Moment Magazine*.

It was on a very sunny day in April 1942, that a woman named Miriam Rabinowitz saved the life of a young boy named

Philip Lazowski in the small, rural town of Zhetel, Poland. Miriam couldn't have known it then, but by intervening on Philip's behalf, she set in motion a series of events that would lead to generations of happiness for her own family.

On that April morning, the Nazis occupying Zhetel rounded up all the Jewish people living in the town's ghetto, violently forcing them into a field outside of town. There were more than 3,000 people in that field—husbands and wives, parents and children, and grandparents. The Nazis pushed and shoved them into lines. At the front of these lines was an SS officer directing people either to the left or to the right. To the left were able bodied men, and men and women with working certificates (and their children). Being sent to the right were elderly people, women separated from their husbands, and children without parents.

It soon became clear that the Nazis intended to kill the people being sent to the right—those who were most vulnerable, who were too young, too old, or too sick to manage physical labor. This wrenching apart of couples and families caused hysteria and

chaos. But anyone who resisted was beaten to death or shot. The violence that erupted in this field was brutal and unrelenting.

Eleven-year-old Philip Lazowski had arrived in this field alone. Old enough to understand that he wouldn't survive the selection on his own, Philip began to approach people in line for help—some were former neighbors or friends of his parents. But they turned him away. Philip began to panic. Then he saw a woman in line with her two young daughters. She appeared to have a kind face, so Philip approached her and asked, "Please, will you pretend that I'm your son?"

The woman took just a moment to look at Philip, and replied: "If the Nazis let me live with two children, they'll let me live with three." And she took his hand. That woman was Miriam Rabinowitz.

When it was Miriam's turn at the head of the line, she showed her work certificate to the SS officer. After looking over her papers, he sent Miriam, her

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daughters, and Philip to the left—the side to live, and they safely returned to the ghetto. The 1,200 people sent to the right that April day, were marched further away from town where they were lined up along the edge of giant pits, and were shot and killed.

Just a few months later, in August 1942, Miriam's family escaped the Zhetel ghetto, and ran to the forest where they hid for two years until they were liberated by the Russian Army in the summer of 1944. Unbeknownst to them, Philip Lazowski also managed to flee the ghetto that August. He too survived the war by hiding in a different part of the forest with his father and one of his brothers.

It wasn't until a decade after that April selection, after both the Rabinowitzes and the surviving Lazowski family members immigrated to the United States, that Miriam and Philip reunited. In 1953, during a chance encounter at a wedding in Brooklyn, Philip learned that the woman who saved him in Zhetel was alive and living in Connecticut. Not only did Philip travel to visit Miriam after that wedding, but eventually he began to court one of Miriam's now-grown-up daughters, Ruth. In December 1955, Philip and Ruth were married. It wasn't long after, that Philip became a rabbi. Ruth and Rabbi Philip Lazowski still live in Connecticut. They have three sons and seven grandchildren. This winter, they will celebrate 67 years of marriage.

As Holocaust survivors, both Ruth and Philip Lazowski have spent many years sharing their story with students. In fact, I first learned how Miriam Rabinowitz saved Philip as a kid in Hebrew school where Philip Lazowski was the rabbi and Ruth was a teacher. When it comes to Holocaust history, we are most familiar with the narratives surrounding the millions of Jews who perished in Nazi concentration camps. Miriam Rabinowitz and Philip Lazowski's experiences belong to a little-known part of that history—the 25,000 Jews who escaped their ghettos in the Nazi-occupied territories of Poland and Belorussia and who, against all odds, eked out an existence in the forests of Eastern Europe and survived the war.

While understanding the numbers of Holocaust history is essential to how we comprehend the scale of its staggering loss and destruction—and how difficult it was to survive—knowing the accounts of the individuals behind these numbers offers something far more tangible.

I spent more than five years working on my book *Into the Forest*, which recounts the Rabinowitz family's experiences before, during, and even after World War II. My own journey researching and writing about Miriam Rabinowitz's life helped me to understand that it is through testimony and real-life accounts that we build our strongest connections to the past. It is through the lens of human experience that we are afforded our most meaningful view of history. And when it comes to our knowledge of the Holocaust, that human connection has never been more urgent as we will soon be without the last generation of survivors.

I think about Miriam Rabinowitz a lot. I think about the moment on that terrible day in April 1942, when she spared no time deciding to help a young boy she did not know, even as it risked her own safety and the safety of her two young daughters. I have often wondered: would I be brave enough to do what Miriam did?

I can only hope that I'm never in a position to find out. But I am certain that I'm better off for knowing who Miriam Rabinowitz was, so that I can carry her example with me into the future. ■

Access to the NHC network, which includes chapters in 46 states and over 18,000 members, is a great benefit of joining the NHC. We encourage you to read about other chapters in your state or across the country and explore new opportunities! To explore specific sites click on the bolded text to be redirected!



Cannon School (NC) sponsored an event for Veterans Day on November 10. They watched the documentary *Beyond the Bridge of No Return*, about a Korean War veteran who returned to Korea with his 17-year-old great grandson, ate Korean snacks, and wrote 55 thank you notes to veterans, to be delivered to the VA Hospital in Salisbury, NC.



East Bladen High School (NC) recently enjoyed a day visiting the **North Carolina Museums of History and Natural Science**, as well as the North Carolina Legislative Assembly Building. The 2022-2023 club is 70 members strong and focuses its energy on community service and travel to learn about the history of the "Old North State."



James C. Enochs High School (CA) with World War II veteran Jake Larson at San Francisco International Airport last May. Club members were traveling to France, where they visited Omaha Beach among various sites. Mr. Larson's Instagram account is [@StoryTimewithPapaJake](#)



The Steward School (VA) at their first movie night of the year, where they attended *The Woman King*, a film about a group of female African warriors who resisted Portuguese colonization in the 1800s.



Manasquan High School (NJ) has been organizing their school yearbooks and newspaper, and created a display in the hallway of interesting items they found for the school community to view.



Henry Clay High School's (KY) History Lab is now in its 19th year at the school and the Club recently held its annual History Walk, where over 800 students interacted with the hundreds of artifacts that are part of the Lab. The Club, with the help of the IT Department at Eastern Kentucky University, is creating a visual database of every item as well.



Newnan High School (GA) hosted Jan Scruggs in October. Mr. Scruggs is the creator of the idea and founder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in DC. He spoke to an audience of over 250 high school students, local vets, and parents. Jude Henderson, one of the Club's Executive Officers, spoke to open the evening and it closed by Mr. Scruggs taking pictures with the community.



Richlands High School (VA) took an overnight trip where they toured Washington and Lee University, Virginia Military Institute, University of Virginia and **Thomas Jefferson's Monticello**. This was their first trip since Covid in March 2020, and here they are pictured in the Dome Room at Monticello.



Ross High School (OH) recently did a choice read of a history graphic novel or memoir that they checked out of the Cincinnati Public Library. Here is a picture of the club members with their chosen books—each student shared what their book was about, what they learned from it, what part stood out to them, and whether they liked it overall.



The **National History Club** hosted our first Speakers Series event on Zoom in October with Steve Scully. Mr. Scully is currently the Senior Vice President of Communications at the Bipartisan Policy Center and was at C-SPAN for three decades, where he served as a political editor and senior executive producer of programming, including the *Washington Journal*, Road to the White House series and the podcast “The Weekly.” He has interviewed every U.S. President since Gerald Ford!



Temple High School (GA) held their first annual Student-Vet Connect program, where nearly 60 veterans attended. With the help of parents, the local church and VFW, and the school's chorus, students from the high school got the chance to speak with veterans spanning seven decades of service, while also viewing artifacts and memorabilia.

TCR HISTORY CAMP



The **Concord Review History Camp** is an intensive workshop in historical research and writing for secondary students. In each two week session (both online and in-person), two experienced instructors will coach students to compose a first draft of an historical research paper on a topic of their choice.

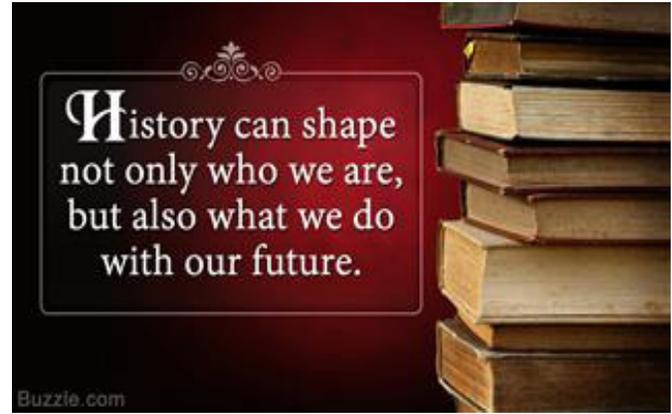
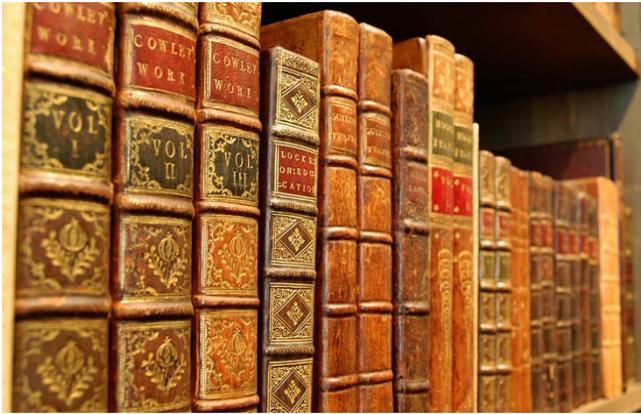
Instructors work one-on-one with students, coaching them through the research and writing process: formulating productive research questions; finding and making discerning use of primary and secondary sources; taking accurate notes; analyzing evidence, formulating a provisional narrative and testing it with more research; marshaling evidence to support one's position or narrative; puzzling together a narrative structure for one's essay; documenting evidence with University of Chicago-style source citations; and writing and rewriting.

The Concord Review is the only quarterly journal in the world to publish the academic research papers of secondary students. Since 1987 it has published nearly 1,500 history essays from students in 46 states and 45 other countries. For more information on how to attend a Summer 2023 camp, please visit their [website!](#)

“I learned so much from those two weeks and am so glad that I had the opportunity to do such. I grew in my writing and research abilities immensely, and cannot imagine who I would be without having had this intensive venture into history. The program showed me how to research and convey my ideas effectively—a skill that I was lacking before the program. My writing has improved 1,000 fold because of these two weeks; likewise, the program furthered my love for writing and history...*The Concord Review* and its summer program have played such big roles in my life, and I am so glad that I was able to interact with such amazing teachers and like-minded peers. I hope that I can spread my love of history and inspire others through my paper when it is published!

* Grace Lu, Douglas S. Freeman High School (VA), Summer Camp Attendee

The NHC is proud to have the support of over 60 college history departments! We hope that any of our members who are interested in majoring in history in college will visit a college's website listed down below to find out more about the history department and its offerings.



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| American University | Loyola University Chicago | Texas Christian University |
| Baylor University | Marquette University | University of Alabama |
| Boston College | Massachusetts Institute of Technology | University of Alabama Birmingham |
| Boston University | Mount Holyoke College | University of Chicago |
| Brandeis University | New York University | University of Colorado |
| Carnegie Mellon University | North Carolina State University | University of Iowa |
| Centre College | Northwestern University | University of Illinois |
| Drew University | Ohio State University | UMass Amherst |
| Georgia Tech University | Princeton University | Umass Lowell |
| Grand Valley State University | Rhodes College | University of Michigan |
| Fordham University | Rice University | University of Mississippi |
| Franklin & Marshall College | Rochester Institute of Technology | University of North Carolina |
| Harvard University | Rollins College | University of Pennsylvania |
| Hofstra University | Santa Clara University | University of Richmond |
| Indiana University | Skidmore College | University of Rhode Island |
| Johns Hopkins University | Southern Methodist University | University of Texas at Austin |
| Kenyon College | Southwestern University | University of Utah |
| Lewis and Clark College | Stanford University | University of Vermont |
| Louisiana State University | Stony Brook University | Vassar College |
| Loyola Marymount University | Suffolk University | Wake Forest University |
| Loyola University Maryland | Swarthmore College | Wellesley College |

NATIONAL HISTORY CLUB

The NHC would like to express our gratitude to the following people and organizations who make our important work possible...

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American Historical Association	Peter Baldwin (Professor, UCLA)
Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles	Jim Belcher
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History 500	Elizabeth Jones
Laurel Hill Cemetery	William Jordan (Professor, Princeton)
Museum of Florida History	John Lane
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National Vietnam War Museum	Lee Pollock
National World War I Museum	Bryan Rogers
National World War II Museum	Guy Rogers (Professor, Wellesley)
Omohundro Institute of Early American History	Henry Seng
Organization of American Historians	Art Snyder
Parkview High School (GA)	Rick Sperry
Penguin Random House	Lisa Wingate

The National History Club is a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on grants and donations to support efforts. If you are passionate about history and would like to contribute to our mission of promoting history at the secondary level please contact **Robert Nasson** (rnasson@nationalhistoryclub.org).