

Blizzard: Premier honours Holocaust survivors



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Toronto's Howard and Nancy Kleinberg, Holocaust survivors, are honoured by MPPs Eric Hoskins, Monte Kwinter, and Premier Dalton McGui

The hurly-burly world of politics paused last Thursday and for one solemn hour, Queen's Park quietly honoured some of this province's m

They aren't famous, but these folk are far from ordinary. Their stories are all testaments to the human spirit.

Nineteen Holocaust survivors told their stories, not just of survival, but of triumph of good over evil.

Of peace and security over violence and war.

Premier Dalton McGuinty joined with the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem to honour these people who endured so much, survived and v
this province.

"You have every right to be angry, bitter and broken.

"You have shown us daily, through your lives and the choices you made, how caring you are," the premier said.

Not only did these people survive one of the most evil acts of the last century, they overcame it. Their stories recounted not just the horror
how they moved on, raised families and flourished in their new country.

Bergen-Belsen

And one special story told of the victory of love over hatred.

Nancy and Howard Kleinberg were both from the same village in Poland. Both were sent to the Bergen-Belsen death camp in 1942. Nancy, then 16, returned to her village to look for them. She didn't find her family, but she did find Howard, then 18, desperately ill, buried underneath a pile of corpses. She cared for him until he recovered.

They lost touch, but both ended up in Toronto.

When Howard heard the girl who'd saved his life was in Toronto, he looked for her to thank her.

And so began a beautiful love affair.

The couple has been married for 61 years. They have four children, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Nancy recalled that life after the concentration camp seemed meaningless. She suffered from survivor guilt and couldn't understand why she survived.

"But I had to pick up the pieces, because God let me live for a purpose," she told me after the ceremony.

"I am grateful to God that I didn't come out bitter," she said.

"I wanted my parents, wherever they are, to see that I followed their guidance."

Nancy has been back to Auschwitz and to Treblinka — where her parents perished. She fell on a stone at the camp and felt she couldn't get up.

"I couldn't get off the stone, because I felt as if my parents were killed there," she explained.

Teaching young people

The couple spend their time now educating young people about the Holocaust and reminding them that life is beautiful.

"One of the principles we both possess is to cherish life," said Howard.

Best of all, after 61 years, they're still in love. They treasure each other and still hold hands to comfort one another.

"I found myself blessed to have a wife who was instrumental, through God's hands, in saving me," Howard said.

After the war, they were both alone in the world. Through love, through faith and through family, they put behind them a world of fear.

While it's we who should be honoured to know the Kleinbergs, Howard was overwhelmed by the ceremony.

"It was a very moving experience to be here," he said.

"Standing near the premier, I thought to myself how strange life is.

"April 15, 1945, I would never have the strength, the dreams, to think that I, in my lifetime, would be standing near a premier of a free country."

"To me, it's the pinnacle."

I'm sure the honour was all the premier's.

One final word from Howard.

"Life is a wonderful commodity. Never take things for granted."

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