



Holocaust survivor shares his story

Story Comments

Print Font Size:

Recommend 0 Tweet 0 G+1 0

Posted: Monday, April 16, 2012 12:00 am

Chelsea Giles, features staff writer | 0 comments

Holocaust survivor and retired Virginia Tech professor David de Wolf will speak today at 7 p.m. in honor of Holocaust Awareness Week.

De Wolf self-published "It Could Not Happen Here, But It Did," which is comprised of letters written between his family members during World War II. De Wolf was five years old when his family fled their home country to escape the Nazi invasion.

The speech is a free event sponsored by Hillel at Virginia Tech as part of a series to remember those who died in the Holocaust. De Wolf's speech, which will consist mostly of readings from his book, will take place in Squires Colonial Hall.

Collegiate Times: Will your speech revolve around your book?

de Wolf: Entirely — it is all about the book. (The speech) is essentially a series of parts that I will read from the book. There will be illustrations in a presentation and tables (describing) what happened in Holland during the time of the writing.

CT: Your book is based on the letters between your families, correct?

de Wolf: Yes, it's in two parts. I'm focusing the book on the story of my family. It's more or less straightforward of what people experienced, and what I find very interesting are the descriptions of life in the United States.

The first chapter is the story of our flight, and the other chapters deal with the letters between by father in the U.S. and my family in Holland. Of these, my Uncle and his family survived the war by going into hiding at the right time. My grandparents did not — they were deported to Auschwitz. In fact, of their generation, almost nobody survived.

CT: Did you inherit your family's letters?

de Wolf: Yes, my father made copies of the ones he wrote and of course kept the ones he received written on aerograms. All of them were looked at by censors. It was expensive to send them, and they were delivered by clipper — an aircraft. It was costly, so my grandparents wrote densely. My grandfather wrote on one side and my grandmother wrote on the other. I can barely read her writing, because there is so much on the page.



Sponsored



Sponsored by VisitNC.com

There's never a wrong time to vacation, especially in North Carolina. But the summer offers warm weather and sunny...

CT: What inspired you to put the letters together and write the book?

de Wolf: After having read them, I realized there was a story that hadn't been told about the war — mainly, the letters of people who remained under the occupation who were telling the story during the war. I hadn't seen that before. It was stuff hot off the press as it was happening; they were directly involved.

My uncle was trying not to alarm my parents of life in the Netherlands, and my parents tried not to alarm them of life in the U.S. They were truthful, nevertheless. They offered camouflage for what they wanted to say in such a way that it would pass the censors.

CT: Even though you were only 5 years old, do you have any vivid memories of the Netherlands during your flight?

de Wolf: The first thing I remember is the taping of windows in the days just before the invasion. It must have been after May 10, because it was in response to bombardments. My parents feared it would shatter the glass. Then, of course, I remember on (May 14), we were shepherded to the

harbor.

We were standing on the pier when we were hoisted onto the ship that took us to England. It was a ship that had turned back to pick up some prisoners of war.

That ship then sailed during the night and was attacked by dive bombers — I remember from the 'ping, ping' somewhere below deck.

Then we stayed in England for six weeks, and my parents managed to get a spot on a ship to the U.S. It was one that rode at night and zigzagged to avoid the U-boats.

CT: Do you remember your outlook being changed in anyway?

De Wolf: Well, my parents write that my brother and I — I was six and he was four — regarded this flight from Holland as the biggest feast of our lives. We thought it was a huge party, until we were hoisted on board of course. That was the moment we grew tense.

CT: What do you think is most important for people to reflect on when attending the events for Holocaust Awareness Week?

de Wolf: To remember that it could occur anywhere, and that's why it's so important. We all have to be alert that escalation of seemingly innocent harsh measures ultimately lead to what we call the Holocaust. Unfortunately, we've had many other examples since the war of which I guess the murders in China, Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia are some glaring examples.

It seems to happen, somehow, that people who (murder) are either ruthless or ideologically motivated. The ideology is the justification for the horrible things they do to people. And as my father wrote, they said it couldn't happen here but it did, which is also the title of my book.

It's been 72 years since the war, and what happened was so unusual that so much is to be avoided in the future. Maybe it will help if people know something about it.

CT: Do you have any special plans, since you're only in the office for the day?

de Wolf: To live until tomorrow.

Tweets

Follow

CT Collegiate Times @CollegiateTimes 2h
Pinball museum opens its doors in Roanoke [#CTnews](http://ow.ly/QeLUE)
Expand

CT Collegiate Times @CollegiateTimes 4h
What is "The Curse of the Unending Sneeze"? ow.ly/Qfjo1
Expand

CT Collegiate Times @CollegiateTimes 4h

Tweet to @CollegiateTimes

Notifications

Today's Collegiate Times Headlines

Would you like to receive our FREE daily news email? Sign up today!

Email

Subscribe

Manage Your Lists

Like Lauren Schwartz and 4,481 others like this.



Online Poll

Online Poll

Do you support laws intended to allow business owners to operate their enterprise according to their religious faiths, such as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided

Vote

View Results

Calendar

July 2015						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18

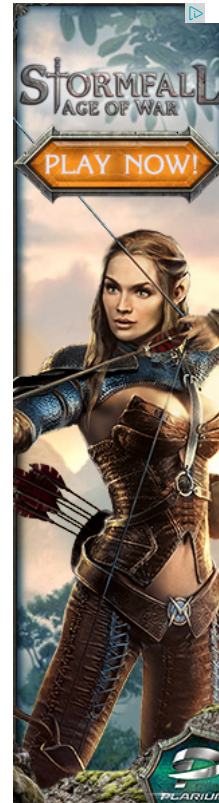
Recommend Tweet

Posted in **Lifestyle** on *Monday, April 16, 2012 12:00 am.*

19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
today's events			browse		submit	

- ### Similar Stories
- Dining Services battling low employee retention rates
 - Review: "Ant-Man" is a fun, small-scale success
 - Review: Bojack Horseman's season two is a dark victory for Netflix
 - Dual event exhibits visual and culinary art

- ### Most Read
- Dining Services battling low employee retention rates
 - Ohio State suspends Bosa, three others for season opener against Virginia Tech
 - Classes to be cancelled on Labor Day
 - The debate of the century: Qdoba v. Chipotle
 - C.J. Reavis loses student conduct appeal, remains not enrolled at Virginia Tech



Rules of Conduct

<p>1 Keep it Clean. Please avoid obscene, vulgar, lewd, racist or sexually-oriented language.</p> <p>2 Don't Threaten or Abuse. Threats of harming another person will not be tolerated. AND PLEASE TURN OFF CAPS LOCK.</p> <p>3 Be Truthful. Don't knowingly lie about anyone or anything.</p>	<p>4 Be Nice. No racism, sexism or any sort of -ism that is degrading to another person.</p> <p>5 Be Proactive. Use the 'Report' link on each comment to let us know of abusive posts.</p> <p>6 Share with Us. We'd love to hear eyewitness accounts, the history behind an article.</p>
--	---

Welcome to the discussion.

Screen Name or Email

Or, use your facebook account:

Password [Forgot?](#)

Remember me on this computer

[Need an account? Create one now.](#)

Sections

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [A&E](#)
- [Lifestyle](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Databases](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Photos](#)

Services

- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Media Kit](#)
- [Subscription Services](#)
- [Submission Forms](#)
- [Site Index](#)
- [Add Search Toolbar](#)

Contact us

collegiatetimes.com
Phone number: 540-231-9865
E-mail: webeditor@collegiatetimes.com
Address: 365 Squires Student

Search

Search in:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All	<input type="checkbox"/> A&E	<input type="checkbox"/> Databases
<input type="checkbox"/> News	<input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyle	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> Sports	<input type="checkbox"/> Opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Video

