

FLORIDA WRITERS

The author's story behind 'Hitler's Silver Box'

BY DR. ALLEN MALNAK

Special to Florida Weekly

When my father came to America in 1906 at age 16, he had only one distant relative in this country. He left behind in Kovno, Lithuania, a large family, including his parents, eight brothers and sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles. They ranged in age from the elderly to babies.

Dad died of natural causes during World War II, and immediately following the war, my late brother Lewis and I began to try to track down our father's European family. I was just 16 when the war ended. We wrote letters to everyone we could think of, and after about a year received a detailed reply from the International Red Cross. Nazi records as well as witness reports indicated that all members of dad's family had been murdered either in or near Kovno or after transfer to a death camp. Every man, woman and child.

So, one entire side of my family was destroyed by the Nazis.

Of course, I became interested in the Holocaust and began reading articles about it even during my high school and college years.

During my internship at Chicago's Cook County Hospital, I read a short book, "Doctors of Infamy," which covered many



MALNAK

horrendous medical experiments performed on concentration camp prisoners by Nazi physicians. The book was so disturbing that after reading it, I tossed it into a garbage can.

My next book on the subject was Elie Weisel's "Night." I then became occupied with my professional career as well as with my growing family for many years.

When I reached the age of 40, I decided I owed it to my dead family members to engage in a real study of that terrible time. I then spent perhaps two or three years of my limited free time reading every book I could find on the Holocaust.

Years later, I retired from the practice and teaching of internal medicine, and my wife and I moved to Bonita Springs. I noticed in the local paper an article describing a course in writing fiction being held at the Philharmonic Center for the Arts in Naples. The teacher was Hollis Alpert, a well-known novelist, biographer and short story editor as well as a movie critic.

I took classes with Mr. Alpert for a couple of years. He would give us assignments, often listing several subjects that we should use as the basis of a short story. He would critique each story and at the next weekly session read some of them to the class.

One topic I picked was titled "A Silver Box." For some reason, I decided to write it about a concentration camp prisoner at the Theresienstadt who was forced by a Nazi colonel to make a silver box that would be a present for Adolph Hitler.

After reading the story in class, Mr. Alpert suggested it could be expanded into a novel, and that started the process that eventually led to "Hitler's Silver Box."

Having put the novel aside for a number of years, the reason I decided to finish it had to do with comments on the website of a local newspaper from two self-admitted neo-Nazis who literally bragged about their admiration for Hitler and the murderous Waffen SS. Their comments were racist and anti-Semitic to the extreme.

While "Hitler's Silver Box" is a work of fiction, it's loosely based on the fact that during the Second World War, Nazi scientists worked up to the war's end on a multitude of secret weapons on which Hitler pinned his hopes for a last ditch victory. These weapon systems ranged from very long range rockets that could be fired from underground bases to alternative physics, robotic warriors, new energy sources, radical germ warfare and, of course, nuclear weapons.

In the novel, the facts were modified to suggest that many objects that were later called UFOs were also developed by Nazi scientists in concealed locations, and various secret laboratories were set up around the world, including in areas of both Arctic and Antarctic wastes where explorers had never trekked.

"Hitler's Silver Box" further develops this to suggest that as Allied Armies closed in on Germany from east and west, it became apparent to his top generals that the war would be lost. With Hitler's reluctant approval, a group of high-

ranking Nazi officials decided it would be prudent to plan for a Fourth Reich. This would require keeping these scientists funded and working for many years. All knowledge about them including their exact locations as well as their discoveries would have to be kept secret until the time was right.

Thus the vital importance of the sole document containing this information placed inside the silver box made especially for Hitler. The box was taken from the Nazis in 1945 and hidden in a forest in what is now the Czech Republic.

Writing the novel required considerable research. Having worked during my training and military service in a number of emergency rooms as well as having been medical director of a large ER department in Chicago's Mount Sinai Hospital, I was familiar with that aspect of the story. I studied articles and books on life in Theresienstadt concentration camp and had to learn a great deal about silver-smithing. ■

in the know

Meet the author

- >> **Who:** Bonita Springs resident Dr. Allen Malnak
- >> **What:** "Hitler's Silver Box" book discussion and signing
- >> **When:** 7:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 27
- >> **Where:** Beth Tikvah of Naples, 1459 Pine Ridge Road
- >> **Reservations:** 434-1818

CAMERON MACKINTOSH'S
SPECTACULAR NEW PRODUCTION

Les Misérables

Dream the Dream

BOUBLIL & SCHÖNBERG'S
LEGENDARY MUSICAL
Lyrics by
HERBERT KRETZMER

January 24-29
Evenings and Matinees available

BUY TICKETS NOW at ThePhil.org or call **239-597-1900**
or visit our Box Office: 5833 Pelican Bay Boulevard, Naples
Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, noon-5 p.m.

PHILHARMONIC CENTER *for the ARTS*[®]
LesMis.com