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# Stories That Need to Be Told

MARKETING EXECUTIVE TURNED FILMMAKER CAROLYN SIEGEL BELIEVES THAT TODAY'S BEST WAY TO PRESERVE THE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IS TO DOCUMENT THE STORIES SURVIVORS SHARED WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

Written by Anne M. Russell

Carolyn Siegel is a 3G—a third-generation descendent of Holocaust survivors. Unsettled by the increase in anti-Semitic speech and violence in the U.S. over the last few years, she sought a way to preserve the lessons she learned from her Polish grandfather, Moses Locker, about the deadly consequences of bigotry.

Her decisive moment came when she saw TV news images of a local synagogue that had been defaced in 2020. “My immediate thought was, ‘Is this a warning sign?’ That’s what kicked it off for me,” Carolyn says.

Although she had no experience as a filmmaker or journalist, Carolyn set out to record and edit oral histories from Holocaust survivors’ grandchildren like herself. The goal was to keep the stories short—30 minutes or less—and thus accessible to a younger generation. “The approach is a light touch,” she says, “like you’re sitting down with a friend for coffee.”

Within 24 hours of putting out a call on Facebook for 3Gs willing to tell their families’ stories, she had 12 volunteers. She now is up to nearly 40. Carolyn, who runs the marketing consultancy Summer Monday, credits her experience in marketing at Ralph Lauren for her sense of what makes a good narrative.

From the beginning, *If You Heard What I Heard* generated ardent supporters—and detractors. Carolyn is still visibly hurt when recounting a meeting with a prominent Jewish producer who told her he just didn’t see any point to her idea. “I got so frustrated with hearing no that something strange happened: I got a feeling of

absolutely having to do this,” she says. “I feel such a debt to the survivors.”

Counted among her supporters from Day One are her friend and neighbor Zac Unterman, a development executive for Reel World Management (*Virgin River*), and Rabbi Susan Nanus of Wilshire Boulevard Temple, “the beacon of light that I needed.” She also mentions State Senator Henry Stern and LAUSD District 4 School Board member Nick Melvoin as champions.

Zac downplays the technical advice and assistance he’s provided, saying, “My role has been as a cheerleader more than anything. You get told ‘It’s not going to happen’ all the time. Everyone needs somebody to be positive.” However, the film history buff has gently steered Carolyn toward examples she can learn from. Says Carolyn, “When Zac suggested a jump cut, I was like, ‘What’s a jump cut?’” She proved to be a quick study and is now proficient in editing her videos—all shot on iPhones—in iMovie.

Rabbi Nanus, who authored a Holocaust play called *The Survivor* that debuted on Broadway in 1981, describes the project as “very special and unique.” The rabbi incorporated the videos into last April’s Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) ceremonies at her synagogue. “They were very moving and very important in connecting with the younger generation,” says the rabbi. “It gave people hope that the stories will continue to be told.”

For more, go to [ifyouheardwhatIheard.com](http://ifyouheardwhatIheard.com) ■





Filmmaker Carolyn Siegel with her grandparents, Lea and Moses Locker

"WHEN I WAS 8, I FOUND A PHOTO OF MY GRANDFATHER'S PARENTS WHO WERE MURDERED BY THE NAZIS. FROM THAT POINT FORWARD, HE SHARED STORIES ABOUT HIS LOSS, TEACHING ME THE IMPORTANCE OF NEVER AGAIN. HE ASKED ME TO PROMISE THAT MY GENERATION WILL MAKE SURE THE WORLD NEVER FORGETS."



Some of the people whose stories are included in the film: Dana Arschin and Nat Ross; and (left) Rabbi Nissen Mangel and Leibel Mangel