

## Holocaust Survivors Share Their Personal Experiences



Kittatinny Regional High School was quiet on January 25 while two gentlemen began to tell their personal accounts of survival during the Holocaust. Mark Schonwetter and Fred Heyman were both children when Hitler rose to power. Today, they speak to audiences about what they witnessed, how they survived, and the insights gained from their experiences. As they tell their stories, it is clear they are reliving every moment of this time in their young lives.

"Mark Schonwetter's father, who was the head of the Jewish community in their Polish town, was taken to the police station soon after the Nazis entered and his family never saw him again. A friend helped Schonwetter, his mother, and sister flee before they could be arrested, and they went to live in a ghetto.

Fred Heyman is what the Nazis called a "U-Boat", a reference to Jews and others who were hiding in plain sight. He was born in Berlin, and most unusually, lived with them throughout the war. The Heymans were assisted by a Catholic family. Fred witnessed his synagogue and school burning on Kristallnacht, the Rosenstrasse Protest, and endured Allied bombing raids. Although he and his parents were liberated by Soviet Forces in April 1945, they were almost killed by their liberators, who assumed they were German Nazis."

At the end of their talks, the two men fielded questions from the students and faculty. Here are a few thoughts they shared:

- Both men talked of miraculous moments during those years, when a decision was made, or help suddenly appeared, that altered the outcome of what might have been.
- By staying focused on a future goal, it helps get you through the times when hope is stretched thin.
- Be kind to one another. If you go to the store look at the cashier's name tag, acknowledge them, and say hello.
- Remember to pay attention to world events. Unfortunately, hatred still exists today.
- The remaining survivors are getting older. Share what you have heard so future generations will understand the atrocities of our past to improve our future.

Thank you to Mr. Schonwetter and Mr. Heyman for spending the morning with our students, faculty, and administration. Everyone was touched and mesmerized by your accounts. We appreciate you sharing such intimate details of your life.



Fred Heyman and Mark Schonwetter with students from in Mrs. Houghtaling's class.