

Student Delves into Restricted Holocaust Archive

FOR MORE THAN 50 years, the International Tracing Service archive in Bad Arolsen, Germany, was the largest closed Holocaust archive in the world. Administered by the Red Cross, it is where Allied Forces placed the millions of documents they captured from the Nazis, documents they used to help reunite families after the War.

But the archive has never been able to keep up with requests for help, and families of the missing have lobbied for years to open it to the public. Finally, in 2007, digitized copies of the files became available in several select repositories, one of them the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.

When history major Kristin Smith '11 heard from assistant professor of German James Martin about a 2010 summer

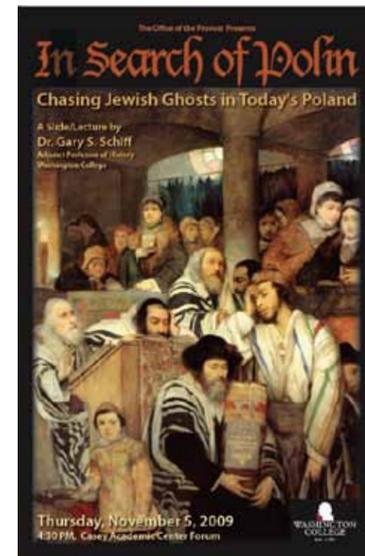
seminar at the Museum to introduce college and graduate students to the archive, she immediately applied. She'd planned to do her Senior Capstone Project on Nazi Medical Experimentation and became one of only 18 students from around the country accepted into the 10-day program, which included free housing and a stipend. Day after day, she was able to examine and try to decode records that provide an intimate look at the procedures of the Nazi regime.



Kristin Smith '11 conducted research for her senior capstone project at the Holocaust Museum.

"It was invaluable for writing my thesis," she says. And it inspired her to dream—not only of earning a doctorate in history—but of someday working as a researcher at the Museum. "The material can be physically and emotionally exhausting," she says. "But I find it fascinating." ✧

Jewish History Kicks Off New WC Book Series



Gary Schiff's trip to his family's homeland inspired a lecture and a book project.

A HISTORY OF JEWS IN POLAND by adjunct professor of history Gary Schiff is one of the first of a series of peer-reviewed books to be produced at Washington College.

In Search of Polin: Chasing Jewish Ghosts in Today's Poland will be published in January 2012 by the Peter Lang Publishing Group, an international academic press, under the Washington College Studies in Religion, Politics and Culture imprint.

Edited by the Institute's director, assistant professor of political science Joseph Prud'homme, the book is a scholarly exploration of Jewish life throughout Polish history.

Schiff, who teaches modern Jewish and Middle Eastern history at Washington College, traveled to Poland to visit the shtetl where his family had lived since 1765.

"Poland for centuries was the largest

Jewish community in the world, home to some 80 percent of the world's Jews in 1800," he says. But the Holocaust wiped out most of Poland's Jews, leaving little but the haunting traces of their history—in synagogues, cemeteries, public records, museums and concentration camps like Auschwitz and Treblinka.

Schiff, who serves as cantor and religious leader of the Chestertown Havurah, is the retired president of Gratz College in Philadelphia, the nation's oldest non-denominational college of Jewish studies. His next book for the series will be a study of Jews in Germany before the Holocaust.

The series seeks to promote "a respectful view of how religious people view their own traditions," says Prud'homme. "We're receiving manuscripts from scholars all over the country." ✧

The Jewish Connection

A SEVENTH-GENERATION Baltimorean and College Trustee, Beth Kahn Leaman '73 is not only an avid supporter of her alma mater, she is its link to nearly 200 years of Baltimore's Jewish history.

Leaman's father, Philip Kahn, Jr. (pronounced "can") was an executive in the city's once thriving garment industry. When he retired in 1979, he began chronicling the history of Baltimore's lively Jewish community and produced two well-regarded books: *A Stitch In Time: The Four Seasons of Baltimore's Needle Trades* and *Uncommon Threads: The Fabric of Baltimore Jewish Life*. He was working on a biography of the first Jewish graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy when he died in 1998 at age 80.

Although there was not a strong Jewish presence at Washington College when she was an undergraduate, Leaman says the atmosphere was so nurturing she felt immediately at home. "I was extremely

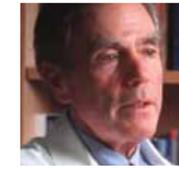
reserved and didn't make friends easily, and I was able to thrive here," she says. Her proudest moment was when, as president of the Panhellenic Council, she was able to persuade a national sorority to allow WC's chapter to admit its first African-American member. "It was a simple matter of justice," she says.

She was even invited, occasionally, to celebrate Sabbath or a Jewish holiday with local families—the Foxes (who owned the local five-and-dime and knew her grandfather) and the Goldsteins (relatives of Louis L. Goldstein '35, a legendary figure in Maryland politics and chairman of the College's Board of Visitors and Governors for 18 years).

"I'm still best friends with my freshman roommate. And I'm still grateful to the Fox and Goldstein families. I can't think of a



better place to spend four years growing up." Graduating with a degree in drama, Leaman went on to earn a second bachelor's degree in business from Towson University and a master's degree in administrative science from Johns Hopkins University. Still, she remained connected to Washington College, serving in various leadership capacities—as a member of the Visiting Committee, as 30th Reunion co-chair and as Class Agent for the Class of 1973. She was co-chair of The Washington Fund in 2005 and joined the College's Board of Visitors and Governors in 2006. An innovative and highly successful human resources executive, Leaman retired in June 2010 as Vice President of Health and Welfare Business Processes for Automatic Data Processing (ADP).



Profile
Ralph Snyderman '61 launched his medical career at WC. [Page 4](#)



Boat Float
Hillel entered *Red Tide* in the cardboard boat regatta. [Page 2](#)



Student File
Kristin Smith '11 studies Holocaust archive. [Page 5](#)

SHALOM

The Washington College Hillel Newsletter

Volume 1, Number 1, Summer 2011

College Forges Partnerships for Jewish Studies

BEGINNING THIS FALL, Washington College students and faculty can look forward to a number of exciting new opportunities to study Jewish intellectual history and theology through partnerships with Hebrew University in Jerusalem, St. John's College in Annapolis and Princeton University.

The programs are sponsored by the College's new Program on Jewish Thought—brainchild of Joseph Prud'homme, assistant professor of political science—under the auspices of the Institute for Religion, Politics and Culture. "We want to offer WC students the opportunity to study with some of the best scholars from around the world," says Prud'homme, the Institute director.

In January 2012, the College will launch what is expected to be an annual month-long course during winter break at Hebrew University, which Prud'homme will teach with a member of the Hebrew University faculty. "We hope that this will lead, ultimately, to semester- and year-long exchange programs," he says. "We are working on short-term research exchanges between our faculties, as well."

Beginning in October 2011, the Insti-



Students will travel to Jerusalem for a month-long course at Hebrew University over winter break.

tute will also sponsor two symposia a year with St. John's College, one in Chestertown and the other in Annapolis. During each two-day event, students and faculty will hear a leading speaker on Jewish thought and then spend a day reflecting on the speaker's message.

The Institute is arranging a similar program with the departments of religion and politics at Princeton. Plans include having Princeton scholars and students visit

Chestertown in the fall. And, during spring break in 2012, Princeton University will host Washington College students and faculty, who will be able to use the Princeton libraries to conduct research in Jewish studies. The week will culminate in a two-day spring symposium.

"It's all incredibly exciting," says Prud'homme. "And we're looking forward to doing it annually." ✧

Coming Events

September 24

Hillel launches vessel in Cardboard Boat Regatta

September 28-29

Rosh Hashana Services with Chestertown Havurah

October 5

Lecture: Atheism and the Poetic Imagination

October 7-8

Yom Kippur services with Chestertown Havurah

October 17

Sukkot Celebration Dinner, Livingood Terrace

October 19

Lecture: Shakespeare and the "likeness of a Jew": Shylock, Fagin and Disraeli

December

Hanukkah celebration, TBA
Shabbat Services and Oneg at U.S. Naval Academy, TBA

Look for more activities and information about monthly Shabbat dinners at <http://news.washcoll.edu/calendar/>

A Semester in ISRAEL

"IT'S BEEN ONE OF the best experiences in my life," enthuses Malory Kahn-Johnston

'12 of her experience at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, where she spent this past spring as part of the College's study abroad program.

Kahn-Johnston says she is glad she was at Ben-Gurion, which is in Beersheba, the largest town in Israel's Negev Desert, rather than at a university in the larger cities of Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. "Fewer people speak English here, so I was forced to speak Hebrew," she says. She studied Hebrew intensively and is amazed at how much she learned in a semester. "I've been so immersed in the language and the culture. When my parents came to visit, I really enjoyed showing them around.

This experience has made me much more independent."

Kahn-Johnston was also the recipient of one of the College's \$2,000 Roy Ans Fellowships, which support research in any area of study related to the Jewish experience. She is studying a group of U.S. high school students spending a semester in Israel—she wants to know why they're doing it and how it has affected them. "Do they develop a stronger connection with Israel? How does it affect their Jewish identity?"

She hasn't yet fully tabulated her results, but one thing has already surprised her: nearly a third of her subjects are so enthralled with the country that they want to join the Israeli army when they graduate from high school. ✧



New Home for Hillel

JEWISH STUDENTS have had their own club at Washington College since 1959—first there was the Jewish Student Fellowship Organization, and then, in 1991, a Hillel chapter was formed.

But neither group ever had a permanent place for its meetings, Shabbat dinners and events like the popular Passover Seder.

Now, thanks to several lead gifts and permission from the town of Chestertown

to begin renovations, a white two-story bungalow on Washington Avenue will soon serve as the College's first Hillel House.

And members of the chapter could not be more pleased.

"We are ecstatic," says Hillel President Cortnee Doll '13. "This will truly be our home away from home."

Associate professor of sociology Ryan Kely, who serves as advisor to Hillel, says plans for the new Hillel House include knocking out walls to create a kosher kitchen large enough for students to cook and eat together and a gathering space large enough to accommodate lectures and other events.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for Washington College students to have a robust Jewish experience and for students of many different cultures to come together for instruction and a rich exchange of ideas," he says. ✧



With renovations now underway, Hillel House will open sometime this fall.

A Grandmother's Legacy

CORTNEE DOLL '13, president of WC's chapter of Hillel, says the turning point in her religious life was the death of her Polish grandmother in 2005.

"I went to Jewish school for the better half of my elementary and middle school years and practiced my faith, but I didn't feel connected to it," she says. "My grandmother became my inspiration."

Marie Brandstetter, who never talked about her ordeal while her four children were growing up in California, told the story of her family's escape from the Nazis, on foot, through the Soviet Union and Central Asia, in a book called *Mania's Angel* she published herself in 1995. She hid in coal cars, went without food for days. She was even a passenger on the ill-fated *Exodus* before she finally emigrated with her brother to San Francisco in 1950. Most

of her relatives, including her father, were killed by the Nazis.

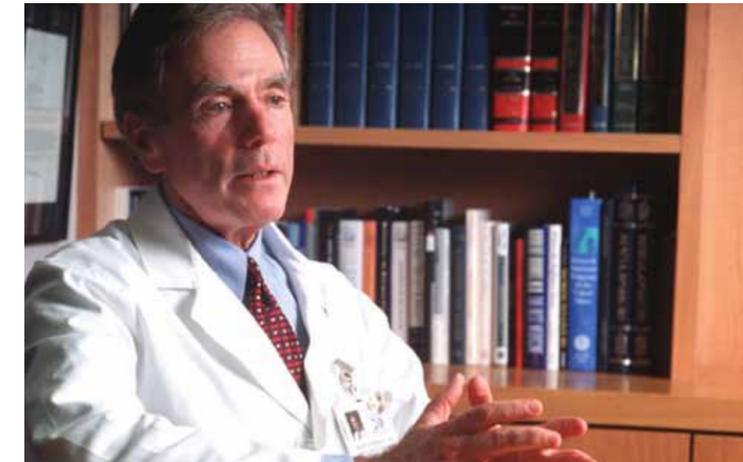
"Because of my grandmother, I want to change the world, to make sure nothing like what happened to her ever happens again," says Doll.

Through Hillel, she's met students with similar values, and she is pleased that the chapter will finally have a house of its own. "When President [Mitchell] Reiss told us the news at last winter's

Hanukkah dinner, I was thrilled. This house is going to bring very good things to Washington College." ✧



Marie Brandstetter helped her granddaughter, Cortnee Doll '13, celebrate Cortnee's bat mitzvah in 2004.



Making Medical History

DR. RALPH SNYDERMAN '61 is one of the world's most distinguished physicians. He is a Washington College trustee, and his achievements and the honors bestowed him would more than fill the pages of this newsletter. We would, in fact, have to relate them in installments—in the same way that Dickens gave us *Oliver Twist*.

Snyderman is Chancellor Emeritus at Duke University, where he holds a distinguished professorship in medicine, and where

he presided over the development—and then served as President and CEO—of the Duke University Health System, one of the nation's first fully integrated academic health care systems. He is internationally recognized for his contributions to inflammation research. In the late 1980s, he helped run the pioneering San Francisco biotech company, Genentech.

And now, in the era of health care reform, he is a leading proponent of Personalized Health Care, a cutting-edge model of medicine that combines the best of molecular and other high-tech testing

with patient-centered medicine in a caring practice to create personalized health plans based on each individual's distinctive risks and needs.

All of this success started at Washington College in the fall of 1959. Snyderman, who grew up in Brooklyn and knew from

the time he was 10 that he wanted to be a doctor, transferred to WC from Brooklyn College at the beginning of his junior year "because I was anxious to go to a small liberal arts college

with a pretty campus and an atmosphere that could prepare me for medical school." He majored in psychology, minored in biology and, by his senior year, was spending hours at the National Library of Medicine, doing research papers on genetics.

"I loved Washington College—it was a great place where I could develop, learn and grow," he says. And he is convinced that it was Washington College that propelled him into medical school at the State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center, where he graduated *magna cum laude* and began his storied career. ✧

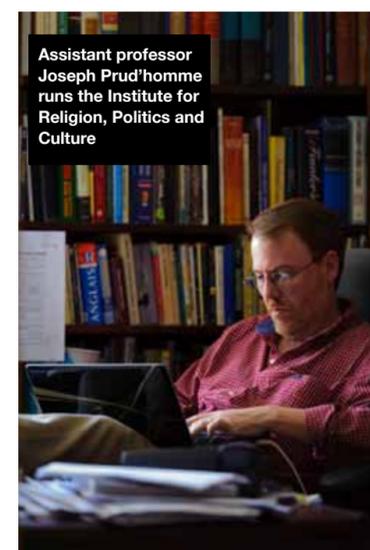
"I loved Washington College—it was a great place where I could develop, learn and grow."

Resources for Jewish Students

Washington College offers a welcoming community for students of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds. Close faculty mentoring helps students sort through an array of special classes, fellowships, internships and study abroad opportunities.

- ◆ Roy Ans Fellowship in Jewish-American Studies
- ◆ Institute for Religion, Politics and Culture (irpc.washcoll.edu)
- ◆ Study Abroad In Israel
- ◆ Washington College Hillel (hillel.washcoll.edu) and on Facebook
- ◆ Chestertown Havurah (chestertownhavurah.org)
- ◆ Temple B'nai Israel in Easton, MD (bnaisraeleaston.org)

For more information, contact wc_admissions@washcoll.edu



Assistant professor Joseph Prud'homme runs the Institute for Religion, Politics and Culture