

Remembering to respect history, not sleep through it

BY CAROLINE KEYSER
WARRIOR SENIOR WRITER

Last week, I had the privilege of hearing Rolf Gompertz speak at the National Training Center and Fort Irwin's Days of Remembrance commemoration. Gompertz is a German-born Jew who, along with his family, survived Kristallnacht, the Nazis' brutal attack against German Jews in 1938.

I found his talk insightful and moving. Unfortunately, I'm afraid not everyone in the audience that day would agree with me. As I left the Sandy Basin Community Center, where the com-

memoration took place, I overheard a Soldier's off-hand remark.

"That was some of the best sleep I've had in a while," he said.

As an Army civilian, an Army spouse, a Jewish person, and a human being, I found this disturbing. Whether or not Gompertz' talk was the most exciting 60 minutes of everyone's day last Tuesday is beside the point, although I would hope others besides myself enjoyed it. The point is that Gompertz and other Holocaust survivors deserve our respect. No, Gompertz didn't have flashy video aids or fun music accompanying his talk. What he did have, and what should have captured everyone's attention, was an amazing story that needs to be told and retold so we never forget that the threat of genocide is constant and still real.

Disrespecting that goes against the very core of what our Army stands for, what America stands for, and what our armed forces fight for.

I believe that the majority of those in attendance at the commemoration grasped the importance of Gompertz' story. At least, I hope so. Because the day is not far off when we will no longer be able to invite Holocaust survivors to speak at events like this. And when that happens, the responsibility will fall on us, the younger generations, to keep telling the survivors' stories and to make sure the world never forgets the atrocities they endured.

Until then, though, we should consider ourselves lucky to be able to have Holocaust survivors like Gompertz come speak to us.

I sure hope we're listening.

Confessions of a former High Desert house dweller

BY JULIE SHROPSHIRE
Community columnist

When I moved to Fort Irwin, I didn't love it. My yard was a driveway, most of the plant-life could double as a deadly weapon, and I saw no less than 37 scorpions the first week I was here. I promptly told my husband that I couldn't imagine why any sane human being would decide to live here on purpose way back when this area was settled. They must have been doing quite a bit of drinking or smoking the naughty stuff. Probably both.

My ugly attitude continued as my husband began working the rotations. He was never home. And we were just coming off of another deployment, so you can imagine how peachy I was about this turn of events. So, I did the most logical and mature thing I could think of: I threw a nice temper tantrum, but not with yelling and crying and gnashing of teeth. No, I simply refused to leave the house. Well, mostly. I became the anti-social, crazy-lady of my street. The computer (and television) became my lifeblood. My world. My crack. Now, most of us have a healthy relationship with our technology, well, unless you don't and I most certainly did not. It consumed me.

MySpace, Facebook, random blogs, news sites, games—oh, the games!—and the ever-popular, all-knowing, wizard-behind-the-curtain: The Google. Don't know how to cook turducken? Ask The Google. Trying to diagnose that pesky pain in your left big toe? Ask The Google. Curious about the cost of Donald Trump's wigs? That's right, ask The Google!

I was loath to leave the house. It was June, approximately 987 degrees outside, and between the World Wide Web and DirecTV at my fingertips? Who needed sunshine and fresh air? But in my defense, I had three children in school all day and a fourth merrily embracing his inner Tom Cruise by jumping on the sofa of my bladder. My husband was little more than a ghost, spending his days in that mystical place known only to me as the "Box" or tied like a naughty puppy to his desk over at Green Flag West.

Now, lest you think I was lounging around my abode gestating a human whilst wearing garishly-printed muu-muus and watching The Maury Show the livelong day, I was not. They were sweats, and I much-preferred Law and Order: SVU reruns. And I did go to the commissary. Alas. Beyond that, I did not get out much. Going off this island was about as likely for me as

having Ms. Paula Deen knock on my door and ask to be my personal chef. By the time I'd get anywhere—including 17 stops to visit the facilities, pregnancy should really just call itself, "Nine Months Spent Visiting Every Restroom in The Known Universe—I'd have to turn around and scurry back to get the children from school. Also, Starbucks had not yet graced us with her lovely presence. So there wasn't even a daily frappuccino habit to rouse me from my sloth.

Eventually, Shropling Four emerged from The House of Womb, as babies do, and a few months after his birth I realized the error of my ways. I was not only wasting my life away, I was also being a hugely terrible example to my children. I was consistently preaching (and talking and discussing, ad nauseam) that they should "always make the best of things!" and "life's not perfect, deal with it!" and well, yeah. I was a big, fat hypocrite.

I decided to do something, for myself and as a better example to my kids. I applied for a job: to be a role player. Soon, I was decked out in an authentic(ish) dishdasha and headscarf, loaded on a bus, and en route to Medina Jabal. I could write a book about my experiences there, but that's a story for another time. Suffice it

to say, I was having fun, getting out, getting paid to do it, and making great friends. Not that I didn't previously have friends, but spending ones days playing Yahtzee online and watching so much Law and Order: SVU one begins to think Olivia Benson is a real person and might be kind of cool to hang out with isn't the best Friendship Maintenance Plan.

For me, Fort Irwin could have been not so great for my sanity. It was easy to slip into the life of a hermit, what with the heat, wind, desolate location, and my house empty all day. (And with the computer and television so conveniently located right there in my living room.) Not to mention the "do as I say, not as I do" example I was setting for my children. Before Fort Irwin, I spent seven years at Fort Drum rarely leaving my house. I almost let the pattern continue here, resigning myself to "serving our time" and hoping for a "better" assignment when orders came around. Instead, I quit feeling sorry for myself, stopped being a lazy hag, boxed up the sweatpants, and got out into the world. I ended up with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help train the Force and hopefully make a difference in the lives of those going downrange.

But I still do love me some Law and Order: SVU.

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High Desert Warrior is distributed every Thursday 50 weeks per year. It is produced at Aerotech News and Review, 456 East Avenue K-4, Suite 8, Lancaster, CA, 93535, (661) 945-5634. Printed circulation is 6,500. Aerotech News and Review is a private firm in no way connected with the Department of the Army and is responsible for the commercial advertising found in this publication. Everything advertised in this publication will be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national orientation, age, marital status, physical handicap or political affiliation of the purchaser, user or patron. A confirmed violation of this policy of equal opportunity by an advertiser will result in refusal to print advertising from that source. The appearance of advertisements in this publication does not constitute an endorsement by the Department of the Army of the products or services advertised.

Printed by Aerotech News and Review, Inc. (877) 247-9288, www.aerotechnews.com.

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