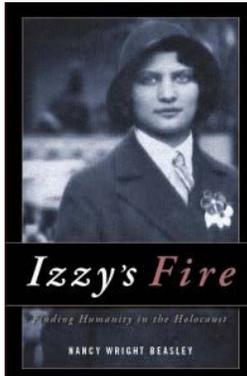


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As many of you know, this year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. While writing *Izzy's Fire*, which is set in that time period, I was the main caregiver for my elderly parents, which meant I saw them every day. My mother sometimes shared memories of that time.



Nancy Wright Beasley

Izzy's Fire: Finding Humanity in the Holocaust

70 Years After WWII - September 2015

“... but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. – Isaiah 41:30

As many of you know, this year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. While writing *Izzy's Fire*, which is set in that time period, I was the main caregiver for my elderly parents, which meant I saw them every day. My mother sometimes shared memories of that time. During one of those conversations, Mama told me she promised God that she would get down on her knees to give thanks if the war ended before she gave birth to me. She said she made good on her promise on May 7, 1945, the day the Germans surrendered.

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who was five months pregnant with me at the time of the German surrender, whether she felt like going to town to celebrate. Indeed, she did. My father described how they sat in the car with my three siblings, all under the age of six, and watched the throng in the streets of downtown Radford, Va., as local townsfolk danced in the streets, sang, blew car horns and beat on metal wash tubs and scrub boards with wooden spoons.

A few months later, my mother had two additional things to celebrate. I was born on September 2, 1945 at 4:45 a.m. Later that day General Douglas MacArthur signed the peace treaty with Japan aboard the USS Missouri, marking the end of WWII.



Photo courtesy of General Douglas MacArthur Foundation

Mama told me she also celebrated giving birth in a hospital that day. The

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Wright children in Southwest Virginia, promised Daddy he would knock \$10 off the delivery bill, if he would take my mother to the hospital where there was electricity and he could see what he was doing. While some folks may think I'm not worth a plug nickel, I can always claim to be worth a ten spot!

Worth can be measured in a variety of ways. One of the greatest pleasures I have comes from hearing how reading *Izzy's Fire* has affected others. I often receive letters from individuals who have attended presentations. Recently I re-discovered a letter from Mary Crawford, a sophomore at Lee-Davis High School. She thanked me for speaking at a Girl Scout meeting she had attended at Fairfield Presbyterian Church in Mechanicsville last year. Anne Sorensen, leader of Troop 280, asked me to speak. Her daughter, Kaitlyn, is a member of that troop. They were working toward their "Once Upon A Story" badge.

Kaitlyn's best friend, Abby Reasor, member of Troop 793, also attended, along with numerous other scouts of that troop, which is led by Erin Reasor, Abby's mother. As a former Girl Scout, I was thrilled to help them by sharing my experience as a journalist.

Spurred on by her interest in Holocaust literature, Abby ultimately earned her Silver Award by coordinating and implementing the first Holocaust education badge for Girl Scouts in Virginia, through the Girl Scouts of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Kaitlyn, who had already earned her Silver Award, helped her friend with some of the planning and was present when the first troop toured the Virginia Holocaust Museum to earn the new badge. Megan Ferenczy, director of education at the museum, worked with Abby to develop requirements for the badge, one of which includes reading books like *Izzy's Fire*. The beauty of the Virginia badge is that any Girl Scout, anywhere in the U.S., can now electronically access the badge requirements and can earn the badge

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Scouts was available in Texas.



(L-R) Erin and Abby Reasor, Kaitlyn and Anne Sorensen, and Megan Ferenczy at the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond, Va.

Now, back to Mary's aforementioned letter. A member of Troop 280, Mary, wrote about how her mother purchased a copy of *Izzy's Fire* after my presentation. Mary was tremendously moved by the unselfishness of Ona and Vaclavas Paskauskas, as well as her teenage son, Stanislovis Krivicius, Catholics who chose to help 13 Jews, thereby saving their lives. Mary describes it like this, "I don't think I could ever put myself in that family's position. They risked themselves to help Izzy Ipson's family, as well as others, which shows strong character and a good heart. Even though Izzy and his family went through so much during the Holocaust, I think I admire the Paskauskas family just as much. If anyone found out they were harboring Jews in an underground potato hole in a nearby

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took that risk, and I admire that about them."

At the conclusion of her letter, which was typed and filled an entire 8x11 sheet of paper, Mary summarized, "I just want to thank you immensely for writing this book. It really is touching and has impacted me greatly in ways I cannot describe. Not anyone could write a book like this, and I admire the fact that you were able to not only write it, but do it so well. Thank you so much for your time!"



Mary Crawford

Now, I ask you? What is a letter like that worth, especially from a young adult? In my opinion, it's priceless.

Nancy Wright Beasley

Author, Journalist

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UPCOMING EVENTS

"The Little Lion" should be available by the fall 2015. I'll let you where you can reserve your copy in future updates.

Nancy Wright Beasley was a speaker at Ferrum College's 2015 Holocaust Conference. For photos and other information regarding the author, see www.nancywrightbeasley.com.

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