



A picture of Alter and Esther Wiener on their wedding day taken from "A Name To A Number."

WIENER: Holocaust survivor to speak at Clackamas

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Tiffanie Clifford, from the college's human resources department, invited Wiener to speak on campus after she heard him speak in Canby. "I don't think we often have the opportunity to hear [about the Holocaust] first hand," she said. "It increases awareness and sensitivity across the generations, and that's a lesson for everyone."

The chance to hear a survivor speak is becoming rarer. "Al's story is one of a thousand," said Sonia Marie Leikam of the Oregon Holocaust Resource Center. She has known Wiener for eight years. "He has the courage to speak about it, but there are a hundred more survivors that are not willing to speak it. Most survivors have five years or less to live so it's really a once in a lifetime experience."

Wiener has three reasons that drive him to tell his story. The first is ignorance of the Holocaust. Wiener says that he runs into people that know nothing about the Holocaust before meeting him.

The second reason Wiener tells people about his life is that some people deny the Holocaust. "This is very painful to me," he said, "How do you reason with a person like that?" After hearing on the news that the president of Iran denied the Holocaust, Wiener sent him a copy of his book, "From a Name to a Number" as well as a copy of a check sent to him from the German government as repayment for the labor he was never paid for in the war work camps. "If there was no Holocaust, why do they send me a check?" Wiener asked. "There is no time period in history as well documented as World War II. There are survivors, museums and documents."

However, it seems the main motivation for Wiener to tell his story is the difference he sees it making in the lives of his listeners. Wiener says he has over 40,000 letters from people who have heard him speak; he says

he has changed their lives. About 100 of those letters are from people saying they were contemplating suicide until hearing his talk. Some students write that they were planning on dropping out of school, but changed their minds after hearing that Wiener was banned from school at the age of 13 and couldn't graduate high school until he was 36-years-old.

Wiener says he thinks he can relate to "youngsters" because he was about their age when the war began. Before the war Wiener lived a simplistic lifestyle with few conveniences.

Wiener says that it was this simplistic lifestyle and the values on which he was raised that kept him going throughout the Holocaust. "The values with which I was brought up are part of the reason I am still alive. I wanted to survive to be reunited with my family because it was so precious to me," he said.

Wiener did not have his doubts about his survival despite the circumstances of the war. Wiener said, "What is most outstanding is the brutality. I saw a German take a young kid and throw him against a wall, killing him. A guard beat me so badly with his rifle that I pleaded with him to kill me. He wouldn't give me that pleasure. I saw so much cruelty so much brutality for no good reason."

Wiener says despite his haunting memories and nightmares he tries to carry a message of positivity to his audiences. "Did I ever dream I am going to be alive and going to be in the United States? You never know. You never know. You never give up hope ... never give up hope. At one point when I couldn't work anymore. The Germans decided to liquidate me so they sent me to a killing center. I was standing in line. I saw the chimney. I knew my life was coming to an end. While I was standing in line a German entrepreneur approached me and said, 'Come on, get out of the line young man, you can still work' and he sent me back to work. Two weeks later I was liberated. Never give up hope. You never know."

Alter Wiener will speak in the McLoughlin Auditorium Thursday, Oct. 27 from noon to 2 p.m.

The Bucket List: Ghost hunting experience leads to new hobby

By Mandie Gavitt
Arts & Culture Editor



On Oct. 8 *The Clackamas Print's* Photo Editor Hillary Cole and I were invited to go ghost hunting with the Spirited Away Paranormal Investigative Team run by Datum Blessing and her mother, Carol Blessing.

Datum Blessing told me she started the company after having a paranormal experience as a young child. She had the idea of starting her own investigative company after watching "Ghost Hunters" and thinking about the other people who might want to experience ghost hunting as well.

We were investigating Cannabis Cafe, a medical marijuana dispensary owned by Madeline Martinez. Customers and employees of Cannabis Cafe had experienced some bizarre phenomena. The building has a rich history, and it was at one point a brothel. The team of Spirited Away thought it would be worthwhile to investigate the place.

Before the investigation, Datum Blessing explained the various equipment used in investigating. The equipment used includes an electromagnetic field detectors, night vision video cameras, voice recorders, dowsing rods, and K2 meters.

After recording the base readings the lights were turned off and we began trying to determine whether or not there was in fact spiritual

activity in the building.

This started with everyone sitting in a circle in the main room with K2 meters out and taking turns asking questions. Cole seemed to have the best luck with this, she was the first one to get a reaction with her questions and the responses continued for 45 minutes. In this time the lights on the meter would consistently illuminate with answers to the questions she was asking.

During our first attempt at contacting the spirits I kept feeling like there was someone standing behind me. Every time I turned around there was no one there.

After a break, we resumed in an office, where a man once felt as if he were being fondled when he was lying down to take a nap. I didn't quite enjoy this room, I felt that the people asking questions were going in the wrong direction and the electronics in the room were setting off the equipment rather than anything remotely spiritual.

I closed my eyes in an attempt to feel a spirit's presence like I had in the other room. I saw an image that played like a movie in my mind, a woman in a full length green velvet dress with white lace covering in a corner protecting an infant. It kept playing over and over so strongly in my mind that it felt real and I swear I felt fearful for her.

Eventually, I tired of the questions the group was asking and the way they were distracting me from the woman I kept seeing, so I slipped outside where I found Datum Blessing.

I told her that I kept seeing a woman in a green dress protecting an infant; I asked her if it meant anything or if I was making up things to make myself feel special. She grinned and knelt down in the exact position I saw the woman in my mind, saying she saw her wearing a full dress with a white trim. I was amazed that she acted out exactly what I saw even though I was vague in my description. This was the moment that I thought that the ghost hunt might actually be real.

Datum Blessing led me to a bathroom and said, "This is where I see her."

I've tried since that night to find in my vocabulary a way to explain that room but I can't. All I can say is that it felt heavy and thick. It was like that moment when you walk into a room and know by the stopped conversation everyone has been talking about you. But there was no one there besides me and Datum Blessing.

I stood in the room for a long time, trying to grasp the emotion I felt in the bathroom. I became distracted by people filtering out of the office space, so I stopped prematurely. We left shortly after my bathroom endeavor.

I still consider myself a skeptic. I know that it is very possible that my experiences were that of an overactive imagination, though my conversation with Datum Blessing leads me to doubt that this was the case. I think it will be a few more ghost hunting trips before I really decide what I believe on the subject. I am looking forward to the next ghost hunt.

If nothing else I know that ghost hunting was the start of what I hope to be a long lasting friendship between myself and the Blessings. Furthermore, I think I have a new hobby that, even if I don't know exactly what I think or believe, I find fun.



Hillary Cole *The Clackamas Print*

Datum Blessing, co-owner of the Spirited Away Investigative Team, shows a group of people how to search for ghosts on Oct. 8 at the Cannabis Cafe in North Portland.

