

8 June 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

Survivors of the Nazi death camps deserve unlimited sympathy for having had to endure the worst evils of humanity. Therefore, it is socially risky and no doubt unpopular to question the testimony of someone claiming to be a survivor. However, there are countless accounts of people who have faked such claims.¹ I am a history teacher in a public school. I am not a Holocaust denier – I believe in truth, and if someone is not telling the truth, I wonder what the lie is covering (the “real” truth). I was first hired as a teacher by a Polish-American administrator² who had survived the Holocaust camp at Bergen-Belsen, who had the scars both physically and emotionally, and who I admired. When I saw an advertisement for a Holocaust survivor coming to my area, I told my classes and encouraged them to go. And I took my own 8th grade daughter because I wanted her to hear the truth in person before there are no more survivors to hear firsthand. But as I listened to Mr. Joseph Bernard Hirt, some things didn’t sound right – in particular his claims to have a picture of himself in Auschwitz (which he showed the audience – see below) and, having grown up in Lancaster, PA, where Mr. Hirt now resides, his claim about meeting Jesse Owens in Lancaster. So the next day I began to check out Mr. Hirt’s story.

First, I do believe Mr. Hirt escaped from Europe during World War II and arrived in the United States as one of the 982 refugees granted “guest” status at the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario in Oswego, NY. This fact that he is one of less than 1000 people to have been taken in by the U.S. during this episode of history – very few of whom are still alive – is in itself an amazing story. Unfortunately, much of what he claims happened before and during his experience is untrue, including, but not limited to, his detention and escape from the Auschwitz Nazi extermination complex.

Given my goal to quickly research Mr. Hirt’s claims in my spare time the past few weeks, I acknowledge that I may not have the best sources, and I am certainly not an expert on the Holocaust. I have tried to use mostly online sources that are public and readily available, but I have also made contact with experts in the field of Holocaust study. Eventually, I also tracked down members of Mr. Hirt’s family to see if they knew of his story and could verify any of it. I have not contacted Mr. Hirt directly – I did not want him to have time to prepare a defense for the indefensible. I will leave that to others. According to my sources, his address appears to be:

Joseph Hirt
P.O. Box 235
Adamstown, PA 19501
phone: either (717) 208-0150 or (717) 517-6608

¹ For example, see recent stories such as “Could there be anything more twisted than these Holocaust fantasists? How more and more people are making up memoirs about witnessing Nazi crimes,” Guy Walters, 21 June 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2346193/Could-twisted-holocaust-fantasists-How-people-making-memoirs-witnessing-Nazi-crimes.html> , as well as famous cases such as Enric Marco, “Binjamin Wilkomirski,” and “Laura Grabowski.” This article was personally encouraging to me in pursuing a rather distasteful line of research.

² Dr. Richard Stashevsky. For example, see: “Holocaust survivor visits Algoma Christian School,” Jan Holst 3 December 2007, http://www.mlive.com/northwestadvance/index.ssf/2007/12/holocaust_survivor_visits_algo.html .

On the face of it, Mr. Hirt's story contains many incredible claims. His story is filled with meeting a lot of famous people and witnessing a lot of famous events.³ Perhaps taking parts of stories he heard from other refugees during his internment at the Fort Ontario Refugee Shelter, it appears that Mr. Hirt has included them and other historical tidbits to add something to his story of escaping Europe as a refugee during World War II. In one brief interview,⁴ he drops the following names and events, all of which are included in his public speaking presentations⁵:

1. recalls attending the 1936 Olympics where he was sitting close enough to Hitler to hear him disparage Jesse Owens and turn his back on him ("Years before his capture, he had attended the Olympics in 1936 in Berlin with his father where he saw Adolf Hitler refuse to shake hands with American Olympian Jesse Owens.")
2. claims "his parents, who had first relocated to Belgrade, Yugoslavia, booked passage for the family for April 7, 1941, on a clipper to Lisbon, Portugal. From there, they would board a ship to New York. But the Germans bombed Belgrade the day before their departure, forcing the family into hiding."⁶
3. says he was "kidnapped [in Belgrade] during a round-up and became a prisoner at the German Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz"
4. states that he "came face to face with the so-called Angel of Death, Dr. Josef Mengele, while at Auschwitz."
5. claims he "escaped Auschwitz after eight months by crawling under an electric fence" weighing a mere 60 pounds – "a skeleton with skin" – was recaptured but then "was allowed to live by one of the Nazis" who left him to run away
6. claims "his parents and brother survived the Holocaust and came to the United States where they were "sheltered," arriving in New York harbor in 1943,"⁷ and states that he "'met Mrs. Roosevelt, Eleanor and I became friends. I asked her to talk to Franklin Delano Roosevelt to allow us to stay.' Hirt said FDR looked into the matter."
7. claims he met Jesse Owens in Lancaster, PA and talked with him about Hitler's snub at the Olympics

Several of these events are difficult to either substantiate or disprove. However, several of them are clearly false, either in part or in their entirety. The following is a point-by-point refutation of Mr. Hirt's claims based on historical records and the testimony of his family members.

³ One of the fullest summaries in the media of Mr. Hirt's presentation is "Parkesburg History Group Hosts An Evening With Nazi Death Camp Survivor," Jack Mariano and Gerry Treadway, 11 May 2013, <http://parkesburg.today/parkesburg-history-group-hosts-an-evening-with-a-death-camp-survivor/>

⁴ "Auschwitz survivor will share his story with Central Pennsylvania World War II Roundtable," Deb Kiner, 29 December 2014,

http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2014/12/auschwitz_survivor_will_share.html All quotes in the list are from this source unless otherwise noted.

⁵ "Hirt frequently speaks to church groups, schools and other organizations throughout Lancaster County and surrounding areas." http://lanasteronline.com/elanco/news/holocaust-survivor-joseph-hirt-to-speak-at-caernarvon-fire-hall/article_e32aca5a-876a-11e3-9a01-001a4bcf6878.html

⁶ "Facing the ghosts of the Holocaust," Kathleen Brady Shea, 17 August 2006, http://articles.philly.com/2006-08-17/news/25397157_1_holocaust-survivor-concentration-camp-racial-hatred .

⁷ http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2014/12/auschwitz_survivor_will_share.html .

Regarding Mr. Hirt's claim that he attended the Olympics in 1936 in Berlin with his father where he saw Adolf Hitler refuse to shake hands with American Olympian Jesse Owens:

Mr. Hirt publically claims⁸ that “Years before his capture, he had attended the Olympics in 1936 in Berlin with his father where he saw Adolf Hitler refuse to shake hands with American Olympian Jesse Owens. ‘The thing is that made me a witness to history. I was there. I saw it,’ Hirt said.”⁹ In another account, he says “He witnessed USA star Jesse Owens win his events and saw that Hitler turn his back to Owens as he received his awards referring to the track star as a ‘hinter menge’ or sub human.”¹⁰



First, is it unlikely that Mr. Hirt (who would have just turned 6 years old in July 1936 – see p.21 below) or any other common spectator would have been in a position to be seated close enough to Hitler to hear him speak. Other than his grand entrance, all of the photographs of Hitler at the 1936 Olympics show him seated in a special section (see photo¹¹ inset), surrounded by high-ranking Nazi officials and isolated

from the crowd. “It is largely forgotten that on the games’ opening day, the Nazi leader *did* invite the winning medalists of each of the first three events to his personal box, where he was seen congratulating them. But Hitler pointedly left the stadium immediately before the award ceremony for the day’s final event, the high jump, where all three medalists were American.”¹²

⁸ There is no recording of Mr. Hirt’s presentation. When I contacted the event sponsor to ask “if anyone did a video recording of Mr. Hirt’s presentation that I could get a copy of to use in class,” the polite response was “Mr. Hirt’s request was for no video recording that evening” (email to and from Rosanna Moser [rmmoser78@gmail.com] Curator, Adirondack Mennonite Heritage Association, 17-18 April 2016). This immediately raised the question of why a Holocaust survivor wouldn’t want their story recorded.

⁹ Kiner (http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2014/12/auschwitz_survivor_will_share.html).

¹⁰ Mariano and Treadway (<http://parkesburg.today/parkesburg-history-group-hosts-an-evening-with-a-death-camp-survivor/>). See also <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-37826036.html>) : “He attended the Berlin Olympics in 1936 with his father and saw Adolf Hitler turn his back and refuse to shake the hand of United States medal winner Jesse Owens.”

¹¹ <http://www.timesofisrael.com/iconic-nazi-built-berlin-stadium-to-host-maccabi-games/> AP photo, file.

¹² “Cornelius Johnson and a Forgotten US Protest Against Hitler at the 1936 Olympics,” Steven J. Niven, 24 February 2016, http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2016/02/cornelius_johnson_and_a_forgotten_us_protest_against_hitler_at_the_1936.html.

More importantly, it is a widely known historical fact that Jesse Owens was not snubbed by Hitler (historians generally refer to this story as a “myth” or “legend”). Several historical sources invalidate the snubbing story:

“In the immediate aftermath of the Berlin Games, a myth arose that Hitler, enraged at the triumph of an African American, refused to congratulate Owens on his victories because he failed to shake his hand. However, the press reported that the German leader gave the American sprinter a “friendly little Nazi salute,” and Owens said that the two exchanged congratulatory waves. In fact, it was the conduct of Roosevelt— who never invited Owens to the White House or acknowledged his triumphs—that disappointed the Olympic champion. “Hitler didn’t snub me—it was our president who snubbed me,” he said months after the Games. “The president didn’t even send me a telegram.”¹³

Also:

“Everyone knows that at the 1936 Olympics Hitler snubbed Jesse Owens. As the story goes, after Owens won one gold medal, Hitler, incensed, stormed out of Olympic Stadium so he wouldn't have to congratulate Owens on his victory.

“Such a performance would have been perfectly in character, but it didn't happen. William J. Baker, Owens's biographer, says the newspapers made up the whole story. Owens himself originally insisted it wasn't true, but eventually he began saying it was, apparently out of sheer boredom with the issue.

“The facts are simple. Hitler did not congratulate Owens, but that day he didn't congratulate anybody else either, not even the German winners. As a matter of fact, Hitler didn't congratulate anyone after the first day of the competition. That first day he had shaken hands with all the German victors, but that had gotten him in trouble with the members of the Olympic Committee. They told him that to maintain Olympic neutrality, he would have to congratulate everyone or no one. Hitler chose to honor no one.

“Hitler did snub a black American athlete, but it was Cornelius Johnson, not Jesse Owens. It happened the first day of the meet. Just before Johnson was to be decorated, Hitler left the stadium. A Nazi spokesman explained that Hitler's exit had been pre-scheduled, but no one believes that.”¹⁴

A lengthy article focusing on Cornelius “Corny” Johnson states:

“In Berlin, the high jump was scheduled for Aug. 2, the first day of track and field competition at the Olympic Stadium. Reports of the games suggest that most of

¹³ “10 Things You May Not Know About Jesse Owens,” Christopher Klein, 12 September 2013, <http://www.history.com/news/10-things-you-may-not-know-about-jesse-owens> .

¹⁴ “Adolf Hitler, Jesse Owens and the Olympics Myth of 1936,” Rick Shenkman, 8 July 2002, <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/571> .

the 100,000 crowd, including Hitler in his box, paid most attention to the victories by the host nation in the women's javelin and the men's shot put, and by Finland's 1, 2, 3 in the 10,000 meters. Hitler could be seen to be clearly delighted by such "Aryan" victories—the Finns were even blonder and more blue-eyed than the Germans. Only the rousing cheers from the crowd as Jesse Owens won his 100-meter [qualifying] heat appeared to disturb Hitler's buoyant mood as the day's events drew to a close.

"By 6 p.m., the high jump field of 40 had been reduced to four. The three Americans and a Finn all cleared a new Olympic record of 6.5 feet. German director Leni Riefenstahl's film of the games shows the long-limbed [Cornelius] Johnson limbering up for his final jumps, looking relaxed. Albritton needed three attempts to make 2 meters. Johnson made every one of his jumps with ease. Unlike Albritton, who confessed his nerves to his friend Jesse Owens, Johnson was, as usual, calm and focused. Johnson went on to set a new Olympic record height of 6 feet 8 inches. Albritton earned the silver and Thurber the bronze.

"Following the medal ceremonies in the men's shot put and 10,000 meters and the women's javelin, Hitler had invited the German and Finnish medalists to be feted at his private box, where he was seen openly congratulating them. American journalists in the stadium then began to wonder if Hitler would welcome Corny Johnson, at least, as he had the previous winners just minutes earlier. Their answer came quickly after the medal ceremony at which the Stars and Stripes was raised on all three podiums: Hitler had left the building. There would be no glad-handing with the führer.

"What happened next is revealing. The U.S. Olympic Committee does not appear to have protested Hitler's snub of the American athletes, but Count Henri de Baillet-Latour, the president of the International Olympic Committee, was incensed. The Belgian aristocrat saw Hitler's early exit as a direct insult to the games' lofty commitment to fair play as well as a violation of protocol.

"It is unclear whether the count viewed the matter in terms of race or as a snub to a member country, the USA, but he forthrightly demanded that Hitler either congratulate all medalists or none. Seeking to avoid a public relations nightmare, Hitler backed down. He agreed to stop welcoming any of the medalists into his box for the rest of the tournament. At the time, most American newspapers, except the New York Times and some of the black press, accepted the official Nazi explanation for Hitler's early exit, namely that he was hungry and trying to beat the traffic."¹⁵

¹⁵ Niven,

(http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2016/02/cornelius_johnson_and_a_forgotten_us_protest_against_hitler_at_the_1936.html).

As one final source puts it:

“Ironically, it was Johnson -- and not Jesse Owens, as widely believed -- who was snubbed by Adolf Hitler at the Berlin Games. On the day of Johnson's triumph, Hitler had congratulated the winners of the day's first two events, a German and a Finn. But before Johnson and silver medalist Albritton, both African Americans, went to the awards platform, Hitler left the stadium.”¹⁶

Hitler opened and presided over the XIth Olympiad on 1 August 1936.¹⁷ Other than that, “Throughout the fourteen days of athletic competition Hitler maintained a deliberately low-key presence at the Olympics. This was done to please Olympic officials who did not want him to upstage the festivities. It was also a good opportunity for the Führer to appear calm and dignified among the thousands of international observers who were watching his every move.”¹⁸ For example, “the Nazis allowed Olympics organizer Theodor Lewald to give the opening speech, which was followed by Hitler's simple message: “I proclaim the Games of Berlin, celebrating the eleventh Olympiad of the modern era, to be open.” This was the only public utterance Hitler made during the Olympics.”¹⁹ Owens competed in the 100 meter finals race on 3 August 1936,²⁰ the long jump finals on 4 August,²¹ the 200 meter finals race on 5 August,²² and the 4x100 meter finals race on 9 August²³ (Owens was competing in the stadium on previous days, but these were in qualifying heats, not the finals where he would win gold). Therefore, there was no opportunity for Hitler to “snub” Owens during a medal ceremony on 2 August 1936.

Regarding Mr. Hirt's claims that “his parents, who had first relocated to Belgrade, Yugoslavia, booked passage for the family for April 7, 1941, on a clipper to Lisbon, Portugal. From there, they would board a ship to New York. But the Germans bombed Belgrade the day before their departure, forcing the family into hiding:

Mr. Hirt mentioned details about his family members from which I was able to contact several of them over the phone and via email.²⁴ After building a rapport with them over several weeks, I finally broached the subject of Mr. Hirt's claims with one of his close family members by stating: “I keep coming across articles about a man giving presentations in southeast Pennsylvania about his amazing experiences during World War II named Joseph Hirt.”²⁵ The family member that I contacted responded:

¹⁶ “Cornelius Johnson,” <http://www.usatf.org/halloffame/TF/showBio.asp?HOFIDs=83> .

¹⁷ “The Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936,” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005680> .

¹⁸ <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/tr-olympics.htm> .

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ <http://www.olympic.org/multimedia-player/all-photos/1936/08/03/raabm075/> .

²¹ <http://www.olympic.org/multimedia-player/all-photos/1936/08/04/raabu043/> .

²² <http://www.olympic.org/multimedia-player/all-photos/1936/08/05/raabu061/> .

²³ <http://www.olympic.org/multimedia-player/all-photos/1936/08/09/raabu099/> .

²⁴ Out of respect for the family and what Mr. Hirt has put them through already (see following), I am withholding their names and any identifying information. They are aware that our email correspondence is subject to discovery.

²⁵ Email sent by author on Wednesday, 11 May 2016 2:26 PM to a relative of Mr. Joseph Hirt.

“Regarding my [relative] Joseph. Yes, I am aware of his recent story-telling crusade. I first became aware of his speaking engagements several years ago, and I confronted him about it. The stories... are complete fabrications with regard to the Auschwitz stuff. When I confronted him, he basically claimed that the stories were taken out of context, or that the authors fabricated the stories.²⁶ Of course I do not believe this. As a result of his behavior, he has been ostracized by his immediate family - none of his three children will have anything to do with him. [His brother], a retired clinical psychologist, thinks that Joseph may be delusional and that he actually believes his own stories now.

“...in spite of his desire to “do good”, his exposure as a fraud fuels the fire of those who would say the holocaust was a fabrication....Perhaps his stories are therapeutic to him. I honestly do not know.”²⁷

Upon informing the relative of the professional duty the author believes he has as a historian and a teacher to bring Mr. Hirt’s false claims to light (especially given the fact that he seems to be more active recently, particularly in making presentations in schools to students) the same relative responded:

“I understand your position and your obligations as a professional, especially in your field of study, to bring my [relative’s] activities into the spot light. I have struggled with doing this myself since I have been aware of what he is doing.

“On the one hand, I have felt anger over his promoting his false narrative.... And then my position softens as I think about his advanced age and his possible state of mind. So I have never taken any steps to stop his activities short of challenging him over the phone, although the thought has crossed my mind on numerous occasions.

“.... Perhaps he might be shamed into stopping, although of course the damage is already done. As you have probably already guessed, I didn’t initially offer you his contact information because I felt that he might try to promote his story to you.”²⁸

The relative also confirmed that the Hirt family (Joseph, his brother, Michael, and his parents, Artur and Amalia) identified their religion and nationality as “Jewish and Polish,”²⁹ that Joseph and his brother

“were born and lived in Horodenka, Poland (now Ukraine). They fled with their parents from Poland to Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1939, just before the Germans

²⁶ To refute this notion, the author has attempted to reference the majority of the media reports that covered Mr. Hirt’s claims. The majority of the information in these media reports was included by Mr. Hirt in the presentation he gave at Lowville, NY on 15 April 2016, which the author attended and witnessed in its entirety.

²⁷ Email received by author from family member (see above footnote) on Wednesday 11 May 2016 8:11 PM.

²⁸ Email received by author from family member on Thursday 12 May 2016 1:54 PM.

²⁹ Email received by author from family member on Monday 9 May 2016 2:30 PM.

invaded. In 1941 they fled Belgrade for Fiume, Yugoslavia as the war expanded. From there they crossed the Adriatic Sea and settled/hid in and around Rapino, Italy. While in Italy they remained in hiding for much of the time in the nearby mountains. The family remained intact during this time period. Occasionally, my father and uncle would venture into town where they were given food and short term shelter by the local Italians, primarily those associated with the church. Once the Allied armies liberated the southern part of Italy in 1944, my father and his family were rescued....”³⁰

Regarding Mr. Hirt’s claim that he was “kidnapped [in Belgrade] during a round-up and became a prisoner at the German Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz”:

See previous – according to his family: “The family remained intact during this time period.”³¹ According to historical sources,³² the Luftwaffe did bomb Belgrade, the capital of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, in the first three days of the German-led Axis invasion of Yugoslavia, beginning on 6 April 1941, causing widespread destruction and significant civilian casualties, especially in the central section of the city. The bombing was then accompanied by a ground invasion a few hours earlier and resulted in the surrender of Yugoslav forces on 17 April 1941. However, the only record of prisoners being sent out of Belgrade are references to Jews sent to local extermination camps in Serbia or Jews used for forced labor in Belgrade.³³ The only reference to prisoners from Yugoslavia being sent to Auschwitz are those who fled to the Italian-held area which was later taken over by Germany in March 1944 at which time they deported several hundred to be exterminated at Auschwitz.³⁴

Regarding Mr. Hirt’s claim that he “came face to face with the so-called Angel of Death, Dr. Josef Mengele, while at Auschwitz,” as Hirt claims that Mengele interviewed every prisoner and would ask every one “what can you do?” Hirt claims during his interview that he told Mengele he was training to be a nurse and therefore Mengele allowed him to live:

According to the USHMM article on Josef Mengele:

“Approximately 30 physicians served at Auschwitz during the period in which Mengele was assigned to the camp. As a requisite feature of their “rounds,” medical staff performed “selections” of prisoners on the ramp, determining from among the mass of humanity arriving at Auschwitz who would be retained for work and who would perish immediately in the gas chambers. Known as the “Angel of Death,” or sometimes as the “White Angel,” for his coldly cruel demeanor on the ramp, Mengele is associated more closely with this “selection

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See, for example, U.S. Army (1986) [1953]. *The German Campaigns in the Balkans (Spring 1941)*. Washington, D.C.: United States Army Center of Military History. CMH Pub 104-4.

³³ Ramet, Sabrina P. (2006). *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p.131.

³⁴ Tomasevich, Jozo (2001). *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: Occupation and Collaboration*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, p.602.

duty” than any other medical officer at Auschwitz, although by most accounts he performed this task no more often than any of his colleagues. Undoubtedly, this association is partially explained by his postwar notoriety, but the ubiquitous image of Mengele at the ramp in so many survivors' accounts has also to do with the fact that Mengele often appeared “off-duty” in the selection area whenever trainloads of new prisoners arrived at Auschwitz, searching for twins.”³⁵

So while it is possible that Mengele interviewed some prisoners, it is not true that Mengele interviewed every prisoner to see if they would be useful and should be kept alive. Furthermore, Mengele was not at Auschwitz during the time Mr. Hirt claims to have also been there. Mr. Hirt claims he was there from the spring of 1941 until his escape on 31 March 1942.³⁶ The historical record shows³⁷ that Mengele was drafted into the Wehrmacht (German armed forces) in June 1940 and shortly thereafter joined the Waffen-SS (the combat arm of the Nazi SS) as a member of the medical service. He first served as a medical expert for the Race and Settlement Main Office in 1940 at the Central Immigration Office in Posen (Poznan). In June 1941 Mengele was posted to Ukraine, and in January 1942 he joined the 5th SS Panzer Division Wiking as a battalion medical officer. In mid-1942 he was seriously wounded in action which resulted in him being declared medically unfit for further active service. Mengele returned to Germany in January 1943, and began work at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics, and Eugenics. After being promoted he was then transferred to Auschwitz in May 1943, over a year after Mr. Hirt claims he allegedly escaped:

“In April of 1943, [Mengele] received a promotion to the rank of SS captain; this advancement shortly preceded Mengele's transfer to Auschwitz, on May 30, 1943.

“During his infamous tenure at the concentration camp, Josef Mengele was not the only physician at Auschwitz, nor was he, as common wisdom often maintains, the highest-ranking physician at the camp; this “distinction” belonged to SS captain Dr. Eduard Wirths, whose position as garrison physician made him responsible in all medical matters for the entire camp complex. Mengele began his career at Auschwitz in the spring of 1943 as the medical officer responsible for Birkenau's “Gypsy camp”; several weeks after its liquidation, Mengele undertook a new position as Chief Camp Physician of Auschwitz II (i.e., Birkenau), in November 1943, still under Wirths' jurisdiction.”³⁸

Regarding Mr. Hirt's claim that he “escaped Auschwitz after eight months by crawling under an electric fence” weighing a mere 60 pounds (“a skeleton with skin”), was recaptured, but then “was allowed to live” by the guard who recaptured him and left him run away:

³⁵ “Josef Mengele,” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007060> .

³⁶ Mr. Hirt is very clear on this date as he states it was his father's birthday. This fact is true – his father, Artur Hirt, was born 31 March 1896 (“Haven: The Dramatic Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees and How They Came to America,” Ruth Gruber, Appendix: Directory of Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter, War Relocation Authority, Oswego, NY, from the *Congressional Record*, p.307.)

³⁷ See “Josef Mengele,” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007060> .

³⁸ Ibid.

This is one of the most disturbing claims Mr. Hirt makes not because it is implausible (there are many people who escaped from concentration camps), but because of the “evidence” he uses to justify his story. For example, in his presentation witnessed by the author on 15 April 2016, as in his other presentations, “Joseph displayed his photos, including one of him, barely clothed, pale and nothing but skin and bones,”³⁹ claiming it was taken by a guard whose feet he had helped cure and was, in return, allowed to sleep on this stretcher instead of on the rough bunks in the prisoner barracks. When he shows the photo (see examples below) during his presentation of an emaciated victim on a stretcher and claims it is him at Auschwitz, it rightly elicits gasps from the audience. However, the use of this photograph raises several questions. First, who took it? That we have pictures of survivors of extermination camps today is mainly because most of those in existence were taken by Allied troops liberating the camps and/or documenting the war crimes. Second, how would he get a copy years later? While there are some examples of other people claiming to recognize themselves in photos taken by guards,⁴⁰ the Nazis generally destroyed such incriminating pictures and other records as Allied liberators bore down on the camps in Poland. Third, how would he recognize himself in that condition? Here are several examples of Mr. Hirt on separate recent occasions visiting schoolchildren and displaying the photograph he claims is him at Auschwitz before his escape:



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Special to the Reading Eagle: Kevin Hoffman | Joseph Hirt, 90, holds a photo of himself as a teenager when he was taken captive and held as a prisoner in the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz. Hirt weighed only 60 pounds in the photo, which shows him sleeping on a stretcher. Hirt, now a resident of Lancaster County, told his emotional story of surviving the Holocaust to students at the Boyertown High School on Tuesday.

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Unfortunately for Mr. Hirt, the historical record again disproves his claim. The image Mr. Hirt claims is him lying on a stretcher at Auschwitz is actually one of the well-known photographs

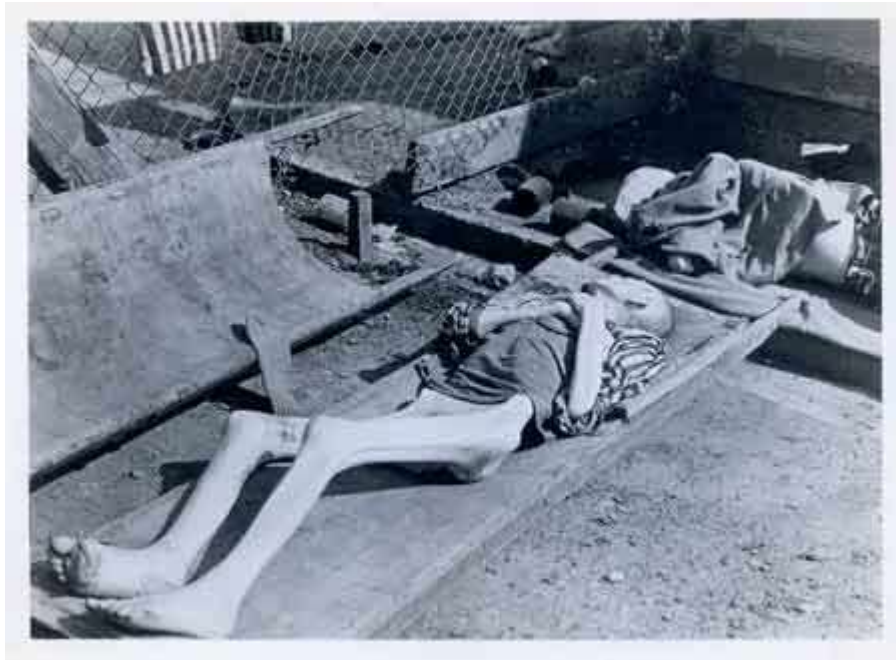
³⁹Mariano and Treadway (<http://parkesburg.today/parkesburg-history-group-hosts-an-evening-with-a-death-camp-survivor/>). See also <http://lancasterlibraries.org/joseph-hirt-a-survivor-of-the-holocaust-returns-to-the-milanof-schock-library-to-share-his-tragic-childhood-story/>

⁴⁰ See, for example, Irene Fogel Weiss in “Tales from Auschwitz: survivor stories,” 26 January 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/26/tales-from-auschwitz-survivor-stories>.

⁴¹ Michael K. Dakota via Twitter, 26 May 2015, <https://twitter.com/dakotaldn/status/603300240171651072>.

⁴² “Auschwitz survivor addresses Boyertown High School students,” 20 April 2016, <http://www.readingeagle.com/news/article/by-forgiving-you-forget-and-thats-something-i-will-not-do>.

taken by Mickey Martins,⁴³ a member of the 42nd Infantry “Rainbow” Division of the U. S. Army which liberated the Dachau concentration camp in 1945 during World War II.⁴⁴ The photo (below) was one of many taken by Martins and his fellow soldiers at Dachau after liberation.⁴⁵



46

Another disturbing “proof” offered by Mr. Hirt is his tattoo – during his presentations, Mr. Hirt rolls up his sleeve to show his tattoo. According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum:

“Tattooing was introduced at Auschwitz⁴⁷ in the autumn of 1941.⁴⁸ As thousands of Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) arrived at the camp, and thousands rapidly died there, the SS authorities began to tattoo the prisoners for identification purposes. At Auschwitz II (Birkenau), the SS staff introduced the practice of tattooing in March 1942 to keep up with the identification of large numbers of prisoners who arrived, sickened, and died quickly. By this time, the majority of registered prisoners in the Auschwitz complex were Jews. In the spring of 1943, the SS authorities throughout the entire Auschwitz complex adopted the practice of tattooing almost all previously

⁴³ The original can be viewed at <http://www.mickeymartins.com/Photos/index.html> - WAR13.jpg The site states: “these images are enhanced, and are under copyright. Please ask permission to use them.” With apologies to the owner, the site leaves no way to contact them, stating “Notice: I am no longer receiving emails about this site. There are adequate explanations of the pictures within this site. *Thank you for understanding.* Web site updated on: April 9, 2016 8:25.”

⁴⁴ See “the 42nd Infantry Division,” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10006164> .

⁴⁵ See <http://www.mickeymartins.com> . “The photographs taken at Dachau were taken by one of Mickey’s friends.”

⁴⁶ “Dachau Photographs: Dachau After Liberation: Mickey Martins (1945),” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/dachaumartins.html> This site also lists Martins as the photographer of another image (of the camp cremation ovens) used in Mr. Hirt’s presentation (see <http://64.121.221.24:8090/index.php/veterans/dr-joseph-hirt/>) .

⁴⁷ “During the Holocaust, concentration camp prisoners received tattoos only at one location, the Auschwitz concentration camp complex” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007056>

⁴⁸ Months after Mr. Hirt allegedly arrived in the summer of 1941 **emphasis added** (see below).

registered and newly arrived prisoners, including female prisoners. **Exceptions to this practice were** prisoners of German nationality and **“reeducation prisoners,”** who were held in a separate compound. **“Reeducation prisoners,”** or “labor-education prisoners,” **were non-Jewish persons of virtually all European nationalities (but at Auschwitz primarily Germans, Czechs, Poles, and Soviet civilians)** who had run afoul of the harsh labor discipline imposed on civilian laborers in areas under German control.”⁴⁹

Mr. Hirt claims he was in Auschwitz for 8 months before escaping on his father’s birthday, March 31, 1942,⁵⁰ thus he would have arrived in Auschwitz⁵¹ in July 1941, which, according to the above information, was before the practice of tattooing began in any of the camps. And while it is true that the Nazis tattooed all previously registered as well as newly arrived prisoners, they would not have done so to a non-Jewish European – specifically a Pole captured in the Czech region – as Mr. Hirt claims to be (see bold above). Furthermore, Mr. Hirt claims he was tattooed immediately after he got off the train, but the USHMM article clearly states that the tattooing started in the autumn of 1941 at Auschwitz I. Again, “It is generally accepted that the tattooing of prisoners began with the influx of Soviet prisoners of war into Auschwitz in 1941....most arrived in October 1941 from Stalag 308 in Neuhammer.”⁵² So why does Mr. Hirt have a tattoo and when and where did he get it? He is, unfortunately, not the first person to have a fake Auschwitz tattoo.

And what does Mr. Hirt claim his identification number is? 194517.⁵³ According to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, their collection of artifacts includes

“5.076 Personal Cards of Auschwitz inmates (Häftlingspersonalbogen) with **prisoners numbers 44,125 to 199,882 for the period 30.06.1942 to 28.10.1944 year.** The cards include the following fields: citizenship, camp number and category, personal information, description, health status, data on incarceration,

⁴⁹ “Tattoos and Numbers: The System of Identifying Prisoners at Auschwitz,”

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007056> **emphasis added.**

⁵⁰ “Holocaust survivor recounts escape from Auschwitz to Lancaster County community,” Meredith Jorgensen, 22 August 2014,

<http://www.wgal.com/news/holocaust-survivor-recounts-escape-from-auschwitz-to-lancaster-county-community/27681118> and “Holocaust survivor recounts his experience at Auschwitz,” Lauren Kershner, 13 April 2105,

<http://www.lewistownsentinel.com/page/content.detail/id/564991.html>

⁵¹ Presumably Auschwitz I: Auschwitz II, or Auschwitz-Birkenau, was not established until October 1941, and Auschwitz III was not established until October 1942 – see “Auschwitz” at <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005189> .

⁵² “Auschwitz-Birkenau: The Evolution of Tattooing in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp Complex, by George Rosenthal (Auschwitz Survivor)” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/tattoos1.html>

⁵³ “Facing the ghosts of the Holocaust It's time to tell his story Facing up to ghosts, he'll tell of his story,” Kathleen Brady Shea, 17 August 2006,

http://articles.philly.com/2006-08-17/news/25397157_1_holocaust-survivor-concentration-camp-racial-hatred

the information about fate in the camp and columns about the transfers between different camp. Forms were also signed by prisoners.”⁵⁴

And according to the USHMM,

“The first series of prisoner numbers was introduced in May 1940, well before the practice of tattooing began. This first series was given to male prisoners and remained in use until January 1945, ending with the number 202499. Until mid-May 1944, male Jewish prisoners were given numbers from this series. A new series of registration numbers was introduced in October 1941 and remained in use until 1944.”⁵⁵

If Mr. Hirt escaped in March 1942, his prisoner number should be a number less than 44125 (see numbers and corresponding dates in bold above). Furthermore, if his number was number 194517 in 1941, it is not plausible to believe that only 7981 more numbers (194518-202499) were used by 1945. According to Hirt’s account, “Prisoners were ordered to remove all of their clothing, standing there naked and humiliated while the Germans cut off all of their hair (hair that would be shipped out for use as insulation in German submarines) and they were tattooed with a number on the inside of their forearm. There were never any names used in the camp, only numbers.”⁵⁶ According to the USHMM,

“Originally, a special metal stamp, holding interchangeable numbers made up of needles approximately one centimeter long was used. This allowed the whole serial number to be punched at one blow onto the prisoner's left upper chest. Ink was then rubbed into the bleeding wound. When the metal stamp method proved impractical, a single-needle device was introduced, which pierced the outlines of the serial-number digits onto the skin. The site of the tattoo was changed to the **outer side** of the left forearm.”⁵⁷



This is consistent with many published and well-documented photographs such as the one inserted above.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ “Personalbogen,”

<http://www.auschwitz.org/en/museum/about-the-available-data/registers-and-cards/personalbogen/> **emphasis added.**

⁵⁵ “Tattoos and Numbers: The System of Identifying Prisoners at Auschwitz,”

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007056> See also “Prisoner Numbers” at

<http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/auschwitz-prisoners/prisoner-numbers>

⁵⁶ Mariano and Treadway (<http://parkesburg.today/parkesburg-history-group-hosts-an-evening-with-a-death-camp-survivor/>)

⁵⁷ “Tattoos and Numbers” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007056> **emphasis added.**

Mr. Hirt's alleged Auschwitz tattoo (on the inside of his forearm – see picture below) contradicts all of the historical information regarding the process of prisoner identification and tattooing at Auschwitz:



Lastly, there is no record of Mr. Hirt being at Auschwitz.⁶⁰ The following page is a copy of the inquiry made by the author via email to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum on 4 May 2016:

⁵⁸ "From Salonika Quartet, 1991," in *Diaspora: Homelands in Exile*, by Frédéric Brenner, cited in "A ballerina, a bobby and many marked men: Frédéric Brenner's photographs of Jewish communities across the world, collected in *Diaspora*, show astonishing diversity, says Linda Grant," 19 March 2004

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/mar/20/highereducation.news>

⁵⁹ "School News: School Hosts Holocaust Survivor," School Hosts Holocaust Survivor, Lower Dauphin School District, <http://www.townlively.com/school-hosts-holocaust-survivor/>

⁶⁰ See searchable databases at <http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/auschwitz-prisoners/> and http://collections.ushmm.org/search/?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=hirt&search_field=all_fields

To: Ewa Bazan and Piotr Setkiewicz, Ph.D.

Re: Auschwitz Prisoner Record Verification

M. Bazan and Dr. Setkiewicz,

I am a teacher and historian in upstate New York. I live in a community with a significant Polish immigrant population. I recently attended a public presentation featuring a man who claims to be a Polish survivor/escapee from Auschwitz. However, I found some aspects of his story to be historically untrue and am attempting to verify the rest. I contacted several Holocaust organizations for assistance and was referred to you by Mr. Aaron Breitbart of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. He suggested that I contact your museum directly to see if this man's name appears on your prisoner list.

I have already searched your online database (<http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/auschwitz-prisoners/>) which did not contain the man's name. Although I recognize that the Nazis destroyed a large portion of the documents they created and that therefore a list with the names of all Auschwitz prisoners and victims does not exist, your website advises: "If the name of a person looked for does not appear in this database there is still a chance it is included in other documents, which are not online yet. To find out more you should contact the Office for Information on Former Prisoners." Thus, if there is any way for you to confirm that any or all of the information below is true, false, or not possible to determine, it would be greatly appreciated.

The following is the man's name and information:

Name: Joseph Bernard Hirt

Claims to have been captured spring of 1941 in Belgrade after it fell to Germany in April and transported to Auschwitz

Claims to have been imprisoned at Auschwitz until 31 March 1942 on which date he claims to have escaped (he also claims to have been interviewed by Josef Mengele upon arrival from Belgrade in 1941 – it is my understanding that Mengele was not transferred to the Auschwitz complex until 1943).

Prisoner number: 194517 (it is my understanding that his prisoner number does not match the years he claimed to be at Auschwitz).

Thank you in advance for any assistance you can provide.

The following is the response (**emphasis added**) received by the author via email on 5 May 2016 from Dr. Piotr Setkiewicz, head of the Research Department at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum:

In our opinions we try not to doubt the claims of former prisoners, because our experience shows that often even seemingly unlikely stories after some time turn out to be true. Nevertheless, it is not so, that we cannot verify certain - rather obvious facts.

We have a document called Stärkebuch (daily count of prisoners), which includes SS reports with the names and numbers of prisoners dead, released, transferred and escaped from the camp. Therefore, **at the turn of March and April 1942 only one prisoner escaped from Auschwitz, Franz Doschek (Franciszek Doszek?), number 18271.** Almost certainly, this escape was described in the book of comments by a duty officer of the SS garrison:

Führer vom Dienst
28./29.3.1942
Müller
SS-Obersturmführer
Parole: „Oppeln?“

Auschwitz

Vorkommnisse:

20:15 musste? der K.G.L. um 45 Mann? ****ätet? weil 2 russische Kriegsgefangene fehlten. 0:45 – 3:00 waren 2 Unterführer, 20 Mann? auf der Suche und dem entflohenen? Häftling, der im Führerheim? tätig war. ** *-** fehlten keine **.**

Dienst richtig:

Übergeben
Müller
SS-Untersturmführer

Übernommen
Schulz
SS-Untersturmführer

Prisoner named Hirt is not mentioned in the Stärkebuch at all.

Number 194517 belongs to a Pole, Kazimierz Sikorski, who was brought to Auschwitz from Warsaw on 4 September 1944.

Of course, **Josef Mengele arrived at Auschwitz in spring of 1943....**

With my kindest regards,

Piotr Setkiewicz

Regarding Mr. Hirt's claim that "his parents and brother survived the Holocaust and came to the United States where they were "sheltered," arriving in New York harbor in 1943,"⁶¹ and that he "met Mrs. Roosevelt, Eleanor and I became friends. I asked her to talk to Franklin Delano Roosevelt to allow us to stay.' Hirt said FDR looked into the matter":

The Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter located in Oswego, New York, was in fact the only refugee center established in the United States during World War II: "On June 12, 1944, the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter was established in Oswego, New York by order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and was operated by the War Relocation Authority.... From 1944 to 1945, the shelter housed almost 1000 European refugees, predominantly of Jewish descent.... It was the first and only refugee center established in the United States. In August 1944, the shelter received 982 refugees of predominantly Jewish descent and of various national backgrounds, especially Yugoslavian, Austrian, Polish, German and Czechoslovakian."⁶²

Small parts of Hirt's story are historically accurate: "Aversa, Italy was used a central collection area for the refugees."⁶³ All four members of the Hirt family are listed as refugees at Fort Ontario:⁶⁴ Amalia Hirt, Artur Hirt, Joseph Bernard Hirt, and Michael Leonard Hirt. Furthermore, Joseph Hirt appears several times in the photographic collection of the UNHMM. The full caption (below left) of the first photograph (below right) reads:

"Jewish youth living at the Fort Ontario refugee shelter sing songs accompanied by an accordionist."

"Those pictured include... **Joseph Bernard Hirt, standing on the far left next to the American flag.**"⁶⁵

Jewish youth living at the Fort Ontario refugee shelter sing songs accompanied by an accordionist.



Record Type: Photograph
Photograph #: 39547
Caption: Jewish youth living at the Fort Ontario refugee shelter sing songs accompanied by an accordionist

⁶¹ Kiner, http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2014/12/auschwitz_survivor_will_share.html . The 1943 date is impossible, but this may be an error by the reporter.

⁶² "Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter,"

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Ontario_Emergency_Refugee_Shelter . While Wikipedia is admittedly not an academically acceptable reference, these quotes are used for the sake of expediency. These and other quotes from Wikipedia can be easily documented from primary historical sources. For example, see <http://www.oswegohaven.org/> and <https://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-the-collections/bibliography/fort-ontario-emergency-refugee-shelter> .

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ http://www.oswegohaven.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Refugee_List.pdf

⁶⁵ **Emphasis added.** Screenshot of picture from <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1127050> with arrow identifying Hirt added

The full caption (below left) of the second photograph (below right) reads:

“Fort Ontario refugees pose with their classmates on the steps of the public high school in Oswego, New York.

“Among those pictured are **(back row, left to right):** Eddie Levitch, Kostia Zabotin, Bruno Kaiser, Paul Bokroshh, Ralf Kutznitcki, Zachy Romano, **Joseph Hirt....**”

Fort Ontario refugees pose with their classmates on the steps of the public high school in Oswego, New York.



Record Type: Photograph
Photograph #: 06496
Caption: Fort Ontario refugees pose with their classmates on the steps of the public high school in Oswego, New York.

However, the second part of Mr. Hirt’s story about meeting Eleanor Roosevelt and having her appeal to President Roosevelt to allow them to immigrate via Canada is problematic. While it is true that Eleanor Roosevelt, accompanied by Mrs. Henry Morgenthau Jr., and other dignitaries visited the camp in September 1945, it was not until Germany surrendered on 6 May 6 1945 (twenty-four days after President Roosevelt’s death) that:

“the question of what to do with the camp became a pressing issue. Internment was becoming increasingly difficult to support. The problem was whether to return the refugees to their home countries or to admit them into the United States. Most of the refugees wanted to stay. In fact, 60% of them had active immigration cases pending. A subcommittee voted to close the camp, and the shelter was closed in February 1946. Some refugees chose to return to Europe, whether to find family members, or under the impression that their homes and businesses still remained as they had left them. Some were desperate to remain in the United States and not return to a country where they believed they had no future. Many were granted permanent or temporary status and allowed to stay in the country, sometimes ending up in the homes of family or friends.”⁶⁶

But Hirt’s claim that he became friends with Mrs. Roosevelt and was able to get her to convince President Roosevelt to allow the refugees to stay and immigrate is wishful thinking at best – F.D.R. died on 12 April 1945 and it was President Harry S Truman who released the Oswego Haven refugees *after* the war: “Following V-E Day, pressure from Jewish groups, relief agencies, Congressmen and members of Truman's cabinet, led to the Truman Directive of December 1945, which permitted the immigration to the United States of displaced persons in America's zones of occupation and removed restrictions on war refugees already in the

⁶⁶ “Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter,”
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Ontario_Emergency_Refugee_Shelter .

US,”⁶⁷ although without official standing in America, “the refugees were detained for seven months after the war was over until President Harry S. Truman allowed them to apply for citizenship.”⁶⁸

Regarding Mr. Hirt’s claim that he met Jesse Owens in Lancaster, PA and talked with him about Hitler’s snub at the Olympics:

Mr. Hirt claimed⁶⁹ to have met with Jesse Owens in Lancaster, PA, when, after moving to southeastern Pennsylvania, he found out Owens was (living or visiting?) there, and they talked about Hitler’s snub of Owens. Mr. Hirt lived 50 miles away from Lancaster in Chester Springs, PA, for 30 years (c.1980-2010) until moving to Lancaster County in June 2010.⁷⁰ Jesse Owens died March 31, 1980 in Tucson, Arizona and is buried in Oak Woods Cemetery, Chicago, IL.⁷¹ The only record of Owens in Lancaster, PA, is a visit in 1957.⁷²

CONCLUSION: The fact that no one has challenged Mr. Hirt’s extraordinary claims is not surprising – who would suspect someone of making such extraordinary claims about such a topic? Who knows why Mr. Hirt would lie about so many events that are easy to disprove is the real question. What is his motivation? Presumably it is not about financial gain given his age and a civil service career that no doubt provides sufficient retirement benefits. Perhaps it is the love of attention or a mental illness that has resulted in delusions of grandeur. Perhaps, as his family suggests, he is so deluded that he does not even know he is lying anymore. Nonetheless, it is the duty of all who now know the truth to confront Mr. Hirt and deny him any more audiences.

⁶⁷ “Mary Campo teaches a hairstyling class at the Fort Ontario refugee center.” USHMM, <http://digitalassets.ushmm.org/photoarchives/detail.aspx?id=1098470> .

⁶⁸ <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/21/nyregion/59-years-ago-they-fled-to-an-internment-camp.html>

⁶⁹ April 16, 2016 presentation at Lowville, NY.

⁷⁰ Apparently to New Holland until c.2011 (see http://lancasteronline.com/religion/unwavering-faith/article_ahea48ad-5031-5bee-95f5-c1074cc73509.html [2011] - there is no current listing in the Lancaster phone book for Mr. Hirt or any Hirt in New Holland: <http://www.dexpages.com/app.php?RelId=6.5.7p2.33&BookCode=lncl6htm&Search=hirt%2C+joseph&SectionType=5%2C7%2C6&from=2>) and then to Adamstown by c.2014 (see <http://www.readingeagle.com/news/article/wilson-southern-middle-school-students-tell-holocaust-victims-stories> [2014] and http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2015/03/central_pennsylvania_world_war.html [2015] - there is also no current listing in the Lancaster phone book for Mr. Hirt or any Hirt in Adamstown, PA). Adamstown, PA are about 15 miles apart.

⁷¹ <http://www.jesseowens.com/> Interestingly, Owens died on the same date (March 31) that Mr. Hirt claims was the day he escaped from Auschwitz, which Hirt claims was also his father’s birthday.

⁷² “Meeting A Hero At The Station In 1957,” 21 September 2008, *Sunday News* (Lancaster, PA): “In this photo, it was 1957 when Olympic great Jesse Owens arrived at the Lancaster train station from Chicago to speak at the Lancaster Sportswriters banquet at the Hotel Brunswick. Greeting Owens, the hero of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, were local newspapermen.” http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=LC&p_theme=lc&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&s_dispstring=%28jesse%20owens%29%20AND%20date%28%29&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=%29&p_field_advanced-0=&p_text_advanced-0=%28%22jesse%20owens%22%29&xcal_numdocs=20&p_perpage=10&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no The online archive of Lancaster newspapers does not go back before 1989 – previous years are archived at the Lancaster Public Library on microfilm.

ADDENDA: Who is Joseph Hirt?

Joseph Bernard Hirt was born on 10 July 1930.⁷³ He was born and lived in Horodenka, Poland (now Ukraine) before fleeing with his parents and brother from Poland to Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1939, just before the Germans invaded.⁷⁴ Horodenka is now in Ukraine, but it was formerly part of Poland and, during the WWII era, part of the Austrian province of Galicia. His mother, Amalia, stated she emigrated from Austria:

Kent senior citizen directs Project DOVE for a day

Similar to being queen for a day, Amalia Hirt, 70, was director of Project DOVE for a day.

Hirt, who lives at the Kentway Senior Citizens Apartments, 360 E. Summit St., became director of Project DOVE Thursday from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. as part of the Senior Citizens Take-Over The City Day organized by the Kent Committee on Planning Services for the Aging (COPS).

COPS, 360 E. Summit St., is a social agency which organizes activities and offers medical services and transportation to senior citizens, said Mary Ward, administrative assistant at COPS. She said about 21 senior citizens took-over jobs in the city, such as mayor and KSU president.

Hirt said she likes her job and enjoys working with the people.

"It's not a paying job, but I wouldn't go away," she said.

Hirt immigrated to the United States from Austria in 1946. She said she lived in Des Moines,

Iowa, until the death of her husband in 1954 and then moved to New York City where she became a seamstress for fashion designer Mollie Parnis.

The outfits Hirt sewed "cost \$500 to \$800," she said.

In 1971, Hirt moved to Kent. Her son, Dr. Michael Hirt is a professor of psychology at KSU. She has another son, Joseph Hirt,

a teacher in Pennsylvania.

"I am independent. They (her sons) are proud of me and I am proud of them," she said.

Hirt said she sews bandages for the Cancer Society; is a member of Retired Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP) does volunteer work at the Kent Free Library; and plays the kazoo in the COPS kitchen band.

Application deadline set for December graduates

Graduate students planning to graduate next December, and who are attending KSU this quarter, must apply for graduation by Friday.

The application deadline for undergraduates planning to graduate in December, who are not enrolled this quarter, is July 2.

If a student does not apply by the deadline, his or her degree will not be granted until the next graduation date in June, according to the Registrar's Office.

Application forms and more information may be obtained from the Registrar's Office, Rockwell Hall, or the office of the student's college dean.



One relative confirmed⁷⁶ his family identified their religion and nationality as "Jewish⁷⁷ and Polish,"⁷⁸ and this is confirmed by numerous documents. Why Hirt goes out of his way in his presentation⁷⁹ to prove he is not Jewish (he claims during the roundup in Belgrade, the men were lined up, forced to drop their pants (or had them cut off), and all circumcised men were shot on site – the audience is left with the impression that since he was spared he was obviously not Jewish) is another unanswered question. The refugees at the Fort Ontario Refugee Shelter were predominately Jewish,⁸⁰ and whoever wrote the

⁷³ "Haven," p.307.

⁷⁴ Email received by author from family member on Monday 9 May 2016 2:30 PM.

⁷⁵ Daily Kent Stater, Volume XLIX, Number 103, 11 May 1976, <http://dks.library.kent.edu/cgi-bin/kentstate?a=d&d=dks19760511-01.2.37>

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ See page 7 above.

⁷⁸ "Haven," p.307.

⁷⁹ As witnessed by the author on 15 April 2016, Lowville, NY.

⁸⁰ 874 out of 982, Haven," p.59/.

caption for the pictures Hirt appears in⁸¹ from the Fort Ontario Refugee Shelter collection apparently understood that he was. Other pictures confirm his ethnic identity. For example, one shows that he attended a private school for Jewish children:⁸²



Hirt does admit that “his grandparents were Jewish,”⁸³ and when he first began telling his story, the media coverage reported that “Hirt grew up in a Jewish family in Poland.”⁸⁴

Mr. Hirt is advertised as a “Polish Holocaust Survivor” and appears alongside Mennonites in Lewis County, NY, and Lancaster County, PA, but there is no evidence that he was ever a Mennonite; neither is he a Christian in the orthodox sense: he is “of the Baha’i faith.”⁸⁵ Why he is being sponsored and accompanied by members of the Mennonite community is another mystery.⁸⁶ Lastly, Mr. Hirt claimed that “He is writing his life story and expects to have the book available for sale at the April 15 [2016] event.”⁸⁷ He has been claiming this for at least ten years.⁸⁸ Perhaps now we know why he has not – doing so would allow the world to verify that much of his story is false.

⁸¹ See pp.17-18 above.

⁸² “Pre-School Class, c. 1933” – “Elke Apelbaum Savoy, who submitted this picture, says “This is a picture from the private Hebrew School that Jewish children attended before they went to the regular public Yiddish school. The children learned Hebrew here. Children started public school at the age of 7...” Michael Hirt, in Elmhurst, Illinois, says that “I can identify the fifth child from the left in the second row in the photograph. This person is my Uncle, Joseph Bernard Hirt. He is 78 years old and currently resides in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania. (2008).” Photograph and quote from: http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/gorodenka/html/preschool_class_c_1933.html . See <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Gorodenka/html/hirt.html> for additional text and Hirt family photographs.

⁸³ <http://www.readingeagle.com/news/article/by-forgiving-you-forget-and-thats-something-i-will-not-do> .

⁸⁴ “Facing the ghosts of the Holocaust It's time to tell his story,” Kathleen Brady Shea, 17 August 2006, http://articles.philly.com/2006-08-17/news/25397157_1_holocaust-survivor-concentration-camp-racial-hatred

⁸⁵ http://lancasteronline.com/religion/unwavering-faith/article_abea48ad-5031-5bee-95f5-c1074cc73509.html

⁸⁶ When I approached noted Mennonite historian John Ruth (who has appeared several times at events with Mr. Hirt to speak about the effects of World War II on the Mennonite community) with some of my suspicions, he admitted that “One of the ambiguous aspects of Mr. Hirt's late life story-telling trajectory is the fact that his narrative, while avidly received by audiences of non-professional orientation, has never been published, and spread before the wider public.” Email received by author from Mr. Ruth on Friday 6 May 2016 9:06 AM.

⁸⁷ <http://www.mennoniteheritagefarm.com/events.php>

⁸⁸ August 17, 2006, “Joseph B. Hirt has begun writing his memoirs, giving voice to previously unspeakable trauma.” http://articles.philly.com/2006-08-17/news/25397157_1_holocaust-survivor-concentration-camp-racial-hatred

AFTERWORD: An Open Appeal

I believe Mr. Hirt should have an opportunity to publically retract his claims and admit his fraud. I appeal to Mr. Hirt to make things right – admit the truth, ask for forgiveness, and cease involvement in public presentations.

I also believe Mr. Hirt's presentations are reasonable grounds to pursue criminal charges as they appear to constitute fraud and/or identity theft. **If Mr. Hirt refuses to publically recant**, I appeal to law enforcement in both Lancaster County, PA, and Lewis County, NY, to pursue a criminal investigation, separately or jointly, as by giving public presentations of his false claims to have been a prisoner and escapee from the Nazi Holocaust camp at Auschwitz and by receiving monetary compensation from money collected at such events.⁸⁹ It would appear that Mr. Hirt has committed fraud and identity theft in the States of Pennsylvania and New York. I therefore believe the Lancaster County District Attorney can justifiably seek charges under various sections of the *Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes Title 18*⁹⁰ such as:

§ 4101. Forgery. “A person is guilty of forgery if... with knowledge that he is facilitating a fraud or injury to be perpetrated by anyone, the actor... makes, completes, executes, authenticates, issues or transfers any writing so that it purports to be the act of another who did not authorize that act, or to have been executed at a time or place or in a numbered sequence other than was in fact the case.... "writing" includes printing or any other method of recording information... and other symbols,”⁹¹

§ 4102. Simulating objects of antiquity, rarity, etc. “A person commits a misdemeanor of the first degree if, with intent to defraud anyone or with knowledge that he is facilitating a fraud to be perpetrated by anyone, he makes, alters or utters any object so that it appears to have value because of antiquity, rarity, source, or authorship which it does not possess,”⁹² and/or

§ 4120. Identity theft. “A person commits the offense of identity theft of another person if he possesses or uses, through any means, identifying information of another person without the consent of that other person to further any unlawful purpose....”⁹³

⁸⁹ I believe Mr. Hirt received monetary compensation for at least expenses related to his and his entourage's travel to and from Lowville. Record of such compensation can no doubt be obtained from the sponsors of his many presentations.

⁹⁰ <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&ttl=18&div=0&chpt=41>

⁹¹ Mr. Hirt has claimed – and allegedly tattooed on his person – the prisoner identification number of a real Auschwitz prisoner which he displays during his presentation in promoting his fraudulent story. According to the Head of the Research Department at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, prisoner number 194517 belongs to “a Pole, Kazimierz Sikorski, who was brought to Auschwitz from Warsaw on 4 September 1944.”

⁹² Ibid.

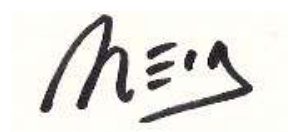
⁹³ Ibid.

I believe Mr. Hirt could be similarly charged by the Lewis County District under similar laws contained in *New York State Penal Law Article 190*⁹⁴ such as:

§ 190.65 Scheme to defraud in the first degree. “A person is guilty of a scheme to defraud in the first degree when he or she: (a) engages in a scheme constituting a systematic ongoing course of conduct with intent to defraud ten or more persons or to obtain property from ten or more persons by false or fraudulent pretenses, representations or promises, and so obtains property from one or more of such persons” and/or

§ 190.78 Identity theft in the third degree. “A person is guilty of identity theft in the third degree when he or she knowingly and with intent to defraud assumes the identity of another person by presenting himself or herself as that other person, or by acting as that other person or by using personal identifying information of that other person, and thereby: 1. obtains goods, money, property or services... or causes financial loss... to another person or persons.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Reid', is placed over a light yellow rectangular background.

Andrew R. Reid
3087 State Route 12D
Town of Leyden, NY 13309
areid@southlewis.org

⁹⁴ <http://ypdcrime.com/penal.law/article190.htm#p190.23>