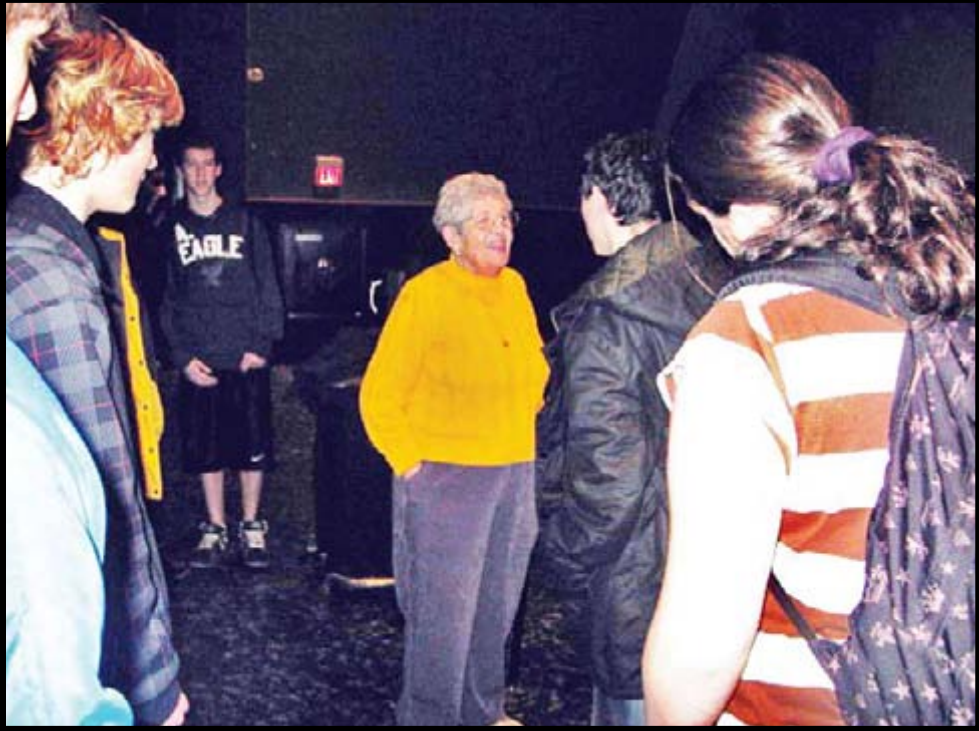


Holocaust Survivor Noemi Ban Speaks at Cedarcrest High School By Leanne Christensen, RSD

On Wednesday, February 17th Noemi Ban came to Cedarcrest High School to address the Freshman class, and share her life story and of her experience as a Holocaust survivor.

Noemi began her presentation by sharing with students of the loss of her family members; her mother, grandmother, sister and brother while imprisoned in



Students wait in line after presentation to ask questions of and offer praise to Holocaust survivor Noemi Ban. Courtesy photo

Auschwitz-Birkenau. Although her story is heartbreaking the message carried throughout is one of tolerance hope and love. She explained in detail her three reasons for deciding to talk openly about her experience after so many years: To allow children and adults to hear and see what prejudice, bigotry and hate can cause. There was a time years ago when magazine articles were written questioning if the Holocaust had actually happened, this statement made her very angry and she vowed to be a witness to it until she is gone. By speaking to groups she is able to honor her loved ones who died during the Holocaust, as she does not have any ashes, or graves to represent them or the lives they had lived.

She began her presentation sharing that as a little girl in 1933 she remembers

when her father heard Hitler's first speech on the radio, and how upset and worried he became. She spoke of the many years of deteriorating circumstances for her family, and then how in 1944 the German troops gained occupation of her community in Hungary. It was at this time that the Jewish peoples were moved to ghettos. Dozens of families were forced to live together; sleeping in hallways sharing only one bathroom. She remembers hearing the crying of babies, mothers and children all through the night. Her father along with all able bodied men ages 18 – 55 were taken away from their families and sent to a forced labor camp, while she and the rest of her family were forced to leave their homes and all of their possessions. "We ceased to be human beings at this time, and were now only a number". She and thousands more were transported by cattle car with "standing room only" to their next destination. "I can still to this day remember the terrible smell that filled the car", she told the students.

Noemi went on to explain how upon their arrival at Auschwitz they were forced to have their bodies shaved, and how they were treated like "trained dogs" standing in line for hours at a time, to be counted by the German soldiers. Their meals consisted of a type of "soup" 1 slice of bread and coffee. The average weight of the prisoners (children and adults) was 58 to 60 pounds during their imprisonment. Noemi explained in detail how during one of the "counting" processes she became faint, and if it were not for three other young girls standing closely beside her, truly "holding her up" she would surely have fallen out of line, something that would have cost her her life. She proudly shares, "those three brave girls saved my life that day."

Her story goes on to follow her experience from Auschwitz where Noemi was transported to an underground factory. The prisoners were put to work making bombs. Knowing that these bombs were being used against the Americans, the prisoners began destabilizing the bombs. She heard stories in later years of how so many of the bombs used by the Germans during that time were inoperable, and she was thrilled to hear of the success of their efforts.

As her imprisonment came to an end, and she and the others who had survived were finally liberated she was able to reunite with her father who thankfully survived as well. Within one year, she was married to a teacher whom her parents had approved of years before. Noemi expresses her deep appreciation for the 47 wonderful years they had together. They were blessed with two sons and many, many grandchildren. As her talk came to a close, she shared with students of her profound "love of life", and her awareness of how precious our lives truly are, and she encouraged her audience to do the same.

Noemi's presentation was coordinated through the Holocaust Educational Resource Center of Washington State. This is her third year sharing her inspirational life story to the Freshman classes at CHS, which is organized by Language Arts teacher, Tracie Kelly.

RSD Board attends Legislative Conference in Olympia By Courtney Fields and Glynis Bawden; RSD Board Student Representatives

On February 7th and 8th, Courtney Fields and Glynis Bawden attended the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) Legislative Conference with the Riverview School Board as Student Representatives. We went down to Olympia and met with two of our legislators, Eric Oemig and Larry Springer, to help give a student perspective on the effects of some of the bills going through our state legislature. One of the most important parts about this trip was talking to the legislators to persuade them to vote for school revenue. It was very cool to see pictures of Carnation and Duvall on Larry Springer's wall, and to talk to both of them about what they believe the best solution to school funding is. We were also given a tour of Sam Reed, the Secretary of State's office and actually got to meet with him to hear about what his job entails. One

of our favorite parts, though, was getting to meet and speak with Governor Christine Gregoire in her office with a few fellow student representatives from other school districts. She let us know that this is a time of very tough choices, but in the end we won't be judged on how we went into this economic downturn, but on how we persevere and come out of it. Overall we learned about all that is going through the legislature at the moment and the future effects certain bills could have on education.



L to R: Dan Pflugrath, Carol Van Noy, Danny Edwards, Glynis Bawden, Greg Baweden, Lori Oviatt, Courtney Fields and Senator Eric Oemig. Photo courtesy of the Washington State Senate

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