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COURTLAND MILLOY

Holocaust Museum Tragedy Provides Actors With All the Motivation They Need

You can tell when an actor owns the role, personifies the spirit of the character being portrayed. And so it was Friday night at George Washington University that two broken-hearted witnesses to hate breathed love and life into a play about Anne Frank and Emmett Till.

"All of a sudden, there was a force behind it — a power coming from somewhere outside of me," said Amal Saade, who played Anne. "It felt like a force from the security guard who was slain was moving through me. It wasn't just my energy. I could never generate that much energy on my own."

The security guard was Stephen T. Johns, a black man who worked at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. The play, "Anne and Emmett," about an imagined meeting between the two martyred teens, had been set to debut Wednesday night at the museum. But it was as if Adolf Hitler and Jim Crow had struck from the grave in protest, canceling the performance with the killing of Johns earlier in the day; an 88-year-old white disciple of hate named James W. von Brunn was charged.

The play at GWU went on without incident. Saade and Leo Breckenridge, who played Emmett,

transformed the tragedy into a triumph of truth over lies, love over hate, reality and remembrance over white supremacist delusion and Holocaust denial.

Playwright Janet Langhart Cohen had set out to produce a living history lesson aimed primarily at schoolchildren, peers of Anne, who was 15 when she died in a Nazi concentration camp in 1945, and Emmett, who was 14 when he was lynched in Mississippi in 1955. After the killing at the Holocaust museum, requests for performances of the

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Suspect's Son Sorry It Was Guard At Museum, Not Dad, Who Died

By BILL TURQUE
Washington Post Staff Writer

The son of James W. von Brunn says that he wishes it had been his father, not U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum guard Stephen T. Johns, who died in Wednesday's shooting and that von Brunn's hatred of Jews was a plague that ruined his family's life.

"I cannot express enough how deeply sorry I am it was Mr. Johns, and not my father who lost their life yesterday [Wednesday]," Erik von Brunn, 32, says in a written statement to ABC News. "It was unjustified and unfair that he died, and while my condolences could never

begin to offer appeasement, they, along with my remorse is all I have to give."

James von Brunn, a white supremacist, has been charged with killing Johns and remains hospitalized with gunshot wounds to the face from two other museum guards who returned fire after Johns fell.

In his statement to ABC and a phone interview with The Washington Post yesterday, von Brunn said his father's bigotry was a shadow over his life. He said in the interview that he was too young to know his father when James von Brunn went to prison for 6½ years for attempting to kidnap members of the

Federal Reserve Board at its District headquarters in December 1981. Erik von Brunn, now 32, was nearly 11 when his father was released.

"Even from that moment, he still had those beliefs," said von Brunn, reached by phone at his mother's home in Homosassa, Fla., about an hour north of Tampa. "It was always a part of our life." Erik von Brunn is an aspiring teacher and science fiction writer who recently graduated from the University of Maryland.

He said he had a decent relationship with his father, "in comparison with other families that I know." Al-

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PHOTOS BY RICKY CARROTI — THE WASHINGTON POST

Dancers from the Abigail Francisco School of Classical Ballet, in Calvert County, rest at the Capitol reflecting pool, above. They were preparing for the Dancing for Peace event, during which Nazanin Baygani, right, of the Konark Dance School in Herndon performed a traditional Indian dance.



At Rest and in Motion, Think Peace

Near the glistening waters of the Capitol reflecting pool, performers came together yesterday at a Dancing for Peace event organized by Brahma Kumaris, a group that promotes inner peace and international understanding. There was modern dance and ballet, show tunes and Indian and Turkish performances, along with music and prayer.

Sister Jenna Mahraj, director of the group's metropolitan D.C. chapter, said she hoped that people would realize "peace is not a sitting-down affair. Rather, it's a quality that we bring into our actions."

Fifteen of the dancers, ages 11 to 17, came from the Abigail Francisco School of Classical Ballet in North Beach, including Dymonde Brown, 16, who said she would like to contribute to "peace all over the world — just helping people who need peace in their countries, including America."

Tourists who happened upon the gathering seemed to appreciate its message. "Dancing, it is peace," said Tamara Iskhakova, 54, of New York. "You remember Dostoevsky? He said, 'Beauty will save the world.'"

— Donna St. George

Denied Benefits, Man's Widow Tries To Change Va. Workers' Comp Law

By CHRIS L. JENKINS
Washington Post Staff Writer

On a damp early morning in September 2006, trucker Arthur Pierce was found lying next to his rig, unconscious in a small pool of blood.

No one saw what happened to Pierce, 64, in the Owen Trucking parking lot outside Fredericksburg, but investigators who reconstructed the scene would later testify that Pierce, while getting ready for his daily drive, had fallen about 12 feet from the top of a ladder on the side of his truck and hit his head on the concrete.

He remained in a coma and died 16 months later, never able to tell his family or supervisors what happened that morning. Pierce, a retired IBM engineer, was working as a trucker between stints as a tour guide for youth and international

groups.

Thinking that she would be able to help pay his medical bills through workmen's compensation, Pierce's wife, Claire, filed a claim. She was denied twice: once by Owen's insurance company, then by the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission. In both cases, officials found that because Pierce was not able to testify about the accident — even though it happened at work after he had clocked in — there was not enough evidence to award benefits.

And in a legal twist, Claire Pierce discovered something even more baffling: Had her husband died immediately from his fall, the family probably would have won the case. Virginia law generally presumes that when a person dies at a work site, it is considered a work-related injury. But because Pierce was severely brain injured and remained coma-

tose, he was not eligible for benefits. And it was irrelevant, according to the state, that he died later.

"I couldn't believe what I was hearing," said Claire Pierce, a legal assistant from Stafford who had been married to Pierce for 40 years. "It just seemed incredibly unfair that if he had died, it would be work-related, but if he doesn't die, it's not work-related. It doesn't seem to make any sense."

Now, Pierce is fighting a one-woman crusade to get state law changed so that people like her husband — severely brain injured and unable to testify on their own behalf — can receive the same presumption as those who die immediately in similar situations. She was unsuccessful during the last General Assembly session; her effort failed in the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee. She said she will try



BY JOHN MCDONNELL — THE WASHINGTON POST

Claire Pierce of Stafford and daughter Lisa look at pictures of Arthur Pierce, who died after a fall left him brain injured and comatose.

again in January.

"The death presumption for these cases in Virginia is very narrow," said Greg Harbison, a lawyer who filed Pierce's case with the workers' compensation commission. "The theory is that dead people can't talk,

so in our mind, there should be no difference for those who are so severely brain injured that they can't testify on their own behalf.

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Guard's Error Is Blamed In Beating

Pr. George's Inmate Attacked in Cell

By RUBEN CASTANEDA
Washington Post Staff Writer

An inmate in a maximum-security unit of the Prince George's County jail was badly beaten this month after a guard in a control booth "inadvertently" opened his cell, allowing another inmate, an alleged member of a violent street gang, to enter the cell and assault him, officials said.

The victim, DeAndre Wilson, 19, told his attorney that he was dragged out of his cell during the June 6 attack and that he was "bleeding and slipping in and out of consciousness," according to court papers filed by the attorney. Wilson said his nose was broken in the attack, and he said he did not receive proper treatment.

"He didn't even look like my son," said Wilson's mother, Sherenna M.V. Corbett, recalling her visit with him a day or two after the attack. "I fell to my knees."

Vernon Herron, the county's director of public safety, described the incident as "inexcusable" and said it is under investigation. He said he knows of no connection between the alleged assailant and the guard.

"I'm not happy about this," Herron said Friday. "When you come to work as a correctional officer or a police officer or a firefighter, and you don't bring your 'A-game,' people get hurt. I guarantee it won't happen again."

The assault was the latest in a series of violent incidents at the jail caused by security breakdowns. In February, a band of inmates disabled the locks on their cell doors and stormed out to assault guards. In November, an inmate disabled the lock on his cell door and assaulted another inmate.

A jail employee said Wilson's attacker shouted obscenities as he dragged the inmate down the stairs from the cellblock's second tier, where Wilson's cell was. Wilson's head bounced off the stairs repeatedly, said the employee, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to give interviews.

Wilson's attorney, Assistant Public Defender Kimberly V. Lewis, wrote in the court filing that when she saw Wilson two days after the assault, he had two black eyes, stitches

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Mary Ann Kephart, 88

Montgomery County preservationist grew up in Silver Spring and had a central role in saving Poolesville's oldest building, the John Poole House, a log cabin built in 1793. C6



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