



Nobel Prize Winner, Holocaust Survivor Speaks At UNH Feb. 11

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DURHAM, N.H. - Roald Hoffmann was a child when the Nazis occupied his Polish town in 1941 and killed thousands, including his father. When they left, he was one of perhaps five children among the 200 Jews in total who had survived.

Hoffmann and what was left of his family left Poland, eventually coming to America where he went on to become a noted chemist. In 1981, he received the Nobel Prize in chemistry. Hoffmann will give the keynote address at the fourth annual Hans Heilbronner Lecture at the University of New Hampshire Monday, Feb. 11, 2008.

The lecture, "Returning, Remembering, Forgiving: Poland 1941 - Ukraine 2006," is sponsored by the Endowed Fund for Holocaust Education, the UNH College of Liberal Arts and the UNH Department of History. A reception will be held at 7 p.m., with the lecture commencing at 7:30 p.m. in Richards Auditorium, Murkland Hall. The reception and lecture are free and open to the public.

Hoffmann is the Frank H. T. Rhodes Professor of Humane Letters and professor of chemistry at Cornell University. He received his Ph.D. in 1962 from Harvard University in chemical physics. Born in 1937 in a Polish Jewish family in Zloczow, Poland, Hoffmann survived the Holocaust, and came to the United States in 1949 as a child.

His lecture will focus on Jewish life in Poland before World War II, the different ways of survival in the Holocaust, issues of collective and individual responsibility, the role of the Ukrainian churches, and the evolution of Ukrainian-Jewish relationships.

In 2006, Hoffmann returned to his place of birth - now part of the Ukraine - for the dedication of a memorial in honor of those who perished. At the dedication, Hoffmann recounts watching his children and grandchildren climb into the attic of the village schoolhouse where he and his family hid for 15 months.

"The storeroom where we were hidden is now a classroom with Mendeleev's periodic table of the elements on the wall. A chemistry classroom," he says.

"Can one forgive what happened - the pain, the killing? Forgiveness comes from the soul, it is individual. I can only speak for myself," Hoffmann says. "I can forgive. But only if I remember, and, importantly, if I see that the people in whose midst the killing took place, remember. If they do not, if their children are not taught that it must not happen again, then my soul hardens."

In addition to his academic achievements, Hoffmann is an accomplished writer, poet and playwright. His books include "Chemistry Imagined with artist Vivian Torrence," "The Same and Not the Same and Old Wine" and "New Flasks: Reflections on Science and Jewish Tradition."

The Hans Heilbronner Lecture is named in honor of Hans Heilbronner, a retired professor of

Russian history who taught at UNH for more than 30 years. He was one of the first Jewish faculty members at the university, and his family escaped Nazi Germany after his veteran father was released from a concentration camp.

Additional biographical information about Hoffmann is available on his website at <http://www.roaldhoffmann.com/pn/index.php>.

PHOTOS

High-resolution photos of Hoffmann are available at

<http://www.roaldhoffmann.com/pn/modules.php?op=modload&name=Sections&file=index&req=viewarticle&artid=80&page=1>.