

around the bay

Red Cross Reconnects Childhood Friends Torn Apart by Holocaust After 70 Years



In 1939, Walter Ullmann and his family fled Germany to escape Nazi persecution. Ullmann left behind a dear childhood friend, Elfriede Haas. One day last year, Ullmann received an unexpected phone call – it was Haas, making contact after 70 years of separation.

In attempt to reconnect with the Jewish families who had been her childhood neighbors, Haas had gotten in touch with the American Red Cross. That Red Cross contact initiated a tracing request that was ultimately sent to the American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter headquarters in San Francisco, where Ullmann and his family now live.

“After 70 years it is wonderful to hear your voice again,” claimed an emotional Ullmann when he finally received Haas’ call.

The two long-lost friends continued to catch up about where their lives have led them after the tragic years following the holocaust in Germany. Ullmann admits that he never expected to hear from his friend again. “We left Germany in 1939, but since Elfriede’s family was not Jewish, she had no reason to leave. She stayed behind,” he said.

Ullmann and his family travelled to Geneva, and eventually to Shanghai, the only country they could enter without documentation. They did not enter the United States until 1948. While the lives of Ullmann and Haas are both radically different

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While the American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter remains devoted to helping people prepare for and respond to disasters at home, we are also proud to be part of the world’s largest humanitarian network.

Our chapter extends its humanitarian mission around the world through its work as part of the global Red Cross network. With more than 97 million volunteers, employees and members worldwide, we use our presence in nearly every community to provide urgent humanitarian assistance.

Be it training volunteers who travel to other nations to contribute humanitarian work or bringing families together after decades of separation through our tracing services, our chapter continues to serve those in our own community and abroad.

In this issue of **around the bay** we will share some of the work that our local chapter has done in international communities within the Bay Area and abroad. Hear a moving story of friends reconnecting through Red Cross international tracing services and learn about a program that is educating the youth in our community to be global-minded leaders.

Your ongoing support of the Red Cross ensures that together we’re able to meet our humanitarian mission here at home and around the world. Thank you.



Harold Brooks
Chief Executive Officer
American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter

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from when they knew each other as children, the familiarity of an old friend provided for an emotional reunion.

Ullmann and Haas aren't alone. The chaos and confusion that accompany war and disaster can separate families when they need each other most. When this happens, the Red Cross joins the search across international borders.

Restoring Family Links is a program of the American Red Cross that helps families and friends reconnect after months or years of separation. Caseworkers at local chapters around the United States, including at the Bay Area Chapter, handle inquiries and work directly with family members to locate missing relatives by working with our Red Cross network – the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations in nearly every country around the world. This past year, the American Red Cross helped reconnect more than 860 families – bridging years of separation to renew critical links between new communities in the United States and their families around the world.

Bay Area volunteer Craig Knudsen knows firsthand how important and touching these reunions can be. He is one of the volunteers who was instrumental in reconnecting Ullmann and Haas.



"It is so important to provide this service to people who do want to locate loved ones," Knudsen said. "Finding a friend or family member can make a big difference in a person's life."

For people who have lost everything due to war or a disaster, news and the hope of reunification with family and friends can be just as life-sustaining as food, shelter and medical care. Even far away and many years after the devastation, Red Cross volunteers in the Bay Area are helping people to reconnect, gain closure and heal through the Restoring Family Links program.

Three Simple Words



Placid Dimanche talks with American Red Cross worker Winnie Romeril in Port-au-Prince before using the ICRC family linking Web site to let his sister in Miami know he is safe.

When news of the January 2010 Haitian earthquake reached people in the United States, it caused panic for the thousands of Americans who had family members and friends living in Haiti. For many, days passed without being able to reach loved ones on the telephone.

To help reconnect separated families, the International Committee of the Red Cross set up a family linking Web site where frantic family members could enter information about their loved ones. Local chapters helped the Haitian American community enter information and search for news of survivors.

Meanwhile in Haiti, the Haitian Red Cross was helping earthquake survivors register on the site to report that they were safe and well. One month after the disaster, nearly 4,000 survivors were able to let their family members abroad know that they were safe. The Haitian Red Cross and the ICRC also equipped mobile teams with satellite phones to go into some of the most destitute neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince, making it possible for more than 2,500 people to call relatives abroad to let them know they were alive.

With three simple words – "I am alive" – and the help of the Red Cross, people in the Bay Area and across the country found peace of mind and missing loved ones in Haiti.

How You Can Help

The backbone of the Restoring Family Links program are the volunteers within local chapters who work directly with family members to help locate missing relatives. You can help the American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter continue this important work. Volunteer or donate at www.redcrossbayarea.org or call 1-888-4-HELP-BAY (1-888-443-5722).



Exploring Humanitarian Law in the Bay Area

War is a lot more complicated than in a video game, and violence isn't just something that happens overseas. Young people in the Bay Area and around the world need the skills to understand when conflict intersects with the rights and protections of people at home and abroad. Through the Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) program of the American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter, youth in the Bay Area are learning about human rights law and the international humanitarian principles supported by the Geneva Conventions.

Since 2002, EHL materials have been introduced to schools in more than 40 countries, helping students understand the reality of war and the impact of the Geneva Conventions on human life and dignity.

This year, the chapter expanded the EHL program to 25 Bay Area school districts, offering teachers special training and materials to teach the program for one year. The initial participating schools have strong foundations in and resources directed toward international studies.

As part of its EHL training outreach earlier this year, the Red Cross hosted a reception and program called "Inspiring Change: Educating the Humanitarian Leaders of Tomorrow," featuring Jimmie Briggs, human rights advocate, author of *Innocents Lost: When Children Go to War* and founder of the Man Up campaign. Briggs discussed the human rights abuses he witnessed as a journalist. Briggs also highlighted the extensive work of the Red Cross in the conflict areas he visited.

Briggs subsequently spoke at two Bay Area high schools, a middle school and the University of California, Berkeley. He emphasized the power that the individual, even a young student, has to change lives for the better – empowering the leaders of tomorrow with the humanitarian principles that will hopefully help to minimize human suffering in the future.

Bay Area Volunteers Represent American Red Cross at International Council Meeting in Africa

Earlier this year, Bay Area volunteers Sandy Tesch and Pat West represented the American Red Cross National Youth Council at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Council of Delegates in Nairobi, Kenya. Every Red Cross and Red Crescent Society in the world was represented.

In addition to attending general sessions, the two also held meetings with other youth delegates to discuss youth policy within the organization. Tesch says that about half the Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers worldwide are under the age of 30, making youth volunteers a vital part of the Red Cross movement around the world.



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A View from the Field: Board Chair Susan Atherton Recounts Experience as a Red Cross Volunteer in Kenya

The American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter extends its humanitarian mission from our local neighborhoods to countries around the world through its work as part of the global Red Cross network. People in the Bay Area contribute to the Red Cross overseas by supporting humanitarian assistance to the world's most vulnerable populations.

Over the last few years, board chair Susan Atherton has traveled several times to Kenya as a Red Cross volunteer to see the international Red Cross movement at work. She witnessed not only the distribution of measles vaccines and malaria bed nets, but also the work being done to fight and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Atherton personally visited several communities in Kenya to watch delegates from the American Red Cross at work along with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Kenyan Red Cross Society.



"Watching all of these organizations working together only emphasizes the notion that we truly are 'one Red Cross,' one movement, one community," Atherton said.

Atherton remains hopeful that Kenya and other developing nations will continue to grow as they receive assistance in building capacity and expanding services.

"The generosity of our donors allows us to continue the Red Cross movement. We have to help, because we can help. It is a humanitarian requirement," Atherton said. "I don't know how you can't be hopeful."

Mission

The American Red Cross, a humanitarian organization led by its volunteers and guided by its Congressional Charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement, will provide relief to victims of disasters and help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies.