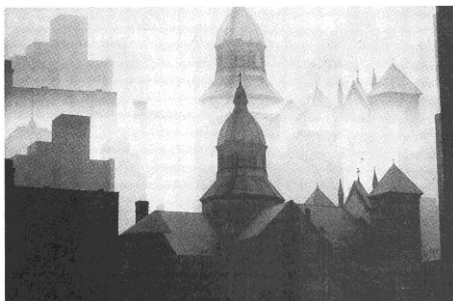




BERNARD GOTFRYD'S photograph of playwright Lillian Hellman is one of many of his portraits on display at the Hebrew Home at Riverdale.

A purveyor of intimate portraits

by Megan James

In Bernard Gotfryd's portrait, playwright Lillian Hellman seems to be cast from stone. Her wrinkled face and smooth, silver hair appear unmovable, but there is a softness in her expression that hints at something else.

Mr. Gotfryd, a veteran *Newsweek* photojournalist whose work is now on display at the Hebrew Home for the Aged at Riverdale, once called Ms. Hellman his "second mother." He had been assigned to take her picture for the magazine, but like many of his subjects, she quickly became a close friend.

They got to talking and soon, she was encouraging him to tell his own story — Mr. Gotfryd had survived the Holocaust.

"You must definitely write about it," he recalled Ms. Hellman telling him. "It's important that you do. You're an eyewitness and a survivor."

In his 30 years working for *Newsweek*, Mr. Gotfryd met and photographed some of the most influential people of his generation, and in nearly every portrait he captures this sense of intimacy.

"I was looking for personality," he said in an interview last week at his Forest Hills home. He looked for that moment when they took a deep breath, laughed in spite of themselves, revealed something new about who they were.

And he often caught it.

Visitors to the show, "The Eye of a Generation," which is at the home, at 5901 Palisade Ave., until Oct. 26, will see Adlai Stevenson's face buried in his hands at the United Nations during the Cuban Missile Crisis; Arthur Miller in profile, his hands clasped under his chin, his eyes just catching the snap of Mr. Gotfryd's shutter beside him; and Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, like Mr. Gotfryd, leaning on his hands, his sad eyes gazing.

From the moment he got his first camera at the age of 11, Mr. Gotfryd knew there was magic in it. It was 1935 in Radom, Poland, when his father, a furniture maker, gave him Kodak's Baby Brownie camera. It never left his side.

"I went wild with it," he recalled.

He took pictures of his friends, charging them for the prints so he could afford a steady stream of film and

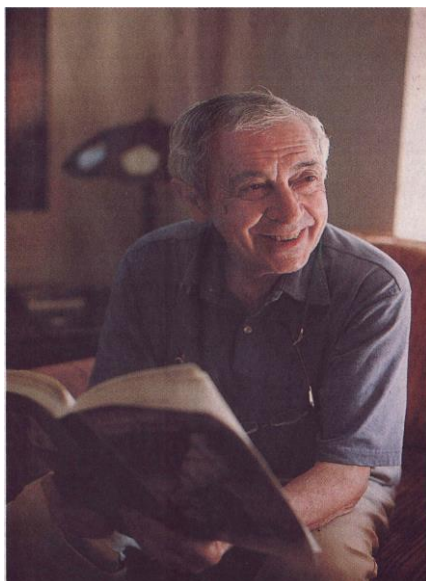


Photo by Claudio Papapietro

BERNARD GOTFRYD, pictured in his Queens home, spent three decades photographing some of the key figures of the 20th century for 'Newsweek.'

It was Mr. Gotfryd's apprenticeship at a family friend's photography studio that allowed him, for a time, to avoid the labor camps at the beginning of the war. It was there that he got involved with the Polish resistance to the Nazis, and there he was ultimately caught and packed onto a train bound for Maidanek concentration camp.

He had already been moved into a ghetto when he started the apprenticeship at the age of 15. Every day he was escorted to work where he would spend hours developing photos, a good portion of which came from the Gestapo and Nazis.

When a young woman named Alexandra came into the shop and asked him to take an identification photo, he fell in love. She was part of the Polish Underground, she later told him, and asked Mr. Gotfryd to help out.

"Now I had a chance to fight back," he said, adding she was so beautiful, he would have done anything for her.

Every night he would work late, making duplicate prints of Nazi and Gestapo atrocities caught on film — mass hangings were common, with Nazis smiling in the foreground.

"They were proud," he said. "They would send these pictures to their families."

Alexandra would return for the duplicates, each time with a different subject for a portrait to serve as an excuse. Mr. Gotfryd said to this day he isn't sure what Alexandra did with the photographs.

By 1943 her family, all members of the resistance, had arranged to help Mr. Gotfryd escape. But in his excitement to get in the car that would drive him to freedom, he didn't walk, as he had been told to do, but ran from the photo studio and was caught. With a forged ID in his pocket, he was deported to the camp immediately.

By the end of the war, Mr. Gotfryd had survived six different concentration camps. He immigrated to the United States two years later, where he was drafted as an army combat photographer.

He was stationed at Fort Benning in Georgia in 1949 when several high-ranking generals came to watch army exercises with new weapons. That's when he caught the eye of the *Newsweek* Atlanta bureau chief, who asked Mr. Gotfryd if he could take a photo of General Omar Bradley for an upcoming cover story.

"I had a hard time imagining that a private like me could point a camera at a four-star general," he wrote in his book *The Intimate Eye*.

"It was a warm day and I did not look presentable. My uniform was wrinkled and soaked with perspiration. But, after thinking it over, I decided to give it a try."

Mr. Gotfryd spent the next three decades photographing powerful people, and not once was he intimidated, he said. To him, they were just people.

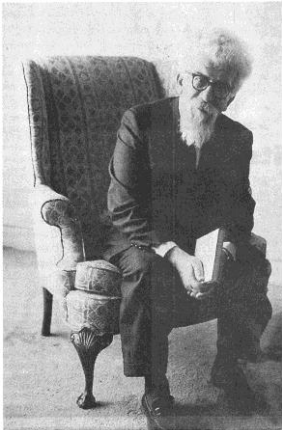
In 1990, Mr. Gotfryd finished that book Lillian Hellman had been urging him to write. He called it *Anton the Dove Fancier and other Tales of the Holocaust*.

He still has the first photograph he ever took — the view from a balcony on his family's apartment in Radom — but not because he held onto it. He had given it to a childhood friend named Salek before the war.

It never left Salek's wallet. When the two men met accidentally in Stuttgart years later, Salek opened his wallet and showed him the yellowed photograph of their hometown.

"You lost everything," he told Mr. Gotfryd. "Take it."

the cost of development.
‘LOOKING
EAST,’ right, a
multi-exposure
photograph
taken from 48th
Street in
Manhattan in the
early 1970s.



At right, Jewish
theologian Dr.
Abraham
Joshua Heschel.