

When I learned the theme for National History Day was “Taking a Stand in History” I immediately thought about the small mountain villagers of Le Chambon Sur Lignon. I learned about them briefly in researching last year’s project, and remembered them and the courage they had to take a stand during World War II to save lives of Jewish refugees. I began my research by visiting internet sites to learn who was involved and how they were able to go about saving the lives of refugees.

Very early in my research last summer I learned the leaders of the stand were the local pastor, Andre Trocme and his wife Magda. I also learned there was a documentary film made on Le Chambon entitled *Weapons of the Spirit* created by one of the survivors, Pierre Sauvage. I was unable to find a copy to purchase online, and contacted Mr. Sauvage at the Chambon Foundation in Los Angeles. He shared with me a private copy of the newest version of the film that he is remastering. Much to my surprise and delight, I read that the Trocme’s have one living daughter, Nelly Trocme Hewett and that she would be speaking at Western Washington University last September and to contact Sylvia Tag with questions. I contacted Ms. Tag, and requested contact information for Nelly Trocme Hewett and explained to her my project. Nelly responded within a couple of hours and not only gave me her blessing to portray her mother, she was thrilled that someone was sharing their story here in the United States. She enthusiastically volunteered to help as needed as the research and play progressed, and I have fact checked with her throughout this process over the last seven months. I learned there is an exhibit at the United States Holocaust Museum and Memorial.

I went to the Holocaust Museum to see the exhibit and do research in their Library and was able to see pictures and some artifacts on display from Le Chambon featuring a young girl named Elizabeth Kaufmann who was a Jewish refugee and au pair for the Trocme family.

When I began organizing my performance I ran across an article on the death of Elizabeth Kaufmann Koenig, whom I learned became the founding librarian at the United States Holocaust Museum. That was an incredible piece of information, found in a small article on her death. I read in several sources about a “signal song” that was used, but never named. I turned to Nelly who gave me the name and sung the song for me over the phone. Nelly also helped me pronounce some words and gain an understanding of her parents and the feeling of those in Le Chambon during the rescue.

The people of Le Chambon took a quiet stand to save lives during the Holocaust. Their actions inspired an unlikely conspiracy of goodness . Not only did their stand save lives, it preserved history and serves as an example to mankind still today.