

## **Governor's Column – 04/14/02**

One definition of a hero reads, “a person of distinguished courage or ability, admired for brave deeds and noble qualities.”

This past week, the Israeli Consul General to the Southeastern United States, Jacob Rosen, recognized a hero with Mississippi ties. Selma Elizabeth Rosemann lived through the horrors of Nazi Germany during World War II. She helped others live through it as well, hiding Jewish refugees from the scourge of Hitler's troops.

Selma Rosemann saved seven lives. She risked her own to do it.

In a ceremony at Beth Israel synagogue, her nephew accepted an award in her honor. Gus Rosemann of McComb received the “Righteous Among the Nations” award, the highest honor given by the nation of Israel.

The award ceremony was part of an annual event sponsored by the Jackson Clergy Network. The Holocaust Commemoration Service serves as a reminder of the millions of innocents who perished in one of the most horrible and tragic periods of our time and the others who lived to remind us that it should never happen again.

As part of this year's service, the week of April 7 through April 14 was declared “Days of Remembrance” week in Mississippi, in memory of the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust.

The actions of a single individual like Selma Rosemann serve to remind us that each of us, in our own way, can make a difference. The specific results of her actions would be difficult to determine, but it is obvious that the risks she took during those difficult times made the difference for generations of families.

The inscription on the award presented to Guy Rosemann reads “Anyone who saves one soul, saves the world.” It’s a saying that brings to mind the parable of the Good Samaritan from the Gospel of Luke, a story that reminds us that we are all neighbors and we all need to help each other. Selma Rosemann lived this Golden Rule, as we all should.

Another definition of hero refers to “a person who, in the opinion of others, has heroic qualities or is regarded as a model or ideal.”

What kind of difference can we make each day here, in an environment free from the terror of the Holocaust? What kind of heroes can we be?

We can mentor a child or volunteer at a retirement home. We can serve at a homeless shelter or clean up a neighborhood park. We can help build a Habitat home. As individuals and as a community, we can work to bring about change and make someone’s life better, and by extension, our own lives as well.

We pray we will never see another Holocaust, but we should also pray for more people in our world like Selma Rosemann. Because of her example, because of her bravery, the world is a little better place.

I believe God does not call us to see through each other, but to see each other through. However we do it, it needs to be done.

