

"My father pleaded with Kubinyi to do so but he refused," she said. "He said, 'I have done nothing wrong.' The prisoners pleaded with the Russians not to take him. 'This is a good man,' they told them. 'He saved our lives.'"

Unmoved, the Russian soldiers took Kubinyi into custody as a prisoner of war. He was shipped to a Siberian labor camp, where just a year later he died of typhus and was buried in an unmarked grave.

Neither Marta nor Morton could let Kubinyi's story end there. Through their efforts he was posthumously given the designation of Righteous Among the Nations, and a wall bears his name in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel's official memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

In 2011 Marta and Henry took their children to meet Kubinyi's son and his family in Hungary.

"I really wanted my children to meet him, and to be able to thank him personally for his father's goodness and courage," Marta said. "I believe that knowing your history is knowing who you are. It gives you a sense of direction and continuity. We are all shaped by that.

"Beyond that," she continued, "this story of courage inspires me and my children to remember that one person can make a huge difference in life. We can see people like Kubinyi as models for how to be."

A Focal Point for Remembrance

And evidently that example is not lost on the next generation of Morton's descendants.

"I can't help but think a lot about Zoltán Kubinyi," said Marta's daughter Sophie. "I've only known this man through stories and already he feels like part of the family. I can't help but think if this man hadn't had an ounce of compassion in his heart, my Grandpa would never have been in my life. My mom wouldn't be here; she wouldn't have had my brother and me. I wouldn't be in this world.

"It is amazing to think about one single person making a difference in so many lives."

Marta has also written about the story in "Legacy of Rescue: A Daughter's Tribute," a book that can be ordered through her website.

"A lot of times people ask me how I could write such an uplifting Holocaust book," she said. "I answer, 'How could I not?' I'm filled with gratitude for my parents' love and protection; for giving me a sense of family connection and continuity by telling me about life and people before; for recounting the sorrowful details of their Holocaust past while also honoring the individuals who showed them human kindness in those abandoned days."

And remembering that "Holocaust past," both the horrific and the good, is precisely the point of Yom HaShoah, established in Israel in 1953 by Prime Minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion and the president of Israel, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. One of the most noteworthy features of Yom HaShoah in Israel is the sounding of sirens at 10 a.m. All over the country, people stop whatever they are doing — even if they are driving on the highway — and stand at attention as a way of paying silent tribute to the dead.

"Yom HaShoah is a vital day in the Jewish calendar, providing us with a focal point for our remembrance," said Jonathan Sacks, chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations in Great Britain. "We cannot bring the dead back to life, but we can bring their memory back to life and ensure they are not forgotten. We can undertake in our lives to do what they were so cruelly prevented from doing in theirs."

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