

## Derman Memorial Statue

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It stands alone in Spring Grove Park, surrounded by an alcove of trees on a quiet quadrangle of peaceful grass that offers a chance to stop and reflect. The cairn-style memorial of rocks and cement was approved by the Village of Spring Grove last year, and honors legacy of holocaust survivor Lisa Derman.

The plaque affixed to the rock spire depicts a bas relief likeness of her face in profile, and inscriptions saying, "Never again," with a short history of her life. Even more, it is a monument to holocaust survivors of Jewish, Armenian, Polish, Lithuanian and many eastern nationalities, and possibly the only such tribute in Mc Henry County.

"We're very much honored that this commemorative structure is in Spring Grove, and that the board approved the placement and site, along with assisting in the wording attached to it," said Laura Frumet, the village's Deputy Village Clerk. "It's an honor to her memory, and also the struggle for freedom in mankind."

The site is pertinent. The location is across a paved access road where Derman passed away in 2002, during her first appearance at the Illinois Storytelling Festival, which called the park home, and was in its 19<sup>th</sup> year of celebration at the time. The 75-year old former resistance fighter in Lithuanian ghettos, a holocaust survivor, and president of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois definitely had a story to tell.

"The time will come, when you will have to stand up, and be counted (against injustice)," said Derman. "I will not be here much longer, and the story must go on." Hebron-based storyteller, longtime festival organizer, and author Jim May recalled the words, and had said that after twenty minutes of speaking, she handed her microphone to her husband, lowered her head, and quietly passed away from heart failure. The impact was shattering, as her prophetic words rang over the grounds.

She was committed to telling her story of watching her family members killed, moving and living through three ghetto enclosures, as well as expanding the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie to include the stories of others. A new facility opened in 2005, at 9603 Woods Drive in Skokie to that end.

May also spearheaded an effort to build and erect a monument to Derman at the park site, entirely through donations, and helped move the project forward. Plans for a bas relief statue monument, designed by Nancy Wicker, depicted Derman and her sisters on a 22" diameter pedestal base. May went to the full board to make a presentation in July 2011.

At the time, Spring Grove Village President Mark Eisenberg had said that the festival was a part of the municipality many years, helping to put it on the map. There were some reservations by the full board that eventually dissolved into an open discussion of allowing the memorial, following the telling of Derman's story.

A text of her speech was transcribed, and Donald Englert, the former superintendent of Mc Henry County schools, made copies for use in all jurisdictional middle and high school levels as an educational component of holocaust studies.

Fundraising efforts raised the necessary amount, pegged at approximately \$12,000 in private donations, continued through site presentations and collections through the festival's tax deductible status as a non-profit organization. Its mandate expresses a dedication to the preservation of oral storytelling traditions, for historic and educational purposes.

Presently, all the efforts and collaborations have culminated in the monument coming to fruition and being on display to honor the "spirit of mankind." "It does honor that spirit, and brings home larger issues for everyone to ponder," said Frumet. "This is why it's an honor for our village to host it."

*Raindrops appear as beads of perspiration and tears on bas-relief plaque depicting the face of holocaust survivor Lisa Derman. The plaque is affixed to a cairn-style pointed stone memorial placed in cove across the road where Derman passed away in Spring Grove Park.*



