



NEWS from the

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## **Catholic Holocaust Survivor to visit Gadsden March 30, 31, April 1.**

“Not all prisoners at Auschwitz were Jewish,” says Dr. Charles Hill of Gadsden State Community College and a member of the Gadsden Reads committee. “That is one of the main reasons that we chose Sigmund Sobolewski, a Catholic Holocaust survivor, to visit Gadsden next week.”

Sigmund Sobolewski will spend three days next week visiting area schools and the public and area schools are invited to hear him speak on Tuesday, March 31 at 11:00 AM at Wallace Hall on the campus of Gadsden State Community College. There is also a public session with him on Tuesday evening from 5:30 – 7:00 at the Mary G. Hardin Center for Cultural Arts. There is no charge for the events.

In his Wallace Hall talk, Sobolewski will explain how he survived for several years as a political prisoner in the infamous concentration camp. Sobolewski was 17 years old when he became the 88th prisoner to enter Auschwitz on June 14th, 1940. Sobolewski's father, the mayor of a small Polish town, was arrested when the Nazis were preparing to invade Belgium and Holland. Many prominent individuals in occupied Poland were incarcerated and detained in anticipation of a rebellion on the Nazis' Eastern front.

Sobolewski is fluent in German, and was employed by Schutzstaffel officers as a translator. He communicated to the other prisoners for the SS and was rewarded with a little extra food.

"I survived also because I was young," said Sobolewski during a 2001 interview. "I didn't realize the seriousness of what was going on. Most of the people who survived were simple people; workers, peasants from Polish villages who couldn't read and write, but who were used to the hard work. Lawyers, doctors, technicians, university graduates: many of them after three or four weeks in Auschwitz had committed suicide because they realized their chances of surviving were very, very slim."

Sobolewski says that up to 7,000 people died every day in 1944. Auschwitz was renowned for its gas chambers, which could kill up to 2,000 people at a time. He often uses his visits to emphasize to the predominantly student audience that university degrees do not make anyone immune to the effects of an indoctrination campaign.

Gadsden Reads: The Shawl is reading “The Shawl” by Cynthia Ozick and is an NEA BIG READ grant recipient. Visit [www.gadsdenreads.com](http://www.gadsdenreads.com) or [www.neabigread.org](http://www.neabigread.org) Based out of the Mary G Hardin Center for Cultural Arts, Gadsden Reads is a partnership of Gadsden State Community College, the Gadsden Public Library, and the Gadsden Cultural Arts Foundation. This year’s special collaborative partner is the Temple Beth Israel Sisterhood. The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest. Local sponsors of Gadsden Reads are The New York Times Foundation and Advanced Imaging of Gadsden.

**POSSIBLE SIDEBAR:** Sobolewski is the subject of a book, **Prisoner 88**, The Man in Stripes by Roy D. Tanenbaum ISBN 1895176743 <http://www.ucalgary.ca/up/1-895176/1-895176-74-3.html>. We originally said the the 5:30 event at the Hardin Center was a book signing. We have been unable to purchase any and instead of a book signing we will ask him to speak.

---- **Schedule of events**, both public and private, for Sigmund and Ramona Sobolewski subject to change.  
Confirm with Bobby Welch 256-490-6764 (mobile)

**Sunday 4/29** – Depart Calgary (YYC) at 7:45 AM and arrive at **Bham airport 4:20 PM** (United from Chicago)– Bobby Welch to pick up. Reservations at Hampton Inn Gadsden

**Sunday evening – dinner on the way home**

**Monday March 30**

Breakfast at hotel and will pick up between 9am – **10 am for visit to Hardin Center for Cultural Arts** and the *Darkness Into Life* exhibit.

At **Gaston High School – 11:20 am** – Honors class discussion possibly

**Free time and/or interviews**

**Monday evening FREE**

**Tuesday March 31**

**11:00 AM speak to Wallace Hall**

Lunch

**3:30 – Litchfield middle school** (40 middle school students) visits the **Hardin Center** and short talk in Heritage Room

**5:30 – 7:00 – Public Reception** in exhibition area of Hardin Center

**7:00 Dinner with Gadsden Reads Committee and Ambassadors**

**Wednesday**

**8:00 – 11:20 – Gadsden City High School**, Steve Fraser in Library with AP classes 1<sup>st</sup> 2 periods

Lunch

**1:30 - maybe 2:00 visit to John Jones Elementary** school Katie Barber 442-2900, 4<sup>th</sup> grade class who read “Number the Stars”

1:30 maybe Eura Brown Cookie tour 5<sup>th</sup> grade request from Idavis for Patricia Gruver

**Evening** – maybe Temple or Catholic church somewhere, if not then **Eucharist at Episcopal Church of the Resurrection 6 PM**

**Thursday- Depart hotel at 6:30 am** for 9:07 AM United flight to Chicago and then to Calgary at 4:18 PM

