

Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus Opens News Exhibit, *The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H.A. Rey*

Curious George was able to go off on his adventures thanks to the fascinating, harrowing and largely unknown wartime escape from the Nazis by German-born Jews, Margret and H.A. Rey, who created Curious George.

The Reys are the focus of the newest exhibit at the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus, “The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H.A. Rey,” which runs through July 5.

The Curious George books are beloved by children of all ages around the globe with George’s stories translated into many languages, including Afrikaans, Chinese, Danish, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese and Swedish.

Author Louise Borden, an award-winning children’s book author, heard about the Reys’ escape from the Nazi invasion and “just like the Reys’ famous little monkey,” Borden was curious. She was “intrigued by the story of Margret and H.A. Rey’s flight from Paris on bicycle in June 1940.”

Over the course of several years, Borden spoke, wrote and emailed with people in England, France, Germany and Portugal who had known Margret and H.A. Rey. Borden traveled to many small towns and cities based upon the addresses found in letters and work diaries the Reys’ wrote in 1936 to 1940 when they lived in Paris.

Borden’s research culminated in her book *The Journey that Saved Curious George* which inspired the exhibit at the Holocaust Memorial Center.

“Louise’s wonderful book enabled all of us to learn about the Reys’ journey to safety, which not only saved H.A. and Margret’s lives—a tremendous feat during the war—but had a positive impact on millions of children who cherish Curious George and his adventures,” said Holocaust Memorial Center CEO Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld.

The exhibit features photographs of the Reys, illustrations by Allan Drummond, and several keepsakes, including H.A.’s copious notes in his pocket diary detailing their four-month wartime escape from Paris to New York. It also highlights several amazing artifacts from the Holocaust Memorial Center’s archives and Detroit area survivors. The exhibit is recommended for ages 12 and older.

Borden was in town earlier this month for an exclusive Holocaust Memorial Center membership event to kickoff the special exhibit. She spoke to members about H.A. and Margret Rey and their five-month odyssey through five countries to escape the Nazis. To stay safe from the Nazis, the Reys traveled by bicycle and train through France, Spain and Portugal before taking a 13-day ocean voyage to South America.

H.A. and Margret arrived in New York on October 14, 1940. The following year, *Curious George*, formerly named Fifi, was published. H.A. and Margret became U.S. citizens in 1946.

“I’m so pleased that Allan Drummond’s wonderful illustrations are on exhibit to be seen by friends of the Holocaust Memorial Center and the community in Farmington Hills. Allan’s art, which frames the text of my story, is a perfect partner for the iconic art of H. A. Rey,” said Borden.

“The world needs Holocaust museums to tell the stories of unspeakable evil, and sometimes of bravery and kindness. Supporters of the Holocaust Memorial Center—whether through museum admission, sponsorship or annual membership—help us teach over 65,000 visitors each year about what happened to the six million individuals who were murdered and also what happened to those who survived,” said Cheryl Guyer, Director of Development, Holocaust Memorial Center.

The Holocaust Memorial Center will be showing a new film, “Monkey Business, The Adventures of Curious George’s Creators,” on Monday, April 30 and Thursday, May 31 at 6:30 p.m. Using animation, archival materials and interviews, the 82-minute film explores the extraordinary lives of Margret and H.A. Rey. Moviegoers are encouraged to visit the exhibit about the Reys before the film begins. The movie is \$10 per person or free to members. RSVPs are requested to 248-553-2400 x 112 or rsvp@holocaustcenter.org.

“The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H.A. Rey” exhibit is generously supported by Janice and Chris Billmeyer, Robin and Leo Eisenberg, Bernie and Rozie Friedman, Nancy and James Grosfeld, Raina Ernstoff and Sanford Hansell, the Karp family, Jackie and Larry Kraft, Henrietta Weisberg z”l, the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The exhibit is open Sunday through Friday and is free with museum admission or membership. For more information about the exhibit, film and becoming a Holocaust Memorial Center member, please call 248-553-2400.