

# ‘Stand up to evil’

**Holocaust survivor will tell her story in Edina April 28**

By **ANDREW WIG**  
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Louise Dillery still doesn't know why she was left alone when two men yanked her father away and put him on a train to Auschwitz.

She was 16 years old, living in an apartment, just her and her father, in Nazi-occupied Paris. And then suddenly, she was alone, left to rely on the kindness of others until the Allies liberated the city two years later. It was only then that she would find out the fate of her father.

Dillery, 93 years old, will tell her story of survival, kindness and hate Sunday, April 28, for Edina's Days of Remembrance event. For the ninth year, the Edina Human Rights and Relations Commission will host the annual memorial to the Holocaust and other



Louise Dillery recounts her survival of the Holocaust as she sits in her Oakdale home. Dillery will be the featured speaker at Edina's Days of Remembrance forum, set for Sunday, April 28, at Edina City Hall.

genocides.

Inside Edina City Hall, Dillery, an Oakdale resident, will tell her story. It was November 1942, and World War II was raging. Germany had already occupied France for two

years as Dillery and her fellow Parisians got by on what they could, having adjusted to their new routine of obtaining food with ration cards.

On the day Israël Gradstein, a Jewish-Polish im-

migrant widower, was stolen away from his only child, he had stayed home, sick in bed with stomach ulcers as Dillery ventured out with two ration cards in hand – one for herself and one for her father – to

obtain what meager sustenance they were allotted. But something didn't seem right as she was followed home by two men in civilian clothes.

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Edina hires new parks and rec director

Perry Vetter, currently the assistant city manager for the city of Minnetonka, has been hired as the city of Edina's new parks & recreation director, set to begin work in Edina Monday, June 10.

Vetter began his career with the city of Minnetonka in 1998 when he was hired as a recreation program manager. He held a number of positions in recreation, including administration of Minnetonka's \$7.5 million voter-approved park renewal bond program to develop and improve parks, trails and natural resource management areas. He also managed a \$1.2 million budget for recreation services programming that served 35,000 participants.

In 2005, Vetter moved to Minnetonka's Department of Public Works, where he continued leading the parks renewal program and managed the Parks & Trails Division. This included managing 12 full-time and

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# Big issues in dispute as Legislature approaches homestretch

By **STEVE KARNOWSKI**  
Associated Press

The Minnesota Legislature reconvened for the homestretch of the 2019 session on Tuesday, with no agreements yet on any of the big issues involving taxes and spending, while the deadline looms just four weeks away.

Nevertheless, Democratic Gov. Tim Walz and legislative leaders from both parties say there's still plenty of time to finish the main job of the session by May 20 — passing a two-year budget likely to be somewhere between the \$47.6 billion Senate Republicans have proposed and the \$49.4 billion Walz proposed.

The fundamental challenge is that while the governor and the Democratic-controlled House are closely aligned, Republicans who control the Senate firmly oppose raising taxes while the state has a projected \$1 billion surplus. The partisan split also shows up on spending. All three sides have to agree, so expect some difficult negotiations.

Here's a look at where some of the major issues stand after the Easter/Passover break:

## Taxes

Walz supports raising

the gas tax by 20 cents per gallon to create a bigger dedicated revenue stream for road and bridge improvements. House Democrats back him but want to phase it in slower. Either way, it's a 70% increase. Senate Republicans say the surplus leaves plenty of money without raising taxes.

Senate Republicans have also balked at Democratic proposals to raise a variety of other taxes and fees by \$1.2 billion to allow for more spending on education and tax cuts for most individuals. Democrats are targeting corporate money stashed in tax havens overseas. Senate Republicans plan to unveil their main tax bill soon.

There's been no meeting of the minds either on the state's 2% tax on health care providers, which helps fund health programs including Medicaid and MinnesotaCare. The tax expires at the end of the year. Democrats say failing to extend it will blow a \$700 million annual hole in the budget. Republicans say it makes health care more expensive and that it should lapse on schedule.

## Reinsurance

Also expiring is a reinsurance program that

holds down premium increases for Minnesotans who buy health insurance on the individual market. Republicans say it's a big success that has kept premiums 20% lower than they would have been, and that federal money would cover the costs of extending it.

But Walz and House Democrats say it's a giveaway to insurance companies and a one-time "band aid" that requires a more permanent solution. They would cut out industry middlemen and give Minnesotans who get insurance through the state-run MNsure exchange a 20% subsidy instead.

## Education

Education is the biggest component of the budget. House Democrats want to increase per-pupil state funding by 3% in the first year and 2% in the second. Senate Republicans propose just a half-point each year. House Democrats also want to freeze tuition at public colleges and universities, while Senate Republicans would hold tuition to the inflation rate. Altogether the two sides are around \$1 billion apart.

## Gun control

Two main gun control proposals have been in

play. One would require background checks on most gun transfers. A "red flag" bill would allow for temporary confiscation of guns from people deemed an imminent threat to themselves or others.

House Democrats have included both in a larger public safety budget bill in hopes of forcing the Senate to accept them. But Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka has said gun control is dead for the session unless they drop that tactic. He has offered committee hearings on the two proposals if the House passes them first as standalone bills, but the committee probably would kill them.

## Distracted driving

The biggest bipartisan success so far is a bill requiring motorists to use hands-free devices when phoning on the road starting Aug. 1. Walz signed it after years of campaigning by citizen-activists who lost loved ones to distracted-driving crashes.

But separate legislation to stiffen existing penalties for texting while driving may have to wait for next year. The Senate-passed bill also treats drivers who kill or injure someone while texting or talking non-hands-free like drunken drivers, with

felony sentences. Some House members have qualms about such high penalties.

## Election security

Unlocking \$6.6 billion in federal funds to beef up security for Minnesota's Statewide Voter Registration System was supposed to be one of the early bipartisan wins of the session. It wasn't. Democratic Secretary of State Steve Simon still needs authorization so his office can begin the software updates. He says he still hasn't been able to get a good answer on why Senate Republicans won't give it. They've made only vague statements about oversight.

While there's speculation that it's a Republican bargaining chip, Simon says he hasn't been able to find out what they might want for it. Competing House and Senate bills are stuck in a conference committee. House Democrats have put the authorization in their broad state government finance bill to try to force the issue.

## Drug prices

The House and Senate are taking different approaches to making prescription drugs more affordable. House Demo-

crats want to take on the pharmaceutical industry by reining in insulin prices, prevent price gouging on other drugs and increase price transparency. Senate Republicans are taking a broader approach. The GOP bills include one for greater oversight over pharmacy benefit managers, the middlemen that are supposed to use their purchasing clout to hold down drug expenses.

## Opioids

Agreement seems closer on holding drug manufacturers responsible for Minnesota's growing costs for dealing with the opioid crisis. Bills have passed both chambers to hike fees for pharmaceutical manufacturers and drug wholesalers that sell or distribute opioids in the state. The differences are still being negotiated.

## Marijuana

Legalizing recreational marijuana isn't going to happen in Minnesota this session, even as recreational cannabis makes new inroads into the mainstream elsewhere. A Senate committee last month voted to kill a legalization bill, and the issue never got much traction in the House either. Maybe next year.

## Dillery

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"They followed me into right into the apartment. They saw him in bed. They made him get up and get dressed and they took him away, because being Jewish was not a good idea during the occupation," the Holocaust survivor recalled as she sat in the living room of her modest Oakdale townhouse, looking out at the pond she could see clearly through the still-bare trees of mid-April, contemplating a life that has brought more than her fair share of tragedy.

And she considers herself lucky.

Not that the pain has gone away. "What hurts is to think about how he died," she said. It happened in a cattle car

## Days of Remembrance

**Where:** Edina City Hall Lobby,  
4801 W. 50th St.

**When:** 1-2:30 p.m., Sunday, April 28

**Details:** The Edina Human Rights & Relations Commission welcomes Louise Dillery, who will speak about surviving the Holocaust.

packed so tightly he was still standing when he met his end.

This is what she heard after the liberation, from an Auschwitz survivor who was on that train. "Almost nobody came back," Dillery said. "But he was young, he came back, and he said, 'If it can be a consolation to you, I can tell you that your father died right away.' And it was a consolation."

Such is the search for the slightest comfort amid agonizing loss. "I don't want to think about

it because my father was the sweetest, sweetest, most gentle man," she said, her vaguely European accent — if not discernibly French — still coming through after more than seven decades in Minnesota. "Everybody loved him. He loved everybody."

Already having lost her mother to tuberculosis when she was 13, Dillery had no choice but to live on, under the specter of Nazi rule. "You learn to live with a constant fear," Dillery said.

She compares it to

someone living with a cardiac condition, knowing their heart could give out at any minute. "Yet somehow they go on living, don't they?" she observed.

Hunger was the norm, but Louise was able to eat at a friend's house once a week. "So every Sunday I had a good meal. During the week I was hungry ... I was always hungry. I wasn't the only one."

That friend was one of several Parisians who helped her survive. "I'm not a strong person," she said. "In fact, you're looking at a real wet noodle. I've only survived because in my life, for some reason, I've had angels in human form who have helped me. Honestly, I'm not being falsely modest. I'm telling you the truth."

There was the priest who gave her rent money

and a false identification card, which she did not end up using. There was the teacher who let her continue coming to school even though Jews weren't supposed to attend after 8th grade. "That wonderful woman risked her life every day so people like me — and I wasn't the only one — we could get our education, our diploma," Dillery said.

That sort of kindness shown by others in the face of evil are the happy memories. So was the ousting of the Nazis when the liberators marched in with "their beautiful American smiles," Dillery recalled. "They were gorgeous. Oh, they were gorgeous."

When Paris was freed, she and a friend were among those celebrating in a public square, the

same place where Dillery and her father had witnessed the French flag replaced with a swastika. "The same city hall square, we're dancing, having fun and we grabbed a little American soldier. ... He had gotten away from his buddies so we grabbed him."

Despite being the best students in their English class, their efforts to communicate with the soldier were in vain.

"We spoke a combination of French and English with British accents," she said. "We thought we were so great, and he couldn't understand a word we were saying, and we couldn't understand him. I've often wondered if maybe he was from the South. So we grabbed him and danced with

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# Dillery

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

him. Then he got away from us. And I've often thought of him, hoping that he got home, he went home safe and sound and told his family about those two crazy Parisian girls. That would probably have made a good story for him, don't you think?"

This kind of encounter characterizes the kind light-hearted events that Dillery, ever-cheerful, holds onto as beacons from a dark time. "Some of it is fun. Some is tragic," she said.

## Moving to America

Another of Dillery's fond recollections from that period was her encounter with the iconic movie star, Marlene Dietrich. Dillery was working for the U.S. Military as a receptionist in a dentist office when in walked the German-born actress.

"That woman was gorgeous. You don't know," Dillery said, still star-struck.

It was her job to ask patients a battery of questions on their way to seeing the dentist, a duty that required Dillery to ask the silver-screen legend her age, the kind of question highly frowned upon in the youth-obsessed entertainment industry. Predictably, the inquiry drew Dietrich's ire.

"If her eyes had been machine guns I wouldn't have been here now," Dillery posited. "She said 41. And I've calculated it since. She told me the truth."

Her job at the dentist office proved pivotal. It was through a connection there that she wound up in Minnesota, arriving in the Twin Cities area at

the age of 21. She had initially planned on being in the country for only five years. Encouraged by the idea that "in America everybody's rich," her plan was to earn a small fortune and move back to Paris. She laughs at that prospect now.

Dillery enrolled at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, where she received free tuition in exchange for teaching a French language class. She would have graduated in 1949, but she came down with tuberculosis, the same disease that claimed her mother. Dillery was hospitalized on strict bed rest for 19 months, but by that time, she had met her future husband, John Dillery. He had initially asked her out by requesting French lessons, and now he was visiting her in the hospital every day, she recalled.

But again, heartache was in store. She and her husband had only 14 years together. "He died during open-heart surgery. I didn't have quantity, but I had the quality," Dillery said.

John Dillery, who worked as a salesman for U.S. Steel, had a tremendous sense of humor, his widow remembers, but he also had a strong sense of right and wrong, willing to speak his mind when, for instance, he didn't approve of the misogynistic way clients would talk about their wives.

"John Dillery, funny as he was, he wasn't funny about certain things," Louise Dillery said. "And he would tell them off, and he would come home at the end of the day and say, 'I'm sure I've lost another customer today. I told him off. He was saying something nasty about his wife, and I

balled him out.'"

Having settled in Mahtomedi, the Dillerys had five children. Louise Dillery went back to school in 1969 to complete the education that was disrupted by illness 20 years earlier, going on to become a French teacher. By that time, her English had greatly improved since attempting to flirt with the American liberator, another happy memory mixed in with the sad ones.

Her life would be visited by tragedy once again when one of her sons died in an accident. "I've had some tragedies," she

said. "And at the same time, I'm so damn lucky. Isn't that weird?"

Dillery feels that way because she didn't expect to live as long as she has. "When I was young, I was so sure I was going to die young, and all that time God was laughing. Because I'm an old lady, you know that?" she reflected in her playful way.

Although she came from Jewish lineage, Dillery did not have a religious upbringing. After she arrived in the U.S., she converted to Catholicism but grew disillusioned with certain aspects of the church. "I'm not re-

ligious, but I believe in God, or at least the spirit of goodness," she said.

But she is no pacifist. The men who stole her father were not Nazis, but Frenchmen, seeking reward for rounding up Jews, Dillery said. "I heard that they had been caught after the war, after the liberation. There was a trial, and they were executed by firing squad. When I heard that, I was glad. I thought that it was so wonderful. And I said to a friend of mine, 'But I don't believe in vengeance.' And she told me, 'That was not vengeance. That was justice.'"

Now, she observes a new rise of hate. "You know what hurts me more now, is the rebirth of, so to speak, racism and anti-Semitism, all the bad isms," she said. "That hurts so bad, and it doesn't make sense. Why?"

Dillery remains inspired by her late husband's refusal to excuse toxicity. "Now I say to everybody, to hell with politeness," Dillery said. "We've been too polite too long. Stand up to evil."

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