

Speech Delivered by William Donat at the Righteous Among the Nations Ceremony Honoring Magdalena Grodzka-Guzkowska

I first met Magda, the person we are honoring today, in 1943 in Warsaw. I was five years old, and she was seventeen. She had been dispatched by the local underground cell to help hide me.

A month earlier I had been smuggled out of the Warsaw Ghetto to the Aryan side and placed in the protection of Maria and Stefan Magenheim, brave Catholic friends of my parents. My mother had prepared me by teaching me the Hail Mary and Our Father prayers and had told me that I must call these nice people "uncle" and "auntie" because they would be like my family. But I was soon betrayed by one of our neighbors and the police came for me. My auntie Maria was able to bribe them and convinced them to let me go. They agreed, but warned her that next time it would be the Gestapo who would come, and that they would not be as reasonable; they advised her to get rid of the child.

Auntie Maria made a call, and soon Magda; this sweet, heroic young woman, appeared. At the risk of her life, she took care of me while my auntie tried to find a safer place where I could spend the rest of the war.

The first night Magda took me to an empty apartment; tied two armchairs together and made a bed for me. She showed me the stars outside and told me that they were good spirits who would watch over me until morning, and because of the curfew, she had to leave me there.

Magda well understood what was in the heart of this small, bewildered child, who feared that he might never see his parents or anyone dear, again. But the next morning she came, and for the following week she took me for walks, she played with me, we had long talks. She provided me with a sense of security during very desperate times.

Dear Magda, I'm so happy to have found you again after all these years and that Yad Vashem has chosen to honor you. You helped save not only my life, but the lives of other Jewish children as well. You are a very special person; unfortunately, there were just not enough people like you to save the million Jewish children who perished during the Holocaust.