



Produced for PBS by the
WGBH Science Unit



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NOVA: HOLOCAUST ESCAPE TUNNEL

**Premieres Wednesday, April 19, 2017 at 9PM/8C on PBS
(check local listings)**

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PAULA S. APSELL

**Senior Executive Producer, NOVA, and
Director, WGBH Science Unit, WGBH Boston**

Paula Apsell began her work in broadcast typing the public broadcaster WGBH Boston's daily logs, a job, she notes, that is now mercifully automated. While at WGBH-FM, her next move, she developed the award-winning children's drama series *The Spider's Web* and served as an on-air radio news producer. She then joined WGBH's pioneering science documentary series NOVA, producing, among several other programs, *Death of a Disease*, the first long-form documentary about the worldwide eradication of smallpox. Moving to WCVB, the ABC affiliate in Boston, she became senior producer for medical programming, working with Dr. Timothy Johnson. She then spent a year at MIT as a Knight Science Journalism Fellow until she took over the leadership of NOVA, where she is now senior executive producer and director of the WGBH Science Unit. She is a recipient of the Bradford Washburn Award from the Museum of Science, Boston; the Carl Sagan Award, given by the Council of Scientific Society Presidents; the American Institute of Physics Andrew Gemant Award; and the Planetary Society's Cosmos Award, among many others. She has served on the board of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, the Brandeis University Sciences Advisory Committee and the International Documentary Association.

HANA AMIR

**Daughter of Motke Zaidel, one of the 12 survivors of the Ponar
"Burning Brigade"**

Amir is the daughter of Motke Zaidel, one of the 12 survivors of the Ponar "Burning Brigade." A retired nurse and mother of three children, she was born in Israel after the war ended and has lived there ever since. She recalls her father meeting with the other survivors annually, but knew little of his experiences until she was older. She had heard the name Ponar, but heard nothing about it in school. When she questioned her father about the truth of his experiences, he finally relented and revealed to her the traumatic details of his life in Vilna during the Ghetto years and the horrifying experience of burning the bodies of the victims at Ponar.

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DR. RICHARD A. FREUND**Maurice Greenberg Professor of Jewish History and the Director of the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford**

Dr. Richard A. Freund is the endowed Maurice Greenberg Professor of Jewish History and the director of the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford. He has directed eight projects on behalf of the University of Hartford at the Sobibor extermination camp in Poland, Rhodes, Greece, Qumran, Cave of Letters, Yavne, and Bethsaida, Nazareth, Har Karkom (all in Israel) and Burgos, Spain, and now in Lithuania. He is the author or co-author of eight books, more than 100 scholarly articles and has appeared in documentaries with National Geographic, Discovery, the History Channel and NOVA. His two most recent books are *Digging Through the Bible* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008) and *Digging Through History* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

ABE GOL**Son of Schlomo Gol, one of the 12 survivors of the Ponar “Burning Brigade”**

Gol is the son of Schlomo Gol, one of the 12 survivors of the Ponar “Burning Brigade.” He was born in a displacement camp in Munich and was seven months old when his family moved to Israel. At 14, he emigrated with his parents to the United States. His mother was a resident of Vilna during the Holocaust, though she escaped with his half-sister before the liquidation of the ghetto. Gol’s father was not so lucky and was conscripted by the Germans to work as part of the Ponar “Burning Brigade,” responsible for cremating the bodies of the 100,00 victims buried at the site. He learned of his father’s story by translating his father’s written account of his experiences during the war into English.

KIRK WOLFINGER**Showrunner, Lone Wolf Media**

Kirk Wolfinger is an Emmy and Peabody Award-winning showrunner and filmmaker with decades of documentary and reality television experience. For the past 20 years, he has managed a boutique independent production company based in Portland, Maine. Overseeing a talented collection of filmmakers and production staff, the company produces between six and 10 hours of documentary, reality and dramatic programming each year for networks ranging from Animal Planet to History to PBS. In that same time, Wolfinger has won two Emmys along with seven other nominations as well as earning a Peabody award for his role as series producer on the critically acclaimed series *Moonshot* (*complete list of awards available on request).

Under Wolfinger’s hands-on guidance, Lone Wolf Media has gained a reputation for solid storytelling and an expertise in showrunning large-scale international expedition series. Wolfinger and his team are known for consistently delivering award-winning productions on time and on budget.

Most recently, Wolfinger developed and executive produced the hit docu series *Yankee Jungle* for Animal Planet, which recently wrapped production on a seven-episode order after the success of its three-hour pilot. Prior to that, he helped create and executive produce the hit series *Ice Cold Gold*, also for Animal Planet.

Concurrently, Wolfinger acted as showrunner on the anniversary event series *D-Day in HD* (2 x 120) for History and the limited series *Alien Deep* (2 of 5 x 60) for National Geographic Channel. Other recent series that saw success under his guidance include *Tougher in Alaska* (History), *Deep Sea Detectives* (History) and *Underwater Universe* (History).

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Wolfinger's forte is adventure and science programming. He has been working in the genre continuously since the 1990s and has produced more than 20 blue-chip specials on topics ranging from biological weapons to lost Nazi U-boats to climate change in Antarctica.

He is widely regarded as a leading expert in producing, planning and executing complicated expedition shoots to remote locations. Over the years he has led crews in Alaska, Antarctica, Greenland, Laos, China, Kazakhstan and the Judean desert. He also has extensive experience with underwater filmmaking including multiple films focusing on the *RMS Titanic*. He prides himself on his ability to direct large, multi-camera, multi-crew productions that translate into engaging, human-centered stories with wide audience appeal.

In the field, Kirk has a reputation for building trust in the toughest situations and is considered one of the industry's best interviewers (*examples on request*). He has worked with some of the most brilliant minds in science including Svante Pääbo, the leading geneticist at the Max Planck Institute, Dr. David Gallo of Wood's Hole Oceanographic Institute as well as working hand-in-hand with world-renowned explorers like Dr. Robert Ballard on countless adventures across the globe.

He has also found success on the big screen with the 2009 release of his 90-minute independent feature documentary about a high school football rivalry in Maine, *The Rivals*. The film earned him a Best Picture (Phoenix Film Festival,) Best Documentary (Los Angeles Real Film Festival,) Audience Award (Woods Hole Film Festival) and a Silver Chris (Columbus Film Festival), as well as a host of official entries in festivals across the country. The film was subsequently purchased and broadcast by the Smithsonian Channel and in flight on British Airways.

Even though Wolfinger considers himself a filmmaker first and foremost, he sees his real talent as a team builder and leader. There is perhaps no greater proof of this talent than the fact that all the productions, awards, revenues have been generated while operating from South Portland, Maine—far from the centers of documentary and reality filmmaking. His reputation makes him highly sought after for high profile projects, as well as a go-to choice for projects encountering artistic or financial troubles. When the going gets tough, Lone Wolf frequently gets the call.

Lone Wolf Media was founded in 1997 by Kirk and Lisa Wolfinger. Since then they have assembled a team of talented professionals who have a passion for filmmaking and a desire to live and work in a place that sustains that desire. No film Kirk has made gives him as much satisfaction as he takes in seeing the company he and Lisa helped to create flourish and prosper on its own terms.

ADDITIONAL ONSITE TALENT:

CHRIS SCHMIDT

Senior Producer, NOVA

Chris Schmidt is an award-winning showrunner, executive producer, writer, director and filmmaker with a focus on documentary and non-fiction television programming. He has traveled the world to produce and direct movies and television programs for PBS, Dreamworks Animation, The Discovery Channel, History Channel, National Geographic, Animal Planet and others.

Since joining NOVA in 2012 as senior producer, he developed, produced, wrote and executive produced dozens of hours of programming—as well as quick-turn around films, mini-series and digital content.

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Prior to joining the NOVA staff, Schmidt served as VP of special projects and VP of production for Powderhouse Productions, one of the largest factual production companies in the North East. While at Powderhouse, he developed and executive-produced the NOVA mini-series *Making Stuff, Making Stuff 2* and a two-hour NOVA special, *Hunting The Elements*—hosted by popular tech writer David Pogue. He also worked as showrunner or executive producer for more than 100 hours of factual programming. Some of his series include *Extreme Engineering*, *Build It Bigger*, *Mega Engineering* (Discovery Networks), *Sliced*, *The Works* (History Channel), *Dogs 101* (Animal Planet) and numerous limited series and one-offs for PBS, National Geographic Channel and others.

As an executive, Schmidt brings the sensibilities of an independent filmmaker of both documentary and narrative projects. In 1990 he wrote, directed and produced the first US-Soviet independent theatrical feature film, a comedy entitled *Banya*. A graduate of Northwestern University and University of Chicago, he currently lives outside of Boston.

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