

## Treatment of Gypsies During WWII Is Topic

By SHERYL SCHMECKPEPER

[living@norfolkdailynews.com](mailto:living@norfolkdailynews.com)

LINCOLN - Christine Harris doesn't remember World War II.

But she remembers the poverty and destruction left in its wake.

"We hosted a lot of charity events to help the Germans in distress after the war. My mother would give butter and coffee to the people . . . because the economy was in such poor shape," she said.

Harris, born in Norfolk to the late Marvin and Margaret (Moyer) Olson, spent much of her early life in Europe while her father served there in the military.

In fact, Harris was born while her father was serving in Europe. Marvin Olson landed on the beaches of Normandy just a month after the D-Day invasion, participated in the Battle of the Bulge and was part of Patton's 3rd Army that liberated Buchenwald, one of the many concentration camps scattered around Europe.

Harris eventually returned to Lincoln where she graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Prior to retiring in 2000, she worked as the human resources director for Harris Laboratories, a family-owned business located in Lincoln. That job allowed her to travel extensively in Europe and Asia.

Now, Harris has taken that knowledge of Europe, World War II and its aftermath and created a novel that winds a fictional story around actual events that took place during the war, specifically the interment and murder of thousands of Gypsies - now known as Roma - in concentration camps.

"The Gypsy In My Soul," chronicles the journey of a young woman from Nebraska to uncover the truth about the fate of her "Gypsy" grandmother who mysteriously disappeared from the home in Warsaw, Poland, that she shared with her husband and two sons.

"The more I learned about the gypsy situation, the more intrigued I became," Harris said.

In fact, around 500,000 Gypsies were killed during the war.

The process of taking an idea and turning it into a novel took Harris about four years. The first-time novelist traveled back to Europe to research the book and enlisted the aid of a professional editor who helped her put the finishing touches on her story.

"The research isn't difficult. Coming up with a storyline isn't difficult. The craft of writing is difficult," Harris said. "Anyone who wants to write needs to find a mentor . . . a professional who will read and critique."

The book is available at [www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com).