Upstander Activity

A Teaching & Learning Resource to follow the Courage to Care (Vic.) Upstander Workshop

courage to care VIC
An initiative of B'nai B'rith

couragetocare.org.au

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To access the linked documents and videos on the Courage to Care website, you will first need to login to couragetocare.org.au using the username and password provided to you on first registering for the Secondary Years Program. All Upstander Activity pack resources are available at this **link**.

Introduction

Inspired by stories of survival and bravery documented in the Courage to Care ***Remarkable Stories of Rescue During WWII*** anthologies, the following lesson sequence and resources are designed to drive students to make meaningful change in their communities and the wider world around them. The activity supports the Courage to Care Upstander Programs in empowering students to become aware of their own responsibilities in situations that they know to be wrong – to make the choice to be an Upstander rather than a bystander.

The following teaching and learning resources have been developed by teachers and for teachers, to scaffold a Year 8-12 class through a lesson sequence in their own classrooms after students have participated in the two-hour Courage to Care Upstander Program (SYP).

To create meaningful engagement with adolescent students, the program incorporates teaching and learning approaches underpinned by extensive research into the drivers of education in the middle high school years. Accordingly, the lesson sequence has been designed to generate motivation and passion through creativity, choice, problem-solving, collaboration with peers, and meaningful connections to real-world issues of relevance to participants.

The core idea within the lesson sequence is that students will undergo a problem-solving process derived from Design Thinking methodology to develop creative solutions to a real-world problem of their choosing. The lessons have been documented as a scalable and flexible sequence catering to multiple year levels, for a diverse range of learners, and with options provided for longer lesson timeframes if the school curriculum allows for a lengthier commitment.

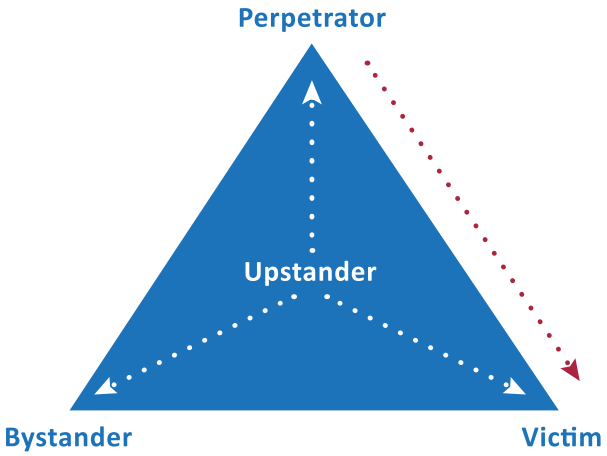
Recapping Courage to Care's Upstander Program

What do you recall from the Courage to Care Upstander workshop in which you participated with your students?

Perhaps it was the powerful documentary video explaining the Nazi ideology of racism and discrimination which led to the tragedy of the Holocaust and millions of innocent lives lost. If you wish to view the ***Lessons from the Holocaust*** video again or watch with your students, please access it at this **link**.

You may have spoken further with your students about the heartbreaking, personal testimony of survival through the Holocaust, thanks in no small part to the bravery of others who chose to act instead of standing by and doing nothing. Whilst Australia is, thankfully, a great distance in time and location from the horrors of the Holocaust, racism and discrimination still exist in our society today.

Your students may recall our discussion about the Upstander Triangle. This paradigm models the ways in which perpetrators, who commit harmful or illegal acts, are enabled by bystanders, who witness these acts and choose to do nothing to prevent such harm from occurring. Together, we concluded that choosing to remain a bystander is not a choice to be neutral, but a choice to allow harm to happen. The Upstander Triangle promotes the individual who, instead, chooses to act and help others rather than watching passively, while also showing bystanders that they can choose to make a difference.



Upstanders during the Holocaust had the courage to care. They made the choice to stand up rather than simply standing by, the choice not to allow bad things to happen to innocent people without attempting to intervene.

These are choices we all face today, as we bear witness to discrimination and hatred in our own communities and in our wider society, whether this be through stereotypical ideas, hurtful language, or acts of physical violence.

Hopefully, your students have since reflected further on ways in which they can take action and make choices when the right moment presents, to stand up rather than standing by, as illustrated in the ***What we do: Courage to Care Upstander Programs*** animation that your students may find enlightening.

Lesson Plan

Learning Outcomes and Success Criteria	For students to draw meaningful connections with stories of Holocaust survival and the courage of Upstanders by reflecting on contemporary issues impacting their own lives and communities and taking action to make positive change. Students will develop skills in creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and leadership. Students will develop their historical knowledge of World War II, analysis of historical sources and different perspectives, civics and citizenship, literacy, and numeracy.
Links to curriculum	**Victorian Curriculum Level 9/10: Australia at war (1914 – 1945): World War II** Significant events, turning points of World War II and the nature of warfare, including the Holocaust and use of the atomic bomb **(VCHHK147)** **Victorian Curriculum Level 7/8: Government and Democracy** Explain how citizens can participate in Australia's democracy, including the use of the electoral system, contact with their elected representatives, use of lobby groups, interest groups and direct action **(VCCCG020)** **Australian Curriculum: Critical and Creative Thinking (General Capabilities)** **Australian Curriculum: Ethical Understanding (General Capabilities)**
Potential literacy and numeracy demands	**Literacy demands include (but are not limited to):** **1.** the comprehension of written texts through listening, reading and viewing **2.** the composition of texts through speaking, writing and creating **Numeracy demands include (but are not limited to):** **1.** interpreting statistical information **2.** using spatial reasoning **Australian Curriculum: Literacy** **Australian Curriculum: Numeracy**
Teaching and Learning Preparation	Prearrange students into six groups depending on class dynamics **Link to recaps:** Documentary video: Lessons from the Holocaust Upstander Program animation What we do **Activity Material** Survivor/Upstander Story Worksheet to scaffold understanding Six packs of Post-it® notes, two or three pieces of butcher's paper per group and one marker pen per student For further rationale and examples of the *Point of View* and *How Might We* exercises in the *Define and Ideate* phases of the lesson, visit **IDEO.org** **Student Self-Reflection Questionnaires** Teacher Marking Rubric (make available to all students)

Teaching and Learning Plan

LESSON PHASE	TEACHING & LEARNING ACTIVITIES	DURATION
Orientation Activate prior knowledge and ensure students have a baseline understanding about the Holocaust and Nazi ideology.	• Teacher begins by briefly questioning student recall of the SYP Upstander Program via a THINK/PAIR/SHARE activity: ◦ Ask students to take a moment to recall an interesting or memorable aspect of the SYP. ◦ Discuss this with another student. ◦ Teacher calls on some of the pairs to share their conversation with the class. • Teacher can share a recap of key learnings in this **brief animation**. • The class may wish to view again the **powerful documentary** explaining the Nazi ideology of racism and discrimination which led to the tragedy of the Holocaust and millions of innocent lives lost, but also highlighted the roles of both bystanders and upstanders in such extreme situations. *Note: Teacher may wish to skip this component if students participated in the Upstander Program recently.*	20 mins
Inspiration Create empathy and inspiration through the stories of real Holocaust survivors and the Upstanders who contributed significantly to their survival.	The class is divided into six groups. Each group is given one of **six preselected stories of Holocaust survival and rescue** to read and discuss. The full **Individual Stories** can be found in the **Resources section on the Courage to Care website**. Within groups, divide responsibility for reading the stories so that each student reads only one or two pages and summarises their pages to the rest of their group. After reading and sharing as a group, to help scaffold and contextualise the information, students work together in their groups to answer questions on the **Upstander Stories Worksheet** in Resources. After students have completed the worksheet in groups, the teacher brings the class back together to ask for answers to questions 5-8, which focus on the role played by the Upstander. The teacher then draws on responses to questions 7-11 to extract potential parallels with the students' lives and the world we are now living in.	25 mins
Elaboration To take inspiration from the courage of the Upstanders in devising solutions to contemporary problems.	 Staying in the same 6 groups, students work through a teacher-scaffolded five-stage *Design Thinking* (see image) process to devise a workable solution to a real-world problem. This might be a problem that impacts them personally in the context of their family, neighbourhood, or school, or it may be some sort of injustice that they perceive elsewhere in the world. For example, improving the lives of those with disabilities, helping refugees adjust to life in Australia, overcoming isolation in aged care facilities, gender or racial inequality, homelessness.	15 mins
	1. EMPATHISE Following the teacher-led discussion around the role that Upstanders played in the stories reviewed in the previous activity, groups will consider problems in their communities or the broader world that they might try to address as Upstanders themselves. The teacher should not provide the students with suggested problems as it is integral to the authenticity of this activity that the students themselves arrive at issues that they intrinsically perceive to be a problem. • Each group is given a pack of Post-it® notes, two to three sheets of butcher's paper and markers. • Teacher instructs students to individually brainstorm a range of problems in the world today and note down each idea on a Post-it® note. These could be problems in their school, in their neighbourhood, in their community or the wider world. • They are given one minute to note down as many ideas as they can think of without editing or thinking too critically about these ideas. There are no bad ideas in the first stage of a brainstorm! • Students then work in their groups to stick each Post-it® note on the butcher's paper, grouping similar ideas. They still should not discard any ideas from the brainstorm. • Groups are then instructed to narrow down their brainstorm to the top two or three ideas. The teacher should float between the groups to ensure that all ideas are being heard and respected. • At the end of this phase, the teacher will call on each group to share one of their top ideas with the rest of the class.	15 mins
	2. DEFINE Each group then takes one of their two or three 'problems' and works to define this into a narrow, tangible idea that they might wish to solve. For example, instead of the problem 'ending bullying of kids in Australia', students might arrive at a still ambitious but more manageable 'preventing students at our school from suffering from bullying'. The reason for having two or three problems in their bank of ideas rather than only one is that this may be a difficult exercise and a second or third problem may be easier to address. If any group is having difficulty choosing between multiple problems, encourage a quick vote within the group to determine which one to start with. To help define a narrow problem, groups should complete the three fields within the following Point of View table. User: A student at our high school Need: To feel confident that they can attend school without feeling afraid of bullies Insight: One in three students at our high school has told a friend that they are afraid of someone else bullying them while at school. Groups fill out the template by defining who they're trying to help or designing their solution for (User), what are this user's most essential Needs (in the context of the problem), and synthesise the problem into an Insight, based on some fact or piece of data. See the table above for an illustration. As groups work through this exercise, teachers should move between the groups to ensure that students are able to narrow down their problem using this framework. This may be a challenging exercise for younger students and could require a higher degree of teacher involvement and demonstration. At the end of this phase, the teacher will call on each group to share a quick snapshot of their work with the rest of the class.	15 mins
	3. IDEATE Now that the groups have settled on a well-defined problem it is time to develop some creative solutions. Often, our tendency is to rush to arrive at interesting solutions that sound like a great fit for a given problem but do not really address the root cause or issue because we haven't spent long enough thinking about the problem itself. Albert Einstein once said "If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions". Design Thinking instead asks students to reframe the above Point of View into a new question before tackling solutions. We do this using "How Might We…" statements. The How Might We method is constructed in such a way that it opens the field for new ideas, admits that we do not currently know the answer, and encourages a collaborative approach to solving it. For example, if your Point of View is "Ensuring that students at our school feel confident that they won't suffer from bullying ", then the How Might We question may go as follows: • How Might We make our school feel safer for all students? • How Might We inspire potential bullies to not go down the path of becoming bullies? • How Might We mitigate the impact of bullying on students who may suffer from it? As a result of this reframing, we are already some way towards addressing the problem by focusing on one solvable aspect such as ensuring that there are safe spaces at the school, or addressing the root cause of bullying, that is, the bullies themselves. We can then tackle these problems one at a time with a more focused solution. • Groups should each develop two or three How Might We statements and write up on butcher's paper. • Groups agree to address one of their statements (perhaps with a quick vote) and each student then spends one minute brainstorming all possible ideas they can think of to address this problem by writing their ideas onto Post-it® notes. Once again, students don't yet edit or think too critically about these ideas. There are no bad ideas in the first stage of a brainstorm! • Students then work in their groups to stick each Post-it® note on the butcher's paper, grouping similar ideas. They still should not discard any ideas from the brainstorm. • Groups are then instructed to narrow down their brainstorm to one solution that feels achievable.	30 mins
	4. PROTOTYPE Groups prepare to present their solution in a five-minute presentation to the rest of the class. *Note: In a longer lesson sequence, groups may actually develop their solution over multiple lessons, but within the confines of a shorter sequence, students illustrate the thinking behind their ideas in a creative, engaging presentation.* In this communication, groups should clearly address: • The problem they are solving (remember the User, Need and Insight from the Design Thinking phase) • How they plan to solve the problem (what does the solution look like?) • What sort of results they expect to see, and when/how long • How their idea progressed through steps one to three of the *Design Thinking Process* Presentations should aim to be entertaining or engaging, even when communicating a serious issue. This is an opportunity to develop important communication skills, and holding the attention of an audience for five minutes is a valuable life skill. Students may choose to use a rich media format such as a poster, an animation, a video or radio advertisement. New, engaging and free online tools are constantly emerging but some options that the students may like to try include Powerpoint, Powtoon, Prezi, Easely, Animoto, Pic Collage, Voice Thread and Canva.	60 mins
Evaluation To allow students to share their ideas, learn from one another, and self-reflect on their process and ideas.	**5. TEST** In a longer lesson format this phase would allow for groups to actually test their solutions in the real world. In the shorter format, however, groups will test their ideas by presenting to the rest of the class and be voted upon by their peers. **Student Voting:** After hearing all six presentations, each student is given two votes to give to any other group. They can give both votes to one group, or one vote each to two different groups. In order to make an informed decision, students are given the following criteria to consider: • This group seemed to have chosen a real problem to address • Their idea seemed like it really might help solve the problem • I enjoyed the presentation from this group **Teacher Assessment:** Teachers can make this an assessable task against the **Marking Rubric** included in the Resources section. Students should be provided with this at the beginning of the task. **Student Self Reflection:** Student self-reflection is critical to learning. Thoughtful reflection via the **Student Self-reflection Questionnaire** provided in Resources is part of the Marking Rubric.	30 mins

Upstander Stories Worksheet

Working with your group, read the story of a Holocaust survivor and Upstander(s) together and answer the following questions.

1. What is the name of the survivor in this story?

2. What city/country were they living in when first impacted by the Holocaust?

3. How old were they when first impacted by the Holocaust?

4. What changed for them as a consequence of the Holocaust?

5. How was their life changed with the help of an Upstander?

6. What did the Upstander do to help?

7. If you could go back in time, would you help this person?

8. If so, what do you think you might do to help?

9. If not, what do you think would prevent you from helping and how might you overcome those barriers?

10. What about this story feels similar to the world today?

11. What are some words to describe how this story makes you feel?

RESOURCES

Marking Rubric

	EXCELLENT (4)	GOOD (3)	REASONABLE (2)	POOR (1)	INCOMPLETE (0)
DESIGN THINKING	Students illustrated clear evidence of undertaking the 5-Step *Design Thinking Process* thoroughly.	Students appeared to complete the 5-Step *Design Thinking Process* but did not fully reflect on it in their presentation.	It is not clear that the students completed all steps in the 5-step *Design Thinking Process.*	Students clearly did not complete the 5-Step *Design Thinking Process.*	Students clearly did not complete any aspect of the 5-Step *Design Thinking Process.*
COLLABORATION	Students showed clear evidence of working well together as a group, supporting one another throughout the process.	Students seemed to work well together as a group, as there is no evidence to the contrary.	Students mostly appeared to work well as a group, with one or two outliers.	It was clear that one or two students did all the work.	The group was clearly quite dysfunctional and did not deliver to the requirements.
CREATIVITY	The students produced a highly creative solution.	The students produced a reasonably creative solution.	The students produced a solution that was not particularly creative or original.	The students produced a solution that was completely unoriginal and looks to have been borrowed from an existing idea.	The students did not produce a solution at all.
DEPTH OF SOLUTION	Students made a deep connection between a real-world problem and a practical solution.	Students connected a real-world problem with a solution which was perhaps a little impractical.	Students connected a real-world problem to a completely impractical solution.	Students arrived at a solution that barely connected to their problem.	Students did not produce a solution at all.
PRESENTATION	Presentation clearly explained process and thinking and was highly engaging or entertaining.	Presentation somewhat explained process and thinking and was somewhat engaging/ entertaining.	Presentation described elements of process and thinking but was not engaging or entertaining.	Presentation did not describe either their process or thinking and was not engaging or entertaining.	Students did not present their ideas at all.
SELF ASSESSMENT	All students in the group provided thoughtful reflections on their experience.	All students in the group provided their reflections on their experience.	Most students in the group provided their reflections on their experience.	A few students in the group provided their reflections on their experience.	No students in the group provided their reflections on the experience.

Self-Reflection Questionnaire

Congratulations for completing the Design Thinking Challenge!

Reflect on your experiences during this activity: working with your group to arrive at a problem, finding a solution to this problem, and then presenting this to your peers. Circle yes or no where applicable and think about the reasons why you answered in this way.

This self-reflection questionnaire should be handed in to your teacher and will be included in your assessment.

Overall, I enjoyed this activity Yes / No

I enjoyed/did not enjoy it because _____

_____

I found it difficult coming up with a problem I wanted to solve Yes / No

I found it difficult coming up with solutions to a problem Yes / No

I feel like the solution my group came up with could work Yes / No

I did my very best to contribute to the group Yes / No

All members of my group worked well together Yes / No

I understand what it means to be an Upstander Yes / No

Being an Upstander means _____

_____

When next given a chance to be an Upstander I will try to take it because…

_____

_____

RESOURCES

Courage to Care Upstander Story Summaries

Philosopher Edmund Burke's statement is often quoted, that "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing". We are witnessing, even today, the wholesale destruction of civilian populations in parts of the world, so the battle is far from over. If we are to believe that change is possible, we must find an antidote.

Within the following stories, we meet survivors who battled extraordinary odds to tell their own stories, and we also meet good people who did something, not because they were saints or heroes but because common humanity demanded it.

Compiled and edited by renowned Melbourne editor, Julie Meadows, the **Courage to Care Anthologies** document 50 varied and compelling stories of survival and courage. Many of these survivors were children at the time, and now, more than 70 years later, they have chosen to share their stories to pay tribute to those who helped them survive.

To follow are short summaries of six of these incredible stories. Visit the **Resources section of the Courage to Care website** to find summaries of many more incredible stories of survival and brave acts of the Upstanders who saved them. To read the stories in full you can purchase the books.

RESOURCES

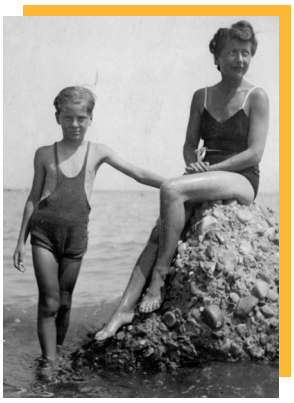
Courage to Care Upstander Story Summaries

The Kindness of Strangers, by Anne Gouttman (Poland)

Anne Gouttman often wonders how one could possibly hide even a small child in a rucksack for any meaningful period of time. Yet this was Anne's own story of survival at the age of three, when she was successfully smuggled out of the Podgorze ghetto to safety. Her new identity saw her passing successfully as a Catholic, and she loved her foster mother. After experiencing the trauma and horrors of war she struggled to readjust to life, and to the shock of learning when she was nine years old that she was actually Jewish.

*Read the full story **here***

Hedy's Story, by Vivian Weldon (Austria)



Hedy, a middle-class Jewish girl from Vienna, went on a working holiday to Italy where she met and married a young Catholic. Their son, Gabriel, was born in 1939. By 1943, Jews were being deported and a failed escape led to the family's capture. Imprisoned, Hedy took an extraordinary decision, claiming her 4-year-old son was seriously ill. She whispered to a doctor to save her child and he claimed that the boy had appendicitis. At the nearby hospital his normal appendix had to be removed. Resistance fighters subsequently smuggled him out of the hospital in a knapsack, moved him from house to house to the safe haven of his grandparents in the mountains where he survived till the end of the war. Hedy was transported to Auschwitz but also survived and the family were reunited after the war.

*Read the full story **here***

RESOURCES

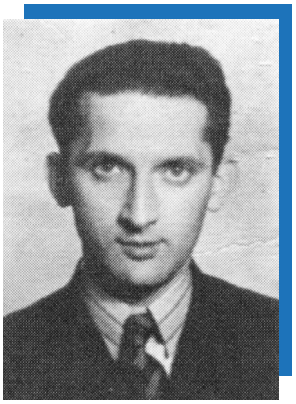
Courage to Care Upstander Story Summaries

Six Moves, by Floris Kalman (Belgium)

When Floris Kalman was eight years old she went into hiding for two and a half years, living in six different places over this period. She was frightened and afraid and, 50 years later, the trauma remains. She recognises that her family was lucky to have survived when so many others did not. She is also astounded by the decision made by her parents to separate from the children to give each of them a chance at survival. The alternate consequences were too terrifying to contemplate.

*Read the full story **here***

My Guardian Angels, by Harry Philips (Netherlands)



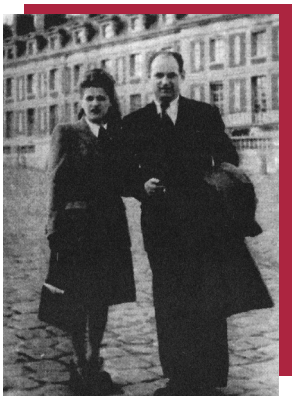
Harry Philips and his brothers did well to escape an October 1942 raid that would have transported them to a Nazi labour camp. Thanks to a warning from a non-Jewish friend, Harry awoke his brothers, they climbed the back fence, ran through a neighbouring property and fled their village. After laying low for a few weeks at a farm owned by a family friend, they continued to run from one hiding place to another. While many courageous strangers helped them along the way despite the inherent danger, Harry was the only survivor of his whole family.

*Read the full story **here***

RESOURCES

Courage to Care Upstander Story Summaries

Love, The Conqueror, by Helen Leperere (Poland)



For a story beleaguered by horror, cruelty and extreme hardship, this tale is unexpectedly also a love story. A young Jewish girl in a slave labour camp, so traumatised and shocked by her separation from her family. She exchanged her clean clothing for lifesaving food, but it was not until she met Pola that she really started to learn how to survive. A lifelong friendship had begun, and the interests of some handsome Allied prisoners of war kept their spirits intact.

*Read the full story **here***

As We Descended to Babi Yar, by Elena Gorodetski (Ukraine)

Elena was the daughter of a Polish father and a Jewish mother. At the time of the German invasion of Kiev her father was away working. In September 1941 all the Jews were ordered to assemble and walk to the nearby ravine, Babi Yar, with the threat of being shot if they failed to comply. As Elena and her family were walking there a neighbour warned them that “there were machine guns in action all night down there!” so they slipped away and returned home. Naturally danger still awaited them and their landlord created a hiding place under their house where they survived with his help till the war ended. Over 100,000 Jews and others were massacred at Babi Yar.

*Read the full story **here***

These are edited excerpts from **Courage to Care Vol 1: 28 Remarkable Stories of Rescue During World War II** and **Courage to Care Vol 2: 22 Further Remarkable Stories of Rescue During World War II.**

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To read the stories in full, you can find details of the Courage to Care anthologies on the **Courage to Care website**.

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.
— George Santayana

About Courage to Care

Inspired by extraordinary acts of courage amid the horrors of the Holocaust, Courage to Care believes that ordinary people have the power to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Our Upstander Programs motivate people to make a real difference in their community by standing up and taking action in order to create real change.

Delivered by our team of skilled and dedicated volunteers and featuring inspiring testimonies from Holocaust survivors, our Upstander Programs promote the acceptance of diversity with the aim of transforming bystander behaviour into Upstander action in our communities.

Upstander Programs encourage participants to become aware of their potential to make a positive difference, offering practical tools for standing up to racism, bullying and prejudice, whether in the schoolyard, workplace, or the broader community.

Courage to Care delivers **Upstander Programs** free of charge to secondary and primary schools across Victoria via the **Secondary Years Program (SYP)** and **Middle Years Program (MYP)**. These school programs are aligned to the Victorian Curriculum and run for just under two hours via incursions, at exhibitions delivered to a range of Victorian regional areas, and remotely to classrooms via the web when face to face sessions are not practicable.

Upstander Programs are also offered to community groups, workplaces, and as professional development programs for primary and secondary school teachers.

Founded in 1992, Courage to Care is a not-for-profit organisation that has delivered Upstander Programs to more than 142,000 students over this period.

For further information and resources visit **Courage to Care website**

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Upstander Workshop. ©
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Courage to Care Anthology Summaries

Upstander Activity

A Teaching & Learning Resource to follow the Courage to Care (Vic.) Upstander Workshop

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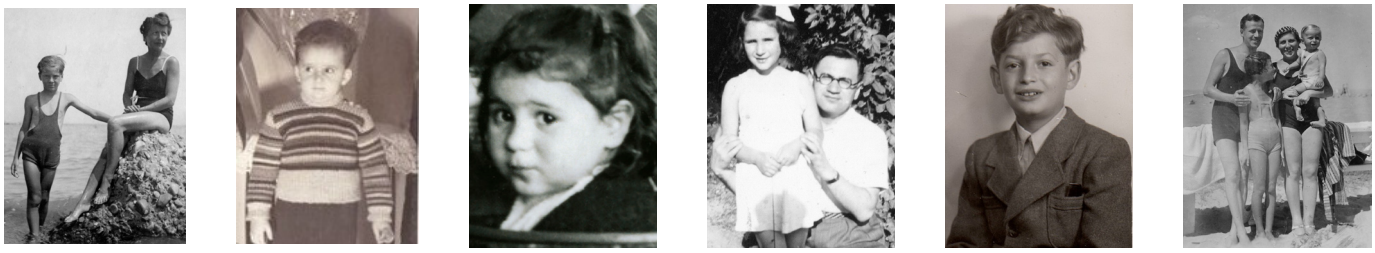
An initiative of B'nai B'rith

In the brutal years of the Nazi occupation during the Second World War, the Jews of Europe were particularly singled out for annihilation. Anyone trying to help them was likely to suffer the same fate. Yet there were non-Jews who risked their lives and the lives of their families to provide assistance. The motivations for their actions were various, but as often as not, at the core was a sense of common humanity.

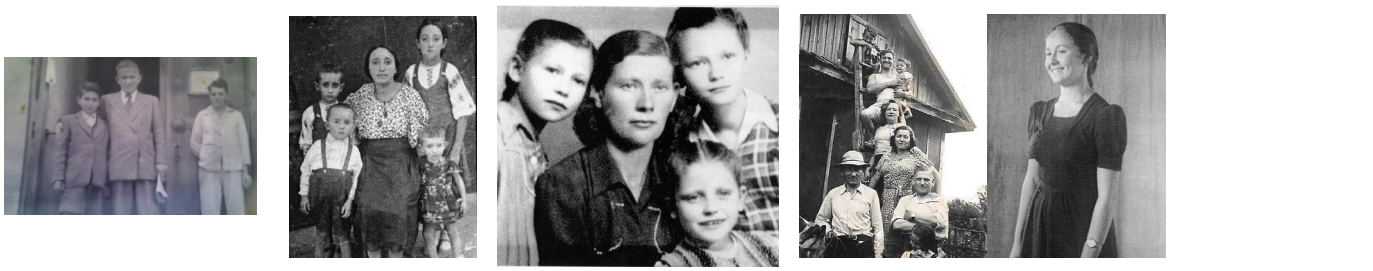
Compiled and edited by renowned Melbourne editor of memoir, Julie Meadows, the Courage to Care Anthologies document 50 varied and compelling stories of survival and courage. Many of these survivors were children at the time, and now, more than 70 years later, they have chosen to share their stories to pay tribute to those who helped them survive.

To follow are short summaries of each of these incredible stories. To read the stories in full, you can find details of the Courage to Care anthologies on the **Courage to Care website**.

Volume 1



MY SECOND MOTHER

By Gilah Leder
Netherlands (Holland)

Gilah Leder was born to a young Jewish Dutch couple shortly after the Nazis invaded the Netherlands in 1941. Gilah's parents knew they were in danger and feared for their baby daughter. Her mother soon came to the heart-breaking realisation that in order to save her baby she had to hide Gilah under the protection of another family. Gilah's story of survival saw her placed on a farm with a large, loving Catholic family, Upstanders who kept her safe until the end of the war.

MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES

By Jack Leder
Austria and Belgium

His surname translates to 'Leather' in German, so it was appropriate that Jack Leder's family had a successful leather business in Vienna that offered them a pleasant middle-class life for many years. After the Nazis invaded Austria and the family suffered through months of harassment, they fled Vienna hoping to make it to safety in England. On their journey through Belgium they were helped by upstanding strangers who hid them, provided information or offered protection in many forms.

HANECZKA

By Anne Irons
Poland

Born one year after World War II had begun, Anne Irons never knew her father, who had been conscripted into the Polish army and never returned. After escaping the Grodno Ghetto Anne was sent to safety, to be fostered by a childless farming couple while her mother struggled to stay alive under a forged identity. After the war had ended, Anne's mother sought her daughter and when they were eventually reunited she found a child who did not remember her and just wanted to continue living with her loving foster family.

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

By Anne Gouttman

Poland

Anne Gouttman often wonders how one could possibly hide even a small child in a rucksack for any meaningful period of time. Yet this was Anne's own story of survival at the age of three, when she was successfully smuggled out of the Podgorze ghetto to safety. Her new identity saw her passing successfully as a Catholic, and she loved her foster mother and forgot her former life. When her mother returned after the war, Anne struggled to readjust, especially on learning at nine years old that she was Jewish.

THE CHAMPIONS OF MY CHILDHOOD

By Naomi Goldrei

Poland

Naomi Goldrei shared a birthday with Adolf Hitler, and the irony of this coincidence was not lost on her family. Naomi's family were warned to escape Sosnowiec and move to the countryside in order to be as inconspicuous as possible. Nevertheless, she and her grandmother ended up in the ghetto of their town. After a few days her nanny turned up, claiming the child as her own and taking her to a farm where she lived throughout the war. This is a story of fierce love between a small girl and an older couple and, in spite of the war, an idyllic though dangerous time for them all.

JUST THINK IT NEVER HAPPENED

By Paulette Goldberg

France

Paulette and her older sister, aged three and nine, with forged identity papers provided by the Jewish Underground, were sent from farm to farm across France. This is a story of hardship and constant difficulty until they found the last person who gave them all the love and shelter they craved until the war ended.

HEDY'S STORY

By Vivian Weldon

Austria

Hedy, a middle-class Jewish girl from Vienna, went on a working holiday to Italy where she met and married a young Catholic. Their son, Gabriel, was born in 1939. By 1943 Jews were being deported and a failed escape led to the family's capture. Imprisoned, Hedy took an extraordinary decision, claiming her 4-year-old son was seriously ill. She whispered to a doctor to save her child and he claimed that the boy had appendicitis. At the nearby hospital his normal appendix had to be removed. Resistance fighters subsequently smuggled him out of the hospital in a knapsack, moved him from house to house to the safe haven of his grandparents in the mountains where he survived till the end of the war. Hedy was transported to Auschwitz but also survived and the family were reunited after the war.

MEMORIES MAKE US WHO WE ARE

By Peter Gaspar

Czechoslovakia

Born in Bratislava into a prosperous, well-regarded Jewish family, Peter Gaspar spoke three languages as a child. When he was aged 2, the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia and Peter's family experienced the harassment and persecution that had already befallen the Jews of Germany and Austria. The family did all they could to escape the Nazis, even converting to Christianity, and ultimately relying on the courage of Upstanders for their survival. When Peter fell ill during the depths of winter, it became too hard, too cold and too scary; they gave up and handed themselves over to local police.

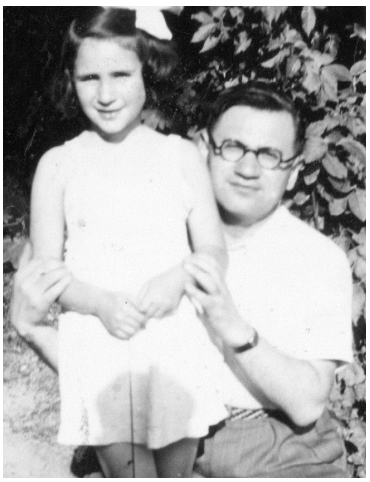
MAY THEIR MEMORY BE A BLESSING

By Danielle Charak
Belgium

Danielle Charak knew not to tell anyone that she was Jewish but she was too young to understand the terrifying reasons why. When the Nazis marched into Belgium in 1940, Danielle's parents chose to defy the Nazi edict for all Jews to wear the yellow star. The family hid, but precariously, so they arranged for their two daughters to be cared for by non-Jews. Danielle was lucky to be taken in by a famous musicologist and his family. Although she was a dark-haired child living in this family of fair people, her host's reputation and seeming geniality to the Nazis who visited kept her safe until the war's end

SIX MOVES

By Floris Kalman
Belgium



Floris Kalman was eight years old when she went into hiding for two and a half years, living in six different places over this period. She was frightened, confused and miserable and, fifty years later, the trauma remains. She recognises that her family was lucky to have survived when so many others did not. She is also astounded by the decisions made by her parents to separate from the children to give each of them a chance at survival. The alternate consequences are too terrifying to contemplate.

THE BOY WITH THE BROWN EYES

By Harry Better
Poland

Harry Better was just five years old when WWII began. As the Germans invaded Poland the family split up, with his father fleeing to Russia and Harry with his siblings and mother placed in the ghetto. She was able to smuggle Harry out and he was then hidden by local farmers, a Catholic couple who cared well for him, although he had to pretend he was mute. After the war they sent him to a Jewish orphanage hoping that family might find him, though, they made it clear that if he remained unclaimed they would be happy to adopt him. These saviours became his and his family's trusted friends for life.

A YOUNG BOY IN BUDAPEST

By Peter Barta

Hungary

Peter Barta was born in Budapest in 1936 in a small apartment in a large block of flats amicably co-inhabited by many Jews and their Christian neighbours. Even before the Nazis arrived in Budapest, however, members of the fascist Hungarian group the Arrow Cross were murdering Jews, and trouble loomed. Peter's family knew that things were getting dangerous and all choices were risky, either to stay or to try and leave. Thanks to a kind and brave neighbour, Peter lives to tell a remarkable tale of struggle and survival.

SAVED TWICE – PARIS AND MELBOURNE

By Jacqueline Shadur

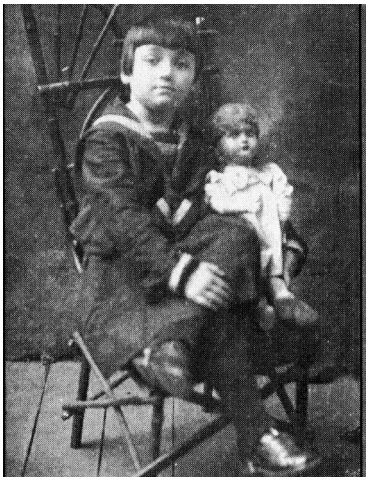
France

Jacqueline was seven years old in 1940 when the Germans invaded Paris, where she lived with her eleven-year-old sister and mother. The Germans began to round up all the Jews and one day her mother was taken away in a raid, never again to be seen by Jacqueline. Despite knowing the punishment awaiting anyone found harbouring a Jewish child, her compassionate and courageous neighbours bravely took the sisters in after their mother's disappearance, and protected them from the atrocities that tragically befell the rest of their family.

MAY A PEACEFUL SUN SHINE ON OUR GRANDCHILDREN

By Ida Shvarts

Ukraine



Ida was an only child, living with her hard-working parents, grandmother, aunt and cousin in a town on the banks of the Dniester River. Life was already tough and Ida was a sickly child. On a hot summer's day in June 1941, everything suddenly collapsed when the Nazis attacked. Ida's family were transported into a Jewish ghetto and survived on the generosity of strangers who smuggled food to them. After being saved from going to Pechora concentration camp, the family hid in a damp cellar until they were freed by the Red Army in 1944.

TWO CHILDREN ON A TRAIN

By Sonia Kempler
Germany and Belgium

Nine-year-old Sonia Kempler sat huddled and terrified with her family in their Leipzig apartment as the commotion and destruction of Krystallnacht raged on the streets outside. That same nine-year old was soon forced to bravely navigate a long, lonely and dangerous train journey to survival, responsible also for the safety of her baby brother as they escaped to Antwerp without the necessary papers. Her education cut short, danger around every corner, Sonia lived to tell this remarkable tale thanks to the kindness of some Belgian Upstanders.

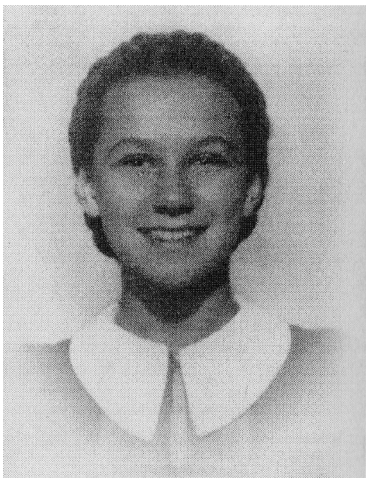
MY GUARDIAN ANGELS

By Harry Philips
Netherlands (Holland)

Harry Philips and his brothers did well to escape a raid in October 1942 that would have transported them to a Nazi labour camp. Thanks to a warning from a non-Jewish friend, Harry awoke his brothers, they climbed the back fence, ran through a neighbouring property and fled their village. After laying low for a few weeks at a farm owned by a family friend, they continued to run from one hiding place to another. While many courageous strangers helped them along the way despite the inherent danger, Harry was the only survivor of his whole family.

THE GIRL WHO MADE THE HORSES SMILE

By Maria Censor
Poland



Maria Censor was a Jewish girl born to a wealthy family who lost almost everything and everyone that she loved by the age of fourteen. She survived the five long years of brutal Nazi occupation of Poland through a combination of luck, sharp intelligence and a remarkable capacity to adapt to whatever circumstances she found herself in. Some of the people around her knew she was Jewish, some did not, and others chose not to know.

THE PIGEON COOP

By Charlie Teperman
Poland

When the Germans began rounding up women and children, Rachel Teperman took her young son Charlie to the Resistance for them to hide him away from danger. Later, her husband organised with the Resistance for her to travel to the village he was hiding in. After hearing rumours that Germany was about to begin bombing raids in the area, they found themselves hiding in a pigeon coop for the next two years, holding on to the hope that they would eventually reunite with their son.

MORE THAN ONE LIFE

By Rachel Amit
Czechoslovakia

Rachel Amit describes her early life in an observant Jewish home as tranquil, carefree and loving. Neighbouring Jews and Christians had gotten along in a cordial and peaceful manner. In 1939, everything changed dramatically. Home was no longer safe and Rachel, aged eleven, could no longer go to school. After hiding in a bunker and later reuniting with her family in a ghetto, Rachel's family was sent to Auschwitz and was again separated. Remarkably, she survived Auschwitz, being granted an unlikely, privileged role as a maid to a camp guard.

THE RIFKA NORMAN STORY

By Rae Mandelbaum
Lithuania

When the Germans attacked Russia in 1941, Rifka Norman's (Rae Mandlebaum) parents knew that they needed to pack their things and escape with their children. But when it came time to leave, Rifka's legs seized up in what she describes as an 'hysterical paralysis'. So Rifka and her parents stayed behind while her older sister, Genia, escaped. Rifka ended up alone in a series of back-breaking labour camps. She was moved through a number of different camps ending up in Bergen Belsen, barely surviving till liberation.

LOVE, THE CONQUEROR

By Helen Leperere
Poland

For a story beleaguered by horror, cruelty and extreme hardship, this tale is unexpectedly also a love story of a young Jewish girl in a slave labour camp, traumatised and shocked by her separation from her family. She exchanged her clean clothing for lifesaving food, but it was not until she met Pola that she really started to learn how to survive. A lifelong friendship had begun, and the interest of some handsome Allied prisoners of war kept their spirits intact.

MEISTER NOAK, A DECENT MAN IN HELL

By Moshe Robin
Poland

Moshe Robin was the eldest of ten children, living a reasonably prosperous life with his family in Sosnowiec. A good student, he was excited to have been accepted into a commercial high school in September 1939. Those plans crumbled when the Gestapo set up a special department to 'look after' the Jews in their town. Despite horrific treatment, Moshe and his brother worked in a German factory which protected them from deportation for a while. Before long, he suffered a similar fate to many Polish Jews, ending up at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, yet the decency of one man helped Moshe survive.

SAVED BY A MIRACLE

By Hannah Sweetman
Germany

Imagine that your parents needed to travel to a new country just before you were born just so that you would be entitled to the alternate passport which might save your life. Hannah Sweetman and her family narrowly escaped the clutches of Hitler, thanks in no small part to the cunning and bravery of a British MI6 spy based in Berlin, who ended up performing this 'miracle' for ten thousand Jews at great personal risk and danger.

AN UNLIKELY SAINT

By Henry Ekert
Poland

Henry Ekert was born in 1936 in a Polish town whose population was one-quarter Jewish. After the Germans broke their non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union and invaded Poland, Henry and his parents were smuggled out of their ghetto with false papers. Following a series of unfortunate events, the family were saved by a complete stranger who came to realise that 'Jews were not alien creatures'. This story combines the horrors of the Holocaust with the strength and courage of one man.

FOUR CHILDREN AND THEIR MOTHER

By Galina Baboukh
Ukraine

Despite the horrors and trauma that Galina Baboukh has withstood, she resolves that 'the world is not without kind people'. Galina and her family had many kind and generous people to thank for their survival as they travelled many miles through Kazakhstan to escape the Germans. After the Nazis were defeated in Moscow the family was able to locate other surviving relatives and travel to Uzbekistan, courtesy of their own courage, a certain amount of luck, and the brave Upstanders who helped them along the way.

THE YOUNG GERMAN SOLDIER

By Rosa Oshlack
Romania

Rosa Oshlack recalls her happy early years with a family who earned a decent living, residing in the Jewish quarter of their Romanian town surrounded by family and friends. The Nazi invasion saw the confiscation of Jewish property, all Jews were forced to wear the yellow star, and Rosa was expelled from school simply for being Jewish. Fortunately, Rosa's family found refuge with some other Jewish families in the home of a non-Jewish communist. Life was still very difficult but they were able to survive through luck, the devotion of their mother and the kindness of some upstanding strangers.

THE CONCIERGE, THE HERMIT AND THE BUTCHER'S WIFE

By Paul Grinwald

France

When the Germans marched into Paris life changed dramatically for Paul Grinwald and his family. Among the severe acts of violence and discrimination, Paul, an avid reader, recalls feeling particularly aggrieved by not being allowed to enter his local library because he was Jewish. To escape the Nazi raiders, Paul and his family were hidden in a cellar by their concierge, avoiding the round-up in Paris in 1942. Subsequently, having got through to Vichy, France with the unlikely help of a hermit, they were still in danger. Further help came from a butcher's wife and, as result of the bravery of each of these and other Upstanders, Paul's immediate family all survived while many of his extended family did not.

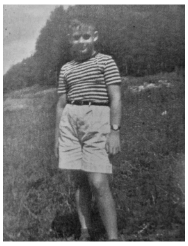
A GHETTO IN THE CUPBOARD

By Ekaterina Danova

Crimea

In 1941 when the German army entered the Crimean town in which Ekaterina lived, Jews were shot dead on the spot if they appeared in public without wearing the compulsory yellow star. Ekaterina recounts being merely four steps from her death in a mass grave when her mother pushed her into the crowd. A woman grabbed Ekaterina and smuggled her quickly into a house. Despite the clear dangers to anyone seen to be hiding or helping a Jew, this woman kept Ekaterina hidden in a cupboard for the next two and a half years. With her whole family having perished she became a cherished member of the family who had saved her.

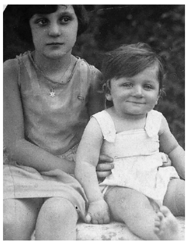
Volume 2















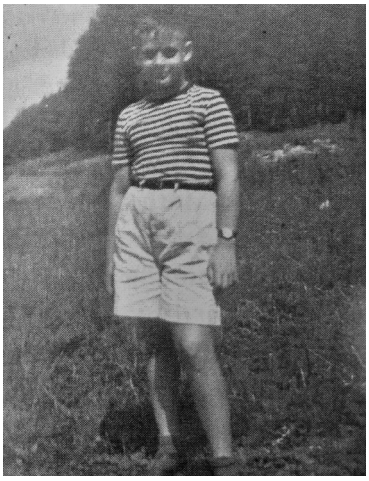







MEMORIES FROM A FOREIGN COUNTRY

By Danny Kahan
Poland



Danny Kahan's first clear memory is of his father being taken away to Belzec. He never returned. It was 1940 in Krakow, Poland when four-year-old Danny's mother, a famous translator of books from Polish to other languages, was able to give Danny's care over to two nieces of a renowned poetess. For a number of years he was hidden in the roof space of their elegant apartment where he remained during daylight hours, able to come down in the evenings to be fed and comforted. When life became more dangerous he was reunited with his mother in the countryside. The building in which they were hiding was bombed but over many days they were able to dig themselves out. Emerging half dead, they found that the liberating Russians had arrived.

I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD WHEN I FOUND MY MOTHER

By Freda Wald
Poland

Freda's mother, knowing that her three-year-old daughter would otherwise not survive, left her in the care of a poor, ignorant Catholic mother and her two children. They were not kind and she was forced to leave the flat at dawn to wander the streets or else was locked in a cupboard for fear of her being discovered. She was beaten and lived in squalor with rats, filth and mouldy food. Despite their cruelty they never betrayed her and she always remembered that they had offered her the gift of life. After the war this eight-year-old girl found her mother who had been in labour camps and was reunited.

TELL IT TO THE SQUIRRELS

By Judy Kolt
Poland

Life changed dramatically for Judy Kolt when the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939. Her family owned a timber mill in Iska, 30 kilometres from Lodz, and her childhood memories were magical but short-lived. Judy's miraculous story of survival recounts the immense bravery of some inspiring Upstanders: a courageous peasant woman, an extraordinary nun, and her older sister Tosia, all put their own lives at great risk so that Judy was able to survive the horrors of the war.

A MULTIPLICITY OF LIVES

By Yola Klempfner
Poland

Yola's family moved from her birthplace Lodz to Warsaw in October 1940 after the Germans marched into Poland. However, their relocation to the Warsaw Ghetto posed deadly new threats; starvation and disease were commonplace and Yola's father soon contracted typhus. To ensure Yola's safety, her parents faced the heartbreaking decision to separate from their children. This is an incredible story of bravery and survival, as Yola confronted many dangerous obstacles along her desperate journey.

THE DEATH OF A SHTETL

By George Oshlack
Poland

George Oshlack was born in the small Polish village of Zelechow, a shtetl, with a total Jewish population of 6,000. Life in the quiet village changed dramatically in September 1939 when the Nazis invaded, maliciously shooting Jews, burning synagogues and confiscating Jewish properties. 14-year-old George and his older brother leapt from a moving train, destined for Auschwitz, escaping into the forest. They were hidden by a loving Polish couple for a few weeks till they recovered but could not stay without endangering others. After many months enduring the freezing winter and near starvation, they were able to join the Jewish partisans. George was given a gun at the age of 16 thus becoming a fully-fledged member of this fearless group of Resistance fighters.

AS SHADOWS THAT FLICKER BENEATH A DARKENING SKY

By Helen Gelb
Poland

Born in 1937, Helen has only two childhood memories. The first is her hiding in a field with her mother; the other is bearing witness to uniformed men raiding her home as she plays on the balcony. Helen recalls no other children in her life, no laughter, and a sense of always being alone. Helen's amazing story takes a remarkable twist as a German soldier falls in love with her mother with unexpected, lifesaving consequences.

UNSUNG HEROES: OTTO GORSCH, MY MOTHER AND MANY OTHERS

By Nina Hurwitz

Poland

Nina Hurwitz has the bravery of a righteous, high-ranking German officer to thank for her survival from the deathly perils of the Second World War. After Nina's mother sold her most precious watch in exchange for false documents to change their names, she taught her daughter to read and write in Polish to help them blend in as much as possible. All the while, Nina and her mother discreetly held on to their Jewish heritage and traditions, as the courage of a most unlikely Upstander enabled their ultimate survival.

OF LOVE AND DUTY: FELICITY GNIESLAW'S STORY OF RESCUE

By Denise Sadique

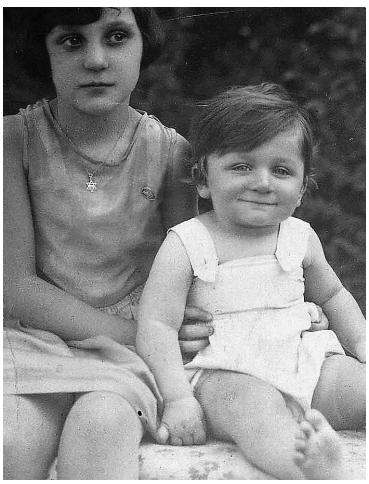
Poland

Felicity Gnieslaw was the only child of a Jewish doctor and his wife in Lvov. When the ghetto was created Felicity's parents entrusted her to a friend – a single Polish woman, Helena, who lived with her elderly mother. However, neighbours could have easily queried the appearance of this young child. Accordingly, she was kept alone in the dark, gloomy basement during daylight hours for more than two years. When life became even more threatening Helena took her across Poland to an orphanage in Krakow, promising to return when the war was over. She returned and gave Felicity all the care and attention she needed, as her parents had perished. Despite having relatives abroad, Felicity chose to remain in Poland with Helena until her death, coming to Australia in her early 20s.

RECITING POETRY IN AUSCHWITZ

By Marianne Schwarz

Austria



Viennese Marianne Schwarz was twenty when she and her family were deported to Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia in September 1942. There she worked unremittingly as a nurse, in a tiny attic without beds or medicine for her patients. When she and her family were deported to Auschwitz and all hope of survival appeared lost, Marianne's self-belief persisted throughout, maintaining her identity and dignity through friendship and a love of poetry.

A MIRACULOUS ACT OF KINDNESS – AUSTRALIA 1938

By Walter Glaser

Austria

Walter was the only child of a Viennese couple. His father was a keen angler and the only Jewish member of the Austrian Fishing Club. After the Anschlüss a fellow member, who in fact was a Nazi, warned him that his name was listed for arrest. He recalled a distant relative, Uncle Borer, whom he believed had migrated to Australia and wrote to a number of people with that name for help. One such letter was received by the owner of the Borer and White Ant Extermination Company. By this coincidence their plight came to the attention of a young M.P., Harold Holt, whose intervention saved the lives of this family.

THE QUAKERS, HER LADYSHIP AND THE PROFESSOR

By Sue Goldzweig

Austria

Born in 1929, Sue Goldzweig enjoyed a happy childhood until Vienna was invaded by the Nazis. Aged nine and alone, she bravely navigated a train journey to the Hague, followed by a ferry to Dover. Sue then went to elderly relatives in London but was lonely and homesick. As a result of her own initiative, she was moved to a Quaker family and subsequently came to the attention of a titled lady who, fascinated by this lively migrant child, assumed her care. After the war the question arose of her being adopted but Sue chose to return to her Jewish family.

FROM AUSTRIA TO AUSTRALIA

By George Deutsch

France

George's family lived in Vienna and led a secular Jewish life but the Nazis did not discriminate by levels of religious observance. After the Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938, his parents were able to go to France. George was born in 1942 and the family was hidden under the very noses of the Nazis. Their story of survival involves a failed attempt in winter to cross into Switzerland and sheltering with a generous family in a mountain village. Their lives were thus saved by a number of French Upstanders.

THREE CHILDREN AND A FARM CLOSE TO LE MANS

By Regina Lipshut

France

In 1942, after Germany had invaded France, Regina Lipshut's father was sent to Auschwitz where tragically he died a short time later. Regina's mother made the heart-breaking decision to give up her three children so that they could survive. She too became a victim of the gas chambers less than a year after her husband had died. Regina, aged 12 months, and her older siblings were protected and cared for by a French farmer and his family with three children of their own. Regina remembers this time as one where she was well cared for and happy.

THE GOOD PEOPLE OF MALFAITE

By Sonia Kempler

France

In 1940, Sonia Kempler's father put his children on a train to La Panne, Belgium, where he had planned to meet them that same afternoon. What followed is an incredible story of the immense bravery and courage shown by Sonia, aged nine, and her younger brother Max. The train was diverted because of bombing and chugged along without stopping for days and nights. The two children finally ended up in the south of France where, with the help of some locals, Sonia managed to care for her brother and herself. Nine months later a schoolmaster recognised that they were alone, without parents. Given options to stay, Sonia chose to re-join her parents in Belgium. The reunion with their parents was spectacular, as by then they could no longer believe that their children were alive.

MY BRAVE SISTER EDIT

By Vera Klein
Czechoslovakia

Vera was born in Czechoslovakia, the second daughter in the Klein family. After the 1938 Nuremberg Laws were declared, her father's business ceased to exist overnight. In April 1940, Vera was deported with her family to Auschwitz where her father and brother were gassed. Vera's mother and sisters considered themselves fortunate to end up in slave labour camps for the remainder of the war. They survived arduous and dangerous times but support for each other helped them through until the end of the war.

A ROAD NOT TAKEN

By Mary Berger, Sandra Morgan and Dia Wolfe
Czechoslovakia

Born in 1916, Anna Novotna grew up in a Catholic family of landed gentry. In 1935 Anna married Alojs Faybik and had three daughters. The Faybiks were best friends with their Jewish neighbours, Alex and Roza Haas, who owned a children's clothing factory. When Jewish businesses were confiscated by the Nazis the family asked the Faybiks to take over their business to maintain it for them. Fate turned their world upside down when Anna divorced Alojs. After the war, Anna converted to Judaism and married the widowed Alex Haas.

THE SHOES OF THE FOUNDLING

By Mink Van Rijsdijk
Netherlands (Holland)

It was 1942 in Amsterdam and the parents of Anne Van Deurse hid a Jewish couple from would-be Nazi captors. This story describes a series of events that, more than forty years later, miraculously led to the children of these two couples finding each other. The children managed to fill in many missing and intriguing gaps in their separate but intertwining lives and a warm friendship grew from that initial meeting.

MY FRIEND ZBYCHU

By Isi Charak
Ukraine

The youngest of four children, Isi Charak was born into a strict orthodox Jewish family and mostly left to his own devices. When the Germans marched into his hometown of Sokal in 1942, harsh restrictions were imposed on the Jews. Starving, Isi dug up potatoes in a nearby field and was caught by the peasant owner, who compassionately gave him a full bag to take with him. Rare acts of kindness helped save his life until he escaped his home town and spent a year on the run. Read this thrilling story to see where Isi finally ended up.

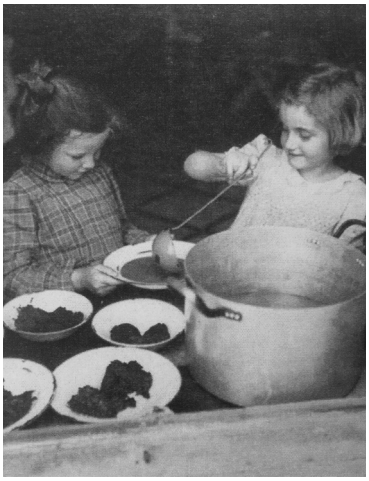
AS WE DESCENDED TO BABI YAR

By Elena Gorodetski
Ukraine

Elena was the daughter of a Polish father and a Jewish mother. At the time of the German invasion of Kiev, her father was away working. In September 1941 all the Jews were ordered to assemble and walk to the nearby ravine, Babi Yar, with the threat of being shot if they failed to comply. As the family walked, a neighbour warned them that 'machine guns were in action all night down there!', so they slipped away and returned home. Naturally, danger still awaited them and their landlord created a hiding place under their house where they survived with his help until the war ended. More than 100,000 people, the majority Jewish, were massacred at Babi Yar.

THE STORY OF TWO 'TEHERAN' CHILDREN

By Ziva Leiblich
Ukraine



Ziva Leiblich laments the loss of her beloved Tsiporah, who 'was my sister, my mum and best friend'. In 1939, when Ziva was only two years old, her family fled to Russia to escape the German invasion. Two years later their widowed father, unable to feed them, arranged for Tsiporah and Ziva to join a large group of Polish soldiers and refugees who had been granted permission to travel through Russia and on to Persia where a refugee camp was established in Teheran. From there the two children, along with others, were sent to Palestine in 1943.

IN OUR HOPE

By Moritz Mandelkern

Germany

After suffering from polio at an early age, Moritz Mandelkern had to walk with two canes due to his paralysis. In 1922, Moritz married Henriette and had a son, Siegfried. When Siegfried was only 15 years old, he was handcuffed and taken away by the police. This story is about the deep love shared by two parents for their lost son, but it is also about the parents' own survival as they strive and struggle to escape the wrath of the Nazis.

WHEREVER YOU ARE, ABID

By Josh Greenfield

Palestine

Josh was the eldest of three brothers and three sisters living in Tzfat, Palestine, in the early 1930s. A friend of Josh's father was a tax collector named Abid who happened to be an Arab. On many occasions, Abid warned Josh and his family of pending attacks by Arabs and, when Arab riots flared in Tzfat in 1936, Abid was confronted with the dilemma of staying true to his Jewish friend or his radical Arab brethren. An incredible tale of loyalty and tough personal choices facing one young man.

These are edited excerpts from ***Courage to Care Vol 1: 28 Remarkable Stories Of Rescue During World War II*** and ***Courage to Care Vol 2: 22 Further Remarkable Stories Of Rescue During World War II.***
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To read the stories in full, you can find details of the two Courage to Care anthologies on the **Courage to Care website**

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

Anne Gouttman

Anne Gouttman (age 3) with
Jozefa Dadak, her rescuer, 1942

Upstander Activity
A Teaching & Learning Resource to follow the Courage to Care (Vic.) Upstander Program

courage to care VIC
An initiative of B'nai B'rith

***Pre-March 1938**

How do you fit a three-year-old, even a small three-year-old, into a rucksack? Over the years I have tried to imagine how it could be managed, because that is how my life was saved and I have no memory of it at all.

My story has been pieced together a snippet at a time over many years. My mother did not speak of the past. I was one of those children who caused conversation to stop when I entered the room, but not before I had heard enough to learn that horrible things had happened during the war. The term 'Holocaust' had not yet entered common usage in the 1940s. It was only when I was at university and began asking questions that the details of my rescue became fully known to me.

I was born in the beautiful town of Krakow, in July 1939, six weeks before the Nazi invasion of Poland. During its history of partition, that part of Poland had fallen to the relatively progressive Habsburg Empire, and its Jewish community had fared better than in those parts administered by Russia. I remember hearing that pre-war Krakow had even had a Jewish member in local government.

Legend has it that, long ago, a Polish king fell in love with a beautiful Jewish maiden and granted land for a Jewish quarter, Kazimierz, named in his honour. This is where my family lived. My grandparents' home was at 5 Krakowska Street. My maternal grandfather, Moses Przeworski, was a tailor. During the summer, my grandmother Rozalia ran a kosher (food prepared according to Jewish law) restaurant from rented premises in the holiday resort of Zakopane. They were not wealthy: my mother told of how one orange would be shared among all five family members, and that she had one dress for weekdays, and one for Shabbat. Their three daughters, however, all received an excellent education: Regina at a commercial college, and my mother, Manya, at the institute of the famous educationist, Dr Janusz Korczak, in Warsaw.

Ida, the youngest, was very unhappy in her strict Polish school and transferred to the Hebrew Gymnasium, where she thrived. Her heart was set on a career in medicine, a seemingly impossible dream, as Polish medical faculties did not then accept Jewish students, and anti-Jewish

violence on campus was rife. Happily, she was awarded a scholarship at the University of Florence, and she was still in Italy when World War II was declared.

My parents had met through the left-wing Zionist youth movement, Hashomer Hatzair. My father, Chaskel Entenberg, who hailed from Przemysl, had probably trained in agricultural science on its training farm (Hachsharah) and had a position lined up in an agricultural institute in Mandated Palestine. Four of his sisters had already migrated there. Tragically, my mother was too far advanced in her pregnancy with me to travel. When I was born they lived in the Kazimierz quarter where my father was director of the well-respected Jewish boys' orphanage (Bursa dla Sierot) at 6 Podbrzezie Street. Here, young orphan boys were cared for and taught a trade.

My parents lived in a small flat on the premises. Although they did not own anything, I have the impression of rich and active lives. They loved music and the theatre, and went hiking and skiing. My mother was well read and could quote poetry by both Bialik, whose wonderful verse was in the revived medium of Modern Hebrew, and Adam Mickiewicz, the most renowned Polish poet of all time. During her studies, she attended seminars on education in Berlin and had also been taken to some of its famed cabarets.

All dreams crashed with the Nazi invasion on 1 September 1939, and a reign of terror was unleashed against the Jewish population. There were random arrests, shootings and beatings; humiliations of all kinds. There were home invasions, and confiscation of valuables and property. On 18 November, an edict was issued which compelled every Jew over the age of twelve to wear a very specific badge of identification – a white armband with a blue star, the precursor to the infamous yellow star that Jews were later forced to wear on an outer garment.

The terror continued, and my grandparents were its early victims. They were shot in the street. My aunt Regina probably shared their fate.

On 3 May 1941, another edict was posted proclaiming that a ghetto was to be established in Podgórze, a poorer district of the city. Transfer there was compulsory, and was to be effected by 20 May.

It must have been during these seventeen days that my parents made contact with Mrs Jozefa Dadak. I do not know how they had come to know her, or of her. To hazard a guess, it might have been through some welfare agency my father had been involved with during the course of his work. Jozefa was a social worker. Photographs show her as a good-looking woman in her late 30s or early 40s. She was divorced and childless. I do not know anything of her personal history. I do know that she was paid a certain amount in cash and given some of my mother's household goods to take me into her care, should it become possible to smuggle me out of the ghetto.

It was a daring commitment, as the penalty for harbouring any Jewish person was death. I try to understand why she would or could take such a risk. My hypothesis is that, in the course of her work, she might have acted as foster-parent to many children, so the sight of another small stranger in her neighbourhood would not have raised questions or suspicions.

In the ghetto, my parents and I shared one room. All the boys from the orphanage, about twenty-five of them, came into the ghetto with us. My father, whose identity document of the period lists him as a locksmith, was sent out daily on work detail. His group was responsible for the classification and storage of looted Jewish property in designated warehouses throughout the city.

Then the deportations began. Orders were issued for specified persons to assemble with their belongings in the large square at the edge of the ghetto. Fear was palpable, and loud cries and wails rent the air. We stood very quietly to one side, and miraculously, one of the Nazi officers overseeing the proceedings spoke to my father: 'You and your family can go back home today'. On our return, it was decided that the time had come to smuggle me out of the ghetto.

This risky undertaking was entrusted to one of my father's charges, one of the boys from the orphanage, who had joined the Jewish resistance within the ghetto. One night, he carried me on his back, in a rucksack, through the sewers. We emerged into cold clear air and a brilliant sky full of stars. There was a doroszka (horse-drawn cab) waiting, its coachman in a top hat. He drove me to Jozefa's home at 21 Felicjanek Street. It was 1942 and I was three years old. This is my earliest childhood memory.

Of the next three years, I have only a few fleeting images in an otherwise total amnesia, and what I know I have reconstructed through photographs and what Jozefa must have told my mother. In the early photographs, Jozefa looks proud and happy, and I, though warmly and beautifully dressed, look forlorn. Later photographs are happier, some taken in holiday mode in the country. I don't know whether I was baptised, but there I am, all in white for Holy Communion. I attended a convent kindergarten and must have behaved nicely, as a cherished story tells that I was the one chosen to present a bouquet of flowers to a visiting bishop! In preparation for my new religious identity, my parents had taught me the basic Catholic prayers. Photographs with nuns show me smiling.

I believe Jozefa cared for me as well as she could, given the harsh wartime conditions. I remember once being force-fed cod-liver oil, eating bread and jam, and drinking just-boiled water. She certainly cared for me well enough for me to grow to love her. Eventually, I came to believe she was my mother, and I quite forgot my former life.

In 1945, local survivors of the Nazi horror met at the Jewish community centre in Krakow, searching for whatever remained of their families. My father was not among them. My mother returned, damaged in body and spirit, with a number tattooed on her arm. She was not strong enough emotionally to seek me out herself, so she sent a friend, a fellow survivor, Pola Frankel, to Jozefa's home to see whether I was still alive. Pola brought a tomato, a rare item, as a gift and, I am told, I devoured it on the spot.

Then my mother came to visit, and brought a piece of chocolate cake. She made several visits so I could get used to her, but when I was told that she wanted to take me away, I would hide under the bed and refuse to see her. On one such visit, she came accompanied by an old friend. He wore a military-style uniform with a pistol in his belt. During the negotiations about my future, he undid his belt and placed it on a chair. Jozefa snatched up the pistol, and threatened to kill herself if I was taken away. This did not happen, but she was left distraught and crying as I was led away.

It was a very angry and resentful six-year-old that my mother now had to contend with. I gravitated towards Pola, the neutral party in this affair. In the shared accommodation we were provided, I chose to sleep in her bed.

Somehow, my mother obtained exit papers, and the three of us left Poland. I remember sitting on suitcases in railway stations, clutching my doll. During the long journey, my mother removed lice from my hair with a very fine-toothed comb. I could hear the 'pop' as she crushed them between her thumbnails. From the train, one could see a war-blasted landscape with children playing in the rubble. Occasionally, a train carrying Russian soldiers back east stopped alongside us at a station. Dzievochka (little girl), they called out to me. One soldier passed me some sugar and told my mother he had a little girl just like me at home.

We reached Florence's beautiful and imposing railway station and made our way to my aunt Ida's home, at 120 Viale Petrarca. It was 24 December 1945. We were to spend the next three years in this safe haven.

Through her studies, Ida had met and married a fellow doctor, Achille Florenzano. Neither family was happy about this union, hers, because it was outside their faith, and his, because it was felt that this handsome and talented young man should have found a more suitable bride than a penniless foreigner. His family was a distinguished one, with a landed estate in Sorianello, Calabria, and all its sons were highly qualified in the professions.

It was fortunate that the marriage took place before 1938, when Fascist Italy passed its own racial laws. Jewish persons were no longer permitted to marry Italians, or work in state or other public institutions. Foreigners were to be expelled. Ida's husband had somehow, illegally, found her a post as a doctor in a psychiatric hospital in a small town in the deep south of Italy. She lived there in terror of la denuncia (being denounced to the police and arrested).

Eventually, her husband's family's attitude towards her softened, and she was allowed to return to Florence and come under their protection. In 1941, her son, my cousin Francesco, was born. His father, my uncle, worked secretly as a doctor to the partisans, and had many narrow escapes.

On arrival, my mother and I received prompt medical attention from my aunt and uncle. I was found to be suffering from tuberculosis and malnutrition, and was subjected to a host of injections, some of them very painful. My mother needed a hysterectomy, which was then a major and dangerous procedure, and which kept her in hospital for a long time. I was taken to visit her, but I did not feel much enthusiasm or emotion. My life became centred on my little cousin within the large, protective Florenzano clan. It was a very privileged life – a good school, piano lessons, holidays by the sea, visits to Florence's museums and gardens, and Sunday bike rides to Piazzale Michelangelo to admire the view. I soon learned Italian and became a voracious reader. My nightly Catholic prayers slipped easily into the Italian language, and around my neck I still wore the silver medallion Jozefa had given me – delicately carved in the form of a rose on one side, and the head of the Madonna on the other. Some decades later, I would say to my daughter, 'Who knows if she did not keep me safe? She, too, was a Jewish girl in search of refuge'.

The Florenzanos were not churchgoers, but I was a devout Catholic, and whenever the occasion permitted, I was allowed to go to Mass and Confession with Maria, their maid.

During this period, while still physically and emotionally very fragile, my mother had to confront major decisions about our future. She was not

sure if she would be able to provide for me in her weakened state. My uncle offered to adopt me and to provide me with a good education. However, for our protection, he thought we should renounce our Jewish heritage.

My mother wrote to one of my father's sisters in Palestine, informing her of this, and asked for advice. A telegram arrived soon after: 'REJECT ADOPTION. CHILD TO REMAIN JEWISH. CERTIFICATES IN A SHORT TIME.'

I don't know whether these entry permits ever arrived. Soon after, the State of Israel was declared, and the War of Independence broke out. My mother felt she could not face the hardships of another war.

Our relatives in America also tried to arrange entry there, but it would have meant a five-year waiting period. In the meantime, our friend Pola had already migrated to Melbourne, sponsored by her relative Rosa Zerfas. Pola persuaded her to sponsor us as well.

We left Italy in 1948 on the SS Napoli, an immigrant ship that carried refugees as well. Only one quarter of these refugees were Jewish. On board, I heard the word 'Jewish' for the first time. From the deep recesses of memory, that word brought to mind frightening images of black and evil beings who stole children away. I must have heard such stories during my years of hiding in Poland. No such beings, however, were to be seen aboard the Napoli. I had not yet been told that I, too, was Jewish. Years later, when I asked my mother why not, she answered, 'I had bigger problems to contend with than your religious affiliation'.

I found it out unexpectedly and dramatically when I was nine years old. We had arrived in Australia in October, and as the days grew warmer, I asked my new Aunty Rosa, 'How do people celebrate Christmas here, where it's hot?' She was puzzled. 'But Jewish people don't celebrate Christmas', she answered. 'What does that have to do with me? I'm not Jewish!' 'Oh, yes you are', she informed me. I was upset and angry, and asked my mother if it were true. She said, yes, but when I grew up, I could be whatever I liked, and I calmed down.

Aunty Rosa enrolled me in an English language class for immigrant children at St. Kilda Park State School, provided us with accommodation, and found my mother work in her hat factory. It came as a great shock to me when I was in grade 5 and a sturdy grade 6 boy accosted me in the playground to hiss in my ear, 'Dirty Jew!' I had no defences against this onslaught. My schoolwork suffered, and my nights were disturbed. I can only imagine what my mother felt when I told her. Somehow, a transfer was arranged to Elwood Central School, very near to where we lived. Happily, I experienced no further anti-Semitic attacks neither at school nor later at university.

Many, but not all, of my school friends were Jewish refugees. With the latter, there seemed to be a special bond. It was good to be able to visit each others' homes and to speak to their parents in Polish. As if by unspoken agreement, we never mentioned the past. We were too busy learning to be good Aussies.

On arrival, my dominant language was still Italian. I could speak to my mother in a very basic, childish Polish, but this needed to be improved so I could also converse with her émigré friends. As English came to dominate my reading and school work, the Italian language gradually faded away, and with it, my Catholic prayers.

My mother remarried a good and kind man, Jacob Frisch, whom we had met on board the Napoli. His wife and small daughter had perished in the Holocaust. We moved to 11 Wenden Grove, East St. Kilda, which would remain the family home until 1980.

Now began the process of repairing the relationship with my mother, fractured by the years of separation in Poland, and emotional distance in Italy. Her love, care and patience with me, even during a turbulent adolescence, were formidable. She did not talk about her past, but when the book Scourge of the Swastika was published in 1954, she gave me a copy. It was the first time I saw the photographs of piled-up corpses, and started asking questions. At university, my psychology course featured the work of John Bowlby and others who had studied the harmful effects of maternal deprivation on very young children. I asked further questions, and my mother now answered them.

When I myself became a mother, I was not able to leave my daughter until she was three years old, and in kindergarten. I would imagine what it would be like to care for a baby's multiple needs in wartime, and how far one could run in search of shelter carrying a heavy child, and so on. Anxiety about the future was never far away.

My return to the Jewish fold came in stages. First, school friends persuaded me not to attend school on Jewish holidays. There was also a brief and unhappy stint at the Sunday school of the Liberal Synagogue, where Aunty Rosa was a member. I was the only refugee child there, and my innocent questions, born of true ignorance, annoyed my classmates and I was made to feel more of an outsider than ever.

I don't remember how I came to join the Zionist youth movement, Betar. It had a superb education program, and no one queried my religious observance or objected to my questions. Now I learned about the Jewish People's history, their writers, artists, and heroes, and that one could be proud of being Jewish. Though religious tradition was respected and always honoured at functions, Betar's ethos was aimed at producing persons of honour and integrity to help build the new State of Israel.

As soon as it became possible, my mother began to help Jozefa financially and by sending her dress materials from my stepfather's shop. Under Soviet rule, the Polish people suffered shortages and hardships of every kind.

When my mother passed away in 1976, I assumed this obligation with the help of a Polish interpreter. She would read me Jozefa's letters, and I would dictate a brief reply.

After some years, I initiated proceedings at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to recognise Jozefa as one of the Righteous Among the Nations. Sadly, she passed away before this was finalised in 1984, but a plaque bearing her name can now be seen along the Avenue of the Righteous.

I was informed of Jozefa's death by Jasia, a young woman who had been placed in an orphanage after the war. Jozefa had been her social worker, and she knew all about me. I bought a Polish dictionary and we began a

correspondence. We actually met in Poland in 1994, and our friendship continues to this day.

I visited the apartment building where I had lived with Jozefa. I had hoped to regain some memory of my years in hiding by returning to this spot, but this did not happen.

At Yad Vashem there is a poignant memorial to the million and a half Jewish children murdered during the Holocaust. I could so easily have been one of them. That I was not, I owe to the kindness of a stranger.

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AS WE DESCENDED TO BABI YAR

Elena Gorodetski

Elena aged 3 with her family, 1938

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***Pre-March 1938**

Any Jewish family that survived the Holocaust has reason to describe that survival as a miracle. Miracles such as these consist of a number of aspects: luck, coincidence and particularly in having good people in the right place at the right time.

This happened to my family and me as we were heading down towards Babi Yar, a ravine near Kiev where we didn't realise massacres were taking place.

We were moving in a crowd made up of our Jewish neighbours and townspeople: old and young, even babies. Most people assumed we were going to be evacuated into some sort of detention camp or area.

This would not have been the first time the Soviets moved whole populations for political reasons, but this time it was different. This was happening in collaboration with the Germans, our supposed enemies. We had no idea what was about to happen.

Totally unexpectedly, Mum's school friend Marusya Bantysh came running up, trying to find us to warn us not to go there. That was one of these miracles!

Just prior to the occupation of Kiev by the Germans, there were daily radio announcements with the same message: 'Kiev will stay ours. Kiev will stay Russian!'

My grandfather, who hated the Bolsheviks, told me, 'Lena, switch off the radio, I am sick and tired of this propaganda!'

He tried everything to persuade us not to evacuate. He kept telling my mother, 'Hana, don't you remember the Germans when they were here in 1918? They are a civilised nation! We don't have to fear them.'

Another reason we didn't leave was because Lyuba, my oldest sister, had graduated from medical college as a doctor on 20 June and had begun working in a hospital. They wouldn't have allowed her to leave.

We were a close family; my paternal grandfather, my parents and their three daughters: Lyuba, twenty-three, Dina fourteen and me, aged six.

On the day of the German invasion, our father was away working in his mail-van. We lived on the outskirts of Kiev, in Borschagovska Street. Four other Jewish families lived in this area, as well as some Ukrainians, Poles and Russians.

I clearly remember the day the Germans entered Kiev — or more precisely, how they roared in on motorcycles with cameras in their hands. They moved from Stalin Square along Kreschatik Street, where we had been staying at our grandfather's place for the past week, to be near an air raid shelter.

From there they travelled on to Shevchenko Street to Lenin's monument. The city's self-appointed 'deputies' were waiting there to welcome their supposed 'liberators' with bread and salt. The Germans were literally dragged off their motorcycles to receive the triple kiss.

People started coming out of the air raid shelters. A German soldier walked into a block of flats, and a crowd gathered round him. They asked, 'What is going to happen now?'

I stood nearby and could see him gesturing and explaining: Communists and Komsomol members are 'plif-plaf' (finished). 'Juden' (crossing his hand over his chest) — 'arbeiten, arbeiten' (they will work).

That seemed to be sufficient invitation for the local marauders to start looting. They smashed shop-windows and took away whatever they could carry.

I have always believed that Babi Yar was no accident. I know the German government had issued an order to kill Jews, but the strong anti-Semitic mood in Ukraine definitely played a role too.

I do not wish to blame the whole population; in fact, what I am about to relate proves this was not the case. Our friends and neighbours, a mixture of Poles, Russians and Ukrainians, did not betray us. Yet they could have been shot for helping us, or jailed, not for a couple of days or weeks, but for two whole years!

But a great many were ready to help the Germans kill us. Leaflets in Russian were printed and posted on fences saying, 'Kill Jews — save Russia' and many people took pleasure in pointing out 'suspicious persons' and Juden to the Germans.

I myself witnessed an execution on the street opposite the opera house.

Some did it because of racial hatred; others, for greed. This scum betrayed Jewish people then took over their homes. Many willingly joined the German police.

At the end of September 1941, the Gestapo arrested nine leading rabbis in Kiev and ordered them to send out a proclamation to their communities:

> *All Jews and their children, as an elite nation, will be transferred to safe places.*

On 27 September, orders were posted around the city:

> *All the Jews of the city of Kiev and its vicinity must appear on Monday, 29 September by eight o'clock in the morning at the corner of Mel'nikova and Dorohozhytska streets near the Viis'kove cemetery. Bring documents, money, valuables, and also warm clothing, linen, etc.*
>
> *Any Jews who do not follow this order and are found elsewhere will be shot.*

In the early morning of 29 September, the Jews in our neighbourhood were getting ready to leave. They had cooked chickens and were packing Primus stoves and warm clothes.

'It's going to be a long trip,' they were saying. 'The kids should have something to eat on the way.'

Manilov, a close friend of my father, was walking around, holding up a stick and saying, 'Jews, today is Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). God is calling us, so get ready quickly!'

Grandfather Moshka was eighty years old and couldn't move on his own, so they brought a wheelbarrow for him.

Manilov came to my mum and asked, 'Hana, why aren't you getting ready like everyone else?'

Mama replied, 'Itsik, I am not going anywhere without Volodya (my father). We'll lose each other, so I'll wait for him and we'll go together.'

Manilov left my mother a tallit (a white prayer shawl with black stripes) as a memento of his friendship for my father.

Everybody left, but we stayed. The next day the radio announced, 'Anyone who conceals Jews will be executed'.

Mama decided we would go, after all, as she did not want to jeopardise the lives of our neighbours. We joined a crowd of people who, like us, had originally stayed hidden at home.

A few streets before the descent into the ravine of Babi Yar, we heard somebody calling out to us. It was Marusya, mother's friend. She had come searching for us.

'Hana, girls, where are you going?' she shouted. 'There were machine guns in action all night down there. They're killing people!'

My sisters started to cry. 'Mama, we don't want to die!' I started crying too. 'I don't want to die either!' So we returned home. Nobody stopped us.

That same night our father returned. He had been coming home on a train that had been bombed. He survived, but it had taken him ten days to reach Kiev. We told him everything, and he found it impossible to believe. He sat with his hands over his head muttering, 'This cannot be true. This is monstrous!'

The next morning he decided to go and check for himself. He was Polish, and not Jewish. He came back after five or six hours looking lost and pale, his hands shaking.

'Yes, it's true. I went through the fence and could see what the policemen were doing. They were searching the people for any valuables, then stripping them and piling up all their warm clothes. I went down and said to someone, "I have a Jewish wife. What am I supposed to do?"'

He answered, "Bring the Jewess here. You must bring her here!"'

From that day onward he seemed to be affected by a quiet and growing insanity.

I remember my parents lying in bed with ropes around their necks, the conversation going something like this:

'If they come for us at night, we'll tighten the ropes.'

'What about the kids?'

'They have red hair, so they'll survive. The Germans are looking for people with curly black hair and crooked noses. That's their idea of what Jews look like.'

Fortunately, our apartment was on the ground floor, so we were able to dig a big hole near the stove. We covered it with wooden boards reinforced by metal plates, and we hid in that hole during the day.

Our neighbours helped us by exchanging our belongings for food.

A young Polish man, who had been mobilised by the Germans for construction work, moved into our apartment. He was fond of us girls, especially my pretty sisters. He knew we were in danger from the Germans and he wanted to help us. He was not actually told we were Jewish; perhaps he guessed.

He brought us Konder, a soup made with millet and pork fat, part of his own modest food allotment.

Our former maid, Ustina, who lived in a nearby village, also helped us. She supplied us with milk and some vegetables. We were often very hungry, but we did not starve.

During raids by the SS soldiers in search of Jews, Mama would hide in the cellar. Meanwhile, my sister Dina rubbed her cheeks with a brush to redden them. She would then lie in bed, moaning, and I would tell the Germans, 'Typhus, typhus!' and they would disappear at once. We all admired Dina's courage. She was so scared, but she had to be a good actor for all our sakes.

In March our grandfather died, and our father committed suicide that same night by hanging himself. He had twisted the tallit Manilov had given him a few months earlier, creating a noose. The ironies of this world never cease to amaze me!

We buried them together, father and son, taking their coffins to the graveyard on the same cart. My mother covered her curly black hair with a scarf.

After our father's death, mama tried to commit suicide several times, but each time my sister, being a doctor, was able to save her. Looking back I can understand her state of mind … the murder of our fellow Jews, our father's horrifying suicide and her fear for us. Every day could have been our last.

Kiev was liberated in November 1943. This should have been our greatest moment of relief but, incredibly, mama was called in to the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) headquarters, where they interrogated her for several hours, asking questions like, 'How did you manage to survive?'

Did they think that we were spies for our murderers? In the end, mama started sobbing, 'How can you ask me such a question?' They let her go.

We returned to a 'normal' life despite the heavy consequences of the war: the terrible memories, the devastation, the loss of our father and most of our community. We later learned that one hundred thousand Jews were mown down at Babi Yar.

Our mother died in 1953 at the age of fifty-eight after five years of illness brought on by all the hardships of our existence and antisemitism. But we, her daughters, wanted to live again and did not give in to despair.

Lyuba became a respected pulmonologist, and Dina a sales-agent for a big factory. I continued my studies, did well, and in 1949 I enrolled in the Technical College of Communications. I graduated and worked as an engineer-designer in the Scientific Research Institute of Communications.

It must be said we were not considered Jewish because we had a Polish father, otherwise the ongoing, underlying antisemitism would have made it harder for us to obtain access to good educational and professional opportunities.

My sisters and I remained close, even after we all married and had children. We got together often. Invariably, we recalled the destroyed lives of our beloved parents, but we also celebrated the miracle of our survival. We came out of what was an unimaginable horror because of a number of brave people. They simply saw us as fellow human beings and friends. They did not believe the vicious Nazi propaganda about Jews. They put themselves in daily danger for two long years. Our generations of children will remember them.

The Talmud tells us: 'Whoever saves one life, it is as if he saved the whole world'. Among our children are doctors, engineers, librarians and nurses. More importantly, they are good people. They exist only because of the compassion of others.

My sisters' families live in Ukraine, but fate brought me to Australia. My two daughters and their families left our place of birth in 1994 because they feared for the future of their own children in the collapsing Soviet Union. My husband and I joined them in 1998 under the Family Reunion scheme.

We found peace and prosperity in this wonderful country. When I stop to think, I truly believe that miracles keep happening to me.

Excerpt from **Courage to Care Vol 2: 22 further remarkable stories of rescue during World War II.**
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SIX MOVES

Floris Kalman

Floris Kalman, 8 years old
with her father, 1942

***Pre-March 1938**

I dedicate this story to the people who, at risk of their own lives, took me in, a little girl the Nazi invaders were determined to exterminate simply because I was Jewish. I don't really know anything objective about them or their lives, and can only guess at their reasons for hiding me. I can't even remember the names of some of them. I can only describe how it was for me.

Not all were welcoming. Something as simple as a smile, a kind word or a hug would have made all the difference. Nevertheless, thanks to all of them, I survived to have a long and fulfilling life: a loving marriage and children and grandchildren. We are all very close. I look at them and count my blessings.

*

I was eight years old when I went into hiding, and during the next two and a half years, I lived in six different places. For me, a frightened and lonely child, it was a deeply traumatic time. The memories remain in vivid images, but the feelings were deeply buried for over fifty years. If asked, I would have said that nothing much had happened to me.

Our family survived when so many around us were not so lucky. After the war, when we were reunited, we never talked about the years of separation. I was never asked about what had happened to me, so it just became a non-event.

When I was suddenly left in strange places among strange people, my mother did not explain to me the reality of our situation. I had no idea that she was leaving me to save my life, or that the people looking after me were doing something dangerous and heroic.

Confused, miserable, I coped by learning to repress all my sad and angry feelings. What I did understand was that I needed to be 'a good girl', at all times so as to please my hosts.

The first place, in the summer of 1942, was a children's holiday home. My sister, Danielle, aged three, was also there, but she was housed with the very small children, and we never saw each other. I can still recall this first separation from my home and my parents with surprising clarity.

I am eight years old. I am standing in the middle of a playground. There are children all around me running, shrieking, climbing and laughing. It is a beautiful summer's day. I don't play, I don't laugh, I just watch. I miss my parents terribly. I don't understand what is happening, but I sense it is not good. I try to forget the ache in my stomach.

One day, the woman who runs the home sends me along with her fourteen-year-old niece on an errand. I am considered a responsible child. It's a nice day, and it's a relief to be out in the streets of my city. We travel on the tram and when we get off, I recognise the park. We are only two blocks away from my home. I get excited. We could easily walk there and see my mum and dad. But suddenly, it hits me that we mustn't do that! It would be bad, in fact, very dangerous. My parents would be angry.

This realisation leaves me feeling even more scared, and I find myself fighting an overwhelming wave of homesickness. Yet it is such a lovely day! The sun is shining and the birds are singing.

By this time, the Germans were rounding up and deporting Jewish women and children as well as the men. My parents were themselves in a precarious situation. My mother had false identity papers, but my father did not. He also looked strikingly foreign, so he had to keep out of sight.

My mother was the one to take the risk of leaving the safety of home to do whatever was necessary to keep us going. Throughout the war, she visited both of her daughters from time to time. Just coming and going from a place where you were not supposed to be living was something a suspicious neighbour might notice, and report.

When we had been in the holiday home for only a few weeks, my parents discovered that there were quite a number of Jewish children there, and decided it was not a good idea for us to stay there.

My mother arranged for someone to come and move us to the country where we stayed with a couple who fostered children for a living.

They were in fact hiding four other Jewish children, but they certainly had no kind or compassionate feelings for us. We went hungry and they frightened us with stories of what would happen if the Germans got us. They asked my mother to come and work for them, and she accepted, but when she saw how they treated us, she left and sent a young woman to fetch us.

My next 'home' was with the family Van den Borren. They were kind and loving. A warm, smiling grandmother looked after her grandchildren as well as me. Their daughter was married to an American and they and their children also lived in the spacious three-storey home.

Jewish children were not allowed to go to school, so I was home all day. I was nearly nine and I discovered that I could read a whole book! This was very exciting, in fact a godsend. There was a multitude of children's books in the house. I was allowed to read all day, and I escaped into a world of my own. There was also a grand piano and I was permitted to play the shiny notes.

Despite being treated with kindness, I remained anxious and lonely. While the lives of the people around me were normal, I knew that something terrible could happen any time to my family and to me.

One day, German soldiers came to arrest the American son-in-law. They were directed upstairs, which allowed him to slip away to safety. The soldiers came downstairs and interrogated the family. They noticed my dark hair and wanted to know who I was. I certainly did not look like the other children of the house, who were all fair except for one boy who had bright red hair.

The grandmother said I was the child of neighbours who often came to play with her grandchildren. It was decided that I was no longer safe there, and had to move.

I didn't know it at the time, but after I left the Van den Borrens, these remarkable people agreed to take my sister Danielle in my place. She

had some resemblance to the dark-haired grandmother, and could pass as the child of a relative. She stayed there until the Liberation in September 1944.

I went home to stay with my parents until they found somewhere else for me. This was not a happy time. A number of people were hiding in the same house. There was a lot of tension, as they spent most of their time practicing to get into a hiding place as fast as they could. It was very scary and I was actually relieved when another place was found for me.

I was taken to Madeleine, a friend of the woman who had been our landlady before the war, a single woman living on her own. She was very strict and aloof. I helped her to wind wool, I dusted the furniture and willingly did whatever jobs she gave me.

A devout Catholic, she took me to church a lot, something I looked forward to. It felt so peaceful and safe. She taught me catechism and all about the Catholic religion, and I learnt it enthusiastically. Yet, whatever I did, I never seemed to please her. Her lack of warmth was so hurtful to me that one day, I got angry enough to say, 'You are only doing this for money!'

There were some odd moments that lifted my spirits, like going berry-picking with her in the forest and making jam. Madeleine had a radio and we listened to the clandestine BBC news. We had to use it very sparingly because if a valve in the radio burnt out, it could not be replaced. This activity was punishable by death but, in late 1943, knowing that the Allies were starting to win the war gave us great hope.

It is while I was staying at this place that my mother and I had a narrow escape. She had taken me as a special treat to visit my father, and she was bringing me back 'home'. We were on a tram that was stopped by the military, and all the passengers were ordered off to have their papers checked.

My mother told me to run home, but I stood to one side, frozen with fear to the footpath. My mother had no option but to join the queue. They looked at her ID card and didn't recognise it as false. Saved by a piece of green cardboard!

One day, I wet the bed. I had never done this before, and was overcome with shame, and even more so, with fear of the woman's harsh words. I hid my damp pyjamas, but of course, I was found out. I desperately denied what was obviously the truth and she was horrified, more at the lie than the wet clothes. Madeleine would have kept me, but I was so unhappy that my mother looked for somewhere else.

I moved again. Another place, another way of doing things, this time in the country with a woman who kept a pub. I wore clogs and the people spoke Flemish. I learned the new language as fast as I could, but I couldn't get on with the woman's dog, which was a shame, because he was the most important member of the household. I was not used to dogs, and I learned the hard way. I was blamed for letting him get to my handkerchiefs, precious in a time of austerity, which he delighted in shredding. Another time, when I was asked to take some butter down into the cool cellar, nobody warned me to put it up high, out of the dog's reach.

What I found most uncomfortable was having to sleep in the same bed as the woman of the house. She was never kind to me, and I hated it. Perhaps she did not like it either, because she decided to make me sleep on a deckchair, the only piece of furniture in an otherwise empty room. I was unable to stretch out and was so uncomfortable that I tried laying it flat on the bare hard floor!

I tried not to be a nuisance. Although I always kept my feelings to myself, I did once break down and cry when my mother came for a visit. It seemed to me that the war would never end. Afterwards, I felt bad about crying, making it hard for my mother once again.

It is June 1944. The Allies have landed in Normandy. I move to my sixth place. Here, I breathe a sigh of relief. I am again staying with kind people, a woman and her elderly father, who leave me to myself. She is busy all day in her optometrist shop, but the grandfather talks to me. He explains things about history and geography on a world map. I am an expert cleaner by now, and any chores I do around the place are very much appreciated. The old man takes me to his vegetable plot. He proudly

shows me the corn and other vegetables that he grows. He teaches me to weed, because it's hard for him to bend.

Finally, the long-awaited day of liberation came. I stood by the window as the liberators' lorries and tanks rolled down the boulevard. People jumped on them and threw flowers. I wished I could be down there with the celebrating crowd, but I felt numb. I didn't know how to rejoice.

I went home to my parents and little sister, something I had longed for every day of our separation. Home at last where I belonged! But strangely, our reunion was a great disappointment. I didn't know what I really expected, but it felt so empty. No jumping for joy, no excitement, no celebration! I remember asking for a particular food, which we didn't have, and then bursting into tears. It was not about food, but about the sense of desolation I could not articulate.

We never talked about what happened to us, as if it had not happened. The priority now was getting back to a 'normal life'. My father went back to work, and I went back to school to catch up on my education. I had learnt the importance of pleasing and fitting in, so I did it once more.

My parents were not the only ones to want to leave the past behind as quickly as possible. At that time adults generally believed that, because children were too young to understand what was going on they didn't really suffer. The sooner it was all forgotten, the better! All the feelings remained unacknowledged, our experiences never discussed, their importance denied with a blanket of silence.

It took another forty-five years before I began to look back on those years. In 1990, I already had two granddaughters when Dr Paul Valent, a psychiatrist and himself a child survivor, gathered a group of people who had been children during World War II in Nazi-occupied Europe.

We were able, all of us for the first time, to talk about our experiences and found we had a lot in common. We thawed out those deeply frozen

feelings of sadness, anger and a sense of having been abandoned. We gave each other support and the recognition that we had never had from the older generation. It was a liberating experience.

We could finally make some sense of all the childhood images that we had carried for so many years. And we realised that early trauma can leave a deep and lasting effect. One of my discoveries was that after two years of separation, my parents and I were really strangers to each other.

When we migrated in 1949 to Australia, we lost touch with the people who had helped us. At that time, I felt no gratitude towards them. That came much later, as I was able to gain insight through sharing the stories of my experiences with other child survivors.

In the late 1990s my sister and I nominated two families who helped us stay alive, for the award of 'Righteous Among the Nations'. This is an award with which the State of Israel honours non-Jews who saved the lives of Jews during World War II.

We attended two very moving ceremonies in Brussels. At one, the ninety-five-year-old rescuer of my parents, Marguerite Preud'homme, attended, and it was humbling to see how grateful she was for being honoured with the award. At the other ceremony, it was Marie Cape, the granddaughter of Charles and Madeleine Van den Borren, who received the posthumous award.

I was by then a grandmother, and so was she. Her children and grandchildren were there, as were my sister's daughter and granddaughter. It was seeing the generations together that brought home to me, very dramatically, how fortunate I am to have been granted a precious life and a loving family.

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MY GUARDIAN ANGELS, JAAP AND JENNY

Harry Philips

Harry Philips, The Hague, 1948

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***Pre-March 1938**

Holland was invaded by Nazi Germany on 10 May 1940. The Netherlands had originally proclaimed neutrality when the war broke out in 1939, but Germany invaded anyway. On 15 May 1940, one day after the bombing of Rotterdam, the Dutch forces surrendered.

After five days, my brother and I were demobbed, and we went home. At first, nothing happened, but by 1941, Jewish people were being harassed and isolated. They had to wear a Star of David on their clothes and their identity cards had a fat 'J' added, in case they might pass as 'Aryans'. They were not allowed to run a business outside their own community, and any money they had saved was transferred to a 'Jewish bank', where it was confiscated by the Germans. They were not allowed on buses and trains, or in certain public places like parks and movie theatres. My family ran an abattoir and kosher butcher and for a time we were still able to provide meat to the Jewish community, but we were no longer allowed to have non-Jewish personnel working for us.

In October 1942 the raids began, and Jewish males of all ages were picked up and sent to work camps, and from there were transported on to concentration camps.

We escaped from the first raid in our village thanks to the warning of a friend, a non-Jewish girl I used to go to school with who came in to tell me that the Green Shirts (local militia) were in the village picking up Jewish men. I woke my brothers and we climbed the back fence, ran through the neighbour's property, and out of the village. We made our way to a farmer friend of my father's. We stayed there out of sight for a fortnight, because we thought we had been seen by a man whose brother was a Nazi. Years later, I discovered that he had not seen us and, moreover, the man we distrusted had actually been very anti-Nazi. It was hard to know in those years who was a friend and who was a collaborator.

Unable to go back home, but also unable to stay where many people knew us, we went by train to Amsterdam. We left the farm early, while it was still dark, and hid in Amsterdam for some time. When all seemed quiet again we returned home, although we expected the Germans to

return to our village, Groenlo. As a precaution, some Jewish men kept vigil every night at the outskirts of the village. Even so, Leo and I decided to sleep most nights at local farms, as our family had many friends. Still, it was a tricky business because, even though we discarded the yellow star, we were known by the local Nazis.

At that time, I had a Jewish girlfriend who had grown up in the same village. When the women and children started being rounded up as well to be transported to the camps, my girlfriend went into hiding, and I had no idea where she had gone.

In 1942, a stranger turned up and told me that she had sent him to rescue me. He explained that he was a member of an organisation led by a Protestant minister called Dr Overduin. It was based in Enschede, a town about thirty kilometres away from us, and its mission was to hide Jews from the Nazis. They were willing to find a safe place for me, my three brothers and my parents as well. Our family decided to trust him. After all, what did we have to lose?

That night, the man returned and we left Groenlo, but we were stopped in the next village at a roadblock manned by local Nazis. They took no notice of me, although I recognised one of them. He either did not recognise me or pretended not to. I'll never know. After examining what was in my suitcase, he told my rescuer, 'Okay, push off, but make sure you're home before eight o'clock. After that you are not allowed on the street'.

We arrived at the home of my guide's friend, and found that my girlfriend, her cousin and a young couple were being temporarily housed there. After a few days, the man returned and took me to the home of one of his brothers. I was later joined there by Leo, my Aunt Gonne and a sad couple from a neighbouring village whose children had already been arrested and deported. My parents were in hiding on a farm near another town, also organised by Dr Overduin.

After leaving my temporary shelter, I had three more hiding places, the first two of which I had to leave in a hurry. There was always danger.

In fact, I was nearly caught after being at the first address for about six months.

This is what happened. There were about six houses in a row that shared one bathhouse at the back. One day, when I was in the outside toilet, I overheard one of the neighbours saying that he could see some German police coming through the back of the houses. I immediately ran into the garden and hid behind an old chicken coop.

There was no possibility of warning the others. Two Nazi police entered the house from the back, others from the front, and everyone else was caught. I did not dare leave my hiding place, and stayed there for a full night and until the middle of the next day. I did not know where to go.

By then, the organisation had been informed about what had happened, and a brother of the man who had come to me at Groenlo, came to fetch me. He had a fishing rod on the back of his pushbike with a piece of line, but no hook or sinker. We went to a canal outside the town, and that is where he left me. I must have been in shock, because I felt no hunger or thirst. My main problem was avoiding the habitual curiosity of other fishermen. All over the world, fishermen like to share information about their catch, about bait, things like that. Hoping to avoid any questions, I stayed in the bushes, of which there were very few, rather than at the water's edge.

When it began to get dark, I thought about going to some farmhouse and asking to be taken in for the night. I knew that could be risky, so it was quite late before I found the courage to start on my way. After less than half a kilometre, I was picked up by the brother of my first host.

He took me, of all places, to the home of a Jewish family. Because they were Turkish Jews, they were classified as Auskinder, or outsiders, and at that time, they were free of the threat of being transported. The husband had been born in Ottoman Syria when it was occupied by the Turks, and he had kept his Turkish passport. Fortunately, he was not on the Turkish Embassy's books, so later on, when the Turkish Jews were transported as well, he and his family were able to escape and hide for the rest of the

war with friends. (As far as I know, they survived, and went to Israel after the war.)

One Sunday, in broad daylight, the Yanks came flying over Enschede for the first time. They were on their way to bomb Cologne. The German fighter planes were waiting for them just this side of the Dutch border. The heavy bombers were no match for the fighter planes, and they had to make a quick getaway, so they dumped their bombs, which came raining down everywhere.

One came down just outside our window, blowing it out as well as a corner of the house, lifting the whole first floor and the roof up and away. That afternoon, the family had gone out to visit friends, and I was in the house with Isaac's father, who actually lived a small distance away. The old man had been standing by a glass door and he sustained some cuts from the flying glass. I had not a scratch, so I bandaged him up, and we hid in the refrigerator generator. The family were butchers, so it was big enough for both of us, and I closed the door from the inside. People walked through the house to see if there were any wounded or dead, but did not try to open the fridge.

The whole neighbourhood was a terrible mess, and in a street parallel with ours it was carnage. At the time the air raid sirens had gone off, there was a soccer match being played in one of the parks nearby. The people who stayed on the grounds were okay, but a lot of them panicked and, trying to get home, were caught by the bombs in the street. Apart from the explosions, a big factory wall collapsed on the fleeing soccer fans, crushing ninety-six people.

After what seemed like hours, the family came home and boarded up the shop windows, and we were able to come out of the fridge. We could not go outside, as Dutch Nazis had cordoned off the street. They were locals, and would know that I was a stranger. We waited for a few days, and the first night we had the all clear, we went outside in the dark and made our way to the old man's hideout. It was only a little place and, as my Turkish host, his wife and daughter came as well, there was not enough room for me.

So, I was sneaked out the next night to the home of a Mr Migchelbrink, a friend of the Turkish family. Jo Migchelbrink and his sister were already hiding one man, and as they had a very small house, they could not accommodate me as well.

Mr Migchelbrink suggested that his brother, Jaap, might be able to hide me, at least for a little while. During our walk in the dark to Jaap's home, Mr Migchelbrink explained that it would only be temporary, as his brother had children, the youngest being only three years old, and children being children, they might talk. When we arrived, I stayed outside in the laundry, while the kids were taken by their mother into the parlour. I was brought inside to the kitchen and, in no time, it was decided that I could stay.

During the day, I hid in the space above the ceiling that was like an attic. I came down only at night when the kids were in bed. After a couple of days, one of them claimed that there was a man upstairs, so they met me and were told everything about me. They never told a soul!

The Migchelbrinks were very nice people. After I had been with them for a fortnight, Jaap told me he had talked it over with his wife Jenny, and they were willing to keep hiding me. Of course, I accepted their offer and have been grateful to them for the rest of my life!

I stayed with them from October 1943 until June 1945, the end of the war – that is, for nearly two years. Whilst I was there, we had some narrow escapes and one nasty experience remains very clear in my mind.

One night, one of Jaap's brothers came to tell him that he had heard through the grapevine that the next morning the whole town was to be cordoned off and broken into sections for a house-to-house search for Jews. The Germans were also looking for able-bodied men to use as labour in their war industries in Germany.

Jaap Migchelbrink and a number of his friends worked in a local factory and they devised a plan to hide there to avoid being picked up. They hoped Germans would not look there, since the searches usually started

at dawn, long before the employees arrived at work. Jaap's brother did not know they were hiding me, so he did not understand why Jaap decided not to go to the factory. He had decided to risk being picked up so the Germans would not keep searching the house for other males. That would mean disaster for his family and me.

Very early the next morning, I heard a lot of noise in the street outside and, looking through the window, I saw many people milling around. I woke the family. The Germans had blocked the streets off and were already marching local men out of their homes.

They probably would have found me but for my friend Jaap's ingenuity and a bit of luck. At that time, one of his brothers was a patient in a sanatorium on the other side of the country. Jaap had sent his older daughter to his brother's doctor to see if he could get hold of a medical certificate describing his medical condition, which the doctor agreed to do. As the brothers had the same first initials and similar first names, the certificate could pass as being about Jaap.

It was a risk they hoped would work, and there was still the worry that they would discover me. Jaap came up with a further solution. There were some bags of potatoes in the attic that had just been delivered by the organisation, and Jaap carried them all the way downstairs to the cellar. He did not want my help, but got me to lie in a corner of the cellar, under the staircase, and he then heaped the potatoes on top of me.

After that effort, he was very short of breath, and went to bed. Not a moment too soon! The Germans came and Jenny sent them up to his bedroom, and told them that he was deadly ill with an infectious disease. Jaap was indeed pale and sweating. The soldiers did not even want to see the certificate. They left very quickly, but not before coming into the cellar and pinching some food. I could smell the leather of their boots through the potatoes, but fortunately, I was not discovered.

The Migchelbrinks had only a small, working class semi-detached house and the conditions were cramped. At night, I slept in their son's

bedroom, while he slept in his parents' room in a bed that was almost too small for him. During the day, I stayed in the attic, as the floor in the bedroom creaked a little and neighbours would sometimes come in to have a chat with Jenny. At night after curfew at eight o'clock, the Migchelbrinks closed the back gate and I would come down to their room to talk with the family, sometimes until two in the morning.

From the beginning of my stay, there was never any mention of money and I had none to give them. Later on, when the organisation found out where I was, they came to the house and made an arrangement regarding food and some payment. My friends never mentioned it, and I never asked.

Do you want to know what, in my opinion, was the motivation of Jenny and Jaap Migchelbrinks? Well, Jenny was very religious, but Jaap was an atheist, so religious conviction was not the whole answer. They were terribly anti-Nazi and determined not to subscribe to that crazy ideology in any way. They were both beautiful people, never thinking of themselves, very honest and very down to earth. Their motivation for hiding me was purely of a humane character – they wanted to save a fellow human being.

The only people besides their children who knew that I was at their place were his brother Jo and his sister Ada who had introduced me to them. The rest of the family on both sides was very surprised when I turned up after liberation. They simply could not believe I had been hidden there for so long!

Today, apart from my wife and children, the Migchelbrinks are the only mishpacha (family) I have. Jenny calls me her son, even though she is only about twelve years older than I am. Sadly, Jaap died a few years ago. For their children, I am their older brother. Their younger son, born a couple years after the war, is named after me.

I saw them on my last visit overseas and, as always, I was received like a king. Most of my children have met them over the years, and when I visit them I always get the odd feeling that I did them a great favour to let

them save me. That's how they are! We are still the closest friends and always will be.

In the post-war years, I tried to learn something about the remarkable Dr Overduin, to whom I owe my life as well. He was born in 1900 in Leiden, and became a minister when he moved to Enschede in 1937. During the war, he helped save hundreds of Jews and others from the Germans, by hiding them either in his house or in the houses of trusted others who were willing to help. He was arrested by the Germans three times for speaking up against them in his sermons, and was once put in prison for several months. This was in addition to heading the network of ordinary citizens who hid Jews in their homes. His work was financed mainly by businessmen in Enschede, who raised large sums of money to support his work. Pastor Leendert Overduin was a very modest man, who later did not talk much about his past. He died in 1976.

Sadly, it only needed one person to betray the work of these many magnificent people. That is what happened to my whole family and some of their Dutch rescuers. They were betrayed by the wife of a brother of those who first hid me. She was German, but was trusted because she professed herself to be totally anti-Nazi. She wormed herself into the organisation to collect information, and betrayed seventy-two people in all, including her own husband. They were all sent to concentration camps. After the war, she was tried and sentenced to only two years jail after being deported back to Germany.

Of all my family, I was the only one to survive the war. My father and stepmother, Ruben and Mathilde, died on 28 May 1943 in Sobibor, as did my beautiful sister-in-law Betsy. My brother Herman (Broer) was also sent to Sobibor and died there on 23 July 1943. My other brothers, Leo and Laurens, were sent to Auschwitz. Leo died on 4 January 1944 and Laurens, on 31 March 1944.

May the world never forget the slaughter of the innocent. May the world never forget those who, to save a life, cared enough to put their own lives in danger.

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HEDY'S STORY, OR THE MEN AND WOMEN HAVE ARRIVED HAPPILY AND HEALTHILY IN AUSCHWITZ

Vivian Weldon (née Krauss)

Hedy Balcone and son Gabriel, August 1947

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***Pre-March 1938**

This is the story of my maternal great aunt, Hedy Balcone (née Epstein) as recorded by her at the age of eighty-two, and told to me on many occasions until her death at the age of one hundred and two. I have made some corrections as a result of subsequent research.

*

My mother, Mathilde, was ill for more than a year and different doctors tried various cures without any favourable results. As a last resort, they advised her to try another pregnancy. As Emil, my father, and Mathilde already had two children, Lily, sixteen, and Carl, fourteen, they were understandably not very thrilled at this idea.

Nevertheless, against all the odds, I, Edvige (Hedy) Epstein, was born on 13 June 1905. My childhood was quite normal. A weekly highlight was when my mother took me out each Sunday afternoon to one of my many aunts who was the owner of a big coffee house on the Ringstrasse, in Vienna. There, I could enjoy as many ice creams as I could eat. The same aunt had a guesthouse outside of Vienna, on the Semmering, a lovely place in the mountains where there was always lots of snow. Sledding was an experience that never lost its exhilaration for me.

My parents worked full-time in the shoe factory they had built up from nothing. Then came World War I, and my brother Carl enlisted and looked very handsome in his lieutenant's uniform. After the war, my sister Lily married and my brother took over the shoe factory, insisting that his parents retire, as they had worked hard for long enough.

He too married. My sister-in-law was a very pretty girl. She was happy to have a little sister at last, as she was an only child. They had a lovely, big apartment and there were plenty of parties. They went out a lot and often took me with them, so I went to the opera, theatres, the pictures, skiing, ice-skating and dancing. It was a lovely time for me. I was in high school at the time, which I quite enjoyed, as I had no difficulty studying. I also took singing and piano lessons. My ambition was to go to the university and become a doctor of medicine.

Every summer, my mother and I went for a two-month holiday, sometimes to the mountains but mostly near a lake, because I loved to swim. One summer, we were in an enchanting resort in Karinzia when we received a telegram: 'Please come home immediately!' We were alarmed and we left, anxious to discover the reason for the brief missive. Out of the blue, my brother was bankrupt! Our flat was empty, and that included our drawers and cupboards. Everything had been taken to help satisfy our creditors.

My brother lost more than we did. When she realised that the 'good life' was over, his wife filed for divorce. He decided that the only thing he could do was to leave Vienna. Carl went to Paris to start anew. My parents were devastated – all their years of hard work had gone for nothing. We were all desperate and close to a breakdown.

I knew that I had to do something, and do it quickly. I left school, took millinery classes and immediately began to make hats. It was an inspired idea because, at that time, every smart woman absolutely had to have a hat to match each of her outfits. Business boomed. My sister also helped. And so life went on.

An opportunity arose for me to get a position in Vienna, provided I could speak and correspond in Italian. I sought a private tutor but soon after, and by chance, I was introduced to Roger Genazzani, an Italian doctor of chemistry. He offered me the position of 'au pair' for his family in Milan and I accepted. Over the next few months there, I got to know many Italian families and learnt to speak Italian fluently, albeit in the Milanese dialect.

During my first week in Milan, I noticed a fair-haired young man at a coffee shop, and he noticed me as well. We were introduced through a mutual friend.

He was Angelo Balcone. 'What a funny name!' I thought to myself. He was polite and pleasant, a man with a serene, gentle face and a smile full of humour. His father owned a large, well-established hardware store, and Angelo worked in the family business. He was good company, and he

soon introduced me to his family and friends. He quickly became more than a friend to me.

My three-month stay in Milan was coming to an end and we were both sad about the imminent separation. Before my departure, Angelo proposed to me. I had expected him to do so and was very happy. Nevertheless, I had my doubts. Would it work? I was only six months his junior, and we were of different nationalities and religions – he was Catholic and I was Jewish – but that did not worry me a great deal.

I had no objection to converting to Catholicism, as I had always been convinced that there is only one God, no matter what different religions call him. We were married in Milan on 30 January 1936 and, after visiting my family in Vienna, we came back to make our apartment in Milan into a home. It was a very enjoyable task as we made many of the things, like lampshades and pictures, ourselves.

My mother came to spend the spring of 1937 with us, while my father went to visit my brother in Paris. The following year, again after spending time with us in Milan, she joined my father in Paris. They had intended to return to Vienna together, but fate in the form of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis had other plans. Austria was invaded and my parents did not return.

The news that I was pregnant made them both very happy. However, one day I received a sympathy card from a friend regarding the death of my mother. The sender was unaware that I knew nothing about it. It transpired that my father and Angelo had decided to keep this tragic news from me so as not to endanger my pregnancy. Only someone who loved their mother as dearly as I can imagine my feelings of immense loss. Shortly after, my father also passed away.

In spite of my terrible bereavement, I had a normal pregnancy, and on 10 July 1939, our son Gabriel was born. Angelo and I were very happy to have this lovely, healthy baby. My only regret was that my mother had not lived to see him.

As welcome as our child was, it was a terrible time in history. The whole world was in an uproar and the persecution of the Jews was in full swing. All of our Jewish relatives and friends, if lucky enough to escape Hitler's clutches, scattered. My brother was not so lucky, and was murdered in Auschwitz. War reached Italy soon enough. There were many air raids, and each time it was obligatory to go to the cellar. It is almost impossible to describe the anxiety and terror of the twenty-one families – old people, mothers, fathers, children, babies – all huddling together in our cellar.

There was incredible confusion. Some prayed out loud, some accused everybody and everything, others wept, and all the children and babies cried. At last, we would be allowed to go back to our apartments, and when the gas and electricity were finally turned on again, we would begin to make a cup of coffee, often only to hear the sirens start up again, signalling the next air raid.

Angelo and I decided that we had to get out of Milan. After searching for a long time, we found accommodation in a bedroom-kitchen basement in Oronco, near Varese, about an hour's train travel from Milan. While in hiding there, Gabriel became ill, and needed to be seen by a doctor. A Dr Tenconi visited, gave his advice and left, apparently remaining in ignorance of the fact that I was Jewish.

More and more Jews from all over Europe were coming to Italy in the hope of escaping to Switzerland, and Angelo discovered a way to help them. Some of the peasants who lived near the border were willing to guide small parties of refugees across the frontier at night. Although these trips were highly dangerous for all involved, Angelo organised many of them, twenty-three in all. We did consider whether Gabriel and I should join such a group, but we were convinced that this was not necessary because, even in Germany, Mischehen (Jews in mixed marriages) were free.

And then one day, our janitor in Milan let us know that the police had come to arrest me. Angelo immediately arranged with one of the guides that we join a group. On that very day an old friend, Luisa Schlesinger,

who had introduced Angelo to me, visited us. She was sick and alone, and asked to join us. When Angelo told us that he had linked us with the group leaving on Tuesday 8 December 1943, I begged him to arrange the same thing for Luisa. He was informed that the Tuesday group could not take any more, so he postponed our departure until Wednesday so that Luisa could join us. What a twist of fate! Every member of the Tuesday group arrived safely in Switzerland, where they were looked after very well until the end of the war.

It was agreed that we meet the guide in Luino, where Angelo would hand us over. Gabriel was sedated so that he would not cry as the guide carried him on his shoulders. After a heart-wrenching farewell, we set off: the guide, Luisa, Gabriel, another man and myself. We were put in a car, and after about one hour of driving over winding mountain roads, we were led into a barn.

There, the guide tried to extort all the money that we had with us, even though he had already been generously paid. He left us in that barn, warning us not to go outside, lest our footsteps in the deep snow betray us to the patrolling Germans. He said that he would return after talking to Angelo, but he never returned.

Four days later Angelo arrived. What relief! What joy! How did he know where we were? He told me that it was because we had agreed that as soon as I got to Switzerland, I would send him a telegram. When he did not receive it, he guessed that something had gone wrong, and had traced us to where we were. We decided to return to Luino. We arrived at night and tried to find food and lodging, but no one wanted to risk lodging Jews. Finally, at around 7 pm on the same day, 9 December, when it was already dark, Angelo was made welcome by the owner of the Hotel Impero at Germignaga, close to Luino.

Trusting in the management, our group spent the night at this little hotel. At dawn the next day, we decided to abandon our escape attempt for the moment and return to Varese. On the way there, we were arrested by two carabinieri. No wonder the hotel owner had been happy to give us shelter – there was a 5000 lire reward for each Jewish person

apprehended. It was at that moment that the full horror and knowledge came to me of the inhumanity that this particular war could unleash on our young family.

The men and women were split up, though initially we were kept in separate quarters in the same Italian prisons. We were moved from Luino to a monastery in Como, and were then removed to a prison in Varese. Angelo was taken to the male section of this prison, while Gabriel and I were put in a cell that already contained twenty-one Jewish women and their children.

During this first sleepless night, my mind was in a vortex with this question at the centre – should I split up from Gabriel, and if so, how? Somehow, deep in my heart I knew, even then, that I would end up in Auschwitz. If I could leave him in Italy, Gabriel would be spared. I mentioned my intentions to the women around me. They were appalled by the idea. I was accused of being a heartless mother. How could I even consider abandoning my four-year-old child? The answer is that it was the hardest decision I had ever had to make in my entire life, and the right one.

I told the prison guard that Gabriel was very ill and needed to be seen by a doctor. The guard made arrangements and in due course, a doctor arrived. By sheer chance, it was the very same Dr Tenconi who had met us in Oronco. He asked what we were doing there in prison, and I explained the reason. He immediately extended his hand and said he would help us.

He announced to the guard that Gabriel had appendicitis, and needed to go to the hospital immediately for surgery. Papers were signed, and Gabriel and I were scuttled into a truck and taken off to the local hospital. Gabriel was put into a hospital bed and a German guard, with rifle and bayonet, was left standing next to the bed of this little boy. I was trucked back to the prison, and almost immediately, all of us were taken on to San Vittore, the main prison in Milan.

On 23 December 1943, the unnecessary appendectomy went ahead, and Gabriel was returned to the ward for recovery. This was the first stage leading to his liberation. Father Andrea Ghetti, Francesco Moneta, a student, Uccellini, an engineer, and a fourth man, Napoleone Rovera, entered the Varese Hospital ward armed with weapons, and removed Gabriel. He was hidden for several days in the nearby home of Father Natale Motta. So many years later, Gabriel still clearly remembers being driven in the dark from the hospital, being placed in the centre of a large double bed, and being given what he recalls as a 'bucket' of hot chocolate.

He was subsequently transferred fifteen times between the homes of peasants, usually by bike, while hidden in a rucksack on their backs. He was finally delivered to Angelo's parents, Giuseppe and Maria Balcone, in Brunate, where he was kept hidden for the remainder of the war.

At San Vittore prison, Angelo went to the male section and I was put in the Jewish wing with about 100 others; men, women and children of all ages. Although there were three floors of cells, we huddled together on the ground floor, all weeping and trying to comfort each other. The SS guards performed atrocities daily. Apart from the beatings and kicking, there was one cell with an open hole in the centre which was the communal toilet. On some days, men would be picked at random and made to clean the edges of this hole in the cement ... with their tongues!

To make matters worse, there was no way for me to contact the outside world, or even to learn something about Angelo. I cannot even begin to describe my state of mind. No news of my husband or my baby! Had I done the right thing by splitting us up? My mind was in turmoil.

San Vittore prison had a German commander at that time. His name was Scharführer Koch. He asked the prisoners whether any of us could speak Italian and German. Cautiously, I volunteered that I could do so, and I was subsequently appointed as a sort of secretary to Koch. It was my responsibility to record the details of all new arrivals to the prison.

In due course, an Italian peasant woman was admitted to the prison in a greatly distressed state. While recording her details, I asked why she had been arrested. She explained that she really did not understand what was happening. She had simply been asked by her local priest to knit a jumper for a little boy who had been admitted to a local hospital, and had nothing to wear but the clothes he was in. From this snippet of information, I took heart and presumed that Gabriel was still alive. Then, by overhearing a conversation, I leant that Angelo had been released. I was sure he would find our son and look after him. At least, they would be safe!

I was transferred to yet another Italian prison in Fossoli. In transit, I managed to pass a scrap of paper to an Italian guard with the name Fossoli written on it, together with Angelo's address in Milan. As a result, Angelo was finally able to find and visit me. I then learnt the details of Gabriel's rescue.

I remained in Fossoli for about six months and then, with so many others, I was herded on to a train to Auschwitz. At some point after leaving Fossoli, I begged the German guard, Hans Hagen, to let my husband know what had happened to me. He subsequently sent a handwritten note to Angelo in an envelope postmarked, Bolzano 10.8.44 and addressed to Angelo Balcone Via Cusani No. 14 Milano.

The note reads: 'Männer u Frauen glücklich undgesund in Auschwitz angekommen.' Translated, this means: The men and women have arrived happily and healthily in Auschwitz.

*

Although this must have been of small comfort to Angelo, the actions of this Hans Hagen, whose name Hedy remembered until her death, would have been completely against regulations. Nevertheless, it shows that he had a degree of humanity that was not typical of most of the Nazis she had encountered.

Hedy was reunited with Angelo and Gabriel in late 1945. How she survived those ghastly eighteen months is a story in itself, and too long to

include in this tribute to those who did not hate, and thus put their own lives in danger. I will simply add something of her post-war history.

*

The war was over, and all the horrors and atrocities of the Nazi regime had ended. The joy of being free and able to act according to one's own will was elating and overwhelming. All the more so considering that out of the 700 women in the original convoy, only three had survived, and I was one of them.

Now, my whole focus was to try to get back home to Italy. First, I found my way to Prague and then to Vienna, where I found out that the only way to get to Italy was to enter a Russian camp in Kaisersteinbrück. However, I was told that everyone was grouped there according to nationality, so that their own governments could bring them home. According to Russian law, it was your place of birth that determined your nationality and, as I had been born in Austria, I was already there! I wandered around, my brain feverishly trying to find a solution to this problem.

Then I had an inspiration. On being admitted to the camp, when asked where my place of birth was, I would answer 'Siena' in a very low voice. Should I be accused of lying, I would insist that my reply had been 'Vienna', and that I had been misunderstood. I did as I planned and was not found out. So there I was, in another camp, on bread rations again – but now, very big bread rations.

After two months in this camp, and with no government in Italy yet formed, we were told that we would have to be sent to the Ukraine to work, in order to continue receiving rations. This was too much, and although it was not easy to escape from this camp, I simply had to try. I joined six soldiers, and together we got away. We met up with some English soldiers who gave us directions, and so, on foot, with occasional lifts from bicycle riders, farmers with hay carts and, finally, by train, we arrived in Verona. From there, I could access a train to Milan.

Finally in Milan, I saw a Red Cross office at the end of the station, where I asked for the best way to search for my husband and child. It goes without saying that I didn't have a single penny. They gave me a note that entitled me to use trains, buses and trams free of charge.

As I pushed one half of the double doors to go out, a man was pushing the other half to come in. It was Angelo! He had been coming to the station for weeks to meet incoming trains with the hope of finding me, or at least some news of me. He was just dropping into the Red Cross to ask when the next train was due. It was literally like finding a needle in a haystack.

My sister, who had luckily escaped with her family before the war, was in Australia. Determined that we should join them, she sent us all the necessary papers and visas. The situation in Italy at that time was very unsettled, and Angelo was keen to emigrate. He did not want to experience a third war. I did not want to move at all. I was totally fed up with all the moving around I had done, and was very happily settled in our home. We had many quarrels, but Angelo prevailed.

Like most immigrants, we both worked long and hard, and at many jobs, to establish ourselves. I retired when I was seventy-one years of age. If it were up to me to pick my epitaph, it would read: 'I did it the hard way.'

These days, I sit in our backyard in Bondi, enjoying the magnificent view of the immense ocean spread out in front of me. Gabriel and his wife live close by, but the past is always with me.

Excerpt from **Courage to Care Vol 1: 28 Remarkable Stories of Rescue During World War II.**
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Upstander Activity

A Teaching & Learning Resource to follow the Courage to Care (Vic.) Upstander Program

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LOVE, THE CONQUEROR

Helen Leperere

Helen Leperere with husband, Lon, Versailles, France, 1948

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***Pre-March 1938**

I have never been back to Poland since I was forcibly taken from my home in 1941, never to see my family again. Yet my memory guides me through the streets of Sosnowiec, the town of my past, the place where my siblings and I were born into a happy, loving household. Although I have travelled abroad several times, I have never had the emotional strength to go back and face it again. I do not have a single soul there, not even a grave, to visit.

It all started in our family apartment, where I felt so secure and protected. On this particular winter's night, in January 1941, a horrible commotion woke us up: the banging of rifles on the door, the kicking of boots and the yelling of voices. My mother moved fast.

She immediately ordered my older sister, Bronia, and my father to hide, since it was the males and young adults of Jewish families that were being rounded up to work as slave labourers for the Nazis. Every household had a hiding place. Ours was an invisible opening concealed behind a normal wall in the bathroom. The banging on the door became quite frantic now; the shouting even louder.

Mother opened the door and two SS men with rifles leapt in like wild dogs, shouting for Bronia to come out. My mother tried to talk to them, but one of them slapped her so hard that she fell to the floor. My father, unable to bear it, came out of his hiding place but not Bronia. I told my mother that I would go in her place. My devastated father agreed, saying that children would surely be sent back home at once. I was, after all, only fourteen. I dressed myself warmly, and Natek, my brother, offered me his new snow boots, his only barmitzvah present from our parents. This boy, who I believed to be so spoilt, was offering me his most prized possession. As I left, I saw the enormous despair in my parents' eyes and the tears running down my ten-year-old sister Maniusia's pale face. This is how I remember them, and this image haunts me still. I never saw any of them again. Never, ever!

Escorted by the two tall SS soldiers with rifles on their shoulders, I found myself out on the street. It was a beautiful frosty night, with clear sky and lots of crisp snow. Snow can seem very beautiful and peaceful,

but it can also be very frightening when it combines with the sound of heavy boots marching on it … crunch and crackle, crunch and crackle. Whenever I see snow in paintings or films, I hear the sound of those awful boots worn by the two tall SS soldiers, and see them with their rifles, escorting one fourteen-year-old girl.

We were soon joined by other groups of bewildered young women and girls, and we were ordered to form groups of five abreast, and to march 'Schnell, schnell!' (fast, fast) with occasional pushes from their rifles. We arrived at a three-storey building in Skladowa Street. It was a school, now transformed into a segregation point. Later, the Germans simply caught people off the street and sent them away, mainly to Auschwitz.

We were kept at this school for three days and nights. We were given water, but no food except for some watery soup. We were packed in so tightly that we had to stand all the time. Some were lucky enough to get a small spot on the floor, and could sit for a while, until they were kicked or pushed by others, desperate for a little more space.

At dawn of the fourth day, again we were ordered to form groups of five abreast and march, 'faster, faster!' Some women had to be held from both sides, as they were half-dead from the ordeal of the previous days. We arrived at a train station that I had never seen before because it was used for commercial transports only. Large cattle trains were lined up, their doors open wide. Again, the familiar yelling, this time combined with pushing, until we were all in. Finally, the doors were slammed behind us.

Darkness again. Somehow my wagon was not so terribly overcrowded, so we managed to take turns in sitting on the floor. I do not remember how long the journey lasted. Some women said it was five days, but it seemed like five years to me. We were, of course, unaware of the destination, but we all longed for the journey to be over, regardless of where it ended. Anything would be better than this dark, stinking wagon. Later I found that much worse is possible.

We were let out at some intervals to relieve ourselves, humiliatingly in

the presence of SS guards, and to collect our meagre rations of bread and water. Icicles were our saviours. Finally, the train stopped. After a very long time, the doors were unbolted. At once we were greeted by the now familiar shouting and pushing and the barking of human voices, this time mixed with those of real dogs. Again, five abreast and, 'March faster, faster!'

We emerged to find ourselves in a beautiful, picturesque valley surrounded by mountains. This place was called Gabersdorf. It was situated in Sudetenland, which was once Czechoslovakia but had now been annexed by the Germans. The trees and shrubs were thickly covered with snow, and deep snow was all around us. Suddenly, we were ordered to stop. We had arrived in front of huge barracks surrounded by barbed wire.

A few German women in uniforms were standing awaiting us, legs apart, hands clasped behind their backs, their heads proudly held up, their faces harsh. How could pretty young women like this display such hatred on their faces, such mean looks in their eyes? It was January 1941. We were to be totally at their mercy until those of us who survived were liberated by the Russians, but that was not until May 1945.

We had no thought at all of rescue as we were ordered to stand and hear a long and threatening 'welcome speech'. We all had the urgent need to lie down and sleep. At last, we were ordered into the barracks and allocated our dormitories. We got our double-decker beds with thin straw mattresses, and one thin blanket each. It was mid-winter, when frost painted the windows in the unheated barracks, but by then we were beyond feeling anything.

We just collapsed on the beds, me wearing Natek's snow boots. I do not remember what happened to them afterwards. Later on, as the camp started to fill with more incoming transports of women, we each were forced to share our narrow bed with another woman.

I do not recall if it was night or day when I was awoken, for it was still dark outside. I remember the horrible loud shriek of the alteste (the

oldest) screaming, 'Aufstehen!' (get up). She was a Jewish woman, called 'The Oldest' not because of her age, but her position. Shivering, we had to stand at the assembly. The Oldest was the one who counted us, and reported to the camp leader. This woman was extremely rough, and she particularly disliked me from the first moment. Perhaps she had a sense of my utter distaste for her that I naively did not quite mask. Perhaps she had always been a bully, or perhaps power tends to turn ordinary people into villains.

Some women were needed to scrub floors in the long corridors of the barracks. Why she picked me, I do not know – me and another young girl, Guta, a pretty seventeen-year-old. She ordered us to fetch a bucket of water, gave us each a small nailbrush and a rag, and yelled, 'Scrub, but fast.' Needless to say, we were quite hopeless. Every few minutes, she would come and kick the bucket of water with her boots, screaming: 'Is this what you call cleaning? Scrub, scrub, faster, faster!'

We noticed that the camp leader was standing at the end of the corridor with a nasty smirk on her face. I no longer recall how the ordeal finished. This incident completely broke my spirits. For a while, I started to walk like a zombie, dragging my legs. I even gave up rations of bread to other women in exchange for them washing my underwear – we still possessed some at that time. I just cried and cried.

Then a girl I did not know, one from a different town, stepped in. She was some years older than me. 'Listen here,' she said in a stern voice, 'This place is not for crying. We are here to work. You are not going to give up food for someone to wash your underwear, you are going to wash it yourself.' And thus my lifelong friendship with Pola began. She watched over me like a guardian angel all through the years in the camp.

So much for the horror, the cruelty and extreme hardship. This is, surprisingly, also a love story. Not mine, but nevertheless one that sustained me and kept me from despair.

Throughout the ages, love has been the most universal theme for songs, poetry and stories. Most novels have a love interest, and there is hardly a film made without an element of romance in it. What follows is yet one

more story of love, but an extraordinary one that flowered in the least likely of times and places.

The time is the Second World War; the place, our dreadful German slave labour camp. A few hundred women are locked behind barbed wire, working in a huge spinning factory that manufactures raw cotton. They work from dawn until dark. They are starving, cold and frightened. Of course, they do not look glamorous; not pretty, not even the slightest bit feminine. In fact, they hardly look human. I am one of those women, but in this story, I am not one of the lovers. I have the role of onlooker.

Suddenly, men appear within our premises, tall, good-looking men in clean army uniforms. They are English prisoners of war assigned to work in the same factory. We are, of course, forbidden to talk to them, as they are to us. At the beginning, their presence has no effect on us. We are beyond human feelings, but as time goes by, somehow the presence of the opposite sex begins to stir long-suppressed emotions. A silent companionship develops. A wink, a smile from the men reminds us that there are decent, normal human beings in the world. Words are whispered to us in English, incomprehensible but recognised as words of greeting and comfort. I hear, 'Keep your chin up!' from one of them, an Aussie who seems particularly kind. He is always smiling encouragingly. It takes me a while to understand the meaning of this sentence, although, of all the women, I have a little schoolgirl English to utilise.

I often try to imagine how they saw us. We were miserable, emaciated creatures, ragged kerchiefs covering our short hair. We would drag ourselves from the barracks to the factory and back, with rough wooden clogs on our feet. We were under the guard of brutal Germans, male and female, who treated us harshly, and had the power of life and death over us. It showed in our demeanour. Poor, ugly remnants of human beings! Could we present any attraction to the opposite sex? Surely not! They wore clean army uniforms, walked briskly and defiantly, and were not afraid of the guards. They were not hungry and cold. They, unlike us, were protected by rules, and worked normal hours. But they were prisoners too, and watching them 'keep their chins up', we felt strengthened in our will to survive.

And slowly … a spark was kindled. Every morning, boxes of empty spools were delivered by the Englishmen and placed next to the huge machines we operated, dangerous work that required every bit of our attention. The raw cotton was spun onto those spools by the machines. We would then place them back in the boxes, which were then collected and loaded on to trolleys by the Englishmen, to be delivered to different departments of the factory for further manufacturing. It all had to work with utmost precision, like clockwork, and it did, under the supervision of experienced German mechanics and guards.

Some of the girls began to find notes in their workboxes. Notes like, 'What is your name?' and, 'How old are you?' were beginning to appear in the boxes among the spools, delivered with a wink or a smile. How they lifted our morale, even though we were quite aware that the punishment for communicating with them would be severe for us.

Nothing would happen to them, but our women, when caught for 'insubordination' of any sort, would have their hair shaved off, or were publicly beaten. Some were even sent to Auschwitz for a small piece of food found on them by the Germans. Yet risks continued to be taken. When you are hungry all the time, you think of little else but food. When you have been treated like vermin for so long, a piece of correspondence directed to you reminds you that you are human.

This 'correspondence' particularly developed between two of my best friends and two of the prisoners. Noel, the Australian soldier from Newcastle who taught us to keep our chins up, was one. He corresponded with Pola. Alex, from Scotland, had his eye on Guta, whose beauty still showed in spite of all her privations. The men began to bribe their German guards who quickly learned to look the other way. The English prisoners were very generously supplied with food parcels from the Red Cross, as well as cigarettes that were a special temptation for the Germans.

Pola and Guta were more than fair. They always shared their small food gifts with us. Every bar of chocolate was equally divided between our

group of seven that had formed the closest family one can imagine. Though we are now scattered in different parts of the world, our ties of friendship have lasted for over sixty years. I remember particularly a tin of sardines that miraculously reached us via the boxes. One of us, Bella, would not allow us to throw the empty tin away, saying she could not part with the beautiful aroma of the sardines. It had long ago evaporated from the tin, but she couldn't bear to throw it away. She would hold it under her nose and inhale and inhale, while consuming her small ration of bread. Her imagination provided the aroma for quite some time.

By now, real love developed between the two couples. Long letters began to appear in the boxes, and on an assigned moment, when the guards conveniently disappeared, the girls grabbed the notes. At first, I was the main translator – utilising the little that I understood at that time. The men wrote about themselves, their families and their countries. All they wrote about seemed so very strange to us. And of course, they expressed their feelings towards the girls. They were imagining how beautiful the girls would be when the war was over and they could take them away to their homes, care for them, dress them in lovely clothes, etc.

Though life in the camp became harder and more unbearable as the war progressed, their feelings for each other prevailed. The 'correspondence' continued. I was also given the task to answer the letters, which I did at first, but the girls soon got upset with my teasing. They were even more concerned by my growing reluctance to stay up late into the night after twelve or fourteen hours of work, to write in a narrow bed shared with another girl. They soon started to write for themselves, mostly in German, with a few words in English.

Noel was particularly cheerful, or pretended to be. He was helpful not only to Pola, but also to many of us, hiding, very skilfully, items of food or medicine, which we needed so badly. Those of us who survived the four years in that camp always remember Noel with gratitude and affection. He was the most adventurous and courageous among the sixteen or eighteen prisoners in that Stalag (prisoner-of-war camp). He soon invented ways of meeting face to face for a few short minutes,

when the German guard was occupying himself with something else. We would watch with our hearts in our throats. Those romantic rendezvous took place in different corners of the factory that Noel had explored previously, and checked for safety. A few minutes only, but what precious time for the sweethearts.

The war finally came to an end and we were liberated by the Russian Army. Noel and Alex came immediately to the camp to take care of their girls. Their marriage proposals had already been made through the correspondence via the spool boxes. Transports soon started to arrive for the former prisoners-of-war, to take them back to their countries. They were strictly – very strictly – for the men only, but Noel would not be repatriated without Pola. After some heated words with his superiors, he was finally allowed to take her with him. Alex left for Scotland, promising a tearful Guta to send for her immediately.

He was true to his word. Guta was the only one of our group to immediately make the long journey to Paris through a still smouldering landscape, a trip that took many weeks to complete. After only a short time, papers arrived for her with permission to immigrate to Dundee, Scotland, the home of her future husband. Noel was forced to leave Pola in London. War with Japan was still raging, and no civilian ships were allowed to travel through the Pacific Ocean.

Nevertheless, Pola was one of the first war brides to arrive in this country. She reached Australia immediately after the war with Japan was over. Noel came from a very large family in Newcastle. He was one of nine siblings. They all welcomed Pola with open arms, and she immediately felt like one of the family. I am always deeply touched by the stories she tells me about her arrival here, and the warm reception his family gave her. A stranger appeared, a girl from a small town in Poland. She was traumatised, still bewildered by the horrors of the war and the loss of her entire family. She had a very poor knowledge of English, and could hardly communicate with them. Yet at once, those warm-hearted people made her so very welcome.

Noel's mother was a particularly wonderful person, who took Pola into her heart as if she were her own daughter. She even told Pola to try to

influence Noel to convert to Judaism: 'You have given up all your people for him; he can do something for you now, and take up your religion.' Pola never attempted to do this, nor did she change her religion. They have lived most of their lives in Sydney, and made many friends. Today, sixty years later, with two daughters and a grandchild, they still live a harmonious and happy life together, and have retired to Queensland.

Pola took to this country like a fish to water. The first letter we received from her in Paris, where we were still living in refugee centres, told us what a wonderful country Australia was. 'Imagine,' she wrote, 'Bread and milk is left outside – and nobody steals it!' Coming from Poland, it really seemed like a fairytale to all of us. One could not leave a crumb anywhere in Poland which would not be stolen at once. We assumed that in Australia, nobody ever went hungry. An amazing possibility!

I am very proud that Pola and Noel are my adopted family and acted as such for my husband, my children and me. Whenever I went to visit them, Noel would introduce me as his sister-in-law to all his friends and family. My daughter asked her 'Uncle' Noel to give her away at her wedding – my husband had died by then. Very proudly, Noel put on my husband's kipa (skullcap) and led her up to the chuppah (wedding canopy). I am very grateful to my daughter for making this choice. We have no other family. They and their children are very special to us.

Excerpt from **Courage to Care Vol 1: 28 Remarkable Stories of Rescue During World War II.**
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Upstander Activity

A Teaching & Learning Resource to follow the Courage to Care (Vic.) Upstander Program

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