



What Papa Told Me

By Felice Cohen

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What Papa Told Me is the story of Murray, a young Jewish boy from Poland whose courage and sheer will to live helped him survive eight different labor and concentration camps in the Holocaust, start a new life in America, and keep a family intact in the aftermath of his wife's suicide - one of the Nazis' last victims.

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What Papa Told Me By Felice Cohen Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"Children and grandchildren of survivors also have their stories to tell. As is this one. All are poignant, just as they all are important to the understanding of the Event and its human implications and consequences."
-Elie Wiesel, author of Night

"This is the Holocaust testimony of Murray Schwartzbaum, from Szczerkociny, Poland, as told to his granddaughter, Felice Cohen. While many such stories are told in the first-person with the help of a family member, Cohen also includes pieces of her conversation with her grandfather, opening the dialogue with the third-generation, a topic not always incorporated into Holocaust testimonies. This touching and heart wrenching story begins when Murray is a child, born in 1921, to a traditional Jewish family. Owners of a family-run lumber company, he has fond memories of his sisters and brother and the "normal" life that they all shared. When the Nazis invaded Poland, Murray's brother escaped to the Soviet Union, while the rest of the family tried to move to Bedzin but quickly learned of the killings of Jews and chose to return to their home. Murray lived most of the war in a series of slave labor camps, eventually being transported to Bergen-Belsen where he found his sister Cecia and learned of the tragic fates of the rest of their family. With his sister's help, Murray survived and together they were liberated by the American army in 1945. They each married a Holocaust survivor and began rebuilding their lives. But the story does not end there. Cohen asks her grandfather about her grandparents' move to the United States and the hardships they faced as Holocaust survivors. Both Murray and his wife Fela were deeply traumatized by what had occurred during the six years of the Nazi occupation. Murray recalled those difficult years and yet the story concludes in an inspiring and uplifting manner, and he explains to Felice the legacy that he has left for her, his other grandchildren, and future generations. This book can be graphic, exposing the horrors of the Nazi atrocities. Teachers should use their discretion when using this with middle-school students, though there is much to be learned from the story. It is written in an easy-to-understand style and tells the story of people their age who lived in an unfortunately devastating time. Perhaps one of the biggest reasons to use this with students is its emphasis on talking to grandparents, listening to their stories, and retelling them." - Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center

"Listening to your elders is important. The stories they tell you can help you choose your own path in life. And nobody tells history better than someone who's been there. This book is the life story of Felice Cohen's grandfather, Murray. He grew up in Poland with loving parents and five siblings. When Murray was nineteen, the lot of them were consigned to ghettos or shipped off to German camps. "What Papa Told Me" is primarily Murray's oral history of his experiences in the camps. It took ingenuity, resourcefulness, and plain luck to survive. Clearly, Murray had all of those and an indefatigable spirit. He worked for the Germans for five years of his life combating pestilence, plague, and unimaginable abuse. The secondary portion of this book is how Murray made a life for his family in America afterwards. That combination of skills got him from abject poverty to a successful grocery business and a lovely retirement in Boca. Murray doesn't lecture in his tales. He shines by example and that's the best kind of hero to have." -Rebecca McFarland Kyle

From the Author

The countless hours my grandfather and I spent together working on this book were worth every minute. I wrote this book - my first - because my grandfather asked me to. The plan was to give copies to just our

family, but after it was published it turned into so much more. Two honorable mention book awards, endorsements by Elie Wiesel and Yad Vashem, speaking engagements in numerous states at schools, synagogues and bookstores, schools purchasing the book for their Holocaust curriculum and much more. I'm fortunate to be able to share my grandfather's story with so many people and look forward to doing this for years to come.

About the Author

Felice Cohen has published over 100 opinion columns and articles in the New York Daily News, amNew York, and Metro (New York, Boston and Philadelphia editions). Many of her columns were picked up by jewishworldreview.com. She has published stories in two anthologies: The Truth About the Fact and For Daddy, With Love, and is also writing a personal memoir Crushed, a chapter of which won the Bronx Writers Chapter One competition while another chapter was recently published. A video of Ms. Cohen's 90 square foot Manhattan studio went viral with almost 6 million views on YouTube.com, gaining media attention on ABC's Good Morning America, NBC's LXTV, NY1, Good Morning Sacramento as well as on TV shows in Australia and Germany. She's also been on the radio in the U.S., Australia, Ireland, Canada, along with online media coverage on ABC, AOL, the Canada's Globe and Mail, and the UK's Daily Mail. And thanks to the YouTube(dot)com video of her 90 square foot studio, she is writing a book about Living Large in a Small Space. Felice is available for speaking engagements at schools, synagogues and bookstores. For more information on speaking engagements and on her book, go to www.whatpapatoldme.com.

Users Review

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