

"Every shoe tells something about its owner"



Adam Altschuler
18 Emander Drive Dianella
8.11.99
93751567
Carmel High School

"Every shoe tells something about its owner" ...

This thought echoed in my mind as I looked at Hinda's one remaining shoe. "Who was she and why was there a date etched in the bottom of her shoe?"

After doing some research, I found the answers to these haunting questions. Hinda Cohen was a toddler who was deported to Auschwitz in a children's aktion (round up) that occurred in the Kovno Ghetto, on March 27, 1944. HINDA WAS MURDERED IN AUSCHWITZ.

When Hinda was taken from her bed to be deported to Auschwitz, her shoe was left behind. When her father found it, he etched the date on the sole of her shoe and swore to preserve it for eternity.

Hinda's parents, Dov and Zipora Cohen, survived the war and kept her shoe until they died. ¹

About 70 years after WW2 living memories are fading. There aren't many people in the world that can address the Nazis and say "I beat you!" The great Holocaust survivors are now few and far between. Their stories of loss and survival are coming under question by ignorant younger generations. In a recent global survey, two-thirds of respondents either had never heard of the Holocaust or believed historical accounts were exaggerated. The ignorance is normally focused around the youth who haven't been told the real story, so here it is. In November 1938 a major nazi pogrom was conducted against German and Austrian Jews. The Nazis had an open policy of hatred for the nation's Jewish citizens. Before the National Socialist Party came to power in the 1930's, Jews had lived at the heart of the German culture for centuries, excelling in business, medicine and law. This open hatred for Jews led many to flee the country before the pogrom could occur. Many of those fleeing chose to go to Australia for its ideologies about giving citizens a fair go. Others were lucky enough to leave during this despicable act of hatred and some had to leave after witnessing these depressing acts committed by many nazis because of their belief in their campaign.

Adolf Hitler is the name that comes to mind when mentioning the Holocaust. He is the man that convinced others that Jews weren't 'real' Germans. He spread propaganda and blamed the Jews for Germany's economic and political problems. Adolf Hitler was the cunning mastermind that dictated millions of Jewish fates. In 1939 thousand of Jews were imprisoned in concentration camps following the mass arrests from the consequences of Kristallnacht (night of broken glass). Many more severe changes were to take place to make life a lot harder for many Jews around Germany. Following the outbreak of WW2 in Germany, new laws were to be placed strictly on Jews, these included a strict curfew, a general food rationing and not having the ability to visit certain places in Germany. These laws left many Jews lacking essential items for everyday use. With the Jews accepting these laws and not wanting to cause any problems, the Nazis saw this as a sign of weakness and knew they could demand whatever pleased them. In the year 1941 Jews were no longer allowed to use transport and had to start wearing the yellow Jewish star from the age of six. Children were extremely vulnerable during the period of the Holocaust, around 1.5 million Jewish kids were brutally murdered at the hands of the Nazi's. In the ghettos Jewish children died from starvation and diseases as well as a lack of clothing and housing. Eddie Jaku is a

¹ http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/artifacts/shoe_mittens.asp

man that knows all too well the horrors of being a boy in the Holocaust and the suffering that went on.²

Eddie spent most of his youth running from the nazis and ended up in Auschwitz but against all odds managed to survive. When the Germans started coming for the Jews, Eddie was scared. His father, who fought for Germany in the First World War, said to him: 'Don't worry, Eddie I have a friend. He is the headmaster of a big school but it's far away. I will get you false papers and take you there. You must never speak to the headmaster – he will be the only one who will know you are not named Walter Shleiss'. He lived there for five years learning different trades. After not seeing his parents for so long Eddie started to become desperate and set out to see them. Eddie knew it wasn't right to sneak away from the boarding school, but had a desperate longing to see his parents' faces. On the 10th of November, Eddie set off for a long train ride to Leipzig. Upon arriving, nobody was at home because everyone in his family knew what was going to happen that night. He opened the door to his house and was relieved to see his young dachshund named Lulu. Eddie and Lulu went to sleep and were woken up the next day by bashing on the door and ten men running at them with guns. These 10 men bashed and stabbed Eddie until he could no longer move and shot Lulu who was trembling next to Eddie. Lulu and Eddie had shared so many memorable experiences together and upon seeing his dog dead, Eddie was shattered and wanted to cry really badly but couldn't because every time he tried, a searing pain shot through his body. For the next few years Eddie spent his days running away from Nazis, in and out of concentration camps and even survived Auschwitz. At the end of the war Eddie moved to Australia with his wife and child to get as far away from Germany as possible.³

Many Holocaust survivors sought to establish new lives in Australia, which seemed to them a very inviting place; it was a highly-favoured haven, it was geographically as far from Europe (and their European memories) as possible and offered its citizens freedom and democracy. It was this wave of immigrants that altered the face of the Jewish community in Australia. Most of them were Yiddish-speaking Jews from Poland, Romania and other parts of Eastern Europe, although a number were Hungarian Jews who had led a more assimilated life in Europe before World War 2. Some survivors were accepted into Australia on the basis of their work skills. Nevertheless, proportional to population size, only Israel accepted more Holocaust survivors than Australia. The Australian Jewish Welfare Society played a pivotal role in obtaining entry permits to integrate and rehabilitate many Holocaust survivors. The society took responsibility for employment, housing, medical care, and tuition for surviving immigrants. Although there were many difficulties bringing these Jews from Germany, it was well worth it. Approximately 15000 Jews settled in Australia in the four years following 1945 and although they didn't bring much with them, these immigrants were revived by the prospect of a new country and brought hard work and commitment. These Jewish immigrants shared the usual difficulties of adjusting to new home soil, new languages and cultures and on top of all of that, the psychological trauma of losing loved ones as well as other Holocaust traumas, that would haunt them for the rest of their lives.⁴

² <http://www.ijs.org.au/Jewish-Immigration-after-the-Second-World-War/default.aspx>

³ <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/memoirs-of-a-sydney-holocaust-survivor/story-fni0cx12-1227194950404>

⁴ <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005142>

Humanitarian and sympathetic attitudes were expressed by a number of prominent Australians. The moderator of the Presbyterian Church in N.S.W. suggested that different churches send a protest against the treatment being accorded to the Jews in Germany, which had gone patriotism-mad. Men, women and children, he said, were being slaughtered for no reason and the atrocities were worse than reported. It was time for people to think internationally and to stand up for the right of all sections. One survivor wrote an article on 'coming home' which stressed: 'It is a very peculiar feeling. It is almost midnight. We are in the middle of a city with two million residents. We are in Sydney. We are in Australia. You who were born here or have been living here for many years, you might not understand these feelings. Though it is midnight, though it is just our second day in Sydney, we seem to be at home. Already we start to have the same sense of security as Australian citizens. We are beginning to share the confidence in their fellow citizens and in their country'. Many of the Jewish refugees to whom were interviewed, who came to Australia after the war, praised the warmth of the welcome when they got here, and were eternally grateful that they had arrived in a land so free of the virulent strain of anti-Semitism that they had escaped in Europe.

Their ability to put the past behind them and to forge new lives for themselves is a tribute to their courage and an inspiration to us all. In total, about 35 000 pre-war Jewish refugees and post-war Holocaust survivors had immigrated to Australia by 1961. These people have become loyal and grateful Australian citizens. The Australian ethos of a 'fair go' enabled many to achieve success in both psychological and material terms. Holocaust survivors have made significant contributions to Australia in fields as diverse as industry, theatre, art, medicine, architecture, academia and more. For many, this has been their way of giving something back to the country which has given them so much. ¹

There are a number of Jewish organisations in Sydney catering for the needs of Holocaust Survivors. These include the Australian Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Descendants, JewishCare, the Council on the Ageing, the Child Survivors Group, B'nai B'rith and the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies through its Shoah Remembrance Committee. Many Survivors act as Volunteer Guides at the Sydney Jewish Museum, serving to teach about the horrors of the Holocaust through retelling of their own experiences. The organisations listed above are involved in various educational and commemorative functions throughout the year, including Yom Hashoah and the Days of Holocaust Awareness, commemoration of Kristallnacht (the Infamous Night of Broken Glass) and remembrance of the liberation of various concentration and death camps. B'nai B'rith has an excellent program called Courage to Care. This is an exhibition which travels around country areas teaching tolerance and understanding from the viewpoint of the Righteous Among the Nations who saved Jews at their own peril during the Holocaust. The Australian Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Descendants began after an International Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in 1983. Its charter is to officially represent the views of Jewish Holocaust Survivors; to cooperate with other organisations and individuals in opposing Nazi and Fascist philosophy, activities and injustices, to foster the

memory of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, to assist and cooperate with educational programs on the Holocaust, to assist in acquiring and maintaining artefacts and memorabilia from the Holocaust period, to assist in cooperation with other institutions in providing solace and comfort for Jewish Holocaust survivors who are lonely and distressed and to encourage and participate in Holocaust memorialisation. The Association has approximately 750 members comprising of Survivors, their descendants and some interested and supportive members of the Jewish Community.¹

After the Holocaust, piles of shoes that had belonged to the victims, became a symbol of The Tragedy that had occurred. Next to the heaps of unmarked shoes, lies a small shoe with an etched number on the bottom, which tells a personal story ...

Let's put on our walking shoes and take a few steps backwards in History ...

Over 120 years ago, Yoel Breckler, a Russian Immigrant began a shoe repair store in Fremantle, WA. The store focused on great service and product value which continue to be their principles today. Today Betts Kids is the largest children's footwear chain in Australia and one of the country's leading children's brand. It stands as proud testament to what can be achieved when given the opportunity.

Australia has played a crucial role in many Jewish survivors lives'. It's a place that has provided protection, sympathy, a fair go and a new start to life. Many Jews that moved to Australia had gone through many hardships in their lives and wanted to give back to the Jewish community. Many Australians were very understanding and helped the Jews settle into their new homeland. This has led many Jews to give back to the country that has given them so much.

In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
For those who've come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.

⁵ <http://www.nswjbd.org/Holocaust-Shoah-Survivors-in-NSW-Article/default.aspx>