

First
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Eva Kor

Many people think about death and destruction when they are studying the Holocaust, but many people survived, too. Many of those survivors inspire others. Eva Kor was eleven years old when Auschwitz was liberated. Nobody in her family, but her twin sister survived. Eva was used as a “human guinea pig” during the Holocaust, and afterward worked up the courage to forgive the Nazis.

During the Holocaust, Eva Kor was used as a “human guinea pig”. The Nazis would test drugs and cures for diseases on her and her twin sister, Miriam. Eva and Miriam were taken to Auschwitz at the age of ten. The Nazi doctor, Dr. Josef Mengele would test on the twins. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, her, her twin sister, and other pairs of twins were put in a room naked for six to eight hours a day. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, they got a lot of blood drawn from their left arm and at least five injections in the other. After one injection she became very ill. She had very high fevers and was taken to a hospital. Dr. Mengele said, “‘Too bad she’s so young! She has two weeks to live’” (McKinney). Even though the doctor said this, Eva did not give up. She made a pledge saying, “I would do everything in my power to prove Mengele wrong, to survive and be reunited with my sister” (McKinney). Eva inspires me because she was strong and didn’t give up faith. Even with perseverance, she inspires me with her power to forgive, too.

Imagine somebody torturing you for a year. A year. Now, imagine them torturing you for a year, and then forgiving them for what they did to you. That is what Eva Kor did. That inspires me so much because some Jewish people despise the Nazis so much that they could never and

will never forgive them. Eva was an amazing person. She forgave the Nazis for personal freedom, personal recovery, and personal empowerment (McKinney). When Eva and Miriam returned home, they found that nobody in their family had survived (theforgivenessproject.com). After the Holocaust, Eva wanted to see if there were other pairs of twins who survived Mengele's experiments, so she made a newspaper, and sent out a lot of letters. Nobody was responding. She started an organization and made herself president because people always like to get letters from presidents. Her idea worked, and twins started to write back. They shared memories of the Holocaust which helped Eva recover from the torture. Eva also had to be brave and strong which I admire.

Even though she was tested on by the Nazis for a year and almost died, she was brave and courageous enough to forgive the Nazis for what they did to her. Eva was an amazing woman who almost died because of the Nazis, but then she forgave them. This really inspires me because she had to be very brave and courageous to write those Nazi doctors a forgiveness letter. She was brave when she made a pledge that she would not die, and that she would prove Mengele wrong. She had to work up the courage to forgive the Nazi doctors, and she accomplished that. Eva Kor inspires me so much because of those things. If you were tortured for a year, do you think you would be able to find the courage to forgive them?

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During the Holocaust, about a thousand Jewish people were saved due to a list Oskar Schindler made; Leon Leyson was one of those people. Leyson was the youngest Holocaust survivor from Schindler's list, working in Oskar's factory when he was only thirteen. Schindler's list saved Leon's life because it ensured his status as a factory worker, forcing the Nazis to permit his continued work rather than kill him at a death camp. Leon Leyson in no means had an easy life, but he kept going and later became a very inspiring survivor of the Holocaust.

Until Leyson was eight, he lived in Narewka, Poland. Narewka's main population consist of Christianity and Judaism, so Jews and Christians both got on together without many issues (Leyson 16). This all changed in 1938 when Leyson and his family moved to join his father in Krasco, Poland (Leyson 30). One year after the big move, the German Nazis invaded Poland. The effect of the Nazi invasion was seriously doubted by the Leyson family who thought Germany would settle down (Leyson 42). In 1939, Leon and his family were moved to Krasco's Jewish ghetto, living there for three years. At age thirteen, Leon's father brought him to Schindler's DEF factory to work for Oskar Schindler. Leon and his father, mother, brother, and sister all worked for Schindler and were all able to survive the Holocaust. Sadly, Leon's two older brothers chose not to be a part of Schindler's list, not surviving the Holocaust. Leon's job at the factory was to stand on an upside down, wooden box and help work a factory machine. By standing on that wooden box, Leon was able to keep his life. In the book, *The Boy On The Wooden Box*, Leon Leyson wrote, "It was my turn to shake the hand of the man who had saved

my life many times” (1). Throughout Leon's experiences, Oskar Schindler helped Leon at his worst (Little Leyson). Leyson shared about when he was alone in the factory, Oskar used to come to talk to him, when Oskar sometimes saw how small Leon was, he would order he had more rations of bread, and when Leon's vision got blurry after late nights in the factory, Oskar would excuse him from his work.

These events continued until the end of the Holocaust. Once the Holocaust ended, Leon spent three years in a displaced person camp near Frankfurt, Germany (deathcamps.info). From Leon's time in the displaced person camp, he was able to transfer to the United States and start a life for himself by applying to fight in the Korean War. After he fought, he came back to America and went to college at Los Angeles City College and Los Angeles State College, where he got his degrees for teaching and taught for thirty-nine years before retirement. Leon at first was unable to share his story due to fear, but up until his death in February of 2013, Leon shared his story all around the world, reaching out to thousands of people about his inspirational life. Leyson even obtained a membership of the Rogers Center for Holocaust Education Advisory Board where he was able to share his story even more (deathcamps.info). Leon once said, “A hero is an ordinary human being who does the best of things in the worst times.” This quote was said when he was talking about his experiences during the Holocaust when Schindler saved a thousand Jewish people from death. The previous quote said by Leyson was paying gratitude to his hero, Schindler, who saved him.

Although Leyson had several obstacles up against him, he continued to survive and become an inspiration. Leon showed a great amount of resilience at a very young

age when there was, in some places, no hope for him. Leyson had to stand on a wooden box so he could reach the machine so he could keep his life which seems extreme. No matter Leon's experiences in the Holocaust, Leon continued to live a great, inspiring life, sharing his story of resilience and strength with the world. Leon Leyson being on Schindler's list certainly saved his life, but it was his job to keep bouncing back with enough strength to face the rest of his obstacles in life.

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Third
Place
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A

Today I learned the hardships of a Holocaust survivor. I learned that he had multiple problems to overcome and that he'd had trouble getting out of certain situations. I learned that he went through a lot of pain and suffering that I hope to never have to go through. This man has been through more pain than I'll ever feel in my entire life and I'm glad that he is happy now. I also enjoyed the fact that he spends his time going around to different locations to spread his Holocaust experience. This Holocaust speaker really spoke out to me and made this unit more meaningful for me. He really made me think of all the ways the Holocaust affected millions of people and their families.

Today I learned about a man by the title of Dr. Alexander Svager and his experiences during the Holocaust. He explained to the class that this was a scary time and he had to go through all of this when he was at very young age. In his story Dr. Svager told us how he was originally from Yugoslavia and was forced to flee his home because of the Nazis. He says that when Germany attacked Poland that was when WWII started.

As Dr. Svager and his family watched the Nazis march along the street his father said, "The Germans are now truly scraping the bottom of the barrel."

Dr. Svager and his family started to pack their things. Then Dr. Svager's father was called into service and this was a big change for him. Dr. Svager described that when he wasn't even ten he saw an airplane in the sky overhead and automatically knew that it was a German airplane, for him this started the war. Then when the Nazis came they started to destroy synagogues by stripping their roofs apart. Anyone that tried to stop them was killed and some Jews were held back by the Nazis. There were multiple people that helped Dr. Svager and his family during all of these hard times and some of them were family.

Dr. Svager's mother's younger sister (his aunt) was the first to escape and sent fake documents to his grandfather. His grandfather then refused to leave his grandson and stayed with him till they could both get out. Eventually a friend of Dr. Svager's grandfather sent fake documents for their whole family, which said that they were German citizens, except for his grandfather who was sent a document saying he was Greek. Dr. Svager and his family could pass as German citizens because they had German names. Dr. Svager and his family almost made it to a train station, where they were met by a police officer.

"Hey! What are you guys doing!" shouted the police officer.

"Ugh, oh no. Here he comes," said Dr. Svager's grandfather as the police officer started to approach them.

"Where were you guys heading?" asked the officer.

"Oh, well, hmm, I guess I'll just tell you the truth. No need in lying when there's an officer right in front of you. We were heading to a train station to get somewhere safe," said his grandfather.

"Hmmm. Ahh, I see, so you guys were trying to get out of here aye. Well in that case I might be able to help get you there safely. Come on and hop in my car, I'll drive you there and hopefully that'll be faster," said the police officer. The police officer was a big help because he was risking his life for theirs and could have been killed for helping the Jews. Dr. Svager later found out that the officer and his family had fled their home exactly eight hours before the Nazis came knocking on their door. When they got to the train station they headed to a safer part of Italy.

When Dr. Svager and his family got to Italy they were treated very fairly there and the people were all nice. There were concentration camps in Italy, but they weren't under the rule of Hitler like in Germany so they weren't as terrible. From the train station to the castle that Dr. Svager and his family were staying in was a long ride. Dr. Svager also talks about how he found it funny, as a young child, that there were five Jews in the same railcar as three Italian police officers and the police officers didn't know that they were in the same railcar as Jews. Dr. Svager told us that thirty Jews were to stay in the village and thirty had to stay in an old run down castle. It was cold and dark inside of the castle. There weren't stoves or heating systems to keep people warm so they had to build fires by themselves. Dr. Svager talks about how he had to move his body to different angles to get the heat all around him. The interesting thing about this castle is that during the Winter Olympics of 1956 it was renovated and made into a 5 star hotel. This took place after Dr. Svager and his family were liberated from the camps. When Dr. Svager and his family were in Italy they were allowed to go to a Jewish school there. Dr. Svager was the one who had to provide food for the 8 different people living in the one house. Since he was a child it was illegal for adults to sell food to him so he had to do it through the black market. Dr. Svager was sold bread, chicken and geese. Him and his grandfather also planted a garden where they grew vegetables for the people living in their house.

As Dr. Svager was walking towards the farmers home he was receiving looks from other people on the street. "Hey, will you sell me some bread and chicken for some money?" asked Dr Svager.

"Oh, well, are you Jewish, or from one of the camps? You look Jewish. I feel bad for all of those Jews always being denied the right to live just because of looks and their different beliefs," says the farmer.

"Wow, umm, well I am Jewish but that's so nice of you. Do you have any bread for me to buy or even some chicken?" asked Dr. Svager.

"Well I certainly do young man, but if I do make this transaction I will have to ask you to not tell anyone. If word gets out that I'm selling to a Jew that would be bad news," says the farmer. So then Dr. Svager is sold three chickens and four loaves of bread, then heads home full of happiness. Time went on and Dr. Svager traded with the same farmer over and over again.

Once the farmer asked, "Mrs. Svager, I know that this is a very kind boy, but would you ever consider selling him to me? He would make great work because he is always trying to get a better deal and never gives up!" Mrs. Svager kindly refused, but it was very much flattered. Dr. Svager and his grandfather also grew wheat in the small garden, but could never harvest it and ground it into flour because the government might confiscate it. The bombing started shortly after his family started to get settled into their new home. Dr. Svager and his family were then forced to move to southern Italy where there were fewer Nazis. The Svager family was transported by train. When they got to southern Italy the young boy, Dr. Svager, needed to see a doctor and they explained to him that he needed an appendectomy. This was a problem because his family could not afford a lot of hospital bills. If he didn't have surgery there was chance that he could get sick. Dr. Svager was lucky to receive the best surgeon in Italy who was sent to this small village because he didn't get along with the dictator of Italy. He received an amazing surgeon, but wasn't in the best hospital. During the procedure they didn't have the strongest anesthesia to knock out Dr. Svager completely. The doctors were then forced to go on with the procedure and Dr. Svager was still awake while the procedure was going on.

"Ahhhh! Oh, that hurts!" groaned Dr. Svager as the surgeon cut his stomach open.

"Shhh, stop yelling! You should've been Catholic because then you might've been saved," said the nun that was helping with surgery. "Get out of here! He doesn't need to hear that!" yelled the surgeon. Then the nun was forced to exit the room. The procedure went well and Dr. Svager recovered very well. Three days later more bombing started. Dr. Svager and his family then had to move again. He was to be transported by train but he missed his train ride. After waiting for a few hours, Dr. Svager and his family decided to walk. During this walk their shoes wore out and started to fall apart. He then had to walk on the hot, hot asphalt for a few miles.

"Mommmy, my feet hurt sooo bad! They burn and ache!" said Dr. Svager.

"Well, honey you're going to have to keep moving, there's nothing that I can do." While hiking on this trail, Dr. Svager and his family were caught and taken by some police officers. He and his family were transported to a work camp. There they had to work until their backs hurt and legs gave out. Dr. Svager and his mother had to stay with

lots of other Jews and prisoners of war. By the time Dr. Svager and his family were liberated from the camp, Dr. Svager only had his pair of shorts and his mother had only a dress and nothing else. After the camps were liberated by the Americans, Dr. Svager and his family were taken care of and got to return to Yugoslavia where their father was waiting for them.

This is a story that makes me feel sad and happy for Dr. Svager. I'm happy for him and the fact that he got to return home to his family. I also mourn for him when he had surgery, or when he had to walk on the asphalt for miles. I love the point in his life where he comes to America and finds a wife and makes a life for himself. His story is like Anne Frank's because they both had to mourn losses and go through all of this pain, but never gave up hope. I like to believe that they kept hope because they just knew that things would get good again. Dr. Svager's story is one that I'll remember for the rest of my life and remind me that when things get bad and it seems like the world hates you, you can't give up hope and just have to believe that things will get good again.

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Solomon Radasky was a man that looked death dead in the eyes. Solomon is a Holocaust survivor that was the only man left in his family out of the seventy eight family members. He was quite inspiring of a man to me personally because when he was faced with death, he barely escaped. As for me, I had some really rough times in life and was thinking of suicide, but then my uncle adopted me and has helped get my life in check. Solomon's job in one of his camps was that he had to clean the railroads so that trains could run.

Solomon Radasky was born 5/17/1910, in Warsaw, Poland. He lived in Praga with his mother, father, two brothers, and three sisters. He worked with furs, and made clothing. This became a good asset in the ghettos and camps, for he could help in the factories. This was useful because good workers could survive, for they had a use. Other than working, he had a few life threatening events.

Solomon had a case where he almost died that really stands out from the rest. There was a Jew that was in a group with others that supposedly smoked a cigarette. It most likely wasn't a real cigarette, for that is something you couldn't get your hands on very easily, or even at all in the camps without government help. Although, the people who enjoyed smoking would light items like leaves or paper on fire so that they could feel the sensation smoking. A German guard noticed smoke and asked who has a cigarette, and if they didn't answer he would kill ten "dogs".(The Jews were called dogs because the Germans believed they weren't worthy of being called humans.) Radasky was one of the "dogs" to be executed.

As he stood on the execution bench and had tears and sweat in his eyes, it was time to put the dangling noose on his own neck. He was beaten there on the bench for a few minutes, with the fear in his eyes, he was about to have the bench kicked from under him which would result in

him being hung. Solomon Radasky explained his position as "The tears formed in his eyes as the wait for the guard to give the command to jump was all that was between life and death." Then suddenly, a soldier came screaming "HALT!" for he was to go to another camp. Solomon didn't know what to think, whether to be happy to be alive, what just happened, or if he was too scared to even think. The camp he was about to transfer to was no other than the infamous death-camp, Auschwitz. The rope was then untied, and he was to go.

This man, Solomon Radasky is quite inspiring to me. I would think the most inspiring part about him is that he could keep pushing through. Even being faced with death itself, he would continue to fight for his life unlike those who gave up. For someone to not give up even after discovering family died is quite honorable to me.

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