

# Stories Among Us: Personal Accounts of Genocide

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Every Wednesday through June 11, we hope you'll join us for Stories Among Us: Personal Accounts of Genocide, exploring past and present atrocities through the oral histories of genocide survivors in our region. Produced in partnership with the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center.

## Chapter Four

### MAGDA'S STORY: A SURVIVOR OF AUSCHWITZ

Spoken by Magda S., Holocaust survivor and written by Ilana Cone Kennedy, Director of Education, Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center.

*The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and destruction of European Jewish people by the Nazis and their collaborators, 1933-1945. While Jews were the primary target of Nazi hatred, the Nazis also persecuted and murdered Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Poles and people with disabilities. Six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust.*

*Magda S. survived the Holocaust. She was born to a Jewish family in Hungary. In 1944, Germany occupied Hungary; in June, Magda, her mother and brother were deported to Auschwitz. Here is her account:*

On March 19, 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary. I remember it was a beautiful Sunday afternoon when one of the neighbors came in and told my family the news. It wasn't until the next morning that I started to understand what this meant: If someone was pointed out as a Jew, they were immediately dragged away. The Hungarian Arrow Cross, a party that supported the Nazis, helped the Germans.

We had to wear a Jewish star. One night when I came home from work, a neighbor girl who was supposedly my friend, waited for me and said, "Don't be surprised, your parents and your brother are packed already, and you will have to leave your home."

I took a little suitcase ... how much could I put in a small suitcase? The Nazis took us to an apartment building where 12 people were put in a normal-size bedroom. The Jewish men were put in another house.

Then, one morning, the Nazis decided to take women and girls to the main street of my hometown. They told us to get on our hands and knees and scrub the ground. Most people at that time traveled in horse and buggy — and I can assure you that the street had never been scrubbed. It was a hot day and people were standing on both sides of the sidewalk. Some of the people thought it was a funny sight, but others just moved away.

In June of 1944, we were taken to a train station and loaded into cattle wagons, about 100 people in one section. I was



PHOTO: Magda in 1947 at Feldafing, a displaced persons camp in Germany.



PHOTO: Magda, 2006 in Seattle.

pushed to the little window, and as I looked out I saw my father outside with a little package in his hand. I yelled out, "Dad!" He heard my voice and tried to come to the train. The Nazi guards kept my father back and asked him what he was doing. He said, "I have my family on the train and I have a little package of food for them."

The guards said to my father, "Give us the food. We will give it to your family." My father continued to try to come up on the train. In front of my eyes they beat him and kicked him until he disappeared on the other side of the station. I never saw my father again.

It must have been about 2:00 in the afternoon when the train started to move. We were on the train one night, a whole day, another night, a whole day. Finally, during the night, the train stopped.

We had no idea what "Auschwitz" meant. When we got off the train, the Nazis yelled out for the men and the women to separate. My brother left with the men.

When we got to the front of the line, the SS Officer Mengele pointed my mother in one direction and me in another. I ran after her, but a guard pulled me back. I grabbed my mother and I said, "Mom, I love you and I'll see you later." I never saw her again.

I was in Auschwitz for 10 days and then I was transferred to Krakow Plaszow, a concentration camp in Krakow, Poland. Plaszow was terrible. The work was grueling. I was beaten badly. Many people were shot.

The Russian military was getting close to Krakow. In order to hide what was going on, the Nazis decided to empty Plaszow. They took us back to Auschwitz where I got my tattoo on my arm.

Then came my lucky day. Germany needed 500 Hungarian women to work in a factory where we made parts for weapons. When the factory didn't need us anymore, then again they put us in trains and we were taken to Muhldorf, another concentration camp. After about four weeks, we were put on cattle wagons to be taken someplace to dig ditches and then to be shot.

Their plan was interrupted — Allied troops intercepted the train and we were liberated. It was May 1, 1945.

Magda S. met her husband, right after the liberation, in a displaced persons camp. He was a survivor from Salonika, Greece. They settled in Seattle in 1951 and raised their family.

Magda S. is an active member of the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center's Speakers Bureau. Read Magda's story online at [www.wsherc.org](http://www.wsherc.org). For more information on this article, or others in this series, please contact the Holocaust Center: [www.wsherc.org](http://www.wsherc.org) or email [info@wsherc.org](mailto:info@wsherc.org)

## MORE TO EXPLORE

- ❖ Take five minutes to write down all the words, feelings and emotions that you felt when reading her story. With that list of words, create a one-page poem about the Holocaust from a child's perspective.
- ❖ Using The Seattle Times, can you find people who are being singled out or treated unfairly because of their culture, race, religion, age, etc.? Why do you think this treatment continues today? Why do some people focus on negativity and violence in the world instead of love and compassion? Do you think the world will ever be at peace?