

**EVA
WOLMAN
UNTERMAN
1932-**



**SURVIVOR
PROMOTING
HOLOCAUST
EDUCATION**

Eva Unterman is one of the few children who survived Auschwitz. Starting in the 1970s, she made sure that no one ever forgot about her Holocaust experiences and the six million Jews, including 1.5 million children, that were exterminated across Europe by the Nazis between 1933 and 1945.

Eva Wolman was born in October 1932 in Lodz, Poland. She lived an idyllic middle-class Jewish life with a large extended family enjoying summers in the countryside. Eva was six and about to start school when the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939. Within days of returning home from their annual summer vacation, German soldiers came into their home and removed their dining room chandelier. Everyone stood there helpless.

Soon Eva was not allowed to play with her non-Jewish friends, go to parks or be on city sidewalks. Her father could no longer work and the entire family had to wear a yellow star of David with the word Jude on their clothes. In the winter of 1940, Eva, her parents, and both grandmothers were relocated to the Lodz Ghetto where the family was assigned an upstairs room for the next four years. Grandmother Wolman would die there.

When parents in the Ghetto saw their children dying from starvation, they allowed them to be resettled but soon became suspicious when no one heard from the children again. When the SS tried to round up more children, Eva's parents hid her in a dried-out courtyard water-well until it was safe to come out. In 1944, the family were on the last train to Auschwitz. After a few days, Eva, her mother, and Grandmother Kafeman were transported to Stuthoff concentration camp. One evening Eva's grandmother volunteered to mend socks for an extra piece of bread. Once outside, she was shot. Eva soon discovered her father was in the same camp.

In November 1944 the family was sent to a Dresden munitions factory, which was bombed in February 1945 by Allied Forces. The prisoners then began a Death March, along the river for eleven days. Those who couldn't walk were immediately shot. Eva had a nail in her wooden shoe and could barely walk, so her mother pulled her along. They arrived in Theresienstadt concentration camp in Terezin, Czechoslovakia, where they remained until the Russian troops liberated the city on May 8, 1945, the last day of World War II in Europe.

After regaining their health, the Wolmans wanted to return to Lodz but heard others who tried to reclaim their homes were killed. Instead, they went to Prague, where Red Cross provided services. Eva got her first bath and some clothes. But where to go? Her father's uncle lived in Switzerland – but how to get there? They settled in Ludwigsburg, a little unbombed town near Stuttgart. They planned to travel to Israel via Cyprus but were told Cyprus was just another camp, so they returned to Ludwigsburg, where Eva's brother was born in 1948.

At age twelve, Eva finally began school in Stuttgart. She eventually finished high school, but got no diploma. In 1952, Eva met American soldier Herb Unterman at her parents' small souvenir shop. The Jewish boy from Brooklyn and 19-year-old Eva became friends. When Herb returned home, he soon asked Eva to come to the United States to get married. However, her immigration status was held up because she had no host country – but Herb had relatives in Toronto. After getting a visa to Canada, the couple was married in the Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto two days after she arrived on February 4, 1953.

Herb's business transferred him to Charlotte, Amarillo, Pine Bluff and finally Tulsa. They loved Tulsa, so Herb quit his job to work for Zales Jewelers. Eva's mother told her never to talk about their experiences. In 1978, history teacher John Travers heard about Eva and asked her to speak to his class. She began telling stories about the Holocaust. She realized that if you tell a teacher, it reaches hundreds of young people. Her commitment deepened with the establishment of the Holocaust Educators Group and Tulsa's Council for Holocaust Education.

In 2002, Eva made an emotional trip back to Lodz. She searched for the well where she hid at the Ghetto but didn't find it. Her father and mother would live into their seventies in Ludwigsburg, with Eva visiting several times. Eva Unterman has dedicated her life to educating others about the Holocaust, frequently speaking at Tulsa's Sherwin Miller Museum. Today, a number of states, including Oklahoma, mandate Holocaust education.