

LAKE COUNTY JOURNAL

<http://www.lakecountyjournal.com/2013/04/10/holocaust-survivor-shares-horrific-stories/a4iq023/>

Holocaust survivor shares horrific stories

By YADIRA SANCHEZ OLSON - yolson@shawmedia.com

Created: Wednesday, April 10, 2013 9:44 a.m. CDT



Auschwitz survivor, Eva Kor, 79, signs books after her talk on her time at a Nazi death camp. (Yadira Sanchez Olson – yolson@shawmedia.com)

Not a single sound could be heard except for the voice of Auschwitz survivor Eva Kor.

Kor, 79, spoke during a Holocaust presentation April 4 at Carmel High School in Mundelein.

Students from throughout Lake County and their families heard the harrowing account inside the dark auditorium where the only spotlight was on Kor.

Sitting on an armchair, resting her elbows on a table in front of her on the stage with deep cherry-colored velvet drapes behind her, Kor resembled a character in the opening scene of a play.

Kor is the founder of the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Indiana. She travels the world speaking about her heart-wrenching tale of the time she and twin sister, Miriam Mozes, were taken to a death camp where Josef Mengele held and experimented on 3,000 Jewish twins.

Kor spoke of how she forgave him and how that forgiveness finally set her free. The museum, she said, is in honor of the peace she hopes for the world.

“Anger is a seed for war. Forgiveness is a seed for peace,” Kor said.

Hundreds of Carmel students and their families were invited to hear her speak and see an exhibit of Holocaust artifacts provided by the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation.

John Rizzo of Gurnee heard Kor’s presentation and saw the exhibit. He said Kor’s story is something he’ll never forget.

“When I was listening to the story I felt anger and sadness,” he said. “How could they do that to a child?”

It was the dawn of an early spring day, Kor began in a thick Romanian accent.

That was the day, in 1944, that a Nazi group stopped her parents’ car and pulled her apart from her father, mother and two older sisters and took her and Miriam to the Auschwitz Nazi death camp. They were 10 years old.

“My mom was pulled in one direction and we were pulled in another. Her arms stretched out for us,” Kor said. “I never got to say goodbye to her.”

Eva went on to give an abridged version of the nightmare she endured with her sister.

She spoke about her first day there when she was stripped naked and then got her clothes back with a black mark on the back and how she was thankful she didn’t get her head shaved like some of the other children did, but within days caught lice and got it shaved anyway.

She told her audience about how she was hungry during the day but she quickly learned that if she saved the piece of bread they gave her at night, the rats that lived and walked among the barracks would take it at night.

On their first night in the camp, Kor saw the corpses of three children when she went to the latrine.

That’s when she knew she could die there, she said.

“I made a silent pledge that night to do everything in my power to not end up in the latrine floor like that,” Kor said.

The experiments were at times mild, she said. They would strip her naked and for six to eight hours measure every part of her body and compare it with her twin.

Other times the experiments were painful.

She and her twin were injected with fluids that to this day are unknown to her.

“We were just Dr. Mengele’s guinea pigs,” Kors said. “It made me feel like I was a nothing and a nobody; a piece of meat.”

Kor spoke of what she calls her unbelievable will to survive for more than an hour.

Tattooed on her arm is still the mark: A-7063. Her sister’s arm was given an A-7064.

Kor’s nightmare ended when the children who survived were rescued by the Soviet army Jan. 27, 1945.

Miriam died June 6, 1993. She gave birth to three children. Kor believes her sister’s diagnosis of her kidneys being the size of a child’s had something to do with the experiments they were subjected to when they were girls.

Still, Kor chooses to forgive the aggressors.

It’s a controversial move on her part because as told in a documentary about her life called, “Forgiving Dr. Mengele,” the rest of the survivors do not forgive the Nazis.

“They don’t understand that it has nothing to do with him,” Kor said. “It’s about healing your own heart.”

Kor not only travels promoting peace everywhere she goes, but she also answers dozens of emails daily from survivors of abuse.

Some ask her for advice because they, too, want to forgive and be free. Others just want to tell her how amazing they think she is after watching the documentary.

She recommends to them that to find that peace within they sit down to write a letter to their aggressor. She doesn’t think it needs to ever be mailed. But writing it will help, she said.

“It might take you years to finish it. It’ll take you through all emotions and then you’ll learn to be free,” Kor said.

Sheila Scheer of Libertyville heard Kor’s accounts with her daughter, Emma Scheer, a freshman at Carmel. They were both teary-eyed at the end of the talk.

“As a mom I can’t imagine the horror their mom felt when they were taken from her,” Sheila Scheer said.

Emma Scheer said Kor’s ability to forgive after all she went through was an amazing lesson.

Kor said even descendants of Nazi guards have reached out to her asking her for advice on forgiving their ancestors for leaving them with a legacy of hatred and war.

Through her CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center, Kor hopes to encourage everyone who's willing to listen to forgive and heal so that there may be peace.

Visit the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center at www.candlesholaustmuseum.org or info@candlesholaustmuseum.org.