



What Papa Told Me

Felice Cohen

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What Papa Told Me is the story of Murray, a young Jewish boy from Poland whose courage and sheer will to live helped him survive eight different labor and concentration camps in the Holocaust, start a new life in America, and keep a family intact in the aftermath of his wife's suicide - one of the Nazis' last victims.

What Papa Told Me Details

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From Reader Review What Papa Told Me for online ebook

Karen says

This book was written by the niece of friend's of mine. It is a short book and would be a good YA read. What a wonderful gift the author gave to her Papa by writing his memoir for him. Important story to be documented.

Jackie says

This book was a unique story - it touched on a very special man's life before, during and after the war. It was very well written, with many moving and interesting passages. I cried many times and at times could see and feel what the character had felt. I read the book all in one sitting, as I couldn't put it down! Can't wait to read more from this author.

Chad Payne says

Great book to read! I have great respect for the Holocaust survivors and this book brings to life the real stories and journey that people like Papa went through. I'm very happy Felice took the opportunity to share Papa's story!

If I may suggest another great story:

It Was Worth It - Kazimir Ladny

A Polish POW Officer's Incredible Story!

Ruth Ross says

a short, quick and easy read, not as deep as some other holocaust recount stories I have read, but unique in its own right.

Lorie says

A book such as "What Papa Told Me," which I hold as a very important read among the millions of books we have available to us in these times, is the kind which I can also find to be quite difficult to review. I just feel so bereft of adequate words for such a work. Cliches such as, "incredibly personal", "I was deeply impacted", "an unforgettable read", or "I cried, then I laughed" may all be true, yet they would be pitiful attempts at describing a book which holds so much meaning for everyone - the protagonist, the author, and yes, I would even say, absolutely everyone who has ever lived, and ever will. Think about it - what could be more precious than personal accounts of such an important period in history?

Cohen, in recording and compiling the stories of her Grandfather, as he told them to her, has written a gem of a memoir. She managed to channel her Grandfather, Murray, so well that we fall in love with him within the first few pages, for his amazingly hard-working, matter-of fact, sincere and positive approach to everyday and extraordinary problems, and life in general, as well as his humor, candor, sage-like one-liners, and most of all, profound courage. Courage not only to somehow hold onto an often very fragile thread of hope through so many unspeakable tribulations, but also courage to face the difficult later task of reliving those events in the retelling. Cohen holds nothing back as we are walked through Murray's early life, war years, and aftermath.

Seeing the atrocities of the death camps through a first person narrator's eyes is certainly not unique, but this book is no mere "me too" effort. Here are the eloquent and sincere words of a man who has lived nearly his entire life, into old age, carrying these experiences with him 24/7/365 in his head and heart, and thus chronically dealing with a level of post-traumatic stress which only someone who had been there and lived through that could possibly understand. When it is revealed that Murray has never before told anyone these stories, not even his own wife and children, we understand with a shock that this telling is for him important on more than one level. Firstly, we understand his desire, for the sake of his family, to set straight the historical record of the events he experienced, including the level of torture and suffering deliberately contrived upon selected people groups, the various responses people had to those tortures, and the sheer mass of the losses everyone experienced, with his losses in particular painfully detailed. More importantly, I think, the act of detailing his story to his Granddaughter is for Murray a sort of personal rite of passage, as a Holocaust Survivor who has carried an unspoken burden for decades, and now finally is ready and able to face his immense need to have that burden lifted, to some unknown degree, by the very act of telling the story. We the reader find ourselves rooting for Murray, that by his speaking truthfully and thoroughly about those horrors, and even making the story publically known, he may finally somehow gain a new level of peace about having lived through the Holocaust, and been forever changed by it.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough. I place very few books on my "Important" list, and this book is there with honor. Thank you, Ms. Cohen, for bringing your Grandfather's heartbreaking and inspiring story to the world. What a gift for us all. My thirteen year old daughter returned from a visit to Washington D.C. just a few days before I received and read this book. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum was one of the most impactful sites she and her classmates visited. She texted me from the Museum about how sad she felt there. I texted back, "I am glad you are sad, Honey, because if this horrid thing does not make us sad, then we are lost." Which sums up why I think this book is so important. My daughter will be reading it soon, although she says "I think I need to wait awhile, after being at the Museum." Yeah, I know what she means. These deep and hard things can only be taken in at a certain pace...

Disclosure: I received a copy of "What Papa Told Me" as a Goodreads Drawing winner (wow, Thank You, Felice, I never win anything!) and am voluntarily supplying my honest review, without obligation.

Sara Downard says

History first hand

A story of a survivor, his trauma and life from normal to prisoner, to struggle to be comfortable once again. Bless this family for the strength to share this history and prayers of peace

Eileen Souza says

I hate to be the first person to not give this book 5 stars, but I do want it to be an accurate reflection of my thoughts and not just my emotions.

The man survived eight labor and concentration camps during the holocaust, and refused to succumb. He worked hard and has lived a rich and full life, living to see grandchildren and great- grandchildren. That is a great testament to perseverance. I guess I just wish there was more meat to the story. I wish it went deeper than the short stories we did get. Those short stories were very moving, and sometimes painful - maybe that was all he could give of the hell that he lived through. He IS a survivor - and I mean that more than just breathing air. He has truly lived and that is inspirational.

There are no details on the book at this point, so I can't tell if it was directed toward youth. But it feels that way. The copy I have is 120 pgs and written in a prose that would be easy for an older elementary student to understand and absorb. The stories are told in a way that are powerful, but not nightmare worthy. Since my eight year old stepdaughter is Jewish, we're going to read it and have her write a book report for me as a summer project.

Meredith says

What Papa Told me is a story of "the bravest man I know"...Felice Cohen. I couldn't agree more with the author's view of her grandfather. The story of Murray's strength and will to live will touch everyone young and old. The author's detailed realistic description will haunt you but it takes that fear to prevent something this atrocious from happening again. Amazing Job Felice!

Ro Ja says

Excellent

Another excellent survival story. It makes me so sad to read what the survivors went through. It is truly so hard to imagine until you read something like this, and then it really makes you think about how real evil is. God bless all!

MetLineReader says

Quite short but encapsulates the horrors of the holocaust and the struggles of the survivors. A must-read.

francelia dillon says

Read this book.

Good story. It is important for all to read these memoirs from Holocaust survivors. Maybe we can prevent it happening again.

Linda Marie Marsh says

Not to make light of the torturous hardships Murray Schwartzbaum lived through, but this man has 9 lives! EIGHT concentration camps, a family suicide, the deaths of too many relatives and a move to America. the man has compassion and empathy running thru his veins.

A short book for sure, written by his grand-daughter by way of discussions and questions ...it is NOT meant to be an in-depth Holocaust story. Instead it is meant to be a memoir, shared precious moments with a man who kept more inside than most share in a lifetime of talking.

One word? I'd have to say PRECIOUS.

Wish I could personally give Murray a hug....

Jenny says

My Cousin wrote this book to tell her grandfathers story. To be honest.....Initially, since I had already read many many books on this time in history, I read it just because she had written it. In retrospect I am SO glad I did. The kids and I (all on separate occasions) devoured it within a few hours or less. I had also given the ten copies I purchased to several friends in hopes of supporting her efforts.... she didn't need me, We all felt the same way... to the point, nicely written and very moving. She now tours various JCC'S and other venues retelling the stories so they should live on and hopefully never be repeated.... WELL DONE FELICE!!!! We are all very proud of you...for this and all you do.

Amy Murphy-DeMeo says

Worthy book for a worthy reason

Well written and interesting story of one incredibly brave man's journey from a good childhood through Holocaust hell and the scars it left. His granddaughter has done him justice!

Helen (TBC) says

I have nothing but praise for this book. It is an important and deeply moving account of history that must never be forgotten. Some reviewers have wanted more depth to the stories that Papa Murray recalled, but I personally think that having kept this inside him for so many years, he gave us everything he was able to give.

The book chronicles the changes from his loving childhood through the early years of persecution to the concentration camps and afterwards living in Germany and then in America. It highlights the fact that surviving the camps wasn't the end of the struggle for these survivors and that the mental health issues that many inevitably suffered from impacted horrifically on both themselves and their families. I think that the

way this book is written would make it suitable for older children too.
