

From a Name to a Number: A Holocaust Survivor's Autobiography

Alter Wiener

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Alter Wiener's father was brutally murdered on September 11, 1939 by the German invaders of Poland. Alter was then a boy of 13. At the age of 15 he was deported to Blechhammer, a Forced Labor Camp for Jews, in Germany. He survived five camps. Upon liberation by the Russian Army on May 9, 1945, Alter weighed 80 lbs as reflected on the book's cover. Alter Wiener is one of the very few Holocaust survivors still living in Portland, Oregon. He moved to Oregon in 2000 and since then he has shared his life story with over 800 audiences (as of April, 2013) in universities, colleges, middle and high schools, Churches, Synagogues, prisons, clubs, etc. He has also been interviewed by radio and TV stations as well as the press. Wiener's autobiography is a testimony to an unfolding tragedy taking place in WWII. Its message illustrates what prejudice may lead to and how tolerance is imperative. This book is not just Wiener's life story but it reveals many responses to his story. Hopefully, it will enable many readers to truly understand such levels of horror and a chance to empathize with the unique plight of the Holocaust victims. Feel free to visit my website www.alterwiener.com for more information including links.

From a Name to a Number: A Holocaust Survivor's Autobiography Details


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Rebecca says

Alter is a likable man with a good heart, but his story lacked depth. It felt rushed. He spends a lot of time after the story talking about the public speaking events he has participated in, which is very nice. He focuses a lot on being happy with what you have and getting a good education. It's a lighter read (if a Holocaust book can be a light read) compared to Night and Escape from Sobibor.

Adam Utehs says

This is a true survival story of Alter Wiener, who survived the Holocaust and he tells his journey through this horrifying adventure. I really love books that are true stories because i feel like i can really interact with the characters on a whole other level. This is a very touching novel because you read and really feel everything Alter is going through and can learn about the history of the Holocaust from a first hand survivor. Since I am very interested in the Holocaust I may be kind of biased but I highly recommend this novel to anyone that loves true stories about events that happened in the world.

Brian says

Alter Wiener's story is unique, like any holocaust survivor, and heartbreaking. To contemplate what Alter endured is absolutely humbling. As a Jew, the read was that much more meaningful. He also writes about his post-war experiences in Israel and America--a true story of perseverance. Wiener stresses the need for education and the preservation of human rights. We are all in this together, and we must do our best to ensure that the world we live in is an upright place. An inspiring read.

Kari says

His story is amazing and I hate to even give this three stars because I can't imagine what he went through. His writing, however, is not amazing... So I feel stuck. I'd give it 3.5 stars if I could. I liked it, I hate that he went through what he did in the holocaust and surviving afterwards misplaced and homeless (a side of surviving the holocaust I had never thought of). But the writing seemed vague and wandering most of the time. Great story, just needed a lot of editing.

Holly says

This is a true and moving story of Alter Wiener, who survived the Holocaust. In this book he tells of his youth leading up to and through and beyond his harrowing experiences Polish concentration camps. It's harrowing, horrifying, beyond all compare to any situation I have, or will ever have, to face. It's a heart

wrenching story about another dark chapter in our world history. Just when you think you know your history, you read a firsthand account and realize that you have no idea the depth of the depravity and ache for those who do. I ache for the author of his book. I also ache at the realization that the massacre of the holocaust continues into current generations since family lines died useless, senseless, deaths so terribly few years ago.

The book, post holocaust, continues to be a tough read. Mr. Wiener struggled, as so many do, to pick up his life and rebuild from nothing while having lost all who loved and supported him. To have been taken from your family at age thirteen would be difficult enough. To endure what he did, need to move on, rebuild and to cope is almost unimaginable.

The author is frank about his travels, struggles and what it took to build a new life. He admits to some conflicted feelings for his wife and seems to struggle to have his children understand how fortunate they are. It must have been hard for them all to reconcile the past with the present. I believe that his struggles demonstrate the fact that the holocaust impacts not only the survivors but those of their next generations. It would be a difficult burden for all to bear and makes the Holocaust all the more tragic.

Mr. Wiener's experiences, struggles, willingness to forgive, and ability to move on is powerful. As a public speaker, he only drives this point home even further. At the young age of 86, this man is out sharing his story with over 800 audiences (and counting.) He is touching lives, putting a human face and spirit to history. Mr. Wiener is to be commended for his ongoing bravery.

Elsie says

I had the opportunity to meet Alter with a friend in Portland. He is an amazing man. I am grateful for the story he shares and am eager to share with my family. I love the final 3 words of his book--Count your Blessings! With his joie de vivre he has the ability to put our first world problems in perspective and truly find gratitude for the blessings that surround us--family, freedom and love.

Rosemary Dreyer says

An Important Telling About Horror:

Alter Wiener shares the unbelievably terrible story of his life in occupied Poland and the terror of living through five prison camps. Somehow he survived and shares what he lived through. His experience is vital and important. Unfortunately as a book, it was not written well. His narrative jumps from people, places, and time. He does not come across as the gentle, loving husband and father that he portrays when sharing his story with the general public. While I applaud his courage and his ability to inspire others through his own tragedies, I wish he had enlisted the talents of a real writer to share this story.

anita says

A very well written account

this book is very well written and the few times Yiddish or Hebrew expressions were used, there was a

translation. I recommend this book to anyone interested in learning as much as possible about this horrible time. I as a child was there and too young to hear or see anything. Where was God????? I have read many books now about this, especially accounts of survivors, and I am losing my faith.

Kate says

Crudely written but a compelling story

Philip Mandel says

This book is not just a story of "look how terribly I was treated." It is an inspiring autobiography with just enough "look how I was treated" to set the stage for the important messages of hope, the absurdity of prejudice and stereotyping, and striving for self-improvement. It is important to note that a significant portion of the book is dedicated to Wiener's life after liberation -- when he wasn't as free as one might expect -- and to responses from his audiences based on his speaking presentations since the year 2000 (this book was initially published in 2007). As of today, August 2013, Mr. Wiener has given well over 800 live presentations in the states of Oregon and Washington. Those who want to learn more about this remarkable man are welcome to visit his website <http://www.alterwiener.com> and to Like his book's Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/fromaname>.

Ginger says

___A Personal Note___

A dear friend of mine personally knew this sweet man.

I never had the pleasure but she has told me a few stories and I truly wish I could have met him.

He passed away last night 12/11/18. My heart goes out to his friends and family.

He survived 3 years in concentration camps and was 92 years old. He touched many lives and had a beautiful light that will truly be missed.

Kali says

Amazing book about his story in the holocaust. Makes you feel small for every complaining about anything and makes you remember to thank the lord everyday for every small blessing in your life. Also goes into our responsibility as humans to stand up for the rights of others that may not have the freedoms we do. Do not turn a blind eye and say it's not our problem. Very good book!

Devan says

"We forgot how to talk, how to communicate, and how to smile"

What a beautiful outlook on life. For a man who faced such terrors, hatred, and lived a nightmare, Alter Wiener gives us lessons in love and education. I feel every story should be heard. It is the only way to prevent another Holocaust. I was deeply moved and rewarded with a brighter outlook on life, people, and love. May I live a life that makes a difference. I recommend this to anyone, because everyone could gain a valuable piece of history as well as learn to be a more open, loving person.

John Orman says

This book is a riveting description of the hardships and degradation many people suffered through during the Holocaust. It is a testament to courage and the will to survive.

This book gives a first person witness to the Holocaust, which should lead them to an increased awareness of the need for tolerance. Compared to a Nazi concentration camp, all our troubles seem so trivial. Read Mr. Wiener's story, and you will see.

Wiener speaks extensively at schools and organizations in his city of residence, which is Hillsboro, OR--the same town I live in! So I was very much looking forward to hearing Alter speak, and I enjoyed his talk given in Vancouver, WA in August, 2013. I recommended that our local senior center request that Mr. Wiener speak at the center, and he is now scheduled to speak there on Nov. 8. I am again looking forward to hearing his tale of survival and courage as a young boy staring into the face of unrelenting evil.

Rayna Davis says

This is a true survival story of Alter Wiener, who survived the Holocaust and he tells his journey through this terrifying adventure. This is a very touching novel because you read and really feel everything. You can learn about the history of the Holocaust from a first hand survivor. Alter is a likable man with a good heart, but his story lacked depth. It felt rushed. He spends a lot of time after the story talking about the public speaking events he has participated in, which is very nice. I enjoyed this book a lot more because I met Alter Wiener before and heard his story spoken. It helps having the picture to show the story of his experience. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes learning and reading about the Holocaust and seeing it from someone who has been through it. You will never know how bad it truly was, but this can help. Also, it helps so these stories are not lost. Read this book if you are interested in a sad book and is probably more interesting if you have never heard a story of a Holocaust survivor even if it's a little boring at times it's a quick read so I recommend it.
