

# Tulsa Eva Unterman to Present

## The Last Transport: My Childhood During the Holocaust



**Eva Unterman and her parents in Zakowice two years before Eva and her family were “resettled” to the Lodz Ghetto, c. 1937.**



**Eva Unterman a year after she and her family were liberated, c. 1945.**



**Many Tulsans will remember Eva’s husband, who died in 2008; Herb was a jeweler at Moody’s Jewelry. Eva and her husband Herb moved to Tulsa in 1961.**

**W**hat started out as a peaceful summer ended as a hellish nightmare that lasted nearly six years. In the summer of 1939, 6-year-old Eva Unterman was looking forward to starting first grade. As an only child, Eva and her middle-class Jewish family lived in a lovely, spacious apartment in the center of Lodz, Poland. It was her family’s tradition to spend their summers in the beautiful country village of Zakowice. That summer’s vacation, however, came to an abrupt halt on Sept. 1, 1939, as word reached the family that the Nazis had invaded Poland.

Instantly, life turned upside down for young Eva and her family. Her father was no longer allowed to go to work, food was rationed and Jews were forced to publically wear the yellow star. The once-happy Eva was not allowed to start school; instead, her family, including both of her grandmothers and other relatives, as well as more than 40,000 other Jews were forcibly “resettled” to the Lodz ghetto. There, Eva and her family moved into one room of an old, dilapidated apartment building without heat or bathrooms.

“We were in the ghetto for four-and-a-half years,” Unterman said. “Life in the ghetto was terrible. Hunger, disease and fear of deportation were constant. People were afraid we would be sent to Chelmno [an extermination camp], because it was nearby. We never heard the word Auschwitz.”

In August of 1944, the Nazis liquidated the Lodz ghetto. Among the last prisoners to leave were 250 male and 250 female Jews deemed “essential” workers in one of the ghetto’s slave labor factories. Eva, now age 11, and her family were part of this group of metal workers who were to be sent to Germany to work in a munitions factory. However, instead of going to the factory, the group of 500 was transported directly to the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp.

“We were told to assemble at the train station, where we were crammed into cattle cars for several days,” recalled Unterman. “We didn’t know where we were going and there was no food or water. When the doors opened, men and women were separated. My father went to one side. My grandmother, mother and I went in another group. We were then processed – our clothing was taken, our heads were shaved and we had a group shower. We were in Auschwitz for only a few days before we were transported to Stutthof concentration camp on the Baltic.”

The Nazis murdered 1.5 million Jewish children and thousands of Sinti and Roma (gypsy) children during the Holocaust. Eva credits her miraculous survival mostly to her mother, whom Eva said protected her in “the middle of all this hell.”

Since 1978, tens of thousands of area students have heard Unterman share her story. Now, for the first time, Eva will tell the story of this remarkable transport of 500 Jews to the Tulsa community as the featured speaker for Tulsa’s annual Yom HaShoah Interfaith Holocaust Commemoration.

The Tulsa Council for Holocaust Education, a committee of the Jewish Federation of Tulsa, and the Tulsa City-County Library invite you to honor Eva Unterman as she presents “The Last Transport: My Childhood During the Holocaust” on Thursday, April 16 at 7 p.m. at Congregation B’nai Emunah, 1719 S. Owasso Ave.

The commemoration is free and open to the public. Parking is limited at B’nai Emunah, but overflow parking will be available at Temple Israel, 2004 E. 22nd Place. A free shuttle service from Temple Israel to B’nai will begin at 6 p.m. and resume for an hour following the event.

As in past years, the commemoration program includes an exhibit of Holocaust-related projects created by Tulsa-area students. In addition, music will be performed, and there will be a candle lighting in memory of the Jewish children of Lodz who were killed in the Holocaust. Plus, the Tulsa City-County Library will have many Holocaust-related books and media available for checkout.

Contact the Jewish Federation of Tulsa at (918) 495-1100 for more information about the commemoration.

*By Jackie Hill, Tulsa City-County Library  
Public Relations Manager*