



Ann Hedges

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**'The most important event in my life
occurred before I was born'.**

As a child of Holocaust survivors, I have always felt that there was something unsaid at home about my parents' past. The Holocaust was spoken about in general terms as were the personal and material losses, but there were many gaps. My parents' personal experiences and feelings were never mentioned. As a child I felt that I could not ask these questions because I realized it was too painful for them to recall their past. I felt that the 'unspoken' unintentionally interrupted the flow of family life, but I wasn't quite sure how to make sense of it. 'To make sense of something that didn't make sense' – I searched for answers by reading stories and testimonies.

My parents were born in the newly created 'democratic' country Czechoslovakia. In 1941, there was a knock at the door and my father was ordered to pack some things as he was enlisted to forced labour camp and would leave in two days. He never spoke to me of any details of this part of his life, but after his death in 1972, my mother told me he was in three different concentrations camps and four different labour camps.

My mother, the sixth of ten children went with her parents to the ghetto in 1943 with the remaining three girls still at home. After six weeks in the ghetto, they were taken to Auschwitz.

All four of my grandparents were killed when they arrived in Auschwitz.

After the war ended, my parents were introduced to each other in late 1946 by people who knew them before the war, and were married two months later in February 1947. I was born one year later in Karlovay Vary Czechoslovakia, now the Czech Republic. We went to Paris when I was 3 months old. As refugees we applied 'who will take us.' Santiago Chile was our first destination. Apparently my mother turned to my father and asked. 'Where is Chile?' We lived in Santiago Chile for 5 years, then Los Angeles for 18 years, and arrived in Australia in 1970, where I now live.

I feel that Courage to Care is an important exhibition because the story of evil must be told. This is not just a Jewish story, but a universal story of discrimination. Rwanda, Somali, Bosnia etc.

When we hear the story from the survivors IT IS REAL.