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# William & Rosalie (Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Series)



## Synopsis

"William & Rosalie" is the gripping and heartfelt account of two Polish Jews who survive six different German slave and prison camps throughout the Holocaust. In 1941, newlyweds William and Rosalie Schiff are forcibly separated and sent on their individual odysseys through a surreal maze of hate. Terror in the Krakow ghetto, sadistic SS death games, an "experimental rabbit" job, eyewitness accounts of cannibalism, and the menace of rape in occupied Poland make "William & Rosalie" an unusually candid view of the chaos that World War II unleashed on the Jewish people. The lovers' story begins in Krakow's ancient neighborhood of Kazimierz, after the Germans occupy western Poland. A year later they marry in the ghetto; by 1942 deportations have wasted both families. After Rosalie is saved by Oskar Schindler, the husband and wife end up at the Plaszow work camp under Amon Goeth, the bestial commandant played by Ralph Fiennes in Schindler's List. While Rosalie is on "heaven patrol" removing bodies from the camp, William is working in the factories. But when Rosalie is shipped by train to a different factory camp, William sneaks into a boxcar to follow, and he ends up at Auschwitz instead. Craig Hanley powerfully narrates the struggle of the lovers to stay alive and find each other at war's end. Now in their eighties, William and Rosalie come to terms in this book with the loss of their families and years of torture at the hands of Nazi captors. Unique among memoirs from this era, the book connects directly to the present day. The Schiffs' ongoing and highly effective campaign against prejudice and discrimination is a heroic culmination of two lives scarred beyond belief by racism. "William & Rosalie" artfully combines biography with timely lessons on the nature of mass hate, a stubborn phenomenon that continues to endanger every life on Earth.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

William Schiff is now 88, and his wife, Rosalie, is 84. Coauthor Craig Hanley spent months interviewing these Holocaust survivors, who told of the loss of families; their time spent in the Kraków, Poland, ghetto; and their subsequent journey through six Nazi slave and prison camps. In 1941 they had just married and were separated; later they were both sent to the Plaszow slave-labor camp outside of Kraków, where the notorious Nazi Amon Goeth was the commandant. William worked in the factories there, and Rosalie removed bodies from the camp. First-person quotes from the Schiffs that describe the agony suffered in the camps are set in italics, and the book contains 25 black-and-white photographs. The richness of the Schiffs' memories and the sheer intensity of their experiences record for posterity the horrors of the Holocaust. Cohen, George

"William and Rosalie, having experienced the depth of evil and depravity, nonetheless remain committed to the task of seeking to educate against hatred. They model what is best about the human spirit. Their story deserves to be told, and passed from generation to generation."

The story evolves around personal recollections in Standard English. The longer first person passages, from William, Rosalie, and others, are inset and set in slightly different typeface. Hanley's narration is a detailed history of the period, and the personal recollections are swarmed with visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory imagery. First person recollections of William and Rosalie are more detailed than *The Diary of Anne Frank*, but Anne Frank was not able to expand on her experiences. Hanley's narrations are detailed in history and imagery, but lacks definitions of key words, and dates. Hanley's uses of generalization give the story a surrealism of its own that far surpasses *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The narrators of *The Secret Holocaust Diaries: the Untold Story of Nonna Bannister* attempt to correct dates, and explain away errors from an era that has little documentation, Hanley's techniques allow for more detailed imagery. During a telephone interview that took place on October 13, 2012 Hanley mentioned an example of how the Nazis used radio propaganda to advance anti-Semitism, "I tried to give a sense of the major role that media distortions can play in fueling prejudice". *William & Rosalie: A Holocaust Testimony* vastly exceeds the expectations of a mere Holocaust biography.

I just finished reading this book. I read it in one sitting because I couldn't wait to find out what happened to these precious people. Every Holocaust story I read makes me so sad about what the innocent people suffered but William and Rosalie's story really hit home because they went through the horror alone, yet somehow each managed to survive and find the other again after the madness subsided. They admit they are damaged because of the horrors they endured, but they are alive to tell their story which must be told and retold since every generation comes up with those who want to wash it away and pretend it never happened. God bless the Schiffs and every other human that suffered at the hands of the Nazis.

It's an eye opening account of what the Jewish people and others had to endure during that period. I considered myself very knowledgeable about the war, from a military perspective, but this book took it in another direction. This book put a human face to the tragedy. It was as if you were there alongside them as this was all happening. Having said that it was slightly difficult to keep track of who was recalling the incidents as it would switch back and forth at times. Still it was a gripping and well written story with a happy ending which for me made it so much better, though I did not forget those that were less fortunate.

Well constructed, story was developed by the persons involved during the time of the killing of the Jews, the overpowering of other countries by Nazi Germany and the liberation. The strength and spirit of these two people were revealed as they related the dire circumstances and the utter dehumanizing of the Jewish people. The fact they survived was incredible. The quotes by William and Rosalie placed the story on a human level. Difficult to read, but marvel over their will to live.

It never ceases to amaze me how people found the physical and emotional strength to survive the holocaust. William and Rosalie survive together and then apart even as the world grows darker and darker around them. They both spend time at Amon Goeth's camp Plaszow and lived to tell about it. Oskar Schindler saves Rosalie one random day in the ghetto. This book isn't just about surviving the camps, ghetto, and Germany's occupation of Poland. The book talks about the politics of what is going on around them. After surviving the camps, they do spend a few chapters talking about what was next for them. How they found each other, where they spent the remainder of the 1940's and where they settled and raised their own family. I like to hear how people survived the war, but I also

like to hear what they did after the war. After so much bad treatment, I like to know that life got better and how it got better.

One of the most memorable accounts about the Holocaust I've read so far. The author is Craig Hanley but personal recollections and first-person comments made by the Schiffs are interspersed and are italicized; separating them from the regular text. The Schiffs were young newlyweds when they were separated and deported. They survived against all odds and found each other again after the war. I did not stop reading until I finished the book. I found it appalling - though not surprising - that while lecturing in schools, one girl asked Rosalie what she missed most about being in the camps: dresses or makeup. What idiocy! It's this type of rampant ignorance today that causes people to doubt the Holocaust even happened. I can definitely see how a future atrocity could occur.

This is the Holocaust testimony of William and Rosalie Schiff. William and Rosalie are two Polish survivors of the Holocaust, both are from Krakow, Poland. The story of these two people is just amazing, how they survived I do not know. Between the two of them, they spent time in six camps, including the awful Plaszow work camp, and the dreaded Auschwitz. Early in the book, Rosalie was even saved by the remarkable Oscar Schindler. I liked the way the book was written, with the history of what was happening, and William and Rosalie speaking one at a time. There are also a few interesting twists and turns in the book. I skipped around in reading though, some violence and cruelty was just too much for me. A great read, and also a love story of William and Rosalie.

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