



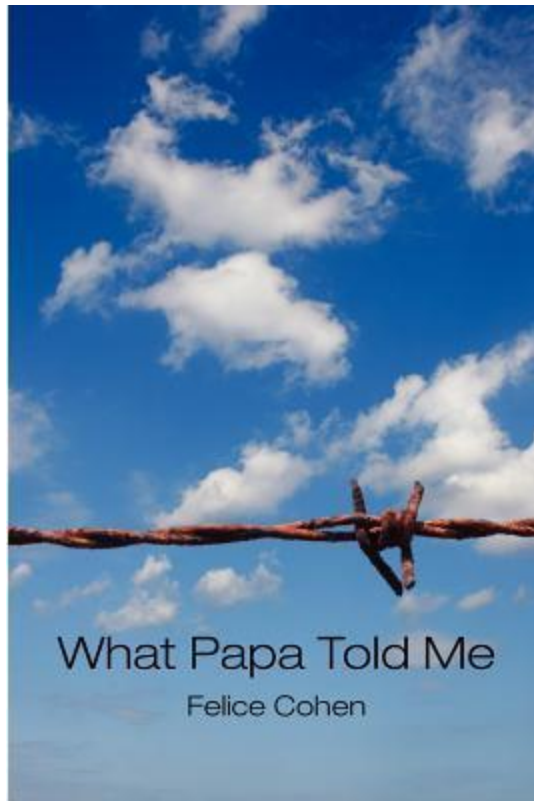
***From Documentation to Social Media:
Empowering Students To Analyze (Mis)Information***

***Barbara Arfa Professional Development Conference
on Holocaust Education***

March 19, 2023

WHAT PAPA TOLD ME

Felice Cohen



What Papa Told Me

Felice Cohen

Dividends Press, 2010

This is the Holocaust testimony of Murray Schwartzbaum, from Szczekociny, Poland, as told to his granddaughter, Felice Cohen. While many such stories are told in the first-person with the help of a family member, Cohen also includes pieces of her conversation with her grandfather, opening the dialogue with the third-generation, a topic not always incorporated into Holocaust testimonies.

This touching and heart wrenching story begins when Murray is a child, born in 1921, to a traditional Jewish family. Owners of a family-run lumber company, he has fond memories of his sisters and brother and the “normal” life that they all shared. When the Nazis invaded Poland, Murray’s brother escaped to the Soviet

Union, while the rest of the family tried to move to Bedzin but quickly learned of the killings of Jews and chose to return to their home. Murray lived most of the war in a series of slave labor camps, eventually being transported to Bergen-Belsen where he found his sister Cecia and learned of the tragic fates of the rest of their family. With his sister’s help, Murray survived and together they were liberated by the American army in 1945. They each married a Holocaust survivor and began rebuilding their lives.

But the story does not end there. Cohen asks her grandfather about her grandparents’ move to the United States and the hardships they faced as Holocaust survivors. Both Murray and his wife Fela were deeply traumatized by what had occurred during the six years of the Nazi occupation. Murray recalled those difficult years and yet the story concludes in an inspiring and uplifting manner, and he explains to Felice the legacy that he has left for her, his other grandchildren, and future generations.

This book can be graphic, exposing the horrors of the Nazi atrocities. Teachers should use their discretion when using this with middle-school students, though there is much to be learned from the story. It is written in an easy-to-understand style and tells the story of people their age who lived in an unfortunately devastating time. Perhaps one of the biggest reasons to use this with students is its emphasis on talking to grandparents, listening to their stories, and retelling them.

Reviewed by Yael Weinstock Mashbaum, Yad Vashem

A GRANDFATHER'S TALE – HOW TO DOCUMENT FAMILY HISTORY

EXERCISE: FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

This exercise is for students to conduct an interview to gain insight about their family's history, and to gain experience in the interview exercise itself. While this is for students to do after-school, interviewing a fellow student in the classroom is good practice for the interviewer. This exercise is less about getting facts and more about the color commentary that makes their interviewee's story unique. These questions are a starting point. Encourage students to add follow up questions if an answer intrigues them. Recording these interviews may be helpful for some students if they cannot write quickly. Most cell phones have recording apps.

Part I. The Interview

These questions are aimed at asking a close family member—parent, grandparent or another older relative. In doing this exercise in the classroom, questions can be altered. For instance, "What *did* you want to be when you grew up?" can become "What *do* you want to be when you grow up?" Tell the students these questions are a guide and to feel free to add their own.

- Pair up students (preferably who don't know each other well) to interview each other.
- Each interview should last approximately 15 minutes.
- Have them take turns in their pairings, each pair should switch places (half hour total)

Screening Questions

1. What is your name?
2. Where were you born? How much did you weigh?
3. Do you have siblings? How many? Where do you fit in the birth order?
4. Did you get along with your siblings? Did you share a room? Are they still alive?
5. Where are your parents from? Your grandparents?
6. If you know, how did you or your ancestors arrive in America?
7. What made your family settle where they did?
8. Did you live in a house or in an apartment?
9. What is your favorite color?
10. What is your favorite food?
11. Did you have any modern appliances in your home when you were young? TV? Dishwasher? VCR?
12. What was your favorite TV show when you were younger? What is it today?
13. What did you want to be when you grew up? Why? Did it happen?
14. What is the scariest thing that happened to you?
15. What makes you laugh?
16. What is your highest level of formal education?
17. If you went to college, where did you go? What was your major? If not, why not?
18. Have you ever had surgery? Where you scared?
19. What were some of the jobs you had?
20. What do you love most about where you live? Like least?
21. Do you have any hobbies? How did you get into them?
22. How much did a pair of shoes cost when you were young? Or an ice cream cone? Newspaper? Bus or subway ride?
23. What makes you unique?
24. Do you keep a journal? Do you still have it? Do you have any artifacts, documents or photos from when you were young?
25. Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

Part II. Artifacts, Documents and Journals

Have the students ask their relative if they have any personal diaries, journals, artifacts, letters, or documents such as travel vouchers, passports, or even an old utility bill from back in the day. Tell the students to take a picture of it, make a copy or have it laminated since it may be the only copy. These items can be a wonderful and unique window into what the relative's earlier life was like during those years. Photos are great too. Seeing pictures of what people wore, where they lived, how they lived, can spark many more questions.

For example:

- How long did it take to get a photo made?
- Where did you go to get photos printed?
- What was the cost for this printing? Was this amount considered expensive?
- Can you tell me about your outfit? Was it popular then?
- Where did you shop for clothes?
- Did you have a lot of clothes?
- How did you clean clothes?
- And many more!

Part III. Writing Assignment

Have the students write up their interview and include photos of any artifacts. Once the paper is written, if they need to confirm or find dates or places, or want to add more historical information about that time, there are many online search engines dedicated to ancestral facts. After students add in any new particulars, have them show their completed project to the relative they interviewed. Memory is a tricky thing; reading their own story with or without new facts, may trigger more memories and stories to share. They most likely will have additions and/or edits. It may take several edits to get it right, but will be worth it.

Suggested Online Search Engines

- www.YadVashem.org
- www.Ancestry.com
- www.Myheritage.com
- www.AfriGeneas.com
- www.Archives.com
- www.FamilySearch.org
- www.GenealogyBank.com
- Google

Part IV. Sharing the Stories

Ask for volunteers to come up to the front of the room and share with the class about the person they interviewed. Maybe every student gets a chance or as many as you have time for. This is also a great exercise for students to practice public speaking.