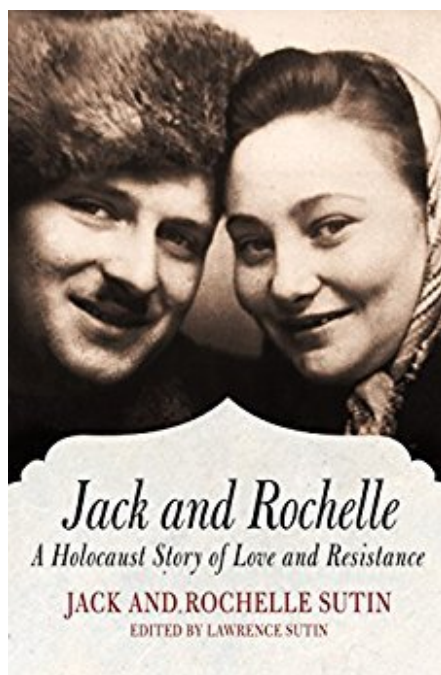




Jack and Rochelle: A Holocaust Story of Love and Resistance

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A gripping memoir wherein Jack and Rochelle Sutin recount their struggle to survive the Holocaust as part of a band of partisans in the forests of Poland. Told through their son Lawrence, the memoir brings to life the reality of months spent hidden in a dank underground bunker unaware of the outside world. However, this is not just an account of stark survival. It is also the tale of an impossible love affair that has lasted more than 50 years, and an eloquent reminder that history is made up of the often deeply moving details of individual lives.

Jack and Rochelle: A Holocaust Story of Love and Resistance Details

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Mattc says

devastating first hand accounts of polish jews, jack and rochelle, escaping from jewish ghettos and fighting nazis, polish police, and russian military groups during the holocaust years.

Kelley says

I have spent a lifetime reading accounts of the Holocaust. This is a unique memoir since it is a joint recollection of a husband and wife telling their unique narrative of their personal and partnered lives as they fought for survival as Jewish partisans in World War 2 Poland. Their personal accounts captured the deep intensity of emotions of Jews fighting unimaginable horrors at the time -- the fear, the anger, the sense of profound loss, and a deep appreciation for having survived, all seen through a deep abiding love that Jack and Rochelle Sutin had for each other which brought focus to their quest to survive. This book more than most really captures how victims of the Holocaust especially could almost lose their sense of humanity in the face of unspeakable tragedy -- an experience common to so many in the Holocaust, yet so. movingly recounted in this book. This book has made me consider anew the lives of partisans as they struggled against the Nazis who overran their country, destroyed their homes and families, and viciously ripped away their sense of self. This book has offered me an additional lens through which to view this aspect of Holocaust history, and because of this, it has been a deeply rewarding and meaningful read.

Donna says

It is the account of Jack and Rochelle before, during and after the Russian and Nazi invasions of Poland.

Their son writes their words. Sometimes Jack will finish Rochelle's words or she finishes his. It also tells their different takes on the times they lived through.

People who don't believe the Jewish history before, during and even after WW II will never change their opinions but the rest of us need to read these types of accounts so we can prevent the same thing happening again to any group of people based on religion, race or creed.

A Steven Bouchard says

I am wondering why this does not win a Pulitzer Prize and why Honorary Ph.D.s are not awarded to all members of this family.

This is so far beyond 5 stars. As a Catholic, I have often wondered where Jewish stamina and positive outlook came from. Thus I have read a huge amount of Holocaust books. I only read one other book that I labeled 5 stars because it gave me more than a glimpse of fortitude, stamina, strength, resistance, forward thinking information.

This book is over-the-top fantastic and is extremely well documented, explained and causes the reader to fall in love with all of the true characters! Outstanding reporting, reader understandable characters, events, thoughtfulness and diligent work by the writer.

READ THIS BOOK! Or, philosophize and scratch your balls! If you read it, you will understand the previous sentence.

What a lovely family, generation to generation understanding, thoughtfulness and such a brilliant way of bringing comprehension to those that don't know, are curious and those that strive for education!!

Thank you for such a wonderful and understandable book! I even learned what the "resistance" was all about, even though other books that suggested resistance were very shallow. I have wondered, in my easy life, what I would/should do if ever caught in the same hell as the Holocaust!

And a Catholic's love to all Jewish peoples! Thank you for bringing me into your world, if only for a read and a moment.

Bravo, Bravo, BRAVO!!!!

Kat says

There is nothing as compelling as a real-life story - whether it's a love story, a war story or a personal journey through an unimaginable horror. Jack and Rochelle is all three of these stories, melded and meshed together into an unforgettable story of the terrible things that human beings can do to each other and the power of love and determination.

Told simply, in a conversational format and alternating between Jack and Rochelle, it is a story that I found completely and utterly riveting from the beginning until the end. Starting with the story of Jack and Rochelle's parents, they talk about their childhoods and teenage years, how they knew each other and the way their lives changed with the beginning of the war.

As they meet again in the forest after escaping from the Nazis and living as partisans in underground bunkers, their story goes from a sweet narrative about growing up to a nightmare where they are forced to endure terrible conditions as they fight to survive against the Germans and the harsh Polish weather.

I've read several non-fiction accounts of World War II, but this is the first partisan account that I've read, and it was really quite shocking to read about the realities of living every day in a cramped bunker, with death an ever-present possibility. But amid the horrors that they are forced to endure, there is also a gradual love that emerges between the two of them, and in their telling of the story their continued love really shines through.

Written by Jack and Rochelle, and edited by their son, Lawrence, the book is obviously a labour of love, and despite the terrible things that have happened to them in their lives, it really reflects their love for each other and how very grateful they are to have each other.

Read more of my reviews at [The Aussie Zombie](#)

Diane Chamberlain says

This book will make you open your well-stocked pantry and freezer doors and stand there in awe at all the choices you have, knowing that some people survived for months and months on nothing more than flour and water. This is an eye-opening and beautiful story about love and survival. I was familiar, of course, with life in the concentration camps, but not with the partisan groups who escaped to the wilderness and managed to survive in the freezing cold and parasite-ridden summers for years. Amazing story.

Amy Hustead says

A touching account of resistance, fate and true love (just to name a few) that made me cry often but mostly made me feel thankful for the very basic things I have (food, roof, family, etc..) I liked how the story allowed for both Jack and Rochelle to each tell their own side and version. Finally I am glad I finally read it after searching for it for so long!

Rae says

Aside from being a beautifully wonderful account of a Holocaust love story, this is now one of my personal favorite books and that's saying a lot. One finds themselves literally cheering this pair on through their triumphs and short-comings. My heart goes out to Jack and Rochelle for everything they've been through.

Becky says

This powerful book of the Jewish resistance in Poland is one of the most inspirational books of survival and will power -- plus, the story of love which endures. The descriptions of living under ground, the woods, the swamp, etc. are so vivid! I learned a lot about the psychology of people in close quarters under constant stress and what people have to do to survive.

Karyl says

When we think about the Holocaust, we remember the atrocities perpetuated on the Jews of Europe by the Nazis, the concentration camps, the death camps, the showers of poisonous gas, the digging of their own graves, and the starvation and mass murder of an entire people. But this isn't a memoir of the same types of experiences. Instead Jack and Rochelle were Jews from different towns in eastern Poland, who had each led a fairly comfortable life before the onset of World War II. That said, the Polish people at the time were fairly anti-Semitic, and each family had to deal with racist comments and actions directed toward them.

After the Soviets, who had taken over eastern Poland, had been driven out by the Nazis, the Jews in Poland were forced into ghettos. Rochelle was spared the liquidation of her ghetto because she was away from the ghetto doing hard labor for the Nazis, while Jack and his father had hidden themselves away before their ghetto was liquidated. Rochelle's father and Jack's mother had already been murdered by the Nazis, and anyone left behind in the ghettos met the same fate. It was then that both Rochelle and Jack, with his father

Julian, escaped into the woods of eastern Poland, where they lived for two years, subsisting on not much more than flour and water for much of it, and enduring infestations of lice and bedbugs and other vermin while living either in underground bunkers or in makeshift shelters.

It's incredible to me how Rochelle, Jack, and Julian were able to survive such primitive conditions, always on the run and fearing attacks from the Nazis or the Soviets, or being informed on by the native Polish. And it's a testament to their strong love that it managed to save Rochelle from utter despair after she realized she was the only surviving member of her family. It took time, but eventually she and Jack decided to continue to fight and to live for one another.

Lawrence Sutin, the son of Jack and Rochelle, who edited this work, does bring up a good point that is worth discussing. It's not unusual to hear someone wonder why some people died during the Holocaust while others died, that possibly some were stronger either mentally or physically, or some managed to escape because they had friends in high places, or any number of reasons. But to suggest that some survived due to their strength is falling into the trap that there was some idea of natural selection going on. In reality, some survived while others died, and it was all due to dumb luck, and nothing more. Had the Americans liberated Bergen-Belsen just two weeks earlier, Anne Frank would still have been alive.

This is definitely worth a read as another Holocaust survival story, one that might not be as well-known as other stories. Though the writing is rather simplistic (it feels as though Mr Sutin simply transcribed oral interviews with his parents), it is engaging and fast-paced. Highly recommended.

Jennifer Willcutt says

I read this book for my reading classes. It's a holocaust story, and it's amazing what this couple went through to survive -- and thankfully it has a happy ending! The students in my reading classes love it because it's a love story, it's nonfiction, and there are some gritty details that we could all identify with.

Sharon Collins Crews says

Amazing story of survival. Also to know that these individuals ended up living in my city makes me want to be more compassionate & a bit more curious about the people I encounter. Enthralled with the people in the story & their will to survive through the hardship & hell of the holocaust.

Christy says

Synopsis:

Jack and Rochelle Sutin tell their survival story, taking turns recounting all that they endured as Polish Jews during the Holocaust. They start with a brief account of their family and their lives before the war. Mere acquaintances before the Nazi occupation, the two met again after escaping the ghettos, hiding with other Jewish partisans in the Belorussian forest called Naliboki.

Review:

In December of last year, I read Nechama Tec's book *Defiance*, about the Bielski partisans, who took in Jewish ghetto refugees and fought the Germans. The Bielski otriad (partisan group) was in the Naliboki forest, as were Jack and Rochelle, who joined a different otriad. The stories told in *Defiance* were incredible, and I was glad to return to the subject and read another story of the same place and time.

Jack and Rochelle is written with some passages by Rochelle and others by Jack. They take turns, sometimes interjecting a sentence in the other's narrative. In his preface, Lawrence Sutin says:

"My parents chose to speak openly of their experiences to us – to my sister Cecilia and myself. I cannot remember at what age I first began to hear their Holocaust stories."

So it seems fitting that it is written as if they are telling the stories to us, the reader.

Jack and Rochelle are very candid and seem to hold very little back from the reader. For instance, they openly admit that Rochelle did not trust Jack for a while after they met again in the forest. He wanted to take care of her, but she thought he just wanted her for sex. Considering Rochelle and her friend Tanya's previous experiences with Soviet partisans, her distrust is understandable.

Although I knew of course that Jack and Rochelle survived the Holocaust and made it to America, that did not prevent me from feeling the intensity of their ordeals. Consider a few quotes from the book:

"We didn't expect to live that long. We just decided that we didn't want to be killed the way the Nazis planned – slowly, as it suited their purposes, and after we had worked ourselves to near death. We could die with some dignity. We would try to get away, they would shoot us with their machine guns, and that would be it." (p. 73)

"Then we realized that these two Germans thought we were Russian partisans. So we explained the truth to them. We told them what the Germans had done to our families. When they heard that their faces turned white and they started to tremble." (p. 141)

For the most part, Jack and Rochelle are in agreement over the events that they jointly experienced. However, Rochelle would mention several times how she worked to keep Jack from going out on the most dangerous partisan raids. Jack was always quick to follow with a statement that: though she may have kept him from some raids, most of the time he did fight with the rest of the Zorin otriad fighters. As a result, I wasn't sure how much Jack went out on raids.

I definitely appreciate that Jack and Rochelle did not stop their story when the Germans were ousted from Poland in 1944. By continuing on, the book covered an aspect of the Holocaust experience of which I knew few details: what happened to the Jews immediately after their liberation from the Nazis.

For indeed, Jack and Rochelle's troubles did not disappear with the defeat of the Nazis. When they returned to their hometowns, the couple found that the majority of their Polish neighbors hated them and wished they had not survived. The Soviets were conscripting the partisan fighters to their army, to fight and likely die on the front. Jack and Rochelle wanted to live and start a family, so they fled west.

After many, many trials and hardships, the couple and their daughter finally ended up in St. Paul, Minnesota. They were interviewed for a local paper and a story was published about them in 1949. I was horrified to read that Jack and Rochelle subsequently received anonymous letters and phone calls "complaining about dirty Jews being let into America when there wasn't enough to go around for real Americans."

The afterword by Lawrence Sutin is essential reading after completing Jack and Rochelle's story. He has some keen insights about his parents, their stories, and his own experience of being the child of two

Holocaust survivors.

"Here, of course, lies the value of Holocaust narratives told by the survivors themselves. These narratives confirm that, within the maelstrom of death, the lives lost or spared were individual lives that cannot be encompassed by the horrific statistic of "six million."" (p. 206)

Betsy D. says

This was such a good book. I've read a lot of fiction and nonfiction about WWII and the Holocaust, but I've never read much about partisan fighting groups, much less a real-life romance in the midst of that. The love that these two had for each other is inspiring! In a marriage, you always have to do some things for the other person when you don't feel like it, but I think most people haven't had to clean open sores on each other's body, or pick fleas and lice off of each other, much less beg for food or empty each other's latrine bucket. If you think your marriage has had challenges (and all of them have), this book puts it into perspective up to a point. What a life they lived.

Lynn Morzorati says

this was an amazing story - and a great Twin Cities connection that I didn't realize going in. What a love story set amidst really unfathomable conditions.
