A Chosen Voice

by Sheila Luecht

It was now really decades ago when a bit of what she had only read about crept silently into her life; only to make a regular din every day of every decade since. Sometimes it was really nothing, other times it was a full fledged story. A small piece of something much bigger than most of the world could understand, let out in scraps left to her to piece together. Most of these people were now long gone, those she had actually met, and heard almost as a witness, their authentic memories, of their poignant stories.

As an empath all she could do was process and remember. At times she could feel too much and while she teetered on that edge, her own life would take her to a place of uncontrolled pain and passion, a remanent of other lives that she would somehow complete for them. It was her duty. Tell the story or live the story. That was the only point of her existence, while living a very suburban life this all trickled out. Openly she called them dreams and stories. People said "Write a book, you must write a book!" They were imagining that this was all some spun tale, but she knew better. They were memories. Not hers but a very active chorus waiting for their songs to be perfected and heard.

At various times, she would begin. There was always a kind of starting point. A dream remembered on a car trip that she would jot down and then read to her husband and family. Even at times, perhaps, too much for them to understand, as children, she counted on their intelligence and depth to be able to hear the sketchy outlines of real activities and real emotions splash outward, dragging them along the back roads on that stretch to upstate Minnesota. Lots of forest there, and the backdrop of that sharp green, mosquito laden and hefty moss smelling venue, giving just the perfect segue to the words that would tell the story of that girl

Copyright © 2023 Sheila Luecht. All rights reserved.

still waiting in that abandoned barn to be discovered by partisans or Nazis.

Her life experiences allowed her to collect the stories. There they remained until she could do something with them, find the finishes. Sometimes a name would come to her, like Zelda Moskowitz, and she would even attempt to see if such a person existed in the now. She would spend decades connecting the dots trying to discern if all the real bits she actually lived and witnessed were part of one big story or many smaller ones.

When she was young, it was very easy to have energy and to put effort into research and finding the path for some of these tidbits to follow in a story line. As she aged and walked the life distance away from the rather fresh, at only 30 years out from the end of the war, to the more smokey memory where modern experiences and interpretations somewhat, and unfairly dulled the real experiences. She went through the times when it was unpopular to talk about the war. She went through the times when survivors still did so, as they recognized the very need to get their story out.

While the shadows of lives that once were still hid away, others who survived tried to stand on their own two feet and walk the distance again and tell what happened and what it was all like.

Now as she emptied the extraneous out of her own house, in her own time, her own similar old age, she could not bring herself to let go of guide books with maps and descriptions for travel which she had used to identify some of the routes taken by her ghostly travelers. She knew she had to get it all accurate, all correct otherwise, who would believe these important vignettes? She might as well make it a Star Trek episode if she was going to be careless about the facts, and really spin it all imaginatively. There was a chorus in her head that rather preferred that concept and pushed for it, to distance all the pain of the reality away from themselves.

She had to be careful. If she read or watched something about this time period she would often find herself correcting things being portrayed, becoming very immersed into the action and the tinges of reality they were meant to give. It was a very dangerous thing to get too wrapped up in it. You had to be ready, distant and calm to pluck the important issues out and determine the value of the stories against the ones that you were carrying deep in your own heart for others.

Everyday lives, which somehow were lost and then recovered, surface. An elderly couple introducing themselves in her own apartment building, telling of their experiences as Jews in Germany during the war in the early 1980's, while others distanced themselves afraid of touching that, she immersed herself in it. With every single description, she would see the story and understand some of the decisions that they made along the way. These brief encounters in her life became guideposts. If others refused to believe, she would challenge them, as a witness of the witness. Who could ever imagine that a Mauthausen would not be enough to declare the truth of what happened, that time would march forward and holes would begin in the cloth of memory, and people could not believe such tales?