



# A New Testimony of a Past Holocaust for Future Generations

**HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR** **Eva Mozes Kor** has told her story many, many times.

About her childhood in the tiny village of Portz, Romania, with her parents, older sisters, and identical twin, Miriam, and their observant Jewish household. How life abruptly changed in 1944 when she was 10 years old, as Nazi soldiers forced the family to leave their home and travel by cattle car to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. What it was like to arrive at Auschwitz, after 70 hours without food or water, and watch her father and sisters disappear forever on the selection platform. The final sight of her mother's outstretched arms as she and Miriam were forcibly taken from her. How she and Miriam were selected to be two of 3,000 twin children used in horrific experiments under the direction of Dr. Josef Mengele.

How, on her first night in the camp, she saw corpses of children on the dirty barracks floor, and her vow that she and Miriam would not share their fate.

With Miriam, Eva Kor was put through many surgeries and experiments directed by Mengele. Once, she was given injections and developed a very high fever and swollen arms and legs. She remembers Mengele laughing, "Too bad, she is so young. She has only two weeks to live."

Of course, Kor did not die. She and Miriam were two of approximately 200 children found alive when Auschwitz was liberated in 1945. They were reunited with an aunt in Romania and, eventually, immigrated to Israel. She graduated from agricultural school and went on to attain the rank of sergeant major in the Israeli army. In 1960, she met Michael "Mickey" Kor in Israel. A holocaust survivor, too, he was visiting Israel from his adopted hometown of Terre Haute, Indiana. They married and Mickey brought his wife to the western Indiana city where they raised a daughter and son.

In 1984, Kor founded the organization CANDLES (Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiments Survivors) with Miriam, who remained in Israel. Through CANDLES, they tracked down other twin survivors and traveled to Auschwitz and to Jerusalem for a mock trial for Mengele. Eighty of the twins participated. CANDLES eventually connected 122 individual twins living in 10 countries across four continents.

When her sister died in 1993, Kor needed a focus for her grief. She created the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Terre Haute. It opened in 1995 with a small collection of Holocaust artifacts. In 2003, an arsonist burned the museum to the ground, but Kor rebuilt it with the help of a generous public outpouring of support. Her determination to rebuild was also fueled by a lesson she learned from Auschwitz:

“I told myself that I would never, ever give up,” Kor said.

### The story continues

Fifty years after the liberation of Auschwitz, Kor returned to the camp with a Nazi doctor who knew Mengele. She read aloud his signed witness statement to contradict those who denied the Holocaust, which resulted in the deaths of 6 million Jews between 1933 and 1945. Then, to the surprise of many, she announced to the world that – in her name alone – she forgave the Nazis. For Kor, the act of forgiveness lifted an incredible weight of suffering.

“It was very controversial,” Kor recently acknowledged. “Very controversial, but logically, I asked myself: Do I have the right to be free of what the Nazis imposed on me? And if so, how do I accomplish this?”

Kor marked her 82nd birthday in 2016, but showed little sign of slowing down. She had 135 speaking engagements in the United States and Europe, including leading 90 people on a tour of Auschwitz. Documentary filmmaker Ted Green is partnering with WFYI Public Media to produce a film

about Kor’s life, and a camera crew accompanied her on many of her trips. These efforts are dedicated to telling audiences – especially young people – about the Mengele twins, her belief in the power of forgiveness, and the importance of respect, equality and peace. Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb honored Kor’s life and work when he awarded her the 2017 Sagem, the state’s highest award, which recognizes a lifetime of excellence that has brought honor to Indiana.

In 2016, more than 10,000 people, including 7,000 school-aged youth, made their way to Terre Haute to learn her story.



Eva Kor (opposite and below) created CANDLES Museum and Holocaust Education Center in Terre Haute, Indiana, to preserve memories of the Holocaust (above), and teach young people about the need for compassion, understanding and justice.



**“I told myself that I would never, ever give up ....”**

“People ask for more, but there is no more of me to give,” Kor said.

“That’s a nice problem to have. People still want to hear what I say.”

Kor will not be able to tell her story forever. It’s a fact that was part of a strategic planning process CANDLES leadership launched in 2011 with the





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support of a Lilly Endowment grant. The process helped CANDLES clarify its unique value as a Holocaust institution: to deliver an inspirational message of hope and healing rooted in Kor’s life. But it also helped leaders begin to explore how the museum will share Kor’s story after she is no longer able to tell it in person. They needed to reimagine how CANDLES could preserve the founder’s legacy.

The exploration led to fruitful conversations with filmmakers at New Dimensions in Testimony (NDT), an initiative of the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation. Founded by film director Steven Spielberg, the USC Shoah Foundation has filmed the testimonies of thousands of survivors of the Holocaust. But NDT is a new approach to preserving the stories of survivors. It uses three-dimensional imaging and natural language

processing to create life-sized, interactive testimonies. With the use of complex algorithms, the technology allows viewers to engage in virtual conversations with Holocaust survivors.

Funding from a \$500,000 Endowment grant to CANDLES in 2015 helped Kor become one of only 13 Holocaust survivors to be interviewed using NDT.

In spring 2016, Kor traveled to Los Angeles to record her story. She answered more than 1,000 questions during five days of interviews inside a soundstage surrounded by thousands of LED lights and 116 specially equipped cameras.

Kor’s testimony is an important part of the NDT project, according to Kia Hays, project manager of NDT in the Collections Department at USC Shoah.

“Her perseverance and will to survive as a young child during the Holocaust alongside her twin sister, Miriam, is a narrative that engages and inspires many students today,” Hays said.

Eva Kor recorded her story at New Dimensions in Testimony in Los Angeles and became one of 13 Holocaust survivors from around the world to use the new technology to preserve their experiences. The recording and that of another survivor, Pinchas Gutter (above right), will be available at CANDLES.



## A new dimension for CANDLES

In November 2016, the unassuming one-story brick CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Terre Haute became only the fourth location in the world to become a pilot site of the USC Shoah Foundation's NDT project. USC Shoah Foundation representatives brought the pilot to CANDLES so visitors could have a "conversation" with Pinchas Gutter, who was 7 years old when World War II began. He spent three years in the Warsaw Ghetto and survived six Nazi concentration camps. Gutter was the first Holocaust survivor to be recorded with NDT.

Visitors to CANDLES quickly adapted to the technology, according to Dorothy Chambers, interim executive director for CANDLES museum.

"It has been interesting to watch how visitors, at first, are a bit hesitant to ask Pinchas questions," she said. "After all, how should one approach a life-sized image of a man sitting in a chair, smiling and nodding his head encouragingly at you? But then they quickly ease into conversation. They soon forget about the technology, and they focus on learning about Pinchas' life.

"Pinchas is providing us with an unexpected opportunity for discussion and debate: his views on forgiveness and justice differ markedly from Eva's, and students in particular seem eager to talk about it."

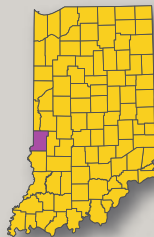
In 2017, CANDLES will be able to share with visitors Kor's NDT experience. As part of its agreement with USC Shoah Foundation, CANDLES holds the copyright to her recordings and has received the rights to exhibit the testimonies of the other 12 survivors, as well. The NDT project will allow

CANDLES to expand its reach, creating a larger, long-term platform to share the stories of men and women who survived the Holocaust. Most importantly, the museum will preserve and share its founder's voice, her remarkable rapport with young people, and her commitment to peace, equality and justice.

"We feel fortunate to be a part of this important project to develop a creative, engaging way to share survivor testimonies," Chambers said, "and preserve Eva's story and her dedication to sharing it so personally with others far into the future."

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

# At Home in Indiana



**Terre Haute may seem an unlikely place** for a Holocaust museum, but this city on the western edge of Indiana became home to CANDLES because of the universal experiences of friendship and love.

In April 1945, Michael "Mickey" Kor was 19 years old when he escaped a death march of slave laborers from Buchenwald near Weimar, Germany.

As Allied forces approached, Mickey emerged from hiding and met soldiers of the 250th Engineer Combat Battalion of the U.S. Army, commanded by Lt. Col. Andrew J. Nehf of Terre Haute, Indiana.

Members of the battalion treated Mickey as one of its own, according to Dorothy Chambers, interim executive director of CANDLES. Mickey built a particularly close friendship with Lt. Col. Nehf, who promised to help the teenager should he ever need it.

After the war, Mickey needed a fresh start. A native of Latvia, he considered moving to the new nation of Israel. Instead, he chose to follow Lt. Col. Nehf to the United States. Nehf arranged for a Terre Haute family to provide Mickey a home and support for his pursuit of U.S. citizenship. He graduated from the former Wiley High School and attended classes at what was then known as Indiana State Teachers College. Mickey graduated from Purdue University, became a pharmacist and returned to Terre Haute to build a career.

In 1960, Mickey met a fellow Holocaust survivor, Eva Mozes, while visiting his brother in Israel. Within a few weeks they married, and Eva moved to Terre Haute. There they raised a son and daughter before Eva created CANDLES.

In 1945, Michael "Mickey" Kor (right) escaped a Nazi death march and was liberated by a battalion of U.S. soldiers led by a Terre Haute native.

