

An Author's Search for Her Mother's Long-Lost "Star" Leads to Her Holocaust Novel's Publication

Booklist writes, "[A] gripping tale. . . . The spirited, realistic dialogue brings the characters to life, and the documents . . . enhance without cluttering the flow. . . . That the family survived to have this powerful, heartening tale told cannot fail to move readers."

Arriving in time for Holocaust Remembrance Day comes K. Heidi Fishman's debut novel, [Tutti's Promise](#) (MB Publishing, \$9.99, ages 10 and up, ISBN-13: 978-0-99088430-1-6), based on the experiences of her mother, Ruth Lichtenstern Fishman (nicknamed Tutti), and her mother's family. Their story of survival, courage, and hope includes surprises, raids, sabotage, helpful friends, and kind strangers. And through it all, Tutti's bravery shines through.

"Tutti's Promise" recounts Tutti's journey beginning as a one-year-old child, when her family fled Cologne, Germany, for neighboring Amsterdam in 1936. But four years later, the Nazis invaded the Netherlands. Unable to escape due to the Nazis' occupation of neighboring countries and the bordering sea, the Jews were eventually deported to concentration camps, mainly Auschwitz and Sobibor, where more than 102,000 of the approximately 140,000 Jews who had been living there were murdered. Twenty-five to thirty thousand Jews survived by going into hiding. Given these grim statistics, the fact that Tutti's immediate family survived is astonishing.

The project began when Dr. Fishman realized that, though Tutti had been making presentations to students since 2007, in order to preserve her mother's story for history, she'd have to document it in a book. Dr. Fishman began researching, including making several trips to Europe. She knew that Tutti's father, Heinz Lichtenstern, was a trader in metals. But what she didn't know then was that his expertise was a major factor in the survival of the family. After they had all been transported to Westerbork, a transit camp, Heinz was able to save his family's life and those of many other Jews by helping to establish the camp's scrap metal sorting facility, which partially supported the Nazi war machine. Naturally, that's where the sabotage portion of the story comes in.

Knowing this history made the first document that Dr. Fishman found all the more poignant: "It was from Adolph Eichmann's trial and stated that the request for seven Jewish metal experts to be exempt from transport out of the Netherlands was denied by Eichmann's office. The men were identified by name—and my grandfather's name topped the list."

Dr. Fishman was introduced to her publisher when she tried to find the yellow cloth star that her mother had been forced to wear. Tutti thought she might have given it to a young man, Jim Catler, who had interviewed her in 1975 for an oral history project for the Greater Hartford Jewish Historical Society. Dr. Fishman located Mr. Catler, who assured her that her

mother had not given him the yellow star. He then asked if she had interested a publisher in her book. When she answered, “Not yet,” Mr. Catler invited his fiancée, Margie Blumberg, the President of MB Publishing, into the conversation. Within a month, the manuscript had found a home, and ten months later, the book was published.

Dr. Fishman has been blogging about her journey and, as a result, many people have reached out to her, such as the woman whose own grandfather had arranged for Tutti's family's life-saving passport, and a Dutch author who told her that Tutti's father helped save the family he was writing about. The blog www.PopjeAndMe.com has a following of about 700 readers and has had over 18,000 hits.

“Tutti's Promise” is filled with personal family photos and historical documents, such as the family's Paraguayan passport, which saved Heinz's life when he found himself on a transport to Auschwitz from Theresienstadt.

Accolades for “Tutti's Promise” include the following:

”‘Tutti's Promise’ is an engrossing story of hope, family, survival, and identity. What's more, K. Heidi Fishman's meticulously researched novel blends drama with facts, inspiring the engaged reader to seek answers through a palpable emotional connection to the past. By drawing the reader into the extraordinary experiences of her family, the author offers us the opportunity to see in her characters our very own selves and loved ones.” —Stephen D. Smith, PhD, Andrew J. and Erna Finci Viterbi Endowed Executive Director of the USC Shoah Foundation

Dr. Fishman, a retired psychologist, lives in Vermont with her family.

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For interview requests with K. Heidi Fishman, please contact the publisher or the author. Requests for review copies may be made by phone or email.

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