

Segal Shares Stories of Twin Children of the Holocaust Through Words, Photos

by *Mary Adcock*
President

Parents of twins often marvel at the “twin bond,” snapping photos of those special moments. Pictures of newborn twins who reach for each other while resting in their bassinet. Snapshots of toddler twins who hold hands as they walk through the park. Photos of teenage twins giving a hug goodbye as they head off to separate colleges.

In her new book, Dr. Nancy Segal shares twin photographs of a much different nature. Chilling photos of twins torn apart. Photos of twins whose ties were broken when they were forced to become subjects of the medical experiments conducted by Dr. Josef Mengele at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.

The book, *The Twin Children of the Holocaust: Stolen Childhood and the Will to Survive*, is a collection of pictures that have been sitting in binders in Segal’s university office for nearly 40 years.

But Segal’s book is more than photos. She also shares the stories of these twins — records estimate that as many as 1,500 could have been victims. There were twins who were six years old when they arrived at the camp and placed in separate barracks. They didn’t see each other again until they were 12 and had been living apart, one in the United States and one in Czechoslovakia.

Fortunately, both twins were adopted by the same Long Island family. There were twins who 40 years later suddenly recall details of their experiences at the death camp: the color of Mengele’s boots, the layout

of the camp, the calls of Nazi officers asking twins to step forward.

Segal gathered these photos and stories when she traveled with a group of twins, non-twins and members of the press to visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in 1985. The journey was timed to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the day that the camp was liberated by Soviet forces. But for the twins, the return to the death camp was more than an anniversary.

According to Segal, the “chilling cold day brought reminders of what the twins had endured.” It also gave some twins a chance to search through camp records as proof that they were actually there, or to learn more about the experimental procedures they had endured as a clue to current medical troubles.

The visit was followed by a three-day public hearing on Dr. Josef Mengele’s war crimes, held at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, Israel.

In the preface, Segal writes, the book “will have universal meaning for those who care deeply about the injustices and cruelties done to innocent children.

“As I listened to the twins’ memories of horror, pain and fear, I marveled at the clever tricks these young children used and the tall tales they told to unsuspecting officers to obtain extra food, visit a twin sister or escape from the infirmary,” she writes.

Find a short [preview of the book](#) on Google Books.

Dr. Segal is currently a professor of Psychology at California State University, Fullerton, and Director of the Twin Studies Center. Her ninth book, *Gay Fathers, Twin Sons: The Citizenship Case that Captured the World*, will be available in August 2023 from Rowman & Littlefield.

Segal, N.L. *The Twin Children of the Holocaust: Stolen Childhood and the Will to Survive*. Boston: Cherry Orchard Books – Academic Studies Press (release date: March 21, 2023).