

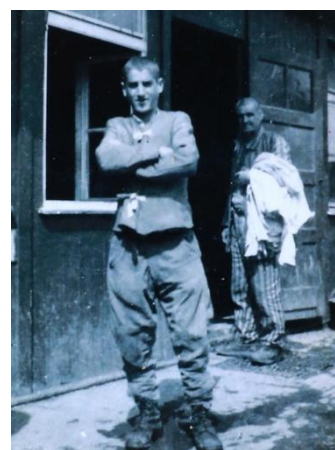
# Handout - Four Brief Survivor Biographies

## Jack Meister – concentration camps

Jack was born in the town of Kielce, in Poland, in 1928. He lived with his father (a shoemaker), his mother (a stay-at-home mother), and his older brother. The family were religious, and Jack had a mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish friends.

When Germany invaded Poland, Jack was 10 years old. He was no longer allowed to go to school. He had to wear a Jewish star on his clothing, and many of his friends stopped associating with him.

Jack and his family were rounded up and moved into the Kielce ghetto. When the ghetto was closed, all the Jews were moved elsewhere. Jack, still 10, was separated from his family. He never saw them again. From that time on, Jack was alone.



Jack Meister at the time of his liberation, Buchenwald, 1945.

He was taken to the Radom camp, where he was forced to work in the munitions factory. After some time in Radom, Jack was transported by cattle train to Auschwitz. He was given a uniform, and tattooed with the number 3488. He spent the next few years in Auschwitz, working in a factory, using a shovel to move coal and hot ash.

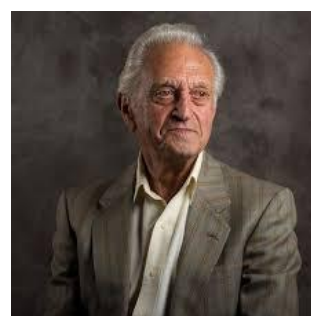
When Auschwitz was liquidated towards the end of the war, Jack was sent on a death march. He survived, and was ultimately liberated from Buchenwald concentration camp, in April 1945.

## Joe Symon – forced labour and resistance

Joe was born in 1925, in Budapest, Hungary.

In 1944, Germany marched into Hungary. Jews were forced to wear the yellow star, and all males were ordered to report for forced labour.

Joe went to a camp and began forced labour. He was young and fit, and managed to avoid being 'selected' (this meant he was not sent to a death camp).



Joe Symon

One day, Joe was marched out of the camp with the other labourers. They marched for four days with no food, until they arrived at a work site where they were to build trenches for the Germans. They were frequently shot at by the Russian army.

Joe got a job working as a baker in the camp, and was able to smuggle bread to other prisoners.

Eventually, Joe escaped from forced labour, by hiding in a trench while the rest of the work crew went back to camp.

After escaping, Joe joined the Resistance. Their mission was to save Jewish lives, help people in trouble, damage the Nazi war machinery, and if necessary, to fight. Among other things, Joe helped smuggle a man out of the Budapest ghetto, and he smuggled food to Jewish toddlers.

Joe's motto was 'It can be done!'

## Egon Sonnenschein - escape

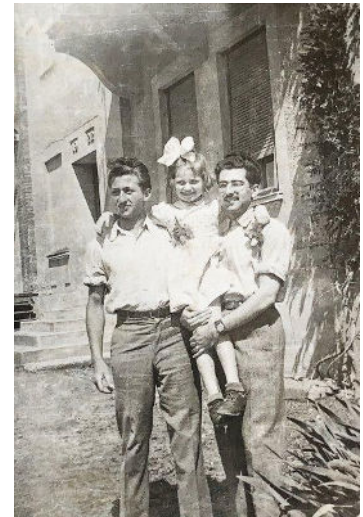
Egon was born in 1930, in a small town call Ptuj in the former Yugoslavia. He was the younger of two brothers.

The Nazis attacked in April, 1941, but Egon's parents had left with the boys 4 days earlier. They went to Bosnia, in Croatia, where they joined Egon's maternal grandparents. The area was full of German Nazis as well the Croatian equivalent, the Ustaše.

The boys were not allowed to go to school, their father could not work, and there were many restrictions on Jews' lives. One day, an Ustaše soldier came to the grandparents' home and took all their money and valuables.

Young Egon observed a number of occasions when Jews were rounded up and killed. Afraid, the family fled, making a dangerous escape into Italy. From Italy, they paid men to guide them on a treacherous journey by foot, across the mountains into Switzerland. Finally safe, Egon was sent to live with a foster family on a farm. Although they didn't have much, they were kind to Egon, and he was delighted to be able to attend school. Egon stayed in touch with his parents, and was reunited with them when the war ended.

After the war, there was only one member of Egon's large extended family who remained alive: a little cousin called Nada (see below).



Egon (left) after the war, with his brother and adopted sister,

## Aviva (Nada) Fox – hiding

Born in Bosnia, Yugoslavia in 1942, Nada's parents, Victor and Helena, were spared the first round of deportations within the area as her father was a pharmacist. When her father heard that more deportations were about to occur, they decided to hide in the forest and join the Chetnik partisan<sup>1</sup> group. After an ambush by the group in which Nazi officers were shot, a punishment brigade was sent in retaliation and as a result, Victor was shot. Helena fled through the woods and rivers with little Nada hidden within her backpack, returning to their hometown.



Egon Sonnenschein and Aviva (Nada) Fox

Helena sent word to a friend, Avdo Prohic, who was a doctor in the town, and a Muslim. Avdo helped hide Nada with his mother while Helena, who was sick with pneumonia, went to the hospital. Unfortunately, the authorities were notified of her arrival, and she was deported to a jail where she later died. While Nada hid with Avdo's mother, the authorities conducted countless roundups and inspections looking for baby Nada. She says, "they went home to home, room to room, cellar to cellar looking for people". Avdo and his brothers organised to smuggle Nada out of Bosnia to Croatia. There she was moved around between various properties owned by the Prohic family, and cared for by the whole family, as well as their nannies. Nada stayed with the Prohic family until the end of the war.

After the war, Helena's sister along with her husband and two children, searched for any surviving family. They heard about Nada's survival and went to Croatia to find her. They adopted the little girl, and she became a sister to Egon Sonnenschein (see above). After moving to Israel, Nada became known as Aviva.

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<sup>1</sup> A partisan was a member of an underground resistance group who fought against the Nazis and helped save Jews and others targeted by the regime.