CANDLES
HOLOCAUST MUSEUM & EDUCATION CENTER

Thank you for your interest in me and my story. Unfortunately, there are only so many hours in a day, and it is simply impossible to grant all of the interviews or personally answer each email. I wish I could talk to everyone for as long as they have questions, but it is just not realistic if I want to stay healthy and live as long as I can, which I intend to be a very long time.

So, with a little help, I have created a list of the questions people most commonly ask me during interviews or lectures, and their answers.

The main question I would like for you to ask yourself is, ***"What should I do to make sure I have the most accurate information about Eva Kor for my project?"***

Please use verified sources of information which include:

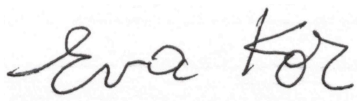
- The CANDLES website: www.candlesholocaustmuseum.org
- This questionnaire with answers, compiled by me, Mrs. Kor. It's the real deal!
- The young adult book, *Surviving the Angel of Death*. I helped write it, I know it's true!
- For more detailed information, my autobiography, *Echoes from Auschwitz*. It's my life!
- The award-winning documentary, *Forgiving Dr. Mengele*
- The CNN documentary, *Voices from Auschwitz*
- My Wikipedia entry, which CANDLES staff monitors closely to maintain accuracy.
- My Quora Answers: https://www.quora.com/profile/Eva-Kor/answers

I would recommend that you refrain from using random articles from the Internet, unless they are from reputable news agencies or organizations. Many times the authors of these articles do not get their facts correct, or I am misquoted, which causes confusion.

Also ask yourself, ***"What do I want people to learn from my project?"*** I ask myself a similar question when I am speaking to a group or giving an interview: ***"What do I want people to learn from my lecture?"***

I wish you the best of luck with your project, and I appreciate your efforts to educate your classmates about my story, forgiveness, and the Holocaust.

Above all, remember that *Forgiveness is a seed for peace. Anger is a seed for war.*



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WHEN AND WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

I was born January 31, 1934, in the Transylvanian region of Romania, in a village named Portz.

WHO WAS IN YOUR FAMILY?

My father and mother were named Alexander and Jaffa Mozes. I had three sisters: Edit was the oldest, Aliz was the middle child, and Miriam was my twin.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR SISTERS?

Edit, my oldest sister, was the kindest and best sister anyone could have asked for. She would pick us up and twirl us around.

Aliz was so beautiful. She had beautiful green eyes, rosy cheeks, and jet black hair. And she was so skinny. She was very artistic and had a beautiful singing voice.

Miriam – Well, Miriam was always so pleasant. Often she would look at me and say, "Do you think we should do that?"

My sisters knew that I loved a challenge, and by challenging me to do something, I'd be the one to get into trouble.

WHAT DID YOUR VILLAGE LOOK LIKE?

Our village of Portz was very small. There were maybe 100 families there in the early 1930s. Our village had a main road in the middle of town, but it was not paved. We did not have a telephone, indoor plumbing, or electricity. Our school was a one-room school, and there was a tavern and one church—a Christian church—in the village. The father of my friend Luci was the minister there. Today, Portz is a little larger and the road is paved. My house is no longer there. A new one has been built where it once stood.

WERE THERE OTHER JEWISH PEOPLE LIVING IN PORTZ?

My family was the only Jewish family in Portz. There was no synagogue, so we worshipped at home. The Nazis came to such a small, quiet place for six Jews. Quite a lot of fuss for six people, don't you think?

WHAT LANGUAGE DID YOU SPEAK?

At home we spoke Yiddish at the Holy Table. Everywhere else we spoke Hungarian. Often, my sister Edit would try to get me in trouble by convincing me to speak Hungarian at the Holy Table, saying, "You are the only one who knows how to talk to Daddy."

WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS DO FOR A LIVING?

My father was a landowner and farmer. He employed many people who lived in our village. My mother was a homemaker. She also was the woman who would assist other women in the village when they had their babies. She was known for her unwavering hospitality toward others.

WHY DIDN'T YOUR PARENTS LEAVE ROMANIA EARLIER?

In 1935, my father wanted to go to Palestine to join my Uncle Aaron and his family there. My mother did not want to leave her sick mother and could not imagine how she would travel such a long way with four young children. She had no desire to live in the desert and truly thought we were safe in Portz.

DID YOU EXPERIENCE BULLYING BECAUSE YOU WERE JEWISH?

Yes. After our village was occupied, we would often be blamed, especially by the other kids, for bad things they did. It was their way of getting themselves out of trouble and causing trouble for us. The teacher, who was Hungarian, believed them and punished us. She never believed us. Even students who had always been nice to us before began bullying us once the Hungarians took control. Sometimes people in the village threw rocks and tomatoes at our house. It was horrible and made me feel like a prisoner in my own home.

I remember them calling us "dirty Jews," which I really did not understand, because my mother took pride in the appearance of her children. We were always clean and well dressed. When we cried to our mother she said, "We are Jews and we will just have to learn to take it. There is nothing we can do." My father said, "Don't rock the boat. You will only make more problems for yourself."

DID YOU EVER SEE HITLER?

I never saw Hitler, but I did hear him on the radio. I remember that he seemed like such an angry man. And he hated Jews so much. I did not understand why he hated Jews so much, but it was scary, because I was a Jew.

WHEN DID THE NAZIS COME TO YOUR VILLAGE?

In 1940 the Hungarians took control of the Transylvania region where I lived, shortly after Hitler came to power. The town crier came through the village, beating his drum, and he announced that we were all to go to the top of the hill to welcome the Hungarian Army.

Everything changed overnight. Soldiers were living in our barn, camping in our yard, eating food my mother cooked for the officers as they dined in our home, kissing her hand, giving us a false sense of security. It was these same soldiers who took my family away.

It took only nine short months for about 70% of the Jewish population in the area known as Greater Hungary to be deported, my family included.

WHEN YOU SAY "EVERYTHING CHANGED OVERNIGHT," WHAT CHANGED?

Jews (only my family since we were the only Jewish family in Portz) were no longer allowed to travel without a special permit. Eventually the Hungarian authorities would not even issue permits. Also, my father had to report to the Hungarians every two weeks as proof that we were still in Portz. Our teachers were replaced by those from Hungary, and in our textbooks began to appear problems such as, "If you had five Jews and you killed three Jews, how many would be left?" Can you imagine if there were a math problem like that in your books today?

Then, in 1942, it became illegal for Jews to hire Aryans or Christians for work, which created a problem on my father's farm. It was in the fall of 1943 that we were placed under house arrest and forced to wear the Yellow Star of David. That was when we attempted to escape by walking out of occupied Romania on the railroad tracks. Our attempt failed when we were caught at the edge of our property by Hungarian Nazi Youths.

WHAT WAS YOUR GHETTO LIKE?

We were forced from our home in March 1944 and taken to the Cehei *(*pronounced *Chā hāy)* regional ghetto. It was located at the old Klein Brick Factory, and we were forced to make a tent from a blanket we had carried with us because there was no more room inside the factory building. My mother was still weak from typhus, so my sister Edit took charge of us. It was a truly miserable and wretched place. The ground was very swampy and muddy, as the Berretyo River ran thruugh it.

The Hungarian in charge of the ghetto, Krasznai, was sadistic. He would wait for us to make our tent and then force us to tear it down and move it to the opposite side of the area, making fun of and mocking us the entire time. He would taunt us, saying, "Look at the Children of Israel living in tents like in the days of Moses." Humiliation and dehumanization was his goal.

One day, my father was taken away, and he returned with burned fingernails and toenails. He had been badly beaten and tortured in an attempt to find out where he had hidden his valuables.

HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THE REGIONAL GHETTO?

We were forced into the ghetto in March 1944, and my family arrived by cattle car onto the Auschwitz selection platform in early May 1944. We were in the ghetto a relatively short time, but the conditions were so horribly miserable, it might as well have been years. We had only the clothing we wore or carried, a blanket tent for shelter, and only enough food for two weeks, not the five we were actually there.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUR YOUR ARRIVAL IN BIRKENAU?

We had been crammed into that cattle car for three to four days. There was no bathroom, no place to sit or rest, no food or water. At least one person in our train car died in transit to Auschwitz.

Everything was so chaotic on the selection platform. People were crying out and searching for one another in the confusion. Nazis were screaming at us in German. Vicious dogs were barking. I

remember hearing gunshots. If I knew one thing, it was that I'd never seen anything like this place in my entire life. I will never forget the smell in the air.

In reality, it took less than twenty minutes; I no longer had a family. The finality of it still astounds and sometimes saddens me. My father and sisters Edit and Aliz disappeared into the crowd. I never saw them again. My mother had been holding onto Miriam and me, trying to keep us safe. That's when a Nazi soldier noticed us and asked if we were twins. My mother asked, "Is that good?" and he replied that it was very good. So she confirmed that we were twins, and in seconds, we were ripped away from her. I remember seeing my mother's arms reaching toward us in despair. Another soldier pulled my mother in the opposite direction, and she simply disappeared into the crowd. I never got to say goodbye to her.

Everything happened unbelievably fast. We were taken to a processing center where we were ordered to undress, and I was soon sitting naked in a room with strangers. We were given short haircuts, clothing with a red cross on the back and tattooed. I was now prisoner A-7063. Miriam became A-7064.

WHAT WAS DR. MENGELE LIKE?

Most everyone seemed petrified of his arrival in our barracks. As a first impression, I remember thinking he was a handsome man—he was always dressed immaculately. This changed when I witnessed his rage on the adults in charge of our barracks when he realized a child had died. He needed us alive. We were important to his work. He was very business-like with us, cold and clinical. Miriam and I did not have any love, loyalty or affection for him, but we knew then that we were alive because he wanted us that way.

It was a very strange relationship. He was a person who kills a family, but yet he was the only person who had the power to keep us alive, for as long as he wanted. It's perhaps the most complex of human relationships.

DID YOU REALIZE YOU WERE IN CONSTANT DANGER?

Of course. There were people dying all around us. Those who were alive looked more dead than alive—like walking skeletons. I witnessed Nazi guards order dogs to attack and kill people. Every day, other prisoners would collect the bodies of those who died during the night. Other children from our barrack would be taken away, to never return. Dying was easy. Surviving was a full-time job.

WHAT GAVE YOU HOPE IN AUSCHWITZ?

Having Miriam with me was a constant encouragement, and we kept each other's hopes up. We could depend on each other, because we clearly had no one else.

Late in the war, I remember seeing airplanes with the American flag flying over Auschwitz. That's when I knew someone was trying to help free us. It gave us hope for another tomorrow.

HOW LONG WERE YOU IMPRISONED IN AUSCHWITZ?

My family arrived onto the selection platform of Auschwitz-Birkenau in early May 1944. The Russian army liberated the camp on January 27, 1945. So we were imprisoned there approximately nine months.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT EXPERIMENTS WERE DONE ON YOU?

No. I know we were taken to what I will call the "Blood Lab" which was in Birkenau, three days a week. There they took our blood and gave us injections. It was after one of these injections that I became deathly ill and Mengele laughingly made the comment, "Too bad. She is so young and only has two weeks to live." I spoiled his experiment; I lived and was reunited with Miriam.

On the other three days, we were marched to Auschwitz I and taken to Block 10. This is where they forced us to sit naked and would measure and collect information on us for hours and hours.

WHAT IS "ORGANIZING"?

Organizing is camp lingo for stealing from the Nazis. I was a very good and resourceful *organizer*.

WHILE AT AUSCHWITZ, HOW DID YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO?

Pure instinct. I firmly believe that children function on instinct most of the time.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE FREE AFTER AUSCHWITZ?

I remember hearing the words from another prisoner, "We are free! We are free!" They were magical words, and I was certainly ready to go home.

The Ukrainian-Soviet soldiers who liberated Auschwitz in 1945 gave us chocolates, cookies, and hugs. It was the hugs we really needed, because we had been starved for love and attention.

To be free was wonderful, but what did it really mean? I remember tying my belongings into a piece of cloth and hooking it to a stick, intending to walk home. A soldier asked me how I thought I was going to do that—after all, there was still a war raging all around us.

Miriam and I wound up in a nearby city named Katowice (pronounced *Cat ō vēt zŭh*) and placed in a convent being used as an orphanage. We had wonderful beds with clean sheets, but we were still so dirty and lice covered. We wound up taking the sheets off and sleeping on just the mattress because we were afraid to get the sheets dirty. The nuns also gave us toys, but we had experienced so much, we really didn't know what to do with toys anymore. I felt insulted that they thought I was a child who played with toys.

If there is only one thing you learn from my story, let it be this: **Freedom** is the most precious gift you have.

HOW DID YOU GET HOME?

We found our mother's friend, Mrs. Rosalia Csengeri (pronounced *Chain ger ē)*, in a displaced persons camp in Katowice. She signed some documents that gave her responsibility for us. She cleaned us up, made "army dresses" for us out of army shirts, and fed us the best she could. We stayed with her in that refugee camp from February to April 1945. From then until October 1945, she took us with her into three other refugee camps before we arrived in the town of Simleu Silvaniei (pronounced *Shĭm lāy eew Sil vŏn ē ā)*, Romania, where she put us on a train to Portz. I do not think we could have made it home without her.

WHAT DID YOU FIND WHEN YOU ARRIVED HOME?

I remember when I got off the train at Portz, Miriam and I were running down the hill into the village. My heart was beating so fast, because I was positive my mother was going to be at our house. After all, we were children and we'd survived, so she must have too. But it was not to be. Nobody was there. My mama and papa were really gone.

The house looked extremely neglected and was empty. It had been ransacked—our belongings stolen. I found three crumpled family pictures on the floor and saved them. After we had been alone there for several hours, an older cousin arrived. His mother, our Aunt Irena, saw our names on a refugee list displayed in the nearby city of Cluj (pronounced *Clue j)* and sent him to get us.

WHERE DID YOU LIVE AFTER 1945?

We lived in an apartment in Cluj, Romania, with our Aunt Irena and her family. She enrolled us in school and took care of us the best she could, even living under the harsh rule of Communism. Our Aunt Sarah, who lived in the United States, sent us dresses so that we could get rid of the "army dresses" Mrs. Csengeri had pieced together for us.

Although we still were not getting the hugs and kisses we needed so much, I know that my aunt did her best to care for us. I also now realize that, as a survivor, she was dealing with her own demons, just as we were.

DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANTISEMITISM IN CLUJ AFTER THE WAR?

Yes. I remember there was a rumor that a Jewish vampire was attacking people in Cluj, and I hoped he'd be able to tell that we were Jewish and wouldn't attack us. I know now that this was antisemitic propaganda.

And, even after all we had been through, we were still called "Dirty Jews."

WHEN DID YOU LEAVE ROMANIA?

We left Communist Romania in 1950 when we were sixteen years old. Officials told us that we could take our belongings, but as the time for us to leave grew closer and closer, there were more restrictions on what we could take. Eventually, it was much like what happened to us when we were forced into the ghetto: We took only what we were wearing. I wore three dresses and a winter coat that I'd stood in line for twenty hours to receive.

The Romanian government confiscated our farm in Portz in 1947, and we were forced to sign over all other property in order to leave. And we did.

We were placed on one of the last three ships to leave—the *Constansa*—before the Iron Curtain closed around Romania's borders for ten years. The ship held about 3,300 people and was so crowded; we stayed on deck for the entire voyage because there wasn't a room for us. We arrived in the port of Haifa, Israel, in early morning. Everyone started singing because we were so happy and grateful to be in Israel. Our Uncle Aaron was there to greet us, and I remember thinking how much he looked like my father. All of this by age sixteen, when most American kids are just hoping to get their driver's license!

WHAT DID YOU DO IN ISRAEL?

Miriam and I attended an agricultural school that accepted us because we were survivors. The school was for orphans aged eight to eighteen, and we stayed there through the tenth grade. We were assigned an "old-timer" who helped us. It was such a wonderful time. For the first time in so long, we weren't afraid to be alive or Jewish. We could sleep. I was so impressed by the Jews around me who had such important jobs.

Miriam and I joined the Israeli Army in 1952; military service is a mandatory part of citizenship in Israel. Miriam studied and became a lieutenant and a registered nurse, and I reached the rank of sergeant major as a draftsman.

WHEN DID YOU COME TO THE UNITED STATES?

In 1960, I met an American tourist, Michael Kor (nicknamed Mickey). He was also a Holocaust survivor, living in the United States since 1946, after his liberation from Buchenwald. He was liberated by an American battalion commanded by Lt. Col. Andrew Nehf from Terre Haute. Mickey never wanted to live anywhere but Terre Haute. We married, and I joined him in the United States.

I have been living in Terre Haute, Indiana, ever since. My husband and I have two children, Alex and Rina. I became a United States citizen in 1965; it was a very proud moment for me. I had to pass all kinds of tests.

WHAT WAS LIFE IN AMERICA LIKE FOR YOU?

Adjusting to life in the United States was very difficult. I was horribly homesick. My husband knew very little Hebrew, and I knew almost no English. Communication was always a challenge as was the general way of life, including American customs. I taught myself English by watching American soap operas on television.

DO YOU OBSERVE JUDAISM FAITHFULLY TODAY?

I consider myself Jewish. I observe major holidays, but I am not overly religious. My father was highly religious, and he believed the laws of Judaism should be followed to the letter. He spent a lot of time assigning importance to things that really were not that important. I did not have a good feeling for the way he was practicing. It was heavy handed, and it made the Holy Days unpleasant. If you want children to practice religion, they have to be excited about it, and it cannot be a burden. Ironically, one of my worst grades in the Israeli school was in religion.

WAS YOUR FAITH STRONGER AFTER THE HOLOCAUST?

Absolutely not. My will to survive is what allowed me to prevail in such a difficult situation. I saw many faithful Jews die right alongside of those who were not as faithful.

DO YOU THINK THAT YOU MUST BE RELIGIOUS TO FORGIVE?

Again, absolutely not. I do not associate religion with forgiveness. Forgiveness is an act of self-healing. Everyone, regardless of their religion, economic situation, or race, has the right to heal themselves from pain in their lives, and they can through forgiveness, because it is free.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE, MEETING DR. MÜNCH?

I was so nervous. But to my surprise, he treated me with such kindness and respect.

There is a very unique tension in the relationship between a victim who is meeting a perpetrator. That same tension was there for me when I met Oskar Groening in April 2015. There is a great uncertainty. I certainly did not expect him to hug and kiss me, but he did.

Both men could have turned away and refused to communicate, but they did not. They were willing to have a meaningful conversation, and neither denied their roles in the past. They have taken responsibility.

HOW DID YOUR JOURNEY TO FORGIVENESS BEGIN?

Really, it began with Dr. Münch. I was trying to decide how to thank him for the information he had provided me during our visit and for his willingness to document the operation of the Auschwitz gas chambers. I finally began writing a letter of forgiveness as a gift to him, but eventually forgave Dr. Mengele as well.

What I discovered was that the act of forgiveness had a tremendous impact on me. It gave me power. No one could stop me from doing it, and I didn't need anyone's permission. It was self-liberating and self-healing at the same time. I am no longer a victim.

AFTER THE WAR, DID YOU OR MIRIAM HAVE HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT YOU FELT WERE RELATED TO DR. MENGELE'S EXPERIMENTS?

Many. There is always a health challenge for me in some way, even to this very day. My body does not react to many drugs like everyone else's does. I always have to be extremely careful.

My twin sister Miriam was injected with something in Auschwitz that stopped the growth of her kidneys, which never grew beyond the size of a ten-year -ld child. In 1987, her kidneys failed, and I donated my left kidney to her so that she could live. Unfortunately, her anti-rejection medication combined with something unusual in her system, and she developed bladder cancer. She died in Israel on June 6, 1993.

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO LEARN FROM YOUR JOURNEY IN LIFE?

I always end my lectures with three life lessons.

1) Never give up on yourself or your dreams.
2) Always judge others by their actions and the content of their character.
3) Forgive your worst enemy and forgive anyone who has ever hurt you—it will heal your soul and set you free.

WHEN DID YOU START CANDLES HOLOCAUST MUSEUM?

I established an organization named CANDLES in 1985 when we were searching for our medical files. I opened the Holocaust museum opened in 1995 to honor Miriam. In November 2003, the museum was firebombed by an arsonist, but it reopened in April 2005, bigger and better.

HAVE THE RECORDS OF MENGELE'S EXPERIMENTS ON TWINS AT AUSHWITZ BEEN FOUND?

No. To this day we still have no idea exactly what was done to us, the kinds of things we were injected with, etc. Of course, there were and are twins who had experimental surgeries and other physical procedures done on them and who have obvious physical scars as a result.

The archives department at the Auschwitz Museum has vials of liquids that were used in the injections. The vials were found after liberation but their contents have not been tested. I wish I knew.

HAVE YOU EVER RETURNED TO AUSCHWITZ?

Oh, many times—at least 20. I visit in January, every fifth year anniversary of my liberation. I was there to observe the 70th anniversary in January 2015. I have visited many summers, leading groups of people, mostly teachers. We start on the selection platform at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and I tell about my family's arrival.

It can be difficult and sometimes surreal to stand in such a place and remember that far back. Sometimes it seems like it was yesterday and other times, well, like so long ago. I can tell you that I firmly believe there is no other piece of land on this Earth that has been witness to such misery of humanity as the selection platform of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

So many families were torn apart in such a short amount of time, and it was so very final. It is difficult to this day to comprehend how it all happened and that there was absolutely no recourse.