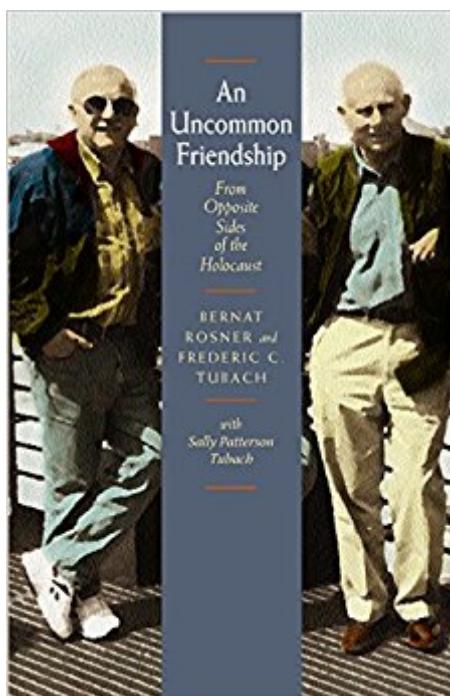


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An Uncommon Friendship: From Opposite Sides Of The Holocaust



Synopsis

Two men, who meet and become good friends after enjoying successful adult lives in California, have experienced childhoods so tragically opposed that the two men must decide whether to talk about them or not. In 1944, 13-year-old Fritz was almost old enough to join the Hitler Youth in his German village of Kleinheubach. That same year in Tab, Hungary, 12-year-old Bernie was loaded onto a train with the rest of the village's Jewish inhabitants and taken to Auschwitz, where his whole family was murdered. How to bridge the deadly gulf that separated them in their youth, how not to allow the power of the past to separate them even now, as it separates many others, become the focus of their friendship, and together they begin the project of remembering. The separate stories of their youth are told in one voice, at Bernat Rosner's request. He is able to retrace his journey into hell, slowly, over many sessions, describing for his friend the "other life" he has resolutely put away until now. Frederic Tubach, who must confront his own years in Nazi Germany as the story unfolds, becomes the narrator of their double memoir. Their decision to open their friendship to the past brings a poignancy to stories that are horrifyingly familiar. Adding a further and fascinating dimension is the counterpoint of their similar village childhoods before the Holocaust and their very different paths to personal rebirth and creative adulthood in America after the war. Seldom has a memoir been so much about the present, as we see the authors proving what goodwill and intelligence can accomplish in the cause of reconciliation. This intimate story of two boys trapped in evil and destructive times, who become men with the freedom to construct their own future, has much to tell us about building bridges in our public as well as our personal lives.

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Customer Reviews

More a pair of parallel memoirs than the anatomy of a friendship, this unusual book recounts the stories of two friends: Rosner, a Hungarian Jew, was uprooted from his life and sent at age 12 to Auschwitz, where he lost his entire family; Tubach, the son of a German soldier, at nearly the same time was sent to a Nazi training camp (though, afterward, his stepmother, defying the local Nazi youth group, steered him away from joining the Adolf Hitler school). The book's structure is unusual: not only do both authors contribute to each chapter in alternating sections, but Tubach's sections are written in the first person, while Rosner's are written (at his request) in the third person. This approach underscores how Rosner reinvented himself after his privations, while Tubach's path was more direct. Intriguingly, Rosner who came to the United States thanks to a GI who generously invited him into his family became a corporate counsel for Safeway, while Tubach who also emigrated to the U.S. after the war found himself wary of power and sympathetic toward student radicals during his tenure as a professor of German at Berkeley. Their friendship, initiated in 1983 by their wives, is undergirded by a "common belief in Euro-American cultural traditions," such as classical music and faith in a common humanity. Still, the friendship grew only gradually, with Rosner slowly revealing heartrending bits of his story of endurance and survival when the two couples took several trips to his childhood village. (Apr.) Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Adult/High School—"We are more than our histories" is the message of this shared memoir. Two grown American men meet in California in 1983 and slowly exchange stories of childhoods in their respective European villages. With time and trust they are able to divulge the particulars of a deeper and more troubling kinship. As teenagers during World War II, they struggled on opposite sides of the Holocaust, Rosner as his Jewish Hungarian family's only survivor at Auschwitz and Tubach as the son of a German Army intelligence officer and a member of the Jungvolk, a pre-Hitler youth organization. Tubach serves as the straightforward and almost dispassionate narrator of these alternating stories of the unimaginable horror of a concentration camp and the confusion and suspicion within a German village on the periphery of Nazi madness. As with other accounts of survival, readers are compelled to consider to what extent who we are is determined by experiences and forces beyond our control, whether a random act of individual kindness or a movement of mass hysteria. While there is inherent drama in these disparate stories, it is the trajectory that each one takes to converge many years later that makes these remembrances powerful and distinct. Ultimately, this is a book about the importance of our common humanity, about resilience and

redemption, and about not letting symbols such as a yellow star or a swastika define or confine us. Margaret Brown, Arlington County Public Library, VA Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Amazing story. Grabbed my attention and interest immediately. Two great men who have accomplished much and show great heart and wisdom. A good book for a book group discussion! Unfortunately, aspects of the Nazi takeover in Germany are showing up in the U.S. today dictated from the current president. That makes this book all the more meaningful.

I actually came to know the main author in this book, Mr. Bernat Rosner, as a neighbor of mine. His personality and life story are a glowing tribute to the fortitude of the human spirit, if one has the mindset and will to survive. Like everyone in life, we all have chapters to our lives. Few, however, have enough substance to put into words, an epic tale of one of mankind's lowest moments. Bernie co-authored this book as a form of therapy - reading it is reliving it in the first person as Bernie only survived the ordeal by living it in the third person. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants an uncanny perspective on both sides of the holocaust - I doubt there is any other biographical book in history, written in this way.

Looking forward to hearing author Tubach speak next month in my community! Has colored my innate perspective on... all life's important topics forever!

We may not like Germans because of the Holocaust but this book gives you the story from both sides. It is friendships like this that can change the world to be more peaceful and respectful of all. Yet understand the dangers by being bystanders and not acting on human instinct. Remember this story and share it with others.

Wonderful story of two young boys growing up on opposite sides of the attempt by Hitler to take over the world. Narrated by the youth (Fritz) in Hitlers camp as told by Jewish holocaust survivor (Bernie). Mind sets can be changed by truth. Chance connection in San Francisco after both reached their retirement age. Divine intervention throughout both their lives.

Friendship comes in many forms, and that relationship between Bernie and Fritz, from different sides, Jewish and Christian, of the deep divide of WW2, is a marvelous testimony to "friendship".

The only bitter-sweet moment was when I realized that Bernie had given up his religious beliefs in his "americanization". His children were not raised as Jews; another generation lost to the Holocaust, as much as the six million were. I first saw this book when a seat mate on a flight was reading it. He praised it, so I ordered it. The book was well worth the praise.

Well written and informative. Bogs down a little at the end but riveting up to that point.

In each chapter it told the story of two boys, one a German and the other an Hungarian Jew. The contrast in the lives of the boys made for an interesting read. They met later in life and exchanged their different experiences.

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