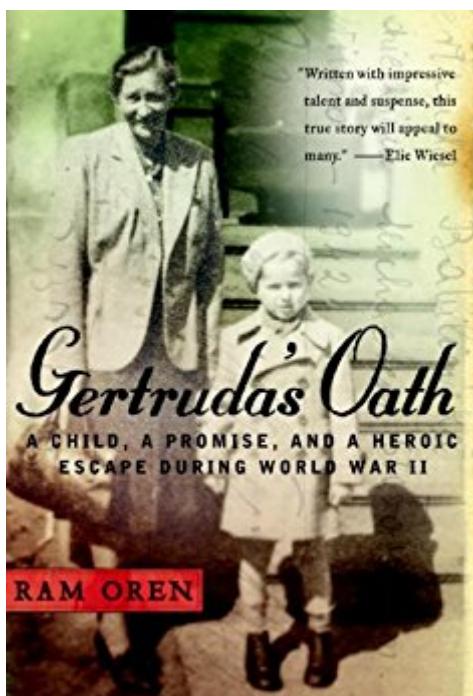


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# Gertruda's Oath: A Child, A Promise, And A Heroic Escape During World War II



## Synopsis

Trapped in the horrors of World War II, a woman and a child embark on a journey of survival in this page-turning true story that recalls the power and the poignancy of Schindler's List. Michael Stolowitzky, the only son of a wealthy Jewish family in Poland, was just three years old when war broke out and the family lost everything. His father, desperate to settle his business affairs, travels to France, leaving Michael in the care of his mother and Gertruda Bablinska, a Catholic nanny devoted to the family. When Michael's mother has a stroke, Gertruda promises the dying woman that she will make her way to Palestine and raise him as her own son. Written with the invaluable assistance of Michael, now seventy-two and living in New York City, GERTRUDA'S OATH re-creates Michael and Gertruda's amazing journey. Gripping vignettes bring to life the people who helped ensure their survival, including SS officer Karl Rink, who made it his mission to save Jews after his own Jewish wife was murdered; Rink's daughter, Helga, who escaped to a kibbutz, where she lived until her recent death; and the Jewish physician Dr. Berman, who aided Michael and Gertruda through the worst of times. GERTRUDA'S OATH is a story of extraordinary courage and moral strength in the face of horrific events. Like Schindler's List, it transcends history and religion to reveal the compassion and hope that miraculously thrives in a world immersed in war without end. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

Gertruda's oath is the true story of a heroic escape from the terrors of the WWII, but it is also a story of love and devotion. Gertruda, a Catholic woman, is hired by a wealthy Jewish family as a nanny for their son, Michael, in pre-war Poland. As the war progresses and the Nazis conquer Poland and move from there to Vilna, Lithuania, the family is separated by circumstances and death. Gertruda makes a solemn promise to Michael's mother to watch over him, raise him as her own, and ultimately deliver him to Palestine. It is also the story of Karl Rink, a Catholic German man who marries the love of his life, who happens to be Jewish, and has a daughter with her. Down on his luck and unable to find work, Karl is lured into working for the Nazi party before they show their full colors, and feels unable to leave even after they do. Even after his own wife's mysterious disappearance, he continues to serve in the party and move up through its ranks, but while he stands by and watches, he steadfastly refuses to take part in any of the hostilities towards the Jews. He also very wisely sends his daughter to a kibbutz in Palestine to wait out the war where she'll be safe. Later, he becomes more emboldened and risks his own life helping many to escape detection and even death. It wouldn't be fair to rate the writing style of this book as I would a fiction piece, because true events don't lend themselves to flowery embellishments. They must be told as they happened. If this were a novel, I'd say that Karl Rink's refusal to leave the SS even after his wife disappeared was too naive to be believable, but as they say, truth is stranger than fiction. That said, it was an extremely interesting read, and underlines more than ever the hardships and inhumanity that people endured during the war, even outside of the concentration camps. It is a story of bravery, heroics, and deep commitment. I'm glad that I read it

I have worked with Michael for many years in the travel industry - and had heard comments about struggles thru WWII -and about his nanny - but I had never taken time to find the book. This is an amazing story of personal commitments and inner strength as well as intertwining relationships thru a dark period. That Michael could share these experiences so well and today still do so much to help others understand the humanity of people against such hardships, is inspiring. Michael continues to try to help people break down barriers to ethnic and cultural biases which still threaten

our world. I admire Gertrude - and others like her - who gave so much to protect the Jews of Europe from the Nazis. And I admire Michael for being a strong leader in cross-cultural tourism to try to educate today's people. This is a MUST read!!

Remember hearing the lofty notion; a promise is a promise? As Hitler's army advanced through Europe, no Jews were exempt--not even the Stolowitzkys. This extremely wealthy family was no exception. Author Ram Oren's story, Gertruda's Oath: A Child, A Promise, and a Heroic Escape During World War II presents the facts with supposed dialogue of these very real individuals. Obviously no one recorded the conversations but, they aid in the telling of this family's tragic history. Eliminating them would de-personalize the story, rendering it a sterile presentation of facts. For purists, this is non-fiction with fictionalized dialogue. Michael Stolowitzky was barely more than a toddler when separated from his father, who was unable to return to Poland, as Jews were herded out of their homes and into ghettos. It wasn't much later when his mother, on her deathbed, begged Michael's nanny to protect him and to see that he get to Palestine. Gertruda, Michael's Polish Catholic nanny, vowed to his mother that she would do just that. This remarkable woman endured suffering, personal sacrifices, and bitter hardships to keep her oath. To Gertruda, a promise was a promise. While this book was written for adults, it would also be appropriate for students in grades eight and above. It includes portions that reveal man's inhumanity to one another but, does not dwell on gore or excessive violence. Gertruda's story would be a good choice for supplemental literature in a Holocaust history class. There are thousands of books to read about this period of time but, this story is unique and that is what makes it an exceptional choice to read.

I am history buff that is particularly interested in the WWII in Europe, the POWs and the treatment of Jewish people. I picked up this book casually thinking it would be a good addition to my extensive library on WWII. What I found amazed me. From the moment I started reading this book, I could not put it down. Michael and Gertruda's story is one of love, courage and unimaginable hardship. I look around at my relatively cushy life, and can't imagine having to endure what they went through. Gertruda and Michael even found help from an amazing man in a most unexpected way -- from about the last person you would ever expect to help them. The passing of Karl Rink left me so sad -- I actually found myself mourning him. This is a must read book. It has become my favorite in my library of historical books and WWII stories. Gertruda was a remarkable woman, and Michael was so lucky to have her. Their bond is one for the ages. This is a remarkable story that will stay in your heart and soul for the rest of your life. Thank you for sharing your story, Michael. I can't give this

book enough stars. Even 100 of them would be a low rating for this book.

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