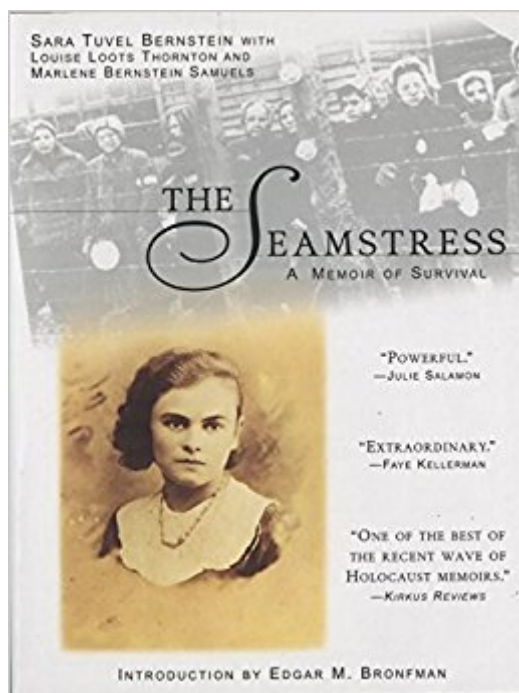


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The Seamstress



Synopsis

"From its opening pages, in which she recounts her own premature birth, triggered by terrifying rumors of an incipient pogrom, Bernstein's tale is clearly not a typical memoir of the Holocaust. She was born into a large family in rural Romania and grew up feisty and willing to fight back physically against anti-Semitism from other schoolchildren. She defied her father's orders to turn down a scholarship that took her to Bucharest, and got herself expelled from that school when she responded to a priest/teacher's vicious diatribe against the Jews by hurling a bottle of ink at him. After a series of incidents that ranged from dramatic escapes to a year in a forced labor detachment, Sara ended up in Ravensbruck, a women's concentration camp, and managed to survive. She tells this story with style and power." --Kirkus Reviews

Book Information

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: Berkley; Berkley trade paperback edition (May 1, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0425166309

ISBN-13: 978-0425166307

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 219 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #118,534 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #90 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Jewish #234 in Books > History > World > Jewish > Holocaust #531 in Books > History > World > Women in History

Customer Reviews

A striking Holocaust memoir, posthumously published, by a Romanian Jew with an unusual story to tell. From its opening pages, in which she recounts her own premature birth, triggered by terrifying rumors of an incipient pogrom, Bernstein's tale is clearly not a typical memoir of the Holocaust. She was born into a large family in rural Romania between the wars and grew up feisty and willing to fight back physically against anti-Semitism from other schoolchildren. She defied her father's orders to turn down a scholarship that took her to Bucharest, and got herself expelled from that school when she responded to a priest/teacher's vicious diatribe against the Jews by hurling a bottle of ink at him. Ashamed to return home after her expulsion, she looked for work in Bucharest and discovered a talent for dressmaking. That talent--and her blond hair, blue eyes, and overall Gentile

appearance--allowed her entry into the highest reaches of Romanian society, albeit as a dressmaker. Bernstein recounts the growing shadow of the native fascist movement, the Iron Guard, a rising tide of anti-Semitic laws, and finally, the open persecution of Romania's Jews. After a series of incidents that ranged from dramatic escapes to a year in a forced labor detachment, Sara ended up in Ravensbrück, a women's concentration camp deep in Germany. Nineteen out of every twenty women transported there died. The author, her sister Esther, and two other friends banded together and, largely due to Sara's extraordinary street smarts and intuition, managed to survive. Although Bernstein was not a professional writer, she tells this story with style and power. Her daughter Marlene contributes a moving epilogue to close out Sara's life. One of the best of the recent wave of Holocaust memoirs. (b&w photos, not seen) -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"There are many recent accounts of Holocaust victims, but this work stands alone as a testimony to personal strength and an independent spirit." ---Library Journal --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is the story of Sara Tuval Bernstein and her experience in the Holocaust. Her original name was Seren which she changed after the war. Much of her experience was with the Holocaust in Romania. Sara was a very strong willed young lady, not afraid to stand up for herself even though she was Jewish. She had a talent for dress making which helped her survive much of her time in Romania. She spent a year doing forced labor and eventually ended up in the notorious women's camp of Ravensbruck. When Sara was rescued by American soldiers in April 1945 she weighed only 54 pounds. In spite of all she went through she did survive. A fascinating story and a great read.

This was a good book and it's one I would certainly recommend to anyone interested in reading about the Holocaust, but I can't say it's anything that's going to stick with me for very long. As much as I respect Seren Tuvel Bernstein - and while I have nothing but admiration for her strength and her courage - I'm sorry to say that I wasn't very interested in the first part of the book that took place starting in 1929 and her reminiscences of her childhood and young adult years. While that doesn't take away from the importance of her memoir, or its historical significance, it wasn't until her memoir reached November 1943 and she and her sister were arrested in Budapest that her story really

picked up speed for me. Still, this is an interesting memoir and just because it fell a little flat for me is no reason for anyone interested in World War 2 or the Holocaust to pass it by. Never forget. Thank you Ms. Tuval Bernstein for helping us remember that. May your memory always be for a blessing. flag

I have read lots of Holocaust nonfiction and fiction. What sets this story apart and makes it unique is a female perception and it's post WWII material. I think it has a very slow start because the author starts with her earliest memories in Romania. If you decide to read, you will soon be swept into the craziness of WWII and bigotry. It has been a month since I read the book and I am still haunted by some of the experiences of the author. For me this is a must read for those interested in this topic.

Seren Tuvel was born in Romania. Bright and independent she won a contest that allowed her to receive an education in Bucharest. But she quit when the priest, teaching a class, made disparaging remarks about Jews. In fact she threw an inkwell at him. So at thirteen she set out to earn her own way and became a seamstress. Quite talented as a dressmaker, her fair hair and blue eyes looking more gentile than Jewish, she lived on the fringes of Romanian society until her luck ran out. Imprisoned at Ravensbruck, she endured the awful depravity of life at the hands of the Nazis and lived to tell the story for the many thousands who did not. An excellent memoir that captures the reader's heart and mind and makes one wonder how the body can survive in such terrible conditions and more amazingly of all, the spirit.

This one is a tear-jerker. The story is told by a Holocaust survivor, Sara Tuvel Bernstein. Unfortunately, she died before the memoir was published. Tuvel begins her story with accounts of her childhood with a large family living comfortably and peacefully in a small village where the industry was mill work. In 1924, the anti-Semitism unrest began with students from Bucharest burning villages and destroying families in support of their belief in anti-Semitism. The Tuvel family members were thus separated, and some were even murdered in this uprising. Tuvel and some of her siblings managed to survive despite spending time in forced labor camps. Tuvel ended up spending some years in Ravensbruck, a women's concentration camp, where she witnessed all sorts of inhumane acts committed by the German Nazis. It's amazing to note though, that despite all these attempts at torturing and destroying a human race, what the human spirit will endure with courage and dignity. I'm always appalled to read about these Holocaust accounts, but at the same time learning this terrible historical epoch in our history makes me appreciate our democracy more!

US is not without its racial issues but since the 60s our nation has been able to work them out. Thankfully, those who believe in Nazism and threaten our democracy are in the minority.

Harrowing first person account of surviving the Holocaust. So well-written that there were instances in which I had to walk away from reading. I had always wondered what it truly felt like in the moment of this horrible piece of history, and now I feel as if I understand it on a significantly more personal level. Read this; it is a life-changer.

This was a truly "hold your breath" book. Well written, fast paced, emotionally charged account of one woman's experience from normal life through concentration camps. Spellbinding.

Great immersive writing, covering much more than other Holocaust stories. I especially liked the descriptions of how survivors were cared for in allied hospitals. Incredibly encouraging. I loved it.

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