

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR EVA SCHLOSS COMES TO ST. JUDE FOR OUR SCHOOL AND PRESENTATION IN CHURCH FOR PARISHIONERS AND GUESTS FROM THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES

ELYRIA

Holocaust survivor speaks to St. Jude School students

Author Eva Schloss is the stepsister of diarist Anne Frank

Shawn Foucher
The Chronicle-Telegram

ELYRIA — It was a request fueled by a child's innocent curiosity: "Can you show us your tattoo?"

Eva Schloss, 77, smiled and pulled up her left sleeve to uncover a faded blotch on her left forearm. The hundred or so students packed into the gymnasium at Elyria's St. Jude School leaned forward where they sat, their mouths agape as they saw the marking on her arm.

"It looks like a bruise," a teacher said.

"It's number A-5272," Schloss said. "I have never come across someone with an 'A' number. All the people from my transport have disappeared."

Schloss, a Holocaust survivor and stepsister of diarist Anne Frank, spent Monday morning answering a horde of questions from the school's junior high and elementary-age students.

Her visit was sparked by a chance meeting between a St. Jude teacher and a friend of Schloss'.

The students at St. Jude had just come off a weeks-long project that had them reading "The Diary of Anne Frank," as well as Schloss' two books: "The Promise," the story of Schloss' family and their survival, and "Eva's Story," the tale of her own experiences in Auschwitz.

Just as her stepsister Anne Frank did, Schloss spent time in hiding before her family was taken to a concentration camp. Her father and brother were killed during the ordeal, but Schloss and her mother survived.

She spent nine months at Auschwitz.

"You all know the story about Anne Frank," Schloss said. "We all talk about Anna, but we mustn't forget about the other victims."

Anne Frank died in a concentration camp in 1945, but Anne's father — Otto Frank — survived and eventually married Schloss' mother. Otto Frank died in 1980.

Schloss said she and Anne Frank played together as children, but "Anna was more interested in clothes, hairstyles and boys," while Schloss herself was more of a tomboy.

Schloss said the most difficult moment in Auschwitz came when she was separated from her mother, who she thought was being taken to the gas chambers.

"I wanted to say goodbye to her, and one of those capos (guards) beat me with a big stick and separated us," Schloss said. "I felt completely abandoned; this was the hardest time in my life."

She was eventually reunited with her mother, but Schloss said it was her own stubbornness and commitment to live that pushed her to survive while she was alone.

"I was a very young person, and I wanted to experience life," Schloss said. "I did not want to just disappear from this world. But it was really about luck."

Mariah Payne, 13, and Anna McNeeley, 13 — officers in St. Jude School's book club — said Schloss'



SHAWN FOUCHER / CHRONICLE

Holocaust survivor Eva Schloss, 77, spoke Monday to Elyria's St. Jude School students about her experiences in Auschwitz during World War II.

STUDENT QUESTIONS

Q: How did you remember all the details in the book?

Schloss: "All those things, I can see them as pictures in front of me. It's still in my mind. Certain things might not be quite exactly how it was, but certain of those bad things — you really remember them."

Q: What was it like with people dying daily at Auschwitz?

Schloss: "It was terrible to see every day — people collapsing and taken away. Especially when it was someone in your own bunk ... that was difficult."

visit was like having a piece of living history come to their school.

Both girls read Schloss' two books, and they recently finished a school assignment that forced them to stay in their rooms for two hours without leaving, to get just a taste of living in hiding like Anne Frank and Schloss.

"Her book made me cry," Mariah said of Schloss. "I didn't read the prologue before I read the book, so I didn't know that her brother died. I cried at the end when I found out."

Anna agreed, adding that Schloss' message of triumph and forgiveness was obvious: "Be grateful for what you've got before it's gone."

St. Jude Assistant Principal Pam Pollack said the books and Schloss' visit had a huge impact. "They loved this book," Pollack said. "They talked and talked about it. These kinds of books can't ever be written again, so these stories have to be kept alive."