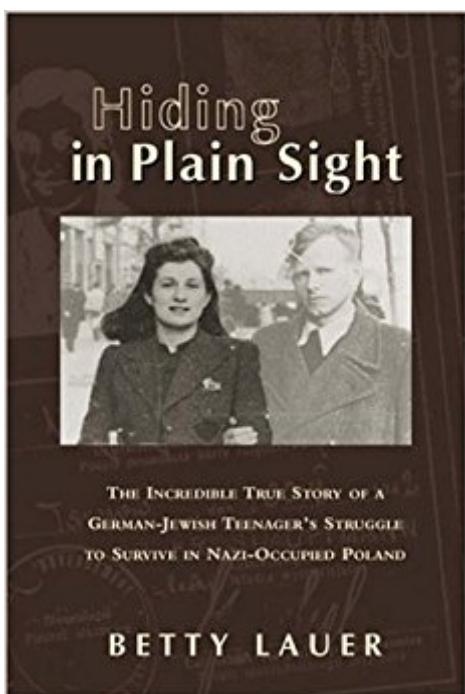


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# Hiding In Plain Sight: The Incredible True Story Of A German-Jewish Teenager's Struggle To Survive In Nazi-Occupied Poland



## Synopsis

It is 1938. Berta Weissberger, twelve years old, lives in Hindenburg, Germany, with her mother and older sister. Her father has already left for America, and the family is awaiting the arrival of their American visas. These hopes and plans are destroyed at the end of October 1938, however, when Jews are rounded up, loaded onto trucks, and driven to the Polish border. They are forced to cross a river into Poland and ordered, "Keep walking and do not turn back. Anyone attempting to turn back will be shot." So begins Bertel's six-year terrifying odyssey in Nazi-occupied Poland. While living a life of constant vigilance and fear, Bertel grows into womanhood. Again and again, Providence steps in and saves her, guiding her to the right person or place. It is Betty Lauer's abiding faith in a higher power that enabled her to survive while hiding in plain sight, during the dark night of Nazi Germany, and to tell this remarkable story of great evil and of the nobility of the few who dared to defy the evildoers. An extraordinary story of strength, resilience, hope, and salvation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Even if you think you've read enough about the Holocaust, start this extraordinary eyewitness account, and you won't quit till you're finished. Bertel Weissberger (now Betty Lauer) was 12 in April 1938 when her father was expelled from Germany and went to America. That October, Bertel; her sister, Eva; and her mother "along with truckloads of other German Jews" were sent to Poland. Initially, they lived as registered Jews, with special curfews, work assignments and food rations. Then came armbands, herding into ghettos and the "liquidations" of ghettos by mass executions or

transports to concentration camps. Bertel and her mother "the Nazis caught Eva" "got forged papers and learned to pass as Polish Christians. This was a constant strain, as IDs were continually rechecked and bounty hunters were always searching for disguised Jews. Fleeing a series of near-discoveries, Bertel and her mother ended up in Warsaw, where they fought in the 1943 uprising and were deported to an internment camp, along with Bertel's Polish Christian "husband." They bribed their way out of the camp to take various work assignments, navigated the Russian occupation of Poland, walked to Auschwitz to look for Eva and stowed away on a ship from Poland to Sweden, finally sailed to America. Beyond the incredible journey, this day-by-day account of a teenager learning "survival dexterity" "how to extract assistance from the ambivalent, how to sense danger in the slightest gesture" is unforgettable. Map, photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

..a testament to the enduring human spirit, highly recommended addition to the growing library of Holocaust Studies and eye-witness biographies. -- Midwest Book Review, August 2004..reminds us there is good as well as evil and the human spirit is capable of unimagined strength. -- Steven Martinovich, July 2004The book is distinguished by a wealth of careful personal detail. Recommended for Holocaust studies collections. -- Library Journal, September 2004

This recounting of events, people, reasoning and emotions and the insurmountable evil that was all pervasive in Poland during world war II is absolutely extraordinary. By God's grace she lived and was able to recall everything.

Amazing story, very moving. A saga of survival and living to give witness...

This book arrived very promptly, and in excellent condition, as described. Since it's in my "to read" pile, I can't comment on the book itself, but I look forward to reading it, probably on a cold, snowy day in front of a roaring fire.

GREAT SERVICE.....

While attending a Bat Mitzvah of a relative, I was fortunate to meet and talk with Betty Lauer, the author of "Hiding in Plain Sight". I told her that I enjoyed the book immensely but found it hard to believe that she could experience so many crises. She said "Believe me: it is true" I said that it must

have been very difficult for her to change her faith. She said that was very easy because both of our faiths believe in one God. She is a very upbeat woman.

well written ,fast moving

Ms. Lauer gives us her almost-incredible account of survival in WWII Poland as a "submarine"; someone sought by the Nazi occupation as a Jewess (zydowka or Judin), yet who could manage by dying her hair blonde, acting confident, finding "female" occupations such as housework and babysitting, to survive in plain sight on the streets of Warsaw, Berlin, and small Polish towns. Rooms to rent were very hard to come by, but most Poles lost their pensions with the Nazi invasion, so many either had to start working or take in boarders. The native population was as frightened of arrest as these German Jewish refugees; if nothing else, aiding and abetting in the hiding of Jews or other undesirables could result in a concentration camp or death. Such a signal as having no fur collar on a winter coat indicated one's Jewishness: Jews were not allowed to own furs, had to turn them in; so obtaining a fur collar became another battle for assimilation/passing. In such and many other examples, the reader gradually realizes that Jews could often "hide in plain sight" by aping gentile behavior and clothing, going to Church, etc. What amazed this reader, after having lived for years in Europe (1980's), is the quite obvious fact that many who hired her or rented her and her mother rooms were aware from the start that they were Jews on the run. Sometimes it would simply erupt at the very end as they were vacating rooms or were let go from a job. Therefore, what you can conclude, most Europeans could recognize these Jewish "submarines" but for many reasons, perhaps from Christian principles or common decency, or hatred of the Occupation, they would not cooperate with the Nazis and turn them in. She does comment that the gentile women would not bother her on the street or in public streetcars, but that the men, ages 18-60, were to be avoided. They would hit on her, call her "zydowka", and try to turn her into the police - and she would run. This kind of detail brings to light that not just Jew-hatred was at play, but some kind of sexual tension was added to the turmoil. One might guess that the gentile women would want her taken away, but apparently it was the gentile men disturbed at her blonde freedom and assimilation. Why? Worth speculating about! The book is so full of details, of names, job descriptions, food and clothing and weather, that one can only wonder that Ms. Lauer could even remember so much. A photographic memory at the least! Those interested in WWII occupied countries, in Jew hatred by gender, in the harshness of Polish life, in the minutiae of survival, will find this book fascinating. I personally enjoyed even hearing what they wore, how they found food, how they cooked it, how

they found medical help, how information through letters was smuggled, how cyanide tablets were sewn into seams, new shoes made of old ski boots, etc. etc. She admits that one great advantage simply lay in her not having been circumcised, as her men were: her pants could not be pulled down and her parts examined. Only Jewish men were circumcised in Europe then. A book full of tension, a trip down memory lane: old-fashioned Poland. She was only a teenager, and her heart often yearned just for friendship with another girl, but her coreligionists' extreme undesirability made even that comfort almost impossible, for she could not risk excess talk. She would give herself and her mother away. A great story! There must have been many more, but who writes these long-ago details down so well?

An unforgettable book by a remarkable woman from a remarkable family. Many times during this memoir I truly was certain that she would be killed or sent to a camp even though I knew she was still alive. The unbelievable hatred and fear that gripped the Nazi's, the collaborators, the informers and the civilians of the occupied lands created such a toxic environment for the Jews. Even still I find it hard to comprehend how Betty and her mother and the other hiding Jews found strength to go on. Late in the book she describes hearing one man who has finally given up and just walks into the Gestapo office and says he is Jewish, he gives up and just wants a bowl of soup before they shoot him. I think that would have been me. Her numerous escapes, close-calls and the amazing audacity of her mother (which saves them many times) is stunning. No review can really add to the story itself. What this book really brought home was the scope and insane energy of the Nazi goal to exterminate the Jews. How so many could work so hard at something so evil for so long is beyond my comprehension. I thank Betty for writing and thank God for saving Betty to tell her story as a warning and reminder of just how evil man can be.

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