

Powerful exhibit on loss and survival opens at Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

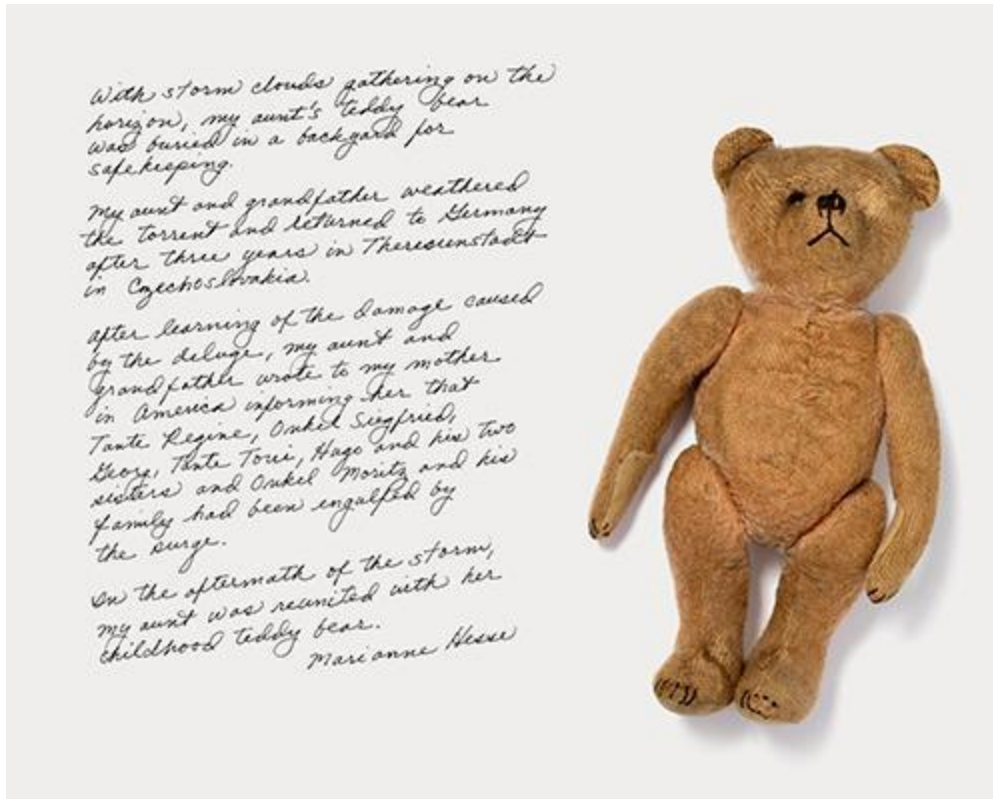
March 24 2022 11:30 AM



SPRINGFIELD – A teddy bear. A set of dominoes. A jade pendant. Ordinary objects made extraordinary by owners who faced the worst that humanity had to offer but somehow managed to survive.

Now these objects and dozens more have been gathered for “Stories of Survival: Object. Image. Memory.,” a special exhibit that opened today at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Using personal treasures and keepsakes, the exhibit tells the stories of people who survived the Holocaust, wars, genocide ... and the stories of friends and family who didn't make it. Why did the survivors keep these particular mementos? What role did they play in the struggle to survive?



Visitors to “Stories of Survival” will see the objects as well as beautiful photographs of the treasures surrounded by handwritten notes from the owners or their relatives.

Learn the stories of:

- Ursula Meyer, who hid her teddy bear during the Holocaust. She survived to reclaim the bear but lost most of her family
- Siyin Duong, whose father survived the killing fields of Cambodia and managed to save a jade pendant that had been in the family for generations

- Othman Al Ani, who fled violence in Iraq and brought along a small set of dominoes to remind him of good times with friends he may never see again.

“We are so proud to bring this exhibit to Springfield,” said Christina Shutt, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. “Focusing on unique, treasured objects makes the horrors of genocide incredibly real and powerful. Telling the stories of survivors reminds us there is always hope, even in the face of evil like the Holocaust, the killing fields or neighbor-on-neighbor murder in Rwanda.”

“Stories of Survival” was created by the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center. It will be at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum through Jan. 22, 2023. The exhibit is included with the regular museum admission price.

Illinois Holocaust Museum CEO Susan Abrams added: "The exhibition allows the viewer to walk in someone else's shoes and experience through their eyes the effort to hold on to cherished memories while adapting to new circumstances. Through these photos, I can picture my own grandmother's teacups (now in my cupboard) or my own family playing dominoes – we can all find something close to home."

Two special features will be added during the run of the exhibit.



“A Promise Kept,” a 14-minute film, will be shown in our “Mr. Lincoln Theater” space. In it, former Illinois resident Fritzie Fritzshall walks visitors through the Czechoslovakian home where she lived until being forced into a ghetto and then taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Fritzshall then takes the audience through current-day Auschwitz. When the film opens in late April, screens will surround the audience on three sides, immersing them in Fritzshall’s story.

And visitors will be invited to share their own stories of survival, whether that means surviving mass violence like people highlighted in the exhibit or more personal battles, such as homelessness or addiction. Some visitors will get to record their stories in a studio inside the exhibit itself for a feature called “Kitchen Table Conversations.”

“Stories of Survival” will be accompanied by a series of events. They include an appearance by the curator and photographer who oversaw creation of the exhibit at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and a kid-friendly program on how to turn a family keepsake or photo into a work of art.

For more about the exhibit and related events, please visit www.presidentlincoln.illinois.gov/survival.

The mission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is to inspire civic engagement through the diverse lens of Illinois history and sharing with the world the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln. We pursue this mission through a combination of rigorous scholarship and high-tech showmanship built on the bedrock of the ALPLM’s unparalleled collection of historical materials.

For more information, visit www.PresidentLincoln.Illinois.gov or follow the ALPLM on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

“Stories of Survival: Object. Image. Memory.” is a project of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center and photographer Jim Lommasson. The Holocaust Museum is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Holocaust by honoring the memories of those who were lost and by teaching universal lessons that combat hatred, prejudice, and indifference.

Learn more at www.ilholocaustmuseum.org.