

ON "SCHINDLER'S LIST"

For those of us who are movie fans, I feel it is safe to say that we have all experienced that moment when a movie has truly touched us. Perhaps an ending scene appealed to our senses and emotions leaving us with a feeling of awe and inspiration. Maybe we found ourselves able to identify with a certain character or storyline. Possibly a particular event tapped a nerve sending chills down our spine, making our hairs stand on end. For whatever reason, we were given that opportunity to share in the emotions and passions of the characters – regardless of whether the movie is fact or fiction. In a sense, we ourselves, as movie watchers, have given a certain degree of realism to a movie. A sequence of events may never have really occurred in a fictional movie; however, they exist in our collective experience – in our hearts and in our minds. A movie based on truth may not, necessarily, be based on the truth of our own personal lives but we, nevertheless, experience a story of a character as if it were our own. Sometimes, though, a certain number of us may find that a movie does portray a truth, which has a direct and profound impact on our own lives. “Schindler’s List”, directed by Steven Spielberg, is one such movie in which I share a direct connection. Even though many people my age, especially other guys, may find the movie boring because they are unable to identify with the issues it presents, I find the movie interesting since it is relevant to my family history. One reason I find the movie interesting and others may not is because my mother, being born part Jewish and living in Germany during World War II, could have fallen victim to the horrors of the holocaust as portrayed in the movie. Another reason I find the movie interesting and others may not is because I can compare my Great Aunt to the main character in the movie, Oscar Schindler.

Throughout my childhood, I was exposed to a great deal of family history and culture, which, in part, has shaped me into the person I am today. I remember growing up as a small child hearing whole conversations in German. My mother and her brother and sister would often speak their native tongue when they did not want me to know what was being talked about. I was able, however, to pick up a few words and phrases but was not exposed to the language enough as for it to become a second language. This desire to be able to understand what they were saying influenced me to take German in high school for four years. The fact that my family was from Germany and that I still have family living there offered my classes a topic of discussion. I also remember hearing the stories of what life was like for my mother, aunt, and uncle in Germany

during World War II. Everything from the horrors of the gas chambers to the bombings of Berlin was often discussed. My aunt and uncle often remarked on how my Great Aunt saved so many Jews. After over hearing such stories I would often ask questions – sometimes I would get answers and other times I would not. Once I got a little older, they told me everything I wanted to know. Some of it came as a surprise but still many other things I had figured out on my own through exposure to media, which talked about the holocaust and the war. Undoubtedly, such exposure to this sort of legacy had affects on my perceptions of the world. I felt unique in that I had this past which none of my friends could share in. In American culture, ones ties to their own ancestry are often lost because it is often so many generations ago that one's family had another home on distant soil. These close connection which have developed over the years and later intensified because of the death of my mother, are what fueled my desire to write this paper on the movie "Schindler's List".

The movie is a true story and takes place in Poland and Czechoslovakia during World War II. Oscar Schindler was an ethnic German born in Zwittau in Sudentland, which was an ethnically German portion of Czechoslovakia. Schindler's family was one of the richest in Zwittau, but as a result of the economic depression of the 1930's, his family firm became bankrupt. Schindler joined the Nazi Party to better his chances at economic survival. When the war broke out and Germany invaded Poland and Czechoslovakia, Schindler saw this as a great opportunity to make a fortune. He left his wife, Emilie, and moved to Krakow, where he took over a Jewish family's apartment. This put him in the position of being able to capitalize on the misfortune of the Jews who had been forbidden from conducting businesses of their own. He managed to coax a handful of Jewish investors into funding a new business owned by Schindler – converting an old enameled-goods factory into production of pots and pans for the war effort. The factory would employ Jews since they were the cheapest source of labor at the time. With the help of his trusty Jewish accountant, Itzhak Stern, Schindler's factory prospered and made a fortune off the backs of its Jewish workforce.

As the brutality of the Nazis accelerated and despite Schindler's greedy nature, Schindler became a hero to the Jews in his factory. The movie does a very good job of showing how the heroism of Oscar Schindler saved over a thousand Jews while vividly depicting the horrors of the holocaust. Thanks to his political reliability and charismatic personality, Schindler managed to convince top

SS and German army officials to move more and more Jews into his factory. In this way, he managed to save many intellectuals, artists, and families of his Jewish workers from the gas chamber. Through careful bribes, he was able to persuade Amon Goeth, the commander of the Plaszow work camp, to set up a little camp for his Jewish workers near the factory. This allowed more food and medicine to be smuggled into the factory. When the front lines were being pushed west and the factory was in danger of being destroyed, sending all this workers to the death camps, Schindler spent a fortune in bribing Goeth once again to relocate over 1,000 of his workers to a new factory in his hometown in Czechoslovakia. This final act of heroism is where the movie gets its title. Schindler paid per name for names of his workers to go on a list – the names of this list were the lucky ones who were to be transported to the new factory and spared the fate of being gassed.

The screenplay of the movie is based on a novel titled “Schindler’s Ark”, written by Thomas Keneally. The movie was produced in 1993. The screenplay was written by Steven Zallian and the movie was directed by Steven Spielberg. Notable cast members include Liam Neeson who played Oscar Schindler, Ben Kingsley starred as Itzhak Stern, Ralph Fiennes was the notoriously evil Amon Goeth, and Caroline Goodall appeared as Schindler’s wife Emilie. The movie has achieved worldwide acclaim for excellence and has won many awards. Out of 12 nominations, “Schindler’s List” has won seven academy awards in 1993 for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Art Decoration/Set Decoration, Best Cinematography, Best Film Editing, and Best Original Score. In 1994, it was awarded three Golden Globe Awards for Best Film in the drama category, Best Director, and Best Screenplay. The movie also received similar awards from the New York and Los Angeles Film Critics Association, the British Academy Awards, and the MTV Awards.

One reason I find the movie interesting and others may not is because my mother, being born part Jewish and living in Germany during World War II, could have fallen victim to the horrors of the holocaust as portrayed in the movie. My mother was born in Berlin, Germany in 1943 – two years before the war ended. She was born a half Jew which would be enough be considered in danger by the German government. My mother had an older brother and sister. My grandmother spent these years during the war hiding herself and my mother and aunt and uncle from the dangers of the Nazi Regime. She was forced to move around from place to place so that the German government was unable to locate her family. She was fortunate enough to have friends that could conjure up