

A parents' legacy in children's hands

As World War II ignited in Europe, the woman who would eventually bring **Eli Nussbaum** into the world was already a young mother with a husband and a little boy.

The family lived in Poland, part of the largest population of Jews in Europe before the war. As the Nazis invaded her country in 1939, Bella-Rachel Liebermench placed her toddler son in the protection of a monastery. Eventually, she and her husband would be transported to a concentration camp, where he would die and she would survive torture and deprivation. She would never again find her first little boy.

That story is at the heart of a new novel, "The Promise" (www.elinussbaum.com), by Nussbaum, now one of the United States' premiere pediatric pulmonologists.

"In writing a novel, I was able to truly immortalize my family's stories because a novel is something that will be read by many more people than just my family," Nussbaum says. "Having a record of a family, like a family tree or what a genealogist might prepare, is important, but few strangers will want to curl up on a sofa with that and read."

Nussbaum says adult children need to think creatively about how they preserve and pass along their parents' stories. Documenting names, dates and milestones is fine, but the audience for

that is limited. Recounting the events that shaped your parents' lives, and their reactions to them, not only preserves their legacies, Nussbaum says, it can provide illustrative and cautionary tales for the world at large.

He suggests:

- ◆ **Make a StoryCorps recording:** StoryCorps is a non-profit organization that has collected and archived more than 40,000 interviews since 2003. Anyone can share their story; it will be archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and participants receive a CD of their recording.

- ◆ **Go to www.storycorps.org, find the location nearest you and make a reservation.** Bring a friend or loved one – someone who will either appreciate your story or whose story you want to share – and think about the story you want to tell. Staff at the recording sight will help you; the process takes about 40 minutes.

- ◆ **Create a digital slide show with soundtrack:** Photos set to music are an entertaining and often emotional way to share a story. Don't try to tell a whole life's story in one slideshow – that's more like watching someone's old home movies. Instead, choose an interesting time, event or story to share.

- ◆ **As you compile photos, music and narration, remember, you don't want to create a photo album, you want to**

tell a story. So you should have a beginning, middle and end. Your finished product should be no more than two to three minutes long. Caption the photos with names, dates and places. There are numerous public sites online to share your show.

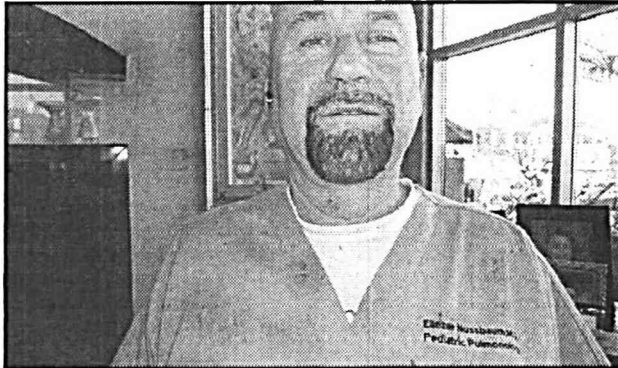
Nussbaum says that he wrote his novel after his parents' deaths; he knew the stories, so he didn't have to rely on his parents to re-tell them. Those whose parents are still living should involve them in the process, if possible. With StoryCorps, for example, parents can share their stories in their own words.

"The older generations are beginning to pass away," he said. "For example, in Israel, where I am also a citizen, a study of Holocaust survivors found that by 2015, 66 percent of the survivors in that country will be over 80 years old, and their numbers will have shrunk from 240,000 to 144,000. "It's important to preserve their legacy now. If your parents are already gone, you need to do it before you can't remember their stories."

◆◆◆ ABOUT ELEAZER NUSSBAUM

Eliezer Nussbaum, M.D., was born in Katowice, Poland; his father lost his first wife and four children in the Holocaust and his mother lost her first husband and son. He is a professor of Clinical Pediatrics Step VII at the University of California and Chief of Pediatric Pulmonary Medicine and Medical Director of Pediatric Pulmonary and Cystic Fibrosis Center at Memorial Miller Children's Hospital of Long Beach. He has authored two novels, three non-fiction books and more than 150 scientific publications and was named among the top U.S. doctors by U.S. News and World Report in 2011-12.





Dr. Eliezer Nussbaum