



Parallel Journeys by Eleanor H. Ayer

Subjects: Holocaust, Jewish (1939–1945)—Juvenile literature; Waterford, Helen, 1909– —Juvenile literature; Heck, Alfons, 1928– —Juvenile literature

Awards: Best Books for Young Adults, The Flora Stieglitz Straus Award, The Christopher Award

Book Lists: Europe, Middle School, Reluctant Readers



Props: Pictures of Alfons Heck, Helen Waterford

Truth can be stranger than fiction. It can be undeniable, incredible, amazing, and sometimes horrifying. Truth doesn't bother itself with events that might have happened or could have happened; only with events that actually did happen. Alfons Heck and Helen Waterford are real people—common people who lived through very uncommon times. (*Show pictures of them from the book*) They were witnesses to one of the darkest hours in modern history—the six long years between 1939 and 1945, World War II, and the reign of Adolf Hitler.

And even though Helen and Alfons were both born German citizens and grew up only 60 miles apart from each other, they had little in common. Helen grew up in a city with her parents. Alfons was raised on a farm by his grandparents.

Helen lived in Frankfurt. She attended the university for three and a half years until Hitler decreed that no Jews could attend classes and she was expelled. She married Siegfried, who lost his government job as a result of another Hitler decree. They emigrated to Holland where they hoped to be safe. But there was no safe place in Europe for a Jew during that time.

Alfons had been taught the Hitler party line from his earliest years in school. He longed to belong to the Nazi Hitler Youth and joined as soon as he was old enough. By the time he was 14, he was selected for the prestigious Luftwaffe. He was vigorous in his dedication and at

16 was in command of 6,000 Hitler Youth troops. He worshiped Hitler.

Adolf Hitler's government heaped honors on Alfons Heck and at the same time it tried to murder Helen Waterford. Their lives in Germany could not have been more different.

Look inside the mind of an ardent Hitler follower. You could have been him. Had you been raised as he was, you might have also proudly proclaimed, "Seik Heil!" (*Do Hitler salute*) And once your beloved leader had fallen and the horrors of his reign revealed, could you forgive yourself for having supported such terror and unwarranted pain and death? Could you accept it as true?

Look inside the mind of a Jew. You could have been her. Had you been treated as harshly as she was, would you have remained true to your faith? Could you have survived the camps, the selections, the hatred? Could you forgive the men and woman who killed your friends and family and tried to kill you?

Read about two young lives—a Jew and a soldier—both victims, both lost for a time in Hitler's hysteria. (*Hold up book*) *Parallel Journeys* by Eleanor Ayer.

