

A third-generation Holocaust story

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With commencement festivities a recent memory, Tulane University grad Sophie Unterman looks forward to a summer of scholarly work plumbing memories from a painful family history. She plans to expand her honors thesis about her grandmother's experiences as a Holocaust survivor into a book.



Recent Tulane grad Sophie Unterman is expanding her honors thesis about her grandmother's experiences as a Holocaust survivor into a book. (Photo by Guillermo Cabrera-Rojo)

Unterman was in fifth grade when her grandmother, Eva Unterman, began relating her personal story about growing up in Lodz, Poland. Nazis removed her along with her father and mother to the Lodz Ghetto when she was 7. The family was transferred to the Auschwitz and Stutthof concentration camps and later participated in what they believed to be a death march to the Terezin camp in the Czech Republic. Fortunately, the family was liberated within days of arriving there.

This summer, Unterman will conduct more interviews with her grandmother, who lives in Tulsa, Okla. She also will transcribe interviews with her grandmother's German relatives, which she recorded while on a trip last summer funded with a Newcomb College Institute [grant](#).

Unterman is telling the story with two narrative threads ? the young Eva's story, alongside her own observations as a third-generation Holocaust survivor.

From the age of 4, the recent Tulane grad knew she wanted to be a writer. She used to memorize children's books and rewrite them from her own perspective. The English and American studies major, who wants to pursue a career as a writer of literary fiction, also is developing for publication short stories that she has written.

Her grandmother's story, she says, is harder to write than fiction.

"I want people to know her story, but I also want it to be good literature," Unterman says. "I'm exploring my own silent voice in the story. This is a personal story, not only a story about the Holocaust, but about my grandmother and our family."