NEWS RELEASE

Holocaust survivor Max Glauben shares his living history

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Deborah Fisher, an analyst in American Airlines Fleet Planning, gets a little emotional when she talks about her relationship with Holocaust survivor Max Glauben. He means a lot to her and her family. Deborah and her husband Mark Fisher, a senior project manager in IT, met Max and his wife 13 years ago when Deborah was pregnant. Since then, the families have become so close that the older couple are considered surrogate grandparents to the Fishers' children — the kids call them Bubbie and Zadie.

"He would sit across the aisle from us at synagogue chanting proudly with a smile on his face," she said. That signature smile signifies how Max approaches life. He's a jovial man, with a quick wit and a talent for storytelling.

Maya Leibman, EVP & Chief Information Officer introduced Max before he spoke to a standing-room-only crowd at American Airlines headquarters on Friday, Oct. 20, at an event hosted by American's Jewish Employee Business Resource Group. A room set up for 70 people held more than 125 team members and guests. Some brought their own children to hear Max tell his unimaginable story of surviving five years during World War II. It's an important lesson in history about humanity and perseverance — a harrowing story of surviving the Warsaw Ghetto, six concentration camps and the death march from Flossenburg to Dachau before being liberated by Patton's 3rd Army tank division.

His vivid memories were delivered stoically — the humiliation and degradation suffered throughout the ghetto, burning of elders' beards, standing aside whenever approached by a guard and bowing one's head, living on 187-calorie daily rations. "It's hard to describe how one feels when met with that type of thing," he said. "They were humiliating us on the streets, both physically and mentally."

After the destruction of the ghetto, survivors were shipped to concentration camps. Max described the overcrowded boxcars, filled with hundreds of people. It took them five days to get to Majdanek, the first concentration camp where most of his family would perish. As they were being divided into groups, Max says that his father took his hand and led him to the worker section, saving his life.

In the first month at the concentration camp, his father and 29 others were taken hostage after a late role call one night. Max found his empty boots the next morning, and that's how he learned his father was dead.

The 89-year-old said that it was because of his can-do attitude and the fact that he was mechanically inclined that he was able to survive — building metal parts for airplanes. He made sure to produce quality work and was transferred to several camps.

That same can-do attitude has helped him persevere in life, too. After the end of the war, he moved to the states as an orphan, enlisted in the military and eventually found his way to Dallas, where he married and worked as everything from a toy buyer for Neiman Marcus to an owner of Imperial Garment Supply. He has three children, seven grandchildren and one great grandchild.

And although he didn't speak much of his experience when his own children were young, he has dedicated his life to educating students on the horror of the Holocaust.

He has made 12 trips for the International March of the Living, an annual educational tour through Poland and Israel to study the history of the Holocaust. Max has attended with hundreds of kids.

During the trip, participants visit sites of former concentration camps. One of the stops is at Majdanek. A mausoleum is erected on the site where the camp once was. Max described the structure — mushroom shaped, with stairs leading up. He said it takes some effort to climb to the landing of the open-air structure.

In the center of the landing, he said, there is a mound. As the students listen, they learn that it is a mound of 7 tons of human ash and bone, collected after the liberation of the camp in 1944. "Once you get there, that's when the reality appears in their mind. It takes a few minutes — you can see it overcoming them. They sit down. Some cry. They see, now, the tragedy and the magnitude of the tragedy. It's a trip that changes their lives."

Max said it is important for him that he delivery his testimony of the Holocaust in a way that does not create hate, but works to educate on the loss of humanity that occurred during the Holocaust, and how all have a responsibility to eradicate evil. "Let's all become upstanders, right," he said. "Because do not be mistaken, bystanders were as responsible for what occurred."

“Max’s speech was truly inspiring,” Aaron Herstein, a senior developer in IT, said. “I feel that his story is a great reminder that we need to remember the evil in our past in order to make sure that we do not repeat history. The opportunity to hear first-hand accounts of the Holocaust is becoming extremely limited. Because of that I think that it is important to hear stories like Max’s as much as possible.”

Max recently attended the groundbreaking of the new Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum, a new state-of-the-art 51,000 square-foot museum in downtown Dallas. It’s a development 40 years in the making that is intended to “teach and inspire new generations to advance human rights to combat prejudice, hatred and indifference.” American is the first corporate sponsor of the endeavor.

Maya Leibman, EVP & Chief Information Officer, introduced Max Glauben to American team members before he spoke.

Max Glauben spoke to more than 125 American team members on Friday, Oct. 20. Dozens more called in to listen on a bridge line set up for the event. He signed copies of his informational DVD, “Plagues of Soul.”

Holocaust survivor Max Glauben shows a black “KL” tattooed crudely onto his skin. The letters stand for konzentrationslager, the German government’s identifying mark for Jews who were imprisoned.

American’s Jewish Employee Business Resource Group organized the event where Holocaust survivor Max Glauben spoke.

CEO and Chairman Doug Parker attended Max’s speech and met with him following the event.