

Standing Firm

Simone Arnold was a 12-year old Jehovah's Witness girl living in the time of the Nazis in the Alsace-Lorraine France region. She took much opposition and persecution but remained loyal to her God. Her story is of much worth and importance and deserves to be told and heard.

For starters you may want some background information. Simone was born on August 17, 1930. Her family, at the time, were Catholics. The region they lived in was fought over by Germany and France for many years. Simone described her childhood this way, "Until World War II intervened, I was a happy outgoing child." When Simone was 6-years old her mother picked up some books from Jehovah's Witnesses. Simone's mother picked up a bible to look up the scriptures in the books. Simone became curious and so her mother had a little study of the bible and the books with her every day. At first it was just them but then her father began to study with them too. The whole family went from Catholics to Jehovah's Witnesses.

In the year of 1940 the Alsace-Lorraine region was taken under control by Adolf Hitler. As a Jehovah's Witness Simone could not say the new German greeting of 'Heil Hitler'. This is because 'heil' means salvation and she believed salvation only comes through Jesus as king of God's kingdom. This, though, meant that she had to be cautious. On one occasion Simone and her friend were cycling through a nearby forest called, Nonnenbruch Forest. As they were cycling they came upon two motorcycles and a black car. They hid and then came out none other than Adolf Hitler himself! From then on Simone became more careful than she ever had been.

That same year when school started the schools changed. Simone's teacher's name was Mr. Zipf. This new situation meant that 'Heil Hitler' had to be spoken every time teachers entered the class 10 times. Hitler's picture was hung in the classroom and the school system revolved around Nazi teaching. The words, "Germany, the Holy Roman Empire" were heard quite often. To Simone the things taught in the school were unacceptable. Simone thought of the words, "no part of the world" quite often during this time.

On September 4, 1941 Simone and her mother got the devastating blow that her father had been arrested. Now without income Simone's mother had to get a job. The Gestapo, though, closed their bank account and refused Simone's mother a working card. When the Arnolds' family friends (the Koehls) heard of this they provided them with the money to keep on buying their basic necessities. Good news came on December 5, 1941, Simone's father was transferred to Dachau which meant he could write a 12 line letter to Simone and her mother. In these letters her father used the term 'lion' to refer to the Nazis. Each month Simone looked forward to her fathers' letters.

Simone received a test of faith when she was in her higher learning school. She was given 5 minutes to salute the picture of Adolf Hitler in the classroom. When she refused she was expelled from that school and sent back to her old normal school. She felt happy but sad at the same time. She would have her old friends as classmates but would not be able to continue in some of her studies.

The principal, Mr. Ehrlich did not like how she had refused to bring money to go to a Hitler Youth Group camp. As punishment he marched her into a class of ten year olds. He proceeded to beat them saying, "Simone, she is responsible!" He was trying to turn these children against her but instead they said, "Resists, resists that swine!" Mr. Ehrlich didn't give up though, he wanted her in the front and center as he had the children salute the Nazi flag. Simone did not give in and Mr. Ehrlich's face of triumph left him.

Simone was arrested on July 7, 1943 at age 12 and sent to a Nazi penitentiary home for girls. She was forbidden to speak except before bedtime when she was supposed to say good night to the heads of the house. Although she was forbidden to speak Simone found a way to hide a bible in the springs of one of the teacher's springs. This made her happy but besides that nothing was good there. One of the things she was supposed to do was carry a barrel with several loads of water 40 liters each. Simone very much wanted to get out of there. Meanwhile her mother had also been arrested. The only other Witness family member was her aunt Eugene. Through this aunt Simone found out about her mothers' arrest. Simone dreaded the thought of going to an actual prison.

On April 24, 1945 Simone was finally released and was able to be under the custody of her mother. Soon after her father was released and the family was reunited. They went back to the way there life was before the Nazis. Simone married Max Liebster, another Jehovah's Witness and Holocaust survivor in September of 1956. Simone Arnolds' story truly is one to be heard.

Bibliography

Liebster, Simone. Facing the Lion. New Orleans LA. Grammaton Press., 2000

I learned from this autobiography that Jews weren't the only part of the Holocaust.

Arnold-Liebster Foundation

<http://www.alst.org/index.html>

I learned about what happened to Jehovah's Witnesses under persecution.

Holocaust Survivor Simone Liebster Testimony Clip "Jehovah Witness Persecution"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8m9QnVYU08U>

I was able to here Simone Arnold tell her story in her own words through an interview.