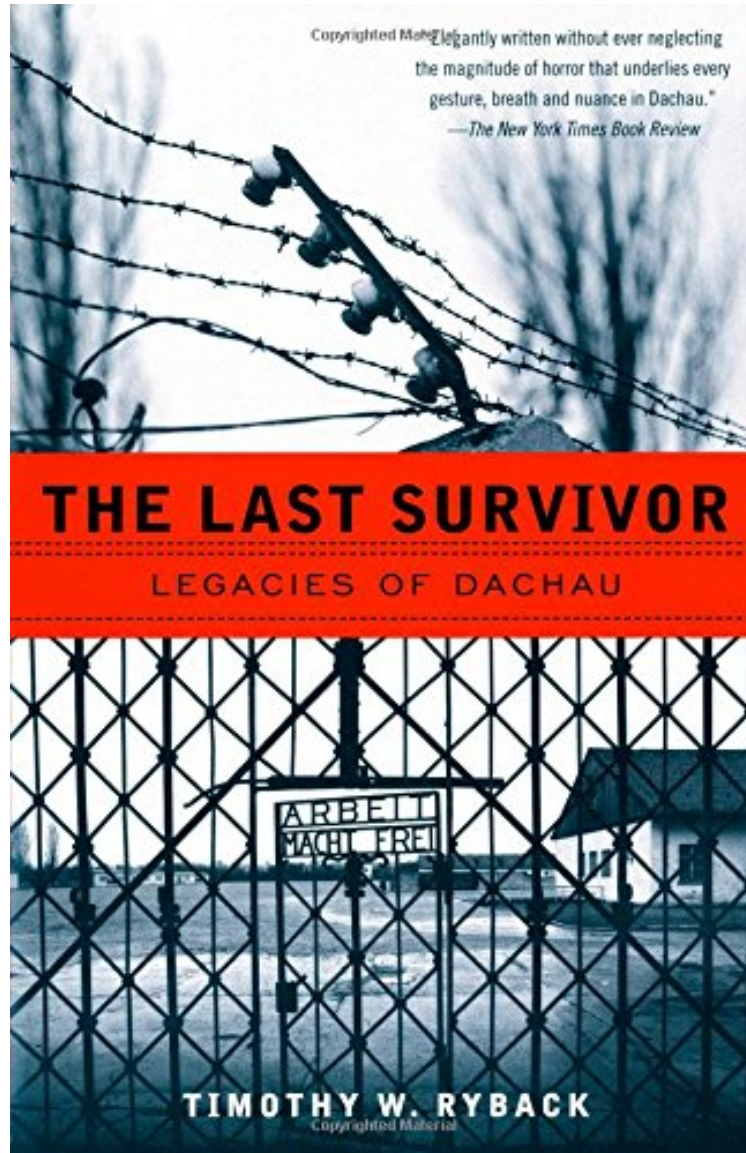


(Get free) The Last Survivor: Legacies of Dachau

## The Last Survivor: Legacies of Dachau

Timothy W. Ryback

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**Timothy W. Ryback : The Last Survivor: Legacies of Dachau** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Last Survivor: Legacies of Dachau:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great history of such a sad reality  
By TachiHaving visited this concentration camp, this book was a must have! Great history of such a sad reality  
1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. It doesn't get any better than this...  
By DavidI buy quite a few history books, because I can't imagine anything more interesting to read about. Unfortunately, I don't read a few of them to the end, and the ones I do finish usually take

months to plod through. I read "Last Survivor.." in two nights. A powerful work of many threads and lives, I was captured by Ryback's ability to tie in so many different characters into on seamless story. A terrific history lesson, should be required reading in every US High School.<sup>5</sup> of 5 people found the following review helpful. elegant, compelling journalistic work  
By A Customer  
Ryback does something I've never had the nerve to do--ask the residents of Dachau about their infamy. He writes beautifully--this is the work of a top drawer journalist--and yet unobtrusively. It reminds me of Krakauer's Into Thin Air. And like Krakauer, Ryback comes from magazine writing. A few years ago when magazines had more room for copy and less space was used on ads this might have appeared unabridged The New York Times Sunday Magazine or The Atlantic Monthly--as cover stories, of course. But now, with small hardback book bindery and clever formatting it suffices as a full-blown book. I read it in 2 hours. Still, it is compelling. As for Martin Zaidenstadt, I never saw him at Dachau any time I visited there (1981 onwards). He appears to indeed be a survivor of WWII and maybe of Dachau--but he also surely is a panhandler preying on the sympathies and guilt of Dachau visitors and (in my humble opinion!) the man is suffering from senile dementia.

In *The Last Survivor*, journalist Timothy Ryback explores the surprising--and often disturbing--ways the citizens of Dachau go about their lives in a city the rest of us associate with gas chambers and mass graves. A grandmother recalls the echo of wooden shoes on cobblestone, the clip-clop of inmates marched from boxcars to barracks under the cover of night. A mother-to-be opts to deliver in a neighboring town, so that her child's birth certificate will not be stamped DACHAU. An "SS baby," now middle-aged, wonders about the father he never knew. And should you visit Dachau, you will meet Martin Zaidenstadt, an 87 year-old who accosts tourists with a first-hand account of the camp before its liberation in 1945. Beautifully written, compassionate, wise, *The Last Survivor* takes us to a place that bears the mark of Cain--and a people unwilling to be defined by the past, yet painfully unable to forget.

.com This disturbing group portrait of Dachau's modern-day residents is a Holocaust book unlike any other. American journalist Timothy Ryback, whose Austrian heritage includes a distant relative in the SS and a Nazi-sympathizing grandfather, depicts the wide range of perspectives held by those who live in the German town best known for being the site of a concentration camp. He finds that denial, distasteful self-pity, and genuine reflection are some of the typical emotions. Looming over all the other Dachauers, however, is 87-year-old Martin Zaidenstadt, a troubled and possibly delusional man who claims to have been a Dachau inmate and makes it his business to stand outside the camp every day, contradicting the glib accounts of the tour guides. Ryback never finds documentary evidence that Zaidenstadt was in Dachau, and many of the old man's diatribes contain factual errors. Yet he is a towering figure, possessed by near-biblical rage and a past whose nightmares include a wife and daughter burned alive in Poland--a trauma that, Ryback subtly suggests, fuels Zaidenstadt's vigil. By presenting his subjects without overt editorial comment, the author forces readers to confront discomfiting issues without the solace of easy condemnation or quick disassociation from decades-old ethical questions that are still painfully relevant. --Wendy Smith  
From Publishers Weekly  
In 1992, Ryback wrote a *New Yorker* article about the picturesque Bavarian town of Dachau, site of the first Nazi concentration camp, in which he "roundly condemned the residents of Dachau as small-minded and selfish, unwilling to accept moral responsibility for their town's role in the Holocaust." In retrospect, however, he felt that he had too casually adopted the moral high ground. So he went back to talk with Dachau's mayor and its journalists, waitresses and policemen, members of a community living normal lives in a place that reeks of historical atrocity. His portraits reveal the various ways Dachauers confront or evade the ugly history of their hometown (many pregnant women deliver in Munich so their children won't have the stain of Dachau on their birth certificates). Yet the voices of these people are ultimately obscured by the enigmatic man Ryback places at the moral center of the book: Martin Zaidenstadt, who may very well be crazy. Every day, Zaidenstadt goes to the camp to rebut the official history given by tour guides and historians. While Dachauers take a bizarre pride that the historical record shows that the gas chambers were never used at the camp, Zaidenstadt has made it his mission in life to tell visitors, in as many languages as he can, that Jews were, in fact, gassed at Dachau and that he saw it with his own eyes. Though Ryback's archival searches never confirm that Zaidenstadt was ever at Dachau, the author is happy to grant the old man his moral authority. In doing so, he implies that there should, after all, be no exit from history for Dachau. Pensive digressions into his own family history and thoughtful responses to what he sees in Dachau make Ryback an appealing guide. Zaidenstadt is so haunting a figure, however, that his presence overwhelms whatever insight Ryback has to offer into the soul of Dachau's present. (Aug.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Library Journal  
Journalist Ryback (deputy director, Salzburg Seminar in American Studies) presents a lively exploration of how the modern inhabitants of Dachau cope with living in the shadow of the infamous Nazi concentration camp. The central figure in the story, tying all the diverse threads together, is the enigmatic figure of Martin Zaidenstadt. A former Polish soldier and inmate of the camp, Zaidenstadt now spends his days sitting in Dachau and lecturing about the camp and his personal history. Ryback's quest for proof of Zaidenstadt's story places the lingering legacy of anti-Semitic violence in stark context. Zaidenstadt's first wife and child were burned alive by Polish Catholics; he now spends his days trying to forget that tragedy by remembering the horror of Dachau instead. Ryback's account helps us understand the

continuing legacy of the Holocaust. For public libraries and specialized collections. A Frederic Krome, Jacob Rader Marcus Ctr. of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.