At the age of 15, Georgia Hunter interviewed her maternal grandmother for a school assignment on her family’s history. She discovered that her grandfather’s family (his parents, his four siblings, their spouses and children), Jews originally from Poland, were Holocaust survivors. Ninety percent of Poland’s Jews were exterminated during World War II, and in the town of Radom, where Georgia’s relatives lived, fewer than 300 of the 300,000 Jewish residents managed to survive. “We Were the Lucky Ones” documents her family’s incredible journey.

LAUREN HENRY: Thanks for taking the time to chat. “We Were the Lucky Ones” is a story of hardship, but also of determination and the power of love. It’s such a moving and inspirational story. Why do you think it took until your teenage years before you learned about your family’s history? And when did you know you wanted to write about it?

GEORGIA HUNTER: I had no idea growing up that my grandfather was Polish or Jewish; he just never talked about it. I made that discovery while interviewing my grandmother for a high school English assignment. I was 15 at the time; my grandfather had died the year before.

I wish I could go back and ask my grandfather why he never talked about his Holocaust-era past. Perhaps the fact that the entire family survived intact—there were 22 in all—played a part in that. They were a statistical anomaly, which is unbelievably fortunate but not something they’d have boasted about. More than that, though, it simply wasn’t in my grandfather’s DNA to dwell on the past. He had this very positive, vibrant, forward-thinking outlook on life. When he moved to the States, he changed his first name from Addy to Eddy, his last name from Kurc (pronounced “Koortz” in Polish) to Courts. He was all about assimilating, becoming an American.

It was a surprise, to say the least, to learn about my grandfather’s past at 15, but it wasn’t until a family reunion six years later, in 2000, that I started hearing little bits and pieces of the greater Kurc family story. That reunion really planted the seed in my mind to try to unearth and record my ancestral past. I knew it would involve a lot of travel (the family is very global!), and a lot of research, which was daunting. But once I put a stake in the ground and set off for my first interview, I knew it was something I really wanted and needed to do. I went into the project as a family historian with the goal of honoring my relatives and capturing the story for the family, and for future generations.

LAUREN HENRY: Can you tell us a little bit about your research?

GEORGIA HUNTER: I met with each of them, as they all had pieces of the stories their parents (my grandfather’s siblings) had passed down to them. I was especially honored to sit down with Felicia, who was only a year old at the start of the war, and whose firsthand memories were heart-wrenching.

Along with these oral histories, I reached out to archives, ministries, museums—anywhere I hoped might have a relevant record. It’s amazing how many records exist and how more and more are becoming available every day. If I had tried to tackle this research before the digital age, this book certainly wouldn’t be what it is today. What I was able to find was remarkable. I encourage everyone to delve into their own histories, and in fact I have a page on my...
The process has been fascinating. We’ve pitched to all the big networks in Los Angeles and are considering pitching in London as well. I hope that if it does get picked up it’s because the story resonates with someone and they feel like they have to do it, in the same way that I felt like I had to record the story.

Learn more about Georgia on her website www.georgiahunterauthor.com