

**Introduction by the book author Melissa W. Hunter provided in January 2020:**

Growing up, I was very close to my grandmother. She often shared stories of her childhood in Poland, her time in the concentration camps during World War II, and her life after, when she eventually emigrated to America. As a writer, I knew I wanted to chronicle these stories for posterity. One afternoon twenty years ago, I sat down with my grandmother and interviewed her about her life. I used that interview, along with extensive research, to write my novel *What She Lost*. While my novel is historical fiction, the events and locations are real, including that of her childhood home of Olkusz, Poland. I tried in earnest to depict her home life the way she described it to me. Her father's bakery, the apartment building where she lived with her extended family, the synagogue they attended, and the cobblestoned streets of the town center are all real. I infused historical fact into the plot of the novel, including the events of July 31, 1940, otherwise known as Bloody Wednesday, and the relocation of the Jewish community in Olkusz to the ghetto. While I had to imagine the dialogue and emotions of the characters in my book, they are based on real members of my grandmother's family: her mother and father, sister, and five brothers. Before World War II, my grandmother's family had lived in Olkusz for generations. This is their story.