

Catherine Allen-Walters & Elisabeth Hartig Lentulo's *Near the Danube Bridge* Wins Top Prize in International Book Contest

Near the Danube Bridge is recognized for outstanding writing, design and appeal out of thousands of books submitted into the Book Excellence Awards.

FALLBROOK, CA, UNITED STATES, June 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Catherine Allen-Walters and Elisabeth Hartig Lentulo are the co-creators of *Near the Danube Bridge*, an award-winning historical biography that preserves a remarkable firsthand account of faith, persecution, and survival under communist rule in postwar Yugoslavia.

Catherine Allen-Walters is a professional violinist with a bachelor's degree in music and a master's in humanities. Her extensive study of religion, history, literature, and world cultures has shaped a lifelong fascination with the beliefs, traditions, and experiences that define the human story. Drawing on her background in music and historical inquiry, she brings depth, insight, and narrative richness to stories of resilience and endurance.

Elisabeth Hartig Lentulo is a licensed realtor who enjoys the excitement and challenges of the real estate industry. Born in Serbia and raised in Germany, she is the daughter of Kalman Hartig, whose extraordinary experiences as a

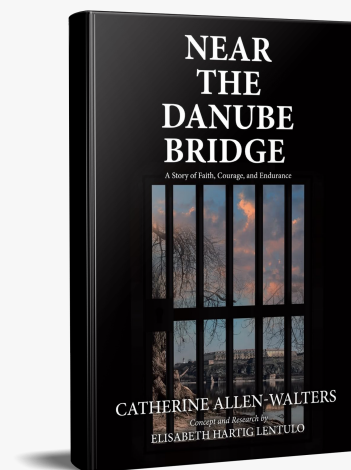


Elisabeth Hartig Lentulo



Catherine Allen-Walters

Authors Elisabeth Hartig Lentulo and Catherine Allen-Walters



Near the Danube Bridge

conscientious objector and religious minority inspired the book. In addition to her successful career in real estate, she is also an ardent vocalist who performs regularly with the prestigious Bonner Singers and with the Fallbrook Chorale.

Together, Catherine and Elisabeth have created a powerful historical narrative that sheds light on a little-known chapter of 20th-century European history while honoring the enduring strength of faith, family, and freedom. This one-on-one interview explores their journey in bringing *Near the Danube Bridge* to readers around the world.

Tell us about *Near the Danube Bridge - A Story of Faith, Courage, and Endurance*.

What would you risk to remain true to your beliefs?

Born into a prosperous family in Yugoslavia, Kalman Hartig expected a future filled with music, opportunity, and promise. Instead, war shattered his world, and the rise of communist rule forced him to make an impossible choice: compromise his faith or suffer the consequences. As a Seventh-day Adventist and conscientious objector, Kalman refused to abandon his convictions. For that decision, he was imprisoned, beaten, and sentenced to hard labor. Stripped of his freedom and pushed to the limits of human endurance, he faced a daily battle to survive in a system designed to break both body and spirit.

Yet even in the darkest moments, Kalman found strength where few would think to look. Through his unwavering faith and the music that had shaped his life as a violinist, he discovered the courage to persevere when hope seemed lost.

But surviving the labor camps was only the beginning.

Alongside his devoted wife, Minka, Kalman embarked on a perilous journey across a divided Europe, confronting prejudice, uncertainty, and extraordinary hardship as they searched for a future free from oppression. Their remarkable story is one of sacrifice, resilience, and the determination to build a better life for their family against overwhelming odds.

Perfect for readers of inspirational true stories, World War II and postwar history and biographies of courage under persecution, *Near the Danube Bridge* is a moving testament to the power of conviction and a testament to the fact that faith isn't just a belief, it's a survival mechanism.

What inspired you to write *Near the Danube Bridge*?

Near the Danube Bridge began with a promise.

Before he passed away, my father, Kalman Hartig, asked me to share his story of surviving religious persecution, imprisonment, and communist oppression in postwar Yugoslavia. For

years, I carried that responsibility with me, but when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the images of war and displacement felt strikingly familiar. I realized my father's experiences were not simply a family history, they were a powerful reminder of how fragile freedom can be and why stories of faith, courage, and resilience remain relevant today.

To bring his journey to life, I interviewed family members, uncovered personal correspondence, and revisited letters my father had written to his family from labor camps decades earlier. Partnering with Catherine Allen-Walters brought another important dimension to the project. Catherine has an extraordinary gift for storytelling and transformed years of memories, documents, and firsthand accounts into a compelling historical narrative. As a professional violinist, she also brought special insight into the role music played in my father's life, skillfully weaving musical themes throughout the book to reflect the hope, strength, and faith that sustained him through unimaginable hardship.

How did you feel when you found out you received a Book Excellence Award?

The Book Excellence Awards are highly respected within the publishing industry and provide authors with meaningful opportunities to increase their visibility, reach new audiences, and elevate their work. We are deeply honored to receive this recognition and grateful to Book Excellence for helping bring our story to readers around the world.

What is one message you would like readers to remember?

At its heart, *Near the Danube Bridge* explores what enables ordinary people to survive extraordinary circumstances. Around the world, both historically and today, countless individuals have faced persecution simply because of what they believe, how they worship, or the principles they refuse to abandon. My father's life demonstrates that resilience often comes from anchoring ourselves to a purpose, faith, or set of values greater than our own comfort or safety. More than anything, I hope readers leave with a deeper appreciation for the freedoms they enjoy and a renewed understanding that those freedoms must never be taken for granted.

Purchasing the Book

Near the Danube Bridge - A Story of Faith, Courage, and Endurance has received positive reviews from well-known literary organizations, authors, and reviewers around the world. Book Excellence writes, "A compelling and deeply moving testament to faith, perseverance, and the enduring strength of family, *Near the Danube Bridge* brings to life an extraordinary true story of survival and hope amid persecution, hardship, and the pursuit of freedom." In addition, Kirkus Reviews writes, "A poignant story of survival, faith, and family."

The book is available for sale on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and other online bookstores. Readers are encouraged to purchase their copy today: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1665750510>

To connect with Catherine and Elisabeth and learn more about their work, visit:
<https://www.nearthedanubebridge.com/home> and follow their journey on [Facebook](#), [Goodreads](#)
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