

The Luckiest People in the World

Incredible Stories of People Who Survived Confrontations with Death

Luck is not a Torah concept. Nothing happens by chance. Mazel tov does not mean "Good luck," but rather is a blessing for the person to receive a "heavenly flow of good." Be that as it may, in common parlance today, people say "luck" whenever something happens that seems out of the ordinary. In that spirit, read some of the most incredible stories about some of the luckiest (or unluckiest) people, including those who survived falling from an airplane without a parachute, being struck by lightning many times, surviving the atom bomb twice and more....



The Luckiest (Unluckiest?) People

“Dying doesn’t scare me, but living scares me.” That’s what Jeanne Rogers of Dover Foxcroft, Maine, told a reporter a few years ago. When you hear her story you’ll understand why.

In 1967, when Rogers was 18, she went on a cruise with a friend to Martha’s Vineyard, a famous resort island off the coast of Massachusetts. Rogers decided to capture the moment on film. She handed her camera to her friend and, with her back to the sea, backed away from the camera. It was raining, which made the deck of the ship very slippery. Rogers lost her balance, flipped backwards over the guardrail and plummeted into the water below.

The friend, the only person on the ship to have witnessed Rogers’ tumble, slipped and knocked herself unconscious while running to get help. Meanwhile, the boat continued on its way, leaving a panicked Jeanne Rogers hollering hopelessly for help in the darkness and rain.

Eventually, the friend regained consciousness, figured out where she was and remembered that Rogers was still overboard. The captain turned around and returned to retrieve Rogers from the water—a full hour later. Fortunately, Rogers was still alive thanks to the lifejacket she was wearing. She had put it on for effect in her picture.

And that was just Rogers’ initiation into face-to-face meetings with death.

In 1971, while waiting at a bus station in Hartford, Connecticut during a mild rainstorm, Rogers was struck by lightning. She suffered burns and severe damage to her nerve cells. In 1973, she was struck by lightning a second time, though this time she was spared any serious injuries.

Over the coming years Rogers experienced several more close brushes with death. In 1981, she was attacked by a gang of muggers but managed to fight them off. On another occasion she was shot. She even fell into an open manhole.



Martha’s Vineyard, a famous resort island off the coast of Massachusetts.



A structure built for raising bats.

Still Rogers’ strange experiences were far from over. A few years later Rogers was walking with her young son in their hometown of Middlefield, Connecticut, when he suddenly called out, “Mommy, funny bird!” Before she could catch sight of the object swooping down on her, a bat landed on her head and became entangled in her hair.

Rogers ran hysterically from one door to the next seeking help, but everyone panicked at the sight of the wild-eyed woman with a bat in her hair and slammed their doors in her face. This further unnerved the bat, which dug into her scalp mercilessly.

Eventually, Rogers met a friend who helped her by throwing her car keys at Rogers and advising the desperate woman to find a veterinarian. Rogers drove to the nearest vet, who placed a sack over her hair that he pumped up with smoke. The aggressive bat finally loosened its grip and was removed. Rogers spent the next three months wearing a beret while she waited for her hair to grow back.

During a 2007 media interview when Rogers was 57, she said, “People think I suffer from paranoia because I will go a mile away to avoid a manhole and I don’t walk under a ladder. But all sorts of strange things happen to me—and happen even though I am so careful.”

Even Rogers’ story, though, does not stand up to the story of the luckiest unluckiest man.

Lucky Croat

Frane Selak, an 86-year-old music teacher from Croatia, found himself facing death several times, yet each time he lived to tell the tale.

In 1962, Selak took a train from Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, to Dubrovnik, a city in southern Croatia. Suddenly, the train derailed and tumbled over into an icy river. Seventeen people drowned, but Selak managed to struggle his way to the surface. He suffered hypothermia, shock, cuts and a broken arm, but he was alive.

The following year Selak decided to take his first trip by airplane. It also turned out to be his last. In the middle of the trip from Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, to Rieka, another Croatian city, the plane suffered a mechanical problem. It was already plummeting to the earth when a door ripped off and Selak was sucked

outside. As he fell Selak realized that his life was over.

The airplane crashed into a field and all of the 19 passengers and crewmembers aboard were killed... except Selak. He landed on a haystack and survived. He woke up a few hours later in a hospital bed.

Selak swore that he would never ride a train or airplane again. That left him with the bus. In 1966, he was on a bus that slid off the roadway and tumbled into an icy river. Sounds familiar? Once again Selak managed to escape the sinking bus and swim to the surface, emerging with barely a scratch. Now Selak no longer trusted buses, so he rode only in his own car.

In 1970, Selak was driving his car when the gas tank burst into flames that quickly



Illustration of how the train derailed and tumbled into an icy river, killing 17.



Graphic illustration of Selak’s bus after it careened off the roadway into a freezing cold river.