

**MICHAEL V. ROTH PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, 1934-1955**  
**1997.A.0446**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2126  
Tel. (202) 479-9717  
e-mail: [reference@ushmm.org](mailto:reference@ushmm.org)

**Appendix A. Memoir of Michael V. Roth**

The following memoir of Michael V. Roth (1931-2011) is housed in the donor files of the United State Holocaust Memorial Museum.

## TIMES COULD ALWAYS BE WORSE

Time takes its tolls and leaves its memories[.] In the complex world in which we live this becomes apparent more and more. The holocaust of wars the tyranny of nation to nation, man's inhumanity to men, all these have had their tell-tale effect upon our lives. In some of these situations we are disinterested bystanders, while other change our destiny. This change does not appear constantly before us. It is something which forever is etched in our memories, always lurking in the bottom of our unconscious mind. It makes us hope that the dawn will hold a better promise.

Dawn! I remember it well on that April morning in 1945, during the Second World War in Germany. A misty cold morning in the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. On that morning, the clouds were hanging low on the mountain top on which the camp was located and the search lights of the guard towers made an eerie sight as they traversed up and down the high electric barbed wire that surrounded the camp.

It was only the day before that we had arrived from Eastern Germany. We were being driven away from the advancing Russian troops. We had been on the road for the past 9 weeks and this had begun to show on us. We were weary; hungry; cold; sick and worst of all discouraged, not only from the journey, but also from the confinement and the back-breaking work of the past nine months. When we arrived in Buchenwald, by the hundreds we were thrown into a huge empty shell of a planned factory building. Without even the barest sanitary facilities this was our accommodation. And this was heaven, because we knew that the morrow would hold no better promise, as we were destined to continue the march. This time it was the American Army that was advancing. For some reason the Germans insisted on holding on to us, even though our value to them appeared to be only as targets for shooting practice. This they exercised with great abandon for the short time that remained of the War.

This is where the dawn dawn found us. However our respite was brief. No sooner did the fog and mist lift than we were driven out to the camp grounds. Here the usual quota of beating and abuse was doled out, along with a meager ration of ersatz coffee and a slice of dry bread. When we finished eating like a hungry wolf would devour its prey in a severe winter, we were lined up for a continuation of our exodus.

This march was to continue for another 10 days. In the end it seemed like a lifetime. For the first three days we were given something to eat. For the last seven days our subsistence was on grass, rotten vegetables and water from gutters or streams. Our shelter was the wide open spaces. Our cover a thin blanket and the stars, which I am sure we did not notice. And we were driven on and on. Up steep mountains, which was a very difficult task in wooden-soled shoes, and across muddy fields. Many fell. Those that did were never to get up again. They were shot summarily on the spot. Including my father. In the last few days I almost became a victim. I came down with dysentery which sapped the little strength I had. Many times I wanted to sit down and let an end come to my miseries. However, a childish fear of pain - I was fourteen at the time - prevented

me from doing this. I inquired of the older persons if it was painful to be shot. Even though the answer was in the negative, I was not convinced. This was not fortuitous because 5 or 6 days after we arrived in the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp we were liberated by American Forces. One Hundred Seventy out of the Fifteen Hundred that began the march survived the ten day ordeal.

That is why today when things go wrong and I am disillusioned and discouraged with any facet of my life, a faint smile appears on my face, and I say to myself remember, remember those times of old for nothing today could be as bad as you make it to be.

Michael V. Roth