

ISRAEL ROSENWALD
RG-50.005.0047 (recorded 1983, Los Angeles)

Israel was born in 1924 in Piotrkow Trybunalski, a small Polish town about 49 k from Lodz. He had 3 brothers and one sister. The family had a comfortable life; his father had a grocery store until the Nazis came to power. At the beginning of the war the family moved into the large Lodz ghetto. Israel worked at Hutakara, a plant manufacturing glass plates, with other Jews from the ghetto. His father burnt his legs working at the same factory, and was then disabled. His brother also worked in the same factory Israel discusses how they survived because they were strong and healthy. They lived day to day and didn't think about tomorrow.

At first his parents made a hiding place in their attic and stayed there during the liquidation of the ghetto. The house was on Platz Trebenalki; Israel went back and forth bringing them food. Eventually the family was found and sent to a smaller ghetto. Israel talks about the Jewish Police, esp. Yuja Levin, who worked with a gestapo soldier named Willie who had a vicious dog. Willie would tell people to come out of hiding in Yiddish and then he would capture them.

Most of the Jews were herded into the big synagogue surrounded by Ukrainian guards. His parents snuck out and hid again - his father in the attic and his mother under the bed. In September 1944 he was evacuated to Czestochowa, about 60 kilometers from Lodz. He was put to work in a factory manufacturing goods for the army, and he stayed there until the Russians liberated him in January 1945. Israel went back to his hometown where he found that his mother had survived by hiding with a former customer of the store. He went with his wife-to-be back to her grandparents' big house, but fled when the Poles started shooting at her and was sheltered by Israel's mother. Israel and his future wife went to Bergen-Belsen where they found her mother and sister. They went back to the grandparents' house and dug up some of their belongings they had hidden in the garden.

Israel and his wife stayed in Bergen-Belsen until 1951 when they immigrated to the US. His oldest brother survived after going through many camps. He got TB and was in the hospital in Germany until 1948. He stayed in Germany. His middle brother also survived and went to Italy, but unfortunately drowned in 1946. His mother first came to the US but then went to Israel. Willie and his wife had 2 children and now have grandchildren.

Israel still has nightmares about Willie and his dog. He recalls a time that Willie shot one of his friends for taking a pair of socks.