

Ferenc Weiss
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Ferenc Weiss, born on July 17, 1924 in Satu Mare, Romania (Hungarian: Szatmárnémeti), discusses life in Satu Mare; Satu Mare's large Jewish community; living near the Hungarian-Romanian border and seeing country borders change multiple times; speaking mainly Hungarian and German, but also Yiddish and Romanian; his family's move to a Baia Mare, Romania (Hungarian: Nagybánya) in 1937 and having to register immediately at the police station; the process of making telephone calls between towns; his father's very religious views; attending yeshiva; the difficulties facing many in the local population in terms of learning multiple languages; being one of eleven children in his family; the family's cows and business selling milk; helping his older brother and sisters to deliver milk in the mornings before school; his father's additional work as a glassmaker and handyman; his wish to learn a trade to help support the family, but his father's insistence that he focus on his education; his parents and siblings; a widowed aunt who lived in a nearby town and was modern thinking; wearing payot; an uncle who was a kosher butcher; this modern aunt who cut off his payot; going to work at an aunt's bookbinding shop in a different town (today: Mátészalka, Hungary) against his father's wishes; liking the work at the shop, which completed many projects for the government; sending money home to his parents; German occupation of the town; the shop losing government projects after occupation began; the ways in which life changed after the occupation began; his father and older brother being taken away for forced labor; having to ask members of his hometown's Jewish community for money to buy food for his father and brother; taking the food and some clothing to his father, only for him to say the food and clothing should go to the family; his father's release from forced labor and return home; his parents' and siblings' deportation to Auschwitz in 1944; increasing persecution he experienced while living with his aunt, such as being prohibited from traveling by train; sneaking onto a train without papers to see his family before their deportation; receiving a conscription notice from Romanian army authorities; reporting to the Romanian authorities; being transported to Košice, Czechoslovakia (today: Slovakia); forced labor assignments such as digging and filling trenches under Romanian control; a Romanian commander who made efforts to give the forced laborers light work whenever he could; having to wear a yellow armband; a shoe repairman who turned him in to a German soldier for being Jewish and managing to escape; being transferred to German officials; worsening conditions; work in Košice and being supervised by a Hungarian guard he knew from Mátészalka; being housed in a brick factory while waiting for work orders; being transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau by cattle car; not receiving a tattoo; seeing escape attempts by prisoners; liberation by Soviet troops; posing as a Christian for a time after the war; living in Munich, Germany for two years after the war and meeting his wife there; immigrating to the United States with the help of his wife's relatives; receiving help from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and requesting to stay in Brooklyn, New York with its large Jewish community; starting work with a bookbinding and publishing company; almost being fired from the job shortly after starting because he could not work on Saturdays; moving to another bookbinding job; wanting to go into business for himself; starting his own bookbinding business and the work there; his faith; how nobody in his family survived; his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren; and wishing to see improvements in the world.