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Summary

David Rozencwajg b. Tomaszow-Mazowiecki, Poland, 5/13/1922; David, next to youngest in 6 children/parents; father (tailor)-children worked with father (David, tailor apprentice); public school; early happy family life; experiencing anti-Semitism "at every step of my life," Non-Jewish Poles' beating Jews, calling them names, father's beating after threatened that "they would kill his son"; David/father/brothers fleeing after hearing rumor, "Germans are killing all the men"; town bombed; father/brother captured, released after being terrorized; return home; (Sept 1939) "Germans came up to house, calling for old men - last time I saw my parents"-David & older brother forced on truck to Rawicz city jail; arrival to Buchenwald, seeing people in striped blue/white uniforms laboring; awareness that "We will not come out from here."; forced labor in stone mine; "30-40 people day dying from diarrhea, the cold, among those, my brother"; in grief, receiving encouragement from political prisoner to keep going; "at big camp" (1/10/1940) "from 1700, 400 people came out" (not selected); after work, "received piece of bread, soup, wash facility outside...They were trying to save the young people."; Sturmführer Dombeck of "Garden" ordering beatings every day; sustenance from always recalling political prisoner's encouraging words "You are young, you must fight."; appealed to a commandant, to leave "Garden" & work in bricklaying/plastering-after receiving approval, first time David felt he would survive; learning German; liberated by U.S. Third Army (later in interview, David says also liberated by Russians); "In 1939, there were 12,000 German prisoners ("with green sign") but by Jan 1945 64,000"; "The Communists use to say, when it happens to you today, it will happen to us tomorrow."; Walter Kraemer (political prisoner); Walter Pikes (infirmary) protecting David during bout of pleurisy (1940) "He saved my life"; forming close relationships with political prisoners, "We were very close, like fire & water."; happiness received in sharing bread with others; (1944) seeing little kids, surprised they existed; week before liberation, Jews ordered to "peel field," resisting order; all SS would give beatings with exception of Polachek; high holidays, services, some "would go around hungry for entire 8 days"; entertainment, "made our own shows on the weekend"; "I know every corner of Buchenwald, I could go anywhere I wanted to go."; David describes Buchenwald layout: separate barrack for gypsies, Poles, Czechs, German (had black sign for "lazy"), homosexuals, infirmary, area for raising pigs, crematorium, kitchen, chlorine area, area for heating kitchen, peel field (where everyone was counted morning & evening); Ilse Koch; suicide ideation in Garden, walking towards guards to shoot him but envisioned parents telling him "You didn't give your life, you don't take your life"; at liberation, experimental (50) block's SS fled, with exception of Dr. Hoven, who David claims, "did some good, took in people" to save them; wrote letters to home 1939-1942, "no answer"; finding two sisters who had survived Bergen-Belsen; returning home; at train station, greeted by man speaking disappointment that not all Jews hadn't been killed; immigrating NY Dec 1945, assisted by Jewish Federation, reunited with sister in Chicago; David's young children, dismissive when elders recounted Holocaust but becoming more attentive as they grew older; David's ongoing nightmares of people being taken to gas chambers but always rescued; SS order for David and fellow prisoner to hit each other;