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Summary

John Engel b. 2/17/1922 Vinohradov (Velká Sevljuš, under Czech rule), raised in Nagykálló, Hungary; father's wife died (3 girls, 1 boy) then married John's mother (a widow); younger brother/sister; father had "big farm in Romania, taken from him," then co-owned sunflower oil mill; kosher home, celebrating holidays, temple every Sat, Jewish school; father dies from hardening of arteries then went to live with mother's family, grandfather (a gambler), growing up sometimes hungry; bar mitzvah; grad/high school; law, "only 6% Jewish could go to college," with not good enough grades, not accepted; 3 yrs. apprentice/mech engineer; recalls happiness in sister's birth; no friends, unaccepted socially because family had no money to be kosher; Hungarian anti-Semitism, grandfather's beard pulled so he shaved it off & stayed home, 72 yrs. old taken to concentration camp; John enduring anti-Semitism (high school) but "had a few Christian friends - nice to me"; beaten up by another guy, tooth broken, couldn't go to police because "They would laugh."; ghetto (able to receive some food); Hungarian police rounds up "200 young boys who went east, 200 went north"; John's group forced on wagon cars (Fall 1944), taken to woods, given day to build shack for sleeping, "skin from tree was roof"; freezing temps, handfuls of lice in hair; Hungarian guards "pretty good - we lost only 8-10 people. They didn't take away money."; slave labor-sledge hammering blue stone; sometimes guards retrieved for prisoners fish from stream, gave horse meat; 8-10 run-aways shot; the other hometown 200 group deported, later learned, only 18 survived; mother dies at Bergen-Belsen; two older half-sisters killed at Auschwitz; half-sister survived, taken to Sweden then South America; brother/younger sister survive, had been locked up in machine shop-no place to sit, gradually men died, brother survived by eating liver of a deceased, they immigrate to Australia; brother's liberation by English-many malnourished died from eating mustard-brother reported English soldier ordering German dog on Nazi, slashing his throat; reuniting with unrecognizable skeletal brother; John returns to discussing his slave labor, trucks with Jewish women brought in for Hungarian soldiers; some Jewish boys were very religious but no holidays observed; chicory coffee/morning (sand in coffee causing bloody rectum), cabbage soup/evening, "sometimes 1 lb. bread a week"; liberation (Russian Army); John with 6-8 boys enter Czechoslovakia, hid in cellar; Germans ran but came back, saw German soldier pick up Jewish baby, "slam against wall"; hearing of Germans raping Jewish women, leaving naked tied up then thrown in river, "Russians were raping every woman...if woman resisted, put sword up their..."; walking 100 miles to hometown; hearing story of Jewish man forced to work in crematory, his brother brought in still alive, both killed; discovering father's gravestone stolen; ill-treatment in hometown upon return; opening machine shop near Austrian border; marriage; experiencing Anti-Semitism post-war; wife had been in forced labor near Luxembourg (at her death, they had been married 62 yrs); son (George) born in Germany, wife's mother died in Austria, wife's father survived; wife's PTSD having witnessed killings, placed in mental hospital 4 times, John encouraged to institutionalize her, "but I loved her...she gave me three nice kids but they suffered too."; immigration to US, first night crying after realizing Americans lift their arms to say "Hi," incorrectly interpreting it as "Heil Hitler"; employment as mechanical engineer for MAC Truck & Johnson & Johnson.; John ends with expressing enormous gratitude for abundance of good things he enjoyed in later life; shows family photographs.