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Summary

Steen Metz born on May 5, 1935 Odense, Denmark, only child, parents from Copenhagen (father Axel/attorney, mother housewife/secretary), extended family, father's family from Metz, Germany (now of France); childhood memories; Steen did not grow up observant-no local synagogue & religious instruction; endured no anti-Semitism growing up, fond memories-Danish Christmas Eves; May 1940, German invasion, bombs dropping; rap apt door early morning, father answers, Gestapo arrest, family able to bring some food; most extended family had already escaped to Sweden, mother's sister & son arrested with 60 others hiding in an attic, aunt & son let go because they were only part Jewish; Steen & parents placed on open truck, assembled in schoolyard with 50-60 young German men rounded up from their agricultural training (rare picture of their schoolyard arrest at interview's end), all sent to Jutland, packed in cattle cars "like sardines" (acc to Steen) standing room only, 3 days/3 nights, toilet buckets; in another transport, father's mother, brother & his son; arrival to Theresienstadt, each family's suitcase confiscated-had been encouraged to pack all valuables/money, "They even took gold from teeth...Mother able to retain wedding ring because Nazis couldn't get it off"; May 1944 anticipating international delegation, Germans present guise of "model camp," moving Danish to better quarters with restaurant/school, Danes unable to speak to delegation, Steen's mother couldn't convey truth that husband had died from starvation; Germans play propaganda film for delegation, after delegation leaves, deplorable conditions return; mother's 8-10 hr. slave labor days in mica factory, when asked about husband, forced to tell lie ("He died from pneumonia"); after mother cleans floor, guard spills her dirty pail water so she has to clean it again; later learns husband had been kicked, whipped, lost half his weight, died after 6 months in Theresienstadt March 13, 1944 (age 40), called in to identify his remains, next day husband cremated; 9-year-old Steen becomes gopher to transport paper from one office to another, able to play soccer with Czech children, sad when they no longer show up; after war, learning they were sent to Auschwitz; Steen & mother's daily food "water with potato peel, coffee substitute, quarter loaf bread for week," after 6 months, parcels from Swedes/Red Cross with some food/clothing; later learning of agreement between Eichmann & Denmark, saving Danish lives; children required to form human chain, 25,000 cremated remains boxes with deceased's name passed from child to child to pour into river, Steen's friend passes boxes with names facing outward so Steen would not have to see his father's name; Steen's Theresienstadt number (not tattooed) 25154 25(Denmark)-1 (1st transport)-54 (Father's last digits were 52, Mother's 53); living on straw mat mattress, bed bugs, lice; discussion of hidden synagogues & art that came out of Theresienstadt, children's drawing; Steen & mother survive the Holocaust; Steen's family had endured two genocides (1917 mother's father killed by Turks); settle in Deerfield, Ill, marriage, two daughters, four grandchildren; Steen's volunteer work sharing his story with students; mother's worry on Steen returning to visit Theresienstadt; Steen's confusion on discovering people now living in Theresienstadt renovated barracks converted to apartments; discussion on Hans Christian Andersen & the Danish king's support of Jews; Steen is only one of 100 survivors in 15,000 children brought to Theresienstadt; during captivity, Steen & mother never lost of hope; Steen shares family photos & photograph of Danish king saluted by German soldiers but

king disregards their salutes; aforementioned photograph of Odense Jews rounded up in schoolyard, believed to be only surviving picture of Danish Jews being arrested; Steen shares illustration of Theresienstadt's primitive living barracks & another poignant drawing with passengers falling from trains arriving to Auschwitz; happier photo of Steen & mother's Red Cross bus arriving back in Denmark after surviving Theresienstadt; Steen's message to children "Be tolerant and to never forget the Holocaust took place."