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Summary

Morris Riff born on February 9, 1922 in village near Oswiecim, Poland, oldest of 5 children (3 girls, 2 boys), parents, father stonecutter, Morris age 17 at outbreak of war, youngest sister 7; recollections of a close family; town committee organized to dig ditches at Auschwitz for taking cover during bombings; enduring Anti-Semitism; Polish Army flees town but family stays; Morris sent to Gross-Rosen slave labor for 3 years, receives daily ¼ bread, pat of butter, SS foremen competing to outdo each other pushing prisoners through punishing labor; 2 years in the camp; SS strip men, given striped uniforms, more SS guards arrive, more beatings, no toilet without permission, prisoners forced to hoist 300-400 lb loads into railway cars, those who survive allowed kitchen work, given extra bowl of soup; 1944 Russian Army encroaching, prisoners marched out, Morris' group ordered to pull food wagon through hills/mountains toward Czechoslovakia, those who got tired shot; in arrival to CZ, men ordered to give up their extra clothes/blankets received in earlier Hirschberg stop; prisoners loaded into open box cars, people start dying, corpses had to be stacked, some sheltered under the dead, after 4 days, arrival to Buchenwald, prisoners full of lice, showered, fights over water to drink; camp's prisoners included political figures, clerical, Russians, true criminals; lying five to bunk, no blanket, some had frozen toes; slave labor drilling dynamite bunkers in hills (to be used again British), too weak to drill, Morris was beaten; April 1944 10,000 prisoners placed in field, SS open fire, Morris hit in shoulder, awakes next morning with dried blood but able to stand; survivors marched to another camp; hearing Red Cross on speaker, "Prisoners from all nations should come."; Morris & friend taken to bath, his bullet wound however dismissed, receives only band aid; placed in sick barracks; not yet liberated, 5-6 men break board into ceiling, climb in attic, hide; May 11, 1945 peering through attic's small opening, seeing/hearing prisoners jubilant that the Americans had arrived; freed Russian doctors x-ray Morris' injury, bone split; survivors start dying from regular food introduced too soon; Morris' overwhelming survivor guilt; documents obtained after being freed; returning to hometown, finding three cousins who had survived concentration camps; Morris travels to other cities searching for family but no one found; finding work with Americans/Landsberg; Morris shares worst experience watching prisoner ripped apart by a dog, also witnessing some hangings; Morris shares disappointment in lies by townspeople who claimed they "did not know what was going on."; marriage, two sons, grandson; his children's disappointment never knowing grandparents.