RUBIN LITERMAN
BORN IN PLOCK
POLAND

Rubin Literman was born in Plock, Poland and attended the Jewish High School there. He shows a picture of his family, parents, 6 brothers and one sister, from about 1930. This picture was sent to relatives in Buffalo and is his only possession that survived the war. He belonged to a Zionist organization. There was local antisemitism, but people ignored it and just went about their business. His father was a merchant, and Rubin and three of his brothers set up an accounting office.

When the Germans invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, the town was almost immediately taken over, and the Jews lost all rights and privileges. At first, they had to live in the ghetto but soon they were moved to the ghetto in Chmielnik. The parents had difficulties because nothing could be taken along, but they were helped by the local Jews and the Red Cross. However, many people died. Two brothers fled to the Russian zone but were captured later when the Germans attacked Russia. They died in Auschwitz. In October 1942, all youngsters, including he and one brother, were collected at the market place and taken by truck to the concentration camp Skarzysko. His brother tried to escape but was captured and put back on the truck. Three days later, all who were still left in Chmielnik, including his parents, were taken to Treblinka and gassed. This he found out after the war from witnesses and other information. He remained in the camp for about two years and had to work hard in a munition factory. There was no medical help of any kind. They always had "selections" to decide who was still able to work and who would be sent away. All tried hard to make themselves look healthy. When the Russians approached, the men were shipped to Buchenwald and the women, including his future wife Luba, to Leipzig. Somehow he managed to send secret messages to her. In Buchenwald, he worked in a similar munitions factory. One day, there was an explosion which killed all his friends, but he survived. Two of his brothers died in Auschwitz. After eight months, in 1945, when the Americans approached, he was taken by train (cattle car) to Theresienstadt where he was liberated on May 8, 1945. He had hoped to find family or friends, but nobody had survived and he did not know where to go.
He signed up to go illegally to Palestine but he remembered the Buffalo address of his relations and was sent to Landsberg near Munich where he lived in German army barracks. There, he worked as a police sergeant and Luba and he were reunited. At that time, he married Luba and their baby was born in a Munich hospital. Because of the American quota limitations, they had to wait four years before coming to Buffalo. He shows a document he received from the U.S. Army which gives his name, birth place, concentration camp number0000000000000000 and reason for being in Buchenwald (political Jew. All this information came from German records. It was difficult to adjust to the new life in Buffalo, but they are grateful to the United States to be able to contribute.

He always impresses on children the importance of carrying on so that the memories are not lost. He shows a photograph of the gathering of survivors in Jerusalem in June 1981. Everybody brought rocks to this meeting with the names of lost family members engraved. These are to be used for a memorial at Yad Vashem. He has never been back to Germany and still has nightmares. More survivors are now willing to talk about their experiences, and people are more willing to listen, but there is still antisemitism in the free world and some people still believe that the Holocaust never happened. He emphasizes that the atrocities were not committed just as a result of individual antisemitism but were the official policy of the German Government.