

ROSE LEWKOWITZ MEYERS
BORN: SZCZEMJANAWICE, SILESIA
1921

Rose Lewkowitz Meyers was born 1921 in the small town Szczemjanowice in Silesia. She had a happy childhood with two brothers in a close-knit family. Her father had a clothing store. In 1937, the family moved to Pintschow, a small town in Poland. She still remembers the German invasion in 1939 and the random shooting of people in the streets. Her father had lost a leg in World War I, but then all Jews had to leave and the family finally came to Sosnowietz. She shows a photograph of one of her brothers. Soon all girls were collected in a school and were sent by cattle car to a labor camp where she worked in the kitchen. After about one month she had to walk several miles to another camp where her brother was. In that camp there were about 1200 men and 16 women. The men went out to work and the women took care of the camp. She worked in the kitchen where she had a chance occasionally to obtain some food in addition to the one-pound loaf of bread that they received per week.

Later, her brother was sent to Auschwitz where he probably was gassed. Her parents presumably also died there and may have been gassed. Then, she was sent to another camp, in Gross Rosen, where she stayed from 1941 to 1943. There, she saw a Gestapo man beat a man until he was no longer recognizable and put him in a cage as a warning example to the others. Finally, she was taken to yet another camp in Schatzlar just inside Czechoslovakia. There were one hundred women in three rooms with a very sadistic woman as supervisor. She worked in a spinning mill together with some outside local people. In all the camps she encountered very unsanitary conditions and inadequate food but knew that she would be killed if she could not keep up with the work. They were liberated by the Russians in 1945. At that time her weight was down to 60 pounds. A Czech woman, whom she had befriended in the spinning mill, took her in and helped her to get well; she even wanted to adopt her. However, she decided to return to her hometown to look for anybody who might have survived the war but did not find anybody. It was dangerous there because some Polish people killed those who wanted their former home back.

She left again and smuggled herself to Germany where she lived at first in Stuttgart but felt that she could not stay in one of the refugee camps. Later she went to Munich where the JOINT paid for her schooling. Eventually through a friend, she came to Buffalo in 1949.

She never found anyone of her family. Later Germany offered her \$1200.00 restitution for her four years in labor camps. After she got married she had many miscarriages as a result of her deprivations during the war but eventually had two sons and a daughter. She shows a photograph of her parents that was taken in 1941 for their identification cards.

She has told her stories to her children who found them hard to believe, such as the one when the Germans entered a hospital and threw newborn babies out of the window. Many Germans claimed that they had never been Nazis and that these atrocities never happened. While she was in the camps, she did not know what went on. Now, she hopes that in the future people will be smart enough to prevent a repeat of such events.