

USHMM

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In 1974 I took my family to Dachau and brought back slides which I will

show you and discuss. My husband was also a survivor of Dachau.

I was born in Lithuania which has been part of the Soviet Union since

1940. My parents were from Latvia. I was enrolled in

German speaking private school in Riga. In 1933 Jewish parents boycotted

German schools and took their children out. My sister, brother and I were

transferred to a Hebrew High School which was a secular school teaching

Hebrew language. From there I went to the University under the Soviets.

In 1933 we heard what was happening in Germany. We had no financial means

and no relatives in the West to go to so we remained. In 1939 the war started

in Poland and in June 1940 the Russians took over the Baltic States.

Everything was nationalized. Schools taught Russian. We went to the

capital of Lithuania, Vilnius to school. In May 1940 the Russians

arrested whole families and transferred them to another area to be shipped

to the East to Siberia. They were landowners, money people. My friend's

parents were taken and their home confiscated but most of them survived.

My parents were not so well off and remained in their own home.

In 1941 the Germans crossed into Lithuania. We had refugees from Poland

who told of many horror stories. Anti Semitism was always very strong

in Lithuania. We had very little help from the Lithuanians, they cooperated

with teh Germans. Jews were accused of being in league with the Russians.

Our citizenship was taken away. Germans westablished their own military

government. They brought in the Gestapo. Our family was still together. Two weeks after the occupation, the SS took over. The

SS is a volunteer organization. We wore yellow stars on the back and front

had to walk in the gutter, bears were taken off. humijliation was great.

We tried to stay inside our homes.

Two weeks after they came in, the Germans with the help of the Lithuanians,

took away the males in each family in the middle of the night. My father

was taken , they missed my brother. If someone was needed in industry

and the owner requested that person to remain for work was a person released.

My father was released. Originally when they picked up the males,

they took them out and shot them. In September we were put into ghetto

as labor camp. In the ghetto, there were over 2000 people. The Lithuanians

who lived there were resettled, this was the poorest part of town.

The Jewish Council was set up to be in charge of providing labor and to distribute the little food. The SS was at the head of the ghetto. The motto was Arbeit Macht Frei. We worked under armed

guard and were marched to work. We carried large bags and boxes to the trains and planes. I worked there two years. Children under

12 and elderly remained in the ghetto. There were small shops in

the ghetto where some prisoners worked. Radios were not allowed but we

did have one radio and people were assigned to pass on information.

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On Nov 5, 1943 the ghetto was surrounded and the Roumanian SS was

brought in. My family all worked in the same plant. We were told to

go to work immediately, we all left for work. Trucks came in and all

children, elderly, . sick, were taken out. When we returned from work

there were very few survivors. We lived in a room and a

kitchen with a family of 6. The grandfather, the father and little

girl were taken away. The 8 year old son survived as he was taken

out of the ghetto to non Jewish relatives. The grandmother locked

herself and the little child in the outhouse but the child cried. The

grandmother tried to bribe the SS but the same thing happened.

They took the child away but she survived. The ghetto was much smaller.

In Jan. 1944 we could hear bombardments. The next stage was to raze the

camps. They killed many on the spot or took them on trains to bigger

concentration camps in Germany.

By July 1944 the Russians were very close to the Lithuanian borders.

Everyone was taken on the train to Stuthof concentration camp near

Danzig.

Dachau was the first concentration camp in Munchen. The first camps

were for anti Nazis, clergy. At first there was euthanasia for the

undesirables but the clergy objects and they stopped. The clergy were

the only ones who had an audience on Sundays as meetings were prohibited.

After 1939 other camps were built in Poland, death camps for Jews and

regular concentration camps where prisoners worked in plants and fields.

Many were razed before the Germans left. Auschwitz still stands. In

1944 we were in Stuthof concentration camp. When we arrived there we

were taken to a square, a Nazi indicated right or left. Some were

taken to Dachau, the rest remained in Stuthof. We were ordered to

leave asll our belongings except toothbrush and comb. The next room

had tables, we were told to undress and laydown on the tables, all women

were examined gynecologically to search for jewels, etc. Guars were

around the room, They went through our hair. The second room was

a showere room. Next room had piles of rags and junk in all sizes. We quickly grabbed clothes and exchanged sizes later. The Nazis

kept perfect records of what we t on and the US Army took over these records

and had meticulous records of names, births etc. which helped us later on.

In Stuthof we had our numbers sewn on our sleeve in Auschwitz it was on the

flesh. The first night we were given slop to heat in the barracks, no

one ate it, the second night we ate it with relish. We were assigned

3 to a barrack, three stories high. We were given wooden dishes, spoon

and a blanket. My work was to dig anti tank ditches for the Army.

We dug in the front lines with pick and shovel. 400 women were taken

south to an empty field where we built tents , 50 women to a tent,

straw to sleep on latrines uncovered outside. Guard escorted you to

latrine and waited after hours. Climate like Minnesota. We heard the

Russians are coming. They would raze this camp. We were to be walked

out of this area. My mother was 47 and she was selected not to walk, we

were allowed to stay with her, my sister and I. 300 were taken on the march.

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Survival depended partly on state of mind. One woman in our barracks

was a biologist and did not permit us to talk about food, only about

books and lectures, etc. She helped us a lot.

In January 1945 we were marched to a smaller town, covered straw for

shoes, bits of blankets, very cold. We were 96 women surrounded by

guards. Fields were snow, we were told to run into the woods.

They started to shoot us. My mother and sisters all held hands. My

mother ran towards them shouting about her children and they shot her.

When it became quiet a few other women came out. We left the woods

for the highway at night and made it into a village. We picked up the

tenth woman. She had been shot. She told us my mother was dead and the others were dead too. We went to the village and the first two houses sent us away. We went to the church. The priest told us he could not help us as it was against the law and that the Russians were close. We stayed on the steps. We were

put in a barn nearby. The next morning there was a knock on the door.

They told us to come out and it was Russian tanks. We stayed a couple of weeks. We were taken by truck to Lithuania. We could not

get a passport because we did not have papers. In October 1945 we

received passports and my father came to Lithuania with my brother.

They had been freed from Dachau May 5. We could not get out of Russia.

We joined an underground organization and we managed to get some people

out. We were 3 days in Brest Litovsk. We came by train to Warsaw.

There was a lot of anti Semitism in Poland. In Lithuania they did

not want to give up Jewish property. We crossed the border to Czechoslovakia by bribe. We finally found a refugee organization

that helped us to get to Austria and then to Munich where we found my brother. We did not have a sponsor for the U.S.

My sister married a man and were on the way to the US. My father said

we would wait in Germany. In 1948 250,000 refugees were allowed in

the U.S. and my sister reregistered in France and came much later.

We arrived in 1950 and my sister 4 years later.

I will show films of Dachau when I was there in 1974 with my family.

Dachau is in the town of Dachau. There is no one in the city that

did not know of Dachau and what went on there. Sign over the front

Arbeit Macht Frei. Barbed wire wall huge lights,

huge endless place. One of the barracks was reconstructed.

Crematoria

behind the gate with the sign THINK HOW WE DIED HERE in German.

All prisoners items clothes, gold teeth, hair, etc. utilized. Gold

crowns were counted and after cremation they were taken out.

Factory for soap from boiling bodies alive for soap,

first shower room and gas chamber. Everything very efficient.

Scratches on the wall with names. The ashes were disposed of after

cremation, very efficiently done. Ashes used for fertilizer.

Fertilizer

used for growing cabbages for prisoners.

Showed pictures of hooks for killing, bins for storing ashes, gallows.

The camp was liberated by Americans. They made mass graves



maintained by Jewish groups and some maintained by Christian groups. It is maintained by former prisoners and partly by German government. They show slides etc. about camp. Building is now

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a museum.

She showed films how people looked in the camps. including medical experiments in the camps.. pictures of symphony orchestra and bands leading prisoners to their death, whipping benches with whips where they were whipped publicly Everything very efficient

On ,May 8 we were liberated. We were marched through the villages, there is no way they could not know about it. The ashes were buried in a grave in Dachau with a sign NEVER AGAIN in several languages.

That is the slogan for today Never Again.