

WORK PLACE IN 1933 WHICH I BECAME

I was born on 1 June 1919, in Turi Paseka, Czechoslovakia in the eastern part of the country called Podkarpatska Russ (Karparten Russenland). I finished five grades of Elementary school and 8 years of Real gymnasium in 1938 in the city of Uzshorod, also Czechoslovakia.

President Masaryk died in 1938, and this emboldened Hitler to make troubles in the republic. In the end of 1938 " numerus clausus" and " numerus nullus" were introduced in various faculties of the universities. The only field that was still open to Jews in the city of Brno, was Engineering Agronomy. I attended this school from October 1938 to March 1939, i.e. till Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. On the day, Hitler visited the city of Brno, I was thrown out by nazi students from the University building first floor, through the window. I had to report to the Gestapo for 3 weeks until they allowed me to leave the city for home. When I returned home, my part of the country was occupied' by the Hungarian army in accordance with the Munich agreement. I stayed only for a short time, in my home- town. This was due to the Hungarian law, which, excluded individuals who finished gymnasium, from performing menial work, but a Jew was not allowed to perform any professional work (non -menial work) i.e, I was not allowed to work. In the year of 1940, I relocated to Budapest, a larger city, where it was easier to get lost than in a small town. There, I worked for a Jewish firm as a helper in plumbing installation.

Hungary was allied with Germany during World War II In 1940 German pressure on Hungary was felt by the Jews, when the Nuremberg laws were implemented in Hungary. Jewish businesses were forced to close. Jewish soldiers still serving in the Hungarian-army, were dismissed from the army. They were reassigned, to labor companies, in civilian clothing with a yellow arm- band. I was- taken twice, unto these forced labor companies for 3 months each.

FORCED LABOR CAMPS

In July 1942, I was shipped out of the country in a forced labor company consisting of approx. 200 men. The company was shipped to the Russian front area starting with Zslobin, White Russia. The company relocated, on foot, as the war front configuration changed. While in Zslobin, where a German SS Headquarters was located, I was assigned, to the Germans, for menial labor, to dig trenches, cut trees into logs and fire -wood for, the German army.

When the Hungarian and/or German armies were withdrawing, we marched in front of the soldiers, as decoys, because the roads were mined, and the territory was infested with Russian partisans. In the 2 1/2 years that I spent in the labor camps, I suffered many hardships. I was running out of clothing, shoes, and other necessities. Non of this items were furnished. I worked, cutting tress in the swamps: sinking up to my waist in the frozen muddy water, with no place to dry the clothing after work. I was continuously under guard, and occasionally whipped by the commander of the work-company. This occurred mostly in the mornings during the lineup for selection and assignment to work, for various detachments of the German Army.

In November 1944, the German and Hungarian armies were in a major withdrawal phase. There was no more a need for our work, therefore, the Hungarians decided to turn over the labor-company to the German SS. When asked, by a major of the Hungarian army, the German SS Colonel was reluctant to accept the labor company. He stated that he had his hands full, and that he did not know what to do with this company. The Hungarian army major replied: "What are all the crematoria that you

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built for?" The German Colonel accepted us. They loaded us in cattle wagons in Kielce, Poland, and shipped us by train with a 1kg loaf of bread, each, for three days to the concentration camp in Flossenburg near Beireuth, Germany.

CONCENTRATION-CAMPS

Upon arrival in the concentration camp, beginning of Dec. 1944, I went true the standard procedure of disposing of all my belongings. I remained naked as I was born, for about two weeks in the assigned barracks. The lodging consisted of an approximately 30cm wide space on the upper level of a long wooden deck with inmates packed like sardines, without the ability to turn left or right. I had to get out every morning at approx. 6 A.M, lining up in freezing weather for an ersatz-coffee. In the evening, I received a small bowl of clear soup of potato-peelings, with a slice of bread.

The camp had aprox 40,000 inmates, interned for political, nationality or religious reasons. Many Russian prisoners of war were also in this camp. One event that occurred during my short stay in this camp, was hanging of Russian prisoners. Apparently, two prisoners broke into the supply warehouse and stole some food and other things. They were sentenced to die, by hanging. All camp inmates had to witness the hanging. I had to attend this gruesome act, naked, in a line up for 1 1/2 hours: in the evening, in subzero weather, to be counted, as one of the 38,420 inmates

Shortly, after arriving in the concentration camp I started to realize that the fight for survival will be a tough one, and I was determined to do so. I did this despite the fact that many from the group that I came with died within a week. I was lucky, that I did not yet receive the striped pajama like clothing. I would have had to go out and work in the quarry near the camp. Every morning a group of 10-12 used to leave for work in the quarry. When they were returning in the evening, the guard asked the capo " How many did you loose? " He really did not loose anybody, he just pushed them down the gorge from the quarry.

One day, after Christmas 1944, a group of factory representatives appeared in our barracks. They were interviewing people for work that spoke German and had some mechanical background. I volunteered, and I was accepted. Within a few days I received my striped pajamas and was on my way by train, with 60 other selected inmates, to Nieder-Oderwitz Schlessen, for works in the Osram Draht metalwerke.

I worked the night shift with electric ovens extruding long cables from metal rods. Before work, I received in the factory, a warm meal. I slept in barracks, which were, guarded by German SS guards 24 hours a day. They escorted us to and from work through the city where we were exposed to the German civilian population. The Sargent had a ball, running around us in a circle, as we were walking in the snow in wooden half shoes, with the snow piling up on the wood, thus raising us in height. The onlookers, German women, applauded with joy, when the Sargent indulged in his sadistic actions i.e hitting us in the face.

Despite all this, my being in this area was also my salvation. We did get one bucket of coal a day, and were able to boil water and wash our pajamas, and maintain cleanliness.

In March of 1945, one could hear the Russian artillery fire from a distance. We were forced to evacuate, partially by train and considerable amount of walking up to the concentration camp in Litomerice (Leitmeritz) in the Sudeten, Bohemia. There, I worked in construction for a German organization, carrying up a muddy hill, on my shoulders, large bags of cement, the whole day. My quarters were a space on a bare concrete floor in the former cavalry stables. Blankets were scarce. Most of the

*Russian
prisoners*

water (soup) in the evening with a slice of bread. Winter clothing was a pajama. The weather was bad, snow, rain, sleet and mud. I was working on a hill, and I fell many times with the bag of cement and could not get up. By the middle of April, I contracted typhoid dysentery and I started to lose hope. I wound up in the camp hospital. There was no medication, no food, and little medical help.

By the end of April the hospital was liquidated. We were loaded into open cattle wagons, for transportation to a crematorium. The train never started. The railroad tracks, were damaged, by, the American Forces.. After three days on the tracks we disembarked

The Jewish inmates walked, or were transported, by horse and buggy to the Theresienstadt ghetto. The non -Jews returned to the Litomerice -camp.

The Russian army moved in to Theresienstadt on 8 May 1945. After liberation, I spent one week in a Russian field hospital, three weeks at Caritas in Prague. Subsequently I returned to my home- town Turi Paseka, by the end of June 1945. There, I found out that my parents, grandmother, uncles, aunts, first and second cousins, a total, of about 45 family members perished in Auschwitz.

My four sisters returned from Auschwitz. We left a new house with furniture, merchandise in the store. We had no place to live. Everything was looted, or/and destroyed. We all left for Bohemia and subsequently to the U.S zone in Germany, in a displaced persons camp. In 1947 I emigrated to the U.S.A.

During the 2 1/2 years in the forced labor camps, and six months in the concentration camps, I had no contact with my family. I did not know that the whole family went through the ghettos, and was deported to Auschwitz.

It would take quite a few additional pages to describe how I was denied entry in the field hospital in Theresienstadt, and how and why I was expelled from the hospital, and walked to the train station on four. I also, have not discussed my experiences with the Russians, that, permanently occupied the territory, where I come from.

. All these events occurred in 1945.