

Samuel Rosen was born in Czespochowa (Częstochowa), Poland on March 19, 1924 to parents David and Rosa. He had a brother (Harry) two years older and a sister four years younger. His father survived the war, but his mother was killed by Germans. Samuel describes the pre-war circumstances that surrounded his local community and the attitude of local non-Jews. Samuel witnessed a pre-war pogrom in 1935, triggered by an argument between a Jew and a Pole, during which the Pole was killed. It took police from outside the town to restore order.

When the war started in 1939, few Jews had the means to move east in response. For two days, German treatment was mild, but, then, Germans brutally confined Jews into various houses of worship. A Judenrat (Jewish council) was set up to help administer the detentions and working groups. As Jews were concentrated together, Sam and his family moved into part of a plant owned by his uncle. Hunger was not an immediate problem as they could still work and trade in non-Jewish areas. This period he called the Big Ghetto (due to a population around 75,000) prevailed from April, 1941 to September, 1942. Then, the so-called Small Ghetto began until June 1943 with a population of 5,500 with balance sent to Treblinka.

Those remaining behind were building work camps adjacent to the armament factories under tight confinement. Only his brother was officially in the Small Ghetto, while the others were in hiding and scavenged for food. Sam and his uncle were able to mingle secretly with a work crew thereby gaining access to nominal food and shelter. Samuel worked a lathe in a machine shop helping to repair railway equipment. There, a sympathetic German supervisor, a professed Socialist, often brought him sandwiches.

He related two instances where they barely escaped detention, once by dogs and once by a fortuitous missed escape attempt that would have been discovered by a dangerous guard, Capt. Dagenhart. He and some others were aware of plans for an armed uprising in Warsaw and began obtaining Molotov cocktails, weapons stolen by killing Germans, and making hand grenades secretly in the plant. His role was limited by the conspirators as he had relatives who could be threatened if he were interrogated. Ultimately, a Jew betrayed the plans bringing many executions.

The Small Ghetto was closed with everyone moving into a concentration camp by the factories. Though the camp was administered by the Auschwitz authorities, it was not a liquidation camp. A Gestapo decision was made to kill 10% of the population in retribution for the conspiracy, which by chance included his mother. (Sam's family was one of the only largely intact families in the camp).

Due to his machinist's skills, Samuel had some advantages. Besides war material, he would secretly make lighters, lamps, etc. that could be bartered with local farmers.

As Russian troops approached on Jan. 17, 1945, some of the guards invited prisoners to evacuate with them, convincing about 350 of them to do so in fear that otherwise the Gestapo might return and kill all who remained. Those that remained confiscated arms and bullets from the factory to prepare resistance should Germans try to return, a force that he considered well organized and capable. Samuel and others didn't wait for the Russians, but simply left the camp for their homes as they were still in their home city.

Immediately post-war, Samuel finished his schooling, but declined an invitation to join the Polish Navy. Instead, he helped arrange travel of Jews to Israel during which he reunited with his family's survivors. He came to the U.S. in 1950 through the Jewish Family Service to Ohio to join his father and brother. He married his wife, Esther, shortly before leaving Europe.