

HARRY SPITZ, Phoenix Arizona 1988

b. approximately 1920 in Munchkase, Czech. family of parents, two brothers, two sisters grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins. survived: mother, father, one brother, one sister, all others, approx. 85 people, died.

1943: put in labor camp making planes, put in another camp making bombs; escaped with help of Gentile friend; went to Swedish consul in Budapest, made part of a group of young men who would act as Nazi soldiers and rescued Jews being deported. Met Wallenberg

Came to the U.S. in 1949 with parents.

Has real estate business

5 children, three boys, two girls.

HARRY SPITZ

May, 1988

Phoenix, Arizona

10:06 In my family, there were two brothers and two sisters. My youngest brother
10:07 died in the gas chamber. He worked there and then he became sick and he
was gassed. My two sisters and my mother were liberated from Bergen Belsen;
they had been at Auschwitz and Gruben (sp) and then Bergen Belsen. One
of my sisters died after the war of tuberculosis; all of them were very
very sick when they were liberated.

10:08 My Grandfather was a dayen, pascher a chales (sp) like a judge, an advisor.
People would come to him for advice. He died a year before we were taken
away. My Grandmother was still alive, but she was taken to Auschwitz and
I am sure died there. My sisters name was Lyvia Spitz and the other
10:10 sister is Gretcha (sp), she lives in New Jersey and has four daughters
My older brother was Arthur Spitz, my younger brother was Walter Spitz.
I named one of my sons after my brother Walter.

Our family was very active in the community and in Jewish organizations. I
went to a Czech school, public school. I never finished high school. I
10:11 learned to be a plumber, a locksmith. My father sold crystal and porcellin.
He had a general store. He had built a new building in 1938, it was four
10:12 stories high. My mother worked in the back with 8 or 9 girls working
for her in the beauty shop. She made wigs that she was famous for. My
mother was an artist. One of the girls who came to learn a trade was
10:13 Heddy. We were very well off. We had a nice home, income, both my
mother and father worked 18 hours a day, 6 days a week. They were
very busy all the time.

10:14 I had many non-Jewish friends. The boys would go exercising together and
maybe 3/4 of them would be Gentiles. But when we came home after the war,
10:15 people said, What, are you still alive?. The feeling against the Jews
was very, very strong. Once a Christian boy that I had known saw me in
Budapest and called out that I was a Jew. I ran away for my life, I
knocked over two women, jumped on a train and before the next station
I jumped off in case they had called ahead about me.

10:16 Conditions got very bad in 1943. In 1938, part of Czechoslovakia was
taken over by Hungary and there would be incidents of people just being
taken away for no reason. Polish Jews would be taken and their whole
10:17 family also. My fathers sister had married a Polish Jew and one day the
whole family was taken and we were never able to find out what happened
to them.

10:18 In 1943, I was taken to a Labor Camp as part of a unit where there were
mechanically inclined boys. In Europe, if you were mechanically inclined,
you could do many things. After two months I was shipped to a factory
where they were making helicopters and airplances called Rohegacapegast (ph)
10:19 The British used to bomb the place all the time - they didnt know who
was working in there. There were bunkers built but only for the Christian
workers. The Jewish boys and girls stayed in the factory night and day;
they just slept on the concret and life was very hard. It was sort of an
island near Budapest.

10:20 Lots of boys and girls were killed when the factory was bombed. I was
there four months and the place was bombed and demolished. 600 Jewish
10:21 girls and boys died there from the bombing. They couldn't rebuilt the
factory and so were taken together and shipped to Czechbell (ph),
a factory which had been owned by a Jew. It had been a steel factory and
it was converted to munitions, making bombs, each 75 kilos in weight. I
10:22 had to carry and load these bombs. I was there maybe 2 months when I
made friends with a Christian boy a few years older. One day, he said
to me, I will bring you some clothes and tools and you blacken your face
and look as if you work in furnace area and follow me out through the
10:23 gate at the end of the day. See, the Jewish children slept and lived
in the factory day and night; they just laid on concrete, no blanket.
So I went with him, we took a bus for Budapest. He said he could not
take me to his home and I was on my own - he gave me a few pennies.

10:24 I started asking around for the Swedish or Swiss Consul. People told
me to be careful and to go in the Consul gates as if I belonged there.
10:25 They said I should carry tools and act as if I were going in to fix
something. So I went in and explained about escaping from the labor
camp. Several people questioned me and there were even people from
Munchkasen (sp). They said I was all right. There were members of
Zionist organizations there and the Consul staff. They gave us uniforms
and papers to act as if we were Nazi soldiers. We were Maidenhausen (sp).
10:26 Our job was to collect people as if we were Nazis, but then we would
hide them in the consulate and get them false papers. We would go to
10:27 transports, with a list of names for certain people, scientists, professors
and we would ask for them, saying that we needed to take them to
10:28 headquarters for questioning. There were so many people being hidden
in the Consul that it was really standing room only and sometimes
gendarmes would drop on the roof and start shooting into the attic.

10:29 One day we were going into the ghetto to get some people and some
Nazis were waiting for us - someone had squealed on us. We were
handcuffed and they took us to the Donai (a river ?), 28 boys and
10:30 girls and started shootin us. My best friend died there. I was shot
two times in the leg. I just laid down, pretending I was dead. I
was sort of in a swamp and I would lie amongst the bodies. The Nazis
waited around for a few hours and then left. I got up, I thought I
10:31 was dead, I lost my voice and I couldn't stand. I crawled out and
decided to go to a Nazi first aid station - I was still in uniform.
The took me in and bandaged my wounds. I couldn't answer their
10:32 questions because of my voice. I lay there until dark and rested.
I began to get strong again so before morning I went out as if to go
to the bathroom and I got away.

10:33 I went to a farm and took some eggs and hid in the straw. Pretty
soon, the farmer came out and saw me and said, I am not going to
report you but you have to get off my farm. So, I went to another farm.
The Russians were already close. The Nazis and gendarmes were giving
10:34 up very slowly, building by building. There were dead people
everywhere. I was crawling, walking, jumping on trains, hitchhiking.

- 10:33 At Hotkoem (ph) the Russians found me, about 60 ki. from Budapest. I had stolen leather boots and a jacket and the Russians took them away from me. The Russians were taking what they thought were prisoners
- 10:34 of war, German soldiers and Hungarian gendarmes. But I was lucky, I was so small and skinny that I could actually hide behind a large tree in the woods as we passed through. After the Russians left, I would go in the opposite direction.
- I would tell the Russians, I am Jewish, I am a comrade, but it didnt make any difference to the Russians. You didnt know what to do or say or what the Russians would do. They didnt help or give you food or anything.
- 10:36 At this time I was helping some boys and girls who needed food and some help. I would go out foraging during the day and then we would move around at night, not staying in one place too long.
- 10:37 Finally, I got on a transport and headed back to my home, where there was still fighting. Someone told me that my brother Arthur
- 10:38 was at home. Our old neighbors were not happy to see us, as if I was a ghost walking. I found my brother Arthur in a house with some other boys, the Bloom house. I knocked on the door at 4:30 in the morning and they couldnt believe it was me. I was so happy to see
- 10:40 my brother Arthur alive. We were crying.
- 10:41 We found out that there was a list, A Red Cross paper, which listed names of survivors, and I found that my mother and two sisters were taken to Sweden, they were all very, very sick with tuberculosis. I got a passport to Sweden but before I could go I found my father on the list. and he was in Teresyenstadt (ph) and he was sick. So, I dug out some money and took it to the doctors to take care of him.
- 10:42 My brother Arthur found his childhood sweetheart, Heddy. We brought my father hom. I tried to go to Sweden, but it was too difficult.
- 10:43 My one sister, Lyvia, died and the rest of the family was reunited in Prague. Then we went to Liebervist (ph) where they were helping Jews and my father and I got jobs. We registered to go to the United States, but it took a long time because my fatherdid not have a trade and people with skills were allowed to go first,My
- 10:44 parents wanted to come to the United States; I wanted to go to Israel but I felt that my parents needed me.
- 10:45 We went from Bremexhaven on the SS Jumper (ph). We were only allowed to take a few belongings; I took pictures; ones that I had carried all
- 10:48 through the war. We settled in New York. I couldnt speak English and the Joint got us a small apartment. I left that to my parents and I got a job as an elevator operator.

- 10:50 Through a friend I got a job doing everything in a grocery store, then I went on to build a business in my own grocery store; married and had three children. After 12 years I went to Phoenix because my brother was there. It was a struggle at first but now I am in the real estate business and we have had two more children. I had 3 daughters and two sons and 5 grandchildren.
- 11:01
- 11:15 When I was working with the Swedish consulate I met Wallenberg 3 or 4 times. He and the Zionists would meet with us and tell everything to do and say and how to act when we used the Nazi uniforms. They had a system where everyone in the Consul had a job and they saw I was a daredevil. We knew that if we were caught we couldn't say anything about what we were doing
- 11:18 We would go to a safe house and take food, we would carry caskets, take out dead bodies sometimes, take people in, all in caskets.
- 11:20 After I was shot I went back to the Consul and they were amazed that I was the only survivor of that group of people. At the time, we felt that we were living to get even with the Nazis who had destroyed our families. Of course, you can't live with that hatred or it will destroy you.
- 11:22 In my family, we lost 85 people at least. Of all my father's 12 siblings, he was the only survivor. On my mother's side, she had two sisters with 8 children, only 1 survived. We must make sure that it never happens again to anyone. It was incredible that human beings could do that to one another.