

HOLOCAUST CENTER OF PITTSBURGH

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I was born in Lodz, Poland, on November 20, 1924. It was 99.9% Jewish. My father was a baker, my mother was a bookkeeper. There were three children, my sister Miriam, my brother Harry and I. We lived in an apartment house which was like a little town. Relatives lived nearby. My father's and mother's families vanished, one cousin survived.

I went to the gymnasium. All my friends were Jewish. It was like a ghetto. My family was active in the Bund - the Social Democratic political organization. Yiddish was spoken at home. In school we learned Polish. Private grade school, run by the baker's union was in Yiddish. I was not allowed to leave our street. The Poles were worse than the Germans with regard to anti-Semitism. The storekeepers were Jewish, only the janitor of the apartment house was Polish.

In 1940, a notice was posted that Jewish families had to move in the ghetto. Before that they took stores away from Jewish and hit people in the street. The German soldiers took merchandise from the stores and shaved beards of Jews in the street. We lived in the ghetto area. People outside the ghetto moved into apartments with Jews in the ghetto. After 3 months there were no schools. They took sick people out of the hospital and threw children out of the window.

We all worked. Jews opened factories in the ghetto. I worked in a mill, my brother worked in a metal factory. My sister and mother worked in a factory. Essential items of food were rationed. There was a streetcar used by non Jews that ran through the ghetto which was fenced in but they were aware of what was going on.

Jews managed their own lives until 1943 when the ghetto was liquidated. Then we went to Auschwitz. During the three years they took lots of people out of the ghetto. In 1944 I left the ghetto. I worked in the factory from May 1940 to 1944. In 1943 the Gestapo took my father and they beat him and took him to the police headquarters and then they threw him out and we picked him up and took him home. He died two weeks later on March 5, 1940. He was a Kohen. We made a casket from wood and I gave a little speech at the gravesite. We remained in the apartment. My mother made a suit from my father's suit ~~doe my mother~~ *for my brother.* We lived in one room. Resistance started when they liquidated the ghetto.

The Germans told us that we would be evacuated to different places. We took machinery parts to a village where they said they would set up a factory. Instead they took us to Auschwitz. We were in the last transport, 14 people from the factory and family. They started to take fences apart. There were 300 people in the transport. We carried food with us. We thought we were going to the village. We had no contact with the outside world.

They took my mother and sister away. Rite and left. My brother and I remained together. It was called the gypsy camp. They had to make room for us - they killed the whole gypsy camp. It was a political camp and not a gypsy camp. We learned this later. We saw the ovens and knew what was happening. Mother died in 1943 in the camp.

We were in a small room 50 people lived there for 2 months. They beat us; gave us a little soup every day. Then they gave you special clothing. It was September, cold already. At 5 a.m. we stood waiting for them to take attendance. People died like flies from disease. I spent two months in Auschwitz.

They announced that they needed metal workers. In November 1944 my brother and I went to work in a metal factory. If you had a tattoo you could no go out. We did not have tattoos so we could proceed. We were on the train for three days and arrived in Sudenland. We thought we would be killed. We were 200 people. We were there for a week. We were told we would survive if we worked. We made propellers for airplanes. A month later a transport of Hungarian Jews came IN, ONLY MEN. It was not bad, they were not cruel in Silesia. I was there until May 8, 1945 when I was liberated by the Russians.

Three months before the liberation a friend escaped from the camp. I did not go because of my brother

About January the Russians were in Breslau. The village did not know what to do with us -- 90% voted to kill us. We knew a friendly German soldier who told us this and gave us a machine gun and told us to fight. The is May 6 three weeks before the liberation. We put up a watch in each room to defend ourselves. On May 6th noon came to take us to work. It was a 3 mile walk through the village to work. They told us not to try to escape. The Kapo said go back to your rooms. French and Italian prisoners of war told us to escape in the woods. On May 7 we escaped in the woods and went through the village and grabbed eggs and other food. 150 people in the camp escaped in the woods. In the woods Germans were afraid of us and we were afraid of them. On May 8th the Russians bombed the village. The Russians bombed the village but not the camp where the sick were.

On May 8th a Russian soldier spoke to us in Yiddish and told us to go to the Germans homes that were abandoned and take clothes and then go home. The next day we took pants and shirts. There was a womens camp nearby. I grabbed a bike and to look for my sister. My brother died in a car accident. I saw my sister's two friends. My sister escaped from camp in Jan. 1945 The Germans had taken 10,000 women to Koenigsberg and shot them. Three girls survived and my sister was one of them. A German lady heard them crying and took the three girls in a shack and gave them food. The three girls have remained best friends and live near each other.

Five months later my sister came home to Lodz. She went back by horse and buggy and train. The house was ransacked. They took everything we had. Two days later I went back to Germany. I went to the Jewish Federation in Lodz. Very few Jews were there. My sister was in Poland, I was in Germany with my brother. We went back to the place we were liberated. The camp was destroyed in Silesia. The German people came back. We took a house with two girls and my brother. People left their houses. It was the police chief of the village's house.

TAPE 2

Five months later my sister found out we were alive and came to this apartment where we were living with two friends. The Russians occupied this German village. The Russians opened a hospital and a Jewish doctor Fishman was in charge. We were 20 -21 years of age, we escaped to Czechoslovakia and the doctor helped us. He gave us 5 guns and urged us to go through the border. We crossed over, 17 people, girls and boys. We crossed into Czechoslovakia and gave the guns to the soldiers. We went to Austria (American side) and moved to Salzburg. We stayed there until July 1949 and then came to the U.S.

I went to school. My sister took care of us in the house. The three of us lived together. My sister later went to Munich.

My father was a Bundist, we were not religious. Some in the Holocaust turned to religion after the liberation but most turned against religion.

Hope sustained us, not religion. You did not deny you were Jewish but not from the religious point of view. I came to the U.S., through the Federation, from Salzburg to the U.S./ They took us to Oklahoma City. My sister urged us to come to Pittsburgh where Yiddish was spoken so my brother and I moved to Pittsburgh.

I would die for Israel. This is our hope for the future. I believe in God but I do not practice. I have two children, a son and daughter. They live in Florida. I never talked to my children about this. They heard it on TV and they did not know anything about it. We should have told them. I should have told them. I could not tell them they hung people. I hid it by working. I was wrong. It will never leave you. I told them I was a survivor. It affected them. They know where the uncles and grandparents are. My children missed this.

I have nothing to show. I have only my children. I am angry. I have my children and my wife. My wife lived in England but her parents died in Auschwitz.