

HOLOCAUST ARCHIVE PROJECT

Name of Interviewee	MARCEL FRIEDMAN		
Name of Interviewer	Marilyn Goodman	Date	9/12/84
Name of Abstractor	Esther Potash	Date	3/14/88

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Marcel Friedman enjoyed a comfortable childhood with his family in Slovakia. He had many non-Jewish friends, a religious home life, and the opportunity to pursue educational and recreational interests.

Marcel's first real exposure to anti-Semitism came in 1939, when he was denied admission to the University of Bratislava, due to a Jewish quota. As a result of the difficulties for Jews at this time, Marcel decided to go to Palestine, as he had been an active Zionist.

Marcel began his journey to Israel in 1940, but the journey was fraught with dangers and delays. The incidents included political problems, a shipwreck and bombings. Marcel and his shipmates were interned on the island of Rhodes in a tent camp. Events of the war forced the group to be moved to a camp in Southern Italy. Marcel was forced to remain in these camps, but was treated fairly well during his internment.

In 1943, the camp was liberated by the British. Again, Marcel attempted to go to Palestine, but the plans did not materialize and he joined the Czech army instead. He was interested in aviation and became involved in the weather department of the army.

In 1945, he was transferred back to Czechoslovakia, where he was reunited with his brother and sister. He learned of his parents' fate in the concentration camps at this time.

In 1948, Marcel was again recruited for Palestine. This time, he was able to complete the journey. He joined the Israeli army, serving again in the weather service. By 1953, however, he had determined that life was too difficult in Israel. He also wanted to rejoin relatives in the U.S.

Marcel, his wife and child were sponsored and aided financially by his American family members. When he came to the U.S. he began working in a travel agency, of which he later became a partner. He joined a synagogue and became active in Jewish activities.

http://collections.ushmm.org
Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection
Marcel credits luck, his personality and religion for his strength and his survival. He believes survivors have a responsibility to make others aware of their experiences. While he admits that the bitterness remains, especially for the loss of his parents, he has a good outlook and remains interested in learning more about the Holocaust.

ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

CURRENT LIFE

Partner in travel agency. Married, two children.

IN 1939, WAS LIVING IN PRESOV, SLOVAKIA; ATTEMPTED TO ENTER UNIVERSITY IN BRATISLAVA, BUT WAS DENIED ADMISSION DUE TO JEWISH QUOTA.

FAMILY LIFE

Father was grain farmer. Parents free until 1944. Mother killed in Krakow. Father was killed one day before liberation of Buchenwald. Family was religious.

SOME NON-JEWISH FRIENDS REMAIN LOYAL TO MARCEL AND HIS FAMILY

IS ACTIVE IN ZIONIST MOVEMENT. ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE FOR PALESTINE IN 1941

RETURNS TO DESCRIPTION OF HOME LIFE

Family spoke Slovakian, Hungarian and Yiddish. Many books in the home. Family vacationed at a spa every year.

INTERESTS AS A YOUTH INCLUDE AVIATION, BOY SCOUTS AND AGRICULTURE

MARCEL HAS DESIRE TO EMIGRATE TO THE U.S. BEFORE THE WAR

RECALLS GERMAN INVASION, BOMBING OF NEARBY POLAND

ATTITUDE TOWARD JEWS BECOMES INCREASINGLY HOSTILE AFTER THE START OF THE WAR

Marcel decided it was best to leave, even though parents objected.

DESCRIBES FINANCIAL, TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS TO LEAVE FOR PALESTINE IN 1940

BEGINS JOURNEY ON PADDLE WHEEL BOAT FOR DEPARTURE TO THE BLACK SEA

Crowded conditions. Hungarian inspector reported that ship was not fit for sea, but was told by his superiors to let the boat pass anyway.

GERMAN JEWISH REFUGEES ARE LOADED ON THE BOAT, DESPITE SEVERE OVER-CROWDING

BOAT DELAYED AT RUMANIAN BORDER BECAUSE IT IS UNABLE TO PASS THROUGH THE IRON GATES. WEALTHY JEWISH SHIP OWNER DONATES ANOTHER SHIP TO ENABLE CROSSING

AT RUMANIAN BORDER, SHIP RECEIVES LETTERS FROM ENGLAND STATING THE CAPTAIN AND CREW WILL BE ARRESTED FOR TRANSPORTING THIS PROHIBITED "CARGO."

THEY ARE PREVENTED FROM LANDING IN ISTANBUL

THEY ARE PERMITTED TO DISEMBARK IN GREECE, BUT WAR BREAKS OUT BETWEEN ITALY AND GREECE. THEY ARE TAKEN BY ITALIAN ARMY TO AN ITALIAN ISLAND OFF RHODES, WHERE THEY ARE TREATED WELL

SHIP HIT STONE WALLS, IS DAMAGED ON THE ISLAND OF CANILA NISI. ALL SURVIVE THE WRECK

PEOPLE ON THE SHIP GET ALONG WELL IN LIGHT OF THE CONDITIONS THEY ENDURE

ITALIAN SHIP ARRIVES TO SAVE THE SHIPWRECK SURVIVORS

Placed in tent camp on Rhodes with very poor conditions. Classified as "shipwrecked internees." Free Italian Jews provided aid.

DESCRIBES BRITISH BOMBING OF THE ISLAND

CULTURAL EVENTS, PRAYERS ARE ORGANIZED WITHIN THE CAMP ON RHODES

WHEN CRETE IS CAPTURED BY THE ITALIANS AND GERMANS IN 1942, THE ITALIANS DECIDE TO MOVE THE REFUGEES TO SOUTHERN ITALY

Three of the group remained on the island; they were later taken to Auschwitz by the Germans.

CAMP IN FERRAMONTE, CALABRIA (IN SOUTHERN ITALY) HOLDS 500 JEWS AND 500 NON-JEWS

ITALIANS GIVE THEM STIPENDS TO PURCHASE FOOD

THEY ARE ABLE TO CORRESPOND WITH FAMILY THROUGH HELP OF ITALIAN PRIEST

MARCEL LEARNS OF HORRORS IN 1943 FROM POLISH YOUTH; URGES PARENTS TO COME TO ITALY FOR SAFETY

THEY ARE TREATED FAIRLY WELL IN CAMP

Some were permitted to go to a village to work.

THEY ARE LIBERATED BY THE BRITISH IN 1943

THEY CAN NOT GO NORTH BECAUSE NORTHERN ITALY IS OCCUPIED BY GERMANY

MARCEL IS RECRUITED TO GO TO PALESTINE, BUT PLANS DO NOT
MATERIALIZE, SO MARCEL JOINS THE CZECH ARMY INSTEAD

HE IS TAKEN TO ENGLAND FOR MILITARY TRAINING

Volunteered for flight training. Served in the weather
department. Did not participate in combat missions.

HE IS TRANSFERRED BACK TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1945; FINDS BROTHER AND
SISTER AND LEARNS OF FATHER'S FATE

Sister had been in Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen.

IN 1948, HE IS RECRUITED FOR PALESTINE AGAIN

BEFORE HE LEAVES FOR ISRAEL, HE GETS MARRIED

Wife joined him in Israel three months later.

HE SERVES IN ISRAEL IN WEATHER SERVICE, BUT DECIDES IN 1953 TO MOVE
TO THE U.S.

Wanted to join family. Life in Israel was quite difficult.

WIFE IS ALSO A SURVIVOR; HAD BEEN IN AUSCHWITZ

AMERICAN FAMILY MEMBERS HELP FINANCIALLY

MARCEL BEGINS WORKING AT TRAVEL AGENCY; LATER BECOMES A PARTNER

HE JOINS A SYNAGOGUE

VIDEO 2 OF 2

EFFECTS OF HOLOCAUST EXPERIENCE

Is very interested in all literature, films on the subject.
Wants children to know about the Holocaust. Is a member of Kol
Israel.

CURRENT EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

Does not have nightmares or terrible memories as others who endured concentration camps. Feels regret that he was prevented from working and studying for three years.

DOES NOT BELIEVE SURVIVORS ARE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER JEWS

BELIEVES HE SURVIVED DUE TO LUCK ONLY

SURVIVORS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE OTHERS AWARE OF THEIR EXPERIENCES

SUFFERED LOSS OF PARENTS; BITTERNESS REMAINS

CREDITS HIS PERSONALITY AND RELIGION FOR HIS STRENGTH

TELLS OF POPE PIUS XII'S INTERVENTION TO ASSURE THAT INTERNEES WOULD NOT BE SENT TO CONCENTRATION CAMPS DURING PERIOD OF ITALIAN MILITARY WEAKNESS

PARTICIPATES IN REUNIONS OF GROUP OF INTERNEES EVERY FIVE YEARS