

RG-50.091.0131

Summary

Marcel Weintraub was born circa 1926 in Kraków, Poland. He went to school there until the war started in 1939. Marcel had two sisters, one older and one younger. His family owned a restaurant. It was not a strict religious household but they did keep kosher. They had many Jewish and non-Jewish friends. He and his sister participated in Zionist organizations. Polish and Yiddish were spoken at home. He mentions some of his friends, including Yennick Scharf, and local antisemitism, which he describes as livable.

Marcel remembers the war starting on a Friday (September 1, 1939) and the Germans were in Kraków by Wednesday. He remembers the quick onset of hunger, closed stores and the oppression. They turned over the operation of the restaurant to friends in nearby Prokocim. He remembers frustration that Jews turned over their goods and valuables to the Nazis rather than destroying them, and accepting burdensome work assignments. When Marcel was hired in 1941-42 as an office assistant by a German engineer, Han (Hunt?) Schneider, he changed his name to Marian Rachinski to avoid police harassment. His parents and sisters left before the ghetto was formed to join his maternal grandfather.

Marcel intercepted a letter that arrived at his employer's office revealing his true identity and immediately went into hiding, sleeping in the ghetto basements. He met a friend who allowed him to stay with his family and found him a job at a brick factory for 9-10 months. He describes his life shuttling between the ghetto, work and the city. The Germans were closing smaller work camps and shrinking the ghetto, moving many, including Marcel, into Plaszow Concentration Camp. He witnessed the murder of some who resisted. He later escaped his own execution when a guard apparently disobeyed orders to shoot his work gang. Marcel was then assigned to a factory in Zabłocie, owned by Oskar Schindler.

Marcel describes a trip he made with Moshe Brother (?) to Miyakov (?) to retrieve some household goods. Moshe was identified as a Jew by local Poles and shot in the street. Marcel escaped.

Without notice, the Germans loaded Marcel and 118 workers onto trains heading west. The train stopped in Auschwitz briefly then went on to Mauthausen Concentration Camp, where he worked at a stone quarry. He saw Black American POWs at the camp. He mentions a friend there, Miadick (?) Schiff, who survived the war. Marcel recalls that after two weeks he had lost hope and was prepared to throw himself on the electric wire the next day. However, instead the next day he was sent to a camp in Linz, Austria containing few Jews and many nationalities. He was there for about a year and experienced near the end of 1944 a severe beating after an infraction. He doubted he would survive but ended up liberated by the Americans on May 5.

After his recovery, he joined the Polish Army. After discharge, he went to England where he met an aunt in Belgium with whom he lived until 1952, after which he left for the U.S. He married in 1954 in Cleveland. Marcel's two aunts survived, but he never learned what

happened to his sisters and parents. He concludes with reflections on how the Holocaust affected his life.

At the time of the interview, Marcel was a semi-retired electrician, living in Cleveland with his wife, Telsa. They had three sons and a daughter.