

AGJ HS
LESLIE NIEDERMAN

FAMILY:

Born in Patroha, Hungary August 26, 1929. Mother's maiden name was Amalia. No remembrance of grandparents. Raised in Orthodox home. He attended Chedar from 5-8 a.m. and 6-7 p.m. During the day he attended Christian Day School. He had two sisters who are still living and three brothers. He was the youngest and had a happy childhood. Father was in business of making shoes and had other employees. Brothers were drafted into Hungarian Army doing manual labor without arms as Jews were not trusted. The burden of business fell upon him at young age of fourteen or fifteen as Father wasn't in best of health. One of the brothers disappeared at Stalingrad. Army used Jewish boys to pick up live mines. Other two brothers were at a work camp near Russian front and later sent to concentration camps.

WAR: GHETTO

Two sisters, parents and himself were put in ghetto twenty kilometers from town. Each room held five families. Stayed for five to six weeks. Relocated to labor Camps. Told them that all families would stay together. It was a lie.

WAR: CONCENTRATION CAMP

He was put in a cattle car and shipped to Auschwitz. There were one hundred people per car with no comforts. Told to pack food and minimum cloths and all valuables. Arrived after three days to concentration camp. When disembarked people were screaming as they were being separated according to their sex. Went to follow father but was thrown to other side, Father was sent to the crematorium. He himself had his hair cut, was issued prison clothing and put into a barracks with three to ten people per deck. He felt totally debased. Told himself he must leave and volunteered as an engineer with eight hundred others. After two weeks he was shipped in cattle car to France. Worked eight hours in mine and eight hours building camp. Got decent food. This was summer, 1944. The allied invasion began September, 1944. Once again sent off in cattle cars to a labor camp sixty miles south of Stuttgart. He worked at a salt mine and was brutally beaten. Was there until December and became very ill with 105 fever. Wrapped him in a wet blanket for 36 hours. Pulled through and was sent back to salt mine. Two weeks later became ill again. Get one day off but he wrote a zero after the one. Noone noticed or would have been killed. Stayed in this camp until March, 1945. one hundred people put once again in boxcar but 36 didn't make it.

NIEDERMAN (continued)

They were on their last legs. For six days and nights - no food, water or sanitary conditions. At Dachau they were disinfecting. He passed out and thought he was dying. Two personal friends beat on him until he regained consciousness. They were fed and he ate slowly and lightly. Many didn't listen and died on the spot. Dachau was a hell hole. six or seven hundred people crammed in barrack for one hundred people. One morning he awoke to find the people on both sides of him dead. They slept in a triple decker bunk with no mattresses, only boards and blankets which were full of lice. Stayed at Dachau until end of April. Fighting was catching up to them. Were told they'd be turned over to Swiss Red Cross. Didn't believe them. In terrible shape eating only two ounces of bread per day. Placed in train again and disembarked near Austrian border. 1500 persons disembarked. He and two others crawled away to escape. Hid out for three days until Americans found them. Indescribably happy.

LIBERATION:

Reaction to being found by American soldiers - they hugged, screamed and danced. He was 5'11" and weight was seventy pounds. (Had been 150 lbs). Couldn't believe what he saw when he looked in the mirror - like skeletons. Teeth were loose. Slowly, within weeks or months they came back to themselves. Heard about sisters' survival.

COMING TO AMERICA:

Arrived in New York on July 26, 1946. Came in children's transport. Housed in East Bronx. Life was too regimented. Met friends of older brother who took him out and the first few weeks were fun. Began job-hunting. First cleaned factories. Later he worked in a department store liquor department. Finally began to work as a waiter. Noticed on a list that on the next transport a girl with last name of Niederman was coming. He introduced himself and they became friends. Three years later they married. After being a waiter for two years he wanted to go into business for himself. He learned a trade and after four years he started his own business. His son works for him. Grateful to U.S. for giving him the opportunity. He would like children to remember where they came from and to fight bigotry and prejudice.