

MICHAEL RONAY

Family:

Michael was born in czechoslovakia in 1921. His family name was Reisman; however, he changed his own name to Ronay in Hungary. His mother's maiden name was Rosa Moskovitz. He was brought up in a religious home and observed Shabbat. Father took eight children to shul every Friday night and Saturday morning. Father didn't work on Saturday but did on Sundays in a mill where he had worked for twenty-six years. The oldest brother was named Adolf and was born in 1910. Martin came second in 1915. Malkin was born in 1918, Charles in 1923, and Anton in 1926. Two children died very young. Three remain alive today: one brother, his sister and himself. The city where he was born was small with a quiet Jewish community. The Czech people were very nice to Jews as well as being intelligent. They never showed anti-semitism but the Hungarians who lived there did.

Leaving Home:

When he was almost fifteen he went to apprentice as a tailor. When he was eighteen he finished his apprenticeship (1939). Hitler came to power in Czechoslovakia. He Encouraged the Hungarians to return to that part of the land which had previously been Hungary. Life became more difficult for Michael because that was where he was born and the Hungarians paid very little. A friend encouraged him to come to Budapest to make a better living. Worked there from 1939 until 1941. In 1941 Germans took away his brother. After two months he was killed fighting the Russians. They gave his father a silver medal telling him that his son died a hero and even though you are Jewish this medal will save you. As Hungarians became tighter with the Germans ghettos were formed. At the last moment they took away his parents.

Labor Camp:

Received notice to join Army but decided to go home first. After two months they finally caught him and sent him to hard labor. Was sent many places to unload ammunition from trains, build roads for tanks in mountains, etc. They slept outside and many died. Group of two hundred was reduced to thirty-five. In 1943 Russians began to push Germans back and they fell back as well. Eventually they ended up in Austria and then to Mauthausen (a little Auschwitz with a crematoria). There 2500 people were reduced to 400. Was in front of firing squad twice. Once in Ukrina and once in another place, but fortunately the bullet only went into his leg after hitting the ground. He knew that he was useful as an interpreter because he spoke five languages. He found his younger brother in Mauthausen and they stuck together. They found a cousin and this helped

them all to survive. They were taken to Gunskerken. Whoever was too weak to get up was shot. He began to write memories of his life and gave one to the interviewer.

Liberation:

Michael Was liberated on May 5, 1945. They heard shootings one afternoon and someone came to the gate yelling that the Americans were close. When they arrived many people broke into food storehouses and many died because they weren't used to such rich and sweet food. Many more people would be alive if they hadn't tried to eat. He was taken to hospital and was slowly accustomed to food. They were put in groups according to nationalities and his group went to Prague where they were put into hotels with food and medicine. He found his sister on the street. She told him their parents were killed in Auschwitz. Finally they went home after nine years and found noone alive in their family.

Aftermath:

He met his wife in Hungary. He wrote to relatives in America but his wife didn't want to leave her family. They were married in 1947 and had one son in 1948 and another in 1952. In 1956, during Hungarian Revolution they fled Budapest. The children were four and eight. They had to walk 28 kilometers. They arrived in Vienna, Austria and were put into camps there for two months. Michael's sister was with them. His younger brother was already in America. He arrived in the United States in late 1956. His brother and other relatives were waiting for them at the airport. He lives in New Jersey. His children live nearby. The oldest is an auditor, married with two children. The middle is a resident studying medicine, and their daughter who was born in America in 1958 is a photographer. All are happy now. He and his brother both came to the holocaust gathering looking for someone from their hometown. Although they found a dozen people in Israel, they found noone here.