

SHTROL, Yoel
RG-50.120*0355
One Video Tape
In Hebrew

Abstract

Yoel Shtrol was born in Oroszmezo, Transylvania (Romania), in 1928. He was one of four children. His twin brother and a sister died in Auschwitz. His older brother survived. His father worked in forestry. As a child he went to a regular school as well as a *cheder*. There were only four Jewish families in his village, and anti-Semitism was felt strongly throughout his community.

When the Hungarians came, they imposed anti-Semitic laws. All the Jewish schools were closed and he ended up going to a trade school to learn carpentry, but returned home when the persecution started. During the rule of the Nazi Hungarian party, Jews survived by giving bribes. The only way Yoel's family was able to keep their home was by allowing it to be used as a brothel.

All the Jews in the village were taken to Dej and a forced labor camp before being taken to Auschwitz. When he arrived in Auschwitz, he was taken first to Mengele's twins' barracks. Then someone took him to the Roma (Gypsy) camp. Yoel spent two weeks in the Roma camp before being sent to Buchenwald where he carried rocks back and forth. From there, he and other prisoners were taken to Remsdorf (Buchenwald) where they worked at the Brabag factory that produced airplane fuel from coal. When the factory was bombed by the British and the Americans, prisoners were sent into the fields. He then worked as a helper to the chief of the Roma camp and was able to get extra food.

He returned to Auschwitz and was taken with others to Mariensberg (Marienbad) in April 1945. There they escaped to the forest, but were shot at by the Germans. Those who survived were marched to Terezín (Theresienstadt). At the end of the two-week march only 1,000 of the original 9,000 were still alive. After two weeks in prison at Terezín, they were taken to a large building named Camp Hamburg. On May 7, they were told that the camp would be destroyed. However, the Russians liberated the camp on May 8.

After liberation, Yoel became very sick and was taken in by a Czech family. After two weeks, he was taken to a children's house in Prague. He described the children's state of mind as depressed and hopeless. He stayed there for a year and a half. Then he returned to his village, but was not allowed to enter his home. He said anti-Semitism was worse than before the war. He went to Germany and Hungary to search for relatives, but found none. He returned to his village and supported himself by begging. When he went to Dej, his oldest brother found him and took him to live with his family.

He eventually went to Bucharest where he joined an Aliya Bet group and went by boat to Cyprus. After spending six months in Cyprus, he was taken with a group of children to Israel in 1947. In May 1948, he joined the IDF and after his discharge he studied law. He worked for 30 years as director of the immigration absorption department, and loved his work.

He stressed the importance of teaching younger generations about the Holocaust.

Oral History

- 00:01:00** Yoel Shtrol was born in 1928 in Oroszmezo, Transylvania (Romania). He was one of four children. He had a twin brother and a sister who died in Auschwitz, and an older brother who survived. He went to a regular school and a *cheder*. His father worked in forestry. There were only four Jewish families in his village, and anti-Semitism was strongly felt in his community.
- 00:01:06** When the Hungarians came, they imposed anti-Semitic laws. Yoel's father lost his job. All the Jewish schools were closed, and when he was ten, he was sent to high school in Cluj (Cluj-Napoca, Romania). When that school closed, he went to trade school to learn carpentry. He returned home when persecution started. His mother died in 1940, and his father remarried later.
- 00:01:16** Yoel describes persecution by the Hungarians and the Germans in 1941. He describes his life in the village, where nobody had believed that what had happened to the Polish Jews could happen to them.
- 00:01:20** He describes the rule of the Hungarian Nazi party. Jews survived by giving bribes. His father allowed his house to be used for drinking and prostitution.
- 00:01:30** All the Jews in the village were taken to Dej, in the forest, and to labor camps.
- 00:02:00** Yoel describes Dej, the forced labor camp, and then the transport to Auschwitz. He describes the transport in the cattle cars.
- 00:02:10** He was 16 when he got to Auschwitz. He was sent first to the twins barracks but then someone took him to the Roma camp to fill a quota. He describes his life there.
- 00:02:19** He describes again his arrival in Auschwitz, and being separated from his family. In Barrack II there was only one other child besides him. Then somebody took him from the Mengele barrack to the Roma camp.
- 00:02:30** He describes his two weeks in the camp before he was taken to Buchenwald.
- 00:03:00** Yoel describes the behavior of the Kapos and Lagerälteste.
- 00:03:07** He describes the transport by train to Buchenwald. His work in the camp consisted of carrying rocks back and forth.
- 00:03:13** From there, he and other prisoners were taken to Remsdorf (Buchenwald) where they worked at the Brabag factory that produced airplane fuel from

coal. The Wehrmacht and the Ukrainian SS supervised them. When the factory was bombed by the British and the Americans, the prisoners were sent into the fields. One of the managers was from England and gave information to the British.

- 00:03:18** Yoel got a severe ear infection and was operated on by a Jewish doctor. He then worked as a helper to the chief of the Roma camp and was able to get extra food.
- 00:03:23** He describes his daily routine as a servant to the Blockälteste.
- 00:03:33** Yoel describes the black market of gold teeth.
- 00:04:00** Yoel thinks that being protected by Dr. Weinberg saved him from being sexually abused. When Red Cross envoys came to the camp, they were shown only normal, positive things. It was a complete German cover-up, and nobody dared talk to them.
- 00:04:08** He describes being sent with a group to Dresden to detonate unexploded bombs.
- 00:04:12** He was returned to Auschwitz and then taken with others to Marienberg (Marienbad) in April 1945. There they escaped to the forest while the Germans shot at them. Those who survived were marched to Terezín (Theresienstadt). After a two-week march, only 1,000 out of the original 9,000 were still alive.
- 00:04:18** He described how the Czechs gave them food as they marched through the Czech Sudeten.
- 00:04:25** He describes his arrival in Terezín. After two weeks in prison there, they were taken to a large building named Camp Hamburg. On May 7, they were told that the camp would be destroyed. But the Russians liberated them on May 8. They were told to go to the surrounding villages to get food. Many died from eating too much and too fast. Yoel became very sick, and was taken in by a Czech family who took care of him. After two weeks, he was taken to a children's house in Prague.
- 00:04:35** He describes how the Russian army burned the corpses in Terezín.
- 00:05:00** Yoel stayed at the children's house in Prague for a year and a half. He describes the children's depressed and hopeless state of mind. After a year and a half, he went back to his village but was not allowed to enter his home. The anti-Semitism among the population remained and was worse than before the war. Everyone wanted to go home and try to find someone who might have returned.
- 00:05:05** He went to Germany and Hungary to search for relatives but did not find anybody. He went back to Transylvania where he supported himself by

begging. Yoel went to Dej where his oldest brother, the only other family member to survive, found him and took him to live with his family.

- 00:05:12** His wife never wanted to hear about his experiences and did not allow him to tell their children.
- 00:05:13** He went to Bucharest and joined an Aliya Bet group. He went by boat to Cyprus. After spending six months in Cyprus, he was taken with a group of children to Israel in 1947.
- 00:05:16** In May 1948, he joined the IDF and after his discharge he studied law. He worked for 30 years as director of the department of immigration and absorption, and loved his work.
- 00:05:23** Yoel married in 1955, and went back to religion. His son is religious but his daughter is not.
- 00:05:30** Yoel's message is about the importance of teaching young generations about the Holocaust.