

G. HIRSCHFELD  
RG-50.150.0015

G. HIRSCHFELD, a twin, was born in Berlin in 1921. His father died the same year, and his mother moved to Breslau where she had relatives. In 1930 he moved to a Jewish school for 4 years. Breslau had a population then of about 5% Jewish. They attended the Neuesynagoga, a beautiful liberal synagogue which burned down on Kristallnacht. He went into the textile business and worked in a big firm until 1938 when the firm went into non-Jewish hands.

He noted that he saw tremendous organizational ability in the Nazis as they paraded after 1934. Slowly he noted Hitler creating jobs for Arians. People started talking about emigration but most didn't believe it would last. In 1939 his brother, considered a technical wizard, was chosen as one of few children to go to England and perhaps then to Canada. His mother wanted out of Breslau so they went to Gross Brazen, a large agricultural community training Jews to possibly go to South America. The time there, from Jan 1941-February 1943 was a mostly happy time. They were pretty isolated and away from terrible happenings. His mother was helped by a Gentile person she employed until she was sent to Auschwitz. This employee, Minna, was eventually sent to a work camp.

Having to wear the Jewish star was traumatic. They wanted to emigrate but knew no one in US, and didn't know anything about concentration camps. In 1943 they were sent back to Breslau. His grandfather had already been taken and his mother soon was taken to Auschwitz. He was sent to Auschwitz and when he arrived, he saw the horrible sight of SS shouting and dogs barking. His mother was sent to the gas immediately. Mr. Hirschfeld was stripped, shaved, tattooed and put on a truck to Monowitz, the part of Auschwitz also called Buna where the E.J. Farben Factory was located. He describes having a shield around his heart after seeing so many murders.

His first job was carrying sacks of cement. Sometimes they were made to jog with stacks for SS amusement. His next job was construction, there was a nice Berlin Jewish capo who sometimes let him work indoors. He describes life with outside latrine, lice infestation and horrible food. You didn't want to be first in line for food, because only got top of soup that was mostly water. Also had to get a pair of shoes that fit or else you risked infection and certain death.

They were taken on a death march, first to Gleiwitz and then by train to Hartz mountain area. He was in Ellrich concentration camp which was more horrible than Auschwitz and where they burned people alive. By the time he was moved to Bergen Belsen he was so weak he was walking on all fours. Then liberation by British forces came. They gave survivors heavy food and many died as a result. He was given clothes by Max Hotner, a friend from Auschwitz and he got release papers. He registered at Bad Nauheim near Frankfurt. He then met his wife who had been at Theresienstadt and had some family left in US. They were able to emigrate (she earlier than he) and he eventually reunited with his brother from Canada. He got a job with a manufacturer and importer of clocks. He admits to having psychological problems but getting to US was best medicine for him.