

## **RG-50.156.0015**

### **Summary**

Peter Gersch, born Pinchas Gerszonowicz 1/21/21 in Mierhauf, Poland. Father Yutka, a machine shop owner, and mother and mother, Chana (died 1975). Grandfather was Gershon Gershonovitch. Spoke "Jewish" and Polish at home. Parents religious and he went to cheder through bar mitzvah. Poles very antisemitic and many boycotted father's business. Had 7 uncles—all perished in 1942. When war started, Gersch and brother tried to escape to Russia but failed. Mierhauf occupied 9/7/39. Father's shop remained open as Germans needed vehicle repairs. Ghetto set up in 1941. Several hundred deported in boxcars to Bergen-Belsen in 1942. He and father were one of last ones to go. Mother and sister hidden by German friend in Cracow. Gersch lived in barracks at Begen-Belsen until he was caught by Gestapo trying to get forged papers for mother and sister. Beaten badly and sent to prison camp at Cracow Pleschau. Worked shoeing horses. Father and brother joined him. January, 1945 as Russians approached, taken by horse and buggies to Auschwitz for 2 weeks and then to Buchenwald and later to Flossenbug. At Buchenwald, Jewish prisoners tried to hide from roll call but were pushed out by Polish prisoners. Knew Leon Blum, former French Premier was there and he died there as well. Marched from Flossenbug to Dachau and he escaped one night. Hid on top of grain in a silo for 4 days til US Army came. Put in homes with other former prisoners in Floss. Learned father died at Grossrosen. Brother liberated from Valdenburg work camp and joined Gersch in June, 1945. Took a motorcycle and tried to return to Cracow. In Czechoslovakia, Russians took the cycle and imprisoned him for 48 hours. Released by a Jewish Russian officer. Walked/rode trains to Cracow and found mother and sister. Older brother died in Pleschau. Gersch traveled by boxcar to Munich and then to DP camp at Feldafing run by UNRAA. Stayed until early 1946. Moved to Munzberg and started a small steel business with a friend, Kobert until 1949. Married while in Europe and "married off" surviving sisters. Came to St. Paul via Schwienfurting and Bremen. Belongs to B'nai Brith. Feels he was lucky to survive because of his metal/repair skills.