

RG-50.462.0676

Summary

David Fishel was born September 22, 1928 in Będzin, Poland. He was the youngest of five with two brothers and two sisters; only one brother survived the war. David's father owned a shirt-making factory, but died in 1936 at under 40. The children were active in the Zionist organization, Gordonia. He had little contact with non-Jews while growing up.

When the war started in 1939, all schools for Jews and Jewish businesses were closed. The family was confined to their apartment during the day, then forced to a much smaller area of the city, an unwallled ghetto. David went to a trade school for carpentry and then worked in a factory. After his experiences in the war, he had more doubts about religion. One brother was deported in 1940, another in 1941. One sister was married with a child; when her husband was deported, she moved back in with David and his mother. David wasn't aware of any organized resistance and had little interaction with Jewish authorities. In February 1943, the SS came for him and shipped him to a labor camp, Bismarckhütte; he never saw his mother and sister again.

David was then sent to a labor camp, Wiegensfeld, connected to the IG Farben conglomerate over the winter of 1943-44. He describes the horrible conditions. He was moved Blechensfeld [PH], another nearby labor camp in Germany.

[The audio is silent from 00:30:50 to 00:33:30.]

By December 1944, with prisoners arriving regularly from camps farther east to avoid Soviet troops, David's camp was sent on a death march for 2-3 weeks to Gross-Rosen, the worst of his experiences with seven camps. He felt that his youth gave him better survival chances than older prisoners. In February 1945, he was sent to Buchenwald. After 2-3 weeks, he was sent to Langenstein Camp; he describes its brutal conditions. He successfully played dead to when another evacuation was undertaken. Four days later, American troops liberated the camp. Since the initial troops had no food, he and other prisoners foraged for food in the fields and the nearby town of Zweieberge. The troops then helped them with clothes, food and shelter.

David found his cousin at a DP camp at Bergen-Belsen, and then his cousin's husband. They then went to Munich where learned the whereabouts and then found one brother, whom he knew had survived. He learned of the deaths of his mother and sister.