

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Bleicher, Paul

Date of interview: 8/15/1990

Summary: Paul was born on October 2, 1920 in Czestochova, Poland. He had three sisters, Helen, Sally, and Esther, and one brother, Heiliakov. When he was very young, his family moved to a suburb of Sosnowicz in Western Poland, where he lived until the war broke out. There, he was a member of a congregation led by Cantor Moisheh Yussel Friedman. His father, Shimshon, saw that war was imminent and several years earlier traveled to Chile, hoping to bring his family after him. However, his mother Pesel did not want to leave and Shimshon returned home, where the family stayed until war broke out. Paul had several experiences with the Germans occupying Sosnovich before he was sent to Gross Rosen-Gebhardsdorf in 1940.

Paul was in a total of nine camps, and he recalls these times in detail. After about fourteen months in Gross-Rosen-Gebhardsdorf he was sent to Auschwitz-Blechammer for five months. He spent some time in Groskanie, and in 1942 moved to Auschwitz-Laurahute. In 1943 he was transported through Brande (where he stayed for a week) to Gross Rosen-Bunslau where he spent a little less than two years. In Bunslau he was saved by the kindness of the camp doctor and his German boss Hoffman when he and six others contracted typhus and could not work. He next worked in Buchenwald-Nordausen making v1 and v2 bombs, and there were regular executions of prisoners who were accused of sabotaging the bombs they made. In March 1945 he moved to Buchenwald-Ellrich where he gave his shoes to a fellow worker in exchange for a loaf of bread. Finally, he was transported via cattle train to Bergen-Belsen where he spent the rest of the war. After liberation he discovered Sally, Helen, and his future wife Faye in the female section of the camp, but Helen died soon after from typhus. The three traveled to a local hospital at Seleh where Sally recovered from her own illnesses, and where Paul got word from his aunt and cousins in the United States. Later that year (1946) Faye's sister joined them in Bergen-Belsen and they traveled through a refugee shelter in Hanover to Noifraima, a town on the outskirts of Munich, where they were given homes. Paul and Faye married there, and on April 17, 1946 their daughter was born.

In 1949 Paul and his family took the boat General Sturgis to Boston Harbor, and then traveled to New York. He moved to Brooklyn and worked in a men's clothing factory for five years, then moved to Manhattan and bought a supermarket with a friend. He owned the market from 1970 to 1980. In 1970 Paul visited Israel for the first time, and in 1980 he retired to Florida.

(His own written poetry on file.)