

RG-50.493.0038

Summary

Robert Poznanter was born in September 1917. He grew up in a tight knit Jewish family with his mother, father, and three sisters. At the time, antisemitism was rampant where the Polacks (non-Jewish people from Poland) did not like Jews. Seeing chaos on the horizon, Roberts's father made preparations to move the family to Belgium. In 1929, they arrived in Brussels Belgium. Robert found that there was a more positive atmosphere in Belgium. People were, happier, friendlier, educated, and did not outwardly discriminate against Jews. After settling with life in Belgium, his father opened a store. Robert helped as a tailor for years with his father until he was 18. At this time, 1936, they started noticing bits of antisemitism. Other Jews started immigrating to Belgium, telling Belgian Jews what was happening in Germany with Kristallnacht and the burning of Synagogues. On the 10th of May 1940, Germany attacked Belgium, Holland, and France. Robert and his family attempted to escape by heading to the Belgian frontier with France, but were turned back by German soldiers. Occupying Belgium, the Germans started setting curfews, making up rules and laws. By 1942 Robert was married, living with his newly wed wife, and the rest of his family were in hiding. Robert was then sent to France for 3 months as a forced laborer. Months later a patrol of S.S were sent out to herd the men on cattle trains heading east. On the 31st of October 1942, they arrived at the Malin transit camp. They remained on the train until the 3rd of November where they arrived to Auschwitz. Robert states that Auschwitz was an eerie experience. The S.S officers seemed accommodating, telling all the Jews from the transport train to leave their luggage and their belongings right at the tarmac, and that everything will be taken care of. Robert immediately faced selection and was sent to a big room where they had to undress. The S.S shaved them, forced them into harsh showers, dressed them in prisonlike clothing, and tattooed a number on them. This was a dehumanizing tactic made by the Nazis, stating that from now on you were no longer referred to by your name only by your prison number. Every couple weeks or so they would have selections at Auschwitz to see who was fit to work and who would be sent to the crematorium for certain death; Robert passed these selection processes. A couple weeks later, Robert was sent to Jawischowitz a coal mining camp outside of Auschwitz. Life in Jawischowitz was horrible. They barely were given food to eat, the living conditions were horrid, and the sanitary conditions were practically nonexistent. The Kapos (prisoner functionary) and other guards would beat the men constantly for no reason at all. After all this, Robert decided that he couldn't take it anymore and decided to go down to the coal mine for supposedly better working conditions. On January 18, 1945, the S.S stated that everyone had to evacuate the camp immediately. This was the S.S's way of attempting to hide any evidence of the atrocities that occurred during the Holocaust. Robert and the other survivors, left the concentration camp. They were told to march not knowing where and what they were doing. The first night they walked for miles and miles and rested in a big field. They marched and reached to Buchenwald, then they marched to another camp. They took them to a train station and stayed there for 20 days and sent them in trains to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. Then three days later, the camp was liberated by the Russian Army. The Russians gave the survivors a paper authorizing their transit back home. Robert went on a train to Prague, heading to Brussels. He managed to get back to Brussels, and thankfully found his parents and his older sister. He found

out his wife had passed away and his other two sisters died. In Brussels, Robert got married, opened his own business, and had two children. In July 1959, they decided to move to the United States and landed in Anaheim and he worked full time as a tailor. They had another child and now they live there happy and free.