

Interviewee: Adalberto (Avrum) Klein

Interviewer: Andrea Stutman

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The 83-years old Adalberto (Avrum) Klein was born on November 3, 1926, in Transylvania, in a town called Giorokuta, (it belonged to Hungary after Hitler's invasion.) There were only 1,000 inhabitants there. His father had a small farm where they grew wheat, they had sheep and made sheep cheese. Winters and summers in the farm. He was the youngest of three children and the only brother to his sisters Anna and Margarita. Parents were observant, kept kosher, observed all the holidays, and for Shabbat they walked to services in another town. The elementary school was in town and the gymnasium was 30 km. away, in Simleu Silvani. His maternal uncle worked in electrical installations and that's what Adalberto chose to study. He trained and worked for three years in Debretzen (?) until he got the title of master electrician. He then went to work in Budapest in a big company, until the Nazis entered the country. Restrictions on Jews and anti-Semitic expressions around him motivated him to return to his hometown. After a couple of months they were sent to a ghetto, site of a bricks factory belonging to his uncle, Francisco Klein. There were about 800 people there. After about a month and a half they were loaded on a train and taken to Auschwitz Birkenau. The jeering of the local population as the train was passing. Mengele's selections. Processing into the camp and living conditions. Going to Buchenwald and then to a labor camp in Bochum, Germany to an ammunition factory. Working under German master electricians. On his own time, Adalberto would collect the tobacco of cigarette butts to trade later for a piece of bread, or other food. American bombers constantly flew over them and they found refuge in a bunker. Many times, the bombs were timed-release explosion and Adalberto was in charge of finding and disassembling them. Hiding in a tunnel that housed utility pipes and cables, he saw an exit door to an empty field. 5 people escaped that way, but not Adalberto. Caught stealing potatoes, he was beaten with a rubber hose. (He lost 36 kilos in the camps, weighing 36 kg at liberation.) Death by starvation all around. The inmates had to rebuild the factory after it was damaged by the bombs. (The Americans would carpet-bomb, and flatten the area, destroying again and again any factories whose chimneys were still smoking.) Evacuated by train to Buchenwald to escape the advancing Brits. They were in Buchenwald about a month and a half. Adalberto managed to join a group of non-Jews in one of the selections, and he ended up being given plenty of food. When the evacuation came, the Jews were sent marching but he, who ended up with the Russians, was sent with them by train. He was given food again. For the 6 following days on the train, though, they starved. Now, it was their turn to be marched too. Arrived in some woods and he and a friend wrapped themselves in a couple of blankets. They woke up without them because the Russians would take the blankets away, cut them into strips and burn them in order to keep themselves warm. On the 7th day, they were given food again. Adalberto licked the bread because he did not have the strength to chew it. The whole group was taken to a place Adalberto doesn't remember, he thinks it was Dachau. They were taken to an airport, with hangars all around. There must have been 2,000 people there. The Jews among them were called up but he did not go. Adalberto got into the back of a plane, and slept the whole night. The next day, there was no one there. They had been taken to a hospital, and sprayed to delouse them. The march continued in the rain, and some attempted to escape despite the Germans' warnings. A couple of Adalberto's friends did

that, but he doesn't know if they were successful. The next day the Germans began fleeing. They were in a place called Kam (?) An American tank came in and saved them. There was a parked German truck full of provisions and the inmates did not have the strength to climb on it to get food. Adalberto had contracted stomach typhus, and was taken to a German hospital. The liberated people that were near death were taken to an American field hospital where they cared for. Adalberto healed fast, and managed to eat everyone's food! The American separated the Germans from the others because the latter were taking vengeance on the Germans. Adalberto was diagnosed with a hernia. After his operation, and a few more weeks, they were repatriated to their country of origin. Then, he realized his family was wiped out and only 3 or 4 people came back. The house was empty, except for the mice. He was 19 years old. He sold some land, bought a couple of horses and plowing machines. In the meantime, he kept a correspondence with his relatives in Chile. They sent Adalberto a ticket to join them in Chile. Communism was taking hold in Rumania and. Although and he entered the party, he abandoned it when they tried to expropriate his land! Adalberto's first steps in Chile.