

Questions to Consider When Viewing Video

1. How old was Roman when the Nazis invaded Poland?
2. Why do some people question his memory of the events right after the Nazis came to his town? How does he explain why he does remember so clearly?
3. When the family was being moved to a work camp, what did his parents do with his younger brother? Why? What happened to him?
4. What were some of the ways that Roman was hidden by his mother in the work camp? What is one memory that he has of this experience?
5. How did a Polish woman save his life?
6. How did his “looks” help him to survive as a hidden child with this Polish woman and her family?
7. What physical characteristic could have given Roman away as being Jewish?
8. Where was his mother being hidden during this time?
9. After liberation, why did he and his family leave Poland? Where did they go?
10. When they came to the United States, why was Roman fearful of the first school that he attended? What lesson does he want students to learn from this experience?

Holocaust Survivor Roman Frayman

Filed on March 2, 2006



“You should not laugh at jokes about other nationalities, other religions, because it’s just cruel.”

- Roman Frayman

Face to Face
A Holocaust Education Program at
Congregation Shaarey Tikvah
Beachwood, Ohio

Roman Frayman was born in Sosnowiec, Poland, in March 1938. The Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, but life continued as normally as possible for Roman and his family until 1941.

In 1941 the Nazis rounded up the Jews of Sosnowiec and took them to the Srodula ghetto. Roman's family was in Srodula for a few months. During this time, his mother had another baby.

When Roman was 3½ years old, the inhabitants of Srodula were sent to a nearby work-camp, about a mile away. The Nazis considered children to be useless and routinely killed them. Roman's parents made plans to try to save their children.

Roman's mother befriended a doctor, who gave her a sleeping pill for the baby. The plan was that the baby would sleep for about 12 hours at home while Roman and his parents marched to the work camp. Then Roman's father would go back to the house and get the baby. Tragically, when he went back to the house, the baby was gone. When Roman's mother learned of this, she became hysterical.

While Roman's parents marched to the work camp, they put Roman between them and covered him with a blanket. Roman's toes were bleeding, because he was walking barefoot on stones. He did not cry because if they heard him, the Nazis would have shot him.

At the work camp, Roman's mother immediately began to hide him -- in boots, hanging on a wall in a potato sack,

and in a suitcase under a bed. While hiding in the boots one day, he saw flashes of light -- from a stabbing bayonet that the Nazis used to search out people who might be hiding. Roman feels that it is miraculous that the bayonet went through air and not through him.

A German woman whom Roman's mother had befriended smuggled Roman out of the work camp to the home of Maria Balagova, a Polish Catholic woman. Maria hid Roman in her apartment from 1941 until the end of the war in 1945. While Roman lived with Maria, she took him to church and raised him as a Catholic. One day, Nazis broke into the apartment looking for Jews in hiding. Roman was wearing a long child's nightgown. If they had ordered Maria to lift his nightgown, the Nazis would have seen that he was circumcised, known that he was a Jew, and killed him and his guardian. Roman did not know that his mother was hiding nearby in a rain barrel in the basement of Maria's apartment building.

Roman's family was liberated by a Russian soldier. After three or four months, they moved to a Displaced Persons (DP) camp in Germany. In 1949, at the age of 11, Roman and his parents immigrated to the United States. He had never been to school, did not know English, was ignorant about American customs, and did not dress like the other children. The other children teased him and were very cruel. Roman worked hard to graduate with his class and to start college when he was 18.