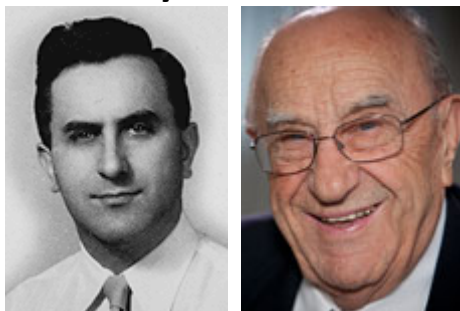


David Bayer



Born September 27, 1922, Kozenice, Poland

David Bayer was born September 27, 1922 to Manes and Sarah Bayer in Kozenice, Poland. Manes owned a shoe factory which supplied stores throughout Poland, and Sarah managed the household and helped in the factory. The second of four children in an observant Jewish family, David spent his days going to school, playing sports and working in his father's factory.

The Germans captured Kozenice on September 9, 1939, eight days after the invasion of Poland. During the bombardment, the Bayers hid in a nearby forest. When they returned, they found that most of their possessions- including Sarah's heirloom Passover dishes- had been destroyed or confiscated by the German army. Overnight, the Nazis' antisemitic policies stripped Polish Jews of their citizenship, confiscated their businesses, and established a curfew. Manes' factory was seized, and David was arrested for standing in a bread line after curfew had begun. His older sister Rose bribed a guard and secured his release.

In 1940, the Bayers were forced into the Kozenice Ghetto. David volunteered to work as a farm hand at a nearby Polish estate in exchange for food before working as a house boy and translator for a Gestapo officer. He was then put to work on an irrigation canal project. On September 27, 1942, the majority of the ghetto's inhabitants (including the Bayer family) were deported to Treblinka Concentration Camp where they were killed. David managed to avoid deportation because he had snuck away from the work site to steal food from local fields. He was smuggled back into Kozenice several days later and worked with a handful of remaining Jews to clean up the Ghetto.

In December 1942, the approximately thirty-five Jews left in Kozenice were deported to Pionki Labor Camp where David was put to work in a factory that manufactured gun powder. In 1944, the prisoners were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. David was selected for slave labor and tattooed with prisoner number "B74." While at Auschwitz, he was forced to undergo medical experimentation; his uvula was removed without an anesthetic. David was then sent to work in the coal mines at Jaworzno, a sub camp of Auschwitz. In the winter of 1944-45, Jaworzno was evacuated and the prisoners were sent on a death march. After a brief stay at Blechhammer, another sub-camp of Auschwitz, David escaped into the forest where he was liberated by Russian soldiers. He weighed only 70lbs.

First Person
Today at 1:00pm
Doors open at 12:45pm



After his liberation, David made his way to the Forenwald Displaced Persons Camp in the American sector of West Germany. In 1947, he moved to Panama then to Palestine to fight in Israel's War for Independence (1948). After the war, David returned to Panama and lived there until 1955 when he immigrated to the United States. He settled in the Washington, DC area and owned a liqueur store until 1992. David married Adele Abramowitz in 1958. They have two children and two grandchildren, and David is a volunteer at the Museum.

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