Michel Margosis

Born September 2, 1928, Brussels, Belgium

Michel’s parents were Russian-born Jews. His father had been a police official in Russia who had been deported to Siberia for being an outspoken Zionist. After escaping, he and his wife had made their way to Belgium, and two of their four children, including Michel, were born in Brussels.

In Brussels Michel’s father owned and edited two newspapers, one French and one Yiddish. As a kid, he enjoyed reading comics like “Yordi,” who in the United States is known as Superman. A day after Michel’s eleventh birthday in 1939, he was shopping with his mother when church bells rang out, announcing that France and England had declared war on Germany because the Germans had invaded Poland.

Four days after the Germans invaded Belgium in 1940 the Margosis family fled for the south of France, where they tried to find refuge. The family ended up in a detention camp in France, where refugees were interned, and Michel’s parents decided to escape. Their first night there was their last, and after sneaking out they got on a train. Still in France, the Margosis family arrived at a friend’s farm and there they hid for a whole year, until it became too dangerous to stay. Michel and his family then made their way to Marseille, where they hoped to get exit visas and sail for the United States.

The Margosis family did not succeed in obtaining exit visas, and they escaped instead over the Pyrenees into Spain. From there, Michel was sent to the United States in 1943.

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