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Summary

Leon Weintraub, born January 1, 1926 in Lodz, Poland, discusses his mother who was born 1894 in Dobra; his maternal grandfather Salman Yoel Bayrach, being in the brewery business; his maternal grandmother Rugele Arkusch; his paternal grandfather's last name being Leisel and his grandmother's Halpern; his sisters, Lola who was 6 years older, Franka 5 years older, Malka 4 years older, Rosa 2 years older; his father working in a textile factory and having his left arm amputated in a work place accident; his father starting a textile recycling business; his father committing suicide in 1927 because his business failed; his uncles wanting to marry off the widow, his mother; his mother refusing and being rejected by her husband's family; his mother taking off her wig, starting her own laundry business; teaching himself to read at five; getting his mother to let him quit Jewish religious school, the Keder; keeping Kosher and celebrating Jewish holidays; feeling the increasing antisemitism 2-3 years before the war; seeing a Jew being shot by a Polish man outside the laundry; avoiding parts of town where Polish boys harassed Jews; being scared of churches; hardly having any contact with Gentiles; spending the three summers before the war at his aunt Hadassa's in the country; describing Jewish life in a small town; having to go to the Mikvah every Friday; not reading Hebrew; getting a scholarship to a non-Jewish humanistic high school, but never starting because of the war; Lodz surrendering; seeing German soldiers cutting off a Jewish man's beard, the man bleeding; being forced to move to the newly created ghetto; his aunt Eva and her husband living with them; in 1942, his cousin Leo moving in; being forced to work with galvanization in a metal factory; causing a small fire in the factory; as a punishment being sent to work with sheet metal; workers cutting their hands on the metal; being moved to the electric repair shop; getting 250 grams bread a day per person; always being hungry; his two oldest sisters working in a garment factory, Malka at the library and his youngest sister in straw factory making shoes; the Germans emptying the "small ghetto"; the Jewish police (in black uniforms with a star of David) and the Polish police (dark blue uniforms) executing German police's orders; Jews from the west (Berlin and Prague) arriving; in spring 1944, the ghetto being moved because the front approached; factories being closed; not knowing about the extermination camps; having a vague idea of Hitler; his mother saying at least they were safe from war inside the ghetto; the family of nine, including his aunt Eva and cousin Leo, hiding in a space behind a dresser in their apartment when soldiers came looking; his mother answering the soldiers once and having to come out together with Leon and three sisters; Eva, Leo and Rosa staying hidden; on August 18, 1944, being taken to the Umschlagplatz in an old prison; Rosa coming to say goodbye, telling them she was in the resistance; Rosa later being picked up with 500 members of the resistance and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Stutthof and to Kaliningrad to work on the railroads; Leo getting away and living in Israel until his 90s; remembering the silence in the packed cattle car to Auschwitz; thinking they would work in the camp; saying goodbye to his mother and sisters; going into a catatonic state, just thinking about his survival, not about his family; his sisters going one way and his mother and aunt the other way; getting his hair cut by hand, bleeding; disinfecting hurt; getting prisoners clothing; going into an old stable; a well-dressed Jewish guard promising extra rations if they gave up their valuables voluntarily; being in one of the ten youth barracks; not knowing anyone in his transport; eating out of the same bowl as three

others; Soviets being on top of the prisoner hierarchy, then Poles and last Jews; only seeing the SS soldiers at the daily Appell (roll call); suffering from the smoke and smell of burnt flesh; after a few weeks, meeting a boy from his class who looked well fed and dressed; the boy offering to introduce him to the block elder; realizing the boy had to give the elder sexual favors in return and declining the offer; sneaking into a group who had been chosen for work; going to the Gross-Rosen Dörnau camp; having number 82707; putting up poles and electricity cables to a weapons factory; the guards killing prisoners; seeing two prisoners getting hanged, but not dying and being shot in the head; in February 1945, going on a death march for three days without food; guards with dogs shooting prisoners who could not continue; on February 25, arriving in Flossenburg; being weak, not remembering much; sharing bunk with three others; being too weak to work in the quarry; trying to stay in the middle at the Appell when they were counted; four weeks later being sent to Natzweiler-Struthof Offenburg; working in the laundry; being hit with a rubber hose filled with sand; on April 20, being put on a passenger train; hearing bombings; having to get off and walk over the hills in Schwarzwald; 7-8 boys escaping and hiding in the bushes; seeing French soldiers; going into the abandoned town Donaueschingen; stealing clothing and food; not being able to sleep in a bed, sleeping on the floor; having a fever; finding a French army doctor; spending six weeks in hospital being treated for typhoid; joining a group of prisoners going to Konstanz am Bodensee; staying in a sanatorium in Reichenau; in September 1945, meeting women who had met his three sisters after the war in Bergen-Belsen; going to the displaced persons camp in Bergen-Belsen; his sisters sitting Shiva for him when he arrived; when he saw his sisters, feeling free for the first time; the British cultural attaché in the camp getting him a spot at the University of Göttingen; studying medicine in spite of only having gone to school for six years; after three years of medicine studies, having to pass high school exams in all subjects; marrying Katja Hof; not feeling hate, nor a need of revenge; not being able to forgive the murderers of his mother; believing in reconciliation; never having dreams or nightmares from that period; working as a doctor in Warsaw; getting his PhD in 1966; losing his job in 1969 because of antisemitism; emigrating with his three sons and wife to Sweden; his wife dying in 1970; remarrying in 1976 and having a daughter Emilia; working with the Polish authorities in Dobra, donating money to restore the Jewish cemetery, showing that Hitler lost.