

## **Summary of Oral History: Oral History Interview with Toni Gass**

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**This summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on 03/2022**

Toni Gass, born 1936 in Apatin, Yugoslavia, talking about his parents Joseph and Katarina (born Tresla) Gass; his 5 years younger brother Joseph and younger sister Anna; his father owning a vineyard and a mill on the Danube; having a comfortable life; being close to his grandmother Anna; Apatin being located in a German speaking area of Yugoslavia; many townspeople welcoming the German occupation; his father being anti-Nazi and prohibiting him from marching with the Germans; hiding in the basement when allied planes flew over, the area sometimes being bombed; in 1944, the Soviet Union taking over the area from German troops; when the Soviets left, Yugoslav Partisans taking over; Partisans taking 100 men from the village, among those his aunt's husband; hearing shots and never seeing the men again; on Christmas Eve 1944, Soviets and Partisans putting men and women from the town in cattle cars, taking them as slave labor to repair war damage in the Soviet Union; Partisans punishing the village since it was German speaking and the inhabitants were seen as Nazi sympathizers; his extended family being taken away and held by Partisans in the village Kruschevlje; before dawn, sneaking out of the camp and begging for food from farmers; being caught several times; Partisans shooting a woman who had hid her jewelry; the war ending, but not changing anything in the camp: escaping to Apatin, to his aunt Katarina Kuntic(?); his aunt taking him to live in an abbey; being too old for the convent and being supposed to transfer to a state orphanage; a nun taking him to a wealthy farmer who had been one of his father's clients; working as a help on the farm; sleeping in the barn; his mother turning up at the farm, saying his baby sister had died when his mother had run out of milk and his brother Joseph being sick; in late 1947, a group (including him, his mother, brother and grandmother) escaping from the camp to Hungary with the help of smugglers; going by train to the Austrian border and bribing a farmer to show them where to cross by foot to Austria; 1947 or 1948, arriving to a refugee camp in the American zone in Salzburg; going to school in the refugee camp; in 1947, his father returning from slave labor in the Soviet Union weighing 45 kilos; in 1956, the allied forces leaving Austria; his father missing half a lung and not getting a visa to the US because of that; Swedes visiting Austria to recruit workers; moving to Sweden; having nightmares.