

*This is an interview with Dr. Oscar Trief (born June 17, 1910), he is interviewed by his daughter, Dr. Paula Trief (Himmelsbach), around 1980. He had never talked about his experiences in any detail until this interview. The dates are as he remembers them.*

Dr. Trief describes his life growing up in Tarnopol, Poland, one of 8 children of Hanoach and Miriam Trief. He grew up in a Hasidic household, and became active in Zionist youth organizations. In 1930, he went to Reims, France, for his pre-medical studies, in 1933 he went to Nancy, France, for medical school. He continued his Zionist activities, and was the Vice President of L'Association Etudiants Juif (Association of Jewish Students). When he returned to Poland, he was "shocked" at his parents' poverty (due to the Depression), and he married Bertha Katz, they had a son, Marek, born Sept. 9, 1939. On Sept., 17, 1939, Poland was invaded by the Russians, and he and his family moved to the shtetl Strusów. The Russians "allowed me to practice medicine," and he worked with Dr. Sliipi (sp?), who was his boss and protector. He appointed Dr. Trief to be a "sanitary inspector," he supervised a team of nurses to do things like check the water supply, give vaccinations, and do health inspections, in the town and surrounding areas. The Russians evicted his parents from their home because his father was a "capitalist," and they were sent to Mikulince, Poland. The whole Trief family had "passport #11," i.e., defined as "counter-revolutionaries." In 1932, two sisters and their husbands (Ronia and Mordechai, Vushka and Pavel) immigrated to Palestine. Other siblings (Anda, Bronka, Gusta, Regina and David) and their families remained in Tarnopol.

In June, 1941, the Germans invaded Strusow. There was a pogrom, Dr. Sliipi protected him. The pogrom was much worse in Tarnopol, several family members were killed. On Aug., 28, 1942, there was a second "Aktion," and they started hearing rumors about the concentration camps. His wife and son hid in the woods, he was out of the town with his work. Those remaining were sent to the ghetto and Strusow was declared "Juden frei." His parents survived the Aktion in Mikulince, and were sent to another town, where his brother, David, lived with his family. They were later sent to Belzec concentration camp. He was told by witnesses that: his father had jumped off the train, was caught, and was shot; his sister, Anda, had also jumped off the train, she hid with the partisans and survived; his mother and Bronka were gassed at Belzec; his brother, David, and his wife and two daughters were slaughtered in an open grave; he does not know what happened to his sister, Regina. During the day, he traveled from town to town with the sanitation team, and looked for a hiding place, but was not successful. At night he returned to the ghetto. One day, he returned and his wife and son were gone, he was told they had been shot in an open grave.

One day a young man, whom he did not know, named Slominski (sp?), told him he wanted to save his life. Dr. Trief "thought he was out of his mind." They spread the rumor that Dr. Trief (and his brother-in-law, who had been with him) had been killed. On June 6, 1943, they ran to Slominski's house, and the young man's father agreed to hide them. During the day, they hid in the barn, at night they went to the house. He describes several very close calls, they stayed there June, 1943-March, 1944. Dr. Sliipi was the only other person who knew where he was, and he didn't tell. On March 24, 1944, the Russians liberated them. They gave him the use of a house, and gave him the job of checking the health of the recruits in surrounding towns. He found his sister, Anda, and returned to Strusow. He organized a clinic to care for survivors, and is very proud of that work.

In Sept., 1944, he was with the Russians when they liberated Podhajcze. He met Leon Kimel, who had survived with his daughter, Luba, and son, Alex. Two weeks after they met, Oscar Trief and Luba Kimel were married. They had a son, Harold (now a radiologist), on Aug., 9, 1946, and when he was 4 weeks old they immigrated to Sweden. He was able to work as a doctor because of Dr. Klinkse (sp?) who

helped him stay in Sweden, and continue his training to become an obstetrician/gynecologist. On April 17, 1949, their daughter, Paula (now a clinical psychologist), was born. Although they were safe in Sweden, they decided to move to the US, and start again. They took a ship, The Gripsholm, to New York City, arriving in Jan., 1952. They lived in the Bronx, NY, he did yet another internship at Lincoln Hospital, and in 1956 he opened his private practice in The Bronx, which he very successfully ran until his partial retirement, around 1977. He also trained residents and students at Albert Einstein Medical Center. His beloved wife, Luba, died in 1975, he later married Renee Boral, a Polish Jew who had survived the war in Italy. He continued to work as an obstetrician/gynecologist with several different agencies until he fully retired, around 1980. He died in 1999.