

SALVATOR MOSHE (Recorded 1980 in Milwaukee)

Salvator Moshe was born in 1915 in Salonika, Greece and traces his families roots back to the Spanish Inquisition, although his family lived in Salonika for centuries. He had 4 sisters, Regina, Mary, Elenora and Bella and describes his childhood and his extended family. His family was orthodox and close-knit. His father was a shoemaker. At the time of Salvator's birth Greece was under Turkish rule, which changed to Greek control in 1923. He reports that the Turks were always good to the Jews, He describes in detail his childhood, traditions, life in Salonika, marriage customs and educational systems. 90% of the Jews in Greece lived in Salonika before WWII. Salvator's father wanted the family to immigrate to Palestine but this never happened. He encouraged his brother and his family to go, and they ae the only branch of the family to survive besides one of Salvator's brothers in law.

Salvator went to live in France for a brief time after school. He discusses his life at this time and his work, mostly in the black market. When Italy declared war on Greece in 1940 Salvator was back in Salonika working with his father as a shoemaker, He did fight in Albania against the Italians, and discusses his life during this time. He says antisemitism started in Greece in the 1930s. The German took Greece in 1940 but the next 2 years were peaceful for the Jews. Salvator was still working on the black market and making a good living. In 1942 a ghetto was established (Baron Hirsch ghetto) and the Jews were deported to Auschwitz after a week, in April 1943. Salvator estimates that 109,000 Jews were transported to Auschwitz.

Salvator describes the train to Auschwitz and the process of selection, shaving, disinfection, etc. His tattoo number was 116520 and his brother in law was 1165521. After selection he never saw any of his family again. He was fortunate to have been befriended by the head of the bunker and didn't have to work outside. He discusses life in Auschwitz. A Polish zookeeper saved his life by telling him to go on a transport to Warsaw. The Germans wanted the Greek prisoners to go because the language barrier made it difficult to communicate with the Poles. Salvator states that this 10-month period was horrible. Another man then saved his life after he got typhoid and was allowed to be in the shoe factory without doing anything.

As the Russians neared, the Jews were marched 5-6 days to Dachau; about 50% of the 4000 prisoners survived the march. Salvator at first worked making shoes, but then was sent to a very primitive Waldlager where he felled trees, which was a better job than loading cement because of the latter's high mortality. In 1945 they were again on a transport when the Americans arrived. They forced the townspeople to look at all the dead, and for 24 hours allowed the prisoners to take anything they wanted from the German homes. Many people died from overeating.

Salvator found his brother in law alive in Feldafing about a month after liberations and took him back to Waldheim where he lived with the Gruenwald family. Salvator explains how he was involved in the black market in Waldheim. His brother in law eventually went to Israel, But Salvator decided to go to Milwaukee where there were a lot of shoe factories. He left in April 1949 on the SS Langfried. HIAS and the Jewish Family Service were helpful to him and he landed a job in the Greenbaum tannery.

Salvator met his American born wife Thelma Seiden and married in 1950. He discusses his 3 children and their accomplishments. Salvator worked at Greenbaum's for 3 years, then 17 years at Droster, then Wisconsin Leather and finally Flagg Tanning from which he retired a month before this interview. Salvator remembers Morris Stern at JFS was very helpful to him. He discusses much about his life in Milwaukee.... His family, friends, religion and thought on the Holocaust. He is often very nervous when thinking about it.