

## Goldie Nisenboun

My name is Goldie Nisenboun. I was born on May 7th, 1919 as Goldie Frimovitz. I was born in Romania which was Transylvania at that time. I grew up in a small village. There were two hundred and fifty Jewish people living there, the next big town was Seeghit, about 30 miles away. My parents were Frank and Bertha and they had ten children with one dying early that I do not remember. The nine remaining children were first Rose, she died in the concentration camp with her four children also dying in the concentration camp, then there was Morris, Frieda, then me Goldie, then Alexander, Esther, Helen, Pearl and then the youngest Erwin. We grew up poor but we did all right. We always had hand me down clothes. My father was a tailor and was able to provide for us. We were a very religious family, we were Orthodox Jews, we observed the Sabbath and on Friday nights we would light the candles as I still do on Friday evenings. My father would close up the shop and on Saturdays we would go to the Temple for services and then on Sunday my father would reopen the shop. We kept a kosher home. So we followed strict dietary laws as Jewish people. We lived in our own section of this village, the people that were not Jewish lived in the other part of the town. But before the war we all got along, we played with kids that weren't Jewish and there were no problems. We went to a public school but had to stop going in the sixth grade because we were Jewish and at home we spoke Yiddish and Hungarian.

Problems began in 1942 when the Hungarian soldiers came to our town and took one hundred of our people away and we never heard what happened to them. At that time I had a trade, I was a seamstress so when the Hungarians came we had to change our flags from Romania to Hungarian. We then had to wear yellow stars to show that we were Jewish. The ladies wore the yellow stars on their chest on their clothing while the men wore the stars as an arm band. We made the stars ourselves and they were made with cardboard and covered with a yellow cloth. Then we weren't allowed to ride on the buses or go to a movie. This went on for two years and then in 1944 everything changed. An order came that the Jews were going to be moved in one month and we had that one month to get ready for it so they told us to pack what we wanted. So we baked what we could for that month and then they would then let us know when we were to leave. After a month they gathered us up and put us in open wagons and transported us to this bigger town Seeghit. Remember during this time we had no cell phones, televisions or ability to talk to the outside world so we had no idea that anything else was going on. So we stayed in Seeghit about a month and they brought a lot of Jewish people from other towns and put us in a ghetto. There were Hungarian guard watching us. There was no work and we basically stayed in our house afraid to go out. This lasted about another month and then they transported us in trucks to a train station and we didn't know where we were going. They then put us in these cattle cars and the train took off. We were packed in, it was deplorable conditions, we brought some food but we mainly gave it to the children thinking since we were older we could survive with less food. We traveled on this train for many days and nights and I don't even know how many because we could not see out do we had trouble knowing if it was day or night but it went on for several days. People that were older were getting sick and several died during this ride. What the guards would do then is just open the door of this cattle car and throw the person out and we would keep riding. They gave us no food and we had a little water but the conditions were horrible. But we were still hopeful at that time thinking they were going to take us somewhere where we would settle down and live. We didn't know we were going to a concentration camp.

After many days the train finally stopped, they opened the door and we saw the SS guards. Our whole family was together at that time. They lined all of the people up while beating us with rubber hoses. They then marched us in to the concentration camp and a guard told us which way to go. I always remember my youngest brother Erwin was in line with my father and they were holding hands. The SS guard told my father to go one way and my youngest brother to go another way. My father thought they were going to kill Erwin since he was young, only 16, and my father told them he had a trade being a tailor so he thought they would use him. So my father pleaded with the SS guard to let Erwin go in the same direction as my father. But the SS guard said no so they separated crying but it turned out they immediately killed my father and not Erwin. As we got off the train as a family we promised each other that we would live and that we would all return home even though at that time we didn't know where we were. We didn't even know what a concentration camp was, we never even heard of it. But within a short time that first day both of our parents were taken to the crematorium and murdered just because they were Jewish. They also immediately killed our sister Rose who was only 30 years old and still young enough to work but was told by the SS guards to give up her children but since she thought they were going to kill them she refused so they took her and the children to the crematorium and killed all of them instantly.

So there was a selection process, they took the older people and the young children and immediately to the gas chambers while keeping the younger people so they could make them work. At that time we did not know about the crematoriums so they stated they were just going to take our parents and Rose somewhere else, later we found out they were killed. Then they took away everything we had. They left us with nothing. Then they shaved all our hair off our heads so we were bald and then took us to a bathhouse. At that time I heard someone mention the word Auschwitz and that's when I know where we were. Then we went to these wooden barracks and we laid in a wood bed and we talked amongst ourselves about food and cooking and what we were going to eat when we got out of there. There was about 1000 women in these barracks, we never saw the men except for the guards.

Even though they had wires that were electric around where we lived they would still wake us everyday at 4 a.m. They counted us to make sure no one escaped. I saw people touch the electric wires and they would die immediately from this. I do not know if they touched them on purpose or not. But there are still times when I still ask myself why didn't I touch those wires and it was because I wanted to live. Initially they would feed us with horse meat. The conditions were very rough and after two months my sister Frieda got very sick so the guards immediately took her out and we found out they took her to the crematorium and killed her. Also I should mention that after three days of being at Auschwitz I asked the SS guard where are my parents and he pointed to the smokestack and said see that smoke, that is where your parents were killed. That was when I began to realize what this camp was all about. After being there for several months, my weight was down to 90 pounds. Our day consisted of basically lying around, talking to each other, not doing anything. We would hear everyday that Mengele was coming to our camp but we didn't even know who Mengele was. Eventually Mengele came and he would look at peoples faces and decide who should live and who should die. Since there were four of us sisters, we would hide behind the barracks to stay away from him as much as we could because he wanted to separate siblings. So by hiding it was one of the reasons we survived. But the conditions were very tough, it was very cold, there was no heat in the barracks, we did not have adequate clothing, food was scarce. We saw the other people there also, which included gypsies, Polish people, etc.

After four to six months of being at Auschwitz, they transported us again, this time to Nuremberg. They put us in barracks again but this time we worked. The condition were a little better because we worked in factories. we made parts in the factory for airplanes. If we made any mistakes when we were working, we would be severely punished, beaten, etc.,. Also they took vegetables and kept those buried in crates for the winter so they could feed us something. There were times when people were so hungry they would try to sneak and get some of that food but the SS guards were watching them and they would immediately shoot them dead for doing this. Some of the guards were women and they were meaner than the men. They would beat us for any small infraction. We were beaten many times especially in Auschwitz. We would see dead people lying on the street and one time they told me to carry the body to the crematorium but I didn't know what I was doing so they beat me severely.

We were in Nuremberg for a period of time but then then the Russians started to bomb our area so we went into bunkers. This did this all day and when we came out everything was destroyed so they had to move us again. This time we were transported in open wagons to Milthower. Once again we were not working and just lying around talking. We were there just a short time and heard the Russians are coming closer so they wanted to move us again.. We did hear through the kitchen help that the Americans were getting closer also.

Then in May of 1945 we woke up one day and didn't know what happened because all the doors were open and the guards had run away because they heard the American soldiers were very close. Then the American soldiers arrived and they brought us food and clothing and we were so happy to see them. Unfortunately a lot of the people in the camps ate too much since they were starving and got typhus and died.

So we knew the four sisters survived but we didn't know if our youngest brother Erwin was still alive. So initially we were put up in German homes and given assistance since Americans were sending supplies over to us. Then my younger sister and myself decided to go look for Erwin. Eventually we heard that he was alive in a hospital in Austria but we had no way of getting there since we had no papers for a visa so we got someone to help us travel by foot through the night to get across the border. Once we got in to Austria we walked from hospital to hospital. By the time we got to the hospital he was at we found out he had just left a day earlier and was going back to Romania to our old house to see if he could find anyone if they were still alive from our family.

So Erwin went back to Romania and checked out our old house and saw that it could not be occupied by us any longer. Erwin tells the story that the only nice possession our family had was a pocket watch that my father always wore on him. Before we were taken from our home our father went to our next door neighbor and asked the neighbor if he would watch this pocketwatch to keep it safe. When Erwin went to the neighbor to retrieve the only possession our father had and being able to keep a memory of him with us the neighbor told us he would not give up the watch because he likes it now and to leave. It was still a reminder of how we were being treated as Jews.

So eventually through talking to strangers and anyone we thought knew about our brother we were finally able to meet up with him in Germany and it was a wonderful reunion for us four sisters. We stayed in Germany until 1949. I met my husband in 1946 and we were married in Germany. We were able to speak German because it is similar to the Yiddish we spoke.

My husband was in a concentration camp for five years. He grew up in Poland. But we never talked to each other about our experiences. It was just something you didn't do early on. In 1947 we had our first child Norman. But there was no work in Germany so we wanted to leave the country. A lot of people were going to Israel but we had relatives in America. At that time Truman signed a bill that would allow more immigrants in to the United States. This allowed us to apply for a visa through our family to sponsor us from New Jersey. I came first with my husband and child and we lived in New Jersey starting in April, 1949. Then my three sisters and my brother came and lived with us. It wasn't easy at first because we didn't know the English language. So we went to school at night to learn English and after five years we became US citizens. We were very happy to live here and be citizens in a free country. My husband owned a dry cleaning business, we had three children, first Norman, then Judy and the youngest Frank and now I have five grandchildren and a couple of great grandchildren.

I would like to say that the people in America have always been nice and friendly to us. Even when we could not speak English they did not laugh at us and they always seemed to help us.

We know that things aren't 100% perfect in America but we have always been thankful and appreciative to be in Germany, in a free country. Never take freedom for granted, it is the greatest gift we can have. G-d bless America and G-d bless you. Thank you