

A Living Memorial in their own words

Family of Julius Schaumberg

I was born in Schweinsberg near Marburg on May 11, 1923. My parents were Sally and Flora Schaumberg. I had an older sister Brunhilde (Hilde) and a younger brother Siegfried (Fred). My father was in the cattle business. My childhood was quiet – the local kids went to school and played together.

My family was religious. Schweinsberg had a small synagogue, but no rabbi. My father often conducted services. Every Sunday the Jewish teacher from Kirchain came to teach the kids.

Everything changed in 1936. The teachers and children were nasty. They hit me and called me names. After attending the Jewish school in Marburg for one year, I went to Kassel, about 120 miles away, where I was apprenticed to become a baker.

Before Kristallnacht nobody talked about the Nazis. But on Kristallnacht we were awakened about 4 a.m. and saw everything burning. Broken glass was everywhere and leftover baked goods were thrown into the street. The owners sold the bakery immediately and moved to Brazil. I returned home. My family wanted to leave but we didn't have the needed papers. We were afraid to sleep in our house because the Nazis sometimes came and took people away during the night.

Right after Kristallnacht my father was sent to Dachau. We had to sell the cattle and dissolve the business. About two months later he returned but never spoke about what happened there.

In 1939 I worked on a farm that trained people to go to Palestine. When I was 17, I was transferred to an Arbeits camp – a work camp for Jewish children called Furstenwalde/Spree. I was there until 1943 when I had to report to Berlin. Eight days later I was on the last train to Auschwitz-Buna. I was forced into a cattle car by soldiers with whips and vicious dogs. The trip took 2 ½ days. I was hoping to go to another labor camp so I could stay healthy enough go home to my family after the war. After the train, a truck took us to Buna. We saw prisoners in Auschwitz and realized it was a death camp.

Kennkart photos of Julius Schaumberg's family, 1939.



Sally Schaumberg



Flora Schaumberg



*Brunhilde (Hilde)
Schaumberg*



*(Werner) Julius
Schaumberg*



*Siegfried (Fred)
Schaumberg*

At Buna I had to take a shower, get my head shaved, and get my arm tattooed (number 116919). We worked building a water tower across the street from the camp. Because I had training as a baker, I was transferred to the kitchen. Later, I became head of my barracks and sick bay because I spoke German. Those jobs meant a little extra food which helped me keep going.

I was at Buna until January 16, 1945. We were forced on a death march as the Nazis began to close the camp. It took 3-4 days. We slept on the roadside. Then I was sent to an underground factory which was harder than Buna because there was no air circulation.

As the Russian army approached in late March 1945, the camp was evacuated. We were loaded into a railroad freight car enclosed with a canvas cover probably going to Bergen Belsen. I was on the train for 1 ½ days when two friends and I decided to jump off at night. We crawled under the canvas and held on to the outside of the car. At a curve as the train slowed we jumped and ran for cover. One friend was shot and killed by the Nazis.

We spent the first night in the woods because we were still in our striped uniforms. The second night we slept in a barn and stole Nazi uniforms, papers and even a gun from the retreating German army that had been hiding in the barn. My friend and I split up – we thought it would be safer to travel alone. I moved with a German company but ran away at night when they headed to the front line.

I was taken prisoner by the American Army and interrogated by Intelligence. They didn't believe I was Jewish even though I showed them the number on my arm. When I read from a Torah that a Jewish officer found, they believed me.

The army drove me to Schweinsberg in May 1945. The German government told me that my parents, sister and brother were murdered in Madjanek in August of 1942.

I went to Marburg where I met my wife Rosa. We came to Springfield in October 1949. My cousin, Adolph Katten sponsored us with the help of Rabbi Issac Klein. We eventually settled in Detroit where we raised our sons Joel and Fred.