

A Living Memorial in their own words

Family of Rosa Wintraub-Schaumberg

My name was **Ruzka Wintraub**. I was born on October 21, 1922 in Lodz Poland to Joel and Esther. Their marriage was arranged when they were 18 and 19. I was one of six children - my oldest sister, Franka, me, my sister Mala, my brothers Baylish and Menasha and my youngest sister, Minna. My father was in the scrap business and my mother helped him.

Lodz was a big city. We lived a simple life in a crowded fourth floor apartment. We had running water and thought our life wonderful. My parents were religious. We attended a small synagogue near our home. In the city, you were religious or you were assimilated.

I didn't experience anti-Semitism until after the war began. In the fall of 1939 the Germans came to Lodz and created the ghetto. My family lived in the Jewish section so we didn't have to move. The Germans began confiscating possessions and rationing food. My mother took the four younger children to the country. She came back to check on us but then could not return to the children.

My father made whiskey in the house and sold it to the drugstore so we had a little money. But people were dying in the streets from starvation.

One day a truck came through the streets announcing that all mothers and fathers had to come down to the streets and leave the children in the apartments. My sister and I were old enough to go with my parents. The soldiers went into the apartments and threw the children out of the windows. People in the street had to watch the children being killed.

I lived in the ghetto from 1939 to 1944. When the Nazis first came to the ghetto, to make us listen, they hanged 12 innocent people and forced everyone to watch. I was afraid all the time. In the fall of 1944 we were loaded on trucks and taken to the railroad station. We were locked into a cattle car going to Auschwitz. For a day and a half there was no food or water.

When we arrived men and women were separated. The Nazis tried to break up families. When Franka and I called for our mother to stay with us, the soldiers took her away. She was only 42 years old. She and my father went immediately to the crematorium.

Joel and Esther Wintraub. While in Lodz, Rosa's sister, Mala, went back to their old apartment and found a photo of their parents and a needlepoint that their mother made thrown on the floor like trash. She saved them. That's all there is to remember the family.

We were taken to the shower. Then we had to sit in rows. A big bowl of soup was given to the first person who took a drink. Then she passed it over her head to the person behind her all the way down the line. We lived in barracks with bunk beds – just four tiers of wooden slats.

Six days later we were marched to the gas chamber and ordered to undress. At that moment an order for a work detail of 300 women came. They chose me, Franka and Ruth Rosenberg, my childhood friend. We were taken by cattle car to a work camp called Oberhausen. The Americans were bombing and we had to clean up. We didn't get much to eat. Franka risked her life, snuck into a basement and "organized" food.

We left for Bergen Belsen in March of 1945 arriving at night. The barracks smelled. In the morning we found dead bodies all around us. We had to dig big ditches and bury the bodies. I got typhus and was so sick and the bunk was so hard that Franka said "lay on me" and saved my life.

We were liberated on April 15, 1945 and Bergen Belsen became a displaced persons camp. I was there until May 1945.

After liberation I was taken to the hospital. When I came out, I went to Marburg to search for my family. There were lists of survivors and I learned that Mala was in Lodz. On her wedding day she received the message that Franka and I were alive.

In Marburg I stayed with a friend. At a going away party for an American soldier I met Julius Schaumberg. Our relationship grew and we married in June 1946.

By 1947 Julius and I had a son, Joel. We decided that we did not want to raise our family on bloody soil. My sisters and I made a pact to go to America together. Mala came first, was sponsored by HIAS and went to Topeka. My family came to Springfield, MA in October 1949. Franka came 2 weeks later and went to Tulsa. Later we all moved to Detroit where we raised our families.

