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Peter
Becker
Born 1929
Munich, Germany

[Peter Becker](#) describes indoctrination and being in the Hitler Youth in the **late 1930s and early 1940s**.

“Now it was in the activities I think that my life differed from that of a normal boy who went to public school and went home after school was over and had a normal life at home. Our life was much more structured. And it was much more directed. So that whatever Hitler wanted to do with us we imbibed in a very careful fashion. That is, we were not aware of being indoctrinated. We were not being aware of what was being done to us. It was all a very, very subtle process. By the time that I -- the war ended in 1945 when I was 15, I had become a Nazi without ever really being aware that I was one. That is, I didn’t know how I’d become one. I knew that I was one. Because to me Hitler was the great man in Germany’s life. I had become convinced that Hitler was the savior of Germany.”



Guy Stern

Born 1922

Hildesheim, Germany

[Guy Stern](#) describes losing a friend to membership in the Hitler Youth in the **early 1930s**.

“I had known one of my friends in high school even before I got to high school, which... started of course even as it does now in Germany at age ten. And his name was Heinrich, Heinrich Hennes, and he, when the first nasty things happened in the school yard, he... out of conviction became our stoutest defender. He would...he would engage in fisticuffs in order to protect us. He was highly intelligent and then he was also of course in the Nazi youth organization as everybody in the class was, and finally he was taken aside more and more by his youth leader, and this youth leader and the propaganda managed to turn him around completely and he became our worst enemy.”



Frank Liebermann

Born 1929

Gleiwitz, Germany (now Poland)

[Frank Liebermann](#) describes life in Germany after the Nazis came to power in **1933**.

“We had three rooms for the first, second, and third grades. It was segregated within the school and the most scary part of the day was for recess. Everybody had to leave the building around lunchtime for about half an hour. We generally tried to navigate between... the boys and girls were separated on one side and the other side of the yard. Basically, we tried to navigate in between where we had supervision and basically were not physically harmed but it was the most unpleasant part of the school day.”

“We couldn’t use parks. Stores were boycotted. As I said hospital privileges were delayed--rather, were rescinded. My father’s brother lost his job and went from a government economist and found a job in Austria as an assistant manager of a department store. But everybody wanted to make a living and wanted to do the best he could.”



Johanna
Gerechter
Neumann
Born 1930
Hamburg, Germany

[Johanna Gerechter Neumann](#) describes anti-Jewish measures in Hamburg, Germany

"...it took place in **August of 1938**, and that was a decree by the government that all Jews, male and female, had to adopt a Jewish name. And you had to add [a] middle name to your name...a middle name. All women became Sara and all men became Israel. So that now my name became Johanna Jutta Sara Gerechter and my mother was Alice Sara Gerechter and my father was Siegbert Israel Gerechter. And it's interesting, only recently did I realize that even people like my own son and daughter-in-law never heard of this law that one can be forced to add a name to...to their existing name. And how come that people didn't become suspicious enough to just throw everything away, and leave Germany, but they didn't? I think it was a legitimate question on the part of my daughter-in-law. But, they didn't. My father had maintained that he had been a high officer during World War I. He had the Iron Cross. He had received in 1935 a cross from Hitler which was given only to all frontline fighters, meaning people who for four years of the First World War spent it on the front line, and how could the same men now deny him an existence or a livelihood and would throw him out? I mean that was something that you could not really believe."



Siegfried
Halbreich

Born 1909
Dziedzice, Poland

[Siegfried Halbreich](#) describes treatment of the prisoners in the Sachsenhausen camp in **November 1939**.

“In the beginning, they didn't treat us special hard, but since there was no work, they had to do something with us, so right in the morning after we got the coffee--they called it coffee, it was a black hot water--we were taken in front of the barracks, and we had to sit down in a crouching position, and you have to remember it was already winter, November, it was very cold, and we couldn't move. When they noticed that somebody wanted to change the position, from one leg to another one or something, they went in and beat him up, and they were sometimes killing, too. Uh, we were sitting, some people for instance got a hold of a empty cement bag, and they put it under their shirt in, in the back in order to get a little warmer, to protect, be protected by the, from the cold. But when they noticed that, they just killed this person. And naturally by this condi...in this condition, lay...standing there or sitting there in this position from the morning till about noon, our hands, fingers were frozen, the toes, and people died, even froze to death. And the next morning when the SS man came to take the report, he never ask ‘How many people?’ He ask first, ‘How many death?’”



David Bayer

Born 1922

Kozienice, Poland

[David Bayer](#) describes life in his hometown of Kozienice after the German invasion of Poland in **September 1939**.

“And then one day they come in, one German came in, and he took me out—there were a few of them, but the one grabbed me—he pulled me out of the house to do some work for them. And there were a bunch of German soldiers standing there behind a church, and they wanted me to take out a battery from under the truck.

I never had a truck; I never saw a car in my town. We had horses and wagons. And I didn’t know how to do it. My hands were bleeding; it was cold already, there was snow on the ground, and I had to lie down in the mud to take the battery out. And they were standing and laughing, taking pictures.

Finally I got the battery out, and the acid spilled on me and burned all of my clothes, to the skin. I was crying; I was yelling and crying. And they were taking pictures and laughing. The humiliation was—I could have died there and I would have been happier.”



[Robert Wagemann](#) describes fleeing from a clinic in **1942** where, his mother feared, he was to be put to death by “euthanasia”

“My mom and I were summoned to a, a part of the university clinic in Heidelberg, in Schlierheim, and there I was examined. And during the examination my mom was sitting on the outside of the room, and she overheard a conversation that the doctors would do away with me, uh, would ab...would abspritz me, which means that they would give me a needle and put me to sleep. My mom overheard the conversation and, uh, during lunch time, while the doctors were gone, she grabbed hold of me, we went down to the Neckar River into the high reeds and there she put my clothes on, and from there on we really went into hiding....”

Robert Wagemann

Born 1937

Mannheim, Germany



[Antje Kosemund, Paul Eggert, and Elvira Manthey](#) describe the Euthanasia Program

“At 5 ½, I was sent to a children’s home that cooperated with the Nazis. The children there were declared mentally ill. Behind our dormitory were the babies. And one day I was surprised that I didn’t hear the babies crying anymore. That was in **1940**. I had been in the institution for two years. Then I looked in, and all the beds were empty. I ran down the long hallway to the other room where the older handicapped were. All of those beds were empty too. And then I was told, ‘Your sister is being taken away’. My sister. I brushed her hair back from her face, hugged her again, and then she was gone. I was devastated.”

Elvira Manthey
Born 1932
Magdeburg, Germany



Jacob
Wiener

Born 1917
Bremen, Germany

[Rabbi Jacob G. Wiener](#) describes his experience during Kristallnacht, known as the “Night of Broken Glass,” on **November 9–10, 1938**.

“That night, they broke in, in the middle of the night, and they arrested all the boys, maybe 50 boys. It was a dormitory, in the middle of the night.... and then afterwards they came and said, ‘Form lines outside, five abreast.’ Now, Würzburg is a small city, it has cobblestones, and we were led through the streets.”

“... they assembled as many as they could, people of the city, and they were staying at the side. And they walked us through the street, and while they were walking us through the street, these people, you see, called us names, they spit at us, and so forth.”

“We went through the streets and we went past the burning synagogues. And we were led into the prison.... Every day, the people who were arrested there, many of them disappeared. They were sent to concentration camps.”



Charlene
Schiff

Born 1929
Horochoów, Poland

[Charlene Schiff](#) describes anti-Jewish decrees and measures following the German invasion of Horochów on **June 26, 1941**.

“It seems every day from then on there were decrees... First, we had to bring everything that was of any value, we had to bring to the marketplace to give to the Germans... All of a sudden, most of the heads of the families were gone. We didn't know where, when, or if we'll ever see our fathers and brothers again...when they took my father away, my mother was still a very young woman and she turned gray overnight, but she tried very much to camouflage her feelings, and she did not want us to feel the despair that she probably felt...

Then, they gathered us in the marketplace and we had to watch when they burned the main synagogue and the little... shtiebels [small houses of worship]... They burned all our Torahs. They burned all the books of prayer, and we had to stand and watch. Everyone who was over 14 years of age was sent to slave labor... My mother and my sister ended up working. My mother was digging ditches, and so was my sister... and sometimes my sister and both my mother were black and blue from beatings.... then one day people were told not to go to work, and we were given approximately an hour to take whatever we could carry with us... we were told we are going to move, we are going to live, in a new place, and this is, this was the ghetto.”



**Charlene
Schiff**
Born 1929
Horochów, Poland

[Charlene Schiff](#) describes escaping from the Horochów ghetto in **September 1942**.

“The next morning... gunshots... seemed to come from every which side. We heard a lot of noise, a lot of commotion, we saw fire, we heard screams, we heard babies crying, and it seems that it was none too soon that we got out. At that point, a lot of other people from the ghetto tried to do... the same thing... they ran towards the river. At that time, the guards started screaming, the Ukrainian guards... in Ukrainian, "Wylaz Zyde Ya Tebe Bachu" and that means, "Crawl out, Jew, I can see you." That phrase rings in my ears constantly, and a lot of people came out. My mother held me down and we stayed put...”

“And we stayed pinned down and at that point the gunshots were working full time. There were screams from the ghetto, and fire, and it never let down even at night, night and day. I don't know how many days we stayed in the river, but it was several days, and I kept dozing off. And one time I woke up, or I thought I woke up, and I looked around, and my mother wasn't there. I really became panic-stricken, and I didn't know what to do, and I just stayed there until the very end of that day. And by that time, everything quieted down. There was no more sound except my own sobbing.”



Erika Eckstut

Born 1928

Znojmo, Czechoslovakia

[Erika Eckstut](#) describes hunger in the Czernowitz ghetto in Romania in **1942** (today Czernowitz is in western Ukraine).

“It was worse than bad; I don’t have a word to use, what it was like. There was no food. There was nothing you can do. There was nothing you can eat.

It was just terrible. My father, who was so much for just the right way, you can’t take the law in your own hands, he decided that we have to learn something in the ghetto, because we didn’t have any food and we didn’t have what to do...

He told us about the French Revolution, which really didn’t interest me at all, and I didn’t pay attention... When my father was telling me that I hurt him very much by never knowing anything, I said, “I didn’t pay attention.” He says, “Why didn’t you pay attention?”

I said, “I’m dreaming of a piece of bread. If I would have a piece of bread, I would be very happy.”



Nesse Godin

Born 1928

Šiauliai, Lithuania

[Nesse Godin](#) describes a roundup and massacre in the Šiauliai ghetto.

“What happened in the ghetto of Šiauliai, Lithuania, on **November 5, 1943**, SS and Gestapo with the help of Ukrainians... went into the ghetto, they found every hiding place, they went in, they broke every dish, every pillow, made every single person come to the gate near that place where you gathered for work, all the children, all the elderly, all the sick, all the babies that were born illegally in the ghetto... on that day not one child was spared. At the gate a selection to the right and to the left, a thousand children. Five hundred elderly and sick and a few hundred healthy and strong, including two men from our Jewish Community Council...”

“We did not know then where they were taken to. We honestly believed that they were taken to another camp where they have children. They said these children need supervision, you all go to work, we will take care of them. After the war we found out they were taken to Auschwitz where they were gassed and cremated, they did not even keep them there one day.... My father was taken with that truck. My father was 47 years old. “



Beno Helmer

Born 1923

Teplice, Czechoslovakia

[Beno Helmer](#) describes conditions in the Łódź ghetto, **1940-1944**.

“Wherever you went, you saw bodies dying. And this becomes part of, you know, [the] first two, three or four, you find them as a shock. But later,... you disassociate yourself completely from it.... Filth was also tremendous. Filth. It was filthy. It was filthy even in the building where we lived. I mean, in the winter time. I mean, the toilet was...it was...it was ice. It was all ice. And then the feces and the urine all over, was overflowing...overflowing there. And..and sometime, they took you to forced labor. I mean, one incident happened. They..they took us into a home. The German came and they, they lined everybody up. They lined everybody up..... And there was a lady there with a child.... And he ask, ‘Whose is this child?’ And the woman who was the mother says, she did not admit the child. So he took the child by the legs, and he swung it against the wall. And he killed the child. And I looked at the mother, and it was like somebody else's. It wasn't her child. She completely cut this child off out of her emotions. She cut this child off completely away. And I realized at that time that self-survival is, is the most...more primary in your life. It's more than...than even your own child.”



Charlene
Schiff

Born 1929
Horochów, Poland

[Charlene Schiff](#) describes conditions in the Horochów ghetto from **late 1941 to late 1942**.

“When we were thrown into that ghetto, we were assigned one room. It was a large building, actually as far as I recall it was a three-story building. It was in the poorest section of town, and it was very, in great disrepair. We were assigned this one room, and there were three other families with us to share that one room. The entire house had one bathroom and one kitchen, and the running water was almost nothing.... There was no warm water, only cold water. If you wanted hot water you had to heat it on a wooden stove, and there was no wood. There was not enough room to sleep everyone on the floor in our room, and so the women--and there were two boys in that group--found some wood and they built... bunks... so that we slept like in threes, because there was not enough room for all of us.”

“The people who did not go to work did not receive any rations. The rations were very meager.... it was like maybe two slices of bread, some oleo, a little bit of sugar, and I think some vegetables. I don't think there was any meat at all... My mother and sister shared their rations with me.... It was an unbelievable feeling to be hungry... it's a hunger that is very difficult to describe, for a child to be hungry....”



Frima L.

Born 1936

Podwoloczyska, Poland

[Frima L.](#) describes the roundup of Jews for a mobile killing unit (Einsatzgruppen) massacre in **November 1941**.

“One morning, very early, we heard knocking on the doors and the windows and yelling, you know, "Get out, get out, get out." So quickly we got dressed and we walked out of the house that we were staying in. The Gestapo was there and...they, they told us all to go in a certain direction.... And we started following the other people, and they took us to a large building. Must have been a factory, and they told us to get undressed. And they would make you take off the jewelry and everything...any valuables that you had on you. We all did. The women remained with the underwear only, and the men in their shorts. And my mother wasn't fast enough to take off her gold earrings so she was hit by a Gestapo with the handle of a rifle. And, she fell down. We picked her up... and we had to form lines outside. It was a cloudy day, very cloudy, and a very fine drizzle was coming down. And all the women were so embarrassed that they were without anything on top that they all covered their...their breasts with their hands. And... we started walking the street following the other people. As we were passing some of those streets, there were some Ukrainians who were cheering as we were walking by, and they were applauding and cheering that this, this what was done to us.”



Martin
Spett
Born 1928
Tarnów, Poland

[Martin Spett](#) describes a massacre of Tarnów Jews in **June 1942**.

“We heard the columns of Jews under German, German escort at night. It was going constantly. They were passing our house because this was already on the outskirts of the city, the cemetery, and they were marching them to the woods behind the... city. And as we found out later they, they were all shot over there. During the day I looked out through the shingles. My father said I shouldn't look but, anyway, I was a kid, I was curious. And the roof was overlooking the cemetery and wagons with bodies, dead bodies, were coming in. Groups, they were bringing in groups of Jewish people that had to dig ditches, and the bodies dumped in, and, after those Jews that dug the ditches, they were shot also and pushed, by another group that came in after them, into those ditches, and lime was poured over, over the bodies, and the next group covered up those ditches and dug other ditches. They brought in...they brought in...pregnant women, and they didn't use any bullets. They used bayonets. The screams of the mothers that their children, they, they tore the children out of their arms. And the screams of the children I still hear.”



Siegfried
Halbreich

Born 1909
Dziedzice, Poland

[Siegfried Halbreich](#) describes conditions and forced labor in the Gross-Rosen camp in **early 1941**.

“There was a new camp, consisted only in the beginning of six blocks, barracks, and at night we were taken to our barrack, and this was our barrack for the whole year, and the conditions were there much worse than in Sachsenhausen. During the day, we had to march to the stone quarry, I would say maybe 20 minutes away, and it was in a mountainous terrain, and there we had to work, we had to work in this quarry carrying the heavy rocks, and people died like flies. On the way back, we had to everyone carry one big rock on our shoulders to the camp because coming home, I mean, to the barracks, to the camp after the report, counting how many people are left, or how many, if the, the same amount of people is coming back who went out of the camp, they said, "All go back to the camp, to the barracks, but the Jews remain." And we had to continue to build the camp till twelve o'clock at night. So--all without food. When we came to the barracks, we were so tired that we just didn't have any appetite. We fall asleep. And in the morning, five, six o'clock right away, up and again the same thing.”



Julian Noga
Born 1921
Skrzynka, Poland

[Julian Noga](#) describes conditions in Flossenbürg where he was imprisoned from **1942-1945**.

“The life, daily life was terrible. You get up 4:30...quick, quick, quick, quick, and go to the quarry, work twelve hours, six days a week, twelve hours a day. Sunday...Sunday before noon we do the chores, so-called, you know. Clean out your lockers, clean out the barrack, clean up yourselves, and everything. Then we had inspection, you know. If you had button missing or something like that, you was punished for that, see. So, it was clean. That time from the beginning was clean, I must say. Yes. Oh, they cut our hair every month, and every week they cut with the clippers in the middle, you know. Yeah. And then you work twelve hours a day. The food was...wasn't enough to survive no matter how strong you are for six months you know. The stronger people I saw, in six months they die.”



Gerda Weissmann
Klein

Born 1924
Bielsko, Poland

[Gerda Weissmann Klein](#) describes her transfer to the Bolkenhain subcamp of Gross-Rosen in **July 1942** and a camp leader there.

“They needed German-speaking people to be trained, so he bought all of us for a place called Bolkenhain which was a new weaving camp in Oberschlesien [Upper Silesia].... In all fairness I must say that camp was probably better than most of certainly what followed because it was new. You see, we were only fifty girls there. And the person who became our lagerführerin [camp leader], at first sight she looked like a bulldog and then I thought she's going to tear us limb from limb, and she was a very kind person. She was probably chosen for her looks but we all who were in captivity under her owe her a debt of gratitude. And I think by her very decency she pinned a lie to the lips of all who said they had no choice. I won't say she particularly loved us. She saved my life once for which I'll be eternally grateful. There was as far as I know, and I do know, that as long as we were there, and later in a place called Landeshut where she also was, nobody was sent to Auschwitz from... those two camps. And uh she showed that people could help individually and she did. I only met, during my entire years under the Nazis for six years, I only met two who were really kind and I think that they should be singled out for that. Frau...her name was Frau Kuegler.”

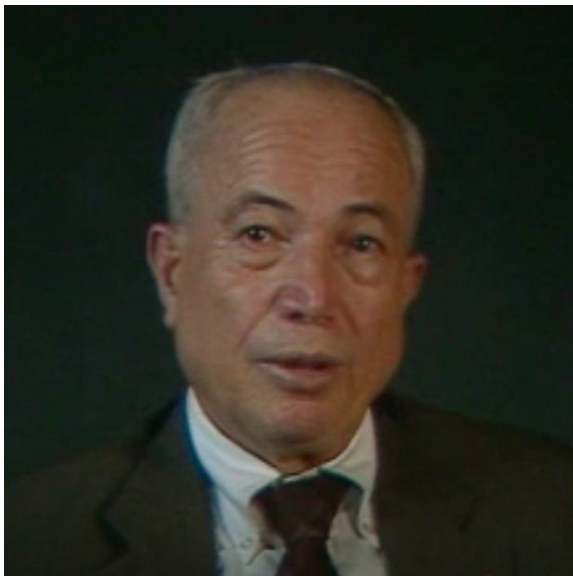


**Sandor Alex
Braun**

**Born 1930
Transylvania, Romania**

[Sandor \(Shony\) Alex Braun](#) describes the death of his father in **early 1945** at Kochendorf, a subcamp of Natzweiler.

“One prisoner was missing. After several recounts, prisoner...one prisoner was still missing. So the Kapos went to the barrack to see...or, or to look for him. And they found the missing man sleeping in a corner. My father. They dragged him from, from his collar, from, from his collar, to the SS guard. That's February, it's cold, snowing, ice on the ground. And, the SS guard turned to the assembly, to us, said "As I understand, the Jewish dog has here two sons. I want them to step out and come near him. Witness his punishment.... They rushed toward him, and was kicking and beating him from all direction. Whipping him.... They were beating him until he collapsed, my father, and was silent, except for his lips were moving, tried to say something. And I noticed...came closer, and I noticed that he was reciting the declaration of faith of the Jewish people, Sh'ma. The Sh'ma: "Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai elohenu, Adonai echad"--"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." Then he was very silent.



Saul Ingber

Born 1921

Moisei, Romania

[Saul Ingber](#) describes forced labor and brutality in the Gusen subcamp of the Mauthausen concentration camp in **1944**.

“We was digging... trenches. And between us were a German. He... used to go to pick up somebody and take him out and beat him for no reasons. And.... he start screaming, "Hey, you there, stinker, you there, come here...." And he come to me and he asked me, you know, in a nice way... and then he... lift up mine chin. When he lift up mine chin, he said to me... "Where is your God?" And I raised my right hand...and face it to the sky. As soon as I lift up my hand to the sky, he pushed me to my stomach. He give me such a punch.... I was thinking I'll faint, and then he raised again my chin... and he asked me again, and, again I raised my hand and I told, "That's my God. I believe in Him." And he...he knocked me in the front in mine nose. I have a broken nose and he knocked those, mine first three teeth what I have up to today false teeth, he broke them, I took out my teeth and threw them away in the front of him, and I was bleeding, very much. And... when I took out mine teeth, he asked me again... "Who's your God?" I say, "You my God." I point with the finger and with the same hand, with the right hand what I point to God, I point to him and I say, "You mine God," and he asked me, "How come I'm your God?" I said, "When you don't beat me, you mine God."



Martin Weiss

Born 1929

Polana, Czechoslovakia

[Martin Weiss](#) describes his deportation in **May 1944** from the ghetto in Munkács, then part of Hungary, and his arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi killing center.

“... they put us on a train with 125, 135 per boxcar with these bundles. No toilet facilities, no water, no food. And for three days and nights we were on a train.... When we got to Auschwitz, it was during the night... they opened the doors and there were floodlights surrounding us. And you got off the train. If you ever saw bedlam, or if you could imagine hell, that must have been it. Because everybody was trying to hold on to their children; they tried to hold on to each other. And in the meantime, people in those striped clothes..., walking around with big sticks screaming and shouting “*Schnell, schnell!*” “Get out!” and “Move, move fast!” And so everybody was trying to hold on and everybody was scared out of their wits.... As soon as we got off, they started separating us, men from women.... Everything had to move very very fast, high speeds... Then we had to go through a line, and the officer would stand there and go like this, left or right. If you went to left, you went to your death. If you went to right, you went to work.... I was not that big. I was like just about 15 years old; I was actually small for my age. Turned out to be, I was the only one from the boys in my age to come through.”



Leo
Schneiderman

Born 1921
Lodz, Poland

[Leo Schneiderman](#) describes his arrival at Auschwitz in the **summer of 1944** and separation from his family during the selection process.

“It was late at night that we arrived at Auschwitz. When we came in, the minute the gates opened up, we heard screams, barking of dogs, blows from...from those Kapos, those officials working for them, over the head. And then we got out of the train. And everything went so fast: left, right, right, left. Men separated from women. Children torn from the arms of mothers. The elderly chased like cattle. The sick, the disabled were handled like packs of garbage. They were thrown in a side together with broken suitcases, with boxes. My mother ran over to me and grabbed me by the shoulders, and she told me ‘Leibele, I’m not going to see you no more. Take care of your brother.’”



Lilly Appelbaum
Malnik

Born 1928
Antwerp, Belgium

[Lilly Appelbaum Malnik](#) describes the registration process at Auschwitz after her arrival in 1944.

"And they said, 'From now on you do not answer by your name. Your name is your number.' And the delusion, the disappointment, the discouragement that I felt, I felt like I was not a human person anymore. They had shaved our heads, and I felt so ashamed. And also when they told us to undress and to shower, they made us feel like, like we were animals. The men were walking around and laughing and looking at us, and you take a young girl at that age who has never been exposed to a, a person, to a man, and you stay there naked, I wanted the ground should open and I should go in it."



**Chaim
Engel**

**Born 1916
Brudzew, Poland**

[Chaim Engel](#) describes arrival at Sobibor killing center in summer **1942**.

“We arrived in Sobibor...I was with my brother and myself and my friend. And..., about seven, eight hundred people and they took us out from the trains and they put us in two lines and they start...picking out people. I didn't know what the picking out means, so one German asked me, "Where are you from?" I said, "From Łódź." "Out." And then they went further. "What are you?" "Uh, a carpenter." "Out." Things like that, so they picked about eighteen to twenty people. Well..., we heard in Poland that.... They kill Jews and they gas Jews.... But... as younger people, we really didn't believe that something like that is possible. We thought maybe the younger people will take to work...maybe only the older people. You just didn't want to...want it to believe, because it was so incomprehensible, so unbelievable that something like that can happen that you just...even if you had the intelligence you didn't believe it. So when they picked us out in the camp, I really didn't know what the picking out means, whether life or death, so they took us...the twenty people...they took us in one side and the others went to the camp, to the gas chambers...what we found out later. So.... in the afternoon, they took us... to separate the clothes. That started to be our work and... that was the clothes from the people who just arrived with the transport what we came with. And while I did that I found the clothes of my brother...”



**Abraham
Bomba**
Born 1913
Bytom, Poland

[Abraham Bomba](#) describes the Treblinka gas chambers, where from **late July 1942 through September 1943**, camp personnel murdered an estimated 925,000 Jews.

“The gas chamber...was all concrete. There was no window. There was nothing in it. Beside, on top of you... it looked like, you know, the water going to come out from it. Had two doors. Steel doors. From one side and from the other side. The people went in to the gas chamber from the one side... When it was full the gas chamber--the size of it was...I would say 18 by 18, or 18 by 17, I didn't measure.... And they pushed in as many as they could. It was not allowed to have the people standing up with their hands down because there is not enough room, but when people raised their hand like that there was more room to each other. And on top of that they throw in kids, 2, 3, 4 years old kids, on top of them. And we came out. The whole thing it took I would say between five and seven minute. The door opened up, not from the side they went in but the side from the other side and from the other side the...the group...people working in Treblinka number 2, which their job was only about dead people. They took out the corpses. Some of them dead and some of them still alive. They dragged them to the ditches, and over there they covered them. Big ditches, and they covered them. That was the beginning of Treblinka.”



Theresia
Seible

Born 1921
Würzburg, Germany

[Theresia Seible and her daughter, Rita Prigmore](#) describe research on Sinti twins in 1943.

Theresia: “We were treated as though we just didn't exist. As if we just weren't there. You know, it is terrible when a person's dignity is taken away from them. You are nothing anymore. We are people, not animals they can study.... Our house was always being watched by the SS. They came with cars, took us to various clinics. They always had one pretext. Always our Gypsy blood.”

Rita: “.... We were identical twins, Gypsy twins, two little girls born... in a research clinic. When my mom had to bring us in, they did all this research.... and then she found out that my sister, Rolanda, was in the bathtub, where the nurse took her, and she had a bandage around her head.”

Theresia: “... I grabbed the child... and ran halfway down the stairs. My father ran toward me, took the child, put her under his coat and fled. I went back up and my mother hit one of the nurses. There was a lot of chaos as she tried to shove my mother back and shut the door... At that moment, another nurse... said to the doctor: ‘Tell the woman you took the child into the operating room and brought it out dead...! The woman wants to see her dead child!’ And that’s when my arms just, I just cannot describe this to you.”



Stanley
Wardzala

Born 1923
Śmigno, Poland

[Joseph Stanley Wardzala](#) describes the badge he wore as a Polish forced laborer after being deported to Germany in **1941**.

“Everyone, when we get to Germany, we have, the company takes so many guys, you know, people, men or women, or separate woman, men separate, and every Pole, like me, they gave us a little cloth like two, three-inch square with "name/P," and you have to put on the right side of your jacket, jacket and on the shirt and you have to sew it yourself and you have to have it all the time. If you don't have this you get beaten very hard, very strong. And this was "P" for, marked for Polish, and I was one of the two million Polish citizen that was taken by force to Germany to forced-labor camp.”



Robert
Wagemann

Born 1937
Mannheim, Germany

[Robert Wagemann](#) describes surreptitious Jehovah's Witness prayer meetings in **1940s** Nazi Germany.

“In those days, yes, they were carried on meetings, but as a youngster I did not realize that these were meetings. Of course, it was nice that, once my father came home, once in a while, he took us then on Sunday out for bicycle tours. Little did I know that these were pre-arranged meetings where we met other Witnesses in the woods and it was like a picnic. So, they had something to eat and also something to read. And brothers were stationed further apart, and if someone would come they would whistle a song and the literature would disappear under the covers, under the, where they were sitting. And so they were having a picnic and once the people were gone again they continued having their Watchtower. And those meetings, as time went on, became smaller, and smaller, and smaller.”



**Estelle
Laughlin**
Born 1929
Warsaw, Poland

[Estelle Laughlin](#) discusses the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, when German forces, intending to liquidate the ghetto on **April 19, 1943**, were stunned by an armed uprising from Jewish fighters.

“And while we were in this bunker, the freedom fighters confronted a twentieth century army. Just a small group of poorly clad, poorly fed, poorly armed freedom fighters climbing up on rooftops, meeting the tanks on street corners, standing in front of open windows and lobbing Molotov cocktails and whatever explosives they could find.... Well, “Boom!” there was this horrendous explosion... Dust was flying, splinters were flying around me. In one instant our hiding place was invaded by a bunch of barbarians and they chased us out of the bunker.... We were marched through the streets. The ground beneath us trembled. The air thundered with detonations. The buildings crumbled to our feet.... enormous tongues of flames licked the sky and painted it in otherworldly colors of iridescence.... People lying in congealed blood. I tried to turn my face away not to see it. I couldn’t understand what death meant. All I hoped for is that I meet it with my mother, and sister, and my father. But I couldn’t turn my face away from the people who I cannot forget, and they marched us onto *Umschlagplatz* onto freight trains, crowded like sardines.



Vladka (Fagele)
Peltel Meed

Born 1921
Warsaw, Poland

[Vladka \(Fagele\) Peltel Meed](#) describes smuggling activities in the Warsaw ghetto in **late 1942 and early 1943**.

“I bought ten pounds... of dynamite... and I will smuggle this into the ghetto... One of the very easy places which smuggling was going on was on uh Franciszkanska [Franciscan Street]. It was a place where one part of the ghetto, of the wall, was on the side of the Polish side and the other part of the wall was the Jewish side... So one of the smugglers... he had a ladder and he was putting the ladder close to the wall and bribing sometimes the Polish police or the Jewish police, but it was impossible to bribe the German patrols..., and I came there with mine package in... greasy paper that it should look like butter... and to my luck when I came... on top of the wall, suddenly shooting was heard from far away, and they got scared. They snatched the ladder away... And I was with mine package on top of the wall, and the shooting got closer and I was sure that this time I am done. I didn't see anybody on the Jewish side and I didn't see anybody on the other side and I on top.,,, I was afraid to jump. I was afraid that maybe dynamite can blow up. I didn't know even if it can... I didn't know too much about dynamite. But suddenly from the Jewish side, two of mine colleagues from the Jewish underground saw me, came running to the wall. They made a human ladder and they brought me down.”



Alisa (Lisa)
Nussbaum
Derman
Born 1926
Raczki, Poland

[Alisa \(Lisa\) Nussbaum Derman](#) describes partisan activities in the Naroch forest from 1943-1944..

“What do the partisans do? They really made it impossible for the German army to move. We cut down trees, and blockaded the roads. We put, we mined the entrances to where, where the, where the resisters lived, and this was called an otriad, the units where, where they lived. They... cut down telephone wires and... made ambushes at times, dynamiting the roads, the, dynamiting also trains that went to the front. And in the very same token we helped Jews that were hiding in the woods, because there were Jewish young children, and also elderly people, women, that escaped, one in a family, that ran out of a probably ghetto that was either burning or everybody was being killed, and quite a few children. I mean, not, not in large numbers, no. And we saw they lived at first almost like wild, running from place to place and hiding and not never having enough food, some of them even died. But when we came in into the forests we made sure that the farmers keep them and they watch over them for their safety, because we threatened the farmers, if something will happen to their safety that you will be punished and punished severely. And you'd be surprised, they'd listen, because they knew that we were, we had power.”



Chaim
Engel

Born 1916
Brudzew, Poland

[Chaim Engel](#) describes how in **September 1943** prisoners planned the Sobibor uprising.

“Now we decided, at four o'clock we start to make an uprising...: in each group what worked, like... for example, with separating the clothes, we had two, three Germans what were supervision over us.... So we decided in each group to assign two people and these people with some pretext, they will have to get them to a warehouse or somewhere and quietly kill them with a knife or an axe or whatever and just do it like nothing happened and in the meantime also to cut the wires. And as I said before we tried to... do it in the time when [SS Sergeant Gustav] Wagner was on vacation.... Now there were in the barracks where we lived, there was a goldsmith, a tailor, a shoemaker, and that they made for them clothes, shoes...these people there. So that meant they had to come to fit. So they told them, 'In this day I will have the fit for you. Come then, and I will have the fit for you, your shoes or your clothes.' And when they came there they were already people with this axe or knives. They were hiding behind a curtain or something, and they killed them on the spot. When they came in to fit, they overwhelmed them and they killed them, and shoved them in under the, under somewhere that nobody sees, and, and the work went through like nothing happened.”



Gideon
Frieder

Born 1937
Zvolen, Slovakia

[Gideon Frieder](#) describes the time he spent hiding with a Catholic Slovak family in **early 1945**.

“These are very deeply believing Catholics.... So when I came there, it was very obvious that if I were called Gideon Frieder, my chances of survival are rather minimal. So they gave me...a very Slovak-sounding name. I was called Jan Suchý. So Jan is the Slavic version of John. And the endearment is Janko....

They understood that they have to establish an identity for me.... So my pedigree was: I was the son of the brother of the woman, and the brother was killed by the partisans. So for the Germans... obviously I don't like the partisans; my father was killed by them.

And they taught me... a sentence. They said if somebody will ask you this, you tell them that. And for the life of me I couldn't understand what they taught me. I couldn't care less. I memorized it and I used it. I discovered only later on. What they taught me was the Lord's Prayer.... All the liturgy was in Latin, with three exceptions, which were always in the language of the country. And one of the exceptions was the Lord's Prayer... So this established my identity as a good Catholic boy by the name of Jan Suchý.”



Agnes Mandl
Adachi

Born 1918
Budapest, Hungary

[Agnes Mandl Adachi](#) describes rescue activity on the banks of the Danube River and the role of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg in the **winter of 1944-1945.**

“Budapest is... two cities, and in the middle is the so-called Blue Danube... and [the Hungarian Nazis] took people down there..., roped three people together, and they shot the middle one, so they all fell in. And if they saw a movement, they shot again so they'd be sure.... it was a terribly cold winter., and the Danube was frozen with big slabs of ice. So Raoul came home the third night, and there was no moonlight, no stars, just cold and dark. And he turned to us the first time, usually he only talked to the men and the Red Cross, and "How many of you can swim?" I have a big mouth, I put up my hand, I said, "Best swimmer in school." He says, "Let's go." And as you saw me coming in like a teddy bear, that's how I was dressed, and a hat and a glove. And we went down on the other side, the Hungarians didn't even hear us coming because they were so busy roping and shooting, and... we had doctors and nurses in the cars and... we had people outside to pull us out. Four of us, three men and me, we jumped and thanks to the icicles, the the ropes hang on to it, and we saved people out, but only fifty, and then we were so frozen that we couldn't do it anymore. But without Raoul Wallenberg, we wouldn't have saved even one single person.”



Preben Munch-
Nielsen

Born 1926
Snekkersten, Denmark

In **October 1943**, German police began to round up Danish Jews for deportation. [Preben Munch-Nielsen](#) describes the Danish people's responsibility to help their Jewish fellow citizens.

“You couldn't let people in need down. You can't turn the back to people who need your help. There must be some sort of decency in a man's life, and that wouldn't have been decent to turn the back to people in need. So, there's no question of why or why not. You just did. That's the way you're brought up. That's the way of the tradition in...in my country. You help, of course. And therefore I don't think it's...I...could you have remained your self-respect if you knew that these people would suffer and [you had] said, ‘No. Not at my table?’ No. No way. So that's not a problem of...of--you just have to do it. And nothing else.’



Kurt Klein

Born 1920

Walldorf, Germany

[Kurt Klein](#) describes his difficulties leaving Germany in the **1930s**.

“It was becoming more and more evident that Jews should leave if anybody at all would have them, and not very many countries would have them. It, it wasn't quite that easy, but especially young people, uh, it was suggested for young people to leave because there was obviously no future for them in Germany. And, so, we too, came to that conclusion, that I--and since we had some relatives in the States that, that seemed to be the natural place to go. I was fortunate and now in retrospect I know that that must have saved my life. My sister, who was older than I, was then in nurses' training, uh, in Germany, but she also decided, of course, that it was time to leave and someone vouched for her on this end and, and so she came here a year ahead of me and had she not been here, I, I would not have gotten out, because she was able to go after people and ask them for the necessary papers that one needed in those days, an affidavit of support. And so she, she did that for me and, so that by 1937 I was able to leave also and come to Buffalo where at the time my sister lived and so did various other relatives, among them an uncle and an aunt and their daughter in whose house I then stayed the first few years when I came to Buffalo.”



**Hesy Levinsons
Taft**

**Born 1934
Berlin, Germany**

[Hesy Levinsons Taft](#) describes his father's attempts in **1941** to obtain visas for the family to emigrate from Nice, in the south of France.

“When you get an American immigration visa--which is hard to get because you need to prove that you can sustain yourself and, you know, you're not going to land up being on welfare or a burden to anyone in this country...and that you are in good health and so on. But even after all this, you are told that you have ninety days to reach American shores. And my father realized as time was going by, that there was no way in which he could get his family to the U.S. within the time frame left. Thirty days before the visa expired, he requested an extension from Washington. The Atlantic, you know, across the Atlantic, there were no commercial flights at the time... this was in 1941... the ocean was patrolled, submarines... Uh...anyway, we waited for a reply from Washington. And [it] eventually came, and it said, ‘No.’ They denied us an extension. So, again, I guess I could say it's not thanks to Uncle Sam that I am sitting here today. My father tried every avenue available to him. He went to a series of Latin American consulates in France and...in Nice, and eventually landed up with a Cuban consulate who would listen to him, also accept some money, and granted him visas to Cuba.”



**Manya
Friedman**
Born 1925
Chmielnik, Poland

[Manya Friedman](#) describes a death march to Ravensbrück in **January 1945**.

“Well life in that camp went on, ‘til January 1945. That was the time when the Soviet army was coming closer, and... the Germans decided to evacuate us.... They put us in open cars, the type that you transport coal... winter in Europe can get very severe. And all we had was a blanket.

I had to take my friend in the corner of the car. With my hands I was holding onto the railing with my back pushing back the crowd so she wouldn’t be squashed. And we kept going like this, back and forth.

Wherever we went the railroad tracks were bombed...

The snow that fell on our blankets served to quench our thirst...in the next car happened to be the nurse from our camp. At one of the stations she begged a guard for some water because one of the girls fainted, and instead he pulled out a gun and shot her. And she fell down between the cars. We could see with the cars going back and forth, she was laying there, not knowing if she was still alive, or dead.

We went like this, maybe for ten days....We came to Ravensbrück in the middle of the night.”



**Rochelle Blackman
Slivka**

**Born 1922
Vilnius, Lithuania**

The evacuation of prisoners from Stutthof camp began in **late January 1945**. [Rochelle Blackman Slivka](#) describes a death march from Stutthoff.

“We didn't have any warm clothes, only that what we had on ourselves and we didn't have any shoes. We had to cover our feet with rags. And when somebody...a women died we used to take away her rags from her feet and cover our feet with...with more rags to keep our feet warm. We used take away her clothes to keep ourselves warm, to put on something else on us. While we were walking we saw some people lying on the ground. Frozen men, frozen dead. We knew that a transport of Jews went by there. We used to start out about six o'clock to walk, in the morning, six o'clock in the morning to walk, with a piece of bread and the black coffee and walk a whole day until we find a, uh, place at night where to stay. Either a barn somewhere, or a church...wherever they could find a place for us. Then they used to give us again a piece of bread and coffee and we used to go to sleep. We walked like that for six weeks. We weren't allowed to...to bend over to take some snow to wet our lips. Those who did bend over to take, they were shot by the guards. Those who helped each other to walk were shot. We weren't allowed to do that either. We walked like that for six weeks.”



Lilly Appelbaum
Malnik

Born 1928
Antwerp, Belgium

[Lily Appelbaum Malnik](#) describes death march from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen in **January and February 1945**.

“Word came to us that we were going to evacuate Auschwitz. Why were we evacuating Auschwitz? It is because the Russians were coming close by. And so we...we all walked out Auschwitz and we started walking. And we started walking, we walked for days. I'll never forget it. I don't know how many days we walked. We walked and then we took cattle cars and then we walked again. And as we walked we heard gunshots and they told us to keep on marching. We heard gunshots and they were shooting people in the back who couldn't keep up with the walking. It ended up being called the death march because the ravines and the gutters, they were all red from blood. From people, some people who spoke Polish, we were walking through Poland, and some people who thought they could escape would try and escape. Some people who couldn't keep up with the walking anymore, they got weak, they threw all their bundles away and they walked until they couldn't keep up anymore, they fell behind and the Germans just shot them. We saw people being shot in the front in their chests, in their back. They were laying all over, on top of hills, behind trees. It was really like a war zone. And this is how we finally arrived in a camp called Bergen-Belsen.”



Gerda Weissmann
Klein

Born 1924
Bielsko, Poland

[Gerda Weissmann Klein](#) describes her liberation in **May 1945** by a US soldier following a death march in Czechoslovakia.

“... I saw a strange car coming down the hill... not bearing the swastika, but a white star... And two men..., came running toward us and one came toward where I stood. He was wearing battle gear... and... dark glasses and he spoke to me in German. And he said, ‘Does anybody here speak German or English?’ and I said, ‘I speak German.’ And I felt that I had to tell him we are Jewish... I was a little afraid to tell him that but I said to him, ‘We are Jewish, you know.’ He didn’t answer me for quite a while. And then his own voice sort of betrayed his own emotion and he said, ‘So am I.’ I would say it was the greatest hour of my life. And then he asked an incredible question. He said, ‘May I see the other ladies?’ You know...what we have been addressed for six years and then to hear this man. He looked to me like a young god. I... weighed 68 pounds. My hair was white. And you can imagine, I hadn’t had a bath in years. And this creature asked for ‘the other ladies.’ And I told him that most of the girls were inside, you know. They were too ill to walk, and he said, ‘Won’t you come with me?’ And I said, ‘Sure.’ But I didn’t know what he meant. He held the door open for me and let me precede him and in that gesture restored me to humanity. And that young American today is my husband.”



Kurt Klein

Born 1920

Walldorf, Germany

[Kurt Klein](#) describes encountering a group of death march survivors in a Czechoslovak village in **May 1945**..

“... I learned... of Polish and Hungarian Jewish women who had been dumped by their SS guards in a vacant factory building.... So... in the morning we set out... I saw some skeletal figures trying to get some water from a hand pump. But over on the other side... next to the entrance of the building I saw a girl standing, and I decided to... walk up to her... I asked her in German and in English whether she spoke either language, and she answered me in German. And I asked about her companions and she said, ‘Come let me show you.’ And we went inside the factory. It was an indescribable scene. There were women scattered over the floor on scraps of straw, some of them quite obviously with the mark of death on their faces..., and of course we could see they were emaciated and ill. And something that I have never been able to forget,... The girl who was my guide made sort of a sweeping gesture over this scene of devastation, and said the following words: ‘Noble be man, merciful and good.’ And I could hardly believe that she was able to summon a poem by the German poet Goethe, which...is called ‘The Divine,’ at such a moment. And there was nothing that she could have said that would have underscored the grim irony of the situation better than, than what she did. And it was a totally shattering experience for me.”



Norbert
Wollheim

Born 1913
Berlin, Germany

[Norbert Wollheim](#) describes liberation at Schwerin, in northeast Germany.

“I remember... very well, that morning of **May 3, 1945**, when we saw the American flag...hanging from the trees in the forest near Schwerin, and then we realized that we had been just reborn, and had all received a new lease on life. I remember, we embraced each other. I was in a small group of people, and we were laughing, and we were crying, and, was a tremendous feeling of relief, but also of burden because we realized that this moment for which we have waited years and years, we couldn't share with those of us who deserved it--our own families. And we realized also something else, especially the Jewish persecutees -- that we had no home left to go to. I personally knew that going back to Berlin would be hopeless. I couldn't find anybody anymore. And... therefore, I had to settle for a certain transitory existence somewhere else. I knew I wouldn't stay in Germany, because for me Germany was one big cemetery. And therefore, it was especially -- and this is the specific situation for the, for the survivors, for the Jewish survivors. The world was celebrating, I remember how jubilant the Frenchmen were amongst us when he saw the tricolor hanging from the roofs in Schwerin, and they were dancing. We couldn't dance. We had no right to dance. So, that was the moment of tremendous elation, but also tremendous sadness.”



**Thomas
Buergenthal**
Born 1934
L'ubochňa, Czechoslovakia

[Thomas Buergenthal](#) describes the significance of the **postwar** Nuremberg trials both personally and as a lawyer and judge.

“I will answer the question about what I find interesting about Nuremberg not as international judge or international lawyer, but from a personal point of view. To me it showed that it was possible, that things we did not think possible in the camps -- at least many of us didn't, that one day, these people would pay for what they had done -- proved possible, when they were in the dock. That is to victims extremely important and I think, now switching to being an international lawyer, it is very important for the world to see, for retributive purposes, that some of the most powerful people in the world, who at least think they are the most powerful people, they one day have to account for their crimes, and that is refreshing. And vital. It's really very important when one wants to establish international system, international laws, to be able to point to some concrete examples.”

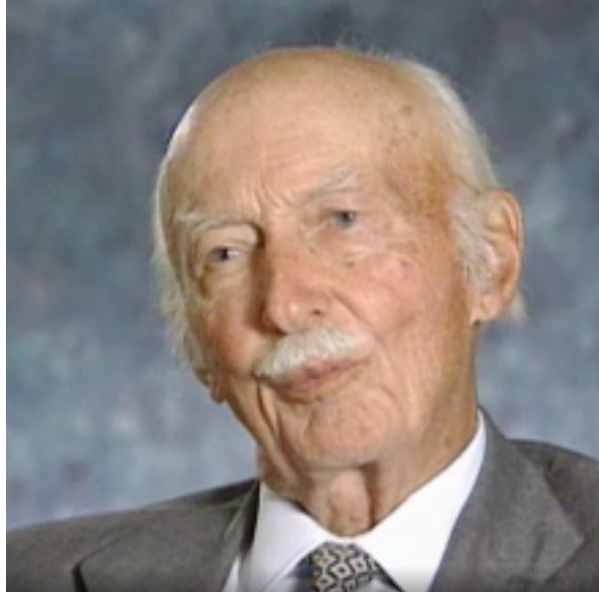


**Benjamin (Beryl)
Ferencz**

**Born 1920
Șomcuta Mare, Romania**

At the **end of 1945**, [Benjamin Ferencz](#) returned to Europe to assist US prosecutors in the Subsequent Nuremberg Proceedings. Here he describes collecting evidence of death marches.

“As the camps were about to be liberated, the Germans tried to move the inmates out, those who were still able to walk or to work. They left those behind to be killed or to die who were too sick.... And they were marching, I think it was from Flossenbürg to march to Dachau, or one of the camps. And, they took them through the woods and they marched at night, and if anybody faltered on the way, they were immediately shot; if anybody paused to try to pick up a potato or to eat a root or something, they were shot. And I was able to follow this trail through the woods... of mass grave -- 10, 20, 30, 50 killed.... And I would get the nearest farmer... They would say, ‘Oh yes, we heard firing there last night, there was shooting going on.’ ‘Where was it?’ ‘Over there in the woods.’ ... I would say, ‘Let's go.’ And we'd go out to the woods and there would be a newly dug-up place, and I'd say, ‘Get some shovels,’ and I'd stop some Germans on the street, ‘Take those shovels, dig 'em up,’ and we'd dig up the bodies of... people who'd been obviously shot through the head. Usually the top of the skull is blown off... shot probably kneeling from the back... some of them were tied still... just lightly covered over with... six inches of dirt.... So I could follow the trail of crime being committed all along the way.”



William Denson

Born 1913

Birmingham, Alabama

In **August 1945**, [William Denson](#) became chief prosecutor for the US Government at the Dachau concentration camp war crimes trial. Here he describes the nature of the evidence uncovered.

“I don't think there's much doubt about the fact that anybody that came in contact with... the evidence.... It was a credible matter to them. But... the biggest problem that I had after I was designated to prosecute these cases, the biggest problem that I had was believing or getting testimony that could be believed. Because of its nature. Not that it wasn't true. It was true. But the events that were depicted were so horrible, were so sadistic, were so monstrous, that they were incredible. That's the only way to describe it. And... I didn't start believing it until I really started digging in too... with the authority that I was going to prosecute the Dachau concentration camp case. At that time when I started talking to witnesses, and I heard events there... that were incredible.... there was place in the camp called the arrest bunker. And... there was some cells which were called the standing cells. They were instruments of torture in reality because they were so small and so constructed that... it was impossible for a prisoner... to either lie down or to sit. He had to stand in order to be within the confines of the cell... They received no food, no water, and no chance to sit down or lie down, or change their position for three to five days. And sometimes longer if they lived that long.”



Fela
Warschau

Born 1926
Ozorków, Poland

The Feldafing displaced persons camp opened on **May 1, 1945**. [Fela Warschau](#) describes life in the camp.

“People in Feldafing were from all over Europe. It wasn't only from Poland. We had Hungarian Jews, Rumanian Jews, Czech Jews, and also Greek Jews in this camp. Everyone just walking around and trying to mingle and find someone. Like I said, we never did. But what the Americans also did, is organize art schools. They brought in films. They brought in, um, organized our people, the survivors that were musicians and also traveling from other camps. They were giving concerts, and believe it or not, even dances for those that were well enough to attend all this. And also a Jewish...our own police force, to police that it would be safe, you know, from other intruders. They kept us busy. But the problem was, there was no future in being there. Where do we go from there?”



Richard
Seibel

Born 1907
Defiance, Ohio

[Colonel Richard R. Seibel](#) describes aid given to survivors after the Mauthausen camp was liberated in **May 1945** and the survivors' plans for emigration.

“We brought in two field hospitals. Huge installations. And anyone who had to be taken care of, uh, was so assigned to these hospitals. Our medical records show that we had hospitalized while we were there, about 5000 people. And as soon as they were able to leave the hospital they left. And we...that's what we did until, until the bulk of the people in the camp had gone home. Now when, when I left there and my people and I left, there was only about 3000 or 3500 people left. And they...the bulk of those people didn't want to go home. And there were quite a number of Jewish people left in the camp that did not wish to return to their homelands. In checking with these people, the older Jew wanted to go to Israel. The younger Jews wanted to go to the United States, to England, or to France. And so those...I don't recall how many there were, but those were the ones that were left and the other people...just didn't want to go home.”