

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

April 9, 1994

Oscar Klein

Israel

Dear Uncle Oscar,

I'm doing a report on the Holocaust and I was hoping you could answer these questions.

1. How long did you stay in hiding?
2. Did you try to get a visa to America?
3. What year did you get caught?
4. Did your whole family get caught?
5. Did you have a diary?
6. Did you keep track of what was happening?
7. What camp were you and your family in?
8. How many times were you transferred?
- 9. What happened to you in the camp?
10. What happened to your family in the camp?
11. How were you saved?
12. Where did you go afterward?

Thank you very much for answering these questions. Please answer soon if you can. My rough draft is due at the end of April.

Love,

Nate

Nathan Lamb Klein

Dear Jonathan, Nathan and Jacob:

I will try to answer your questions to the best of my memory.

1. We did not hide at all. My parents, younger brother, grandparents, aunt, continued to live our usual life in our house in Batubo.
2. I did not try to run away or come to the USA--I was a little boy.
3. In 1944, on the last day of Passover, the Hungarians and the Germans arrived and took all the Jews from the region to the ghetto in Barkases, 30 KM. from Batubo.
4. The whole family was caught and taken. My whole family that lived with us as well as my other grand parents on my father's side, that were living in Monkatz. My father had a Aryan look. He knew all the villagers in the region, and could run away many times, but he did not want to separate from us. €
5. I never wrote any diary. All that took place is carved in my heart and memory.
6. In 1993 I was interviewed by Yad-Vashem in Jerusalem. I gave them all the facts surrounding my family, as well as pictures and movies that were in my possession.
7. I was in the death camps Birkanow, Auschwitz, Bishowitz, Buchenwald. my father was in Birkanow, Auschwitz and Bunah. My grand parents, mother, brother were killed in Birkanow; my young aunt was in Bergen-Belzen.
8. I was taken from the ghetto to Birkanow in a freight train, then on foot to Auschwitz, then to Bishowitz, and then for the fourth time on 1-18-45, on the "death march" from Bishowitz to Buchenwald.
9. In the Berkases ghetto we were two weeks before we were taken to Birkanow. Upon arriving at the death camp Birkanow we were gathered in the central court where Dr. Mengele and his assistants selected who would live and who would die. My father and grandfather were directed to the right, and I, who was 15 years old, was directed to the left with the women and children. We were lined up in groups of 5 each. I don't know what prompted me to run and be with my father, but I ran over to the lines where my father was standing. My mother called me to return, but I ignored her calling; I was saved. She was taken to the gas chamber. My grandfather was taken to the left side later on and sent to the gas chamber as well. Only my father and I remained alive at this time. We were ordered to strip our clothes and given striped prisoner clothes. Every day new selections would

take place, and more and more would be sent to die. Because I was a short boy, my father gave me a brick to stand on so I would appear taller. I would stand behind my father, and was saved from the selection. Few days later, during a freezing rain storm we were marched on to Auschwitz.

My serial number there was A-3619, which is tattooed on my forearm to this day; my father's was A-3620. Three days later they had another selection, and my father was taken away. His last words to me were: "after the war, if we survive, we shall meet at our home. Remember that you have family in America". With another group of young people we were taken to another camp Bishowitz. After a short while in Bishowitz they wanted to return us for extermination to Auschwitz, 12 Km. away, but luckily they found work for us in the coal mines. Everyday we march to work accompanied by armed guards and attack dogs. The only food we got was old bread and dirty soup. There I got sick with pneumonia. I was staying in the infirmary until I discovered that the sick people were being taken out for extermination, so I forced myself to return to work. Work saved my life.

In 1945 the Russians were approaching the area. The Germans took all the prisoners and marched them towards Germany accompanied by guards and dogs. This march, which started on 1-18-45 is known as the Death March. We marched in deep snow, barefooted, clothed only with our stripped prisoner outfits. Most people died during this march from frost, hunger, thirst, disease, and because they fell down from exhaustion. The Germans shot anyone who fell down. We encountered thousands of bodies of prisoners who were ahead of us during the march. The bread and margarine we had we could not eat because our hands were frozen. I had diarrhea during the march; I ran up ahead every time I had diarrhea so I would not be caught standing up or I would be shot for not marching. I did that as long as I had the strength, but finally I could not continue, I had no more strength. I just evacuated in my pants.

When night came we were ordered to sleep on the snow. Many never woke up again. I had a friend with me, so we took turns in sleeping and guarding. We made sure the other guy was up and awake before the other one took his turn to sleep. In the morning many were frozen to death. The Germans were not sure that they were not faking it so they shot every person that was in the snow. We finally arrived to a train station in Brasilia where they loaded us onto open freight cars in temperature of 35 degrees Centigrade below zero. Many more froze to death and fell down; we had no choice but to sit on them. From 3000 people that left Auschwitz only 280 made it to Buchenwald.

Upon arriving to Buchenwald, my feet were frozen. I took off my rugs that covered my feet and with them came off my skin. We went through another selection and many were sent on death transports. I was spared and placed in bunk number 8 with other Ukrainian children.

10. What happened to my family? When we arrived at Birkanau we went through Dr. Mengele's selection. My mother, 10 yr old brother, grandparents, were killed immediately in the gas chambers. My young aunt was transferred to Bergen-Belsen from which she was liberated at the end of the war. I spent few days with my father until he was selected to be sent to another death camp Bishowitz. Since he was a master machinist he was put to work in his profession. When the Russian Red Army was getting close to Auschwitz, the Germans took all the prisoners from all the surrounding camps and start marching them towards Germany. I was taken out of Bishowitz and my father was taken out of Bunah. I hoping to meet him during this march. I tried to look at every dead man in the snow in an attempt to identify my father. I found out later that my father was in the Death March but got shot when he tried to escape on 1-18-45. 25 years later, on the same date, his grand daughter, ILANA, was born in Israel.

11. In Buchenwald I lived in Block 8 with other Ukranian children. The Capo (guard) was a Czcheck who himself was a political prisoner. He was a decent man and treated us fairly. The selections continued daily. I was afraid to enter the infirmary to take care of my frozen feet that they might send me to my death. Even when my feet finally healed (God only knows how) I could not wear shoes. As the end approached the Germans tried to finish off the Jews in the camp. They pulled out one child and asked him to point out the Jewish ones; he did not know, we were saved. On another day the Germans pulled a kid out of the line, ordered him to take off his pants to see if he was Jewish. Fortunately the boy, Stephen, was half Jewish, and was never circumcised. Stephen was with me the whole way, and we were saved again. The Day of Liberation was April 11, 1945 at 4 pm. Russian and French prisoners who were in the same camp broke out with help of arm which they hid in the camp. Two days later the Americans arrived.

12. Many liberated prisoners died shortly thereafter due to eating fatty food which their starved stomach could not handle. I too ended up with severe diarrhea but the Russians placed me in a "hospital" in Buchenwald. Upon recuperating I remembered my father's words to meet again at home.

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With another surviving childhood friend we took trains back to our home town. Our home was taken from us by strangers and nothing was left of our possessions.

I met my young aunt who had been liberated from Berge-Belsen. She had seen my name on a list of survivors posted by the Red Cross, and we decided to leave the area. The Russians who now controlled the area started to mistreat the Jewish survivors.

We arrived after a dangerous trip to Teplitza-Shanov in Czechoslovakia where I lived in an orphanage and studied to become a machinist.

Few months later, in 1946, we were organized by immigration agents from Israel. We were taken through Vienna to Germany, to Lantzburg, where preparatory camps were set up for immigration to Palestine.

While still in Czechoslovakia the first contact was established with the family in the USA, with aunt Lenka and aunt Dora. They sent us the required papers and asked us to come to America. I decided to go to Palestine, which at that time was under British control. In January 1947, we were taken to France, and in February, 1947, we were boarded on

a ship for the then illegal immigration to Palestine. We were 800 young refugees on this boat which arrived to Palestine on Feb. 16, 1947.

The British discovered us while still in sea and gave us chase. While using tear gas they boarded our boat, dragged it to the port of Haifa and sent us to a prison camp on the island of Cyprus, where again we lived behind barbed wires and guard towers. We were finally freed and allowed to go Eretz Israel in Sept. 1947.

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Translated by Svi Bareket

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