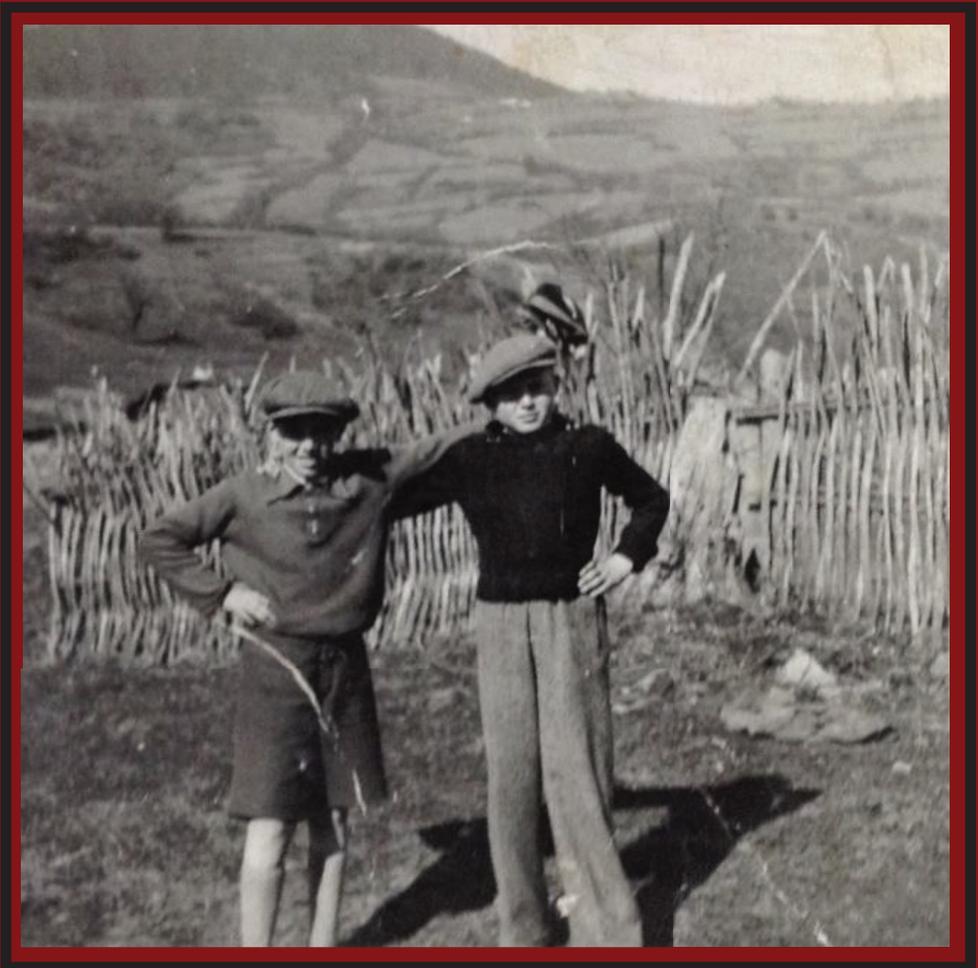


Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in South Florida

# **NO LONGER A BOY, NOT YET A MAN**

Holocaust Survivor Fred Mulbauer's Memoir



As told to Bobbi Kaufman



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Republished by  
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On the cover: Ruby Lax and Fred Mulbauer in Stavana, Czechoslovakia.  
Circa 1941.

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## FOREWARD

*“For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time....”*

*“... I have tried to keep memory alive...I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget we are guilty, we are accomplices.”*

**- Elie Wiesel**

As time goes on, the number of Holocaust survivors alive today is rapidly dwindling. With their passing, the incomprehensible cataclysm known as The Holocaust, or Shoah, is fast morphing from a ‘lived memory’ into a ‘historical memory’; from a personal experience of ‘those who were there’ into impersonal commemorative monuments and museums.

All too soon, there will be no one left to offer first hand testimony of what it was like to actually be there when all hell broke loose; all too soon, even those who knew and heard directly from the victims of the Nazis and their collaborators, will be gone.

It is, therefore, a matter of great urgency that we gather and preserve for future generations as much primary documentation and testimony as possible about the lives and experiences of those heroes who survived the Holocaust, managed to build new lives, and were willing to tell their stories.

Memoirs serve as a very important means of preserving these testimonies. Several years ago, Holocaust survivors began approaching Bobbi Kaufman, asking for help writing their memoirs, describing their lives before, during, and since the Holocaust. She began working with the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach (HMMB), writing the memoirs of Holocaust survivors who were docents and contributors to the memorial. This collaboration was instrumental in her developing a series of in-depth, book-length memoirs. Six books were completed and uploaded onto the HMMB website and the HMMB created lesson plans for each book to be used in teaching about the Holocaust.

Now, in collaboration with the HMMB, the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies, and the George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies of the University of Miami, the series has been named Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in Florida. The existing books were graphically redesigned and several new books have been added to the collection, with the objective of continuing to expand the series. The complete series will be freely available to the public in digital form on the HMMB and Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program websites.

Our hope is that this series will make a significant contribution to the growing literature of Holocaust survivors' memoirs and serve as a tribute to their ability to make new lives for themselves while never forgetting.

**Dr. Haim Shaked**  
**Director, The Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program**  
**University of Miami**

## DEDICATION

With love to my parents  
Faige Moscovitz Muhlbauer and  
Baezel Tuvia Muhlbauer  
who perished in the Holocaust.

— *Fred Muhlbauer*



## LIFE BEFORE THE WAR



I was born in the small village of Stavna, in the Carpathian Mountains area of Czechoslovakia on December 28, 1929. My Jewish name was Efraim. My sister, Lily, was born in 1926. My brother, Isidore, was born in 1921.

Our town was very small. Our house was on the main street that led from one town to another. I don't think we had an address. Our two room home was made from logs. One of the rooms was my father's shop and our kitchen, the other room was a bedroom for all of us. Between the two rooms was a foyer where our oven was. We had no electricity and no bathroom in the house — we had an outhouse. We had a big tub and once or twice a week we heated up some water and took turns washing.

My father's name was Baezel Tuvia Muhlbauer, Zoltan in Hungarian. He was a tailor. He mostly made clothes for the rural people, the peasants. He made the ethnic type of peasant outfits: clothes with different colors around the edges, like a blue trimming around the edges of a gray suit. The clothes were made from very heavy wool cloth the peasants wove themselves. He would arrange for one family of peasants at a time to come down once a year, or so, to have their clothes made. He would put them up in our house for the night. We would feed them and find space for them to sleep — all in two rooms! My father would measure them, then work all night, twenty-four hours, to finish their suits and coats.

He had no help; he did everything himself. He had only one sewing machine and when it broke, poor guy, he would have to carry it on his shoulders to the big city to get it fixed. I tried to help my father. I learned how to sew on the machine. I knew how to make a pair of pants when I was twelve years old. I think if the war hadn't broken out I would have remained there and been a tailor. I'm glad I'm not.

My father was in World War I. He used to tell me stories about the war. He told me about a city in Yugoslavia where there are signs on every building saying that this is where the volunteers from the Carpathian Mountains fought. I liked learning this history. We had old books in our house and I would always read about the war.

He was very kind and gentle — a very, very good father. One time, there was a soccer game and I wanted to see that game so badly. But on that particular day I had to take our cow about a mile away to graze. While I was there I saw my father walking toward me. He said, "I gave up my work so you can go to the soccer game." It sticks in my mind.

My mother's name was Fanny Moscovitz Muhlbauer. Her Jewish name was Faiga. She was a very sweet, typical European Jewish woman. She was educated: she could read and write in Czech and Hebrew. To me, my mother was very pretty.

My father took care of making a living and my mother did everything else with no help other than my sister and me. She planted vegetables, cared for the chickens and goats, and milked our cow every day. On Pesach she even painted our house inside and out. On Fridays she would get up at three or four o'clock in the morning and bake bread for the whole week. Our evening meal was mainly vegetables, sauerkraut and beans, and potatoes, except for Friday night and Saturday when my parents would manage to have chicken or meat. It was a little bit difficult to be kosher because our town didn't have its own slaughterer. He came from another town once a week to do the ritual slaughtering. We always had two or three goats and lots of little goats. I enjoyed the little goats — they were curious little things. We would sell some of them and the others were slaughtered for meat. When we would let the goats out to graze they would sometimes run away and we would have to run after them. I did a lot of mountain climbing — and not just for pleasure!

We were an observant family. We kept the Sabbath and had only kosher food in our home. I had *payos*, I wore *tzitit*, and I had my head covered. The shul was the center of the whole Jewish population. Our entire social life was around the shul. It had just two rooms: one was used for praying and the other for *cheder*.

My life mainly consisted of going to public Czechoslovakian school from about 8 o'clock until 1 or 1:30 and then directly to Hebrew school, *cheder*.

My sister went to the same school with me but she did not go to *cheder*. She learned Hebrew with a private tutor. Where we lived we had snow five or six months of the year. In the winter we went to school on skis. School was about a mile away. I liked to ski, my sister did not. The school was a small building with about three classrooms. There were some other Jewish students in the school. We had men and women teachers. The women were nicer. One woman never wanted to say the word Jew because the word for Jew in Czech or Ukraine sounded derogatory. On Friday at noon time she would say, “All the Hebrew children can go home now for Shabbat.” I never forgot this.

I went to *cheder* every day including Saturday and Sunday. I was always “the lively one”. One time I was fighting with a real bully. I was so mad at him I took a rock from the street and I threw it at him. I missed and it hit the window of the butcher shop. Right in front of the window was a lot of meat — a big, big amount of meat where the butcher would cut it up. The glass fell into the meat and my father had to pay for all the meat. It was terrible.

We played soccer in the street, but our main fun was skiing — downhill and cross-country. I really liked downhill even though we had to walk back up the hill. Once a year a guy would come to town with a big tent and show movies. I remember one was a cowboy movie. I loved it! I wanted to be a cowboy, an American cowboy. To be in America to us was like you were talking about flying to the moon.

I never thought I would ever be in America. I remember very well when I was little my friends and I found something like a bathtub that somebody threw out. We started painting it pretending we were making a boat to go to America.

My brother was eight years older than me. When I was about ten years old, my brother went out of town to learn to be a custom tailor. He was away for two years working, for very little money, to learn the trade. I didn't see much of him. My sister was home and I used to fight with her a lot.

My brother was the opposite of me. He was a very quiet guy, very mellow. He didn't like to fight with anybody, but I would always want to fight with him. I would swing at him and he would just playfully push me away. I would be kicking at him and he would just push me away. I think he enjoyed me. He was so good to me.

We had one bicycle for the three of us children, a used red bicycle. We were always fighting over it. I would ride the bicycle to my mother's parents' house which was about fifteen kilometers away. My grandmother had a very big, very old house. We children were afraid to go into certain rooms because they were so dark. My mother's sister lived right next door to my grandmother. I was very close with her daughters Sylvia and Helen. Two of her sons and one daughter died in the war. One daughter went to America before the war and one son survived the war but was trapped in Russia until 1979.

My grandparents had a lot of horses and a general store where they sold all kinds of farm and horse equipment. They even had an expensive sleigh with seats and bells that my uncle would attach to the horses and take for rides. The horses were their business; they were horse merchants.

The Polish border was maybe eight miles from their house. My uncle used to bring horses across the border because horses were cheaper to buy in Poland. There were always problems. Every horse had to have documentation with a description of the horse or you couldn't sell it. The police, the finance police, would come to check. My grandmother was illiterate but she kept all the documentation in her bosom. My uncle would go to her and say, "Mom, I want the documents for this or that horse," and she would reach in and say, "This is the document." I don't know how she did it! They were fake of course, but she always knew which one to give them. Sometimes there were fifteen or twenty horses and she would always get it right. My grandmother and grandfather perished in Auschwitz.

## ANTI-SEMITISM INTENSIFIES



In 1939 the area of the county where I lived was occupied by Hungary. Anti-Semitism intensified greatly under the Hungarian regime. The gendarmes moved in. Things went from bad to worse. They were actively ruthless. Once the Hungarians came in my father could no longer get a permit to work. Even to be a tailor in the house he had to get a permit, and they wouldn't give it. He had to bribe somebody to get it. Then they put a bigger tax assessment on the Jews. If you didn't pay they came and took the furniture out of your house.

There were people in the town working with the police, the gendarme, as informers, as their helpers. My father did not have too much trouble from the peasants because he used to sew for them. That was the only reason they were nicer to him — because they needed him. But I guess they didn't need him that much.

I experienced increased anti-Semitism in school, in the stores, everywhere. It was rampant. I used to be beaten up. I was hit by rocks. I was constantly called names like 'Dirty Jew.' They used to throw rocks at our house. After a while my father had some shutters made just to keep the rocks out. We also had shutters on the front door because we had glass panels in our front door. We were constantly afraid.

In around 1942 my brother was taken into a Hungarian forced labor battalion attached to a military battalion. He worked building railroad tracks. My father was also drafted into a labor battalion but he was allowed to come home after a while.

We knew a war was on. We heard stories about what was happening in Poland. I wanted to listen to the adults talking, but my parents would say, "Out, out. Go play." We could not listen to the radio because it was against the law to listen to radios. We knew trouble was coming but we didn't think there was anything we could do about it. Things were so bad, but we didn't see any way out. We just didn't know what to do except hope that God would help and nothing bad was going to happen. We couldn't go any place; there was no place to go.



*With my best friend, Ruby Lax (left), in the backyard  
of our cheder. The mountains of Poland are in the  
background. Ruby did not survive the war.*

*C. 1941*



*In Stavna with a neighbor lady who was putting her hat on me for fun. The mountain in the background is where I grazed our cow and chased our goats.*

*C. 1941*

## THE GHETTO



On April 15, 1944, at two o'clock in the morning Hungarian gendarme, along with many drunken Hungarian peasants, were banging at our door. They said, "You have fifteen minutes to get ready and to leave." We started getting dressed. My parents started putting some suitcases together. We couldn't take much at all. The minute they took us out of the house we could see the peasants running into the house like vultures, taking our furniture, our clothes, everything. They couldn't wait for us to leave.

The first night they walked us to the shul. We stayed in the shul for maybe two nights sitting on the floor. Then, on the third day, they took us by regular passenger train to Uzhhorod, the capital city of our area. The train was not very crowded, only people from our area were on it. People from other towns came at different times on different trains.

We found ourselves living with twenty-five or thirty thousand people in a converted brick factory with walls but no roof. We slept on mats on the floor crammed next to one another. The food was mostly soup made from green vegetable leaves. The Jewish prisoners were the ones working in the kitchen. I volunteered to help out in the kitchen so I would keep busy. I was running errands.

## THE TRAIN



We were in the ghetto for approximately a month. The rumor was we were going to be shipped to very pleasant camps in Germany to work. My family was on the first transport to be shipped out from the ghetto. We traveled by cattle car with approximately eighty or eighty-five people locked into the car. There was not enough room to sit or lay down. We were like trapped animals. There was a little window, about one foot wide, with wire on it. There was no way to escape, nowhere to go. There was no thought of resistance.

There were two buckets in the car — one was for water, the other was for body functions. The waste bucket overflowed many times over; it was never emptied. There was human excrement all over the floor. The stench was unbearable. People were dying and there was not a big to-do about it. Nobody even tried to resuscitate them. People were crying, people were praying, “God, what are you doing to us?”

For four and a half days we had no food and no water. We did not know where we were going or what was to be. For four and a half days the doors never opened. Then we heard screams and dogs barking. This was the beginning of us becoming zombies. I still have dreams about that train ride.

## AUSCHWITZ



We arrived at Auschwitz in the middle of the night. All of a sudden the doors of the cattle car opened up and big spotlights came shinning at us. Dogs were barking, Germans were yelling, “Out! Out! Out! Raus!” Whoever wasn’t fast enough they beat with sticks. Dogs jumped on us — big German shepherds. It was bedlam. This was when my mother got in trouble.

In our cattle car there was a neighbor of ours who had four little children. When the train doors opened, this lady couldn’t carry all her children, so my mother grabbed one of the children to help her. Every woman with a child was automatically sent to the gas chamber. The Germans did not ask my mother, “Is this your child?”, they just sent her straight to the gas chamber. I was at the age when I wasn’t a boy and I wasn’t a man. I was thirteen and a half. They announced that small children should go with their mothers. I didn’t know which was better — to go with my mother or with my father. First I was with my mother. A person who was in the camp for a long while said to my mother, “Tell him to go with his father.” So she said, “Go to your father.” I got to my father and he said, “You go with your mother.” My father thought that if I went with my mother I would be given easier tasks. They both wanted to save me. I just kept on running between my mother and my father.

As long as we didn't pass Dr. Mengele we could go from one side to the other. I was with my father when time ran out; my father was at the front of the line where Dr. Mengele was standing. Mengele sent my father to the right. I followed my father without waiting for the doctor to look at me and decide. Mengele yelled to me, "Come back! Come back, you dog, you *hund!*" So I stopped. He looked in my face and said, "Go, go." Then he hit me on the back of my head with a riding stick he always carried.

Mengele was very impeccably dressed. He was tall, a very handsome man. He wore beautiful, shiny boots. He was very calm. He kept humming to himself. He constantly kept looking at his nails. He had polished nails. I did not know at the time he was Mengele. I found out later.

At first I thought my sister was walking with my mother but from far away I could tell they were separated. My sister was going to the right and my mother was going to the left.

The first thing we had to do after the selection was get undressed and go to take showers. We were sent in one entrance and we came out another entrance. All our possessions were left at the first entrance. When we came out they gave us clothes that were left by somebody else. They were just throwing clothes at us — pants, shirts and mostly striped pajama type outfits. When my sister came out of the showers they threw a dress at her. It was my mother's dress. My mother had been gassed already by that time. My sister was eighteen.

I was with my father. We were very frightened; we didn't know what was going on. We were so naive until my father walked over to one of the old prisoners and said, "My wife was taken away. Can you tell me where she is?" He answered, "You see this door? This is where she went in. See this chimney? This is where she went out." For a minute I didn't know what he was talking about. Finally I realized what he was talking about. We could smell the flesh of the bodies burning.

I was not tattooed. Instead, I was given a dog-tag with the number 8342. It was made of a hard piece of cloth. I hung it around my neck on a piece of plain string. My father's number was 8341.

My father and I were together in the same barrack. We were given a little metal bowl for our food which we carried with us everywhere. Once a day each person was given a small piece of bread and some hot water that was supposed to be soup. A father and son would be given one slightly larger piece of bread to share. My father and I would cut our bread with our makeshift knife — I always wanted to give my father more and he always wanted to give me more. There would be desperate fights between some fathers and sons over food, but never between my father and me.

The kapos would say to those fighting, "Can't you all behave like the Muhlbauers?" Thank God it was that way — at least I know I tried to help my father.

At Auschwitz we spent our time cleaning up the grounds. We would get up at four or five o'clock in the morning and stand in line on an open field for as long as three or four hours until somebody came and counted us. Then we would be assigned to our duties. We were in Auschwitz for maybe six weeks: we arrived April 20, 1944 and we were shipped out in May or June.

## WÜSTEGIERSDORF



My father and I were shipped out to a camp called Wüstegiersdorf, not far from the Polish/Russian border. It was a very rough camp. I saw people commit suicide there. They cut their wrists with glass. I saw one man commit suicide in the latrine.

The camp commander was the most ruthless person I ever saw. He was a big, big, big, rough guy. When he wanted to beat up someone he would bring them into the kitchen where I would see him beat up people every day — for no reason. He thrived on beating up people. He used something like a riding whip which wasn't so bad, but when he got really mad he used a lead pipe. Many people died. I don't remember his name but we used to call him The Butcher. He looked like a butcher. Strangely, the only people the commander was kind to were the mentally slow people. Mentally slow people would go up and talk to him in Yiddish. Other people were afraid to even look at him.

Just off the kitchen was a warehouse where the food was kept. The same guy guarded that door every night. By midnight he was always drunk and always snoozing. When he would fall asleep I would go into the warehouse and throw the cheese out over his head to one of my co-workers. I was the only one who went into the warehouse — I was the gofer, the little guy. I would take bread, and I even took a handful of butter and put it in my pocket. It was like having a pocketful of diamonds! I gave the food to my father. Some prisoners were assigned to work in a factory, others worked building fortifications like bunkers in the mountains and tank traps using old railroad tracks. My father and I were working carrying the railroad ties. I was short and my father was a tall man so most of the weight was on his shoulders. It was very hard on him.

I was very lucky. Being the youngest one in the camp, I was soon given a job to be a kitchen boy which actually saved my life. If I hadn't gotten that job I probably would not have survived. I worked in the kitchen where they prepared the food for the Germans. One of my jobs was to keep the fires burning. I would also carry in water and wash the dishes and the pots. Sometimes we had to go into town to pick up cheese and I was always sent. It must have looked very funny that I was a four-foot-five little guy pushing a wagon with these big, big SS guys escorting me. They called me Piccolo — it means "Little One" in Greek.

We would go out to work at five o'clock in the morning and come back at eight o'clock at night. We had no clothes other than our thin, striped uniforms. In the winter we learned a trick using the bags the cement came in. We made clothes out of those paper bags. We would put them under our striped pajama jackets and we wrapped them around our shoes. Otherwise we would have frozen to death.

In the camp I couldn't keep track of the days. We worked every day including Saturdays and Sundays, so to me one day was the same as another. We tried to pray together but we couldn't make any noise in the camp. There was little conversation — we were afraid even to talk. They started shooting at us if they heard any noise. But on one holiday — I think it was Yom Kippur in 1944 — we went outside and we started praying very loudly. The Germans turned away and they didn't do anything. It was like a miracle.

In September or October 1944, my father was beginning to lag. As soon as he went to the infirmary, I knew what was going to happen: once you reported to the doctor and were sick, you were taken away. My father was taken away to another camp in the vicinity. I think the prisoners taken there were simply left to die. My father was 49 years old. I never saw him again.

When they took my father away I made a friend, a Greek boy, Nicki. Nicki and I could not talk to each other because we had no common language, but somehow we could communicate. We would go out at night to look for food in the garbage cans. One of us would look in the cans and the

other would watch out for the search lights. One night I was sick and Nicki wanted to go out alone to get food. I begged him not to go but he said, "You are sick, you need food." And he went out. Nicki was shot and killed that night. I cried and cried.

## THE DEATH MARCH



In December 1944 when the Russians were coming close, the Germans decided to take us on a death march to another camp. When I saw a guard throwing a gray sweater in the garbage I asked if I could take it. He said yes. It was so full of lice that it looked like it was a white sweater. Without that sweater I would have frozen to death.

My father had a friend in the camp named Schrieber. When my father was being taken away he asked Schrieber, "Could you please do me a favor and take care of my son?" And Mr. Schrieber did take care of me. For the first few days of the march he didn't let me fall behind. He made sure that I kept up. If I was falling behind he grabbed me and pulled me. Anybody who showed any tendency to be tired or lagging behind was shot immediately.

As we marched we were joined by prisoners from subcamps along the way. There must have been fifteen or twenty thousand people. We marched on the roads passing through towns. People would see us but they would turn their heads away and not look at us. No one even thought to offer us anything.

It never entered my mind to try to run away - I didn't think I could make it.

We marched in the freezing cold; it was snowing the entire time. We would stop along the way and they would give us something to drink — I don't know what was in it. Luckily, I still had my bowl from Auschwitz. Sometimes we slept in a barn, sometimes outside in the snow.

We were surrounded by guards on motorcycles and bicycles. The regular German soldiers were all fighting at the front, so our guards were all very young guys. They were eighteen and nineteen years old. They enjoyed killing. It was like a sport to them. Every time they shot someone they would laugh. If they shot someone and he was still alive they would say, "Look at that dog. He is still alive." And they would shoot him again. I happened to turn around one time and saw the road was solid red, all red from the blood. All red.

The death march lasted about three weeks. Mr. Schreiber did not survive.

## FLOSSENBURG



Finally we arrived at a camp named Flossenbourg, but Flossenbourg was not to be our final destination. There were some Jewish prisoners who had already been there for a long time and who had become, unfortunately, as ruthless as the Germans. They were well fed and well clothed. They did the

dirty work for the Germans. These kapos would beat us for no reason. Actually, the reason they gave was, “You just got here. We have been here for three or four years.” They were mostly people from Poland and for them the war started earlier than for us. Most of them were taken as early as 1941 or 1942 so they were jealous that we were free longer than they were. I was beaten up something terrible by a young Jewish kapo who told me he was a rabbi’s son. He beat me with a very hard rubber hose, like a hose from a car engine. He broke my skull — it was bleeding something terrible. I can still feel the spot today with my hand. He was wearing beautiful boots — like a German. I would like to find out if this one particular man is still alive.

We were in Flossenburg for a couple of weeks, from the end of December 1944 until the beginning of 1945. All we did at Flossenburg was clean up the grounds and wait to be transported. The only food was hot water that was called vegetable soup, and some dried grass. There was very little bread.

We could hear planes dropping bombs. We could hear cannons being fired in the distance. Because the Germans knew the war was almost over and they were losing, they were just taking us from one camp to another away from the advancing Allies.

The worst was yet to come.

## BERGEN BELSEN



From Flossenburg we were shipped in open cattle cars to Bergen Belsen. This transport lasted only a couple of days, but it was even worse than the death march. It was winter. It was snowing. We were in the open day and night. It was snowing on us day and night. Many prisoners died from the cold. To me this transport wasn't good or bad — by this time I didn't think I could go on, so somehow I gave up hope that I would survive. It didn't make any difference to me if I was cold.

Bergen Belsen was a very big camp. They used it to bring all the prisoners together. There were many sections of the camp. In my section there were only men. Many of them were Greek Jews. In another section there were women. Later I learned there were even some families brought there from Holland and Belgium.

At Auschwitz everything was very orderly, everybody knew their place, everybody was assigned to a barrack. At Bergen Belsen there was no order. I don't know how they kept track of the prisoners at Bergen Belsen, but apparently they were very efficient about it. I know I was registered there because my name appeared on every list.

Bergen Belsen was just an open field with some barracks and thousands of people and thousands of bodies. There was no place to go, no place to sleep. At first the only food was beets, then there was nothing. People were sleeping on top of bodies. I saw a person whose ear was missing, another whose nose was crushed. Everybody was bleeding. Everyone was covered with lice. You could put a piece of cloth on the ground and see it moving because of all the lice. Everybody was like a zombie. Bergen Belsen looked like a Hollywood movie after a nuclear holocaust. It was bedlam.

At Bergen Belsen I couldn't wait to die. I wanted to get it over with. I had no feelings anymore. I didn't want to go on. I would rather die already. I was like in a twilight zone — I didn't know if I was alive or if I was dead. I was fourteen years old and all alone. There was no one to comfort me, no one to talk to. I couldn't even say hello to anybody because I didn't speak their language. I just wanted a familiar face.

The Allies were coming closer and closer. The Germans knew they were losing the war so they wanted a decent looking camp. There were thousands of bodies lying everywhere, so they built bonfires to burn the bodies. There would be a layer of wood and then a layer of bodies. The only thing was, they didn't have enough strong people to bring the bodies to the fires. It was a problem. So they offered the newly arrived Russian prisoners who were still strong enough to work a piece of bread for each body they brought to the fire.

As I bent down to relieve myself, I fainted. I was completely out. Two Russians grabbed my legs and began to drag me to the bonfires. I was not fully conscious, but I felt like something was hitting my head. My head was banging on the ground as they were pulling me. I had no strength to say “Hey! Let me go! Let me go!”, but I did have some strength to move my leg. One guy said, “This guy is still alive.” The other guy said, “I pulled him this far, I want to get the piece of bread. I’m going to take him to the fire.” I was trying to scream, but I couldn’t. Nothing came out. I was pulling my leg, pulling my leg. Finally he let out a curse word and dropped me. I crawled away.

## LIBERATION



Then I heard gunfire and a lot of shooting. The British arrived at Bergen Belsen on April 15, 1945. I was taken from home by the Nazis on April 15, 1944, and liberated April 15, 1945, exactly one year later. Among the liberators was a brigade of Jewish soldiers who had joined the British Army. When I saw a soldier with a Star of David on his sleeve, I just couldn't believe they were the ones who liberated us! I asked them about the star; I spoke to them in Yiddish. They said they were from Palestine. I was as excited as I could be under the circumstances.

In the camp I had been with strangers. I was a young boy and I didn't have anyone to talk to because most people did not speak my language. I was so alone. I was crying all the time. So when they opened up the gates of the women's and the men's camps, I figured I would see if there may be anyone who knew anything about me. I did the only thing I could; I pulled myself from barrack to barrack yelling out, "Anybody from Stavna? Anybody from Volosanka?" All I wanted was to find somebody I knew before I died. Good thing I named two towns because we had family in the other town. After about fifteen times someone said, "Yes. There are two sisters from Volosanka." I said, "Who are they?" He said, "Lebovics. Lebovics is their name." They were my first cousins Helen and Sylvia! I found them and we held each other and we started crying and we said we would never, never part again.

My cousins had a little brother who was sent to the gas chamber. He had the same name as me, so we decided we would say I was this brother.

Anne Frank was in the same camp with my two cousins. She was about the same age as I was, which is why I feel very, very close to her. We were the same age, we were in the same camp, and we had the same sickness. She died very close to liberation. My cousins did not know her — in the camp we did not ask people their name.

When the British came in and started to care for us, the first thing they wanted was for us to take showers and be deloused. So we went to the showers. Fifty people at a time were to take showers. My cousins and I were holding on to each other for dear life; we wouldn't let go. The women were to go into the shower first and my cousin said, "I can't go. I've got my brother, my little brother here and I can't let him go." The British were very nice to her. My cousin asked, "Does anyone mind if my brother takes a shower with me?" No one minded, so we all went into the shower together. I went in and I started washing and my cousin turned me to face the wall! I was fourteen and a half.

The British made an unfortunate mistake by giving us army rations to eat. Many people died from eating the rations because their bodies could not handle the food. I was five-foot-six inches tall and weighed 69 pounds. As soon as they could, the British took all the survivors to army barracks and then they burned the whole camp down.

I was deteriorating rapidly from the typhus. The British took me to a hospital they had taken over from the Germans in Cele, the next town from Bergen Belsen. When they took me to the hospital I was unconscious. I was in a coma for a couple of weeks. When I woke up everything was white. I was positive I had died and I was in heaven. I thought the nurses were angels. I was in this British hospital for a few months being treated for typhus.

## RECOVERING IN SWEDEN



Soon, the Swedish Red Cross came to take the younger children who were sick to Sweden. When they were preparing to ship me to Sweden I said I have two sisters here and I am not going without them. They said my 'sisters' could come, too. So we all went to Sweden. The Swedish Red Cross took us by bus to the ship to go to Sweden. There were many different transports to Sweden. I would say they took over ten thousand children.

We had no name tags, no passports. When they asked my name I said Lebovics because that was my cousins' name and I had said I was their brother. So I was Lebovics. We went to Sweden as brother and sisters.

When we got there, all the sick children were in quarantine in a town named Landskrna for about a month. We were sleeping on cots in a school building they converted for us. They gave us all new clothes and pajamas. Sweden was a

lovely country. The Swedish people were extremely nice to us. They treated us very generously.

When we got out of quarantine the town people would take us to their houses to stay for weeks and weeks and weeks. The doctor who took care of us in quarantine took me to his house to stay for a while. I stayed for about two months. He had a home in the city and a summer home on a lake which I enjoyed the most. Going from a concentration camp to a beautiful home like that, a serene environment like that, was indescribable. He had a son, Roy, and a daughter, Ilsa, about my age. He was thinking about adopting me, and I was almost willing until I started thinking that he wasn't Jewish and I was a Jew. I went through so much being Jewish, I decided I would take my chances.

All us recovering children were moved to a hotel in Helsiniborg which was converted into a place where people could live for a long time. We were about two or three boys in each room. Most of the boys were around my age. One boy, Jack Garfein, later became a movie director. We became life-long friends. There were all kinds of boys there — speaking all different languages. I learned how to speak Polish, I learned how to speak Hungarian, I learned how to speak German — all out of necessity. I learned from these boys which was the biggest Jewish city in Poland and the name of the street where most people lived. So when people asked me where I was from I would say this city in Poland, this street in Poland. Everyone thought I was Polish — it was for a joke. Eventually I was strong enough to go to town. I remember riding a bicycle.

They sent us to special schools. They wanted us to be on par with what fourteen-year-old boys should know. We learned algebra, science, languages. They were planning for us to grow up and stay in Sweden.

My cousins Helen and Sylvia were not staying in the same place with me, but they came to see me. Certain things stick out in my mind: they came to see me and they brought me a grapefruit. I had never seen a grapefruit before. I peeled it and I ate it and it was bitter! I said, "Oh! That orange is bitter. What is wrong with it?"

While I was living at the hotel I was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was sent to the Solbaken Sanitarium. I didn't feel very sick, just a little weak. The sanitarium was very, very nice. They had beds set up outside with just a roof covering them where I would nap every afternoon even though it was very cold there. There were nice nurses, good food and entertainment. I was very happy there. I was there for about a year.

After a while, different countries sent emissaries to Sweden asking us to go back to our home countries. I did not want to go back to Czechoslovakia.

People from Palestine had come to Sweden to try to get us to go to Israel. They even built a kibbutz in Mykleby, Sweden, where we could practice for when we got to Israel. I spent several months living on the kibbutz and was planning to go to Israel.

## FINDING MY FAMILY



My sister had first been in Auschwitz and then at Mathausen. After liberation she went back to Czechoslovakia where she found my brother. My brother had been in a Hungarian labor battalion until the end of the war and was liberated in Austria. My sister had gone back to Stavna but was chased out and went to Uzhhorod. It was not safe for Jews in the small towns; they all went to the big cities.

A girl I knew in Sweden did go back to Czechoslovakia, where she met my sister. This girl said to her, "You know, I just saw your brother." My sister sent me a telegram saying she and my brother were alive and she was hoping to go to America. So, I decided not to go to Israel and would instead try to go to America to be with my sister.

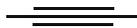
Because the talk was the Iron Curtain was coming down and people would be trapped, my sister and her husband decided to leave Czechoslovakia and go to a displaced persons camp in Germany while waiting for visas to America. It was very hard to get visas to America.

My brother's wife did not want to leave her family, so they did not leave with my sister. Once the area came under control of the Russians and the Iron Curtain came down, my brother was trapped there for 25 years. At first we would write to each other but then my brother became afraid to write to the United States from Russia. I kept waiting and

waiting for letters from him. Finally I took a trip to visit him in 1977. When I got there I decided I had to bring him to America. It took me two years. I approached everyone I knew who could help me. I worked on all the documents, the papers, and was eventually able to bring out 48 people including my brother's wife, his family and his in-laws. My late wife found apartments and furniture for all of them.

After the war I received a letter from the International Red Cross in answer to my inquiry about the place and the condition of the death of my father. The letter says that my father, Zoltan Muelbauer, date of birth January 15, 1896, prisoner number 56543, was in Gross-Rosen on February 16, 1945, that he died of natural causes after liberation, June 9, 1945, and is buried in Wüstegierdorf. They could not give me the exact place because he is buried in a common grave. When I met some people who were in the camp at the same time as my father some of them told me he was beaten to death and others said he died in the gas chamber. I don't think the letter I got was about my father. The prisoner number is wrong and the name is spelled wrong. Plus, he definitely was not buried at Wüstegierdorf.

## GETTING A VISA TO THE UNITED STATES



My cousins, my so-called sisters, were not sick anymore, so they got permission to go to America. But they refused to go to America until I was well enough to go with them. My

cousins had a sister who had moved to America in 1936. They were trying to get papers from her. They wanted her to send papers for me also.

At first we lied a little. They had a younger brother who unfortunately died in the gas chamber. When we wrote to their sister we didn't say the papers were to be for me, a cousin, we only said that the three of us are here. We wrote, "Efraim is here, and Helen is here, and Sylvia is here." It just so happened I had the same name as their brother: Efraim. We were named after the same relative.

When their sister in the United States learned the truth, she worried about it being not such a good idea to use the name and papers of their deceased brother. Her husband did not want to send the papers for me. She wrote saying I have an uncle in the United States, my father's brother, which I never knew before. He had gone to the United States in the 1920's or so. She looked him up and gave him my name. She only said to him, "I think there is a nephew of yours who would like to come. Would you like to help him?" He said yes. She gave me his address and I wrote to him. At that time I was using the name Lebovics. I wrote to him saying who I am and he wrote back to me saying, "If you need help, I will help you, but I don't think you are my nephew because my nephew would be a Muhlbauer, not a Lebovics." I was telling one lie after another.

I wrote back to him saying I was using my mother's maiden name. I don't know why I said that. He wrote me back, "Again, I repeat I will be glad to help but I know for a fact that your mother's maiden name was Moscovitz." Finally I wrote to him telling why I did it and then he got me a visa and a ticket.

I was stateless. When I was ready to travel from Sweden to America I needed a passport. The Swedish government issued me a stateless passport for the sole purpose of traveling to America. The visa was a Soviet visa. There were no more visas available for Czechoslovakians or Hungarians but there were for Soviets, so they gave me a Soviet visa. The name on the passport was Franz Lebovics. The Lebovics was my cousins' name. The Franz I picked just because I liked it.

In June of 1947, Helen, Sylvia and I traveled from Stockholm to America on a very nice Swedish liner, the Drottningholm, of the Swedish America Line. The ship was very luxurious: there was entertainment and wonderful music. Not all the passengers were refugees, many were traveling on vacation. The food was very good, but I was seasick most of the time.



*These are the children who came with me on the boat from Bergen Belsen to Sweden. I am in the second row from the bottom, near the center, wearing a beret.*

*C. 1945*



*This picture was taken as we were leaving quarantine.  
I am in the top row, sixth from the right.*



*Wearing my school uniform cap in Sweden. The Swedish people gave all us children the same clothes: a blue blazer, a coat and a student hat. They got the clothes from a warehouse, I think they were all donated.*



*With a nurse  
at the  
tuberculosis  
sanitarium in  
Sweden.*

*In the sanitarium  
recovering from  
tuberculosis. I am  
third from the left.*





*On the model kibbutz with a young lady who  
came to Sweden on the same boat with me.  
She went to live in Israel.  
C. 1946*



*On the model kibbutz in Sweden.  
I am second from the right.*



*On the model kibbutz in Sweden.  
I am third from the right in the top row.*



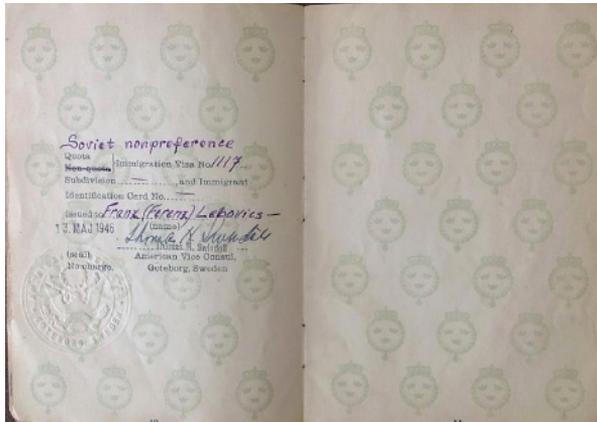
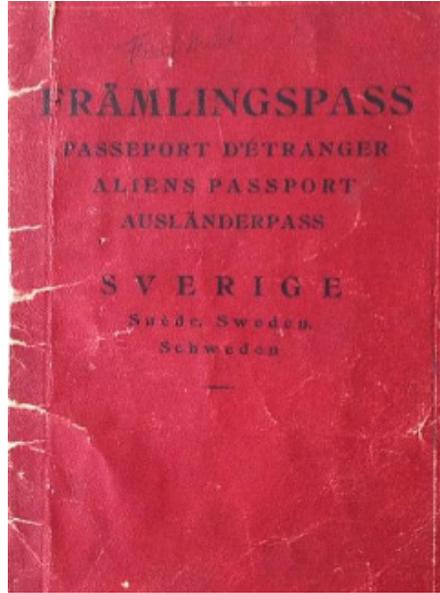
*On the model kibbutz in Sweden. I am on the far left.*



*On the model kibbutz in Sweden.  
I am on the bottom row on the left.*



*On the model kibbutz in Sweden.  
I am on the right kneeling behind the seated boy.*



*In 1946 Sweden issued me a stateless alien's passport. I was also issued a Soviet immigration visa signed by the American Vice Consul.*

	N:o <u>42805</u>	Avgift (7200) kr <u>166</u>
	För giltighetstiden t. o. m. den <u>23</u> / <u>4</u> / <u>19</u> / <u>16</u> (Valdets år)	t. o. m. den <u>23</u> / <u>4</u> / <u>19</u> / <u>16</u> (Valdets år)
Plats för fotografi och därpå anlagd stämpel. <i>Place pour le photograph et sous le cachet à y apposer.</i> <i>Ort för fotografiet och därpå anlagd stämpel.</i>	Stockholm i Statens utlänningskommission den <u>23</u> / <u>4</u> / <u>19</u> / <u>16</u> . Ex officio: <u>Stenung</u>	
<u>Franz Lebovics</u> Postlithografen namnteckning. Översatt af namnet. Transcription of name. Contraint par l'éditeur.	N:o _____	Avgift (7200) kr. _____
Hämmed vitändas, ett ovanstående fotografi och namnteckning äro innehållna av detta pass. <i>Le passeport contient une photographie et la signature apposée en-dessous avec deux          nits de sécurité et quatre passaport.</i> <i>The underwritten articles and the photograph and signature thereon are those of          the holder of the present document.</i> <i>Ensamtidigt äro medtagna ett eller flera fotografier och namnteckningar på          ett eller flera andra pass.</i>	Giltighetstiden förlängd t. o. m. den / / 19_____ (Valdets år)	Stockholm i Statens utlänningskommission den / / 19_____ Ex officio: _____
Stockholm i Statens utlänningskommission den <u>23</u> / <u>4</u> / <u>19</u> / <u>16</u> Ex officio: _____	N:o _____	Avgift (7200) kr. _____
I tjänsten: <u>Stenung</u>	Giltighetstiden förlängd t. o. m. den / / 19_____ (Valdets år)	Stockholm i Statens utlänningskommission den / / 19_____ Ex officio: _____
	N:o _____	Avgift (7200) kr. _____
	Giltighetstiden förlängd t. o. m. den / / 19_____ (Valdets år)	Stockholm i Statens utlänningskommission den / / 19_____ Ex officio: _____

*My passport was issued in the name I began using when I began posing as my cousin's brother: Franz Lebovics. For my passport photo I put a jacket on over my pajamas.*



*On the ship going to America.  
I am on the left, my cousin Sylvia is next to me  
and my cousin Helen is next to her.*



*I am with my cousins Sylvia and Helen in America.*

## LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES



We arrived in New York at 55th Street and West Side Highway. New York was amazing. I saw all these cars running day and night! I couldn't imagine where the cars were going — they never stopped running!

I went to live with my Aunt Rose and Uncle Samuel Muhlbauer in Brooklyn, in Bedford-Stuyvesant. My uncle was a machine operator in the garment trade. They were very poor. I never dreamed that people in America could be so poor. I thought that all people in America were very, very rich.

My aunt and uncle were very nice to me and cared for me as best as they could. I still did not feel well. For about ten months I was too weak to do anything. My aunt took me to doctors but she really couldn't afford it. Even buying food for another person was not easy for them. Then my aunt found out that the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) could help. She went to HIAS and they gave her some money every month to help take care of me.

HIAS tried to figure out what to do with me. Instead of sending me to school they figured the best thing for me would be to learn a profession that did not take much strength. I didn't mind. They figured out being a watchmaker didn't require much strength so they said, "Would you like to be a watchmaker?" I said, "Whatever you say, I'll be glad to learn." So they sent me to watchmaking school.

I went to Bulova Watchmaking School in Flushing, New York. The course took a couple of years. We learned how watches work, how to assemble a watch, how to fix a watch. We did not learn how to make a watch from scratch. My first job was as an intern with the Tissot Watch Company in New York. The office was on 5th Avenue and 42nd Street — a very nice place to work. I enjoyed it even though I made very little money.

I wanted to meet young Jewish people so I joined the Zionist youth groups Betar and Habonim. In 1948 when the Haganah needed workers on ships carrying contraband supplies to Israel, Habonim recruited me and a couple of other boys. I was assigned to a ship the Haganah leased from a Greek company. We sailed from New York to St. John, Newfoundland, where we loaded on weapons packed in crates marked, “farm equipment.” My job was to keep an eye on the crates. We were in constant communication with the Israelis telling us when to speed up or when to wait to avoid having the British confiscate our cargo. We had no problems on our month long trip to Haifa.

When we arrived in Israel, I joined The American Friends of Haganah as a volunteer. I was assigned to a battalion that supplied food to soldiers who were on the borders fighting the Arabs. I went from one border to another bringing food to the soldiers during the daytime and going on missions at nighttime. Wherever they sent me, I went. I maintained trucks. Whatever they asked us to do, we did. There was no such thing as giving orders at that time. People only told you what had to be done and everybody gladly did it.

While I was in Israel I heard from my sister that she was finally coming to America. I cut my stay in Israel short and returned to the United States because I missed my sister. I was waiting at the dock to meet her ship. When she got off the ship I was yelling, "Lily! Lily!" My sister looked at me and said, "I'm looking for my brother." She didn't recognize me!



*With my sister Lily and her husband,  
Harry Greenspan, in America.*



*A picture of me taken in Brooklyn.  
C. 1947*



*Serving as a lookout on a ship carrying arms to Israel.  
1948*



*Serving as a lookout on a ship carrying arms to Israel. 1948*



*Serving in Israel with the American Friends of Haganah.  
1948*



*Serving in Israel with the American Friends of Haganah.  
1948*



*Serving in Israel  
with  
the American  
Friends  
of Haganah. I was  
wearing the keffiyeh  
for fun.  
1948*

*With friends while  
serving in Israel with  
the American Friends  
of Haganah.  
1948*





*Serving in Israel with the American Friends of the Haganah. One of my jobs was to deliver supplies to the front.  
1948*

I went back to work at Tissot, but after a while I wanted to change jobs. I got a job at a firm that had stores in different cities. The manager in their store in Montclair, New Jersey had just quit so they offered me that job — temporarily, to help out. Because I lived in Brooklyn, I had to take a train, a bus and a ferry to get to Montclair every day.

When the Korean War began I was drafted into the Marines 3rd Division and sent to Parris Island, South Carolina. They had never before in American history drafted men into the Marines. The draft went on for only about two months. I was drafted and given American citizenship. I was assigned to a department fixing instruments. When I let everyone know I was a watchmaker, the officers would bring their watches and their wives' watches for me to fix. They wanted to keep me there, so I didn't have to go to Korea. I served for about twelve months.

## MARRIAGE AND A NEW BEGINNING



Then I went back to my job in New Jersey. The fellow I worked for, Shumar Schawl, asked me if I wanted to meet a nice young lady. I said, "Sure. Why not?" I was always ready to meet a young lady. So he gave me her phone number and I called her up and we met. She lived in Washington Heights in Manhattan and I still lived on Van Buren Street in Brooklyn with my aunt and uncle. My courtship with Edith Stein was not too long. I think I got engaged to her in a very short time — like three or four weeks. I was looking

for a family in the worst way. She had very lovely parents and when I first met them I fell in love with them too because they were people like my parents used to be. It was nice to have a family I belonged to.

All my documents had my name as Fred Muhlbauer. Edith said to me, “What do you need the ‘h’ for? It is too German. Take out the ‘h’.” We went to lawyers to take it out.

Edith was born in Belgium. A child prodigy pianist, she was a well-known performer in Europe. Her family was in the fur business. They were very well- to-do. When the Germans came into Belgium her family was somehow smuggled into France where they lived in a hotel in Nice. When the Germans went into France, her family was smuggled into Lisbon, Portugal. Edith, her parents, her two sisters, and her brother came to the United States in 1944.

Edith and I were married in the Bronx on May 25, 1952. It was a big wedding with a band and lots of friends and family. We went on a honeymoon to a lake in upstate New York which would have been perfect except for one thing: in the middle of the honeymoon — I was so nice — I called my boss. I was supposed to be gone for two weeks, but when I called him he said, “I need you back.” I took a bus back to New Jersey! Shortly after our wedding, Edith and I moved to New Jersey.

I couldn't wait to have a family. Edith and I had two daughters. Our first daughter we named Diane, Faiga in Jewish, after my mother. Our second daughter, Michelle (I call her Shelly),

was named for my wife's relative. We spent every weekend visiting with Edith's big, close family. We traveled for two weeks every year — we especially loved cruises. Edith and I had a wonderful life together.

I eventually bought the store in Montclair. The name of my store was Swiss American Jewelers. It was a very nice jewelry store. I was buying diamonds wholesale on 47th Street, the diamond district. I did a lot of business with engagement rings. My daughter, Shelly, designed some of the jewelry. I was very successful, but after 35 years I sold the store. I was tired of it, tired of being in one place for so long. When I sold the store I started dabbling in some other businesses. I did some real estate, some mortgages, I was building houses for a while — just to keep busy.

It was difficult to become observant again. I was away from it for so many years. But the longer I was in America, and especially after I got married, I started observing more. When I had my store I worked on Shabbas; after I sold my store I began to go to synagogue every Saturday.

One evening in 2001, Edith and I were getting ready to go to a wedding. She said to me, "We have to stop, I need to get some make-up." I said, "Do you want me to go get it at the drug store?" She said, "No, no, you won't know what to buy. I'll go get it." So she went. I waited and we were late. Somebody rang our doorbell. A stranger. She said, "There is a lady lying in your driveway." It was my wife. She had gotten

out of the car and she collapsed. The ambulance came. Edith was in a coma for about three days. They kept on asking me to disconnect the life support but I couldn't do it. I was crying and crying. I couldn't do it. I was pleading with the doctor to operate. He said he couldn't, there was no operation for it and even if he did operate she would be a vegetable. I didn't even care, I just wanted her. They disconnected the nutrition and I got very angry. I said, "What are you doing? Are you going to starve her?" They were hoping that she was going to die.

Finally, my nephew, my wife's sister's son, who is a cardiologist, came and said to me, "Fred, the best thing is to disconnect." So, what was I going to do? It was horrible, really horrible, but I had to do it. She died May 17, 2001 from a brain aneurysm. I am grateful she didn't suffer.

I couldn't stop crying for months. My children didn't know what to do with me. They wanted me to go to a psychiatrist. They sent me to group therapy. I went once — I hated it! Finally my brother-in-law said, "Why don't you pack your stuff and come with me to Florida? Come with me for a couple of weeks and see what happens." So I packed up my stuff, called the airlines, and came to Florida. He had a lot of friends and invitations to dinners every night — and they included me. I started feeling better. There was some life in me. So I decided I was going to buy a condo in Miami Beach.

After a while I began dating. In 2008 I met Elaine Brown. She is a very good-hearted lady. She is so good to my children and grandchildren. I am enjoying my life with her very much.



*With Edith at our wedding.  
Bronx, New York, may 25, 1952*

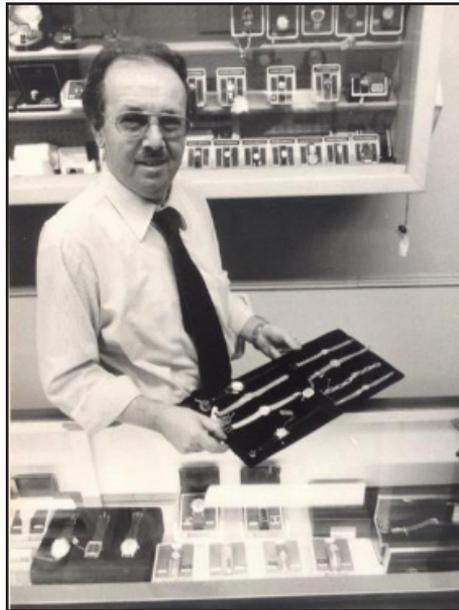


*My wife, Edith Stein Mulbauer.*



*With Edith.*

*At my jewelry  
store in Montclair,  
New Jersey.*





*My family.*

*From the left: Michael, Andy, me, Edith, Diane, Shelly, Eric, Robert. Steven is standing in front of Diane.*

I. No.  
INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE  
129 17A U.S. Army

Telephones-Arizona (Ill., Ext. No. 7. Date: April 4th, 1949.

Our Case No: T- 29 963

Your ref. : Your enquiry through  
Centr. Loc. Index, N.Y. Agel J

Subject : Tracing Report

To : Mr. Samuel MUEHLBAUER,  
190 Van Buren St.,  
Brooklyn, New York,  
U.S.A.

1. Please find below our report on the investigations we have made in connection with Tracing Request for  
M U E H L B A U E R, Soltan or Tobias

2. We are assuming that this report is conclusive and unless we hear from you to the contrary, we shall consider this case as closed.

We transmit the following information with the sympathy of this organization :

MUEHLBAUER, Soltan, born on 13.1.1896, has been in Concentration Camp Gross Rosen under prison number 218, was transferred to Arbeitslager Riese, Kommando of Gross Rosen and died there on 9.6.1945.

If you require documentary evidence on this case of death, please let us know and proper action will be taken.

For the Chief of I.T.S. HQ.  
... *Hudson* ...

T - 50

EP/T-50

*A letter dated April 4, 1949, saying my father died in Gross Rosen on September 6, 1945.*

398 Bloomfield Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey  
January 5, 1968

Adjutant General  
Washington, D. C.

Re: Muhlbauer, Soltan

Dear Sir:

Attached is a photostat copy of information which I had received from the I. R. O. International Tracing Service in 1949 in reference to my father's death.

At that time I was not in need of further information. However, I do find that I need further information at this time and have been told that the I. R. O. International Tracing Service is no longer in existence and it was suggested that I write to you with the possibility that you could help me.

I would appreciate it if you could give me more detailed information on the above named person such as the location of the prison camp and the place of burial and, if possible, whether it was in an individual or mass grave.

Very truly yours,

Fred Muhlbauer

FM/f  
encl.

*My January 5, 1968 letter to the Adjunct General  
requesting information about my father.*

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION



Federal Records Center  
5000 Wissahickon Avenue  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144

February 29, 1968

In Reply Refer To: ZMCP

Mr. Fred Muhlbauer  
398 Bloomfield Avenue  
Montclair, New Jersey

re: Soltan Muhlbauer

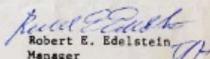
Dear Sir:

All prisoner of war records formerly in the custody of the Philadelphia Federal Records Center have been transferred to the Federal Republic of Germany. Accordingly, your correspondence is being sent there.

It is suggested that all future correspondence be sent to the following address:

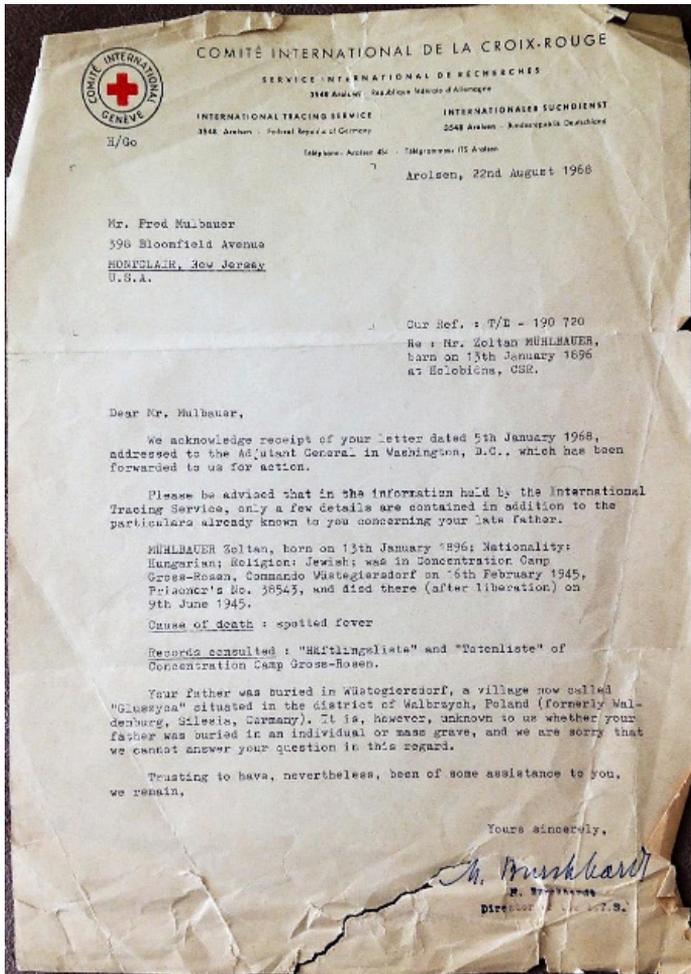
The WAST Record Center  
Eichborndamm 167-209  
1 West Berlin - 52  
Germany.

Sincerely yours,

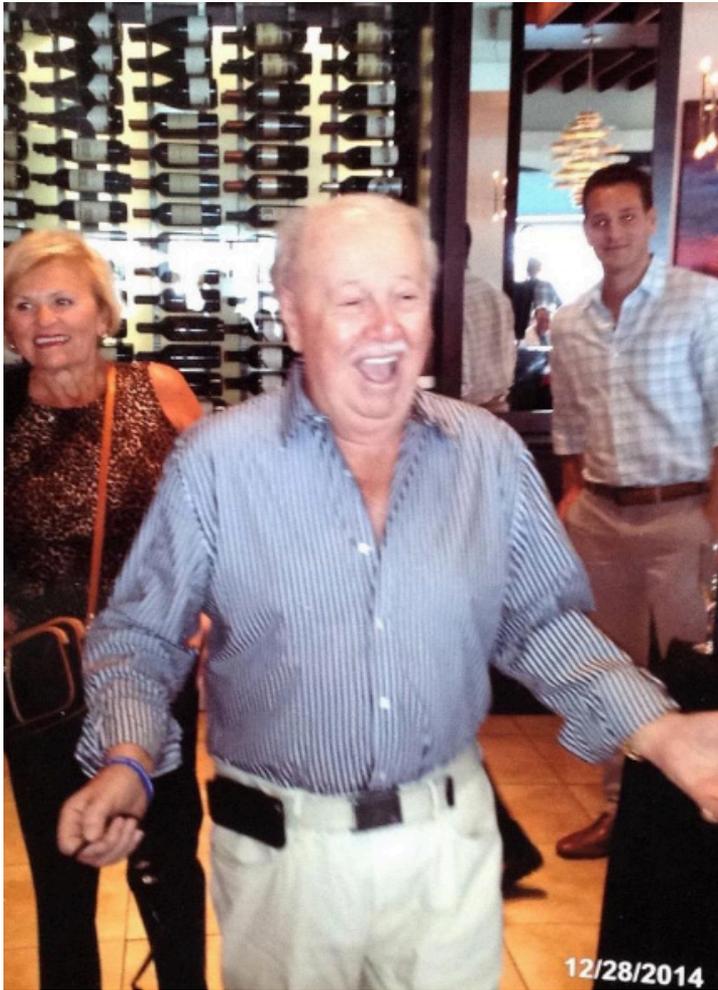
  
Robert E. Edelstein  
Manager

*Keep Freedom in Your Future With U.S. Savings Bonds*

*On February 29, 1968 I wrote to the Federal Records Center in Philadelphia requesting my father's war record. This reply says my request was forwarded to the Federal Republic of Germany where all prisoner war records had been transferred.*



*The letter dated August 22, 1968 I received from the Red Cross in Geneva saying my father died of spotted fever and is buried in Wüstegiersdorf. I knew this could not be true.*



*Today I enjoy sharing my life in Miami Beach with Elaine Brown, a very special lady.*



*My family today.*

*Front row: Diane, me, Elaine. Second row: Andy,  
Allison, Steven. Third row: Eric, Shelly, Brian.  
Fourth row: Robert, Michael.*



*With my daughters Diane and Shelly.*



*My great-grandchildren Jordan and Emerson  
(I call her Emmy).*

Thank you from Mindy Hersh

**ICHHC Project**

To: [fridman69@yeshiva.com](mailto:fridman69@yeshiva.com)

Hi to Fred:

I wanted to thank you again for speaking at the Legacy Luncheon. As you know, the interns are required to write journals about their experiences in the program. I must tell you that over and over I am reading about how much your words meant to them. I know the public speaking part wasn't your favorite thing to do, but you spoke with clarity, presence and purpose. We were all very moved!

The following is a link to a story about the luncheon that appears on the University of Miami website. Just click on it and it should take you there. I'm also including a copy of the story below. It's a wonderful write-up of the event.

Wishing you all the best! I look forward to your continued participation in the program.

Be well,

Mindy Hersh

A letter from Professor Mindy Hersh thanking me for speaking at the Legacy Luncheon at the University of Miami.

*I am a guest lecturer at the University of Miami.*

Holocaust Survivors Student Internship Program (HSSIP)	
The Holocaust Survivors Student Internship Program (HSSIP) is a project of the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies and the George Feldenkrais Program in Judaic Studies at the University of Miami, in collaboration with Jewish Community Services of South Florida and Aventura-Torrey Jewish Center.	
The Internship Program and our students have been the beneficiaries of scholarship funding graciously provided by The Greater Miami Jewish Federation, and members of Miami's Jewish Community.	
We greatly appreciate the generosity and efforts of the organizations and donors in making this extraordinary educational experience possible.	
Special thanks to all the participants in the HSSIP Program - the students and the Holocaust survivors - who have devoted so much of their time, energy and love to this important Holocaust legacy educational project.	
	<u>Program</u>
Welcome & Introduction of Partner Organizations	Dr. Eugene Rothman
Community Greetings & Introduction of Supporters	Mrs. Maire E. Schwartz
Introduction of Student Interns	Dr. Mindy S. Hersh
Student Reflections	Vilka Chittagale Sarah Akiba Kaelja Lynd
Introduction of Survivors	Mrs. Barbara Davis
Survivor Reflections	Mr. Fred Melisser
Closing Comments	Dr. Eugene Rothman
Exhibit of Legacy Projects	

April 20, 2012

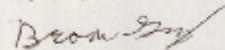
Dear Mr. Mulbauer,

On my first day to visit you, I can remember how anxious I was to meet you. I was incredibly nervous about the whole ordeal, not just about what you would tell me, but also about how you would feel about me. As I exited the elevator on the tenth floor, I saw a very excited man standing halfway down the hall. When I saw your smile I instantly knew that I had nothing to be worried about, and I was extremely thankful that we both became comfortable with each other so quickly. After talking to you for only a few moments I knew that I was truly blessed to be able to work with you and hear your story.

Before meeting you I had envisioned that our meetings would be very solemn, especially considering what we would be talking about. Since that very first meeting, however, my expectations have been completely wrong. Every time I have met with you, you have been very warm and happy, and even after moments of sadness, I am constantly surprised that you are able to revert back to your kind smile. It is incredibly impressive that you have been able to keep such a positive outlook on life, especially in spite of everything you have gone through. Your positive attitude has truly been an inspiration to me, and it is something that I will strive to emulate for as long as I live.

I want to say thank you for everything you have given me throughout our time together, but I honestly don't think that words can ever accurately describe how this experience has affected me. Thank you for sharing your story with me. I know that it is something deeply personal, and it must have been difficult at times to recount your experiences in the Holocaust. I feel incredibly fortunate to have heard it. Hearing the details of your story has intimately connected me with the Holocaust. No longer am I simply a passive observer of the Holocaust; I am now actively connected to it in a way that very few people today are. Today whenever the events of the Holocaust are brought up I instantly think about your experiences: about your life in Stavna, about your brother and sister, and about your mother and father. Whenever someone mentions Auschwitz or the gas chambers I immediately recall how your mother was taken from you simply because she was trying to help another woman with her children. I also think about how you didn't let your experiences ruin your life, how you persevered and had a very successful life with a wife and daughters and grandsons. And I cannot ever forget about your smile, which always greeted me every time we met. Your story is something that I will always carry with me, something that I can keep forever and pass on to future generations. Thank you so much for choosing to share your story with me, you don't know how profoundly it has affected me. You once told me that your biggest fear is that someday in the future people will begin to question whether or not the Holocaust ever actually happened. I promise you that as long as I am alive on this earth I will never allow that to happen, that your story will never be forgotten. That is the least that I can do in repayment of everything you have done for me. Thank you, Mr. Mulbauer, both for the time we have spent together and for the many meetings yet to come.

Respectfully,



Brock Gomez

*A letter from a student in the Holocaust Survivors  
Student Internship Program at the University of Miami.  
April, 2012.*

## TODAY



My life today is very busy. I go to synagogue every Saturday. Every Monday I volunteer at the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach. I enjoy meeting people there from all over the world and trying to talk to them in their languages. I especially love talking to the children who visit the memorial. I am also active in a program at the University of Miami that pairs students with Holocaust survivors.

I am still working at my mortgage business. As a member of the board of directors of my condo building there is always some committee to be on. I like to walk and I go to the gym. Elaine and I go out with friends and we give parties at my home. I am always doing something!

I am very close with my children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and with many of my nieces and nephews. I speak with my children every day and see them several times a year.

My daughter, Diane, is a teacher at a Jewish school in New Jersey. Diane and her husband, Michael Kohut, have two sons: Andy and Eric. Andy and his wife, Allison, have two children: Emerson and Jordan— my first great-grandchildren. My daughter Michelle is a talented artist. Michelle and her husband, Robert Bodner, have two sons: Steven and Brian.

My cousin, Sylvia Ettinger, passed away in 2006. My cousin Helen Goldkind lives in Washington D.C. Until recently she volunteered at the Holocaust Memorial every day — not once a week — every day. I said to her, “Chaia, why do you go every day?” She answered, “This is my life.”

My wife, her sisters and brother, my sister and brother, and their spouses have all passed away. I am the only one of that generation still alive.

I am grateful I have a very loving family, I hope they will never know the troubles I had and what I went through. I hope no person in the world will have to go through what I went through. Everybody should have the right to live a normal life.

I ask the question of myself many, many times — Why did I survive? Why me? Why did God choose me to survive? There is no answer to it. I suppose it is written in the stars.

## ABOUT THE WRITER

I began writing for Holocaust survivors in the 1990's when survivors I met on The March of the Living asked me for help writing about their feelings on returning to Poland for the first time. Later, survivors I interviewed for Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation asked me for help writing down all the things they did not speak about in their interview. Soon, other survivors began approaching me seeking help writing a book about their experiences in the Holocaust. I met with the survivors, recorded our numerous conversations, organized and wrote the stories in the survivors' own words, printed the books, and then handed the books to the survivors as my gift to them. The books were written solely for the survivors and their families; they were never intended for publication. They are being published now because my friends, Carol and Jaime Suchlicki, recognizing their historical value as first-person testimony, introduced me to Dr. Haim Shaked to discuss finding a wider audience for the books.

Thank you to Dr. Haim Shaked director of the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies at the University of Miami for agreeing to publish the books and for your guidance and patience as we worked together on this project.

I am grateful to the March of the Living for introducing me to the world of Holocaust education and finding a role for me in it.

Thank you to the Shoah Foundation for choosing me to be an interviewer and for mentoring me through more than thirty interviews of Holocaust survivors. Your training led me to do the work I do today.

Thank you to the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach for encouraging the docents at the memorial to work with me to write their memoirs. I appreciate your confidence in me and your respect for my work.

Thank you to the my dear Holocaust survivors for sharing your most painful as well as your most joyful memories with me. Thank you for answering questions that no one should ever have to ask or answer. Thank you for trusting me to write your memoirs accurately and respectfully. It has been my honor and pleasure to work with you.

—Bobbi Kaufman





“My father and I were together in the camps. We would share our bread. I always wanted to give my father more and he always wanted to give me more. Thank God it was that way — at least I know I tried to help my father.”

— *Fred Mulbauer*

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After confinement in the Uzhhorod Ghetto in Czechoslovakia, Fred’s family was taken by cattle car to Auschwitz where his mother was immediately sent to the gas chamber. Fred and his father were sent to work at Wüstegiersdorf labor camp. After enduring a death march to Flossenburg and transport by rail car, Fred was finally liberated at Bergen Belsen. He was not yet fifteen years old. Fred spent the next year in Sweden recovering from typhus and going to school.

In 1947 Fred emigrated to the United States where he was drafted and served in the Marines. He married and raised two daughters.

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There is a concept in Judaism of a positive commandment, something that is time dependent, something that must be done *now*. One must, accordingly, applaud this important effort by the Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program of the University of Miami to collect and publish Holocaust survivors’ memoirs as there will soon—too soon—come a time when the last survivors will be no longer. Sadly, tragically, this testimony is not only urgent but timely because the world in which we live echoes their world and the quality of their witness. The very nature of their survival has much to teach today’s generations. One must express gratitude for this project and in the sagacious words of Hillel say: “If not now, when?”

**Dr. Michael Berenbaum**  
Professor of Jewish Studies  
American Jewish University  
Former President and CEO  
Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation  
(Now USC Shoah Foundation Institute)