

Atlanta, Georgia

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ALEX GROSS

I was born in 1928, in the small village of Palanok, near Mukachevo in the Carpathian Mountains, part of Czechoslovakia. My Jewish name is Jankele Gross. I was the youngest of six brothers, and one sister. Our father was a tailor, and our mother was the gentlest human being, loved by everyone, especially by the young Jewish people. Our lives were happy and our home was the gathering place for most of the young Jewish people in our village, especially on the Shabbat when everyone joined in zmiros songs.

In 1941 when I was 11 years old, the Hungarian troops took over our part of the country. Soon after the Hungarian occupation, there was chaos. My grandfather, Mojshe Aaron Lebowitz died at home later that year.

In 1942 when I was thirteen, I had to leave my home because the Hitler youth attacked us every time we went to or from the synagogue or left our home. The Hitler youth headquarters adjoined the back of our home. I went to Budapest to work, and when they were rounding up Jews who were not born there, I came back home.

Soon thereafter, at Pesach time, in 1944, we were taken to the Munkacher ghetto. By then our three older brothers, Fishi (Filip), Benjumin (Ben), and Bendi (Bernie) were taken to the Hungarian labor camp. Soon after that my mother, father, two brothers,

Bill, Sam, sister, Rosalyn, and I were taken in cattle cars to the Auschwitz extermination camp.

I believe our father was immediately sent to the gas chambers, then to the crematorium! Brother, Bill, Sam, Rosalyn, and I were taken to Birkenau. I did not see my five brothers or sister again, except Sam, who was with me in Buna until we were liberated.

I found my brother, Sam, again in Buchenwald, then found another brother, Bill, there.

The three of us brothers were liberated in Buchenwald; we got on the first army truck to take us back to Czechoslovakia to look for our family.

I was very sick and fell into a coma when we were liberated in Buchenwald, and very soon in Praha again, I came down with all kinds of sicknesses.

When we got to Prague, we found that all of our brothers were still alive, except our step-brother, who died the day of liberation of Typhoid in Bergen Belzen, where our sister, Rosalyn, was also liberated.

When we went to Palanka to visit my oldest brother, Phillip, I barely got out of there, because the Russians were closing the borders. They annexed that area and renamed it Zakapatsky

Ukrainia. Phillip was not able to leave, and lived under Russian domination for twenty years before we were able to get him to America.

A British Jewish organization was gathering the orphaned children to bring them to England. I ended up first near Edinborough, Scotland, where my sister, Rosalyn, had been taken a few months before me.

We stayed there awhile, then we were sent to Nelson Lancashire. From there they sent us to London, England.

By then, they brought out brother, Sam, to London, England, and he was with us until he left to fight for the re-establishment of Israel. Rosalyn and I stayed in London till 1949, and enjoyed the British people, especially the Jews, the Belsize Park Club, and the 45 Aid Society. Most of all, the camaraderie we developed amongst our boys and girls was wonderful, which I still cherish, and still keep in touch with Jerry Hornstein, Gene Spiegel, (they live in california) and Abe Grabia, who has been working for us in PA and GA for over thirty years. I also keep in touch with the Ralph family, where we lived in Croydon, and Ben Hellgot in London.

I learned a trade in London with Jerry Hornstein, and finally left almost a year after Rosalyn in December, 1949, to come to America, where I rejoined my family, then after Sam suffered injuries, he came to the U.S.A.

All of us brothers and our sister are T.G. alive, living in the U.S.A. or Canada.

I have been very much involved in the education of and teaching about the Holocaust. I was former Chairman for six years of Hemshech, a survivors group in Atlanta, GA. I have served on the Board of the Atlanta Jewish Federation, as well as General Chairman of Israel Bonds for Metro Atlanta. Presently I am the Vice-Chairman of the Georgia State Holocaust Commission, as well as on the Board of ORT, and other organizations. I was informed that I will be honored with the degree Doctor of Laws, 'honoris causa' next spring at Emory University.

I look forward to the reunion in London next year to see my old friends.