

A LETTER TO OUR FRIEND MR. MORTON FREIMAN...

...ABOUT OUR EXPERIENCES DURING WORLD WAR II

MORRIS HOLLENDER

A few years ago I have started to write a letter to our friend Mr. Morton Freiman to North Miami Beach, FLA., who used to be a neighbor of my dear sister Serene and her husband Max. ~ He became very friendly with them and fond of the entire Hollender family.

During the past years we used to spend our PESACH vacations there and became friends with the Freiman family.

Dr. Freiman, a well-established plastic surgeon, an Orthodox Jew, was also a multi-talented artist and a wood carver. ~ Among others he made a nice special chair, the so-called "PROPHET ELIYAHUS CHAIR" in memory of our dear ones who perished in the HOLOCAUST. He embroidered their HEBREW names on a velvet pillow, which also belonged to the chair.

People were asking him for the chair whenever there was a BRIS ceremony and the baby was resting on this special chair. ~ In addition there is a memorial book in which Dr. Freiman recorded the HEBREW names of the boys. He calls them "THE HOLLENDER BABIES." He has them over one hundred.

Dr. Freiman and his family are observing the YAHREZIT of each member of our family. * ~ A couple of years ago he and his wife TINA made ALIYA to Israel, where most of his family live there. ~ The special chair is being taken care of by their daughter CHANELE in New Jersey. It continues to be used for the same purpose and became very popular there.

Each year when we visited Serena we met the Freimans. He was a very busy man and complained that he has not time to ask about our experiences during World War II.

As I was writing him the letter I thought it would be proper to write them a long MEBILAH which we couldn't do it personally. ~ I didn't start it chronologically just added stories as they came to my or Edith's mind.

As you can see I was able to write 35 pages. For health reasons I couldn't write more. I wanted to write also about our lives in the United States. ~ So we have decided to send to Dr. Freiman the 35 pages. He asked for giving him our permission to place one copy at YAD VASHEM.

We are sending to you the 35 pages and short biography of each member of the HOLLENDER family *. ~ Dr. Freiman asked me to write it in his memorial book.

I felt that it was important to me to write you about this special doctor, a fine human being. May he and his family be blessed.

Hope this letter finds you all doing well. We would like if you could give this reading to your dear children and grandchildren.

Included are a few short articles from our synagogue bulletin. You might be interested to read them.

Wishing you all the best with the blessing of good health, peace and happiness.

With much love,

Morris and Edith

Dear Mrs. And Dr. Freiman, dear friends: *

Hope our letter finds you both in good health, while keeping busy at home and with your professions.

Our stay with Serena through the entire PESACH was—thanks HASHEM—very enjoyable. We were sorry for not having a chance to meet you.

We are thinking of you often. I promised myself to call you on the phone many times, but my process of aging gives me a hard time to keep my promises. ~ Right now I have a little more time. So I have decided to write you a long MEGILAH.

First of all I want to thank you Dr. Freiman for observing the YAHREZEITS for our loved ones and for reciting the KADDISH. Your good deeds are of a high level of * goodness and kindness for which we will be grateful to you always. It means so much to Serena and to me. Your praiseworthy deeds are making sure that the memory of our loved ones will not be forgotten. May they in heaven intercede in behalf of both of you and your dear family and may HASHEM bless and protect you all forever. *

Our special thanks goes also to your dear NOAM for remembering MAX * and for visiting his grave.

Since both of you are so much involved in the history about the Hollender family, we felt to add a few stories from the past and present and about the new life we started in our new country almost 40 years ago. The included reading will surely give you more information about our life in the United States.

First thing comes to our mind that in May 2000 we had our 50th wedding anniversary. Instead of celebrating it with a party, we decided to return to Auschwitz where we were taken with our loved ones in 1944. That time at arrival I have noticed the chimneys, smoke and flames, and didn't suspect of something very bad. In my imagination, it was a factory—ironworks where I am going to work. Very soon we have learned that this is a place of death. Edith had a little sister Judith *. At the selection, Dr. Mengele showed her to follow the children, the elderly and the disabled. Edith's mother * was still young and able to work and was ordered to stand on a different place. The mother rushed to Mengele, she was crying and asked him to allow her to follow her little daughter. She joined her and went together into the gas chamber. That was in 1944.

Now in the year 2000 we were standing where the crematorium was at that edge of a large ditch where the human ashes were dumped. After lighting memorial candles, reciting prayers, I chanted the KEL MOLEI RACHAMIM. ~ Suddenly something went

through my mind. I asked Edith if she had a plastic bag. She was surprised when I was walking down into the crater and filled the bag with soil. ~ We designated that earth as symbolic remains of our parents. We brought the earth home, processed it in fine powder and set it aside. We thought that one day we will ask somebody to bury these ashes with us in our graves. ~ Recently it was decided that on YOM HASHOAH to place these ashes from Auschwitz in our cemetery in memory of our six million brothers and sisters who perished in the HOLOCAUST. To both of us, this hold ground will also be the symbolic burial of our parents, * .

Just as the ashes have a story, so does the melody of the KEIL MOLEI RACHAMIM that I am singing at YIZKOR when remembering the victims of the HOLOCAUST. It is based on the melody by a cantor from Roumania named SHALOM KATZ who was saved from the Nazis in World War II. Apparently, KATZ asked the S.S. if he could say a prayer at the graves of the Jews who were executed. The Nazis liked how he sang it, so that spared his life. They took him to many other executions and let him "PERFORM" the same prayer.

On YOM HASHOAH Apr. the 15th the ashes were laid to rest by 3 young brothers, children of my primary physician Dr. Samuel Osher and Mrs. Alana OSHER. Many congregants and friends participated in the ceremony. The grave-stone was already in its place. We were standing there, chanted prayers which are being said at burials and listened to remarks of our Rabbi, the president and officials of our congregation. In conclusion I sang the KEL MOLEI RACHAMIM of Shalom KATZ and everybody was chanting the mourner's KADDISH.

In 1998 the Boston Globe columnist Jeff Jacoby—a son of a Holocaust survivor—wrote an article about Dr. William McDermott who in his book *Surgeon in Combat* describes his experience and the horrible conditions in Ebensee after the concentration camp was liberated by the U.S. army. I called Dr. McDermott to express my thanks to him and the American soldiers for liberating the camp and for saving my life. I told him that the content of his book with many pictures is very important from the standpoint of an eye-witness. It will help to convince a denier of the Holocaust. I told him that—from my experience—many people have an inclination not to believe everything if they are listening to a person who speaks with emotions. To Holocaust survivors it was difficult to tell the horror stories without emotions. Many people thought that we are exaggerating. ~ We were very happy to meet Dr McDermott, a sensitive, righteous and a fine human being.

Hope you will forgive me for not writing in a chronologic way. I am sure you will understand that there are too many things in our minds. Right now I am thinking what happened to Edith in Auschwitz. She got there a skin rash, probably an allergic reaction to the grass which we ate in the soups. For that reason she was selected to be taken to the gas chamber with many other inmates. Edith overheard that somebody is talking SLOVAK. She approached a few girls for Slovakia who were in charge to keep order over the inmates who got the death sentence. Edith explained then that she is not sick, she only has an allergic reaction from the food. They managed to get her back in another barrack among the healthy ones, and told her: Whenever people are being selected for work, make sure that you will be among the first ones. Because we came with a Hungarian transport, the girls were surprised that Edith spoke SLOVAK.

On the day when we were taken from our GHETTO to Auschwitz in cattle wagons, we were standing in line. Before boarding, our belongings were searched and most of them were taken from us and thrown on a big pile. ~ My father * carried his TALLIT and TEFILLIN under his arm and I was holding my TEFILLIN. The SAYS took it from both of us and threw it on the growing pile. As the turned away for a few seconds I “stole” my TEFILLIN back and hid them under my loose overcoat. I was very lucky. If they would notice it, they would kill me on the spot. ~ In the cattle wagon I was the only one who had TEFILLIN. We had among us our beloved Bertcher Rebbe * and he was the first one who was DAVENING with my TEFILLIN. ~ When we arrived to Auschwitz, everything was taken from us.

My dear uncle BEEL KALLUSH also comes to my mind. He was in his late forties, still in good shape. On the High Holy Days he didn't want to go to work and reported that he was sick. I am pretty sure he wasn't the only one who got sick at the same time. He and many others were taken to a barrack and were held there until the S.S. came with a big truck, loaded all prisoners, and took them in the gas chambers. It was the second day of SUCCOTH and I witnessed it. He went to his death for * . His good friend GIMPL KESTENBAUM was following him.

Shortly after arriving to Auschwitz I was tattooed with the number A-10103 on my left arm and was assigned to many different jobs, working on the fields surrounding Auschwitz Birkenau. The soil in the area looked like reddish clay and wasn't very fertile. We were digging canals in order to drain off the swampy areas. The grass was growing well which we were cutting. After the grass was dry, it was pressed in big blocks.

There were large fields where RAPE SEEDS were growing. (Today CANOLA oil is being made from it.) To the German war machinery, the oil pressed from the seeds was

a very important commodity. The straw was cut into small pieces, making big piles of it. Since the Germans were economizing everything, human waste was brought from Auschwitz-Birkenau in large cisterns, pulled by prisoners. We had to dig big holes where the human waste was emptied and from there we were carrying it in buckets and pouring it on top of these straw piles. The compost made from it was used as fertilizer on the fields.

Some days the prisoners used to bring in big containers human ashes from the crematorium. With our hands we were scattering the ashes all over the fields as fertilizer. From time to time I found pieces of human bones which were not completely consumed by the heat and fire. I was holding those bones in my hands and couldn't stop crying while thinking that these may be the bones of my parents. *

While doing all those things, in front of me were the chimneys and the railways leading in the direction of the camp. It was very sad and painful watching the incoming cattle-wagon trains with human beings, taking them to the gas chambers.

By that time it was already known to the leaders of the Western Alliance what is going on in Auschwitz. On that summer almost every day their bombers were flying over the camp and the railways. Alarm was sounded and we had to lay down and were watching the beautiful "SILVER BIRDS" high in the sky. The Germans were trying to bring them down, but without success. We were praying, asking HASCHEM to make them to drop the bombs on us, because there wasn't hope for survival. We were brought there to be completely destroyed. It was just a matter of time. But first they used up every bit of our energy. Exploitation was high on their agenda.

You may be surprised if I tell you, that there was something I enjoyed very much in Auschwitz. The S.S. selected the finest musicians from Europe—all prisoners—and for their own enjoyment created a first-class orchestra. ~ As we were walking out to work through the gate with the inscription "ARBEIT MACHT FREI," the orchestra situated on the first floor of a brick building with all the windows open played beautifully. We listened to music also when we have returned from work until the time when the S.S. finished the counting of the prisoners.

A different story comes to my mind. A survivor Mr. KRAUS who was the only one I know who benefited from being in Auschwitz. He was brought there on stretchers, paralyzed from a spine illness. Kraus could speak German. Mengele got interested in his condition. Instead of sending him to the gas chamber, he was placed in a "HOSPITAL" where horrible experiments were done on prisoners by SAYS doctors. They removed

some bones from his legs and implanted them in his spine. He got the best care from them. They followed his condition and gradual recovery. He returned home completely healthy. We met him in a sanatorium in the High Tatras Mountains in Czechoslovakia. There were 70 young Holocaust survivors, and I met Edith at this beautiful place.

People usually ask if my survival can be attributed to something. To be honest, I do not have an answer to that question. It just happened by coincidence. I didn't consider myself as a person who was strong, flexible, energetic, smart or courageous. For an 18 year old I was pretty naïve. One thing I should say that on the way to work and back to the barracks I chanted the morning and evening prayers which I could do most of them by heart. In my prayers I didn't ask HASHEM for saving my life, only to protect me from insanity and to keep my spirit in balance.

After 4 months of hard labor, suffering from constant hunger, pain and beating, I lost a lot of weight. One day I felt sick and feverish. The "so-called doctor" immediately established his diagnosis. He put it on a piece of paper: ALLGEMEINE KERPER SCHWECHE, which in translation means "general weakness of the body." He sent me to a "so-called HOSPITAL." That place was practically a center where run-down prisoners were placed. When the big 2 halls filled up to about 300 persons, the SS came with big trucks and took them to the gas chambers. I was there through the High Holy Days and SUCCOTH. From the window of this "HOSPITAL" I saw uncle Berl * when on the second day of SUCCOTH he was taken to be killed.

This hospital had 2 physicians, Dr. Klempfner from Prague and Dr. Valentin from Vienna. Both of them were my Angel-Protectors. They told me that I have pleurisy. One day came Dr. Klempfner and said that he has six injections of calcium with vitamin C. He gave me one each day in my vein. ~ The mentioned 2 halls were already overcrowded. The SS came with trucks, called each patient by their number. They walked to the main door where the trucks were waiting. My immediate thoughts about to die in such horrible violent way frightened me so much that I was hyperventilating and my heart was pounding very rapidly. With my left palm I pressed it and with my right hand I was holding a piece of bread which I was saving for worst times. Right now I wanted to eat it before I die. Everything went so fast that it was no time for a prayer, only the *. I was able to say a few lines. ~ Then I heard when the main door was slammed and I was standing there with 5 more survivors. Two of them, Mr. Kirsehnner and Mr. Justie, were from Pilsen. And there are coming my two ANGELS, Dr. VALENTIN and Dr. KLEMPFNER to tell us that we are all healthy and are going out to work. They didn't have any comments or explanations. But all six of us were sure that at the last minute

they pulled our records out and made us healthy before the SS. I am thinking of both of them in my prayers. Of course, they couldn't save many more. I am also thankful to HASHEM that I found favor in the eyes of those two righteous doctors * . Dr. KLEMPFNER survived. I was in touch with him in PRAGUE in 1950.

From Auschwitz, Edith was transported with many other prisoners in cattle wagons to concentration camp Oranienburg in Germany and was assigned to work in a factory, making spare parts for the German army. The factory was located in Schönholz, close to Berlin. She worked 12 hours a day either days or nights. ~ In the winter of 1945, she got sick and was placed in a similar hospital as I was. From there they were taken to the gas chambers to Sachsenhausen.

The prisoners didn't know what is the situation on the Russian front, but there were alarms and bombings of Berlin.

On April the 1st, the SS—as usual—came with big trucks to get rid of the sick prisoners. Before they boarded the trucks they had to undress completely. They were on the trucks the whole afternoon. Among the prisoners who came to say goodbye were her two cousins to whom she gave her clothing and shoes. ~ Those waiting hours are impossible to describe, the horrors seemed to her lasting an eternity. ~ And there comes the SS commandant and shouts in their direction: “This was an April fool's day joke and everybody goes back.” Her cousins gave her back the belongings. In those days before the end of the war, crematoriums couldn't handle to burn so many bodies and this saved her life.

We would like to mention my 3 cousins, Hindu, Hentchi and Mati. When their family arrived to Auschwitz, the three sisters were selected for work and they stayed together. ~ Hindu, the oldest one, was married and pregnant. She was ordered next day to appear before a “COMMISSION.” That was a sure death sentence. Hentchi, the young single one, decided to go there instead of Hindu. Her courage paid off. They looked at her and said, that some mistake has been made and let her go. ~ In the meantime Hindu was always looking for a larger size of an inmate-dress in order to cover her pregnancy.

In January 1945 they were among those who were leaving the camp, walking in the snow in the bitter cold. One night they were placed in a big barn and there Hindu gave birth to a still-born baby. The two younger sisters went out in the dark and buried the baby in the snow. ~ Hindu—fortunately—fully recovered and could continue in the “DEATH-MARCH.”

The three sisters miraculously survived. The husband of Hindu was killed. She remarried and HASHEM blessed her with 5 children. Hindu died a few years ago * , but her family is in touch with us. Hentchi and Mati have their own families and they are also in touch.

In all concentration camps the SS needed reliable people who would keep things in "ORDER" everywhere. They were selected among German prisoners. Most of them were criminals. They were separated from us, lived in better barracks and were well-fed. The more brutal ones had a better chance to get a job. They were the so-called CAPO'S, overseers, supervisors who were constantly angry and made us to work harder. They enjoyed to beat the prisoners and to see their suffering.

And here I would like to describe a good one among them who deserves to be mentioned. His name was ANTON MAZUCH whose father was Polish and mother German. The SS called him "THE WASSER POLACK." He was there as a criminal because in his job he committed some financial embezzlement. At his new assignment he had to be brutal, making us to work harder, to yell and hit us with a whip. He did all those things when the SS were present. After they departed, Anton told us to take it easy and to move slowly. When the SS returned he played the brutal one. Whenever he hit us with his whip, it was in a very gentle way. ~ Anton was born in Königsberg—the Russians called the city KALININGRAD. He asked me my HEBREW name and always called me MOISHI. Sometimes he gave me a piece of bread or dropped at my legs a carrot, piece of cabbage, turnip or boiled potato. He was very careful, because if the SS would see it, that would be a crime and punishable for both of us.

The hunger was constantly with us. I tried to chew different kinds of grass and to scrape the bark of any tree in a piece of paper and to make a cigarette. Smoking that stuff helped alleviate the hunger.

On January 1945 the Russian Army wasn't far from Auschwitz and the camp had to be liquidated. Before we left—Jan 18th—Anton Mazuch got an order to prepare a large farm wagon in which we placed all kinds of grain, oats for horses and on the top squares of pressed hay. Two strong horses were pulling the farm-wagon. 4 young horses were tied to the end of the wagon. I was in charge of the horses and followed them on the snowy road. Sometimes they got loose and I had to run and to retrieve them from the big snow. ~ Anton was walking on the side of the wagon in front of the tow pulling horses, holding the reins and a whip (lash). Not an easy job!

On the pressed hay was sitting an young armed SS, sometimes playing on a mouth-harmonica. He asked me a few times to let him know when I won't be able to walk further, so he could relieve my suffering.

On the road thousands of prisoners were marching. SS guards were following them on horses and were constantly "on the watch." Whoever wasn't able to continue to walk was shot and killed. The red spots on the snowy road showed where another human being lost his life.

Our SS commandant on a horse always checked with Anton if everything was all right. One night we were ordered to make a stop. The commandant came by. He was a cruel brutal sadist and was able to kill any prisoner for no reason. ~ That night he probably went through some transformation. He took out from his bag a larger piece of bread and a bottle which had still some alcohol in it (SCHNAPS), he gave it to Anton and told him to share with the "young boy," that's me. Anton gave me half of the bread and half of the SCHNAPS. That was a real life-saver.

As we were further walking, an SS came and stepped before me and ordered to stop. He let the wagon and the young horses to continue on their way. All those who left were sent to Grossrozen and all those who were behind me went to Mauthausen. I was very sad and sorry that—so abruptly—my good Anton MAZUCH wasn't anymore with me. He was my supporter and protector. I wish I had a chance to thank him for everything, to wish him good-luck and say good-bye to him.

After the short stop, I walked with many other prisoners to a railway station. The German name of the station was LOSLAU. There were waiting large-tall open wagons on which coal is being transported. In those wagons the SS pressed in as many people as they could, like sardines in a can. Everybody was just standing. Each wagon on the end had a small cabin for the SS guards. The train took us through Orderberg-BOHUMIN, crossing the border of occupied Czechoslovakia. We recognized the towns of BOHEMIA. The Czech population were throwing pieces of bread into the wagons whenever the train had to slow-down. The guard fired a few shots to disperse them. ~ When we were passing the city of BRECLAW, I already knew that we will shortly enter Austria. ~ A few hours later the train arrived to its final destination—MAUTHAUSEN. Before we walked up to the camp we had to carry-out the dead bodies from the wagons. Maybe half of the prisoners didn't make it. ~ Here comes to my mind the story, told to us by our friend Mr. BERNER. His brother * came to Mauthausen in another transport. The had to carry to the camp people who were still alive, but badly affected by frost-bites. The SS forced them to take the disabled prisoners and to drown them in a basin of icy-

cold water and hold them there for a while. The brother of Mr. Berner refused to do it and he was killed on the spot. ~ Both of us felt very happy that we haven't been forced to do anything against our will. We are lucky to be able to live with a clear conscience.

Before placing us in barracks we had to be disinfected and to get a shower. We were waiting more than a day without food in a bitter cold. People were weak and tired to stand on their feet. They were sitting on the snow and many of them froze to death. As I was walking around I met my second cousin PINCHAS MOSHE SCHWIMMER who arrived with a different group. Both of us were glad to be together and to be helpful to one another. He had a warm blanket and we found a way how to use it in a bad situation. He spread half of the blanket on the snow and let me to rest on it and with the other half of the blanket he covered my body. After a while he woke me up and then I let him resting. We kept the intervals short because of the danger from freezing.

Finally we got into the showers. Before it happened we had to give-up everything—except the shoes. After the shower they didn't let us to dry our bodies and we had to get out and wait until 500 people got their shower. The pain from the cold was unbearable and everybody was crying. ~ My cousin and I embraced and massaged each other. They took us into an empty barrack with a cement floor. No clothing was available. Only one blanket was given for two people. We put half of the blanket on the floor and tried with the other half to cover our bodies while constantly massaging each other. ~ Twice a day—still naked—we had to stay outside and waiting until the SS came to count the prisoners. We were already getting our ration of bread and soup.

A few days later we got the usual thin clothing and were taken in cattle wagons to Ebensee. The camp was situated in a valley surrounded with the beautiful snowy Alp mountains. ~ The very bad conditions in the camp is very hard to describe. My cousin and I tried always to be together at work and in the barrack. Everybody thought that we were brothers and we let them believe it.

Each day in the morning we were climbing up to the mountains where we were digging tunnels for the German army. They wanted to move there their war machinery in order to protect it from bombardment. Work was hard and difficult. We filled up little wagons with pieces of rocks which were pulled by a small steam-locomotive out from the tunnel. Prisoners emptied the wagons outside. The steam-locomotive was running on coal. I used to steal a piece of coal, flavored it with red salt, which was used on the rails as antifreeze—and I ate it slowly. Each prisoner had his own soup-bowl hanging on his lower back. As warm water was dripping from the steam-locomotive I was catching it in

my soup-bowl and drinking the warm water after I ate a piece of coal. It helped to calm my hunger and warm up in the bitter cold.

Our clothing was made from a thin fabric which didn't protect us from the cold. ~ At work we used a lot of cement and I discovered some empty cement paper bags which had several layers. I removed the dirty layers and on the clean ones I made 3 openings for my arms and head and covered my body under the clothing.

As I have mentioned before, we could keep only our old shoes brought from home. I had a pair of very good quality strong working shoes. One day two CAPOs noticed my shoes. They took me to a hidden place, ordered me to take them off and gave me a pair of big wooden ones. I quickly removed the shoe-laces and wanted to keep them, because my father carved them from a long piece of leather. That was the last item I wanted to keep as a sentimental value from my home. The CAPOs beat me up and took the shoe-laces too. I was crying like a child. ~ In order to keep our feet warm in those big wooden shoes, we used to fill them out with paper, straw or any piece of fabric. Also we tore off pieces from our blankets. The CAPOs noticed that the blankets are shrinking. One night after returning from work, we were standing in the barrack waiting for our food rations. I got suspicious that some horrible surprise is being prepared for us. ~ I had in my shoes also two pieces from the blanket. We were standing in line per 5 and I was close to the beds. I cautiously lifted one leg after the other and pulled out those pieces from my shoes and tossed them under the bed, and that saved my life. ~ Soon they started to search everybody. Those prisoners who had pieces from the blankets were hit 25 times on their lower-back with a big stick. Nobody survived that brutal beating. Among the punished was a French Catholic priest. He fell on his knees and started to pray and the CAPOs hit him 50 times. They were laughing. To them it was entertainment whenever they used their sadism to inflict on us painful beatings and sufferings. As human beings we were vulnerable, defenseless and "worthless."

My dear cousin Pinchas Moshe Schwimmer was constantly with me since we have met in Mauthausen. We were very close since our childhood, attending public school and CHEDER together. Many thought that we are brothers including an SS who didn't hurt the prisoners. He was in charge of distributing all kind of tools before we entered the tunnels. Sometimes he put in a little corner a piece of bread, a boiled potato, carrot or a couple of cigarettes and told us in SLOVAK language: "over there in that corner, there is something for your brothers." He was born in Bratislava—Slovakia and was a rare exception among the SS who had human feelings. He was very careful because his conduct was very risky.

Hope you will forgive me that I am unable to write chronologically. I am returning again to Auschwitz, where we had a very famous fellow-prisoner, YAKOV STALIN, son of Joseph STALIN. Many of us didn't see him personally but everybody knew that he is in Auschwitz. As a regular soldier of the Soviet Army, he fell into German captivity. ~ During the battle of STALINGRAD the German army was encircled by the Russians. General Paulus was afraid that his soldiers will be completely annihilated and for that reason he capitulated. His entire army became prisoners of war. The Russians celebrated their victory and STALINGRAD was saved from a complete destruction. Later the Germans offered to exchange YAKOV STALIN for General PAULUS. Joseph STALIN answered that he is not going to exchange a general for a soldier. His son YAKOV didn't survive.

Now I am returning to Ebensee in Austria where we were working on tunnels. ~ One day as we were standing outside the barrack to be counted by the SS, I felt ill and collapsed. I was taken to the "HOSPITAL" adjacent to the crematorium. On the admission paper there was also "my diagnosis": ENDOCARDITIS. ~ Luckily I recovered within a few days and I was happy to leave the hospital, where I was resting among dying people and dead bodies. ~ There was a selection of prisoners to be sent to WELLS-AUSTRIA. The city had an important large rail-road depot with repair facilities. The Western Allied bombers inflicted heavy damage to that place and we had to clean-up the area. ~ We were working 12 hours every day in 2 shifts and sleeping on the same cemented floor covered with straw. The place was infested with lice and rats. ~ We were heavily guarded by the SS. After 3 weeks of hard work, beatings and smaller rations of food, we returned to Ebensee.

While I was away I lost my dear cousin Pinchas Moshe * . Fellow-prisoners told me that he died of pneumonia. I missed him very much. He was a very fine young man and we always stuck together like twin brothers.

The situation in the camp changed for worse. A couple of camps from the vicinity were liquidated and the prisoners were placed in Ebensee. The place was overcrowded and became a big mess in a complete disorder. ~ Inside in every barrack there was a pile of dead, naked bodies, because the crematorium wasn't able to burn so many bodies. It was shocking to me when I noticed that even cannibalism was committed here in Ebensee. Probably at night, when everybody was sleeping, somebody opened the abdomen of the dead bodies and removed the heart and lungs. Otherwise the bodies were just skin and bone like skeletons. It was horrible for me to see it, but I couldn't condemn those who did it.

A couple of days before the liberation the camp guards summoned all the prisoners and told us that Allied raids were expected. The guards instructed that we should spend the night in a designated tunnel if we want to remain safe and alive. We told them that we were dead anyway and went back to our barracks. ~ That night an explosion rocked the camp. The guards had booby-trapped the tunnel with dynamite or a time bomb, hoping to kill the prisoners after they had abandoned the camp. We noticed that the top SS officers were not present and we just assumed that they already left the camp and that our liberation is very close. Thank heaven it was true.

I was watching the American soldiers when they entered our barrack. They looked at the living skeletons and dead bodies stacked to the ceiling. They couldn't hold back their emotions and many of them had tears in their eyes. ~ It is hard to describe the emotions which were running high among the soldiers and prisoners. All of them wanted to touch the soldiers, kissing their hands and thanking them for their liberation and crying like children.

It was Friday—Erev Shabbat—late in the afternoon. Those of us who were still able to keep our balance gathered outside in a joyous and festive mood for celebration and to give thanks to HASHEM and the American Army for granting life and freedom. We welcomed our SHABBAT KODESH with KABALAT SHABBAT services without prayer books, remembering many of the prayers by heart. Everybody joined in singing LECHA DODI which lifted us spiritually very much.

After the services we got into a little discussion and voiced opinions about faith and HASHEM. Among us was an orthodox rabbi who was very opinionated. He said that he will tell HASHEM that HE should ask us for forgiveness that HE let us down. Some of the survivors believed that it was the will of HASHEM what happened to us. However, the majority of us said that HASHEM shouldn't be blamed for the destruction and suffering of the JEWS. To those who believe and have faith, the support of a loving HASHEM can be experienced despite tragic and cruel circumstances. People do praise HASHEM even in the darkest moments of their life.

My personal thinking is that the blame rests entirely with mortals mainly with the leaders of the free world and their high officials of democratic governments. Their silence and indifference is very well known to all of us. ~ to my mind comes the true story about professor JAN (JOHN) KARSKI, a hero of the Polish underground. He was smuggled into Auschwitz in order to see what is going on in the camp. After he was smuggled out in mid-1943, as a wartime courier, JAN KARSKI emerged from occupied Poland with the detailed eyewitness account of the HOLOCAUST, he was met with skepticism. ~ At

a meeting with three Roosevelt administration's most influential Jews, KARSKI told the story that he had risked his life to tell. ~ No less than Supreme Court Justice Felix FRANKFURTER told him to his face: "I am unable to believe you."

Perhaps I should mention here the fate of little Czechoslovakia which many called the tiny America in the heart of Europe. Its democratic system was truly a model to the neighboring countries. For example in Poland and Hungary, the government allowed just a few Jews to be admitted to their universities. Many of them came to Czechoslovakia where the doors of universities in Prague and Brno were open to them. They were happy to finish their studies there. The country was a haven for the 350,000 Jews and other minorities. The Czechoslovak Constitution was drawn in the United States of America. Its president Thomas Garigue MASARYK was a humanist, a friend and protector of the Jews. He was also their defender in the infamous cases of blood-libel. Masaryk married an American girl. Her name was Sharlotte GARIGUE. He met her when both of them were students at the university in Leipzig. Her maiden name was always included whenever he signed documents and his official name was TOMAS GARIGUE MASARYK.

France and Great Britain signed a treaty in which the two countries made a promise that they would defend Czechoslovakia if its independence would be threatened. Unfortunately their promise and treaty were worthless. In order to appease Hitler, Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier went to meet him in MUNICH in 1938. They returned home with a piece of "PAPER" showing that they won "PEACE IN OUR TIME." Britain and France didn't want to go to war because of a small country called Czechoslovakia, so they sacrificed the little jewel in the heart of Europe. ~ Winston Churchill earlier in 1936 spoke to the members of the British Parliament informing them that Hitler is preparing for war with Britain which cannot be escaped. He warned about the coming danger and recommended that Britain should immediately declare war with Nazi Germany in order to prevent them to take over Europe. He said that Hitler will be later much stronger and that means that Britain would suffer heavy casualties. He was right but nobody would listen.

Now I would like to return to the day after we were liberated. The American soldiers were emotionally affected from what they have seen and had to be replaced with fresh Army units. Sadness and anger were visible on the face of each of them. They went to the city of Ebensee and brought the entire population into the camp to show them the horrible picture of destruction.

The soldiers disinfected all the barracks, and field-showers were assembled outside with plenty of warm water so that everybody got a nice shower. Underwear and shirts were available. To us everything was just like a miracle. Army medical units with a mobile field hospital of General PATTON'S Third Army arrived to the Ebensee camp 3 days later. First thing they did was to change the diet of the prisoners, because we were eating the same food as the army. The soldiers didn't realize that having good food to eat after a long period of starvation can bring a disaster, especially when a digestive system is unable to accept heavy food. Many prisoners developed dysentery and died. I was very lucky because an older experienced French fellow-prisoner watched over me and didn't let me eat the regular food. He went outside and was looking for a few big rocks and a metal plate. He made a fire and placed slices of fresh bread on the plate and made of it completely dry toasts and gave me tea. Also I ate a boiled potato without butter or margarine. He really saved my life. ~ Later he suggested that he would like to adopt me to be his son if I would be willing to live in France. He was convinced that both of us have lost our entire families. I was thinking of him often as of my anger and protector.

The Army Medical Team had some portable X-ray machines and they checked everybody and 85% of us were infected with tuberculosis. I was not bed-ridden and could walk around the camp.

Among the most important problems was to take care of the dead bodies—thousands of them. The Army brought in heavy machinery. They were digging inside the camp large grave-sites. Former guards and German army war prisoners got an order to place each dead body in those graves. I was there, watching and paying respect to my brothers. Then big bulldozers arrived, covered the mass grave, and I said the KADDISH prayer.

To my pleasant surprise there were a few American soldiers and officers who spoke YIDDISH. They came often to see me and we had always a good conversation. Their opinion was that I shouldn't return to my country, where I will hardly find anybody from my family. They already knew that I had tuberculosis and wanted to help to place me in a pulmonary sanatorium in Davos-Switzerland. ~ Even today I am wondering how could they arrange that. They were very serious about it. Maybe they had some connections at influential organizations. ~ However, my heart was longing to return to my birthplace while not realizing that I am seriously ill.

My first I.D.—after World War II—was issued by the authorities of the American Army—our liberators. They encouraged us to write to anybody we wish. First person came immediately to my mind was my aunty Hermine KATZ who lived on 33

Westminster Road, Brooklyn, NY. I was glad that I remembered her address so that I could let her know that I survived.

A few weeks later Social Workers came from Czechoslovakia to Ebensee to take care of their citizens and to repatriate them home. ~ Before leaving the camp, the American Army had a problem how to provide us with clothing and came up with a solution. They opened stockrooms which belonged to the WEHRMACHT—the regular German army. There were complete outfits for us and we had just to select the right size. We dressed up and looked like German soldier prisoners of war. Even military backpacks, shoes, hats and winter coats were added to our outfits. We left there only the protective metal helmets. The American soldiers gave us their army blankets. The one I got is still in use. It travelled with me to many places before it returned to the country of its origin. The American Army blanket has a sentimental value to me. I am thinking about taking the blanket with me into my grave, perhaps as a little pillow under my head.

At an emotional farewell party we expressed warm thanks to our Liberators and to the United States. There were tears and a lot of crying.

To a few HOLOCAUST survivors the German army outfits got them into serious trouble. Some Russian soldiers thought that they are war prisoners—escapees. They were put in cattle wagons among real German soldiers and were taken to Siberia into forced labor camps. With the intervention of diplomats they were later released.

Our transport finally arrived to Czechoslovakia. ~ Each larger city had a center with facilities to provide food, shelter and some pocket-money for the survivors. ~ Trains were not running yet on a normal schedule and we had to wait long hours before we could board a train and to get closer to our destination. On some places the railways were damaged by war and we had to take detours. ~ When I wanted to get to my birthplace on the eastern part of the country, I had to take a train with a detour to Budapest—Hungary. I travelled all night and there was no sitting place in the entire train. My decision was to sit on a metal plate which was placed between the wagons as a little bridge in order to get from one to the other wagon. The plate was constantly moving and sitting on it was rather difficult.

After arriving to Budapest a group of us—survivors—went to the aid center where we got food and shelter. ~ There I met my friend Nusi Schreiber with whom I studied. He was there already a few days and had experience. His every advice was very helpful to me. He told me that he is going into a hospital and recommended that I should also seek medical help. At that time I was coughing a lot and my sputum was stained with blood. ~

I took his advice and the aid center sent me to a pulmonary specialist. There were two doctors who asked for my I.D. first. When they saw that I am a citizen of Czechoslovakia they assumed that I do not speak Hungarian. As both of them were examining my lungs under the ROENTGEN screen they talked together what they have seen on my lungs. They mentioned a cavern large as an egg on my right lung and a walnut size on my left lung. I burst into tears and when they realized that I am familiar with the language they started comforting me. One of them said: "Don't be in despair, you are young and still have a chance to survive." I was afraid that there is not much hope to survive twice in my life. ~ On the recommendation of the two doctors I was ready to be admitted to a pulmonary sanatorium in BUDAKESZI. ~ At the same day I had a great pleasure to meet a cousin of mine Sruli JAKABOVITZ, which increased my hope to meet more survivors from our family in the future. I told my whole story and asked him to look for members of our MISHPACHAH and to tell them in which hospital I was.

To get to the sanatorium was a big problem. There was no regular public transportation. All the bridges in Budapest were destroyed. To cross the DANUBE river I had to use a pontoon bridge. On a hot day on July 1945 I walked slowly to the sanatorium and it was very exhausting. After the war, the existing condition in the hospital was very bad. There was a shortage of food, no medicines, not enough linen and other supplies. The hospital had aspirin and morphine. Because I was running a fever I got a wet-cold compress on my chest. ~ When I arrived I wasn't concerned about the food and its quality because I had no appetite. ~ Now I started to feel very sick. Fever, shortness of breath, pleurisy, pain and coughing. Dr. SEBESTYEN examined me and asked the nurse to give me—he called it—"FLYING DROPS" and those gave me a welcome relief. After 3 weeks she stopped giving me those drops and I started to complain. The doctor came, sat on my bed and told me he didn't want to continue giving me those drops, because I would become a "MORPHINIST."

The sanatorium had inside the building a chapel for patients for the Catholic faith. ~ One day—when the door of my room was wide-open—I heard Dr. SEBESTYEN as he was arguing with the nurse in the hallway in a very angry way. He said: "Every day I am praying the chapel for the health of every patient in this building, but you have neglected to give the sick the right dose of ASPIRIN." The doctor probably could rely more on his prayers than on the available medications.

A few weeks later I became hungry and that was a good sign. Something started to change in my body for the better. The doctor was also very pleased. The nurses started to bring me complete meals which were not touched by patients. ~ I was feeling a little bit

better and my hope for a second survival was increasing. This small improvement in my condition was the reason that I was in a better mood and got more interested to read the newspapers and magazines.

The war ended in Europe, but the American Armed Forces had to fight 3 months longer before the Japanese capitulated. ~ I became inspired with idealism and my hope was that after all bad experiences from the war, the entire world will be transformed into heaven on earth. Later—to my disappointment—I have learned that my idealism has nothing to do with reality.

In the hospital there was no radio or television. A patient in the next room was a violinist who practiced every lunch time. Since the doors and windows were open, I could enjoy his playing. ~ As I am thinking of him today, I know that he was the first one who introduced me to some beautiful pieces of classical music. Among others he used to play the Brandenburg Concertos from Bach, two romances from Beethoven and the Hungarian dances from Brahms.

When my cousin SRULI—whom I met in Budapest—returned home, he met my dear sister Serena and her dear husband Max Nuhomovic and he told them about my fate. ~ Max had a sister Irene living in Budapest and they informed her where I was. ~ One day she came to visit me and told the good news that Serena and Max—thanks HASHEM—are alive. I was very happy to hear everything about them. ~ Irene didn't come empty-handed, she brought me a big farmers' bread, cheese, salami and onions which I gratefully accepted because I had a great appetite. In those days in Hungary food was scarce and rationed. Inflation was very high. People went shopping carrying full bags of paper money. Irene realized she will get nothing for the money, so she took from home a jacket to a farmer in exchange for all those "goodies" she brought me. ~ Next day after breakfast I took a slice of bread, a piece of cheese and an onion. Lying in bed on my stomach I started to eat. And here comes Dr. SEBESTYEN, stops at the door and calls the nurse to open the windows, because "it smells like garlic and onions." I felt ashamed. But when the doctor came closer to my bed and saw what I am eating, he smiled and asked if I like it. He encouraged me to eat as much as I can.

In the weeks ahead territorial changes have occurred in the eastern part of the country where I was born. The presence of the Soviet army had its dark side. While America with its Marshall Plan helped rebuild the German economy and supported the creation of a free, democratic society, the Soviets just did the opposite. They gradually were undermining the democratic system in Czechoslovakia in order to turn the country

to a Communist dictatorship. With pressure and manipulations they annexed the eastern part of Czechoslovakia.

Serena and Max didn't want to live under the rule of a dictatorship. They decided to keep their Czechoslovakian citizenship and moved to Liberec, 65 miles to the north of Prague. They also obtained my documents, so that I could follow them and to be placed in a pulmonary sanatorium in the TATRA mountains.

When Serena came to visit me at the BUDAKESZI sanatorium she asked the doctor to discharge me. He didn't want to let me go. But after she explained to him that she wants to take me to another sanatorium in Czechoslovakia where conditions for treatment were much better, he agreed with my discharge and gave her to sign some papers.

The reunion with my dear sister Serena was a very happy one, full of emotions, smiles and tears. The loss of our loved ones was unbearable. Before leaving I was thanking my healer-protector Dr. SEBESTYEN, the nurses and fellow-patients for everything they did for me to get better. They told me, when I came there, the nurse told the doctor that she didn't know where to put me and that she didn't have clean linen. There was one available bed from which they just removed a dead patient. The doctor answered: "Just put him in that bed, it doesn't matter to him because he will not last long anyway."

By this time trains were running according to the schedule and without difficulties. I arrived to BRATISLAVA. Serene took me to a local Jewish Hospital where Dr. ORENSTEIN and nurse HELEN were taking good care of me. ~ I had to wait there a couple of weeks until there was an opening in the sanatorium KVETNICA in the TATRA mountains. I arrived there in October 1945. ~ Later in my writing I will return with a detailed description of the place and the existing conditions there.

With the help of my dear wife Edith I would like to say more about her family. Father Joseph * Grossman * had 2 brothers and 3 sisters. He served in the army during World War I. ~ In 1923 he married Irene * Horowitz and they settled in FILAKOVO close to the Hungarian border. Mother Irene had 6 brothers and two sisters. All the brothers were doctors and engineers. Father Joseph owned a store where shoemakers and dressmakers were buying their supplies. FILAKOVO had big factories where home appliances were manufactured. ~ The Jewish community consisted of 30 families. They had a beautiful small synagogue, a rabbi, a cantor, Hebrew teacher, kosher butcher and a ritual bath. They were all ORTHODOX, lived in peace and enjoyed the freedom of little

Czechoslovakia. ~ When the country fell apart the territory was given to Hungary. The situation for the Jews was gradually worsening. Their businesses were taken away from them without any compensation and they were stripped of their livelihood.

Edith had a little sister Judith. * Because of all the increased hardships she became very serious with a mature mind of an older person. ~ She was the best student in her class. She had plans for a bright future. She was full of hope that after the war she would be able to write a book about all the sad experiences.

Each day new laws were created in order to make life for the Jews more difficult and miserable. However nobody believed that killings will be involved.

It was beautiful spring weather after PASSOVER when all Jews in the community got orders to make preparations to move into the GHETTO close to the town of LUČENEC-LOSONC. ~ Most of their belongings had to be moved into a storage place. They could take with them only the most important items.

Father Joseph Grossman, mother Irene, sister Judith and Edith were together in the GHETTO with some relatives. ~ On top of the bad conditions there, people lived in constant fear. They were intimidated, terrorized, humiliated, but the worst thing was that the Jews were interrogated and tortured. The Nazis and the police wanted them to confess where did they hide their jewelry. It went so far that the brought in a midwife to examine the women.

Later Edith's father was taken away and placed in a forced labor camp. He was there with a nephew and the cantor. After the war they told Edith that during a heavy bombardment, her father was hit by a large shrapnel and died from his injuries. That happened around the city BEREHOVO-BEREGSZASZ where I grew up. ~ They got the permission to bury him in the Jewish cemetery in an unmarked grave. ~ May * rest in peace.

Edith, her mother and little sister, grandfather and relatives were taken in cattle wagons to Auschwitz.

Among those who deserve to be remembered were two clever cousins of Edith. Fred and Harry Grossman were hiding in Budapest in 1944 when the German army came to Hungary. They overthrew the government and a pro-Nazi leader SZALASI was installed as the head of state. His brutal followers the so-called "ARROW-CROSS MEN" got a free hand to kill the Jews. They were regularly escorting them to the DANUBE river, executed them and pushed the bodies in the water. ~ Fred and Harry, both blond

with blue eyes, didn't look like typical Jewish boys, obtained false identity papers with membership cards of the Nazi organization. It was easy for them to join the killers and receive uniforms and machine guns. They were "PROMISING" to hunt down any hidden Jews and to kill them. ~ Whenever they saw the Hungarian Nazis escorting Jews to the river bank to be killed, the two brothers joined them and were beating up the poor victims in order to show the Nazis that they can be trusted. They asked the killers to hand over these Jews to them to finish the job. They agreed most of the time. Now Fred and Harry were in charge, continued beating up the people and making them walk through narrow streets where it was a little bit safer. They yelled: "Brothers, we are also Jews. Please, run away and hide wherever you can!" The two brothers * were true courageous heroes.

I would like to return to the time when transports were arriving to Auschwitz and to describe the big confusion among people. Nobody suspected what Auschwitz really is. The SS men made sure that everything runs orderly. They even tried to be polite and reassure us that all families will be together soon. Most of us became very pessimistic but still didn't lose hope, because we noticed a few barracks where entire families were outside in the sun and parents were playing with their children. On the green grass a ladies orchestra was playing classical music and chamber music. This all was a camouflage in order to prevent suspicion or resistance among us.

I was watching the flames and smoke coming from the large chimneys and the unusual smell all around. Nobody knew that the chimneys are the crematoriums and the smell is from burned bodies. As I already have mentioned before, I thought that those chimneys belong to an IRON-WORK.

At each transport arrival, prisoners were working, helping the elderly to get down from the cattle wagons. We had to leave there all our belongings. The prisoners were strictly forbidden to talk to us. However, one prisoner looked at my uncle Solomon * and his 2 beautiful sons HERSHELE and BINYAMIN MOSHELE, he whispered to him in YIDDISH: "Save the young boys. Tell the SS that they are strong and were working on the fields with you." ~ When they were approaching Dr. Mengele, my uncle saluted like an old soldier and in fluent German told him about the good qualities of the two boys. Mengele let them to follow their father. Unfortunately, a couple of weeks later, another SS doctor came to check on us. For him the boys were very young and he took them away from their father. Uncle Solomon was crying, pleading and interceding on their behalf without success. ~ At that time we already knew what Auschwitz is. The brothers lost their lives in the gas chambers.

With uncle Solomon I was working more than 4 months and he told the fellow-prisoners that I am his son and I was very grateful to him for that. ~ We were separated after I got ill and was taken to a “hospital.” From there almost everybody was taken to the gas chambers.

Uncle Shlojme had a beautiful voice and was also a good BAAL TEFILAH. On the High Holy Days he and my father * were conducting the SHACHAARIT and MUSAF services. My father also conducted the KOL NIDREI and was reading the TORAH.

On our way to Auschwitz my uncle took his youngest Avrumele and Matika, holding them embraced in his arms and started to sing with them some beautiful sad YIDDISH songs. Uncle tried to disperse the gloomy mood among us in the cattle wagons.

Uncle Solomon was a soldier in World War I and became a prisoner of war in Russia. He was a good looking man, smart, experienced, well conducted himself even in difficult situations. He was loved by everybody in our small Jewish community and well respected among the village population. He was very supportive to all of us. ~ When Czechoslovakia was swallowed-up by HITLER shortly before the outbreak of World War II, Bohemia and Moravia were annexed by Germany. Slovakia became a “sovereign” fascistic puppet regime, which adopted all anti-Jewish laws from the Nazis. The eastern part of Czechoslovakia—Carpatho-Ruthenia—where we lived—was given by HITLER to his reliable fascistic collaborator Hungary. Their gendarmerie rounded-up in 1941 the Jewish families in our village VYSHNY REMETY with an order to be deported to POLAND. They said that we all came from there and do not consider us as Hungarian citizens. We were all waiting on the yard of our small synagogue, crying , lamenting. Uncle Solomon asked them to permit him to go to his adjacent house and check some family documents he once saw in the attic. Shortly he returned with one document which was issued to the HOLLENDER family in 1750 by a Government Office of the second largest city in Hungary—DEBRECZEN. Uncle told them that all Jews in the area are descendants of Hungarian Jews who lived under the AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN monarchy. A few guys from the gendarmerie looked into this document, saluted and left. ~ Our credit went to Uncle Solomon for his courageous deed. He saved our lives for another 2½ years. ~ My sister Serena made copies of the mentioned document and gave it to those who could benefit from it.

I am going back to the time when Edith was in the so-called “HOSPITAL” in concentration camp SHÖNHOLZ. ~ One day they brought in a lady who was completely

out of her mind. She and her 2 daughters were working with Edith on night shifts and told her about the most horrible thing that happened to her young daughter. She was very tired and fell asleep while working on a machine which broke-down. The punishment for the damage was very cruel. Outside in the cold winter, she was tied-up to a pole and inmates were forced to pour on her cold water until she froze to death. Everybody had to look at it including her mother and sister.

On April 20th 1945 the camp SHÖNHOLZ was liquidated. All sick—including Edith—were taken to Spachsenhausen and shortly after that, the Russian army liberated the camp.

Among the survivors there was a lot of joy. Everybody was grateful for gaining their freedom, Edith was also happy to be free, but she was very sick, stricken with tuberculosis on her lungs. The daily high fever took her entire energy and she lost her appetite. In her mind she was pretty sure she won't be able to enjoy her freedom for a long time. People around her with the same condition were dying every day. There were two persons to whom she is grateful for taking care of her. ~ Dr. Hershel with a young medic were both volunteers from Holland. They tried to be helpful in many ways and Edith got from them CALCIUM. ~ Later she succeeded to restore her appetite which helped to a slow gradual improvement in her condition.

Those who felt better and stronger were able to return to their countries. Edith had to stay in hospital another 6 months before they let her to return. ~ Social workers from different countries were always trying to find their citizens to be repatriated. ~ The social workers (among them many Jews) needed some personal identification paper which Edith didn't have. They wanted to be sure that she is from Czechoslovakia and Jewish. At the end the problem was solved when Edith started to say in Hebrew blessings over wine, chale, the SHE-CHEYANU and the SH'MA YISRAEL...

It took her many hours to arrive home by train. Her little house was there but nobody from the family. It is hard to describe the emotions and feelings she had as a young girl finding herself alone. ~ Fortunately her cousin TIBOR and Anny with her husband survived. ~ Uncle Max Horowitz who lost his entire family also came home.

Tibor later visited Edith in the hospital a few times before he decided to leave for Palestine. He was caught by the British and was kept on Cyprus Island. When Israel declared its INDEPENDENCE he was already there and fought for his NEW COUNTRY. Later he became a commander of a tank unit and was fighting in the SIX

DAY WAR. He was an officer, ranking as a colonel. ~ Uncle Max remarried and moved to Israel.

Since Edith was still seriously ill, she was submitted to sanatorium KVETNICA in the High Tatra Mountains, coming there in January 1946. She found in that hospital 70 more Holocaust survivors with very similar health problems. Unfortunately many of them succumbed, because at that time there wasn't medicine for that disease. I was already there 3 months. At that time Czechoslovakia was a free democratic country as in the years before World War II.

The KVETNICA sanatorium was run by Catholic nuns. They were very well educated and professional. They were very strict but gave the best care for their patients.

One day while I was alone in room No. 12A (superstitious Europeans didn't like # 13) a new patient was brought in. He was a Catholic priest and he called me "BROTHER." The nuns probably thought that it was not proper to have in a room a Catholic priest with a Jewish boy. So they came to me and asked if I wouldn't mind to be transferred into another room. I told them that I like to be together with the priest, but they insisted and I agreed. ~ When the priest heard about that, he asked me: "Brother, did you ask the nuns to be transferred into another room." I said, "NO, FATHER." He called in the nuns and told them: "My brother is going to stay with me!"

I was corresponding with my aunt Hermine Katz in Brooklyn, N.Y. She sent me a package with calcium tablets. That was very nice of her and the doctors were glad that I could use them. ~ Auntie gave my hospital address to uncle Moshe ROSNER who lived also in Brooklyn. ~ He surprised me with a very special package. Inside was a pair tfillin and a prayer book. In his letter he was wishing me to use the tfillin in good health with a reminder that he inherited those tfillin after a famous RABBI. ~ The priest noticed the content of the package and every day in the morning he "ordered" that I should put on the tfillin and daven.

My health condition was gradually improving, but his was worsening. I was able to be helpful to him with little chores. One day he asked me to help him with writing down his will. He dictated very clearly and I wrote. Then he called in two doctors and they signed the document. The priest asked the doctors for another favor. He wanted to be taken home while still alive. The doctors fulfilled his wishes. They took an ambulance and accompanied him home with enough morphine. ~ Before he was taken from his room to the ambulance, the doctors and nuns came in to say a good-bye to him. In their presence he blessed me with the Universal Blessing... * in SLOVAK language and asked

the doctors and nuns to take good care of his brother because he wants me to leave the hospital in good health. I was moved to tears. He was a righteous Christian and I felt good and comfortable with him. His friendliness and affection meant so much to me after surviving the Holocaust. MAY HE REST IN PEACE.

In those days after World War II, there was no effective medicine available against tuberculosis. Patients who had an active-positive condition of this disease were kept in hospitals for years. The only treatment was the fresh air in the mountains, resting and nutritious food. Unfortunately the food had a very poor nutritional value because some of the food was on ration-cards and that included meat, butter and eggs.

Thanks to the American Joint Distribution Committee, the 70 survivors in this sanatorium were receiving packages of food from the organization. We had enough canned fish, meat dishes, sardines, vegetables and fruits. ~ With the help of the American Joint we were able to have our first SEDER after our liberation. They provided us with MATZA, wine, canned gefilte fish, chicken soup with KNEIDLACH and other goodies. Everything was KOSHER for PESACH. ~ We were very happy for being able to celebrate our liberation from slavery to freedom. Edith my future wife was also at that SEDER. Gradually we became interested in each other by telling about all our sad experiences. At that time when our prognosis of recovering was uncertain, our mind was not occupied with possible marriage.

Two years later—in the same hospital—our condition started to improve and the disease became non-infectious. Our planning for the future started to be more hopeful. Edith returned to the area where she was born in Slovakia. There was uncle Max Horowitz who lost his family. Later he remarried and made ALIYA to Israel. Cousin Anna Grossman and her husband, also survivors, were there. Cousin Tibor Horowitz left for Israel and fought for its liberation. Later he became a colonel in the Israel Army. ~ I left the hospital for the city of Liberec in the northern part of the country—65 miles from Prague—where my sister Serena and her husband Max NUHOMOVIC lived. They were getting ready to leave for the United States and left me their furnished apartment.

I was happy to find out that Liberec—population 75,000—has a well-established Jewish Community with a place of worship. The beautiful Synagogue of the city was destroyed on the KRISTALNACHT.

At Friday evening services I got acquainted with YITZCHAK HALPERT who fought in the Czechoslovak army abroad and lost there a leg. He had a beautiful voice and was a good BAAL KOREH and BAAL TEFLAH. He was the owner of a tobacco

shop close to my apartment. He was getting ready to move to DUBLIN, IRELAND, where he got a job in a large Synagogue. ~ I have applied to the local authorities to get a license to take over the store. I had no difficulties because the authorities took in consideration that I am a Holocaust survivor.

Since the location of the store was close to schools, my decision was to sell items for the children. It became partly also a STATIONERY store and I was selling also postcards, stamps, newspapers and magazines.

And now Edith and myself became more serious about our future, and we were planning a wedding. It was 60 years ago...