

Michaela Vidlakova And Her Toy Dog Pluto



Back in Prague I had seen some child at the Jewish cemetery with a wooden dog that had strings running through it that you could use to manipulate it, make it wag its head and tail. I liked that very much, and my father traced it and during his lunch break he made that Disney dog Pluto for me on a lathe in the workshop. I took Pluto, my favorite toy, with me to Terezin.

While still in the shloiska [quarantine], my father showed them this toy and demonstrated with it how to utilize wood remnants. That saved my father as well as us from immediately being sent further on, because part of our transport didn't even leave the shloiska, and was transported away.

That took place towards the end of December 1942. The dog was saved and became a family relic, and today sits on my bookshelf. That's how my father got to the Bauhof [Editor's note: Bauhof: a construction yard; in Terezin a place where there were various workshops].

My father wanted to get to work right away, but they told him, 'Lauscher, don't be crazy, you have to go slow. If you've got 'Kommandaturauftrag,' it's got to last you. So first order some lathe tools.' He said, 'But I've got some.' 'That doesn't matter, hide those away. First order them. Then when you get them, order some gouges.' That's what they advised him to do, that you had to delay it as much as possible, so that it would last as long as possible.

In the end he never got to the toys, because they transferred him to the carpenters, which at that time was also relatively good work to have. He had access to materials, both raw materials as well as remnants, which could be used for heating fuel. As for the raw material, you could always save up a bit, for when someone needed something made, like a shelf for example. And of course if it was the cook that needed it, in exchange you'd get a dumpling or the opportunity to scrape out the kettle. Even when the kettle was completely empty, you could still scrape out a mess tin's worth of coffee cream, and the family had a treat.