

Ignac Neubauer With His Friend Moishe Schenberger



This is me, Ignaz Neubauer, on the left, with my friend Moishe Schenberger near the synagogue in Uzhgorod. We were photographed by our friend in spring 1940. During WWII Moishe was in a work battalion and after the war he returned to Uzhgorod. After the war he was eager to take me to live in Odessa. He married a girl from Odessa in 1950 and he had a girl in view for me, but I was inexorable and didn't want to leave Uzhgorod. In the late 1960s Moishe moved to Israel and we lost contact. My acquaintance, who photographed us, kept this photo, and he gave it to me after WWII in 1946.

I was born in Velke Kapusany on 2 March 1924. My Hungarian name was Ignac, and my Jewish name was Nuns-Laib. I finished school in 1938. We were poor and since I was the oldest son I had to support the family. I didn't have a profession, but I couldn't go to study since there was nobody to support the family through this time. I began to sell food products to Jewish families in Uzhgorod and soon I had my clients there. My mother kept poultry: chickens, ducks and geese. I bought eggs, chickens and veal from other villagers to sell them in Uzhgorod and later I also took my mother's poultry to sell there. So I earned our living. Of course, this was hard work, but we were not starving and managed to buy everything necessary for the family.

In 1938 Subcarpathia became Hungarian. persecution of Jews began, though we didn't suffer from it since it was directed on wealthier people. In 1939 anti-Jewish laws were issued. Jews were not allowed to study in higher educational institutions or serve in the army. This was open state-level anti-Semitism and they didn't even make an effort to camouflage it.

In 1944 placed a poster on the building of the village council announcing that all Jews were to come to the village council on Sunday. Our family, my mother's sisters with their families and grandfather Moishe, my mother's father, went there, too. We were taken to Uzhgorod on horse-driven wagons. The ghetto in Uzhgorod was at the former brick factory. On 24 May 1944 we were ordered to gather near the gate to the ghetto. There was a train with open platforms for brick transportation taken to the spur and gendarmes ordered us to board those platforms. We arrived at Auschwitz.

My brothers and I tried to stay together. We lined up and marched to the Auschwitz work camp in 5-6 km from the central camp. There were big barracks with two-tier plank beds in them. We were given thin striped blankets from the same fabric as our robes. We were also given pieces of cloth with numbers imprinted on them. My camp number was 66. Then we began to go to work. We were to arrange road beds for construction of new roads: we did wood cutting and grubbing, grading with spades and placing gravel.

In January 1945 American troops began to attack. In late January evacuation of the camp began. There were 100 thousand of those who could walk. They shot all those who were weak and ill. We were starved and suffered from thirst. My brother Sandor died in this railcar. 9 days later we finally arrived at the Gleiwitz camp. I saw my brother Marton there. He was swollen and dark blue - it was horrifying to look at him. I, probably, looked no better. My brother and I went to a barrack. The next morning we were taken to a hospital barrack. Three days later my brother died in this barrack. I was recovering.

We didn't have to go to work any longer. We knew that if we were not sent to work this meant that this was a death camp. We were waiting for the end of it. My birthday was on 2 March. Early in the morning a German officer came into our barrack and asked who wanted to go to work. He selected

40 stronger men. We lined up on the square yard and they told us that we would go to a very good camp where work was not too hard and we would get more food. We walked to this camp. It was a small camp. There were few barracks for 400 people. We had to walk for about 8 km and we walked to work every day. We worked at the construction of the railroad connecting the central camp with two others. People were exhausted. Since about 5 April English and American planes began to fly over our work site. We were taken to the central camp. We stayed in the camp few days and then we were taken to the railway station where we were ordered to board a train. The railcars were stuffed with people. Our trip lasted about 2 days. We arrived at a station. We were ordered to line up in the woods. German soldiers walked along the line shooting at people. I don't know how I happened to survive. I don't remember soldiers approaching me or how I fell into the pit from a bomb. I probably fainted from fear. When I recovered my consciousness I was in the pit wet from the rain and somebody else's blood. There were corpses on top of me and underneath. I got out of the pit and ran away. I didn't know where I was running. I decided to get to the village for any price. There American soldiers saw me. They gave me tinned meat and bread. I weighed 32 kg. Americans took me to a hospital. I stayed there for a month and then was taken to a recreation center near Berlin. I was going back to home in the end 1945.