

Mr. Rubin Sztajer

Birth date: February 28, 1926

Birthplace: Klobuck, Poland (Southwest Poland)

Experience: Klobuck Ghetto, Death March, and Concentration Camps

Family Background:

Rubin's family consisted of his mother, father, 3 sisters and 2 brothers. His hometown (Klobuck) of 6,000 people included 1,600 Jews who feared anti-Semitic activity daily, even before the war. Rubin's father caught and sold fish for a living.

Wartime Experience:

Rubin was 13 years old when the war began. At age 14 he was sent to a ghetto with his family. He had to grow up very quickly and helped support his family since they were not allowed to leave the ghetto. At night he smuggled out of the ghetto into a field and dug up anything he could to bring back to feed his family. In the wintertime he and his brothers took chances by going out into the Christian community to earn a little money on the black market. The ghetto of Rubin's town, where he lived from 1940 to April 1942, was very crowded. Eight people lived in an 8' by 12' room.

On April 12, 1942 Rubin was taken away from home at age 16, never to see his parents, younger brother and two youngest sisters again. The first concentration camp he was taken to was Markstadt. From April 1942 to June 1943, Rubin lived and worked at Markstadt, a forced labor camp guarded by the military. In June 1943, Rubin was transferred to Funfteichen Concentration Camp, which was guarded by S.S. officers. For about two months, starting in October of 1944 Rubin participated in death marches in which prisoners, wearing wooden shoes, were marched from camp to camp in the snow. If someone would slow down, he would be shot.

As Allied troops closed in on Germany, Rubin was shipped by cattle car to Bergen Belsen. Of the 100 people who began that train transport, only 10 survived. In Bergen Belsen, Rubin had to bury the dead in mass graves consisting of thousands of bodies of both men and women.

Post War / Professional Experiences:

At liberation on April 15 at age 19, Rubin was found unconscious by his sister Gussie who coincidentally also was an inmate at the same camp. She found him naked, unconscious, and almost dead. Gussie did everything she could to save his life. He remained in Bergen Belsen for six months and then his sister carried him to the train to Frankfurt to find his brother Sam. It took Rubin 3 years of treatment to recover his health.

Rubin was sponsored by the Jewish Agency of Baltimore and arrived here in May, 1949. After several weeks he found a job cleaning which paid very little. He worked his way up to salesman and remained with that company for 43 years. He retired at age 70 and is now going to Towson University, playing golf, exercising and enjoying his family.

He is married for 57 years, has three grown, professional children and seven grandchildren. He speaks yearly to thousands of school children educating them about the Holocaust and speaking about his own personal experiences.