Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in South Florida

Yitzhak's Journey

Holocaust Survivor Yitzhak Waksal's Memoir

As told to Bobbi Kaufman

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The information in this book is presented in good faith. It is not intended to be a history of the Holocaust. The words in this book are the words of Yitzhak Waksal as he recalled his personal experience in the Holocaust. This is his story and his truth.

On the cover: Yitzhak and Sabina Waksal in Jedlinsk, Poland. Circa 1946.

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FOREWARD

"For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.…

"... I have tried to keep memory alive…I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget we are guilty, we are accomplices."

- Elie Wiesel

As time goes on, the number of Holocaust survivors alive today is rapidly dwindling. With their passing, the incomprehensible cataclysm known as The Holocaust, or Shoah, is fast morphing from a 'lived memory' into a 'historical memory'; from a personal experience of 'those who were there' into impersonal commemorative monuments and museums.

All too soon, there will be no one left to offer first hand testimony of what it was like to actually be there when all hell broke loose; all too soon, even those who knew and heard directly from the victims of the Nazis and their collaborators, will be gone.

It is, therefore, a matter of great urgency that we gather and preserve for future generations as much primary documentation and testimony as possible about the lives and experiences of those heroes who survived the Holocaust, managed to build new lives, and were willing to tell their stories.

Memoirs serve as a very important means of preserving these testimonies. Several years ago, Holocaust survivors began approaching Bobbi Kaufman, asking for help writing their memoirs, describing their lives before, during, and since the Holocaust. She began working with the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach (HMMB), writing the memoirs of Holocaust survivors who were docents and contributors to the memorial. This collaboration was instrumental in her developing a series of in-depth, book-length memoirs. Six books were completed and uploaded onto the HMMB website and the HMMB created lesson plans for each book to be used in teaching about the Holocaust.

Now, in collaboration with the HMMB, the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies, and the George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies of the University of Miami, the series has been named Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in Florida. The existing books were graphically redesigned and several new books have been added to the collection, with the objective of continuing to expand the series. The complete series will be freely available to the public in digital form on the HMMB and Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program websites.

Our hope is that this series will make a significant contribution to the growing literature of Holocaust survivors' memoirs and serve as a tribute to their ability to make new lives for themselves while never forgetting.

Dr. Haim Shaked
Director, The Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program
University of Miami

DEDICATION

In memory of my family who were killed in the Holocaust — my father Rav Schlomo Wakszal, my mother Pessa, my brother Yechiel, my young sisters Yochevet and Brucha. They meant everything to me and have been with me always.

As with everything else in my life's journey, this is dedicated to my partner in my life — my beloved wife, Sheindel, who was always my joy and happiness.

— Yitzhak Waksal

LIFE BEFORE THE WAR

I was born in Jedlinsk, Poland, a small town in east central Poland between Warsaw and Radom. I was never exactly sure when I was born. A year or two after I was born my father went to register my birth and said, "I have a boy this age. His name is Yitzhak." When I came to the United States and they asked when I was born, I just picked a number and said 1921. I thought, "What is the difference to me when I was born." Many years later, I emailed city hall in Rodom and they gave me my birthdate as September 15, 1924. I am younger than I thought I was. I am not 99 — I'm only 96!

There were about two thousand Jews in my little town — more than half the city's population. We spoke Yiddish; Polish was only spoken in school and by the intellectuals. We had butcher stores, grocery stores, clothing stores, liquor stores, barber shops, and restaurants. There was no shoe store — the shoemaker measured our feet and made the shoes for us.

There were four children in my family. My brother, Chiel (Yechiel), was the oldest. My sister, Yochevet, came next. I was the third and my sister, Brucha, was the youngest. My brother, Chiel, was very bright. My parents wanted him to go to a yeshiva to become a rabbi but he did not want that, he was interested in many other things. My brother was a genius at mathematics and loved engineering. He was so smart that in one labor camp the Germans had him run the whole production in an explosives factory.

Before the war, my brother and our cousin, Chavah Wakszal, were in love and planned to get married. She was the daughter of our father's brother. It was common within our Jewish community for cousins to marry. I remember saying to my father when I was a little boy, "When Chiel and Chavah look at each other I see something between them." I just knew. My uncle and my grandmother did not approve of Chavah marrying Chiel because our family was not as religious as theirs. But Chiel and Chavah loved each other and nobody could do anything about it.

My older sister, Yochevet, was too young to marry before the war. She was a student at Beis Yacov, a Jewish school for girls. Saturday nights, girls and boys all went to a special club where they would socialize. My father and mother did not really approve of religious girls being in a group with boys; they worried that the people in our town would talk about the shochet's daughter socializing with boys and it would affect my father's business. But my parents understood the real world; they were not as strict as some Hassidim.

My sister, Brucha, was around six years younger than me. I remember the night she was born like it was yesterday.

I remember the midwife heating the hot water and getting everything ready for the birth. My sister was so beautiful. She played the piano and knitted beautiful, brightly colored sweaters. Brucha was only nine years old when the Germans came in.

My future wife, Sabina Kozlowska, was from my town. I knew her and her family ever since I was a little boy. We went to the same school but were in different classes because she was two years older than me. I was a rough little kid; I was always doing something I knew I shouldn't do. One time, I tried to push Sabina off her bike. She yelled, "You are so rough! Why did you do that?" She didn't like me so much then.

We young kids had everything we needed. Boys and girls had such a wonderful time growing up. It was such a good life. On Saturday nights the Zionist organizations had events and dances. There were musicians and always a fiddle player. We would listen to the music and sing Jewish songs, Yiddish songs. Sometimes someone would start singing and I would help sing. I had a good voice then. Someone would tell traditional Jewish stories. Other times we just went into the forest and talked. Knowing the forest would later help save my life.

Every day after school we played with the Polish kids. We always had a good time; there were no problems. The only time we had a problem was in school where there was fighting all the time. The teachers did nothing to stop

the fights. The Gentile boys always went after the Jewish kids and we had to fight back. I was a strong boy growing up, my brother was, too. A lot of people got hurt — it was not unusual for someone to be knifed. The police never did anything to stop the fighting.

Every day after secular school I went to *cheder*, religious school. My Jewish education in *cheder* was terrible. Everything we learned was in Yiddish; our only Hebrew was memorizing the prayers and the blessings. For my Bar Mitzvah I learned my Haftorah and all the prayers which I chanted in our synagogue on Saturday evening at the Havdalah service. Saturday evenings, Motseh Shabbat, was the time Hasidic people took out the Torah and did three alliyahs. For my Bar Mitzvah I got the third alliyah. After that I could be part of a minyan with the other men in my community. That was all my Bar Mitzvah was about.

As a child I wore traditional Hasidic clothes: long pants, a special jacket and a special hat. I wore *tistzits* with the strings tucked into my pants. Leaving them hanging out would be a clear sign that I was a Jew which could be dangerous with all the anti-Semitism in Poland. We had to dress in the religious way because of my father's business and stature in the community. It was my parent's tradition to buy new clothes for us children every year for Pesach. To this day, I still do this for my children.

We lived in a large house. Our address was 32 Reimek. When I was very young there was no electricity in our house. I remember helping the man put the wires into the ceiling in 1937. It was tremendous when we didn't have to use candles or kerosine anymore. We had lights! We did not have indoor plumbing; our toilet was outside. Even in the snow and cold weather we had to go outside. It was terrible. The only source of water for our town was two wells, one for each side of the town. We would go to the well every day, sometimes twice a day. There was no pump so we would let a bucket down and bring the water up using a crank. We carried the water home in containers. The water was for cooking and washing ourselves. We had a wood tub, something like a barrel, where we could wash at home. My mother would heat up the water and wash us four kids. People would go to the *mikveh* to take a bath. As a child I went to the *mikveh* with my father. I didn't want to go; I didn't like it. In the summertime I would swim in the river to get clean. We washed our clothes in the river. I remember helping my mother carry the clothes home from the river and hanging them to dry. All us kids helped our mother. We loved her.

We had more than half an acre in the back of our house where we had a garden. My mother and my older sister worked in the garden growing every vegetable we needed: onions, tomatoes, potatoes, cucumbers, radishes. We did not have animals — no chickens or cows. I would carry water from the well for our garden. I was a gardener! Before the war we never had any problem with food. We had vegetables

from our garden and, because my father was a shochet, we had all kinds of meat: schnitzel, sometimes steak. It was such a good life!

My mother's name was Pessa Schemara Wakszal. I do not have a picture of my mother; I only have memories etched in my mind of what she looked like and the words she spoke to me. My mother had three sisters and five brothers. My mother's sisters Golda, Raisel, and Rachel all lived near us in Jedlinsk. My mother's mother, Hannah, had a store in part of our house where she sold material to make clothes. When she got sick and couldn't walk, my mother took care of her. She passed away when the war began. She is buried next to my grandfather, Yitzhak, in the cemetery in our city.

I remember my mother making challah every Friday for Shabbas dinner. I remember the challah was a little bit sweet. She made cheesecakes, apple cakes… She could bake anything. Shabbat dinner was so beautiful when my mother would light the candles and my father would bless my mother and all the children. It was so nice to have the table filled with all the cousins, aunts, and uncles. I have such good memories. It was all life was for.

My father, Shlomo David, was raised in Wiskit, a town south of Warsaw, where his father, Yehiel Gedalia Wakszal, was a rabbi. I don't remember my grandfather very well;

he passed away when I was little. I really loved my grandmother, Channa. She was a loving woman. She was murdered by the Nazis, probably in Treblinka.

My father moved to Jedlinsk when he married my mother. It was an arranged marriage, but a good marriage; they grew to love one another. My father was very educated in Jewish law and history. He made a living as the only shochet in our small town. For meat to be kosher, a shochet has to slaughter the animals properly according to Jewish law and a rabbi has to inspect the process. There were three or four kosher butcher shops in our town and they all got their meat from my father. We were not rich, but we always had food. In 1938 the government of Poland made a law that the Jewish people could slaughter only so many cows a month and a shochet was not allowed to do it. It was a disaster. My father would sometimes do some slaughter secretly, illegally at the farms.

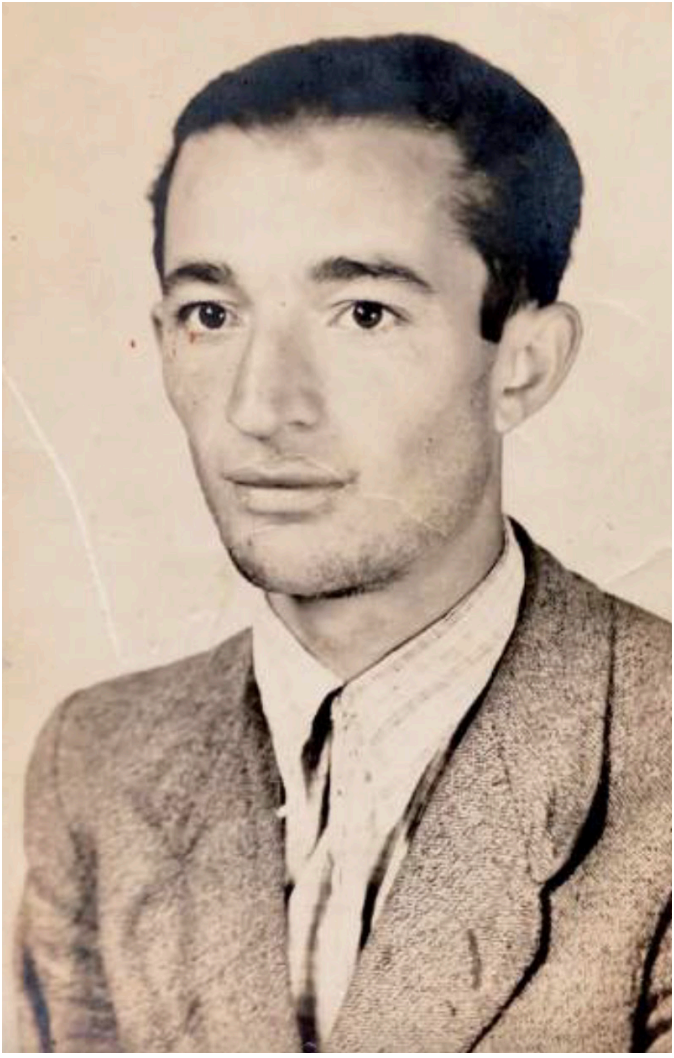
My father did a lot of things for the Jewish community. He helped care for the poor and had us children collect pennies to buy food for people who couldn't afford food. In the afternoons he helped boys prepare for their Bar Mitzvahs. We did not have a cantor, so my father and the other men would all lead parts of the service. He went to synagogue twice a day; our whole family went only on Saturdays. There was a section in the back where the women sat separate from the men. My father was a Zionist. He was always in public talking to the Jewish communities

about Israel. In our town there were four or five Zionist organizations: Ha Shomer ha-Tsa'ir, Betar and others. In each home there was a pushke, a little box, to collect money for Israel. The organizations would pick it up every month and send the money to the Palestinian Yushuv.

Before the war my father wanted to go to Israel. He could have gone because he had a relative who would have brought him there. My father went to see the Worke Rebbe, the head of the Hassidic clan of Worke, for advice. A lot of people used to go to this rebbe. Before the Jewish holidays people would go to him so he could bless them. If a man was not married, he would ask for a blessing to find a spouse. If people were married and didn't have children, they would ask for a blessing to make them fertile. People did what the rebbe told them to do. The rebbe told my father not to go to Israel. He said to my father, "You shouldn't go. It is not kosher enough for us." Unfortunately, my father listened to him.

A picture of me at about the time I was taken to the labor camps.

My father's ID picture taken at Krusziny Labor Camp. This is the only picture I have of my father.



My brother's ID picture taken at Krusziny Labor Camp.

My brother, Yechiel and his fiancee, Chavah. Yechiel is wearing a Hassidic hat. They were both murdered by the Nazis.

A school picture of my cousin Chavah Wakszal, my brother's fiancée, who was murdered in the forest. She is in the second from the back row, fourth from the left.

This school picture is the only picture I have of my older sister, Yochevet. She is in the back row, fourth from the right.

My paternal grandmother, Channa Wakszal.

From the left: My father's sister, my father's mother, my cousin Chavah who was my brother's fiancée, my father's sister. None of them survived the Holocaust.

Sabina with her mother, Faiga Kozlowska, and her brother, Simon. Simon had been living in Paris but returned to Poland and was killed at the same time as my father in the labor camp.

Sabina's mother, Faiga Koslowska.

Sabina's mother and brother, Simon. He was killed with my father in the labor camp.

From the left: Sabina, her sister Joan's husband, Joan.

From the left: Sabina's sister Joan, Joan's granddaughter, Joan's daughter Jacqueline.

Sabina's sister Joan with her husband and their son Mark.

Sabina before the war wearing a dress her mother made and shoes her father made.

Sabina.

THE WAR BEGINS

In the summer of 1939 Hitler was on the radio every day saying he was going to take over Poland, with a fight or without a fight. The Poles put up loud speakers by the police station in our town square so everyone could gather around and listen to Hitler's speeches. We knew there was going to be a war because Czechoslovakia was already taken over by the Nazis.

On September 1, 1939, the German army invaded Poland. Right away, Jews were not allowed to go to school any longer. Because my birthday was after the cutoff date, I had started school very late. So, all I got to do was first grade, second grade, and third grade before the Nazis put an end to my formal education. My older brother had books and he taught me, so I learned arithmetic and I learned to read, but I got very little education in history, science, philosophy… I was so young.

On September 15, 1939, a few days before Rosh Ha'Shannah, the Nazis, with help from the Poles, burned down our synagogue. They didn't let us remove the Torah scrolls, the prayer books, or anything else. They burned the Torahs; there must have been fifteen or twenty Torahs. I watched them burn. I was a little kid. No one helped; the fire department didn't even come. Late in September,

before Warsaw surrendered, the Germans came with loud speakers and ordered Jewish people to come outside. My brother and I went outside. They took about fifty of us, in trucks, to Radom, about twelve kilometers from Jedlinsk. They put us in a room and made us lie on the floor facing down. They said to us, "If Warsaw does not fall, we are going to kill all of you." We had to keep repeating after them, in German, "One Jew is responsible for the next Jew." Then they made us load up trucks with ammunition headed to Warsaw. The next day, Warsaw fell and they told us to go home. We had to walk the twelve kilometers home.

THE GHETTO

In the beginning of October 1939 the Germans established a ghetto in Jedlinsk. It was four blocks surrounded by barbed wire. A sign read, "Ghetto of Jedlinsk." All the Jewish people in our city were ordered into the ghetto. Our house was in the ghetto, so we did not have to leave our home. My mother's sister and her family moved in with us. The ghetto was very crowded. Sometimes three families were living in two or three rooms. We had to wear white armbands with a blue Star of David on our left arm. They brought in material and had Jewish girls sewing the armbands. If you went out of the ghetto without the arm band, you were murdered. In the beginning, the Germans

brought in food for the women to make soup for everyone. Once a day we stood in line to get the soup. There were no more Jewish stores — we had to give them over to the Poles. If people had money they could maybe get some food at a Polish store that was in the ghetto. Many people starved to death in the ghetto.

There was no news of the war, nothing at all. We could not have a radio; it was not allowed. Nobody could have a radio — Gentiles or Jews. The Nazis would come into the house and check. If they caught anybody with a radio, they killed them.

One day, over the loud speakers they said we had to bring out everything with fur: coats, jackets, caps, even the fur from the shtreimels, the hats the Hassidim wore. Some people did not bring everything out thinking this was going to last just a short time and then everything would be back to normal. My father's friend hid some fur and when the Nazis found out, they killed him. Another day, they announced that everyone had to bring their dogs outside. Sabina carried her dog outside and right away when she put him down, they shot him. Sabina was almost killed.

In the ghetto, the Nazis established a Jewish council called the Judenrat to act as a police force to maintain order and to carry out all the Nazi orders and regulations. The Judenrat had to give the Nazis names of fellow Jews for forced labor or for deportation to concentration camps. If a member of the Judenrat resisted, he would be killed.

Everyday there was a loud speaker announcement telling us how many people had to go to work. My brother and I always went; we wanted there to be enough workers so my parents and my sisters wouldn't have to go. Every morning at six o'clock we went to work building a highway for the German tanks. We walked the five kilometers to work, sometimes in snow up to our knees. We worked from the morning until the evening then walked home. All of our life was work for the Nazi machine. We did whatever they asked us to do. That's all. The Nazis made us feel that we were no longer human beings. We were in the ghetto for almost a year.

KRUSZINY LABOR CAMP

In 1940 they took about fifteen hundred people, including my family, from the ghetto to the labor camp in Krusziny. The Germans brought in a photographer from Jedlinsk to take our pictures for identification. We had to have our ID picture with us whenever we left the camp to go to work. If they found you without your identification picture, they killed you.

We went to work for the German army — men, women, everybody. The men worked building a road and barracks for the military. We cut down trees to build barracks inside the forest where the Russian planes couldn't see them. The buildings were all pre-fabricated, brought in in sections. My

brother, acting like an engineer, was in charge of putting in the electricity. I worked with him. Other people were doing plumbing, bringing water into the barracks. Once the Germans got there, my sister worked cleaning the officers' barracks and washing their clothes. Sabina, my future wife, worked in the kitchen.

The Jews lived in three barracks in a separate section of the camp that was surrounded by barbed wire. Men and women lived separately. Our barracks had electricity and plumbing. The electricity was for cooking. There was enough water to cook, but there was no way to bathe. We worked in the clothes we were wearing when we came from the ghetto. They did not give us uniforms. We slept in bunk beds on straw mattresses. I slept close to my father and brother. Each morning I got to see my mother and my sisters when we lined up for food. Then we all went to work. We barely spoke; there was no thinking — we were like machines.

In November 1941 the Russians were coming closer. Because we did not have much work left to do and because the Germans did not want the Russians to find us, they began to liquidate the camp. Some people were taken away in trucks, some were killed.

When they dug a big grave, we knew they were going to kill everyone they could. We were ordered to line up and a selection began. My father was in the second line. They

picked him out right away. I said to the SS officer, "Let me take this man's place." I was smart enough not to say he was my father. He pushed my father out of the line and put me in the line. We walked to the forest. There was a man named Chaim from my town walking next to me. I whispered to him, "Before we are killed, let's grab this SS officer and try to do something before we die." Chaim said to me, "Stop speaking as we walk." I did not speak anymore. We came to the grave and the Nazis told us to lean down. The guards were around the grave. They all had guns. They asked the SS officer, "When are we going to start shooting?" He answered, "When I take out my pistol and fire." When he took out his pistol, which jammed, Chaim and I grabbed him and the three of us fell into the grave. The SS officer started yelling in German to not start shooting because they could kill him too. A voice in my head began shouting at me to jump out and get to the other side. It was not an easy moment. The grave was big: five feet deep and ten feet wide. I jumped over to the other side, quickly climbed out of the grave, and ran as fast as Icould into the forest. I ran and ran. It was dark and cold and I didn't know where I was.

The next day they killed almost six hundred people. My father was one of them. My brother was taken away to another labor camp. My mother was taken away along with my two sisters. The day I tried to save my father and

ran into the forest to escape was the last time I ever saw my mother, father, and sisters. I was sixteen years old.

I spent the month of November 1941 hiding in the forest near the town of Grabow. I felt comfortable there because it was close to my home town. At night I would steal food from the farms that were near the forest. Sometimes a farmer would give me something to eat — many didn't want to. One farmer told me, "If the Germans find out I helped you they will kill you and kill me." It was a very difficult time in my life. I was young and without my family around me. I was afraid that I would not survive in the forest much longer. I was so alone that I decided to break into a German labor camp. I went to the labor camp Fsola. By chance, my brother was at this camp. When I saw him it was as if somebody had come back from the dead.

Fsola was a small air force base. Planes left from there to bomb the Russians. There were about two thousand people working at Fsola. Simply to survive, I was ready to do anything they asked me to do; whatever they asked, the answer was yes, I could do it. I was better off that way. I was putting floors into buildings and loading bombs onto planes. Women worked in the kitchens. We got one meal a day, usually beans and potatoes. We would eat anything.

Every Jewish holiday the Nazis would select ten or fifteen people, old or young, take them a short distance away, tell them to take off their clothes, and then shoot them. The Germans would bring back the clothing and give it to whomever wanted it. We knew they enjoyed purposely killing us on Jewish holidays.

PIONKE LABOR CAMP

My brother and I had been in Fsola for almost a year when, close to the end of 1942, they loaded us onto big trucks and took us to Pionke, a labor camp about twenty-five kilometers from Jelinsk. Pionke was in the forest, away from big towns, and on a main railroad line. There were about six thousand prisoners at Pionke.

At Pionke they gave us uniforms: blue pants and a jacket. They did not give us underwear or shoes. We no longer needed our identification picture or arm band. I wore my uniform all the time — I never undressed. I would come into the barracks after work, lay down on my bunk bed, and go to sleep wearing it. We slept in wooden bunk beds stacked three high. That uniform was the only thing I had in my life.

My future wife, Sabina, was also at Pionke. I helped her whenever I could. I was already in love with her. I brought

her straw to make a mattress. Every morning we had to get up at six o'clock and stand in line to get something to eat. Sometimes I would bring Sabina what they called coffee. In the future, after we were married, I brought her something for breakfast every day for the rest of her life.

At Pionke there was a big explosives factory the Germans had taken over from the Poles. Thousands of Jewish prisoners, including Sabina and my brother, worked in the factory making ammunition for the army. Many workers were killed when equipment broke or there was an explosion. My brother ran the entire manufacturing production. Whatever they asked him to do, he knew how to do it. Polish civilians also worked at the factory but, never once did a Polish worker help a Jew — not even to give them a piece of bread.

My job was to unload coal that came in on the railroad. We had to stand on a platform and use a big shovel to unload the coal. We had to be very careful not to drop any coal on the ground or on the railroad track. We put the coal in a wheelbarrow and rolled it down a wood plank to a place about twenty feet away and dumped it on the ground. There had to be a constant supply of coal on the ground. Ten or fifteen railcars would come in at a time which meant we had to unload coal day and night. Sometimes we did not go to bed for twenty-four hours.

There was an older man who worked on the platform with us. When he was very tired we would tell him to sit down and we would work for him. We were young and strong — we tried to help those who were older or weak. I unloaded coal for over two years. I was always covered with black coal dust. It was a horrible life, more than anyone could imagine. They made us so we did not want to exist anymore.

We were guarded by Ukrainians who worked for the Germans. The Ukrainians were the worst people, worse than the Germans. They would hit or kill people for no reason other than for their own pleasure. The Germans in charge at Pionke were civilians; they had nothing to do with the army. Sometimes, you could tell a German what the Ukrainians were doing to you and he would listen and maybe have the Ukrainians stop. At least the Germans listened. Sometimes, if I was lucky, a German would give me a blue jacket or a pair of pants if my clothes tore while I was working. There was a building, like a barn, where on some days we could take a shower. A few people could go in at a time. A Ukrainian would stand at the door and if a person was not moving fast enough, he would knock a hole in his head or break his neck. One time, I was hit on the head with the back of a gun. My head felt like it was double its size but I was afraid to go for medical care. I just continued working.

At Pionke there was not even one day when the Ukrainians did not kill somebody. They would come into the barracks and choose someone to be hanged. We all had to go out

of the barracks to watch. They would pick a Jewish person to come up to hang the victim. They would say, "If you don't hang him, we will hang you." We had no choice. It was unbelievable.

Polish civilians who worked in Pionke would bring us news so we knew about Auschwitz; we knew the Russians were advancing into Poland, and we knew Pionke was going to be liquidated. It was close to the end of May 1944 when I said to myself, "I am not going to Auschwitz to be killed. If I'm going to be killed I am going to be killed in the forest, not in a camp." I told some people I was going to run away and asked if anyone wanted to go with me. I asked Sabina to come with me but she refused. She was afraid that with her curly hair and other features she would be recognized as a Jew. I didn't force her. I never pressed her to do it. I didn't know — she may have been making the right decision.

THE FOREST

I had my plan: we would cut the barbed wire fence and escape into the forest. I knew the forest — as a youngster I would always walk in the forest — and I knew I could survive there now. The wire fence surrounding the camp was close to where I worked unloading the coal. Every day

I watched the guards on the other side of the fence. I knew they walked two at a time. I knew how many times they walked around the whole place. I knew their timing. I also knew a man who had a wire cutter. When it was time, I cut the wire from top to bottom. Fifteen of us went out including my brother and his fiancée.

As soon as we crossed the railroad tracks, the Germans and Ukrainians started shooting at us. Moshe Lindzen was killed right away. We just lost him — we never saw him again. I started yelling for everyone to drop down as soon as they got into the forest so they wouldn't be shot. I was the leader. We walked that whole night, until we were about fifteen kilometers away from the camp. We were then about a kilometer from Jedlinsk. In the forest was a lake and places where we could hide. In the afternoon on the second day after we escaped we were suddenly surrounded by German soldiers. The Poles must have told them we were there because otherwise the Germans did not usually go into the forest. Right away they killed three people: my cousin Yechiel Kirshenbaum, my cousin Pearl Lindzen, and my brother's fiancée Chavah Wakszal. I said to the others, "We have no choice, let's go into the water." We went into the lake, with our clothes, with everything. The Germans didn't know what we did. We swam to the other side and ran away. If I didn't know the forest and hadn't taken the action I did, I would not be alive today.

Now we were eleven people. We had nothing with us but the clothes we were wearing when we escaped. We needed food, water, a place to hide, and a place to sleep. We dug a hole, like a grave, big enough to hide in. That would be our home base. We put some straw on the bottom to lay down on. We cut some trees and laid them on top to close it up so nobody would notice us if they walked by. One of us was always sitting outside standing guard. We had a special signal, a clicking/popping sound we made with our mouth, to let us know if someone was coming.

For water we dug a deep hole and water would come up from the ground. It was not very clean, but it would do. If we found a little stream we would fill the containers we had stolen with fresh water. In the nighttime we would walk a kilometer out of the forest to steal food from the farmers. We stole chickens and eggs. We stole matches. We stole potatoes. We ate mushrooms we found in the forest. We noticed that wild pigs ran in a line one way and then back the same way, so we dug a pit and sometimes a pig would fall in and we would kill it and cook it. There was no way in the world to keep kosher. We ate whatever we could find. We would go deep into the forest and make a fire to cook our food. We had a shovel, knives, a pan…. Everything we had was something we stole. We could survive in the forest for years if the Poles would just not turn us in.

Whenever we managed to have some Polish money we would go into one of the little stores near the forest where the farmers went to shop. We did not go into towns. When we went out it was always two people together. One day, Herschel Lenimen and I went into a store. When we came out, a German with a machine gun on his car yelled at us to stop. We started running and he started shooting. I yelled to Herschel to run back and forth, not straight. He didn't listen and they killed him. I fell to the ground and waited until they stopped shooting. When they stopped, I jumped up and ran. They started shooting again. Between the store and the forest was a cornfield, but there was no way to hide there because the corn was already cut down. It was just an open field between the store and the forest. Somehow, I made it safely to the forest.

After almost five months in the forest we were desperate for food. We had no choice but to go into a bakery in Jedlinsk. I knew the people in the bakery — I grew up with them. When I went in, they looked at me, surprised I was alive, and gave me some bread. As I was walking out, there were Germans. I was afraid they were going to kill me so I ran to the Polish cemetery to hide. The Poles had stone crypts where they stored bodies before burial. I pushed away the stone cover, laid down in there with the corpses, and pulled the cover over the crypt. I lay there overnight, afraid they were going to bring in another body and find me, but they never did. Early the next morning I went back into the forest.

Winter came and the only clothes we had were the ones we were wearing when we left Pionke. At times the snow was up to my knees. I was barefoot. We put straw around our feet and tied it on. Germans would not recognize our footprints if we walked on straw. Some of us got frostbite, but luckily I did not.

A month before liberation, I went out of the forest with my brother to get food. All of a sudden, we were surrounded by Germans with machine guns. We began to run. My brother's shoes were too tight to allow him to run as fast as he wanted. Suddenly, he was shot. He told me to keep running and not to stop. He wanted me to live. They murdered him and I escaped and lived. Chiel was the last link to my family, my last link to my former life. Now I was truly alone.

When I lost my brother I didn't want to live. I gave up. I didn't care if I died. I didn't go back into the forest; I went to a farm instead. When the farmer's dog started to bark at me, I put my hands on him and spoke to him and he stopped barking. I went to the loft at the top of the barn and hid. In the morning the farmer came into the barn to get some hay for the cows. If the dog had barked the farmer would have found me and turned me in or killed me, but the dog never barked — a miracle I will never understand. I lay up there for four days and the farmer never knew I was there. All I ate was pieces from a carrot I had. I did not move at all. Suddenly, in the night, somebody, I don't know who, came into the barn and said, "Get out of here."

That is why I got up and went back to my group in the forest. I could not believe I could walk after four days without any water.

In early January 1945 we knew the Russians were starting to move forward — we could hear the bullets flying. Because we were in the forest not far from the main road from Warsaw, we could see the Russians coming in with tanks. We did not come out of hiding right away because the shelling was intense and we were afraid we would be killed. The Russians didn't care who they killed. Finally, after a couple of days, we put up our hands, waved our shirts as a peace sign, and went out to the Russians. We had been in the forest for about eight months. Of the fifteen of us who escaped from Pionke and went into the forest, only six of us survived.

LIBERATION

I was liberated by the Russians on January 15, 1945. I think of that day as a birthday. The Russians did not know who we were — they thought we might be enemy combatants. So they took us to a building and held us there for a few hours until they found someone who spoke Polish to interview us. They did not give us any food. When they finished with us they just said, "Go." We were not far from Jedlinsk, so we went to our town.

Right when we got to Jedlinsk, Tamma Lindzen who had been with us in the forest gave birth to a baby boy. The baby only lived for about a month. Tamma was the fiancée of my cousin Chiel Kirshenbaum who was killed in the forest early in our escape. She was the daughter of Moshe Lindzen who was killed right when we were running from Pionke. Tamma later immigrated to Israel.

I was hoping to find anyone in my family alive. In my father's family there were four brothers and five sisters. Only one brother, my uncle Moshe Wakszal, survived. In my mother's family there were five brothers and four sisters. Nobody survived. Nobody. I lost my mother and father and everyone else in my immediate family. I was a young man now and everything was gone. It was so hard. I really did not want to live.

I went to my house. Other people were living there, people I knew from when I was a child. They thought I wanted the house back, which I did not. I asked them, "Where are all the pictures and everything else we left?" Their answer was, "The Germans took it all." It was not true — everything was there. I begged them to give me just the pictures and keep everything else. They would give me nothing.

In Jedlinsk I met the photographer who took the ID pictures in Krusziny labor camp. He offered me all the ID pictures; I only took the ones of people who did not survive. That is how I have a picture of my father and a

picture of my brother. I gave the originals to the Holocaust Museum in Washington. The only picture I have of my sister Yochevet is a group picture of all the girls in her school. In the picture she is so young and lovely; it is a memory I hold dear. I do not have any pictures of my mother or my younger sister.

People who knew me, people I grew up with said, "What are you doing here? If you want to live you are better off leaving." The Poles in my town would kill me if I stayed. They didn't want any Jews there. I didn't know where to go. They were killing Jews in Radom and there were pogroms. There was a Polish underground that was shooting anytime they saw a Russian or a Jew. I had nowhere to live; I was afraid to stay in Poland. I didn't know what to do with myself, so I went to the Russians and joined them.

THE RUSSIANS

I went to work with the Russian army. In each city they controlled, the Russians set up a police station. They put me to work at a station in Opel, a city on the border of Germany and Poland. Whatever the Russians needed, I did. I learned a lot of things in Opel: I learned how to drive and I learned how to shoot a weapon. They wanted to send me to a special school to learn to be a Russian Army officer. Some of the Russian officers were Jewish. When one high-ranking officer wanted to defect to the

Americans, he asked me to drive him to Berlin. I drove him, in a Russian jeep, from the Russian side to a spot close to Berlin. He got out and walked over to the American side. After the war, when we met again in Ravensburg, he grabbed me and said I saved his life by bringing him to the Americans.

I stayed with the Russians until the war ended and somebody told me a few Jews had gone back to Jedlinsk. I couldn't believe it that anybody was going to be alive! When I heard that Sabina had survived, I went back to Jedlinsk and found her. She had been taken from Pionke to Auschwitz where she was tattooed with the number A-15028 and assigned to barracks 20. They did not shave her hair, they just cut it very short. In January 1945 she was on the Winter March from Auschwitz to Bergen Belsen; the march Eli Wiesel wrote about in Night. From there she went to Bommlitz, a satellite camp of Bergen Belsen where she worked in the kitchen. From there she was locked in a cattle car until the Russians liberated her.

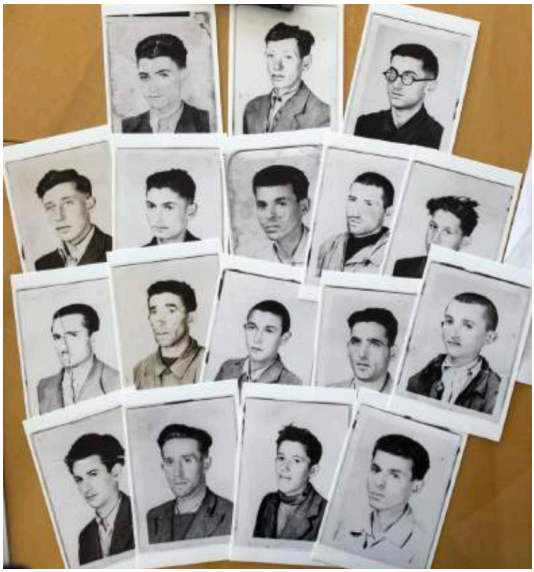
I also found my uncle, Moshe Wakszal, the only member of my entire family to survive. He was in Auschwitz from 1942 until liberation in 1945, a very long time to survive in Auschwitz.

Sabina and I decided to stay in Jedlinsk. The Russians gave us a room in a big house — the Russians lived on one side, Polish communists lived on the other side. Right away

signs were put up all over town saying, "If the Jewish people are not going to leave, they are going to be killed." So, I went to the Russian commander and asked for a letter of permission to go to Germany to look for relatives. I got lucky! In the letter was permission for me, Sabina, Uncle Moshe, and two or three other people to leave Poland. I would be leaving my past that was now just a memory. It was May 1945.

This picture of me was taken by the Russians shortly after liberation.

My father's brother, Moshe Wakszal, the only member of my family to survive the Holocaust. He was in Auschwitz from 1942 until 1945.



After the war, the photographer who took the pictures for Krusziny Labor Camp ID's gave me the pictures. I gave the originals to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. None of these men survived the Holocaust.

My friend, Hershel, who was killed by Nazi machine gun fire while we were in the forest.

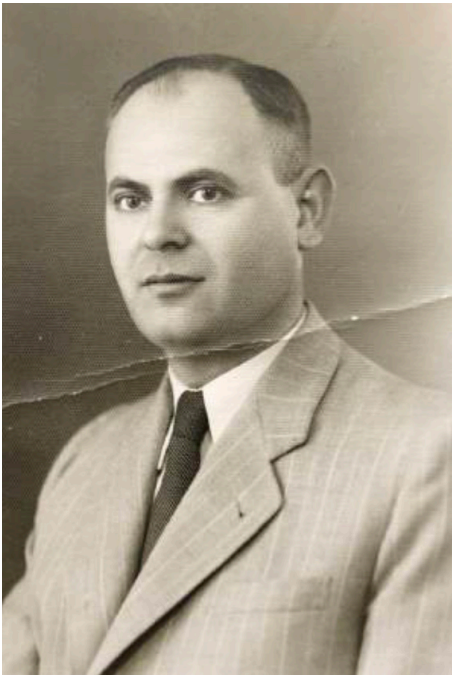
From the left: Shimon Borman, me, Sabina, Simon Vergman at Ravnsburg DP camp.

Tamma Lindzen with Sabina in Israel. Tamma survived in the forest with me.

From the left: Me, Simon Vergman, and Zailek at Ravensburg DP camp. Simon became a butcher in New York.

Sabina in Ravensburg. She is holding a soldier's helmet.

Sabina, Samuel, and me in Ravensburg.



Cousin Chaim Nissonholtz, who lived in Israel. He sent food to Paris for my newborn son.

Cousin Samuel Shemdra, who lived in Brazil. He sent food to Paris for my newborn son.

Sabina and Samuel.

Sabina and Samuel.

Samuel, Sabina, and me on the ship leaving for the United States, November 1950.

RAVENSBURG, GERMANY

We took a train to Prague. In Prague a Jewish organization gave us food and a place to sleep. They wanted to help us, but I did not want to stay in Prague. I wanted to go to Germany because the Americans were in Germany. We took a Czech train and went into Germany. They never asked us for tickets, identification, or anything else. We had nothing. We were like ghosts, no one knew who we were. When the train made a stop in Ravensburg on the Danube River I said, "Let's get off here and see what is going on." I didn't know anything about Ravensburg. We went to a special house for refugees where we slept overnight. In the morning they registered us, gave us identification, and found us places to live. There were a couple of hundred survivors in Ravensburg, mostly people who did not want to go back to Eastern Europe. Sabina and I decided to stay in Ravensburg, but my uncle went to live in a DP camp near Munich where he could be with more religious Jews. He would later move to Israel.

Sabina and I were married in Ravensburg on April 28, 1946, just after Pesach. My uncle officiated at the wedding and created a ketubah, a marriage contract, for us. We did not care if there was a rabbi or not — we just wanted to be married. Sabina wore a special dress and a ribbon in her hair, but no veil. She baked for the wedding. We invited a few guests, but we probably did not dance a hora.

In Ravensburg we met the man who had been the chief at the munitions factory in Pionke where Sabina had worked. He was a German civilian named Brandt. He was a good person. Although he couldn't disobey the SS, he did whatever he could to help the Jewish workers. When they were liquidating the munitions factory he sent a letter to Auschwitz listing the best workers and saying they should not be killed, they should be used to work in Germany. It was like Schindler's List. This is how a lot of people, including Sabina, survived. In Ravensburg we wrote a letter to the Americans saying they should not punish Brandt.

Many Americans came to pick out young refugees to adopt and bring to the United States as their children. I desperately wanted to go to America and go to school and start a new life, but I did not want to be part of a new family and take their name. I did not want to give up my name, so that my name would no longer exist. I would be losing everything, so I said no. Sabina and I waited. It was not a bad time to live in Germany. We had a community of about two hundred Jewish people. There was a rabbi, there were get-togethers in the evenings, we had friends, there were moments of happiness. With some friends, I was dealing in the black market. I bought cigarettes from the Americans and sold them to the British. Everybody liked American cigarettes.

I made a little bit of money. The Americans gave us food. Jewish agencies gave us food, supplies, and clothing. The United Nations gave us food and housing. Everything was free. It was a long time before we could think about a future. It would be much later before people began to think about where they were going to go and what their future life would look like.

For me everything was so hard; I was so angry. I did not care about anything happening in the world. I kept asking myself why so many people were murdered; why everyone I loved was dead. Did I want to exist in this life, or not? I didn't know. I didn't know why I was like this. My wife saw that sometimes when I was asleep I would seem to be fighting for my life. She understood. Her mother, Faiga Kozlowska, was killed at Pionke.

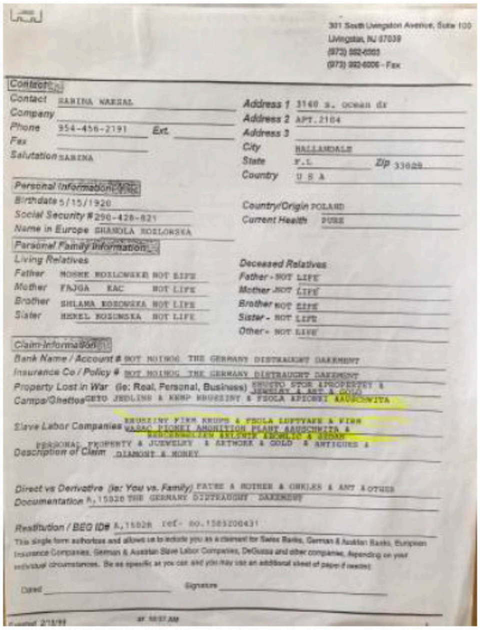
My wife had an older sister, Joan, and an aunt in Paris. When Joan's husband passed away a few months after the Nazis came in, she took her son, Mark, and went to hide on a farm in Normandy. She left her daughter, Jacqueline, in their apartment because Jacqueline wanted to be with her fiancé. When the Nazis were climbing up the steps in her apartment building to take Jacqueline, the fiancé yelled to her to jump out the window. He caught her and took her to his family who was not Jewish. Joan, Jacqueline, and Mark all survived.

Sabina got pregnant at Ravensburg. I did not want my child born in Germany. In my heart I felt I did not want any part of my future to be part of Germany. Sabina wanted to go see her sister, so when it was close to the time for the baby to be born we went to Paris. My son, Samuel, was born in Paris on September 8, 1947. In France we called him Charles. The only place we could find to live in Paris was a very small room. It was miserable. We could barely get food for the baby. My cousins, Chaim Nissenholtz and Shmuel Shmedra who lived in Israel and Brazil, sent us packages of cereal for the baby. We couldn't live easily in Paris. After almost a year we went back to Ravensburg.

It was almost five years since our liberation when President Truman finally opened up immigration. We went to the consulate and got papers for me, Sabina, and Samuel to go to the United States. When we went to get on the ship the consulate looked at our papers, looked at Samuel's long hair, and said, "You cannot get on the ship — that's a girl and your papers say you have a boy." My wife said, "No, he's a boy." The consulate said, "Before you go on the boat you have to cut his hair." We did not cut it.

In November 1950 we boarded the ship in Bremenhaven, Germany. A Jewish agency must have paid for our tickets on this military ship. I had to work on the ship cleaning floors and painting. They put my wife on the floor in the bottom of the ship. It took me hours to find her. I went to the captain and told him how terrible it was that she was

down there with our little child. They brought her up and put her in a cabin with five or six other women. She was seasick the entire time, from the second we left Bramerhaven until we got to the United States. I tried to help her by saying, "If you are going to lie in bed you are going to get sicker. You survived Auschwitz but you are going to be dead before we get to the United States!"



301 South Livingston Avenue, Suite 100
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(973) 992-6003
(973) 992-6006 - Fax

Contact

Contact SABINA WARSAL
Company
Phone 954-456-2191 Ext.
Fax
Salutation SABINA

Address 1 3140 s. ocean dr
Address 2 APT.2104
Address 3
City HALLANDALE
State F.L Zip 33009
Country U S A

Personal Information

Birthdate 5/15/1920
Social Security # 290-428-821
Name in Europe SHANDLA KOZLOWSKA

Country/Origin POLAND
Current Health PURE

Personal Family Information

Living Relatives
Father MOSHE KOZLOWSKE NOT LIFE
Mother FAJGA KAC NOT LIFE
Brother SHLAMA KOZOWSKA NOT LIFE
Sister HENEL KOZOWSKA NOT LIFE

Deceased Relatives
Father - NOT LIFE
Mother - NOT LIFE
Brother NOT LIFE
Sister - NOT LIFE
Other - NOT LIFE

Claim Information

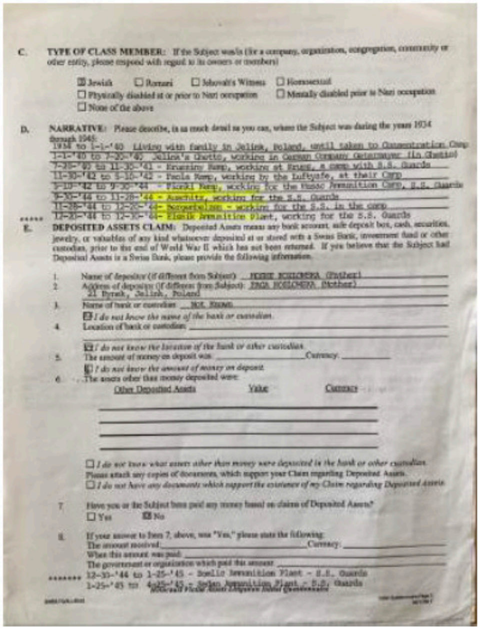
Bank Name / Account # NOT NOTHOG THE GERMANY DISTRAUGHT DAKEMENT
Insurance Co / Policy # NOT NOTHOG THE GERMANY DISTRAUGHT DAKEMENT
Property Lost in War (ie: Real, Personal, Business) [illegible] PROPERTY & JEWELRY & ART & GOLD
Camps/Ghettos GETO JEDLINE & KEMP KRUSZINY & FSOLA & PIONKI AAUSCHWITA
Slave Labor Companies KRUSZINY FIRM KRUPS & FSOLA LUFTVAFE & FIRM WASAC PIONKI AMONITION PLANT AAUSCHWITA & [illegible]
Description of Claim PERSONAL PROPERTY & JUEWELRY & ARTWORK & GOLD & ANTIQUES & DIAMONT & MONEY

Direct vs Derivative (ie: You vs. Family) FATHE & MOTHER & UNKLES & ANT & OTHER
Documentation A,15020 THE GERMANY DISTRAUGHT DAKEMENT

Restitution / BEG ID# A,15028 ref- no.1383200431

This single form authorizes and allows us to include you as a claimant for Swiss Banks, German & Austrian Banks, European Insurance Companies, German & Austrian Slave Labor Companies, DeGussa and other companies, depending on your individual circumstances. Be as specific as you can and you may use an additional sheet of paper if needed.

Dated ________ Signature ________



C. TYPE OF CLASS MEMBER: If the Subject was/is (for a company, organization, congregation, community or other entity, please respond with regard to its owners or members)

☒ Jewish ☐ Romani ☐ Jehovah's Witness ☐ Homosexual
☐ Physically disabled at or prior to Nazi occupation ☐ Mentally disabled prior to Nazi occupation
☐ None of the above

D. NARRATIVE: Please describe, in as much detail as you can, where the Subject was during the years 1934 through 1945:

1934 to 1-1-'40 Living with family in Jelink, Poland, until taken to Concentration Camp
1-1-'40 to 7-20-'40 Jelink's Ghetto, working in German Company [illegible] (in Ghetto)
7-20-'40 to 11-30-'41 - Kruszina Kemp, working at Krupp, a camp with S.S. Guards
11-30-'42 to 5-10-'42 - Fsola Kemp, working by the Luftwafe, at their Camp
5-10-'42 to 9-30-'44 - Pionki Kemp, working for the Wasac Ammunition Camp, S.S. Guards
9-30-'44 to 11-28-'44 - Auschitz, working for the S.S. Guards
11-28-'44 to 12-20-'44 - Bergenbelsen - working for the S.S. in the camp
12-20-'44 to 12-30-'44 - Elsnik Ammunition Plant, working for the S.S. Guards

E. DEPOSITED ASSETS CLAIM: Deposited Assets means any bank account, safe deposit box, cash, securities, jewelry, or valuables of any kind whatsoever deposited at or stored with a Swiss Bank, investment fund or other custodian, prior to the end of World War II which has not been returned. If you believe that the Subject had Deposited Assets in a Swiss Bank, please provide the following information.

1. Name of depositor (if different from Subject) MOSHE KOZLOWSKA (Father)
2. Address of depositor (if different from Subject): FAGA KOZLOWSKA (Mother) 21 Pyrsk, Jelink, Poland
3. Name of bank or custodian NOT KNOWN
☒ I do not know the name of the bank or custodian.
4. Location of bank or custodian: ________
☒ I do not know the location of the bank or other custodian.
5. The amount of money on deposit was ________ Currency: ________
☒ I do not know the amount of money on deposit.
6. The assets other than money deposited were:

Other Deposited Assets	Value	Currency

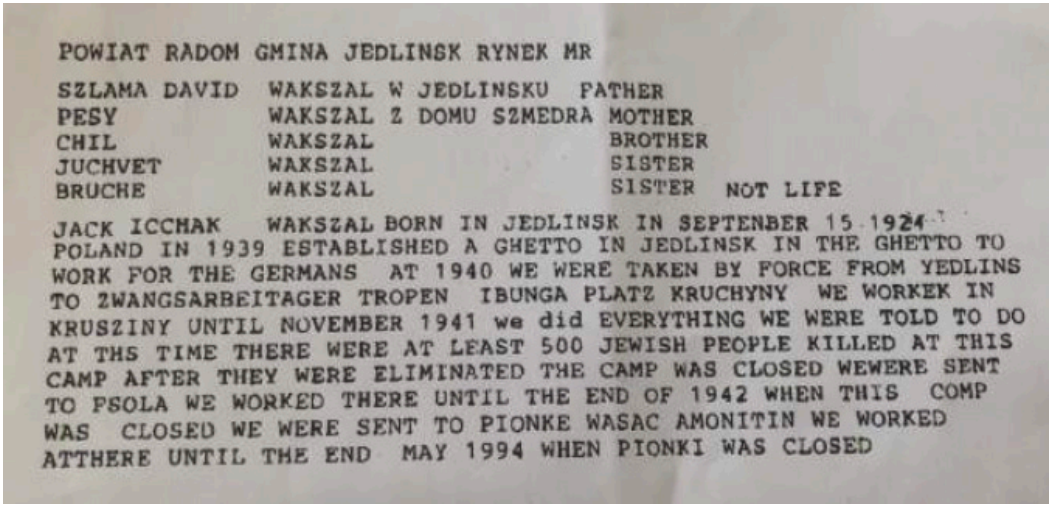
☐ I do not know what assets other than money were deposited in the bank or other custodian.
Please attach any copies of documents, which support your Claim regarding Deposited Assets.
☐ I do not have any documents which support the existence of my Claim regarding Deposited Assets.

7. Have you or the Subject been paid any money based on claims of Deposited Assets?
☐ Yes ☒ No

8. If your answer to Item 7, above, was "Yes," please state the following:
The amount received ________ Currency: ________
When this amount was paid ________
The government or organization which paid this amount ________

12-30-'44 to 1-25-'45 - Soelin Ammunition Plant - S.S. Guards
1-25-'45 to 4-25-'45 - Sedan Ammunition Plant - S.S. Guards

Information about Sabina's family following the war.

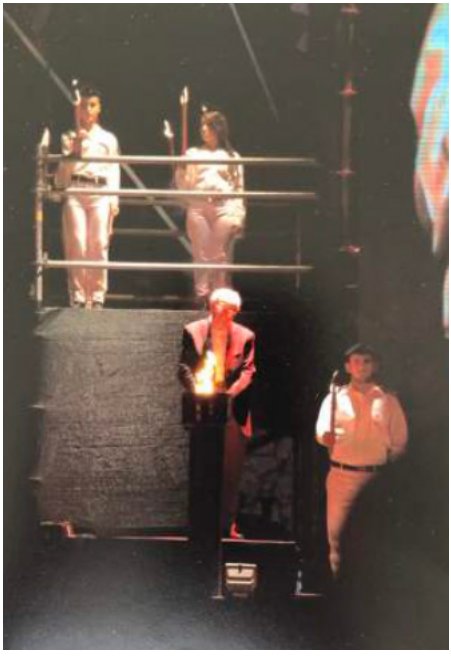


POWIAT RADOM GMINA JEDLINSK RYNEK MR

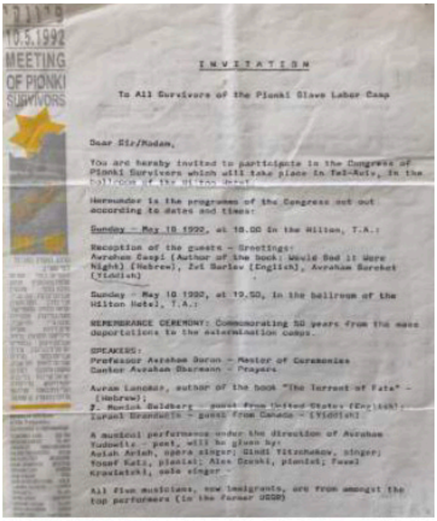
SZLAMA DAVID	WAKSZAL W JEDLINSKU	PATHER
PESY	WAKSZAL Z DOMU SZMEDRA	MOTHER
CHIL	WAKSZAL	BROTHER
JUCHVET	WAKSZAL	SISTER
BRUCHE	WAKSZAL	SISTER NOT LIFE

JACK ICCHAK WAKSZAL BORN IN JEDLINSK IN SEPTENBER 15 1924
POLAND IN 1939 ESTABLISHED A GHETTO IN JEDLINSK IN THE GHETTO TO WORK FOR THE GERMANS AT 1940 WE WERE TAKEN BY FORCE FROM YEDLINS TO ZWANGSARBEITAGER TROPEN IBUNGA PLATZ KRUCHYNY WE WORKEK IN KRUSZINY UNTIL NOVEMBER 1941 we did EVERYTHING WE WERE TOLD TO DO AT THS TIME THERE WERE AT LEAST 500 JEWISH PEOPLE KILLED AT THIS CAMP AFTER THEY WERE ELIMINATED THE CAMP WAS CLOSED WEWERE SENT TO PSOLA WE WORKED THERE UNTIL THE END OF 1942 WHEN THIS COMP WAS CLOSED WE WERE SENT TO PIONKE WASAC AMONITIN WE WORKED ATTHERE UNTIL THE END MAY 1994 WHEN PIONKI WAS CLOSED

Information about my family following the war.



Kibbutz Bait V'kait in northern Israel was founded by Holocaust survivors. They picked me to light a candle at a special ceremony honoring people who survived the Holocaust in the forest.



10.5.1992 MEETING OF PIONKI SURVIVORS

INVITATION

To All Survivors of the Pionki Slave Labor Camp

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are hereby invited to participate in the Congress of Pionki Survivors which will take place in Tel-Aviv, in the ballroom of the Hilton Hotel.

Hereunder is the programme of the Congress set out according to dates and times:

Sunday – May 10 1992, at 18.00 in the Hilton, T.A.:

Reception of the guests – Greetings:
Avraham Caspi (Author of the book: Would God it Were Night) (Hebrew), Zvi Barlev (English), Avraham Berekot (Yiddish)

Sunday – May 10 1992, at 19.30, in the ballroom of the Hilton Hotel, T.A.:

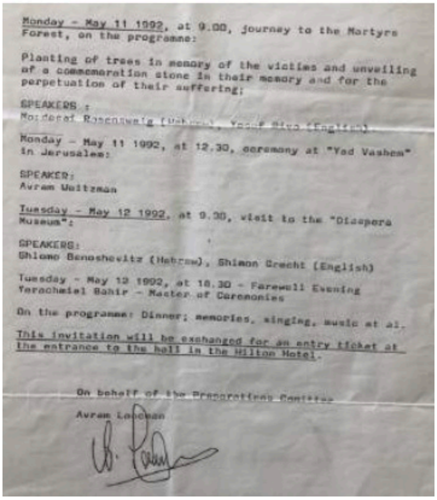
REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY: Commemorating 50 years from the mass deportations to the extermination camps.

SPEAKERS:
Professor Avraham Duron – Master of Ceremonies
Cantor Avraham Obermann – Prayers

Avram Landman, author of the book "The Torrent of Fate" – (Hebrew);
J. Moniek Goldberg – guest from United States (English);
Israel Brandwein – guest from Canada – (Yiddish)

A musical performance under the direction of Avraham Yudowitz – poet, will be given by:
Aviah Arieh, opera singer; Gindi Yitzchakov, singer; Yosef Katz, pianist; Alex Orzeki, pianist; Pavel Krawietzki, solo singer –

All five musicians, new immigrants, are from amongst the top performers (in the former USSR)



Monday – May 11 1992, at 9.00, journey to the Martyrs Forest, on the programme:

Planting of trees in memory of the victims and unveiling of a commemoration stone in their memory and for the perpetuation of their suffering;

SPEAKERS:
Mordecai Rosenzweig (Hebrew), Yosef Siva (English)

Monday – May 11 1992, at 12.30, ceremony at "Yad Vashem" in Jerusalem:

SPEAKER:
Avram Weitzman

Tuesday – May 12 1992, at 9.30, visit to the "Diaspora Museum":

SPEAKERS:
Shlomo Benoshevitz (Hebrew), Shimon Grecht (English)

Tuesday – May 12 1992, at 18.30 – Farewell Evening
Yerachmiel Bahir – Master of Ceremonies

On the programme: Dinner; memories, singing, music et al.

This invitation will be exchanged for an entry ticket at the entrance to the hall in the Hilton Hotel.

On behalf of the Preparations Committee

Avram Landman

In May 1992 Sabina and I were invited to Israel for a gathering of survivors of Pionke Labor Camp. We visited the Martyrs Forest where we planted trees in memory of the victims and unveiled a commemorative stone in their memory.

MEMBERS OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE, of the United Jewish Campaign, headed by Louis S. Goldman, are shown here, as they gathered to act on allocations to local, national and world-wide organizations, supported by funds raised in the drive here.

I was on the committee deciding how to distribute UJA funds.

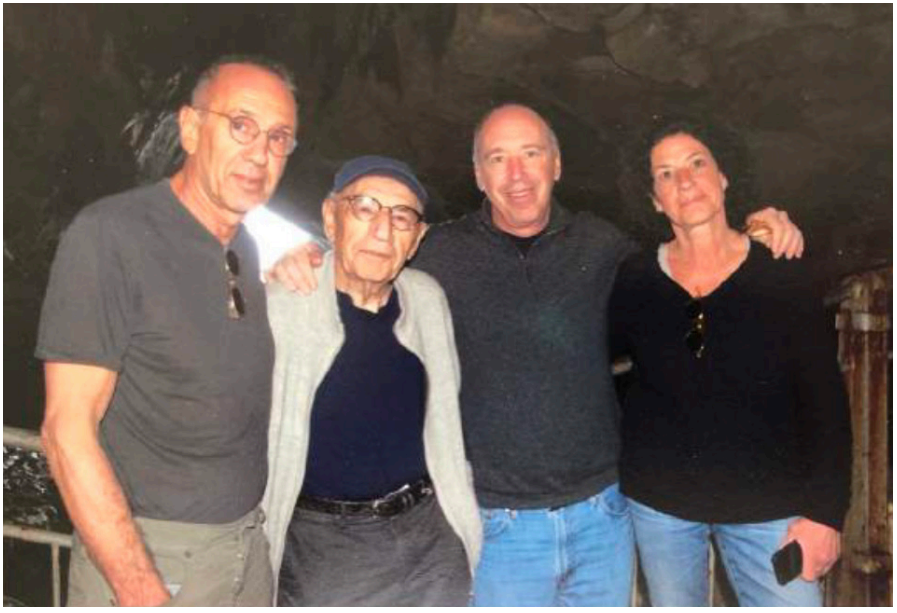
THE JCC NEWS APRIL 1, 1968

SPECIAL RECOGNITION for the Dayton Jewish Society for New Americans' contribution to the 1967 Israel Emergency Fund last June was made by the United Jewish Appeal at a breakfast meeting recently. JCC President Harry Schear (left) is shown presenting the certificate of appreciation to Harry Gordon and Jack Waksal, chairman and co-chairman of the organization. Looking on is Louis Goldman, chairman of the 1967 UJC and Emergency Fund drive.

I received special recognition for my contributions to the 1967 Israel Emergency Fund.

I told President Clinton I thought the United States could have done better during the Holocaust. He understood.

Sabina with me in Dayton, Ohio.



From the left: Samuel, me, Harlan, Patti.

My sons, Harlan and Samuel.

Patti and Sabina at the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The photographer searched for over a year to find me to give me the picture.

My daughter Patti's family: Ali, Simon, Mollie, Peter, Jesse.

My granddaughter Mollie's wedding. From the left: Patti, Peter Navarro, Mollie, Lewis Goetz.

My great-granddaughter Noa Sabine Navarro, Mollie and Peter's daughter.

Samuel with Eli Wiesel.

My great-granddaughters Penelope Ivy and Vivian Helen, Aliza and Jeff Pressman's daughters.

My granddaughters Elana and Aliza, Samuel's daughters.

Elana and Lloyd Nathan with their sons, my great-grandsons Pierce and Euan.

My son Harlan, his wife Carol, their sons Julian and Zachary.

My grandson Julian and his bride Emily.

My grandson Zac, his wife Tal, their daughter Sabina Liv.

My great-granddaughter Sabina Liv.

LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

The Jewish agencies met us as we got off the boat in New York and processed us through Ellis Island. The United Jewish Appeal, UJA, sent us to Dayton, Ohio, where they helped us find a place to live. The first thing I did was go to the synagogue where somebody right away recognized my voice. It was our sponsor, Nathan Wiseman, who used to live in the same city where I grew up!

When I came to the United States I knew a little English from speaking with the Americans in Ravensburg, but I understood very little. I went to school at night to learn English. I didn't have any problem getting a job — I went to work for a scrap yard dealer. But I wanted to go into business for myself, so I started to peddle scrap metal. When I had a few dollars put away I said to myself, "I can buy a truck and do even better." I paid the dealer every month for a used truck. I got a friend to partner with me. We would go from gas station to gas station picking up old mufflers and other scrap they didn't want and sell it to scrap yards. And there I was in business! I didn't know too many words of English when I started, but I built my business and kept learning the language. Later, I started The Dayton Iron and Metal Company. I would buy scrap from places like General Motors, separate out the metal, and sell it to the mills and the foundries.

I worked very hard and became very successful. All the time I ask myself, "Why didn't my brother and sisters live? Why didn't my parents live? Life would have been so different for us all."

For a long time after we got to the United States I was very angry with what the American leadership did during the war. I thought American Jews could have done more, demonstrated more, cared more about what was happening to European Jewry. Roosevelt could have bombed the camps… I couldn't understand when people in Dayton would say to me, "Forget about it. It is in the past." I asked them, "If you lost your mom, your sisters, your father, your brother, would you forget about it? Could you forget that you were in the line to be murdered?" It never goes away with time, and I will never stop thinking about it.

The rabbi in Dayton was close to me. He wanted me to sing in the synagogue but that would take a lot of time and I needed to make a living. I did become active in the Jewish community especially with the United Jewish Appeal. In 1967 I was a newcomer on a special committee that decided how the UJA dispersed money. I was sitting with millionaires and they were asking me for advice! I helped raise a lot of money for Israel during the 1967 War and the Yom Kippur War. Along with other Holocaust survivors I forced the mayor of Dayton to proclaim a day to recognize the Shoah to honor the people who died in the Holocaust. I became involved with Israel Bonds.

Sabina and I often spoke in schools about our experience in the Holocaust. At the opening of the Holocaust Museum in Washington I told President Clinton how I felt the United States could have done better. He understood. He said, "It was our fault what we did."

MY LIFE TODAY

I have three children, seven grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and two more on the way. My sons, Samuel and Harlan, are both doctors. They live in New York where they work in cancer research and help build biotechnology companies. Sam is an immunologist who received his doctorate at Ohio State University College of Medicine. Harlan has an MD from Tufts University Medical School. My daughter, Patti, went to Ohio State University. She has an antique business in Washington D.C.

Sam has two daughters: Aliza and Elana. Aliza and Jeff Pressman's children are Penelope and Vivian. Elana and Lloyd Nathan's children are Euan and Pierce. Harlan and his wife, Carol, have two sons: Julian and Zachary. Julian is married to Emily. Zachary and Tal have a daughter named Sabina. Patti has three children: Mollie, Simon, and Jesse. Simon is married to Ali. Mollie and Peter Navarro have a daughter named Noa Sabine.

Sabina and I stayed in Dayton until 1990 when she facetiously said, "If you are not going to retire I'm going to divorce you." I retired in 1991. I sold my company in Dayton and we moved to New York where I bought a house a three minute walk from the ocean in East Hampton. We also bought a condominium in Miami where we spent half the year. We had a good life together.

In 2012 we were sitting in our car, Sabina was fine, when all of a sudden she had a stroke. They did as much as they could for her in the hospital, but they never could do very much. Whenever she was in the hospital I never left her side. She lived for close to a year after the stroke. Sabina died July 9, 2013. She is buried in East Hampton. I lost so much when she died; I was broken without her. She was the only person who could make me laugh. She humanized me. She was my memory. We completed each other. We truly loved each other.

Three times I escaped from being killed by the Nazis. The first time was when I was kneeling at a grave expecting to be shot. The second time was when I was escaping from the camp and trying to survive in the forest. The third time was when my brother was murdered and I managed to escape. I went through a lot and I am still alive.

In 1993 I had open heart surgery. In 2012 I had a heart attack. Today, at age ninety-six, to stay fit I walk pretty

close to two miles every day and also go to the gym. I am active in my synagogue and I speak about my experience in the Holocaust in schools and at the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach. I worry so much that the Holocaust will be forgotten when those of us who survived it are not here any longer to speak about it. Maybe this is why I survived.

At home preparing my memoir.

ABOUT THE WRITER

I began writing for Holocaust survivors in the 1990's when survivors I met on The March of the Living asked me for help writing about their feelings on returning to Poland for the first time. Later, survivors I interviewed for Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation asked me for help writing down all the things they did not speak about in their interview. Soon, other survivors began approaching me seeking help writing a book about their experiences in the Holocaust. I met with the survivors, recorded our numerous conversations, organized and wrote the stories in the survivors' own words, printed the books, and then handed the books to the survivors as my gift to them. The books were written solely for the survivors and their families; they were never intended for publication. They are being published now because my friends, Carol and Jaime Suchlicki, recognizing their historical value as first-person testimony, introduced me to Dr. Haim Shaked to discuss finding a wider audience for the books.

Thank you to Dr. Haim Shaked director of the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies at the University of Miami for agreeing to publish the books and for your guidance and patience as we worked together on this project.

I am grateful to the March of the Living for introducing me to the world of Holocaust education and finding a role for me in it.

Thank you to the Shoah Foundation for choosing me to be an interviewer and for mentoring me through more than thirty interviews of Holocaust survivors. Your training led me to do the work I do today.

Thank you to the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach for encouraging the docents at the memorial to work with me to write their memoirs. I appreciate your confidence in me and your respect for my work.

Thank you to the my dear Holocaust survivors for sharing your most painful as well as your most joyful memories with me. Thank you for answering questions that no one should ever have to ask or answer. Thank you for trusting me to write your memoirs accurately and respectfully. It has been my honor and pleasure to work with you.

—Bobbi Kaufman

"It was close to the end of May 1944 when I said to myself, 'I am not going to Auschwitz to be killed. If I am going to be killed, I am going to be killed in the forest, not in a camp.' I had my plan."

— Yitzhak Waksal

In September 1939 Yitzhak watched as the Nazis burned down his synagogue and torched its fifteen Torah scrolls. His family would spend the next year in the Jedlinsk Ghetto before being sent to forced labor camps. At one camp, while kneeling by a mass grave waiting to be shot, Yitzhak escaped and ran into the forest. He survived the war hiding in the forest for eight months.

After liberation Yitzhak married and he and his wife spent five years in a DP camp in Germany before emigrating to the United States where they raised their three children.

There is a concept in Judaism of a positive commandment, something that is time dependent, something that must be done *now*. One must, accordingly, applaud this important effort by the Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program of the University of Miami to collect and publish Holocaust survivors' memoirs as there will soon—too soon—come a time when the last survivors will be no longer. Sadly, tragically, this testimony is not only urgent but timely because the world in which we live echoes their world and the quality of their witness. The very nature of their survival has much to teach today's generations. One must express gratitude for this project and in the sagacious words of Hillel say: "If not now, when?"

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