

Erwin Levy

Photographed with his brother Ernest

Wartime Experience: Camp Survivor

FATHER: Max Levy	Born 1882
MOTHER: Johanna	Born 1890
SISTER: Ruth Levy	Born December 10, 1919
BROTHER: Ernest (Ernie) Levy	Born March 9, 1926

I was born on October 1, 1921 in a small town named Waldbreitbach, 35 miles from the city of Cologne (Köln). In 1938 one week before Kristallnacht, the family, except for my sister, moved to Koln. She was in Antwerp, Belgium and later in Brussels. She disappeared from Brussels and to this da, we do not know what happened to her.

Our family - my father, my grandfather, and my great-grandfather- made as cattle dealers. My great-grandfather had twelve sons and one daughter, spread all over, including one son in the United States. He came to the United States about 1880-1890 and he died sometime between 1930-1938.

My father and mother were both well educated in private schools. My father in Dusseldorf and my mother in Wiesbaden. My education in Germany was normal until around 1934. From that time on, as I was the only Jewish boy in my class and my teacher was an active Nazi, it became impossible for me to study. I was beaten and kicked on a daily basis. Finally my father took me out of school and sent me to another town. In 1941 the family; father, mother, brother and I, was deported, first to Lodz (Lizmanstadt)and then to Posen.

Camp In Posen

From Lodz I was sent to Posen, where I worked loading dirt into cars to be used for laying down tracks. I also worked as a steam locomotive operator and engineer as well as operator and engineer on a roller diesel, used for compacting the gravel before the railroad tracks were put down. I was also a blacksmith, repairing the picks that the workers used to compact the ties under the rails. From Posen I was sent to Auschwitz.

Camp In Auschwitz

In Auschwitz I worked as a coal miner and as a mechanic, doing several different jobs. Repairing coal transport wagons (they delivered the coal to the outside, repairing pumps, and unloading railroad cars. I often stole oats from the horses so that we had some food to eat. On January 26, 1945, we marched from Auschwitz on a death march and on April 29, 1945 we were liberated by the American Army.

After the war I found my brother Ernie in a hospital and we were reunited.

In 1946 I was married to Rose Kahn. Rose was the only survivor of her entire family. In 1948 we arrived in New York City; my wife, my brother, my cousin and me. Two months later we moved to Sioux City, Iowa. In 1954 my wife and I moved to San Francisco and my brother went to Los Angeles. We started to work in San Francisco. My wife Rose worked as a salesgirl for over twenty years for the department store Joseph Magnin. I worked for a plumbing company, Scott Company of California, for twenty-two years. During my employment with Scott Company, Mr. Scott encouraged me to go to college. I spent six years at night school and he paid for my education. Following that, I started my own plumbing business and at the age of 66 I retired. Since my retirement, I devote part of my time playing golf and part of my time volunteering at the Jewish Home for the Aged in San Francisco.

My wife and I had a marvelous 38 years of marriage. We were very devoted to each other and always were together. We had no children. She died in February of 1984 in San Francisco.

I am very lucky to have so many good and devoted friends.