

## **Bericht von Susan Fisher geb. Partos**

Dear Miki,

I am fascinated to see how much effort you have put into researching our camp. Some of the information is completely new to me, possibly because I may not have been aware of a lot of things that were happening around us.

I arrived with my parents, Yeno and Elizabeth Partos, at Strasshof on 11 July 1944, my late mother's birthday. We slept in an old cemetery on the first night and the next day, to the best of my recollection, we were taken to Viehofen. None of us had our heads shaved.

There was a POW camp adjacent to our camp and the two camps were separated by a dirt road and as there was no fence surrounding our camp we were able to go across to the POW's. There were French and Belgian POW's at the camp but I don't recall any Yugoslavs. They occasionally gave us cigarettes, which we traded for bread with your grandfather.

It was along this dirt road that we walked daily for about 30 minutes until we reached our work site, which was on the banks of the Traisen. Our project was to build a levy on the bank to prevent the river flooding in the Spring. The levy was built up with dirt that was brought there by a trolley. This proved to be ineffectual as the river broke its banks regardless.

Whilst working on the riverbank we would sometimes hear someone whistle and we would look across to see someone disappear into the forest and we would go over and find that they had left some food for us.

I do not remember anyone being shot at the camp. The first person to die in our hut was Izso Potasman and he died from a bleeding ulcer. His son, Willie (don't know his Hebrew name) lives in Jabotinsky 30, Naharia. I think he went back to look for his father's grave.

The Lagerfuher's name was Kubitchek and he was a nazi and wore a feather in his hat. There were 2 old Austrian guards who were more humane and their names were Seif and Losleben. Losleben's son was in the army and when he returned on leave, he gave some baby clothes to Paul's mother. She kept this a secret for obvious reasons and we only learned of this after the war.

Kubitchek had an affair with one of the girls at the camp and when she became pregnant your grandfather arranged for her to have an abortion.

Seif "befriended" a girl called M. K. who was 16 at the time and he supplied food for her that she gave to her father. She lives in Sydney and I contacted her but she doesn't want to be involved in your project. She started crying and became very distressed when I approached her about it.

Losleben warned Clara Kraus, who is my cousin and is Paul's mother, that we would all be moved to Mauthausen and she asked that we go with her and her two children into the woods and towards the Russian front. The Russians were getting closer and as we walked there were hundreds of American bombers flying overhead and dropping leaflets as well as, spiral shaped streamers which were made of some kind of metal foil that I think was intended to interfere with radio communications or radar.

My father was pushing a wheelbarrow that contained our meagre possessions and as he crossed the river on the narrow plank that we had to walk across, he overbalanced and fell in wheelbarrow and all. He retrieved the wheelbarrow and some of our possessions with the help of a couple who were there, but most things were lost.

This couple now joined us and we arrived at a small village where we sheltered in a half built house with no roof. We realised that we could not spend the night there with 2 young children so we continued towards the

village. The other couple whose name was Schaffer stayed there and we later learned that they had been shot. (When we finally arrived in Budapest, we were told about JOINT. This was an aid organization that was established by American Jews to help survivors. The first person that we saw when we went to JOINT was the son of the Schaffer's. We told him that we had been at the camp with his parents but could not bring ourselves to tell him that they had died.)

On our way to the village we came to a monastery and decided to it would be a good place to seek refuge. As we walked through the gate we found ourselves in a huge estate. The grounds were occupied by German soldiers and camouflaged artillery. We could not about turn so we continued towards the monastery. The nuns took us in and that evening we had dinner in the kitchen, with them and the German soldiers!

The next morning Clara Kraus decided to tell the Mother Superior that we were Jewish and so she made us leave but did not betray us to the Germans. We then continued walking towards the village, towards the Russian front. The road was filled with refugees who were all walking in the opposite direction away from the Russians.

We reached the village and in the first house that we approached there was a woman alone with her daughter. She let us stay and the next morning the Russians arrived and my father was able to talk to them in mixture of Serb and Russian, which saved them (and us) from being robbed or raped.

Anxious to move on we started walking back along the way we had come, now behind the Russians, on the road to Vienna. As we passed the monastery, we saw that it had been bombed and completely destroyed! Along the way farmers let us shelter in their barns as well as giving us food and milk. Then the Soviets helped us by giving us food and transporting us on their trucks until we reached the Vienna woods. From there they went back for more supplies.

We then travelled with other survivors on mostly coal trains or any other trains that were going in the direction of Budapest.

Clara found her mother in their old apartment in Budapest and stayed there with her 2 children and I continued to Subotica with my parents.

P.S. I went to school with Gyuri Kohn.

I remember your mother and aunt. Please ask them if they remember me.