

Letter from Kurt Bach to Steve Friedlander about Mr. Bach's experiences at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. The date of the letter is July, 1978.

I was owner of a wholesale business since 1931. In the Crystal Night, Nazis destroyed the store completely. Next day I was arrested, put in jail. Next morning I and a number of other Jews from our city were transported by truck to Greslau, where we were marched through the streets, passing by the burning synagogue to the railroad station, where we had to go on a train to Weimar, closest city to the concentration camp Buchenwald.

From the platform to the trucks we had to go through a small tunnel, which was lined on both sides with S.A. men with all kinds of and sticks, beating us.

Again, on a truck to the camp there we were forced to stand 48 hours in a field without food. We were told not to move, otherwise they would shoot. Nobody could move to relieve himself; the few who did got killed. The reason they gave us was, that the barracks were not ready. Before we could move into the barracks, our heads were completely shaved. We finally got something to eat on a plate without spoons so you had to lick like dogs. After you finished, the plate was filled again and we could eat on one plate for 20 people.

The barracks were wooden made of wood about 36 X 30 for each prisoner. No blankets. Nights guards selected a few prisoners, walked them outside. You could hear shots and nobody was seen again. The same thing went on day after day. One day one prisoner, who escaped and was caught the next day, was hanged in public. We all had to be there to witness this procedure.

When it rained the place was so muddy that you sank in and many prisoners lost their shoes and had to do without for the rest of the winter. Since we got very little to drink, we drank rainwater from the roof. The fence was electrically charged. The guards sometimes took away hats and other things from prisoners and chased them to the fence where they were electrocuted.

Instead of an outhouse there was a long beam where you had to sit on. When you had to go at night, you had to wait till about 20-30 had to go also. Then you had to exercise for 20 minutes and nobody could hold that long. We could not wash or shave or change clothes for the term of our stay. We were filthy dirty and the smell was awful.

And everyday some were elected to be killed. You had to manipulate, not to do something that the guards could observe. That was pure self-preservation to survive.

Finally, after 9 weeks I was called to be released after my head was shaved again.

Letter from Larry Friedlander to Steve Friedlander concerning the Friedlander's experiences in Germany after the took control.

July 13, 1978

Dearest Steve,

As I told you I had asked Uncle Kurt to write down some of his memories from Hitler's Germany. Enclosed is what he gave me which deals mostly with his stay at Buchenwald Concentration Camp. If you remember Karl the artist in the TV series "Holocaust" stayed at Buchenwald for part of the time. I hope that you will be able to read it.

As far as my own experiences are concerned I will try to write down some of the ones I remember at some sequence. Hitler came to power in Germany when I was eight years old. My first memory is that my mother, brother, and I were at a shoe store owned by some Jews to buy some shoes and while we were there a large contingent of Storm Troopers assembled out front and hollered slogans. I do not remember what they said but when they left one of them stayed behind and urged people not to enter the store and a great, big "Jude" (Jew) was painted across the window.

We lived in relatively small town, about 30,000, and my mother's father owned the largest department store there. We were therefore very well known and just everybody knew that we were Jewish. In school Uncle Werner and I were pretty much constantly harassed not only by our schoolmates but also by some of the teachers. I was forever chased by not one but always a group and at times caught and beaten up.

In September of 1938 my Father was arrested by the Gestapo for some political activity prior to 1933 and put into one of the camps. In November 1938 during the Crystal Night (Uncle Kurt also mentions it) all of the stores still owned by Jews (there were very few left, my grandfather had passed away and his store sold prior to this) were destroyed, burned, if possible, during this night and also all of the synagogues were completely destroyed and the books burned. The reason the Nazis gave was that a Polish Jew had killed an employee of the German Embassy in Paris and this was the outrage of the German people.

The next morning I went to school and I was told that I am not welcome any longer. I had just entered the 7th grade, this therefore finished my education. My Mother was told by the Nazis that if she could arrange for our family to leave Germany that my father would be released. Since the opportunities in the small city we lived (Brieg) were rather limited to arrange any kind of trip we moved to Breslau which was a much larger city in 1939. I started as a kitchen helper so as to have some kind of work and of course we also needed money at that time since our money was either confiscated by the Nazis or just gone.

The chances to get out of Germany were rather small by then. No country in the world really wanted the German Jews. My mother wrote to her relatives here in the USA but they never bothered to reply. Uncle Kurt and his brother Hans were able to get visas to go to Shanghai, China, which in those days was an international city controlled by the Japanese, British, and French. They left for Shanghai in early fall of 1939.

As you know World War II started in September of 1939 and life for all of the Germans became more difficult but particularly of course for the Jews. Most of the food was rationed then and we as Jews received rations much smaller than others. Our lives were constantly harassed by searches. My mother, Uncle Werner, and I rented a small room from an older Jewish couple. My mother would

make constant trips to the Gestapo to get my father released and any number of times she was thrown down one set of steps just so she could talk to someone about getting Papa out of the concentration camp.

During the Spring of 1940 my two Uncles who were then in Shanghai were able to get visas for our whole family to also to Shanghai. Just prior to that I was able to go to England by myself but I opted to take my chances and stay with the family. This choice could have been fatal as you will see later.

By the time we were ready to leave France had fallen and it really looked like Germany may be on the way to victory. Italy had entered the war by then and their ships were the only ones that were still going to the Far East until then. But once they became a belligerent nation they too stopped all passenger ships and for a while it looked like we will not be able to leave. Finally Russia permitted us to go to China via the Trans-Siberian Railroad which was quite a trip but another story,

Of course we were happy that we were to be able to leave and Papa was released by the Gestapo shortly before our departure. We packed all of the personal belongings we were allowed to take along. The day before our departure my parents were called to appear before the Gestapo and were told that all our belongings had been confiscated. When my father said we would not leave either he was shown a list of the people that were ready to be shipped to one of the death camps and our family was on the list. So we left the next day with nothing except the very clothing we had on our backs and about \$4.00 per person. Our trips were paid for in advance.

On our way out we went back to Brieg, our home town, to say good-bye to my father's parents. The day before we got there my grand-parents were notified by the Gestapo that one of their sons, or my uncle, had died in the concentration camp. Another brother of my father's was also killed in a camp. My Grandparents were later on also sent to Theresienstadt (it was also mentioned in the "Holocaust") and never heard from again and so we have to believe that they ended up in the gas chambers.

I do remember a great deal about our experiences in Shanghai but they are another story. I do remember so that during the trip through Russia, and even so Stalin and Hitler had signed a friendship treaty, all of the people we talked to were very sure that there would be a war between Russia and Germany.

I hope this will help you. Enclosed are pictures I took when I was there last. Please give my love to Mom, David, Linda, and Princess.

Very, very much love.

Dad.