



Oskar Knoblauch

Oskar Knoblauch was born on November 27, 1925 in Leipzig Germany. He was in third grade when the 1935 Nazi Nuremberg laws forbid Jewish children from attending school. Because his parents were Polish citizens, the family, including sister, Ilse, and brother Siegmund, were forced to leave Germany in 1936. They settled in Krakow, Poland, where Oskar continued his education until September 1, 1939 when Germany occupied Poland and World War II broke out. The Nazis soon imposed new laws and restrictions against the Jews, who were ordered to wear the Star of David.

In March 1941, a 9-foot walled ghetto was established, and Oskar's family was assigned to one room in a building on Ulica Benedikta. By mid-1941 the Nazis began deporting Jews to various forced-labor and killing camps. With deadly intensity, the deportations continued until the ghetto's liquidation on March 13, 1943. Oskar's mother was sent to slave labor at Camp Plaszow.

Oskar, with his father and siblings, along with 116 skilled ghetto Jews—tailors, shoemakers, seamstresses—were taken to Gestapo headquarters on Pomarska Street. Their assignment: to service 500 top German officers. Oskar shoveled coal in the boiler room, which provided hot water and heat for the gigantic Nazi complex. Ilse knitted dresses for Nazi wives. Oskar's father, however, was murdered while working at slave labor.

By 1945 the Germans realized the Russians were nearby. On January 17, 1945 Oskar, Ilse, and Siegmund escaped, luckily missing a deportation to the Matthausen concentration camp, from which few survived. The very next day the young Knoblauchs were liberated by advance Soviet troops.

In May 1945 the war ended and Oskar, like many surviving Jews, did not want to live in post-war Europe, which still resented Jews. Ilse married and with her husband joined a kibbutz in the Negev Desert, Siegmund moved to the British-occupied sector, and after four years in Feldafing, a DP camp, Oskar, his mother, and a cousin were sponsored by a Canadian uncle. The Knoblauchs arrived in Halifax, Canada on June 11, 1949. Oskar and his wife, Lila, 24, moved to the USA in 1953. The couple had three children. Oskar lost his wife and a daughter to cancer. An Arizona Holocaust speaker, Oskar is author of *A Boy's Story*, a *Man's Memory: Surviving the Holocaust 1933-1945*.