

WILLIAM FEDERER

May 9, 1995

Interviewer: Louise Goodman

Notetaker: Harriet Tarnor Wacks

- 01:22 Born in Vienna, Austria on may 27, 1915. Mother, Regina Kluger/Jewish, Father, Frederick Federer (convert) sheetmetal worker (at war when born). Librarian in Vienna when Hitler came to power.
- 01:25 People came to Austria from Germany. Decree Jews could not move from place of residence. Parents living arrangements, separated by law. Mother worked in a dairy/chocolate store.
- 01:27 Great festivities on German invasion. Didn't know what would happen. Felt it would all settle. Mother's business threatened to be closed. One day all smashed, closed, took away apartment, many families lived together.
- 01:29 Two types of people. Anyone not wearing swastika could be take to Dachau (Jews, foreigners, protestors). Father died mysteriously during his eleven months in Dachau.
- 01:30 Walking down the street, taken to police station, knew policeman; out of their hands. Gestapo took school for three days. Cattle car train to Dachau one-half day and night. Couldn't see anything.
- 01:33 Sign- "Arbeit Mach Frei". Showered; hair shaved; belongings put in package and stored. Were allowed to spend money in camp, could get up to five marks a month (could request up to 35, but confiscated. Code with mother- if he wrote in Gothic style, don't believe.
- 01:35 At 5:30, got up, counted in Appel Platz. Thirty barracks - 40,000 people, groups of 100 (of 10). If someone died, must be brought to be counted, dug grave. Kapots (people in charge of them, released prisoners, could do what they wanted to Jews). Austria not invaded, welcomed Nazis. Barrack #14 (his). First to die, his cousin. Carried his body to hospital area, thrown in wire basket. I became designated body carrier. I was fortunate to be strong (Age 23).

WILLIAM FEDERER (continued)

- 01:40 Ways to die:
1. People's hands blistered, pus, invaded body, amputate, died
Barracks 3 and 5 punished for escaping, etc.
 2. Collected strings until enough to attach to fence to kill themselves in view of everyone else. Prisoners not allowed to cut down.
 3. Game - Threw bread from tower over line, shot you if electric wire.
- 01:43 Not much hope, began wondering, "Who will carry me out tomorrow?"
- While librarian, met British students of dignitaries. Mother found their address and wrote for help. Got false papers from Oxford University requesting him as librarian. Since Germans still friendly with Britain, let him out. Threatened to kill mother if he told about Dachau, couldn't help her.
- 01:47 Went by train to England, windows covered with newspapers. Escorted by stormtroopers to Belgium border. Met by friends in S. Wales. Became a lumberjack. Eleven and a half months in Dachau. Went home to see mother (soup kitchens from Jewish American Organization, apartment with six to eight other people). Daily report to Gestapo. Got passport. Last time saw mother.
- After war, in Austria learned that on May 12, 1942, mother (age 47) taken to a small town in Poland, then to Auschwitz.
- 01:52 Friend, newly married woman, Nellie, cared for fourteen of them. Four of men married four of women. (One year in S. Wales.) Earned enough to come to U.S. Used own money to pay ship to speed up entry into U.S. His last boat out of England bringing people.

WILLIAM FEDERER (continued)

Served in U.S. service for three years, in Mississippi as interpreter.

Married girl who made fun of his accent when he sang in choral group, and so "I punished her and married her."
Married for 52 years (she died six weeks ago).

01:57 Opened candy stores, learned from mother.

Asked, "Why I don't hate?" "I'm not made that way. I have so many wonderful friends of all groups. I did well for someone who came with nothing and no relatives."