The Geller and Weber Story 1939-1945

Translated from Hebrew to English

Naomi Weber

Naomi (Weber) Geller after WWII

My grandmother's name is Naomi (Weber) Geller and she was born in 1931 in Chrzanów, Poland. Her father was a baker and she had five siblings, she shared a room with her two sisters. My grandmother studied at a Jewish school where they learned Hebrew and Yiddish. One of her favorite games was hide and seek where she played with the other children at the field behind her house. My grandmother was around nine years old when the war broke out and she and her family were sent to the ghetto. In the ghetto there were "actions" in which old people, women, and small children would be separated from the young, this is when my grandmother and her sister were separated from the rest of her family. She never saw the rest of her family again but she stayed with her younger sister the entire war.

Moshe and Bela Weber and two of their six children pre-WWII

My grandmother and her sister were taken to the textile mills where they worked for four years. Towards the end of the war the Germans knew that the Russians were approaching so they were transported by train and by foot to Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp. My grandmother says, "There, people started to fade away and die. My sister became sick with typhus and so did I. A week before the end of the war my sister died and once the war was over I was transferred to a rehabilitation center in Sweden, on my own. I was 14 at the time". The British liberated Bergen-Belsen in April 1945.

Towards the end of the war, my grandmother was taken on what is known as a "death march". A death march is when prisoners of the camps were forced to walk for days without food or water and people would slowly begin to collapse and be left on the side of the road. In one of these marches my grandmother says “I sneaked away from the rest of the prisoners in order to reach one of the homes nearby. There I begged for food for me and my sister, when I returned one of the Nazi soldiers spotted me and hit me over the head with the back of his rifle. I fell to the ground but knew I had to quickly recover and rejoin the rest of the prisoners or be left to die.”

Naomi (Weber) Geller, after WWII

When the war was over my grandmother stayed with the other survivors in Sweden and then Belgium waiting for the opportunity to immigrate to Israel. Eventually my grandmother did board a boat, and they spent a month at sea before arriving in Israel. At that time the British controlled Israel and did not allow Jewish survivors to immigrate to Israel. The boat was sent to Cyprus where they spent a year and a half at a holding camp waiting to be allowed to immigrate to Israel. In 1948, after the birth of Israel, at age 17, my grandmother was allowed to immigrate to Israel where she lives today. My grandmother was the sole survivor of her entire family besides her Aunt, Genia Teicher, who moved to New Haven, Connecticut after surviving the war.

Naomi Weber and her Aunt Genia Teicher

Yizhak Geller

My grandfather's name is Yitzhak (Isaac/Isak) Geller and he was born in 1924 in Gorlice, Poland. My grandfather says, "We had a good life before the war. We had a small house with a yard. My father was a trader; he would buy and sell goods. I had two sisters and one brother, and we all shared a room. As a child, I used to play soccer with the other kids and participated in Jewish boy scouts. We were always busy studying or doing our homework. I have very good memories of the time before the war, we were a traditional family and we enjoyed celebrating the Jewish holidays."

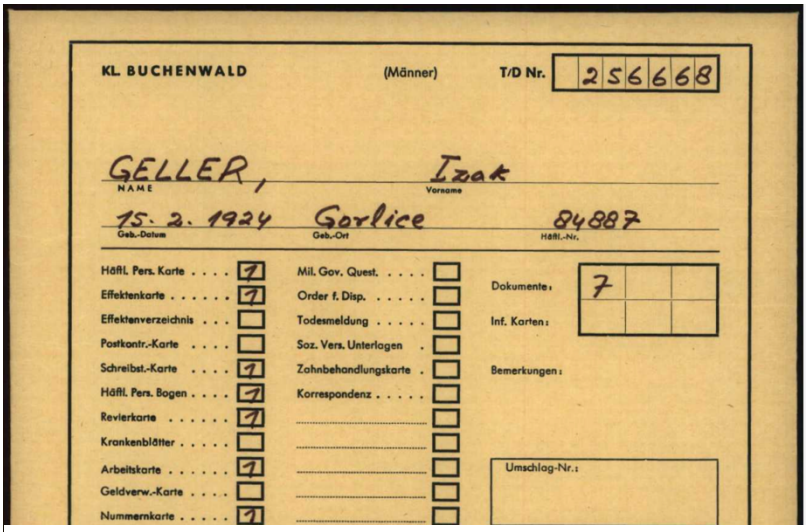
Yitzhak Geller, after WWII

My grandfather was around 15 when the war broke out, he would have been a freshman in high school. In September, 1939 when the Germans took over Poland, the Polish people were so surprised and unprepared to defend themselves, that there was little to no resistance.

Yitzhak Geller, after WWII

My grandfather recalls, "Right from the start there were problems, the Germans started to harass the Jews. They would grab them off the street and take them to work. There were new restrictions; Jews could not walk on the sidewalk (only in the gutter), Jews could not eat at restaurants or sit on a park bench, Jews could not own property, the Germans would throw them out and move in. At that time there was still no ghetto yet, the Jews were only allowed to

live in a certain area. Everyday Jews would be taken to work on the roads and gardens. I worked at the garden of the Gestapo (German secret police); Jews would also be used to clean the snow off the roads. Everyday the head of the Jewish community would have to deliver a certain number of Jewish workers to the Germans."


KL. BUCHENWALD (Männer) T/D Nr. 256668

GELLER, Izak
NAME Vorname

15. 2. 1924 Gorlice 84887
Geb.-Datum Geb.-Ort Häftl.-Nr.

Häftl. Pers. Karte	☑	Mil. Gov. Quest.	☐	Dokumente:	7
Effektenkarte	☑	Order f. Disp.	☐	Inf. Karten:	
Effektenverzeichnis	☐	Todesmeldung	☐		
Postkontr.-Karte	☐	Soz. Vers. Unterlagen	☐		
Schreibst.-Karte	☑	Zahnbehandlungskarte	☐	Bemerkungen:	
Häftl. Pers. Bogen	☑	Korrespondenz	☐		
Revierkarte	☑		☐		
Krankenblätter	☐		☐		
Arbeitskarte	☑		☐	Umschlag-Nr.:	
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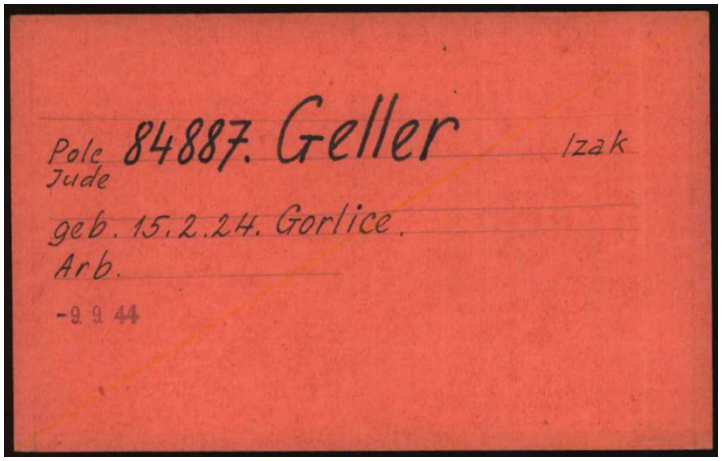
Izak Geller's Document, From the Arolsen Archives

He continues, "My father was old, the Nazis liked to harass the elderly. I worked for the both of us so he wouldn't be picked on." In 1942, the Jewish population in Gorlice was around 4,000 people. The Germans removed 3,000 Jews and sent them by train to Belzec. Belzec was an extermination camp. My grandfather says: "I am the sole survivor of my entire family in Gorlice, the rest were eventually sent to Belzec. The Germans did what was known as an "action". They separate the male adults from the women and children, and they sent away the young. I did not know I was being separated from my family, it was all very sudden. When we heard the Germans were coming my dad and I ran to the forest."

He continues, "When we returned (from the forest) my parents were taken to a factory, my dad joined my mom. The young people were allowed to stay in the ghetto. Shortly after, 400 of them were sent to a work camp called Plaszow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geb. 15.2.24. Gorlice.

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Izak Geller's Document, From the Arolsen Archives

(I was one of those 400). There, I worked for a company named Siemens, the same company that exists today. At Siemens, we built bridges and railroad tracks. I worked there for a year and a half and then was transferred to a different camp, it was a factory that made explosives and ammunition for the German army.

I worked very hard and I was not given any food, there were a lot of poisonous chemicals in the factory. Many people died because of the exposure to the poisonous chemicals. I was there for almost a year and from there I was sent to Buchenwald. I was in Buchenwald for only a month, there were a lot of people there. It was not a work camp. We were made to carry stones from one place to another but it was not for work, it was simply to humiliate us. When the Russians got closer, the Germans moved us to Germany. I returned to work with explosives and ammunition. In this factory we would make anti tank rockets, I think if the Germans wouldn't have had these rockets the war would have ended 6 months earlier. By the end of 1944 we were working day and night, no food, I weighed 30 kg (66 lb), at age 20."

"What was good is that from there we were sent to Theresienstadt. There was a ghetto there and there were nurses that treated us, took us to a hospital, where I recovered a little. A few were with me the entire journey, some people disappeared while some people joined (90 percent of the prisoners in

Theresienstadt did not survive). During the war when the Germans moved us from one camp to another they moved us in cattle cars, not in regular passenger trains (there were no seats or bathrooms and we would be in these trains for days with no stops). Some prisoners were moved from camp to camp by foot. Most of those prisoners died. Those who did not walk fast enough were shot. The Russians liberated Theresienstadt on May 8th, 1945 that was the official date of the end of the war, that was a historical date."

"At the end of the war I was not happy, then we were faced with new problems," my grandfather recalls.

Yitzhak Geller and two Israel Defense Force Soldiers

When my grandfather was released from Theresienstadt he rode on the roof of cargo trains back to Poland in hopes of finding his family. He found no one. In the meantime more Jewish survivors returned to Gorlice. When he returned to his hometown, he found out that a Polish family had moved in, they would not allow him to enter the house or to gather any remaining belongings. My grandfather left his hometown for the last time without any pictures, belongings of his life before the war and he was entirely alone. He only had his memories. My grandfather arrived in Israel in 1948 and immediately was drafted into the Israeli army. None of my grandfather's family survived the war.

My grandparents married on March 7th, 1955. They had three children, 2 boys and 1 girl who were named after their own parents who had died in concentration camps. They settled in Israel where they still live today. Our grandfather, Yitzhak Geller died June 2019 at the age of 95. Our grandmother, Naomi Geller died March 2023 at the age of 91.

According to Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum "On the eve of the German occupation of Poland in 1939, **3.3 million Jews lived there**. At the end of the war, approximately **380,000 Polish Jews remained alive**, the rest having been murdered, mostly in the ghettos and the six death camps." Our grandparents were two of those 380,000 people; 11.5% of the initial Polish-Jewish population pre World War II.

Isaac (Izak) Geller Concentration Camp Documents from the Arolsen Archives

DOB: 2/15/1924

Prisoner #84887

https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/search/person/5936713?s=isak%20geller&t=0&p=0

Yaakov (Jakob) Meir Geller and Rachel (Hollander) Geller, and their children Sala Geller, Genia Geller, Markus Geller, and Izak Geller

- Jakob Geller
- Rachel Geller (Hollander)
- Sala Geller
- Genia Geller
- Markus Geller

Moshe Weber and Bela (Lemler) Weber, and their children Wrumek Weber, Hela Weber, Dina Weber, Arie Weber, Lea Weber, and Naomi Weber

- Yad Vashem Memorial Site