



Hanoch (Heiny) Ellert
His journey through the Holocaust



*Cover photo: Heiny Ellert – May 1945
Photo – Heiny's collection.*



Above: Heiny Ellert - Jan 2013

Heiny's Message

“The holocaust is still happening every day, all over the world, in places like Syria and Lebanon. There are still wars, mass killings and discrimination between mankind. People don't treat each other the way they should, and it's for this reason the 'holocaust' is still going on”

“The holocaust is a monumental part of history, so please do not forget what I am saying... I won't be here forever to tell the story, it is in your hands and the hands of your generation, and generations to come - to always remember.”



Living Historian Project Evening - Carmel School Year 10 2012
Sarah Lee, Michi, Harry, Toby, Heiny, Rebecca, Anne, Larry & Jonathan
Photos: Mrs Leith Flinkier

Michi (Michael) Ellert and Rebecca Brest were privileged to work with Heiny Ellert, under the guidance of Mrs Shirley Atlas, for their Year 10 Living Historian Project in 2012.

This book is an amalgamation of their project which consisted of a large map to describe and a power point presentation to explain Heiny's journey through the holocaust. Included is information from Heiny's own written story, recorded discussions with Rebecca & Michi, discussions with Zoe Brest and from other community group talks. Photographs included are from Heiny's own collection, the internet, friends who have travelled to Europe and those taken for the school by Leith Flinkier.



Introduction

Michi: We would like to take you back to a day in history when everything changed. It was the 22nd of June 1941 when the Germans marched into Neustadt, Lithuania. It was crazy. People were being arrested and one of them was Michael Ellert. He was sent to Heiderkrug to work in a park. Soldiers were being shot at and Heiny Ellert was sent to bury 4 German soldiers who had been shot by the Russian military. The worst part was that people whom they knew, had become a part of this terror, the German Commandant was the baker that they had known for 15 years. Heiny came back from burying the soldiers and saw a horrendous sight; there were his fellow Jews being forced to burn Siddurim and SifraTorahs.

This is not just any story that we decided to tell you about. This is the story of Hanoch Ellert..... My Zeida.

Rebecca: Heiny has freely shared with us his story, and has been available for any additional questions, in order to try and give us some insight. For example: when trying to figure out which of the 4 Neustadts around Lithuania was actually his home town, or deciphering where each of the places he spoke about actually were. It all became especially difficult as names were constantly changing and even the borders of each country were moving during World War II.

It is impossible for us to sum up Heiny's life story, in one speech, presentation or book, but we feel that it is important to try.

In our presentation we have mapped Heiny's journey with 3 different colours. (Yellow for before the war, Red for during and Blue for after the war) We also outlined his travels in a timeline formation, adhering to the same colour combination. In addition we have a power point presentation that not only states his historical journey but also includes the emotional aspect and attempts to include some of the many personal stories Heiny has vivid memories of; the sickening smell of burning flesh that lingered on the air as he walked through the gates of Birkenau, the fluorine outgassing that went on into the early hours of the morning and his will to survive when all seemed lost.

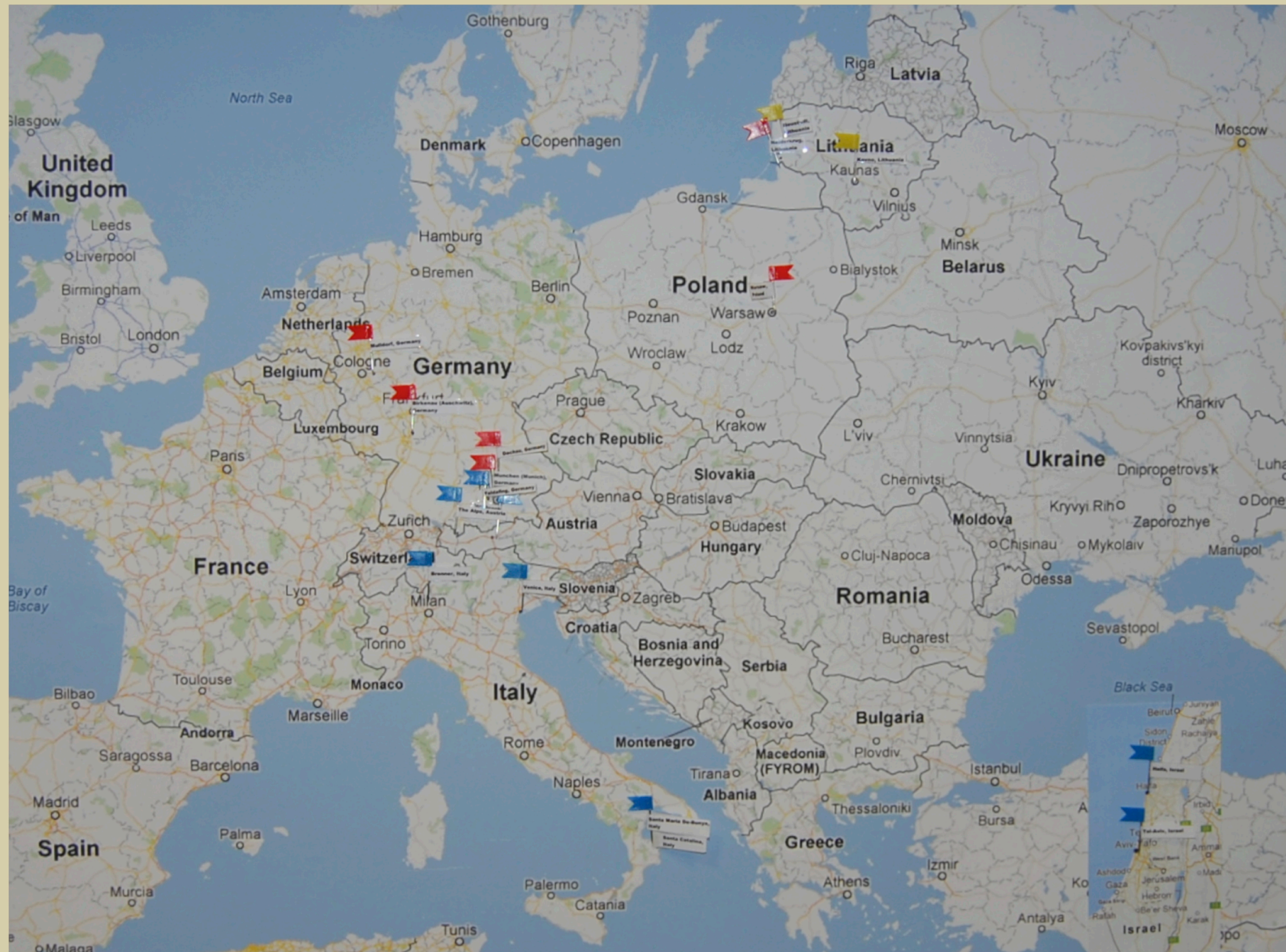
Michi: After our interview we asked Heiny if he had a message that he wanted people to take away from his story. He responded, in reference to the holocaust, by saying:

"The holocaust is still happening every day, all over the world, in places like Syria and Lebanon. There are still wars, mass killings and discrimination between mankind. People don't treat each other the way they should, and it's for this reason the 'holocaust' is still going on"

Rebecca: After our interview, Heiny said something to me that will be forever planted firmly in my memory. He told me that:
*"The holocaust is a monumental part of history, and to please not forget what he was saying... he told me that he wouldn't be here forever to tell the story, and that it was both in my hands and the hands of our generation, and generations to come to **always** remember."*

Thank you Heiny and thank you Toby for allowing us to do our bit in remembering history.

Heiny's Journey



Key

Yellow = pre WWII, Red = During the war, Blue = After WWII

(This map shows current borders and names and Israel was inserted onto the map in the right hand corner)

Pre 1941

Neustadt → Heidekrug → Neustadt → Kovno

Heiny Ellert was born 12.9.1922 in Neustadt, Lithuania. A small town near the Memel gebied (district).

Neustadt is also known as; Naishtut Tavrig, Naumiestis Taurage and Neustadt Taurogen.

He was three or four years old when his family moved to Heidekrug, which was in the Memel gebied within Lithuania at that time.

There the Ellert family opened up a kosher butchery / polony factory. They sold many kosher polonies into Germany (a lot of which were subsequently sold to German Jews on the black market.) This presented a problem with the money they received as it was mostly Deutsche Marks and the locals didn't want to accept this currency.

He attended a German primary school as it was the only school available. At that point there were only 30 Jewish families in Heidekrug and only 10 Jewish children. The Jewish youth formed a small 'Bar Kochbar' organisation. By default Heiny socialised with German children.

Heiny's Bar Mitzvah was held in Heidekrug and Heiny had a very 'normal' childhood.

Once it was established, he attended a Lithuanian High School but this was already 10 years into his education.

When the borders changed in 1938 Memel gebied, including Heidekrug, was given back to Germany. All of the thirty Jewish families left town, moving further into Lithuania. Of these families, only Heiny and his family moved back to Neustadt where the family then re-opened their butchery.



Below: Map showing the Sudetenland, the new protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia, and how Poland was divided after its invasion.

<http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/MAPS/map005.htm>





Circa 1920

Deena Shein (friend), Pesia (Heiny's mother), Henna (Michael's sister), Michael (Heiny's father)



Michael and his Military Batman in Russian army uniform



Lena (Heiny's older sister)
& Heiny

Michael Ellert married Pesia Itzikovitz. Their children were; Lena (3.3.1921), Heiny (Hanoch) (12.9.1922) and Hirschel (1927 - 1941)

Originally part of Germany, the Memel gebied was occupied by France during WWI and was given to Lithuania by The French.

Neustadt was also part of Germany before WWI and so there were still large numbers of Germans living there at this time.

World War II started with the German invasion of Poland 1.9.1939.



1939-1941 ORT in Kovno

In 1939 Heiny left for Kovno to study at ORT
ORT = World wide trade centre (similar to TAFE) that teaches Jewish students a trade.

Yiddish was the National language of Kovno, which he didn't speak, so along with his studies to become an electrician, Heiny had to learn Yiddish.

Heiny spent 2 years at ORT and was still studying in June 1941 when he went back to Neustadt on holiday. At this time the Russians were occupying Lithuania.

Heiny's time at ORT saved his life. He had already had a lot of experience in electrical installations due to the amount of work going on around Kovno during his training. He had learnt enough of his trade that the Germans found him useful, allowing Heiny to work for them instead of being sent to the mass graves or gassed in a death camp.

ORT is an acronym for the Russian words:
Obshestvo Remeslenovo zemledelcheskofo Truda
meaning;
'The Society for Trades and Agricultural Labour.'
This acronym has stuck through 130 years of education and training.
From it's beginning in Russia to now a global organisation - hence now World ORT.

ORT still carries the motto "Educating for Life"

Historical highlights in the history of ORT from inception to 2000

1880 - A small group of prominent Russian Jews petition Tzar Alexander II for permission to start a fund to help lift Russia's five million Jews out of crushing poverty. ORT, Obschestvo Remeslenovo i zemledelcheskovo Trouda (the Society for Trades and Agricultural Labour) is founded.

1881 to 1906 - ORT raises over a million rubles and provides manual training to 25,000 Jews in 350 towns of the Russian Empire.

1914 to 1918 - During World War I, ORTs cooperative workshops, soup kitchens and credit offices save thousands from starvation. Further ORT sets up a Relief-through-Work project to find employment for displaced Jews.

1921 - World ORT Union is established by ORT leaders at a conference in Berlin.

1922 - The American ORT Society, forerunner of American ORT, is established.

1927 - Women's American ORT is established.

1930s - World ORT starts its operations in Latin America.

1938 - Stalins purges end ORT operations in the Soviet Union.

1940 - ORT conducts vocational training courses in the Kovno Ghetto until 1942.

1945 - ORT begins work in the post-war DP (displaced persons) camps.

1947 - World ORT representation established in Israel.

1949 - ORT Israel is established.

1949 - The Iron Curtain forces the closing of ORT programmes in Eastern Europe.

1947-1950 - ORT begins operations in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Iran.

1959 - The Syngalowski Centre is created in Tel Aviv the first modern vocational education institution in Israel.

1960 - ORT International Cooperation activities commence.

1960s - ORT Israel and ORT France meet increasing demands for training from the influx of Jews from North Africa and Eastern Europe.

1970s - Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay become major centres of operation for ORT in Latin America.

1976 - Opening of the ORT School of Engineering on the campus of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

1980 - ORT celebrates its 100th anniversary.

1985 - ORT Israel absorbs the first large wave of olim from Ethiopia.

1989 - Opening of the ORT Braude International Institute of Technology in Karmiel, Israel.

1990 - ORT returns to Russia after a 52-year absence with the signing of an agreement with the Academy of Sciences and Ministry of Education.

1995 - ORT schools open in Moscow and St Petersburg.

1996 - ORT enters the Internet Superhighway, linking its centres around the world through ORTnet.

1999 - Agreements are signed with the Russian Government and local education authorities leading to a sixfold increase in ORT student numbers in the Former Soviet Union.

2000 - ORT celebrates its 120th Anniversary.

Source: <http://www.ort.org/news-and-reports/world-ort-news/article/milestones-in-the-history-of-ort/>

22nd June - July 1941

Returned to Neustadt on holiday

Heiny had returned to Neustadt for his summer holidays and to spend time with his family.

On the 22nd of June 1941, at 5 am, the Germans marched into Neustadt.

Heiny's father, Michael, was arrested that day and sent to Heidekrug to work.

At 18 years old, Heiny was taken by the Germans to bury four of their soldiers who had been fatally wounded by the Russians. On returning Heiny witnessed fellow Jews being forced to burn Sedorim and Sifrei Torahs - in the school yard.

Heiny couldn't understand what was happening, and how suddenly people who were once considered friends were now the enemy. To make matters worse, the German Commandant barking orders was Mr. Shade, the local baker the Ellert's had been buying bread and doing business with for over 15 years.

After two weeks of turmoil, the Jews of Neustadt were forced into a ghetto.

Heiny, his mother and brother had no clothes or blankets when they were being moved. Pesia (Heiny's mother) asked the commandant, whom they knew very well, if she could return to their home for these essentials. Because of their close relationship he agreed. Mr Shade also told the family that their Dad, Michael, was working in Heidekrug and was okay.

The family was squashed into one small room in the ghetto.

*Some of the Laws enforced in the ghetto:
No Jews shall be allowed to walk on the side walk.
They must walk only in the street or the gutter.
All Jews MUST wear a yellow star for identification purposes.*

Jews living in the ghetto had their rights and liberties removed.

Heiny felt that all Jews were treated as animals and no longer human beings, they had no dignity.

1941 (Selection Process)

"19th July 1941 - all men over 12 years old were to assemble in the Neustadt Shule yard. As a favour Pesia asked the commandant (Mr Shade) if she could keep Heiny's 14 year old younger brother, Hirschel, with her. Permission was granted.

All other men (including Heiny) were marched off to the stables of the Russian Garrison. An SS man asked who had trades and who did not. Those with trades (27 men) were selected for work. Heiny was 18 years old.

As it was very hot and as he was in shorts and sandals, Heiny requested to go and collect other clothes and shoes before being taken to work in Heidekrug.

As he collected his clothes he said goodbye to his mother and brother, and told them he hoped to see his father and work with him. Unfortunately, Michael was traveling back to Neustadt on a tractor while Heiny was collecting his clothes and saying goodbye, so

Heiny missed seeing his father.

All the women, children, unskilled and elderly men remained after the selection process and were shortly after shot dead into mass graves. The officer giving the overall orders was Dr Shoy. (SS Reich Sturmabteilung Führer Dr Shoy.)

It is believed that Michael was killed along with the other victims that same day. Only the 27 skilled tradesmen survived from the town. Of these only 6 of the 27 survived the war.

Heiny never saw his father, mother or brother again.

Working in the Heidekrug District

Upon arrival in Heidekrug Heiny was put into barracks along with other 'selected' Jews.

Their work allocation was to dig storm water canals through the district.

There was roll call twice a day. Monas Kagan, one of the prisoners and also a Lieutenant in the Lithuanian army, was given the task of counting and reporting back on roll call.

It was just before Rosh Hashanah, not long after they had arrived in Heidekrug, that Heiny found out that all the Neustadt Jews had been executed.

Heiny could not believe that someone could order such a thing.

They were given very little food or water, and they were always hungry. One day a Christian German lady gave Heiny a sandwich. Despite contravening all the kashrut laws it tasted delicious.

Initially they were given a young SA guard, who didn't treat them too badly. However when the guard was sent to the frontline Heiny and the Jewish labourers were allocated a wounded, elderly, SS man who was very cruel

There were daily bed inspections, and if they did not reach a specific standard, they were whipped.

Heiny's bed was once not up to army standard so he was whipped. As the SS man went to whip him, the leather cane struck something hard. Opening the back pocket of Heiny's trousers his ORT book was found. The book, which has Heiny's picture on the front, contained identification pictures and newspaper clippings of the German front line (deep in Russia at the time) which Heiny had collected, while trying to follow what little news he could.

The guard was outraged, grew red in the face and screamed at Heiny "You are a spy!"

Heiny was then pushed over a bench and whipped repeatedly until the guard had enough.

For weeks Heiny could not sit or sleep on his backside.

SA guards were generally not too bad, they wore yellow uniforms and were mostly older people.

SS guards were the bad ones - they wore black uniforms and were there to kill.

The winter with Dr. Shoy

SS Reich Sturmabteilung Führer Dr Shoy (the officer in charge of the execution order for the people of Neustadt) was the person at whom Heiny directed his anger and need for revenge.

As winter approached they were relocated to different places. Heiny (along with other labourers) was moved into Heidekrug town to work in Dr. Shoy's brickyard.

Within the group was a father and his 2 sons. The SA guard monitoring them would often get drunk and issue orders for his own entertainment. One such order was to force them to crawl on their stomachs through water and in the mud. On one occasion the youngest son avoided the water, and was shot dead on the spot.

Another tragedy Heiny witnessed, while working for Dr. Shoy, was Reuven (a dumb fellow labourer) who went to ask for bread, simply just to ask. However he didn't make it past the gate before he was caught. Reuven

was hung the next day in front of everyone. It was cold and they were all very hungry that winter.

A horse died on Dr Shoy's estate and was buried. The starving labourers asked to dig it back up, to cook and eat.

They were allowed to and they ate it. This was their first taste of horse meat. It was hot and tasty and the first meat they had eaten since being taken prisoner.

Wiring the dairy in Heidekrug

A Dairy was being built in Heidekrug and they needed electricians for the electrical installation of the lights and motors on the mechanical cheese churns.

The German contractor was an older man and knew Heiny as well as Michael. This contractor had told Michael not to return home that fateful day in 1941. However all Michael wanted was to return to his family, and so he hadn't heeded the contractor's advice and had begged Dr Shoy to let him go home that fateful day.

There was another electrician at the dairy, Itzke Mureinik, to whom Heiny grew very close. The two of them usually worked in the ceiling doing the electrical wiring.

One day they stole a 10kg round of cheese, sliced it in half and stashed it in their tool boxes, they then ate from it every day.

There was a Belgian prisoner of war, a welder, working alongside Heiny and Itzke who was receiving Red Cross parcels. Parcels were allowed to be distributed to the prisoners of war, they mainly came from America and England.

One day the Belgian man was seen with ½ a litre of cream. He was accused of stealing and was hanged the next day.

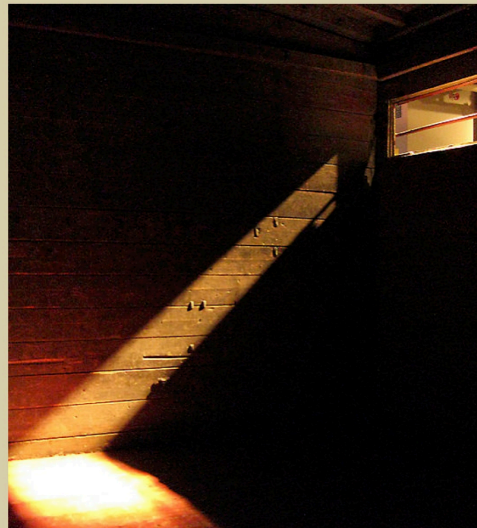
This only amplified the risks they were taking everyday, the Germans could get away with anything.

The cattle trucks to Auschwitz

After 2 years in Heidekrug, in July 1943, they were marched to a railway station and herded into cattle trucks.

There was standing room only - their destination Birkenau.

The journey took 10 days with no food and it was very hot. They got water only once but it was spilt because people were fighting each other over it. Heiny never had a drop. Most people started to drink their own urine, they were so thirsty.



Auschwitz - Birkenau complex in Wartime

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Holocaust/auent.html>

A = Auschwitz 1

B = Birkenau or Auschwitz 2

Picture left: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:US_Holocaust_Memorial_Museum_-_Boxcar.jpg

Picture far left: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Brendonko71.jpg>

Birkenau (Auschwitz II)

On arrival at Birkenau the doors were opened and, before they could acclimatise to being released from the truck, they were told to start running, after which there was a selection process. The SS men directed many into a big closed van marked Red Cross, the rest including Heiny had to stand to one side. Then they were marched in to the camp and on the opening was written “Arbeit Macht Frei” (Work makes you free). Heiny saw the smoke and smelt the sickening smell of burning flesh.

Heiny was tattooed with the number 132703 on the outside of his forearm and then later re-tattooed with larger numbers on the inside of his forearm. Dr Joseph Mengele declared the first tattoo not visible enough on Heiny's sunburnt skin, and ordered the second tattoo. It was very hot in Birkenau and when it rained people drank the water from the ground. People drinking water like this invariably contracted malaria. This happened to Itzke Mureinik, Heiny's fellow electrician from the dairy. Itzke came to say goodbye to Heiny before being taken to the ovens.





Photos were taken by people travelling to Birkenau - the bunk on the left is Heiny's actual bunk in Block 16a
Photos from Bronia Sharp and Henry Sommer. View of passage between stalls - Yad Vashem Photo Archive

It was hot and conditions were poor in Birkenau.

Heiny and his friend Phil, a tailor, had wounds on their lower legs. They used to put green leaves on the sores to try and keep the dirt out of the wounds. One day an SS man came to select people for extermination, Heiny took his leaves off and begged Phil to do the same so as not to draw attention to the wounds. Phil refused, he had given up and said to Heiny;

“ I don’t care anymore, we will never get out of here”
The SS man picked out Phil and ordered; “You with the green leaves, come out!”

By now they were skeletal. Big eaters had died quickly. It was lucky Heiny had been a small eater.

The bigger eaters simply couldn’t cope on a starvation diet and usually lasted less than 6 months in these conditions. Their food rations: only ½ a litre of watery soup and a slice of bread each day, there was also very little water.

Some people were even committing suicide by hurling themselves onto the electric fences. Heiny had a strong will to live and he believed that he would survive.

Despite being surrounded by hunger, sickness, thirst and death, with no happiness or freedom - he believed he would survive.

Heiny wanted revenge on Dr. Shoy, the man actually responsible for killing the Neustadt Jews.

Ontlousing – lice checking

The Germans often inspected the prisoners for lice with which they were infested.

Winter was drawing nearer and it was already colder.

Ontlousing was a cold and degrading process.

Usually roused from their beds, they had to assemble outside, stand in rows in the cold and dark, strip off their clothes and present for lice checking.

Their clothes consisting of striped pyjamas (labelled with the same numbers as their tattoo) were thrown into a hole in the ground. The hole was filled with fluorine to kill the lice. A flood light was shone into the hole so the workers could identify the numbers on the pieces of clothing as they were pulled out.

It took hours to get their clothes back and when they did the clothes were still soaking wet.

They would dress in the soaking, cold clothes and go back to bed. The clothes were still wet in the morning.

Lice were a part of life. There was barely drinking water and hardly ever water to wash with.

Electrical Commando - Warsaw

In October 1943 Heiny was marched out of Birkenau to Warsaw.

People that couldn't march and fell down on the road were moved to the side and shot.

They arrived in Warsaw and were tasked to clean up the destroyed ghetto following the Warsaw uprising.

Housed in barracks, Heiny worked in an electrical commando unit that had to dig up and disconnect electrical transformers and send them to Germany to help with the German war effort.

There was a typhus epidemic in the camp - Heiny became very ill and was hospitalised in a makeshift hospital. He has no idea how long he was there but when he finally returned people were shocked that he was alive, they thought him dead. Most people never made it through typhus.

Heiny started working again and in June 1944 he was sent to Dachau for a few days. There he was without food. In Dachau Heiny met Issy Lichtenstein a Lithuanian.



Photos of the destroyed Warsaw Ghetto after the uprising – Yad Vashem Photo Archive

Mülldorf

Heiny was moved to Mülldorf and had to carry iron bars and cement on a building site. Weak from his illness & starving Heiny told us: “I was at the end of my strength” Despite this Heiny carried on - there was no option.

In Mülldorf there were no SS men and no soldiers in the camp. One day, on returning to the barracks after work, the Lager Führer's second in command called Heiny and told him to put on an armband saying ‘Lager Reinigung’ meaning camp cleaning. He told Heiny “tomorrow you will stay in this place where we are now, and I will tell you where to go.” The man seemed very friendly. Heiny asked what he had to do and was told he just had to walk with the two camp cleaners and he didn't have to do anything unless he was called to do so. The second in command took Heiny to the Lager Führer and showed him the armband on Heiny. The Lager Führer said “I see you have marked your birds, is he also a Kapo?” Heiny missed the answer but the second in command grew red in the face.

There were two Hungarians cleaning the camp. It didn't take long, usually about 10 minutes, with Heiny walking between the two men as they cleaned. One of them only spoke Hungarian resulting in very little communication between the three of them.

After the camp was cleaned, they were free for the rest of the day. There were no more long walks to work and no more hard labour. Heiny was ‘happy’ not to be exhausted, he felt like he had a reprieve. It was almost a holiday compared to what he had been through. He spent a lot of time on his own.

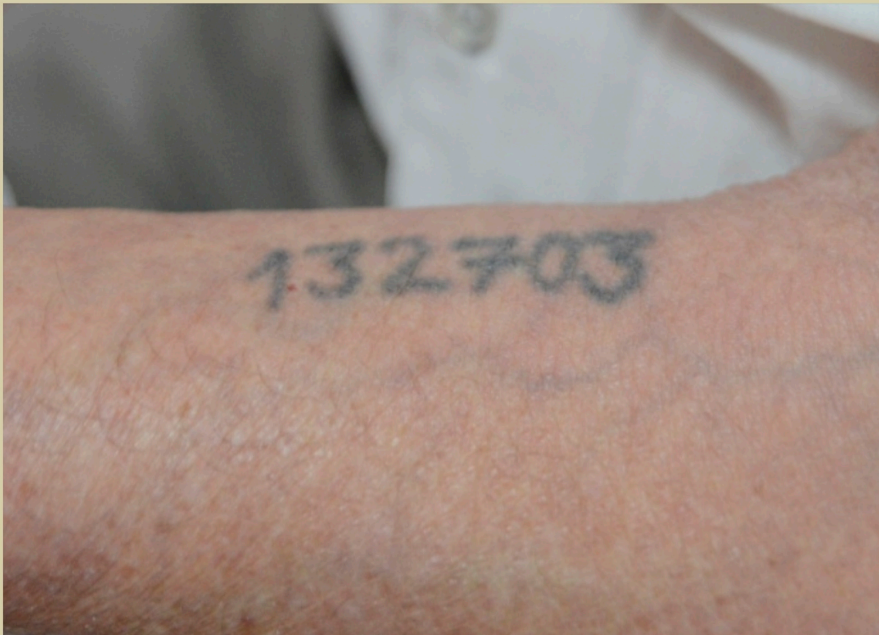
They were only called 3 times for “Lager Reinigung” – real labour. The first time they had to unload cement trucks by floodlight. The second time was peeling potatoes in the kitchen and the third time they had to mix cement.

These infrequent episodes were not without incident – usually due to the Hungarians. Vidjorgo talked all the time and the other Hungarian stayed silent. Vidjorgo nagged Heiny into asking the kitchen Kapo how long they would have to peel potatoes for, and when Heiny enquired, he was hit in the face. While mixing the cement they were told to throw the cement further and the Hungarians didn't react. To protect them Heiny didn't either, but was closest to the supervising German and was again hit in the face.

Despite this Heiny was relatively happy in Mülldorf. No SS men, no soldiers and an easy load. Occasionally he heard planes flying overhead. As blackout was enforced, he knew that the war would soon be over as it must be bombers from Germany's enemies.

One day new people arrived, men from Shavel including Heiny's cousin Herman Ellert. Herman introduced Jecheskel Galperin as Heiny's brother in law. Unaware of his sister Lena's marriage, Heiny insisted he had no brother in law. Heiny was dumbstruck as it was the first he learned his sister was married. Sadly, on leaving the Shavel ghetto, Lena had been sent to another camp separated from her husband.

Briefly Heiny had been with family but, 5 days later, the men from Shavel were sent away to another camp - the Wald Lager.



Cattle Trucks again

One day they were marched out of the Mülldorf camp and again herded into cattle trucks.

The journey was to München (Munich)

The War Ends

On arrival in München, the doors of the Cattle trucks were opened by the German guards.

The Germans told the prisoners the war was over and then they disappeared.

People were bewildered and displaced but FREE. They were shocked and didn't know what to do or where to go.

By this time Heiny was skeletal but he had made it through to the end of the War.

His remarkable journey didn't end there.

The Feldafing UNRA camp

After some time with no direction, the Americans arrived and Heiny and the others were sent to Feldafing an UNRA displaced persons camp.

This was the first camp set up. Feldafing was originally a Hitler youth camp. Established as a Displaced Persons camp it included schools, religious instruction and an ORT.

This was the first time in four years that Heiny had enough to eat.

One day an American soldier came up to Heiny and his friend. He gave them each a rifle and ammunition and told them to guard a store room full of clothes and shoes.

They guarded the store room for a few months and then one day a truck from the Jewish Brigade came through, they were asked if they wanted to go to Israel.

Heiny only stopped to gather his meagre possessions and jumped at the chance.



Feldafing - Map

Following World War II, several hundred thousand Jewish survivors remained in camps for displaced persons. The Allies established such camps in Allied-occupied Germany, Austria, and Italy for refugees waiting to leave Europe. Most Jewish DPs preferred to emigrate to Palestine but many also sought entry to the United States. They decided to remain in the DP camps until they could leave Europe. At the end of 1946 the number of Jewish DPs was estimated at 250 000 of whom 185 000 were in Germany, 45 000 in Austria and 20 000 in Italy. Most of the Jewish DPs were from Poland.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum

Santa Maria de Bunya

Heiny left Feldafing with The Jewish Brigade. They traveled in trucks from Feldafing through Austria, over the alps.

They arrived at another UNRA camp in Santa Maria De Bunya on the coast.

Heiny was unable to speak Italian but he felt good as he was free. He stayed in converted Italian holiday apartments, unfurnished so they slept on the floor. They were alive, young, no longer hungry. Often they swam 2km to a nearby town to see films

One day he got a toothache but the dentists were in Santa Crochi - 10 km away. He mimed his problem as the dentist didn't speak English so he couldn't tell him what was wrong. In a general ward, on a bare table, with no anaesthetic, one man held Heiny's head and another held his feet while the dentist pulled out the tooth.

Heiny ran all the way home because he was in so much pain.



Top Right: David Marcunski (Toby's cousin) & Heiny aged 22 years
Photos – Heiny Ellert's Collection 15 May 1945



More photos taken in Santa Maria de Bunya



Going back to Germany

One day new people arrived from Germany and told Heiny that his sister, Lena, was still alive and she was in Feldafing.

Even though he was more than half way to Palestine (only called Israel from 1948), Heiny was desperate to return to Germany and see his sister.

Two other people also wanted to go back, so the three of them walked all the way to the closest train station.

The trains were always full so they just held on. Hanging onto the side of the carriage, they got a free ride to the Austrian border which was a long way away.

They arrived at Brenner and found an Italian guide. He told them that if they were caught, they had to say that they were coming from Germany or they would be repatriated to Italy.

They hiked through the Alps in winter and through snow, for most of the journey they were sliding on their bottoms. After a while they started to get worried as to where they were and they found out that they were going in a circle.

An Austrian ski patrol found them and they said that they were coming from Germany. The patrol duly dispatched them “back” to where they said they had come from – Germany.

Arriving in Feldafing Heiny was reunited with all of the Ellert family that had survived the war: Lena & Jecheskel, Herman, Moshe, David, Eda, Israel, Judith and Masha. They had all been in Shavel when war broke out.

Work in Munich and Feldafing

Heiny got a job at the UNRA food magazine.

After working there for a while he got a different job at an electrical firm in München called Siemen Shukert (Siemens).

He went to München every day by train. He worked hard, providing for his family (Lena, Jecheskel, and others) with money and food cards. Heiny worked for a German firm because he needed to provide for himself and his family -it was a means to an end. The Germans were good to him, he wasn't being persecuted and they were genuinely sorry when he resigned nine months later.

One day he was told they needed him in the Feldafing Camp - he was offered the position of Camp Engineer working for UNRA. He was responsible for: the electrical supply, the generators, the coal supply, the plumbing, painting, general maintenance and the roofs. Heiny dealt with a lot of German firms and he signed all the payments and contracts. He often had to go to UNRA head quarters in München.

A senior German foreman wanted a new car, so one of Heiny's work partners told him that Heiny wanted the old car. It was given to Heiny as a present. Learning to drive in Feldafing, he obtained his license in München.

Driving around in his car (a small VW), as the Camp Engineer did incite some jealousy and there were sometimes calls of 'Here goes the Boss of the camp'.

The family stayed in Feldafing, in a house, in Villa Waldbertha. Jecheskel and Lena were in one room and Heiny was in another. It was here that Jecheskel and Lena's first child, Michael (Micki), was born.

One day members of Jecheskel's family arrived, they too had survived. His mother Soreh Male, his sister Nesse and her husband Jankel. Heiny collected them all from the station in his car.

There was a long period of time when people who were thought dead were still being found alive.

Moving to Israel

In 1949 Heiny decided to move to Israel. The rest of his family was established and he wanted to move forward.

He sold his car and bought a motorbike. (He rode this round the camp until he was ready to leave).

He carefully had the motorbike crated but when he tried to ship it to Israel it was one of 100 stolen bikes. Heiny was very annoyed when it was confiscated.

He went by train to Venice from Feldafing, then sailed from Venice to Haifa. Arriving in Haifa he was placed into yet another camp (Maabara).

After a few days Heiny climbed over the fence and took a bus to Tel-Aviv. He had had enough of camps.

Heiny stayed in a room Rehov Hashmal with some of Jecheskel's friends. He contacted cousins who introduced him to an electrical contractor Asher Feuchtwanger for whom he worked until 1954.

While working on an over head installation near Natanya, he went to see his friend from Mülldorf days; David Marcunski.

David introduced him to a cousin of his from South Africa... Toby Mann the lady who was to be Heiny's wife and life long partner.



Toby Mann

Toby Pauline (Pesia) was one of three daughters born to Yosef Moshe Mann (1900 - 1974) and Sore Leija Mann (1903 - 1974).

Yosef and Sore Leija's daughters; Rochel Mann (1927 - 1996), Toby Mann (1930) and Janie Mann (1940 - 1988).

Toby's grandparents were; Yosel Hirschel Mann (unknown - 1941) and Rochel Legum (unknown - 1919).

The Mann family lived in a small town called Zeimelis, in Lithuania, close to the Latvian border. Both Rochel and Toby were born there.

The family left Lithuania in May 1937, sailed to Cape Town and then went by train up to Johannesburg. They moved a lot and Toby lived in; Bertrams, Doornfontein and Bez Valley (all suburbs of Johannesburg), before she travelled to Israel in 1953.

Toby was in Netanya, on an Ulpan program to learn Hebrew, when her cousin David Marcunski introduced her to Heiny Ellert.

They met in August 1953 and were engaged in September. Her parents heard the news by telegram, arriving just before Rosh Hashanah.

Heiny and Toby moved to South Africa, arriving there 31.3.1954. They were married after Shavuot on 27.6.1954.

Able to attend the wedding, standing to the right of Heiny, are Fanny and Barney Isaacs (Pesia's brother - Heiny's Uncle and Aunt) both wearing glasses. Also present, the flower girl in front of Heiny, is Barney's Granddaughter.



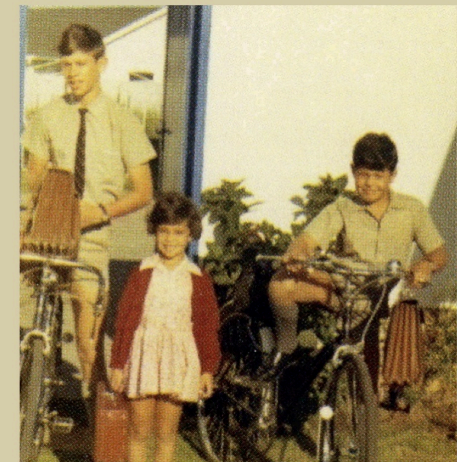
27.6.1954 Heiny Ellert marries Toby Mann in Kensington, Johannesburg, South Africa



Family Life

1954 - 1956 Heiny and Toby initially lived in Johannesburg. Eventually they moved to and settled in Witbank. They lived there until 1992. They ran a business which began as a General Dealer Store and evolved into an electrical business: Ellert's Electrical & TV.

In 1989 Heiny and Toby sold their business to their son Larry. In 1992 Larry sold the Witbank business, moved to Johannesburg and then opened his own Electrical Business. Heiny and Toby regularly commuted Witbank to Johannesburg to assist Larry. While in Johannesburg they would stay with Toby's sister Rochel. In 1996, when Rochel passed away, they moved into a flat in Sandringham, Johannesburg, called San Vito.



Top Left: The Mann daughters with their husbands, Bottom Left: Toby & Harry, Heiny & Larry in Witbank
Middle: Toby, Far Right: The Ellert children off to school, Bottom Right: Ellert's Electrical & TV.
Photos - Heiny's collection

Top: The Whole Ellert Family, in Perth, for Heiny's 80th Birthday 2002
 Below: Heiny with his Perth based Grandchildren at his 90th Birthday 2012



Heiny and Toby have three children: Harry (Harold Hirschel), Larry and a daughter Shana.

Harry (10.5.1955) married Deborah Rose Friedman (5.9.1958). They were married 14.2.1982 and have two daughters; Dana (20.12.1984) and Alyssa (26.2.1988). Harry moved to Perth 4.10.1986 and his wife followed a few weeks later 24.10.1986.

Larry (18.8.1959) married Anne Van der Merwe (31.3.1966) on 25.6.1989. They have four children; Sarah Lee (3.8.1990), Ariella (21.4.1994), Michi (Michael) (7.8.1997) and Jonathan (22.3.1999). Larry relocated his family to Perth 4.10.2000.

Shana (25.2.1964) married Duddi (David) Leibovich (29.4.1959). They were married 10.9.1989 and have two children; Meidan (15.9.1990) and Dana (20.7.1994). Shana moved to Israel 11.1.1986.

When all their children had left South Africa, and six of their eight grandchildren were living in Perth, Australia, Heiny and Toby moved to Perth 1.6.2006.

Heiny's sister Lena (3.3.1921) married Jecheskel Galperin (19.7.1921). They had two children; Michael (Micki) (Oct 1946) and Pliah.

During the war Heiny didn't understand how or why this could happen.
How or why G-d could let it happen.
He couldn't believe it and felt they didn't deserve it.

He survived fuelled by the anger of youth and the desire for revenge and motivated by his refusal to give up. His friends talked him out of physically seeking revenge and after the liberation he says that the need for revenge was no longer there. "It just left me"

Heiny can't forget the horrors he has been through, they are there all the time, nights are especially bad and he still gets nightmares. 'It hurts like toothache in the heart'

For years Heiny couldn't tell his story. He thought not talking would help him to obliterate the horrors but now he has been sharing his testimony and we were privileged to talk to him.

Initially following the war Heiny didn't want to go to shule, to go past a shule or even be Jewish.

He had no desire to return to his homeland.

However Heiny needed to honour his parents, family and community and went to shule to say kaddish for all of them and has returned to his faith.

While he doesn't want to return to his birthplace Heiny wishes he could say kaddish at the mass graves of his family in Neustadt.

Heiny's sister was the only other survivor of his immediate family. His mother, father and younger brother were all murdered by the Nazis.

Even little things still remind Heiny of the holocaust - it is not something he could forget. Slowly he is finding it slightly less hard to share bits of his story.

Heiny feels he needs to talk although it is still very difficult with repercussions of increased nightmares for days afterwards.

Only 6 people survived Neustadt and he is one of the few still alive.

Heiny has shared his story as he feels his story and his message should be passed on to future generations.

He is grateful for his children and his grandchildren and feels he is a lucky man.



Work in progress