

Michael BLAIN Biography

[Maylech BLOBSTEIN in Silt'se]



Budapest, Hungary (1944)



Cleveland, Ohio (2012)

Maylech Blobstein, better known today as Michael "Mike" Blain, is a Holocaust Survivor and a decorated Korean War Veteran.

Mike was born in Siltz, a small village in a region of Czechoslovakia (1918-39) that is now in the Ukraine.

Mike left home at age 14 and moved to Budapest where he was apprenticed as a ladies' handbag maker and designer. He was in Budapest when his family was deported to Auschwitz in 1944. Of 13 members in his immediate family only three survived.

Mike survived, he says, because he had a number of lucky breaks: he was not home in the village when his family was rounded up and sent to Auschwitz. In Budapest he was caught several times, and had several escapes. As the Soviet Army was getting closer to Budapest, he was marched to the German-Russian front where he was forced to dig trenches for the German Army. He was rescued and marched to Budapest by the Jewish underground. Rearrested, he was being marched toward Austria, but was turned back because on that day, December 24, 1944, the Russian Army completely encircled Budapest.

Liberated on January 15, 1945 Mike returned to his village now part of the Soviet Union. In February, 1946 he and four other friends attempted a daring escape into Czechoslovakia. Mike and a friend succeeded, the other three friends were captured and jailed.

In June, 1946, now free in Prague, he joined a group of 100 recently orphaned child Holocaust survivors, who were taken to London, as temporary residents, guests of the Jewish Community. Mike resumed his work as a leather craftsman by day, and his studies in the evenings.

In December 1949 he landed in New York, where he again resumed working and studying. The war in Korea broke out soon after. Mike was drafted in the US Army and sent to Korea. After Korea, Mike

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wanted a college education and enrolled at RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology) where he earned a BS degree.

At RIT he founded and was first President of RIT Hillel, edited the college newspaper, was active in several other campus organizations, and worked part time at the local JCC.

Mike moved to Cleveland in 1957 working for the World Publishing Co. Active in the community, he was president of B'nai B'rith (Gateway Lodge), vice president of the State Association, and Cleveland Interlodge Council of B'nai B'rith. He edited the Cleveland *Craftsman*, a prize winning technical monthly magazine.

Mike was transferred to Indianapolis in 1971 and soon after joined the Israel Bonds organization, retiring in 2007 after 33 years as Executive Director.

Mike is the recipient of many honors and awards, two from Israel, two highest awards from the Governor of Indiana, the Jewish Federation's outstanding Jewish Professional award, and several others.

Mike is married to the former Sylvia Kramer of Rochester, NY, they have three sons, 12 grandchildren, and 13 great grandchildren. The Blains moved back to Cleveland in 2010..

(Epilogue---Mike met another member of our Congregation, Joe Klein, in Prague in 1946, traveled together to London, arrived in New York on the same boat in 1949, met again as soldiers in Korea, and, of course, here in Cleveland.)