
Reviewed by Merle Carrus, Hollis, NH, USA

Author, Nathan Moskowitz has captured both his parents’ Holocaust experiences and recorded them in a book for posterity. This is significant in terms of historical narratives so the world not only does not forget the atrocities of World War II but also so we have as many of these stories to share with future generations as possible. As the generation who lived through the Holocaust leaves us, we need the first hand written accounts for our grandchildren and their future children to read and share. The documents of the survivors of the Shoah are a tribute to those who did not survivor. Books like this honor their memories.

Gizella, or Gitelle in Yiddish, Moskowitz and Lieb Moskowitz tell their stories of growing up in Kuzmino, Czechoslovakia. They describe the lives of their families and their town. Then they describe their childhoods interrupted by the intrusion of the war. Worked into each of their stories are the statistics and facts that have been gathered by Yad Vashem and other historians supplying the background information that put the personal experiences into historical perspective.

Lieb Moskowitz was born into a modest family living in Kuzmino, a small town. His father was a tailor. They also had their own animals, cows, egg laying chickens and geese. Their farming life revolved around the Jewish holidays. Starting at Purim, the family began to fatten up the goose and ferment beets. Then for Passover, the goose was eaten and the fat was rendered with enough *schmaltz* for Passover. The beets were made into borscht. There were fruit trees and a garden with vegetables and potatoes. There was a milk cow that gave them milk, butter and cheese. The family was self-sufficient. Lieb was born in 1928 and went to two schools in his childhood, both a *cheder* to learn Hebrew and prepare for his Bar Mitzvah and public school for general studies.
The first sign of unrest began when his father was conscripted into the Hungarian army, and taken away for forced labor. Lieb never saw him again. In April 1944, the Hungarian police transported everyone from the town to a ghetto. Their neighbors asked for their valuables, because they knew that there would be no return. They are marched to Munkatch, a town three miles away, and positioned in a brick factory. From there, everyone was split up and some were sent by cattle cars to Auschwitz.

Gitelle's life followed a similar path. Growing up in the same town, she was the second oldest of eight children. They had a garden with all kinds of fruit and nut trees. They also had a stable with cows, chickens, and geese. In addition, they had a vineyard and made their own wine. Her father earned a living buying and selling fields and property.

It is always amazing to me how the stroke of luck or timing is what saved one person and not another during the Shoah. Gitelle explained that when they got out of the cattle car at Auschwitz, they were directed to the right or to the left, to die or to live and work. Gitelle's mother and sister were each holding a younger child, they were sent one way and Gitelle and her sister Leah were sent to the other line, to work. Gitelle described in detail her memories of the time she spent in hard labor and moving from camp to camp till she was liberated in 1945. Then she recounted her traveling, trying to go home and then to England before coming to America.

Similarly, Lieb described his life in the concentration camps, his work details, and being moved from to camp to camp. He also tried to go back to Kuzmino, but realized that it could not be his home anymore. He shared his account of traveling to America.

In addition, this book includes all the travel documents, concentration camp arrival and transfer logs, liberation papers, and manifestos of inmates, which add historical credence. Along with the historical documentation from Mauthausen Museum and other places, the author provides documents from the International Tracing Services and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Even though seventy years have passed and Lieb and Gitelle Moskowitz had a life filled with children and grandchildren, both had never forgotten the experiences of the dark days of the Shoah. Moskowitz has presented his parents’ recollections in their own words.
and without edits. Reading this book is like listening to someone recalls his or her experience first hand. The reader can feel and hear the characters reminiscing in old world speech patterns and accents.