

Holocaust Survivor Biography: Miriam Krugman Caine

Miriam Krugman Caine was born in 1933 in Bialystok, a city in northeastern Poland near the border with the Soviet Union. Her father owned a textile factory and grain mill outside Bialystok and Miriam's life was rich and full of family and friends. Her life changed forever when she was 7 years old though, in 1939, when the German army invaded Poland.

Bialystok fell to the Germans on September 15th but was handed over to the Soviet Union as part of the Non-Aggression Pact previously signed between Germany and the Soviet Union. The Soviets then occupied the city and confiscated her father's factory and mill and turned their home into a Kindergarten because of the gardens and fruit trees on the land.

One day in July 1941, after being given fifteen minutes to pack their belongings, her family was put onto army trucks and taken to the local train station. They were packed into cattle train cars, 80-100 people in each train car, and spent two weeks traveling often without food or water. They ended up in labor camps in the Soviet Union. Unable to speak Russian, it was very difficult for Miriam, 9 years old at that time, to get food or water. She was always hungry and freezing cold because the winter in Siberia begins in mid-September and ends in mid-May. In the summer time the swamps were so nasty that they used fishnets dipped in tar to keep the mosquitoes out of their small hut where they lived.

When the war and the Holocaust was over, Miriam was 12 years old. The family made their way to the western part of Germany where they were placed in a Displaced Persons camp. Miriam was finally able to attend school again and learn Hebrew. She was then intending on going to Israel on a full paid school scholarship but instead the family moved to Philadelphia in 1949.

Miriam was married to another Holocaust survivor, Allen, for 58 years. His number on his left arm, tattooed on him in Auschwitz, was 73590. Miriam now has two children, a son and a daughter, and two granddaughters and feels blessed to be living in the United States.

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Witness to History Project:

The Witness To History Project is designed to further the message and lessons of the Holocaust by direct interaction between students or interested adults and Holocaust survivors. Participants "adopt" a survivor by learning his or her unique account of via listening to the survivor tell his/her story, asking questions, writing a biography, reviewing a videotape, and memorizing and re-telling the story to others. Ultimately, the participant will have the lifelong job of educating others about the Holocaust by sharing this personal narrative. Contact the Holocaust Awareness Museum to participate.

Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center

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