

Holocaust Survivor Biography: Michael Fryd



Michael Fryd was born in 1936 in Wolomin, a small town in Poland near Warsaw. Nazi expansionism was starting, and it was a difficult time for Polish Jews. In Wolomin, Jewish families faced vandalism and attacks that sometimes rose to the level of “mini pogroms.”

When the Nazis occupied Poland, Micheal’s family was forced to move to a Jewish ghetto. Micheal’s father, Saul Fryd, was a shopkeeper by trade. In the ghetto, he was unable to rebuild his business. All that people bought was food, and he had no access to other goods even if people wanted to buy them. It was through the persistence and ingenuity of Micheal’s mother, Evelyn, that the family survived.

In the ghetto, Evelyn was able to provide for the family by smuggling. She was the only woman allowed out of the ghetto to buy rations. These rations were not nearly enough to feed everyone, so Evelyn illegally bought from Polish farmers and smuggled the goods in to provide for her family. On these escapades, she barely escaped capture by the Germans on multiple occasions. While doing all this, Evelyn spoke to those she met outside to secure a hiding spot for her family in case they had to escape. When Micheal’s family escaped the night before the ghetto was liquidated, they had a place to go.

Michael and his family escaped to the cellar of a family that Evelyn had met on her smuggling expedition. They hid in the cellar for three years until they were forced to leave when Germans cracked down on the village in early spring of 1944. Evelyn saved the family again by

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finding them a place to stay on an old couple's farm. They earned their keep through farm work, with Evelyn taking on the most burden. They had to hide their identities from neighbors and even other house guests, but they were safe. They stayed on that farm until the end of the war before moving back to Wolomin to rebuild their lives. They were the only Jewish family to return to Wolomin, and Michael continued to face antisemitism from his peers as long as he stayed there.

Under threat of racial violence from the local Polish underground, Michael's family left Wolomin and briefly stayed in Warsaw before arriving in West Germany. During this time, Michael stayed in a Jewish orphanage, as it was the only place he could receive an education without suffering antisemitic beatings from his peers.

Once in Germany, Michael's family stayed in a displaced persons camp in Prague until they received a visa to go to France.

After living in a Parisian tenement for some years, Michael's family acquired a visa to move to New York City, where they stayed.

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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.

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This educational program has been supported by a grant from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.