

Ernest Sterzer's Memoirs

To the best of my knowledge, I am the only diabetic who survived years of imprisonment in German concentration camps. This is my story

I, Ernest Sterzer, was born in Vienna, Austria, on April 28, 1925 as the second of three children. My sister Gerda is two years older and my brother Fred is five years younger than I. My father, Dr. Karl Sterzer, was of Vienna's best known lawyers and my mother, Rosa, was a housewife. At the age of three doctors found that I had diabetes.

Diabetes is a condition in which a person's pancreas does not produce enough insulin to turn foods like sugars and starches into energy. These carbohydrates increase the blood sugar so that the sugar passes into the urine. To supplement a diabetic's lack of insulin, it is taken from the pancreas of pigs and cattle and given to humans through injections. A bad case of diabetes needs more insulin to keep in good control than the light one. Hard work decreases the diabetic's need for insulin and sickness and tension is a fact to be considered when adjusting a diabetic to his amount to be injected daily. An insulin shock occurs when a person takes too much insulin, doesn't eat enough or strains himself physically more than usual. This is recognized by shaking, perspiring, faintness, etc., and is many times followed by unconsciousness. To combat a shock, the first thing to do is to take sugar orally. If it has advanced too far, a doctor has to inject glucose intravenously. The opposite of an insulin shock is a coma which occurs when a diabetic does not get enough insulin. It is recognized by tremendous thirst, hard breathing, tiredness, odour of acetone on the breath, and can be followed by death.

I have taken insulin since I was three years old, and cannot live without my daily shots for more than about four to five days. Except for those insulin shots and my strict diet, my childhood was as normal as the average Viennese boy. I received good marks in school and participated in all kinds of sports such as swimming, basketball, soccer and track.

Hitler came to Vienna on the 13th day of March, 1938. Between then and the time my family and I were sent to concentration camps, I had gotten a little taste already of what was going to happen in the camps. Because all Jews had to wear a yellow star with the word "Jew" written on it, we were easily identified and I, myself, had my arm broken twice and my thumb broken once by members of the Hitler Youth. By 1940, even German diabetics could get only half the insulin prescribed by doctors, and this, of course, meant that the future didn't look too bright for any person with diabetes.

On September 26, 1942 at 2:00 a.m., two SS-men came to our apartment and told us to be ready for relocation within three hours. At 5:00 a.m., a truck pulled up in front of our building and brought us to a stop-over camp in Vienna where we waited for further transportation to Theresienstadt. On the day we left Vienna, I overheard my mother saying to my father (of course, this was not meant for me to hear) how awful it was that I would have to die at the young age of seventeen because they were sure it would be impossible to get insulin in a place like Theresienstadt.

Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia, where we arrived on October 1, 1942 was a former fort about one square mile in area. It was surrounded by walls about thirty feet high and the compound consisted of eight tremendous army post buildings and many smaller two and three storey houses. About ninety percent of the 60,000 people who were interned in Theresienstadt when we got there, were over sixty-five years of age.

Despite the large population, Theresienstadt at that time looked like a ghost town. There was no electricity, inadequate plumbing facilities, water had to be boiled before drinking, we had to sleep on cold bare floors and filth, sickness and disease were all around us. As we found out afterwards, the German command had selected Theresienstadt to be shown later as a model camp to an inspection team of the International Red Cross for propaganda purposes. This was the reason we had to build up the camp into a liveable ghetto. Because this project took two years, most of the old people could not stand the terrible conditions and the starvation diet. The death rate was two hundred prisoners per day for a long time and those were replaced by transports of younger people of many different nationalities, so that by the end of 1943, the population then of 40,000 was mostly under fifty years of age. In September, 1944 the inspection team of the International Red Cross arrived. I recall the wonderful lunch we received that day. A band was playing in the park which had been constructed for that one day of inspection only and when the SS commander of the camp gave chocolate to children playing in the playground, they had to say: "Chocolate again, Uncle Rahm?"

The way I was able to obtain insulin in Theresienstadt is one example of how people were stripped of their dignity in the fight for survival. I was fortunate to have been consigned to work in the bakery and though stealing bread was punishable by death, I had to steal one loaf each day which I gave to a woman my mother had found in exchange for insulin. To get that insulin, the woman became the mistress of one of the Czechoslovakian policemen who guarded the ghetto together with SS-men.

I still remember how certain I was at this time that the constant threat of death, which was hanging over me because of stealing bread, was just about as much as I could take and I also recall how in later concentration camps I thought of Theresienstadt as a wonderful and carefree place to live.

My mother, brother and I left Theresienstadt on October 15, 1944, together with about 2,000 people. My father had been sent to Auschwitz, Poland, two weeks earlier. Because we were allowed to take all our belongings with us, which were piled about six feet high in each car, we had to sit and lie on top of them. I had my syringe, needles and six bottles of insulin in a small camera case which was hanging around my neck. Sleeping on top of the baggage plus the movement of the train was the reason, I guess, that when I woke up next morning I found that I had lost the case holding these precious medications. We arrived in Birkenau, the Jewish camp of Auschwitz, on the morning of October 17, 1944. As soon as we were pushed off the train by old time prisoners of the camp, who were trustees in charge of receiving newcomers, we got our first look of what was in store for us from then on. SS-men killed infants and small children by grabbing them by their legs and hitting their heads against the cars of the train. I saw one of them throw a blind man to the ground and kick him in the head till he was dead. We now had to form a single line and each person had to stop before an SS-man by the name of Dr. Mengele who told us to go either to the left or right side.

Because I had been without insulin for two days, I was feeling very drowsy and it took all my strength and will power not to just lie down and faint. I remember my mother asking me to tell the SS-man that I was sick and would have to be brought to the hospital. I guess it must have been that terrible atmosphere that made me ask

one of the prisoners in charge if I should tell them about my condition. He answered me, "Are you crazy? You must be healthy." Because I felt I couldn't live much longer without getting my insulin shots, I asked another one of those old time prisoners the same question before getting to Dr. Mengele and I received the same answer: "Are you crazy? You must be healthy." Dr Mengele sent my mother and about eighty percent of our transport to his left side, the rest of the people, my brother and I were sent to his right. We were then made to assemble in one large marching group and SS-men who were armed with rifles, marched us towards the bath houses.

As we were passing the women's camp, I remember it took us a while to realize that those drawn out bald-headed figures dressed in bag-like blue and white striped uniforms were women. They were shouting to us to throw food to them over the barbed wire. One man who apparently didn't realize yet the seriousness of the situation, threw them a can of liver spread. He and the girl who ran to pick up the can were shot instantly by one of the SS-men. When we entered the first room of the bath house, we were told to strip completely. One man who claimed he could not get a ring off his finger, had ring and finger cut off. We were then told that anyone who was sick and didn't think that he could work hard should now step forward so that he could be put into a hospital. I still recall how wonderful the thought of a hospital seemed to me, but one of the reasons that I am alive to-day, is the fact that I had realized that this was no time or place to be sick. We were now taken to the next room where prisoners, who I guess we should call barbers, shaved off our hair and because they were using very dull blades, we were bleeding all over our bodies. I asked the man, who was working on me, where the people who had been sent to the left side by Dr. Mengele, had gone to. When I told him that my mother was one of them, he pointed at the smoke coming out from one of the crematories and said, "There she goes, on her way to heaven." The next step was to dunk ourselves in a big bathtub filled with disinfectants, and because of the cuts on our bodies, that sharp lotion felt like fire.

We were now pushed into a tremendous shower room. My first pleasant sight since arriving in Birkenau was a water hose, and even though the water was bad tasting and hot, the lack of insulin had made me so parched with thirst that I am sure I must have engulfed many quarts of it. After a brief shower, and without having the opportunity of drying ourselves, we were chased out into the cold air.

Trustees were standing behind mountains of so-called underwear and prisoner uniforms, and threw each of us one of those outfits. Many a man size 44 got a uniform size 36 and vice versa. I remember very clearly that it was almost impossible to recognize my friends or even my brother, because we all looked so strange in those rags and our shaved heads.

We again had to assemble in a large marching group and our next stop was one of those horse stables, which had been converted into barracks. There my brother, another hundred prisoners and I, were told that we would be sent to a different camp in the morning.

When they woke us at 5:00 a.m. the next day, I was in a coma and unable physically, as well as mentally, to get off the floor. One of the prisoners, a doctor by profession, told me after smelling the acetone on my breath, not to worry about the

gas chamber because I would be dead before they could bring me there. I distinctly remember that I was not afraid of dying and even looked forward to being together with my mother again. I was also sure at that time, that the goodbye to my brother was a goodbye forever.

I know to-day how lucky I was to have lost my insulin the first day on the train to Auschwitz; for otherwise I would have taken injections for two more days and this would have enabled me to go on that transport. When we met again in Vienna after the war, my brother told me that this camp had no hospital and it was impossible to get any medication at all.

Two days later, I awoke in a so-called hospital. The only difference between this hospital and the other barrack I had seen was that this one had wooden beds in it. I found out later that the two prisoners who were supposed to carry me to the gas chamber, had brought me here instead. Two of the amazing things that happened there was that the doctor in charge, a Russian Jew, had insulin at all and that I didn't get blood poisoning from the rust needle he had to use. The insulin shots I had received for the past two days had got me back to normal again, and I remember that I was the only able creature among half dead creatures. My stay there was comparatively pleasant, because instead of having to go out to perform hard labour, all I had to do was to carry out dead prisoners, and assist the doctor.

One of the rules of any concentration camp was to stand at attention and to take off our caps whenever approached by an SS-man. One day, while standing in front of our barrack, I didn't notice an SS-guard who just happen to pass by. When I came to, I realised that my eyes had haemorrhaged as a result of the blow he had given me on my head.

This "accident" combined with the inability to control my diabetes during those years, was the cause which led to my later blindness.

On October 29, 1944, news got to Birkenau that the Russian troops were approaching Auschwitz and that all prisoners would be transferred to other camps. At 6:00 a.m. the next day, Dr.Mengele entered our barracks and commanded us to get out of bed and strip completely. I was the first one to stand at attention in front of him. "What is your sickness?" he asked me. I knew that to tell him the truth would mean sure death in the gas chamber. To lie and be found out would mean death by torture. The thought of this just paralyzed my tongue and my prisoner doctor answered for me, "he just had a swollen leg, he is fine now." "Can you work?" Dr.Mengele asked me. "Yes, sir", I replied. "Hard?", he asked me. "Very hard," I said. To the best of my knowledge, I was the only one in our barrack who Dr.Mengele selected to be evacuated from Birkenau and I am quite sure that the ones left behind, are part of the six million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis.

Here, I would like to point out the courage shown by that prisoner doctor, who, by lying for me, endangered his own life to save mine.

I now asked this wonderful man to give me the syringe and insulin. He explained that he could not do that because, if I told anyone who might find these medications on me that he gave them to me, he would surely be killed. After I

convinced him that I would not talk if found out, he gave me a small package containing the medications, without which I could not live.

Another rule in concentration camps was that prisoners had to be showered before being received in, or sent to another camp. When entering the bath house, we had to strip everything off except our shoes and belts, and SS-men always checked and made sure that nothing else was carried into the shower. I guess the nearness of the Russian troops and the impatience of the German command to get out of there, was the reason that when I now came to the entrance of the shower, no SS-man but two boy prisoners aged thirteen or fourteen were standing there.

I would now like to explain why some young boys who were not able to perform hard labor were not gassed when arriving in Auschwitz. Old time prisoners who had become trustees because of their brutality towards other inmates were allowed to take any boy they liked from incoming transports and have them live with them. I am sure that those trustees did not do those unnatural things because they were basically homosexuals, but because they had lived without women for such a long time. Those little boys were also given much authority over regular prisoners by their masters, and I have seen some of them perform brutal and sadistic acts.

One of the two boys I mentioned before, told me to throw my little package away. I pleaded with him in tears that this was insulin and that I couldn't live without it. He grabbed the package out of my hand, threw it away and said laughingly, "What do I care, go ahead and die."

I now prayed with all my heart that it would not take too long to reach our next destination for a journey of more than three or four days without insulin would never get me there alive. There was still a faint hope in my heart that maybe another miracle would happen in the next camp.

6,000 prisoners left Auschwitz the same day. We were transported in cattle trains, 120 prisoners to each car. There was hardly any room to move and the lack of sanitary facilities, plus the fact that dead bodies could not be removed from the sealed cars, made the air almost unbearable. Before leaving, 120 loaves of bread were thrown into our car, and I recall we behaved worse than starved animals fighting for possession of the bread. I also remember how heartbroken I felt that I did not get any at all.

I did not realize then that this was lucky for me because having no sugar intake meant I could live a little longer without getting my insulin shots.

After three terrible days, the train stopped at one o'clock in the morning. Two SS-men carrying whips entered our car screaming: "Aren't you filthy Jews out of here yet?" Even though we had not used our leg muscles for so long, and just getting off the ice-cold floor was a hardship on us, we cleared the car in record time, for getting lashed in the face was very painful. We now again had to assemble into marching groups and were ordered to run. Vicious police dogs were circling each column and attacked anyone who stepped out of formation. About 20 minutes later, we arrived in a tremendously large hangar. We were told that we were in the Heinkel Werke, one of Germany's largest aeroplane factories, and ordered to stand at attention till daybreak.

By this time, the lack of insulin had weakened me so much that I couldn't stand up, and I guess it was the warning of prisoners next to me: "Come on, get up or they will shoot you!", which made me use my last strength to get up, and wait.

Prisoner doctors arrived at 7 a.m. to bandage dog bites, and when I told one of them about my condition, he took me to another building which was the hospital of Heinkel. I still remember how impressed I was by the sight of clean, white, sheet-covered beds, which by that time I had almost forgotten existed, and how amazed I was to find that he had insulin. I also recall the tremendous hope this put back into my heart again. The insulin injection he gave me came just in time again, for a few more hours without it would have meant the end for me. He also gave me a bowl of soup, which at that time tasted so wonderful, for it was the first food I had received in three days. When I asked him if I could stay in the hospital, he told me this could not be done because we were the first transport of Jews to get to Heinkel and that they had not received orders yet as how to treat us. He also told me not to worry for he would come to our hangar the next day to give me my medication.

During our stay at Heinkel, we were counted at 5 o'clock every morning, and by six, on our way out of the hangar, we each received a slice of bread and a cup of warm black coffee. The monotony of the day was interrupted only by the bowl of watery soup we got at lunch time. At 7 o'clock in the evening, we were marched back into the hangar where they gave us a second bowl of soup which was our supper. Not to work, but just to stand around inadequately dressed, in rain, snow or just ice-cold weather was physically and mentally hard to take and even though three prisoners had to sleep in one straw-covered wooden bunk, we were looking forward to getting our rest. We didn't get much of that rest, for the rule at Heinkel that anyone who did not leave the hangar during an air raid would be shot to death. Being that Heinkel was an aeroplane factory, the alarm was sounded many times each night.

Because the doctor did not come to see me the next day as promised, but only every third day, my physical condition was getting worse, and during many an air raid, I did not want to leave the hangar. I recall how the thought of ending it all was very tempting. One of the big reasons that I survived Heinkel was because of my very close friend, Fred Haber, who practically carried me in and out of the hangar during air raid alarm and covered me with his own jacket to keep me warm.

When I awoke on my 10th day at Heinkel, I discovered that my right leg was swollen and I was unable to put on my shoe. I now knew that this was the end, for it was impossible for me to report for the morning roll call. Just then the doctor arrived and told me that the Germans had allowed one room in the hospital for Jews and that one prisoner with scarlet fever, one with pneumonia and myself would be brought there. Two days later, the entire transport, with the exception of the three of us in the hospital, were sent to the Jewish parts of Dachau and Buchenwald, where obtaining even an aspirin was almost impossible.

After one week in the hospital, I was told that their supply of insulin was gone and that I would be sent to Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen. At 10 o'clock that night the man with pneumonia, the other prisoner who had died that same morning, and I, were put in an open truck dressed in our shirts only. I remember how during this two hour trip through Berlin in freezing weather, my companion tried to convince me that the

only reason they sent the dead man with us was because we would be buried together. Now, I believe, is a good time to mention that it was very unwise to get into conversations with prisoners who were pessimistic, for the only reason many of us did not commit suicide was our hope for the future.

Oranienburg, one of Germany's oldest concentration camps was like Auschwitz, surrounded by electrically charged barbed wires and machine gun towers. It consisted of about 60 barracks, one crematorium and a very well equipped hospital. This hospital was made up of about twelve barracks and was separated from the rest of the camp by a large fence. Every barrack was supervised by a prisoner doctor who was assisted by male nurses, each assigned to one room. All doctors and male nurses were Norwegians. The reason that Oranienburg had such a well equipped hospital was that it was built in 1933 and at that time was not meant for Jews but mainly for political and criminal prisoners. The only other building on the hospital grounds was the brothel to which German and Norwegian prisoners could go. The ten girls who worked there were made up of many different nationalities, and it was said that each one who volunteered to stay there for three months was promised freedom. I also heard that none of them ever lived to see this freedom because they had to accommodate many, many men each day and just could not stand the physical strain.

We had to wear our number and identification triangle sewed onto the outside of our jackets, so that each prisoner was easily identified as to the reason of his imprisonment. A red triangle meant political; red with a yellow strip, Jewish; green, criminal; pink, homosexual; black, Gypsy, and violet Christian scientist. At the time of my arrival, the population in Oranienburg consisted of Germans, Poles, Czechoslovakians, Frenchmen, Norwegians, Belgians, and also Russians. As far as I know, the only Jews were eleven boys, ranging in age from six to twenty-two, who had been brought there from Auschwitz to be used as human guinea pigs.

Not only was the hospital room I was placed in clean and the beds covered with white sheets, but the medical treatment there was excellent. They checked my urine sugar twice and my blood sugar once each day. I am quite sure that the 110 units of insulin I received daily is a world's record, but because of my mental anguish, even this tremendous amount of insulin did not get my abnormally high sugar count down.

After about three weeks in Oranienburg, I awoke one morning finding my left ear filled with fluid. The doctor told me I had mastoid, opened my ear with a needle, and for many days after that I had a constant flow of pus. The days after my ear was opened, I contracted pleurisy and I remember how frightened I was when the doctor punctured my back with a tremendous needle to draw out any fluid I might have accumulated. The following morning I found myself yet with another complication, I could not speak or swallow and Anything I tried to drink came out through my nose. This sickness in German is called Gaumensegellähmung, which translated into English means paralysis of the gum sail (soft palate). I was told by the Doctor that if I should be lucky enough to get my voice back, I would be left with a speech defect. I know the reason that I speak perfectly normally today, and that after three weeks I recovered from all three sicknesses, was due to my constant prayers.

The SS-commander of the camp made daily inspections of the hospital and selected prisoners he thought would never recover to be sent to Bergen-Belsen to be

gassed. One evening, in Ralph, our male nurse, told me that I had been selected to go. I asked him for a syringe and some insulin to take along with me and he brought me a small package containing those medications. Very early the next day as a group of about 100 skeleton-like figures and I were waiting to be transported, the one thing happened that I never will be able to figure out. The following announcement was made over the loudspeaker: "Prisoner #110223 report back to your room." To the best of my knowledge, this was the only time anyone was ever pulled out from a transport to Bergen-Belsen.

Right then and there, I did not realize that having been selected to go to the gas chamber would save my life four months later.

Each hospital room had one prisoner who was called "Kalifaktor". His duties were to wash the floor twice a day, hand out food to the prisoners, wash dishes, and carry dead bodies out of the barracks. After I had regained most of my strength, Ralph made me Kalifaktor in our room. One day, all Kalifaktors were ordered to appear in front of one of the barracks, and we were told that prisoners who could perform our type of work could be more useful to Germany, labouring outside of the hospital grounds. The SS-commander asked each one of us what country we came from. He was pleased to hear that I came from Vienna and replied, "Oh, we have a Viennese her?". "Yes", said my doctor standing next to me, "but he is Jewish." "A Jew in the hospital!" screamed the SS-man, and the beating he then gave me was one of the worst I have ever experienced.

I was now assigned to a working group and soon found that the barracks in the regular camp were not much different from the ones I had seen in Auschwitz. Before leaving the hospital, the doctor told me to report back at 5 o'clock each morning for my insulin shots. Knowing that I would get less food and much hard labour from then on, I asked him to give me less units of insulin, but he refused because of my abnormally high sugar count. My first day at work proved that I was right to ask to be given less insulin, and I am quite certain that I am the only diabetic ever to be brought out of an insulin shock by being viciously beaten with rifle butts instead of receiving sugar. The SS-men who were guarding us of course, did not know of my condition, and I remember hearing them scream: "That lousy Jew is too lazy to work!".

Because the doctor still did not want to reduce my insulin after I told him what had happened, I now felt that the only other alternative was to go for my injection every other day. I recall how hard it was for me to work whenever I did not receive my shots and how afraid I was of getting an insulin shock all other days.

The group I worked with consisted of ten Russians, one Frenchman, and a German, who was our foreman. This foreman was not a prisoner for political reasons, but because he had stolen bread while serving in the German army. He was one of the worst Nazis I had ever met, and I remember how when American bombers were flying over us, he shook his fists at them and said: "Why don't they let me out of here, I would show those lousy Americans". Two of the four SS-men who were guarding us at our working place, a field about 1½ hours walking distance from the camp, took some of us every morning to help out nearby farmers. As payment, we received potatoes which were baked over an open fire and everyone, including the SS-men, shared in that so-important addition to our very meagre diet. I was the only one left

out, for as my foreman said, "Why waste good food on a dirty Jew." Even though I was beaten viciously every day by this Nazi, the only times I cried in this camp was when I had to watch them eat because hunger can be more painful than beatings.

I now would like to mention three more episodes that happened in Oranienburg.

One day while I was still in the hospital, a group of SS-men came there to learn some so-called first aid. The one who picked me as a guinea pig, tried to hit the vein in my arm with a very large injection needle, and I remember how angry he got at me because it took about twenty-five stabs before he reached his goal.

One of the jokes the SS-men enjoyed so much was to have a prisoner hung in front of the entrance gate, and everyone returning from work had to pull the dead man's legs apart and march between them.

I was once assigned to work in the dog kennels, and I recall how envious I was of them, for the dog biscuits I had stolen there tasted better than the bread we received.

One day early in April, 1945, the Russians had come so close to Berlin and Oranienburg that we could hear the thunder of their cannons. The German command now ordered all prisoners to be evacuated, and the clearing of the camp had to be accomplished within a few hours. I then knew that the end of the war was very near and I was thinking very seriously whether I should try to hide and await the arrival of the Russian troops. Apparently, many other prisoners had the same idea for word was spread that the camp would be burned after the evacuation.

I now realised how lucky I was that four months ago I had been selected to go to Bergen-Belsen to be gassed. The insulin, needle and syringe I was now going to use on the forthcoming march were the ones Ralph had given me the night before my scheduled trip to Bergen-Belsen, and I know that it would have been impossible for me to get those medications on the day that the whole camp was evacuated.

Many marching groups of 500 prisoners each, left Oranienburg and the first day out, each column was guarded by about fifty armed SS-men. As the end of the war came closer each day, fewer SS-men were with us, and I myself have seen one of them shoot a prisoner of about the same build as himself and then put on the dead man's clothes. I guess he was one of many who later posed as a concentration camp victim. I, myself, was lucky to have had the courage to tear off my Jewish identification triangle when leaving Oranienburg, for being recognized as a Jew on this trip could probably have been fatal by itself. We were made to march sixteen hours a day and any prisoner who could not keep up the pace was shot. This shooting was heard very frequently because almost the only nourishment we had during this three week march were raw potatoes which we stole from fields, and grass and leaves. This march, by the way, was referred to after the war as the "death march". Because walking for sixteen hours a day was so exhausting, we slept very soundly, even though it was on open fields, and many a rainy night I woke up in the morning with my clothes frozen to the ground.

I remember how careful I had to be of how many units of insulin to take, for I never knew how much food I would be able to get the same day, and an insulin shock on this trip certainly would have meant the death for me. I never once washed during those three weeks and even though my clothes were so filthy, I had to make all injections through my pants, for I did not want to be noticed by any of the SS-men.

When I awoke on the morning of May 2, 1945, I found that the last of the SS-men who had guarded us had gone. The German soldiers all going up north to be captured by the Americans, instead of the Russians, had thrown away their arms. I would like to mention here that the many farmers and their families who were passing us during our march had left their homes so that they would not be caught by the Russian troops.

A woman now told me that the American and German troops were fighting in Schwerin, a town a couple of miles further to the north, and even though I knew getting nearer to the fighting would be dangerous, my desire for liberation was so great, that I decided to take the chance and go there. I had walked for about five minutes only when I suddenly saw two American soldiers. I was speechless but they knew what I felt, for my actions spoke louder than words.

The wonderful treatment I received from the U.S. troops during the week I was staying there, I will never forget. After several days, I decided to try to get back to Vienna again, for there was still a small hope left in my heart that maybe my father or brother might have survived also.

I finally arrived in Vienna after three weeks of hitchhiking and I will never forget that day. My brother had arrived one day before me. A friend of mine who had been sent to Auschwitz together with my father, told me a couple of months later that my father also had been gassed there.

When I tried to get insulin in some of Vienna's leading hospitals, I was told that they had none and that all diabetics had died. I now realized I was lucky to have been sent to concentration camps, for the same camps which took the lives of many millions, had saved mine.

My sister, who had emigrated to America in 1939, sent us affidavits and my brother and I arrived in New York City on the twentieth of August, 1947. One day in 1953, I found that the haemorrhages in my eyes started again and by December, 1956 I was completely blind.

Today, with the help of my seeing-dog, Sheila, I own the Superior Addressing & Mailing Service, 1650 Broadway, New York City. I know the reason that my lettershop is a success, and that today we are able to call many nationally known organisations our satisfied customers is due to the fact that in America everyone is given an equal opportunity.