

## L'chaim—To Life After the Kristallnacht in Berlin

November 9, 1938

### Part One

By Norbert Lachman

Not long ago, just before the passing of my dear sister Helga, I met Jewish students who were very much interested how I survived death and deportation during and after the Kristallnacht, or "The Night of the Broken Glass," where the biggest pogrom against the Jewish people took place, not only in Berlin but in all of Germany. At that time, I was in Berlin and witnessed the destruction of synagogues, broken windows in Jewish stores, furniture being thrown out of windows, and the unmerciful Nazis forcing the Jewish population into trucks, wearing their nightclothes in the middle of the night, and it was very cold.

I told the students that is not hearsay. I was a witness and I will share my memories with our congregation in monthly installments. This very sad part of Jewish history should be told over and over, exactly as we read our Haggadah every year. Anti-Semitism is again very strong today, because we Jews are fighting back. Today we are still fighting the Hagen (in our Haggadah), as Hitler and Hamas. They all wish us dead and be gone. However, all of them will follow the fate of their predecessors and ancestors.

I was born and raised in Danzig (now Gdansk) located at the Baltic Sea. It was the month of January 1938, when the Nazis forced Jewish men and boys into labor outside the city, with the exception of the ones who still had a job. I was lucky, because our bread factory was still functioning. The danger for me still existed to be placed in a Nazi labor camp. (In one of my next articles, I will explain more of this issue of forced labor.)

Jewish people were leaving Danzig, mostly in secret. Their hope was to get unseen to the Polish border. The Gestapo or German Secret Police knew about this and set up traps. Those who got caught were shot in the basement of a girl's high school.

In our synagogue office, there was hardly anybody left. The rabbi, Dr. Ivan Green, left and so did most of the remaining officers. Yet there were some who had nowhere else to go, and that was my opportunity for a future life. Through the efforts of those still in the office, contact was made with the Ort School in Berlin which in turn accepted me as a new student to learn a trade. I was sorry to leave my parents and sister behind. My passport was stamped with swastikas and I was on my way to Berlin. Ironically, Jews were fleeing Germany and I went there. My passport was good until 1943.

Through the Jewish "Hausfrauenbund" or Jewish women organization in Berlin, I could stay in the only Jewish hostel, The Ahawah House, in the August Street. In charge of this house was an elderly lady, Dr. Alexander. She was very strict. Upstairs were the girls' quarters, and downstairs the men. We all had to follow certain rules. All our food was strictly kosher. That Ahawah House is full of Jewish history since about 1900. Right behind that house was the famous Oranienburg Synagogue. This temple was one of the oldest and largest in Berlin. I still remember the beautiful services there.

The Ort School was very far from the August Street. I had to go via the subway to get there. Siemens supplied the Ort school with most machinery and was in charge of this school, according to the law of the Third Reich. Mostly all metal used for the machines came from England. But then all this came to a sudden end, November 9, 1938.

During that night the Nazis invaded the Ahawah house.

To be continued....