

Shaul Spielmann biography

Shaul (Paul) Spielmann is now 88 years old. He was born in Vienna on 1 July 1931 as the only son of Benjamin and Josefina Spielmann. His father served as an officer in the Austrian army, then as an engineer with Vienna Electric Company. His mother obtained her musical education from the Conservatorium in Vienna. Both were Austrian patriots and had good relations with everyone.

The family lived happily until the Anschluss (annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany). Their lives changed profoundly in the subsequent days. They were robbed by the Nazis and ordered them to leave everything behind in their apartment in the 16th district, so they moved to the 1st district, where they stayed 4.5 years, mainly in fear and destitution.

On 2 October 1942, late at night, the family was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Theresienstadt two days later. They remained in Theresienstadt about a year.

In mid-November 1943 the family was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau together with 5000 other prisoners with families. That transport, later known as one of three transports of families, did not pass any selection and was absorbed in the B camp, but only for six months. They were kept alive in case the Red Cross would inspect the camp. In that event they would have been used to make the Red Cross believe that there was no extermination happening at Auschwitz.

Both of his parents were murdered, and Shaul, together with some other younger boys, remained in Auschwitz one more year – with number 170775 tattooed on his left arm. Surviving horrible death marches in the frost, he returned to Austria, the land of his birth, in February 1945, but as a prisoner. At that stage, in the last months of the Third Reich, he was moved between Mauthausen main camp as prisoner number 118298 (this time engraved on a tin plate), Melk and Gunskirchen, where the Nazis planned to poison the Jewish prisoners.

However, liberation day arrived on 5 May 1945, thanks to the U.S. Army.

Shaul recovered after the war mainly in Israel. He settled down to his new life and his new happy family in Israel, where he still lives today.

Shaul strongly believes in the faith and hope that people can express to others, beyond all suffering that may exist. This is the lesson that he shares with his own children and many young people whom he meets. Shaul believes that this is his life mission. He speaks again and again as a lecturer in schools. During his recent visits to Nazi concentration camps in Europe, Shaul spoke to young people as a survivor, bearing witness to some of his own experiences in the Holocaust.