

To See You Again [WWII survivor] by Betty Schimmel (1999)

Hitler invaded Austria in 1938 & began to persecute the Jews. Betty's family moved from Czechoslovakia to Budapest to be safer. Her dad was a wanted man & had to go into hiding [never seen again]. She fell in love with Richie & spent lots of time together, until Hitler invaded Hungary on March 19, 1944.

First all Jews must wear a yellow star; then no school; they were forced to move again & again; [& could only take what they could carry while their possessions were looted]; they were forced to share rooms with other families; it was difficult to buy food; Jews could no longer own a business; radios, cars & bikes were confiscated; curfews were imposed; Swiss papers of protection were taken away; utilities would be turned off; they closed food stores & people began to starve; it was forbidden for Gentiles to help Jews; Jews were killed for no reason; Some were rounded up & never heard from again.

Their last move was to a muddy factory yard with no plumbing. They were given some soup & once in awhile some bread. After 3 weeks 5000 Jews were skin & bones and forced to march for 3 weeks to Austria in the winter. People watched from the side of the road & did nothing. Her shoes fell apart, her feet froze, but she survived. The 500 that survived were packed into cattle cars on a train to Gunzkirchen then walked to Mauthausen concentration camp.

She got typhoid fever was in a hospital tent for 6 weeks, but survived. 5may45 the Americans came & liberated them before the Germans could kill them. They were trucked to another camp for rehab. Some died from eating too much too soon. The Russians liberated Budapest, but were brutal themselves. She started looking for Richie through the Red Cross. One day she found his name listed as dead.

A friend introduced her to Otto Schimmel [his entire family was gone]. Otto won over her mom, but not Betty. They married & he was a good man, but she was still in love with Richie. They moved to USA in 1949 & lived in NYC with her aunt. Otto lost himself in work & didn't talk much. They had 3 kids & moved to PA in '55 then AZ in '73.

Her & her mom talked about visiting Hungary, but her mom died before they went. So in '75 she took her daughter to help her face her nightmares. They were in a restaurant & she saw Richie [30 yrs later]. They talked & kissed the night away. The emotions were overwhelming. He looked all over Europe & USA. He thought he found her in NYC, but when he went to the door a man [Otto] told him she did not live there [but she did]. Richie waited 15 yrs to get married & was ready to walk out for Betty.

Betty was furious at Otto & called to yell at him. Read the last 20 pages to see what she did.

Quotes:

"I shall allow no man to belittle my soul by making me hate him...."

"God's will was not to be questioned by mere mortals like us." "They cannot break us unless we let them." (Ethel Markowitz)

Note: Betty was born 1929.