

INTERVIEW WITH JULIO GARTNER

My name is Julian Gartner, I was born in Poland, in Krakow in September 18th, 1924. So, you can calculate how old I am, it's not a secret, everybody knows. I went to five concentration camps.

Six millions Jews were murdered. Behind every single victim there is a story. "Nenhuma Ideia Uma Vida", memories of Holocaust survivors.

Julian Gartner was only a student when World War II started. In the first days, he watched German tanks invading his city and the Jews being sent to ghettos and villages in cities nearby.

Ghetto, I would say, is a huge captivity where mothers scream for help, but help couldn't come, because the terror was made by the state. While I could stay on the village working with polish, I learned lots of jobs, what saved my life.

Julio and his brother decided to go to Krakow's ghetto, in Poland. From there, they were sent to the first camp they've been, Plaszow. One of the most awful figures of Holocaust who Julio met was Amon Ghot, the commander of the camp. To the survivor the general was a monster.

What he liked the most: he trained dogs, angry dogs, let them be starving and released them, screaming "juden", Jews in German, and the dogs attacked, and attacked until killing them. This was funny to him, besides that he walked through the camp, where prisoners worked, and, if he didn't like someone, he took the gun and killed him.

Plaszow was evacuated and, by train, the prisoners were deported to Auschwitz. Julio was lucky that they only spent some hours there and then were sent to Mauthausen. The camp was known by the Nazis medical experiences. Organs were removed in surgeries from live patients.

This camp had a stone quarry, a very huge one. There were 102 steps. They told us to take a stone, climb the 102 steps, put the stone there, take another one and climb it again. Doing this for 12, 14 hours a day, no one survives. This was a psychological torture, they wanted to break us. After 11 days, we were called to go to another camp.

At Melk, Julio and his brother worked in an atomic bomb factory. Germans wanted the factory to be built inside a mountain. Prisoners were forced to build tunnels and Julio was chosen as master carpenter. This job was decisive in his surviving.

It happened again: Russian army started to advance. So, again, they decided to evacuate the camp. We got off. We went to Linz. From there, they make us walk 43 miles.

After overcoming the Death Marches, Julio and his brother went to Ebenze. Different from other camps, in Ebenze there weren't ovens. There, people died of hunger. Julio was weighing 66 pounds.

I saw people walking like dogs, because they could stand. When we got to Ebenze, a Nazi said: "I need men to open a railway crossing". When we got there, there were some trains tumbled. In those trains, there was sugar, flour... We ate until we were full, we were hungry for months. What we couldn't eat, we put in our pants.

Death penalty in Poland was by hanging. There was a tradition in the country that, if the condemner's rope breaks, they should be forgiven. In Plaszow, Julio say this tradition be broken by Amon Göth, one of the most awful commanders of Holocaust.

In a tent near us, there were three 17 year old boys. They were whistling a Russian song, when a German soldier passed by and took them to Göth. Göth condemned them to death by hanging, the three boys of 17 years old. What was their crime? Whistling a song. The three were hanging, the three ropes broke and the bodies fell. They tried to beg for Göth's mercy, but he didn't forgive them and ordered to hang them again. And we were told that if someone didn't watch, the person would be hanged too.

After recovering physically from Holocaust's atrocities, Julio moved to Italy. There, he got a letter from his brother; he was trying to go to Brazil. Julio decided he wanted to go too. With some help from American entities in Rome, he got a diploma of technic in agronomy so he could go to Brazil.

I went to the Brazilian consulate in Rome, it was Getúlio Vargas govern in Brazil e I was interviewed by the consul. I just needed to fill a form. But I wrote that I was Hebrew, because Jew is Hebrew in Italian. When he read it, he took my things and said: "come back in 6 months".

Nenhuma Ideia Vale Uma Vida

MEMORIES OF HOLOCAUSTO SURVIVORS

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Julio's story was eternalized in that documentary "Sobrevivi ao Holocausto", release in 2014. After being at 5 concentration camps, the survivor didn't want to remember these painful memories. However, everything changed after travelling with his family to Poland.

In 2008 I went to the Life March with my grandsons, my son and my daughter. In Majdanek there are some huge mountains of ashes from the people burned in the ovens. When they said that, my grandson started to cry. He was really sad. So I thought: "It's possible that in these ashes there are my parents too". I can't not let this go, this need to be remembered in order to not happen again.