

## Eugen Blum As A Child



This is my brother Eugen, born in 1925. All my brothers graduated from primary school in Fizesul Gherlei 7 grades.

In 1938 and 1939 the Goga-Cuza cabinet was in power. At the Romanian public school there was only one teacher who picked on my brother Eugen for being Jewish.

His name was Calugaru and he was a local. As we were devout, my brother refused to light the fire on Saturday, so this teacher forced his head inside the stove.

I was a very bad pupil, as opposed to my siblings, who were always the first in their class.

My parents owned a store until 1943. Then things got really hard... After 1943 we had to wear the Yellow Star. Of course we had to.

When we were among kids of our age - Romanians and Hungarians - we felt ashamed. It's not like they pointed their fingers at us or beat us. It's just that we were sort of embarrassed.

After my older brothers, Matei and Ernest, had been taken to forced labor - along with all the other Jewish men -, my brother and I started working with horse-pulled carts.

We borrowed them from the Jews who had been left at home (women, children and elderly ones). What did we use them for? Well, the Hungarians were looking for natural gas.

The Romanians were already extracting it in Sarmas and Sarmasel [Editor's note: Currently in Mures county, in an area that remained under Romanian authority even after the Second Vienna Dictate] and we were close to the border, which passed through Sucutard [currently in Cluj county] and next to the lake.

So the Hungarians thought there must be natural gas here too. They were using a method of detection based on coal. The coal was brought to Gherla by train from the mines and it had to be carried further by cart.

This is where my brother and I stepped in. But we didn't do it for nothing, you know? Both the families who owned the carts and us got paid.

Then, one morning, in 1944, my brother and I were on our way to two Jewish families who lent us their carts. They lived in the opposite part of the village.

When we reached the center of the village and crossed the bridge - I remember it was a clear morning, in the month of May - someone called us to the mayor's office.

We entered and found two Hungarian gendarmes and the mayor. 'You are under arrest!' he announced. I had no idea what 'arrest' meant, since I had never been 'under arrest'. But my brother Eugen, who was 2 years older than me, knew what it meant.

They didn't let us return home. They escorted us to the Jew who lived closest to the mayor's office - a destitute fellow who made pottery and whose house was near the Christian-Orthodox church.

He had a horse and a cart, so they made him and his family (4-5 children) board the cart and prepare to go. Then they took us home to get dressed for the road.

So they put us in the cart and took us to the brick factory in Gherla. Then they put us in train cars whose windows had been covered with planks and took us straight to the brick factory in Cluj.

The way from Cluj to Auschwitz was by train. We were put in cattle cars. [Editor's note: 16,148 Jews were deported from Cluj in the period 25 May - 9 June 1944.]

The Nazis were selecting the newly arrived and two groups were being formed: men and women.

My brother Eugen and I were pointed in one direction, while my mother and my sister were sent to the other group. I don't know what became of them. That was the last time I ever saw them...

My brother and I lived in the same block; we even slept next to each other. I had the 'bed' no. 19 and he had no. 20. I was inmate no. 10919 and he was inmate no. 10920.

He was a handsome fellow. So I kept very much in touch with my brother, but I didn't know anything about the other members of my family. And I never found out what happened to them.

We worked at the construction site of the new factory. There wasn't such thing as a work schedule: we practically worked till we dropped. Work [in the factory] continued until 15 or 16 January [1945].

I later heard from others that it may have been until 15-20 January. Then things got even harder. They stopped feeding us at all.

Like I said, Mendl [Eugen] and I had been in the camp together ever since we had got separated from our parents. But, in the end [in 1945], we lost track of each other.

When the Russians entered Poland, the Nazis began to evacuate Auschwitz-Birkenau - I was living in Buna [also known as Auschwitz III].

They started to herd us like cattle, by the thousands. My brother and I got separated from each other in this commotion and we never saw each other again.

This happened in January 1945