

NATHAN OFFEN

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



Nathan Offen was born on December 15, 1922, in Cracow, Poland, to Jacob and Gusta Offen. He had two brothers, Sam and Bernard, and one sister, Miriam. His father was a traveling salesman and his

mother was a dressmaker. Nathan went to public school until the age of twelve, when he started working at a dry goods store. Life began to change when the Germans invaded Cracow. All Jews had to wear the Star of David. Then the Cracow ghetto was formed and Jews were forced to move into a confined area in the town.

In 1942, Nathan managed to get a night job working in a hospital. He was specifically assigned to help the German soldiers returning from the Russian front. One morning in October, as Nathan was returning from his job, he noticed lines of people being marched into the streets. His mother and sister were in the line and as he tried to run toward them, an SS guard hit Nathan on the head. He never saw his mother and sister again. In 1943, Nathan, his father, and brothers were deported to Plaszow and selected for forced labor. A few months later, Nathan and his brother Sam were transferred to Wieliczka, a labor camp nearby, to work in the salt mines.

In 1944, due to the advancing Soviet Army, Nathan and his brother were brought back to Plaszow from the salt mines where they reunited with Bernard and their father. Shortly thereafter, in August, the four were transferred to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. Nathan and Sam were selected apart from Bernard and their father for forced labor in the granite quarry.

In May 1945, after the United States Army liberated Mauthausen, Nathan and Sam were taken to Modena, Italy, to a displaced persons' camp. They later joined the Polish Army under British command as part of the occupation forces in Italy. With the help of a published survivors' list, Bernard found his brothers and broke the news that their father had been killed in Mauthausen. First Bernard and then Nathan and Sam immigrated to England in 1946, where Nathan met his future wife, Helen Goldberg.

In 1951, Nathan and his brothers obtained visas to immigrate to the United States. Helen followed shortly after and she and Nathan were married in June 1951. They lived in Jersey City, New Jersey where Nathan worked in the garment industry. The couple had three daughters: Ruth, Gail, and Suzanne. Helen later became ill and died in 1990. At the time of Nathan's interview in 1996, he had three grandchildren: Zachary, Jason, and Veronica.



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.