

# DAVID ABRAMS

## BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



David Abrams was born David Abraham on December 8, 1928, in Dej, Romania, to Sarah and Joseph Abraham. He had four sisters: Olga, Ethel, Liebe, and Irene, and three brothers: Ezekiel,

Yehuda, and Zev. The family lived in a house above the family bakery where Joseph worked. Shortly after David was born, his mother, Sarah, passed away. His father remarried a couple of years later to Rachel Moskowitz. The family lived an observant Jewish life and the four boys went to religious school in the afternoon in addition to their other studies. David recalled that he often was beaten by non-Jews in the city on his way to school.

In 1941, Dej was occupied by the Hungarians. By 1943, they passed anti-Jewish laws. Jews were no longer allowed to own businesses or employ non-Jews, and eventually, Jews had to wear the Star of David. David's father lost his bakery as a result of these laws. He later became ill and passed away in January 1944. A few months later, the Nazis forced the Jews in Dej to move into a ghetto, located in a forest outside of town, where they lived in tents and built primitive huts.

In June 1944, the ghetto was liquidated and everyone was taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau. David was selected for forced labor and was separated from his family. A week later, he was transferred to Mauthausen concentration camp before being taken to Gusen, another camp nearby in Austria. There, David worked building canals and digging tunnels. In April 1945, when rumors circulated that the Allies were approaching, David and

the prisoners in both Mauthausen and Gusen were forced on a death march to Gunskirchen, a subcamp of Mauthausen. The camp guards disappeared after a couple of weeks and then the United States Army arrived and liberated the camp; David was sixteen years old.

In the summer of 1945, after David was liberated, he spent time in different displaced persons' camps until he could return home to Dej. When he finally arrived, he discovered that three of his sisters had also survived but that everyone else had died in the camps. David then made efforts to move to the United States to be with his eldest sister who had immigrated there before the war. A friend smuggled him to Paris where he obtained a visa to go to Cuba. He lived in Cuba for a year before he was finally able to immigrate to the United States in October 1949.

In 1952, David was drafted into the United States Army. After two months of basic training, David was sent to Korea. In May 1954, he returned to the United States and was discharged from the Army. As a civilian, David worked as a waiter at a resort in the Catskill Mountains where he met his future wife, Sheila Cohen. They were married on April 28, 1956, in Brooklyn, New York, and had two daughters: Leah and Rachel. At the time of David's interview in 1997, he and his wife had seven grandchildren.



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.