

JOSEPH GRINGLAS

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Joseph Gringlas (née Grynglas), son of Leizor and Blima, was born on May 20, 1926, in Ostrowiec, Poland. The youngest of six children, Joseph had four brothers—

Mendel, Shlomo, Jankel and Sol—and one sister, Miriam Baila. The family was observant- lit candles every Sabbath and celebrated all Jewish holidays- and Joseph attended *cheder* every day after public school.

On September 1, 1939, the German army invaded Poland, and World War II began. The German army occupied Ostrowiec one week later. The day the army arrived, Joseph saw Jewish doctors and lawyers killed in the town square. Food began to be rationed, and Leizor was no longer allowed to work. In 1941, a ghetto was established in Ostrowiec, but the family did not have to move as their pre-war home was in the area designated as the ghetto. Joseph worked in the ghetto: he cleaned streets, worked in a kitchen, did manual labor, and was sent to work in the Ostrowiec steelworks. His brother Sol also worked in the factory. In October 1942, most of the family was sent to Treblinka during the liquidation of the town ghetto.

Joseph was later separated from Sol and sent to Blizyn, a concentration camp that was being built. Joseph helped to build the barracks and also worked in a quarry breaking rocks to make roads. While at Blizyn, Joseph tried to supplement the paltry daily food ration and was beaten for stealing potatoes. Joseph was deported from Blizyn to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he lied about his age during Selection and was sent to work at Auschwitz III-Monowitz. While at Auschwitz III-Monowitz, he was reunited with his brother, Sol. In January of 1945,

Joseph and Sol endured the Death March from the Auschwitz camps and were transported from Gleiwitz to Mittlebau- Dora, where the United States Army liberated them on April 11, 1945. Joseph and Sol were the only members of their family to survive the Holocaust.

After liberation, Joseph and Sol lived at the Landsberg Displaced Persons Camp. Joseph went to technical school in Esslingen and, in 1950, immigrated to the United States. He married Reli Keisler Weisberger, another survivor, in Detroit in 1957. They have two children, Marcy and Larry, five grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Joseph's interview for USC Shoah Foundation was conducted on April 5, 1996, in Southfield, Michigan.