

FRITZIE FRITZSHALL

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Fritzie Fritzshall (born Frida Dawidowics Weiss), daughter of Herman and Sara, was born on August 27, 1931, in Klucarky, Czechoslovakia (now

Klyucharky, Ukraine). She had two younger brothers, Elia and Mendel. When Fritzie was a child, her father immigrated to the United States. He sent money back to his family and tried to get them papers to immigrate as well. By the time the family received the papers, World War II had already begun and it was too late for them to safely immigrate.

In 1938, as part of the First Vienna Arbitration, Klucharky became part of Hungary. Life in Klucharky remained the same for Fritzie and her family; she attended school and the family attended synagogue. Fritzie and her family had Jewish and non-Jewish friends. Life began to change in March 1944, when Hungary was occupied by German forces. During Passover in 1944, Fritzie, her mother and her brothers were celebrating the holiday with extended family members. In the middle of the night, there was a knock upon the door and they were told to gather their belongings. The family was taken to a ghetto in Itzky. They remained in the ghetto—a fenced-in school—from mid-April 1944 through mid-May 1944, when they were deported to Auschwitz, a concentration camp complex in Nazi-occupied Poland. Fritzie was with her family throughout the deportation. Her grandfather died along the way.

Upon arrival at Auschwitz, Fritzie was told to lie about her age and to say she was 15. She was separated from her mother and brothers. After getting her hair shorn, Fritzie was found by her maternal aunt, Bella. Bella helped Fritzie survive Auschwitz—she told her what to do and what not to do and took Fritzie into her

barracks. Eventually, they were separated and sent to different slave labor camps. Fritzie was forced to work in a factory that made airplane parts. Fritzie was the youngest prisoner there, and the 599 other women looked after her, encouraged her to stay alive and gave her some of their rations.

In January 1945, Fritzie was sent on the first of two death marches. She survived both marches and was liberated by Soviet Armed Forces in spring 1945. Fritzie spent time in a displaced persons' camp, but chose to return home to Klucarky. She knew her mother was dead but hoped her brothers had survived and would come home; she would learn later that they did not. Her Aunt Bella, too, died the day after being liberated. In Klucarky, Fritzie lived at her grandparent's old house. She took in orphans and they lived communally. Her father placed a call to the local post office, and she was able to speak to him. Before leaving for the United States, she lived with her uncle in Itzky.

After arriving in the United States, Fritzie went to school and became a hairdresser. She married Norman Fritzshall in 1948. Norman was in the United States Marine Corps during World War II, and had been in a Japanese prisoner of war camp for four years. Fritzie did not like to talk about her Holocaust experience, but she and Norman knew one another's stories. The couple had one son, Steven, and two grandsons. Fritzie became an active member in the survivor community in Skokie, Illinois, and she became President of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. This interview was conducted on August 6, 2015, in Skokie, Illinois. Fritzie was also interviewed as part of Dimensions in Testimony, USC Shoah Foundation's interactive biography. Fritzie passed away on June 19, 2021.