

After a few weeks in Ecouis, 220 boys chose to go to Israel and the rest of us remained in France. Two months after our arrival in Ecouis, we were then sent to different orphanage homes near Paris. I was sent to Vesinet. The OSE looked after us well. They provided us with the education that we did not receive during our years in the camps and ensured that we lived in a warm and happy environment. I cannot thank the OSE enough for what they did for us boys.

Each of us Buchenwalders had our own unique story of survival but there was one thing that we all had in common. We had all lost most of our families to the Nazi regime. So we formed a new family, together. We created a bond like brothers which still exists today.

After spending around 4 years in France, most of us Buchenwalders immigrated to different countries around the world. Some ended up in America, some in Canada, some remained in France and about 65 of us came to Australia. Once we arrived in Australia, we quickly went about the business of forming new lives for ourselves. Life wasn't easy at first. We arrived mostly single, with little to no money and without any university education. But we worked hard, found jobs, and started new families in Australia. We were able to make sure that our children grew up in warm and loving homes and received the education that we were denied. And through all this time, we continued to support one another.

If one of us ever needed assistance, they knew they could count on their Buchenwalder brothers. In one case, a son of

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one of the Buchenwalders got lost in Mt. Buller and the rest of us raised money for a helicopter to find and rescue him. Similarly, we provided support to some of the widows of Buchenwalders who passed away. But we didn't just support each other, but also the wider community. Twice a year, we organized a dinner at one of our homes where we raised money for the United Israel Appeal and the Jewish Welfare Appeal.

We didn't have caterers at these events. Instead, the fantastic food was provided by all the Buchenwalder wives. These dinners took place in the homes of many different Buchenwalders, but I especially remember well the evenings we spent in our home. I remember fondly how my darling wife Tania was so involved in preparing for these dinners and how the other boys considered her as a Buchenwalder. Other women as well played such an important part in organising these evenings together. And of course, everyone here knows about the Buchenwalder Ball and picnics we had together.

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But the Buchenwalder community is bigger than just our group here in Australia. We continue to share a close connection with all our fellow Buchenwalders around the world. Willie Fogel, in Paris, kept a record of all the Buchenwalder Boys around the world and if any of one us, or our families, travelled anywhere in the world, they could be sure to count on the hospitality of their fellow Buchenwald Boys. If any of us travelled to Paris, we were always invited to the home of Willie and his wife Catherine for dinner. One of my closest friends, George (Jurek) Kestenberg, who recently passed away, also went out of his way to make sure that any Buchenwalder who visited Paris was welcome there. He would take time off work to give visitors a first-class tour of Paris. Other Buchenwalder boys did the same to anyone who visited America, Canada or Israel. We were and still are a truly global family.

One of the most remarkable events in the story of the Buchenwald Boys was our first reunion in Israel in 1990, 45 years after our liberation. The reunion was organized by Willie Fogel and Armand Bulwa from Paris and Chaim Zilberstein and Natek Zimm and his wife from Israel. The reunion was an extraordinary event and was attended by the Mayor of Tel Aviv, members of the Knesset, Ambassadors to Israel from France, the UK, Canada, the United States and Australia and by Rabbi Lau, the Chief Rabbi of Israel. We were entertained by an orchestra, dancing and singing by the children of Israeli Buchenwalders. It was an unforgettable and joyous evening.

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I cannot describe the feeling of seeing many of my fellow Buchenwalders for the first time in 45 years. In fact, it had been so long that many of us couldn't recognise each other's faces. So we carried old photos of how we looked 45 years before. Similar reunions took place at the 50<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in 1995 and 2000.

Amazingly, despite the trauma that we all went through, so many Buchenwald boys around the world have achieved incredible things in a wide range of different fields.

Buchenwald boys became doctors, scientists, professors, artists, writers, musicians, rabbis and businessmen. Jerzy Suskind, who lived in the United States, became a well-known scientist, who worked at NASA and gave lectures at the most prestigious universities around the world. And of course everyone knows the stories of Elie Wiesel and Rabbi Lau. There have been three documentaries made about the Buchenwald boys and numerous books written about our unique story.

But even as we celebrate the success of so many Buchenwalders we must remember the 1.5 million Jewish children murdered by the Nazis who were not so lucky. Children whose lives were brutally cut short for no reason other than they were born Jewish. Who can imagine what successes these children would have achieved? What books they could have written, discoveries they could have made or works of art they could have given to the world.

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When we reflect on these children it becomes clear how miraculous it was that we somehow survived. I was only 12 years old when I was separated from my family and sent to the horrible Skarzysko labor camp. And I was not even 14 years old when I was sent to Buchenwald. I still remember the Nazis marching into Kozenice, the town where I was born, and seeing them cutting off my grandfather's beard with a bayonet. That image is imprinted on my mind and his screams will stay with me forever.

Other unforgettable memories include watching my mother die in the ghetto, seeing my brother shot by the Germans. I also remember how after looking for my father in Buchenwald I heard from an eyewitness how my father was shot on the death march from Auschwitz to Buchenwald. Yet despite all these atrocities, I and all the other Buchenwalder boys managed to survive. Against Hitler's evil wishes we continued the chain of Jewish life and tradition through our children and grandchildren. We have left a legacy that will continue for generations to come.

So today, at the same time as we remember the loss of our families, it is important that everyone here, especially members of the second and third generation, learn from what we experienced. All of you must work to fight against hatred and intolerance to help make sure that nothing like the Holocaust can ever happen again.