

Andre Gabany

Wartime Experience: Hid using false identity

My name is Andre Gabany. I was born in Hungary on April 11, 1930, in the city of Debrecen. My mother's name was Margit Recz and my father's name was Joseph Gabanyi. I changed my name from Endre Gabanyi when I became a citizen of the United States. I survived the Holocaust with my mother and grandfather.

My grandfather, Aron Gabanyi, was a former judge and my other grandfather, Josef Racz, was an artisan well driller. My father owned a large store, specializing in retail sales of fabrics. My uncle, Dr. Gabanyi, was an ear, nose and throat specialist, who was educated in Hungary and practiced in Debrecen. My uncle, Dr. Desider Racz, was a physician practicing in Sopron, Hungary. His brother, Dr. Tiberio Racz, was a physician-dentist in Milano, Italy. Tiberio was married to a dear Christian lady, a college professor, and survived the war.

I lived with my mother in Budapest, where my mother owned and operated a dairy franchise. When the Second World War broke out, my grandfather Josef, my mother and I moved to Sopron, next door to my uncle Dr. Racz, who had been educated in Germany. I attended Jewish grammar schools both in Budapest and Sopron. We assumed that because my uncle was German educated, we would receive better treatment as Jews. But during the war we had to wear the Star of David. I was beaten by classmates in school, and was spit on for being Jewish.

Later, German armies were stationed in Hungary and the Gestapo took hostages to force the Jewish population into ghettos. My Uncle, Dr. Racz, became one of the hostages and later was deported to Auschwitz. Following this incident, my mother obtained false Christian identity papers from her sisters and brothers-in-law living in Debrecen. Two brothers-in-law and a sister perished later. With the help of a righteous Christian neighbor my grandfather, Joseph Racz, my mother and I escaped from the ghetto in Sopron to Budapest. During our escape, we almost lost contact with my grandfather. From Budapest, we traveled to a small village next to the Lake Balaton, hiding under false identity, pretending to escape the Russian occupation.

When the Russian armies were closing in on us, we were discovered as Jews by Nazi-Hungarians constantly patrolling the area. Due to a miracle, we were not killed, but beaten and arrested. The Nazi-Hungarians were collecting other Jews, some who were "exempt Jews", and transported us from prison to prison westward. We were transferred to the Gestapo as prisoners and while being transported westward to Germany, the Russian army liberated us in Sopron, Hungary.

While in prison, I met Russians who said the Germans put them in prison by mistake; they were white Russians on the German side. When we were liberated by the Russian army, one of the so-called "white Russians" became a high-ranking Russian officer and asked me to identify the good and the bad Hungarians, so that he could have the Nazis executed. I had absolute power

at age fifteen and I had not one person killed. I am a very lucky survivor. All of my schoolmates in Budapest and Sopron were killed except for two.

My father, Joseph Gabanyi, and my grandfather, Aron Gabanyi, were considered "exempt Jews" at the beginning of the war because my grandfather was a respected judge. My father was inducted into the Hungarian army as a motorcycle messenger. Later, when the German armies occupied Hungary, my father no longer was exempt and was driven out to a minefield and was killed. My grandfather the judge was deported to a concentration camp.

I came to America in 1948 with my mother. I graduated from the University of California, College of Engineering, Berkeley in 1953, and attended graduate school at Stanford University. I am a licensed, registered mechanical engineer in the State of California. I have participated in major engineering projects including the first US. Satellite, the "Discoverer" and in the design and construction of the Bay Area Rapid Transit System.

I received Commendations from Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, from the Bay Area Rapid Transit District and the United Coast Guard. I retired and live with my wife Solange, who was born in Casablanca, Morocco. We were married in 1965, and have two children, my son Dr. Joseph Gabany, and my daughter Gizella Gabany, and two grandchildren.