

Rubin and Jona Turner  
by Daughter Ruth Turner  
Polish Displaced People  
and Holocaust Survivors  
Samaria  
December 3, 1948



My parents, Rubin and Jona Turner both were born in Poland. My mother was born in Cracow and my father in Lublin. When the war broke out they both left Poland and began to travel east into Russia and Siberia to escape Nazi persecution. They met in Russia and married. When the war ended, they went back to Poland to see if any of their family survived. Unfortunately, most of their family members perished. They were directed by the immigrant aid societies to a refugee camp in Deggendorf, Germany. Apparently, it was a large stone castle which had been used as a training school for German officers.

Once there the refugees tried to establish some sense of normalcy. They lived as if they were in a small village and people were assigned different duties to keep the village functioning. For example, some people were assigned to be the chief cooks, some were tailors, some were policemen. Food and clothing came to the refugee camp from the United States and Canada and the refugees began to try to live a normal life after all the horrors they had been through.

It seems that the German people who lived in the surrounding regions were very badly off. They had no food, many of their homes had been destroyed, and they were not receiving any aid. They used to come to the gates of the compound to beg for food. At first the refugees refused to have anything to do with them but then they began to give them some of their food and eventually they allowed them into the compound to do some work for them in return for food and clothing.

I have pictures of me as an infant and I am almost always being held by a nurse in uniform. My mother tells me that within nine months of arriving at the camp, there was a population explosion as the women gave birth to post-war babies. They hired the young, local German girls to help take care of all these children.

Obviously, the refugees were very anxious to get out of the camp and out of Europe. Some were lucky enough to have relatives in America (the United States) and they eagerly awaited sponsorship. My father's brother, Saul, had married a woman in Russia who had actually been born in the United States. He went to the U.S. soon after the war and when he found

out that his brother was still in Germany, he applied for papers to get us to New York. In the meanwhile, quite a few of my mother's family survived and they all went to Palestine. Some of them were even detained in Cyprus by the British, who did not want the refugees to go there. My mother obviously preferred to go to Palestine to be with her family.

One day some officials from the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society from Montreal come to the camp. They said that they were looking for skilled workers. If a worker had a specific skill, he could easily and quickly get papers to come to Canada. My father proved to be a skilled furrier and the paperwork was started for us to go to Montreal. The Society would make sure he had a job and a place to live.

My mother always described the journey as horrific. She was violently ill the whole time and she never did go on a boat or ship for the rest of her life. (She passed away on February 28, 2000). Apparently I loved the whole trip and I was well cared for by other passengers. We left Hamburg Germany on November 23 on the Samaria and landed in Halifax on December 3, 1948. I was two years old.

When we arrived in Montreal, we were greeted by volunteers who came regularly to the trains station to meet newly arrived immigrants. One gentleman approached my father and asked his name and some information about his family and it turns out that they were related. They discovered they were cousins. Our cousin was so excited at being reunited with a family member that he insisted we come stay with his family until we were settled. We stayed with them for several days and I was put into a dresser drawer to sleep because they did not have an extra bed for me!