

Bill Gluck
Jewish War Orphan
Marine Falcon
June 23, 1948



The Voyage

On June 14, 1948 we were taken to the port city of Bremerhaven, Germany given two American dollars and my first-ever bottle of Pepsi-Cola. I was sure I would get drunk before I finished the bottle and I was ready for anything. At 8:15 am we boarded the SS Marine Falcon, a converted liberty ship that had been built for the US Navy. These ships were ferrying home troops at the end of the war. I believe, through the generosity of the American government, they were supplied to transport us to Canada. I was most impressed with the two level cots covered with snow white sheets and hanging baskets for sea sickness (just in case). The dining room was spotlessly clean. The tables were covered with spotless white tablecloths. I was very impressed with anything clean and white. There was lots of good food served by white-jacketed, black waiters. Coffee, cream and sugar was left on the tables. We could have as much as we wanted during and after the meals. I was in awe of everything and immediately began keeping a daily journal (in Hungarian) for the duration of the voyage. I still chuckle when I re-read that journal after all these years to see my youthful innocence and excitement.

This was our first ocean voyage. Some in the group became sea sick as soon as the ship left the harbor, others later, as foul weather set in. Soon the ship was bobbing like a piece of cork in the open sea. The poor souls afflicted with mal-de-mer were encouraged to stay on the top deck during the storm. They felt and looked absolutely awful - barely able to stand on their feet with blankets wrapped over their shoulders. I quickly learned not to stay downwind of them. My lifelong friend and room-mate Mike Blum looked like a "Muselman" again, a name the SS guards gave to those in the concentration camps who were skin and bones and would soon die of malnutrition or dysentery. Mike thought he was dying and looked like it. Because I spoke some English he asked me to get him some help from the doctor on the ship. The good doctor laughed at our panic and told us not to worry. He said that when the storm passed or Mike stepped off the ship he would soon be as good as new.

Journal entries translated by Bill Gluck

Halifax, 23 VI. 1948

We pulled into the harbour at about 10 am. At 12 noon we disembarked beside a train station where a number of kind people were waiting for us with oranges, cigarettes and chocolates. They bought stamps and mailed our letters for us. And then the train began to roll with us toward Toronto. This time we found ourselves in neat first class compartments that were easily turned into sleepers during the night. The sheets were sparkling white. Besides the fancy equipment on board, we also found the food to be fairly good. Twelve people remained behind in Halifax, the rest of us will be divided between Toronto and Winnipeg. The trip will take 24 hours. It is a most comfortable journey and I am looking ahead for further developments with much curiosity.

Montreal, 24 VI. 1948

I had a very pleasant sleep on the train and the food was also fairly good. It was 9 o'clock at night when we pulled into the Montreal railway station. Representatives from the Jewish Congress were already there waiting for us. Dudu's Klara and Csoki from Aschau were also there. We were bussed to the temporary home where we washed and bathed, then four of us - Brandi, Blumi, Yunger, and myself-moved into a neat room. We'll stay here for three weeks. The Personnel in this house are very pleasant. Even though roll call is at 8 in the morning, we the new arrivals, will be allowed to sleep in.

Montreal, 25 VI. 1948

I had a most pleasant sleep in a bed that was supplied with upper and lower snow-white sheets. Today we will receive some clothes and some "dough". I wonder what we will get.

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