

Joseph Bach

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Abstract

Joseph Bach was born in 1908 in Lvov, Poland to Henry Bach and Marena Holtzberger. He had a younger brother, Siegfried. His father owned a china and porcelain store. Joseph graduated from a German Gymnasium and went to a university in Paris to study medicine. He left after three years as it was rumored there would be war. He went to work at Metro-Golden-Mayer where he had worked during the summer. The war began and soon the Russians occupied the area and sent some of the citizens including Joseph to Siberia. He was let out after five years and found his way home via a train through Asia. His family was dead and he decided to join the Polish Army. He left after three years and married a girl in Poland and they immigrated to the US. He is happy and does not desire to discuss much of the bad times. His grandson helped with the interview.

Summary

00:00 Joseph Bach was born in 1908 in Lvov, Poland to Henry Bach and Marena Holtzberger. Joseph had a younger brother, Siegfried. His father owned a medium-sized china and porcelain store near the center of the city. His father's brother was in the Austrian-Hungarian Army in and took care of horses. Joseph knew his mother's siblings as they came to visit. He attended a German school as it was the best quality, especially for math. The Polish School was noting special.

05:00 They spoke Polish at home. He also knew German but no Yiddish. His family was assimilated into Polish society. They were somewhat religious as attended services on holidays. His brother got the same education as he did. Joseph completed the German Gymnasium. Then he went to Paris to attend a university where he studied medicine to become a doctor. Paris was nice and entertaining. He was there for three years and did not finish as it required five years for completion. He did not finish because the war started and he went home.

10:00 His family was middle class. They did not own a house but lived in a nice three-family house. They had no financial problems. His parents paid his tuition at the university. Upon his return to Lvov, he obtained work at Metro Golden Mayer where he ordered and advertised movies. Polish was used in the office. (Sometime Joseph's grandson, Matthew, talks in the background.) There were 12 cinemas in Lvov. The cinema people came to the office to obtain what they needed.

- 15:00 Joseph had worked for them two previous summer vacations. It was a temporary job. He was in Lvov when the war started and everyone was upset. Young people entered the Army but he did not want to do so. The Polish Army got ready for war but was smaller than the German Army as it had about 1,000 soldiers and the German Army had thousands. Germany had made excellent preparations. Poland was a poor country compared to Germany. His younger brother was away in an organization. Joseph obtained the MGM job upon his arrival from Paris. Russia then grabbed part of Poland. The Germans started building up their lines.
- 20:00 Russians moved into Lvov. They were well-dressed and prepared for war. They behaved different with grownup girls. They did not trust anyone. Joseph was called by an inspector and asked if he worked at MGM and they thought he was an American spy. He said he worked for the company but never met an American. Joseph told them they were crazy and he was permitted to go home. The agent came at night with a gendarme and his father got red in the face and his mother almost fainted. He went marching north with 400 people and the Rabbi. There were nice people including bank directors.
- 25:00 They were the richer, higher class people. They marched on foot to the trains where both passenger and freight trains were loading. Joseph received a piece of bread and, in Russian, was told to go. They traveled three to four days by train and later by car. There were only men in the train and no families. They traveled around 3,000 miles. It was very cold up there. They got a little food and a place to sleep on the floor in the cattle car. They got to a place where people were sleeping by the hundreds. It was a work camp, a gulag with 2 to 3,000 people. You got work to do such as repair or build something. There were lots of Jews, mostly from Poland. People died in the camp from infection.
- 30:00 After five years they were let out one at a time. He walked alone to the train. Women helped him by giving him food. He traveled alone by train through Asia through many cities and returned to Lvov. The janitor told him that everyone in his family was killed, even his brother's two year old. His mother's close Polish friend said his mother had committed suicide by poisoning herself after being forced into prostitution by the soldiers.
- 35:00 He went to the movies and saw Jews passing as Christians which did not seem natural. He felt the Germans had impressed on the Poles that the Jews were bad. He saw he did not belong in Lvov and did not know what to do so joined the Polish Army under British direction and they fought through to Berlin. After three years in the Army, he came home but felt that he did not belong because he was Jewish.
- 40:00 He met his future wife on the street and they got married though he did not have a penny. He met the wife's mother and sister who were friendly and the mother said not to look for

a rock when you have a diamond. A woman alone is in a dangerous situation so they attached to him. He had three Jewish girl friends, two were pretty. He married the diamond and they went to the US

45:00 They put their names down and knew a little English. They went through Austria to get to the US. He went to work in the US and later had a store. Joseph did not want to tell more as his wife would get upset. The trouble is over and he does not want to discuss it. He has nothing to tell children or young adults as you can get crazy. He tried to make a nice living as he has a nice family, both the children and grandchildren. His life is over now. The Poles and Russians hate each other and the Jews are in-between. He was a slave in the camp.

50:00 Now it is normal time. It is better to forget about it and drink coffee. It was nothing pleasant. Here everyone is happy. You don't need the crazy time. Old people are falling back.

55:00