Abraham C. Frydman was born on 3 January 1929 in Lodz, Poland, to parents Chaim & Rywy (Riva) Frydman. He had one sibling – Younger brother Lolek (Louis) Frydman. Abraham and his brother lived in his hometown until 1939, with his parents and extended family. In November of 1939, uniformed German soldiers surrounded Abraham's house unannounced, and all the Jews living there were ordered to leave the building, without taking any of their possessions with them. Abraham and his family were furthermore warned that unless they left immediately to the Lodz Ghetto they would face execution.

In mid-February of 1940, shortly after the Lodz Ghetto was sealed off, in order to avoid deportation to concentration camps, Abraham and his family succeeded in escaping the Lodz Ghetto and relocated to the Piotrkow Trybunalski Ghetto. In the Piotrkoz Ghetto Abraham was forced to do miscellaneous works for the German military. In late September of 1942, just before the Ghetto was liquidated, Abraham and has family escaped, yet again…All the inhabitants of the Piotrkow Trybunalski Ghetto who did not manage to escape were either murdered on the spot, or directly deported to Treblinka where they were gassed to death.

Abraham, his brother, and mother were able to escape to Warsaw where they were kept in hiding on the "Aryan" side for approximately one month, until someone denounced them to the Gestapo. After bribing the two Gestapo agents who came to arrest them, they fled to the Warsaw Ghetto where their father was already living. Abraham and his brother Lolek lived illegally in the Warsaw Ghetto where both their parents were slave laborers for the Hermann Brauer Clothing Factory, located on 42 Nalewki Street.

The final liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto began on 19 April 1943. In order to avoid deportation once again, as the ghetto was being liquidated, Abraham and his family secretly relocated into an extensive underground bunker. They remained in hiding until a German Gestapo agent caught a Jewish member exiting the bunker (through the sewer) to go and collect food on the Aryan side, and bring it back. Soon enough, the Nazi's started to bomb the bunker and threaten, through a loud speaker, that if the Jews in hiding did not voluntarily leave the bunker they would all be killed immediately.

After nine days of increasingly louder explosions, the Germans broke through the ceiling of the extensive underground bunker, in which Abraham and his family were hiding. According to Joseph Tenenbaum: “On April 28, 1943 355 Jews were taken from a bunker that had running water, electricity, toilet, 3 meters under the surface,” (In Search of a Lost People, 1948). According to the Strop Report, on 28 April 1943: “An engineer officer assigned by the Wehrmacht worked tenaciously to open a bunker that had been prepared last October and was equipped with running water, toilet, electricity, and other conveniences. 274 of the most influential and wealthiest Jews were removed.” The difference between Tennenbaum’s and Stroop’s numbers, a total of 81 persons, undoubtedly consisted of the able-bodied men, whom were all executed immediately following their capture. Abraham’s father, Chaim, was one of the ‘able-bodied’ males, who was shot down and brutally murdered immediately after he was forcefully exited out of the bunker. This was Abraham’s last memory of his father.

After forcefully exiting the bunker, Abraham was led through the burning Warsaw Ghetto to the Umschlagplatz, where a freight train was awaiting him and the rest of the children and women. Abraham and the remaining group were brutally packed onto freight wagons, and transported to the Majdanek Concentration Camp. The trip that normally took three hours took between six to eight hours. The freight car that packed up to 50 was packed up to 150, with barely any ventilation and no food or water. Abraham and all the other transports from the Warsaw Ghetto were unloaded at Flugplatz, located on the grounds of the former Plage-Leskiewicz airplane factory. Zofia Leszczynska reports the arrival on April 28, 1943 of a “Large transport of Warsaw Ghetto Jews: men, women, and children” (Kronika Obuzu na Majdanku, 1980). They were then forced to march one mile to 7 Lipowa Street in Lublin, a sub-camp of Majdanek, where many SS workshops and warehouses where located. The clothing of prisoners gassed at Majdanek were sorted and stored here. Upon arrival, the Nazi officers at the camp removed all body hair, including head hair.

On 30 April, 1943, Reinhard Feix, the Commandant of the nearby Budzyn Camp, came the 7 Lipowa Street Camp in a partially filled freight-car train. He received permission to

bring 700 “experience metal workers” to Budzyn. “His request” was apparently filled through a “selection” from the April 27 and April 28 transports to Lipow Street from the Warsaw Ghetto. Due to the brutal murder of the Jewish men upon capture from the underground bunker, it was difficult for the Nazis to find the 700 able-bodied male adult workers at the Lipowa street site, regardless of whether they have experience working with metals.

At this point Abraham’s mother, Riva, quickly suggested that he and his brother volunteer for this selection, which would ultimately save their life. She handed Abraham a piece of gold and sugar cubes, and told him to suck on the sugar cubes whenever he was hungry and to keep the gold for barter. In order to make himself appear older, as he was only a mere 14 years old, he cleverly stuffed newspapers under his pants and stood on rocks to appear taller during the selection. Abraham raised his hand and miraculously passed the selection…He never saw his mother again, but nonetheless she saved his life. The remaining group of 7 Lipowa Street who did not pass the selection were all brutally murdered, including his mother Riva. The children were told they were going to ‘school’ when in reality, they would be walking into their doom, to soon be gassed to death. If it weren’t for Abraham’s mother, Riva, Abraham would have never survived….

After selection, under a barrage of rifle buts and whips, Abraham and brother Lolek were forced onto a freight train, which awaited them and the other chosen workers from the selection. The train, which was crammed with 807 men, as 107 were already on the train upon arrival at Lipowa Street, most of which having been diverted from Treblinka, arrived in Budzyn, Kreis Krasnik on the afternoon of 30 April, 1943. The primary industry at the Budzyn Camp was the Henkel airplane-manufacturing enterprise. The camp was at first a Judenlager (a camp for Jews) operated by the SS and the local district police authorities. Feix Leipold (who subsequently became the SS Kommandant of Schindler’s Bruennlitz camp). On 22 October 1943 the camp moved to primitive, though newly constructed barracks, officially becoming “Budzyn – Barakenbau,” a sub-camp of Majdanek. Budzyn was one of the most murderous camps imaginable, especially under

Feix's control. Savage beatings, killings, hangings and executions were daily, if not hourly, events.

All Jewish prisoners at Majdanek and at all of its sub-camps, except for the Budzyn camp, a total of 42,000 Jews, were executed in between the 3rd and the 4th of November, 1943. The massacre was dubbed "Erntefest", a celebration of the conclusion of "Operation Reinhard" and the resultant deactivation of the three mass murder camps; Chelm, Treblinka, and Sobibor. The Budzyn camp was spared as it was deemed essential in the production of the Henkel airplanes.

Toward the end of May 1944, as the Eastern frontline was nearing, 400 Budzyn prisoners, Abraham and his brother included, were transported by train to Radom, another Majdanek sub-camp. The Radom Camp contained about 3,000 prisoners, the sole remnant of 40,000 prewar Radom Jews. The rest has been murdered in Treblinka nine months earlier, in August of 1942. The prisoners worked primarily at the Fa. Steiner, Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG, and the HASAG arms factory. Abraham and his brother mainly worked for the HASAG firm.

On June 26, 1944, the Radom camp was closed and the nearly 3,000 prisoners (2,450 men, 500 women, and 20 children) were sent on a brutal 30day 70-mile death-march to Tomaszow Mazowiecki. 60-120 marchers were executed during the march, mainly because they were not able to keep up with the line. Food and water were minimal. Abraham slept in open fields. On the third day Abraham came to Tomaszow – Mazowiecki where men and women were immediately separated. The men were squeezed into an abandoned clothing factory. Little food or water was available, and no sanitary facilities were provided. The weather was unusually hot and the humid, and there was barely any air ventilation. The outside doors were bolted and guarded at all times by the SS. The prisoners were told by the SS that all pipes and underground passages were filled with poison gas, which would be released at any moment if the prisoners became 'disobedient' or loud. The women were packed into a local jail, under similarly devastating conditions.

After a week in Tomaszow, a freight train finally arrived. Abraham was again packed tightly, with barely any room to stand. No food or water was given. When the train disembarked at Auschwitz, Abraham noticed that the Radom women prisoners had been transported at the end of the train and saw them being led into the camp. In Auschwitz the 2,187 men were ordered to line up in rows of five next to our train. Abraham was forced to wait a couple of hours witnessing a severely brutal and miserably tragic "selection" of thousands of people, apparently from a recently arrived transport. All children and their caretakers were led directly to the gas chambers. All others underwent a dreadful selection – those not deemed fit were directed toward the belching, acid wrenching crematoria chimneys. It was not unusual to see a tormented parent of a relative who "passed" the selection bolt from their line and join their family members who were proceeding toward the gas chambers…this was allowed.

When the main selection was over, three SS-men came over to Abrahams' group. One of them announced: "Those who are sick, weak, or worn out from this trip, step forward! You will be taken to the camp." No one stepped forward. The group then marched past one of the SS-men, reportedly Dr. Mengele, who in a relaxed, matter-of-fact manner asked questions to the prisoners, mainly on how old they were, what work they had done prior to incarceration, and how they felt about performing physical work. Those who passed the selection, a total of 2,817 mean, Abraham and his brother included, were shoved back into the awaited freight cars. After a short wait, the train moved on, passing through Czechoslovakia and then stopping on a siding in Vienna. After about six days of non-stop-and-go movement, the train disembarked somewhere in Germany, apparently in a civilian camp for forced labor workers. They were then transported by truck to Vaihingen am Enz, a village between Stuttgart & Karlsruhe. Abraham and the rest of the group were the first inmates of the newly constructed camp, the Vaihingen camp, a sub-camp of the Natzweiler concentratin camp. They arrived on August 14, 1944 - About three weeks before the main Natzeweiler camp was liberated by the American forced. In mid-August, 1944 the Normandy commenced, and that the Warsaw and Paris uprisings had already started.

The primary work in Vaihingen was construction in a former stone quarry (Steinbruch der Firma Baresel) of an underground weapons factory, mainly for the production of V-2 rockets. The Steinbruch enterprise also served to test and modify the V-1 rocket in an attempt to expand the production at the Messerschmitt airplane works. The plans were known under the code name "Stoffel." Abraham's work was brutally controlled by the German enterprise Kolmenthaler Hoch u. Tiebau, as well as by I.G Farben. The workers were forced to work under the most inhumane conditions, 6-7 days a week, constantly being hit and screamed at. The Stoffel project officially ended at the end of October 1943, the result of a devastating air attack on the facilities.

On November16, 1944, 500 Vaihingen prisoners, Abraham and his brother Lolek included, were transferred to the Unterriexingen Camp (Kreis Ludwigsburg, a newly constructed subsidiary of the Vaihingen Camp). Unterriexingen was at first an all-Jewish camp, but as of January 1945 a large number of non-Jewish Poles, mainly survivors of the Warsaw Uprising, were brought in. The work often was carried out in freezing mud, centered on the construction of a landing strip for fighter planes. The construction of a tunnel was also made to serve as an airplane hanger. 300 out of the 500 prisoners from Vaihingen did not survive the first two months…

On March 10, 1945, 250 of the Unterriexingen Jewish prisoners, (Abraham and Lolek included), were transported to the Kochendorf Camp (on the Kocher, Kreis Hailbronn), also known as the Struthof Concentration camp, a recently established Natzweiler sub-camp containing about 1,600 prisoners. Most of the work consisted of building for the Henkerl aircraft manufacturing company underground quarters, which was located in a former salt mine. Inmates also labored for the following German firms, which paid the SS for each prisoners: Hoch and Tiefbau, Koch & Meyer, Henkel Flugzeugfabrik, Zuffenhaeusen, and other smaller firms. The prisoners dug ditches, laid cables, and cleared bombed out sites.
In Kochendorf the inmates had to work in a poorly ventilated salt mine, and groups were frequently sent to clear debris resulting from bombardments. Jews and Poles were a

minority, while French inmates were the majority. All Kapo's were convicted German criminals, and all prisoners were treated with equal brutality by the Germans and their Ukranian helpers. The Kochendorf wake-up call typically consisted of a sharp blow to the head with a trucheon or a heavy stick wielded by a Ukranian, who assisted the German Kapo's.

On March 31, 1945, as the Western frontline came closer, the Kochendor camp was evacuated. About 1,500 prisoners, Abraham and Lolek among them, were sent on a death march in the direction of Ueberrot, the ultimate destination being Dachau. Prisoners who were not able to march were packed into two freight cars and sent to the Hesental camp, which was about to be evacuated. The march was led by the German Kapos, who appropriated all the food and supplies for themselves only. Directly behind them, prisoners carried the Kochendorf commandant's personal bed. Abraham and the rest of the group were relentlessly forced to march at a rapid pace. Any prisoner who fell down, even accidentally, was immediately executed.

The first night, Abraham and Lolek slept in ditched in marl pits. The ground was wet and slippery – Abraham had to cling to the sides of the ditch to avoid lying in water accumulated in the middle of the ditch. The following night they were packed into a barn that barely provided any room to even sit down on the floor. They were given some food, mainly a boiled potato. When the prisoners would scream due to the unbearable conditions of over-crowdedness and lack of food and water, the guards would attack them with clubs and rifles. The SS guards would then warn them to maintain absolute quiet. This was however, impossible to accomplish. Consequently, the guards would periodically spray the barn with machine gun fire, out rightly killing many prisoners and causing others to die from ensuing havoc.

The following night Abraham and Lolek slept in an open field adjacent to the road in which they were marching. The following night they passed a small town in flames, apparently the result of a very recent bombing raid. They slept right on the paved roadway.

After 6 days of brutal, ruthless marching, on April 5, 1945, with virtually no food or water, the line was ordered to take a rest in the Huetten Forest area. When the order was given to continue the march it became evident that about 60 of the prisoners were too exhausted to resume marching. Abraham began marching once again, and noticed Lolek was struggling to keep up in the line. Lolek was out of sight…Abraham continued on the original death march and ended up in Allach, apparently on the same day Lolek did. Many prisoners, Abraham included, were then loaded onto freight cars and left on the siding for two days. After the train started to move, the prisoners changed freight trains a total of three time, marching a day or two between each changeover, until they reached Mittenwald – only one-half of those departing from Allach were still alive at that time. The prisoners were ordered to disembark and found themselves facing a circle of machine guns aimed straight at them. After a night of horror, expecting to be executed at any moment, a limousine arrived and a high-ranking SS officer stepped out and spoke with the SS guards. Shortly thereafter the guards withdrew and within a couple of hour the American troops and the Red Cross showed up. Abraham had survived.

Abraham and Lolek, the sole survivors of their 42+ extended family, reunited three months after liberation.

Of the 2,817 prisoners who arrived in Vaihingen from Radom in August of 1944, only 320 survived the war. Of the 250 prisoners sent to Kochendorf from Unterriexingen, all but a very few perished, either in a camp or on the death marches.