

# Otto and Ferenc (Frank) Klein



Otto, Ferenc, sister Agnes, and mother Lily (APMAB)



Otto Klein in 2009 (*Le Temps*/Geneva)

**Otto and Ferenc (Frank) Klein** were born on June 7, 1932 in Hajduboszormeny, Hungary, into a close-knit orthodox Jewish family. Their father was a successful lumber trader who had studied at many yeshivas.

The family was deported in June 1944 to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the twins were immediately separated from their mother and sister. Their father had already been arrested and taken away in April 1944, and he died during a death march on the eve of liberation.

During their time at Auschwitz, Otto and Frank were examined by many doctors and received eye drops that burned them and rendered them blind for several days. As with most of the twins, they lived with the puzzling juxtaposition of Mengele as both the polite protector and killer.

As the Soviet army approached, the Nazis began to destroy evidence at Auschwitz. An SS officer ordered Frank to carry a large gasoline can a couple miles – it turned out the Nazis used that gasoline to try to blow up one of the crematoria.

After liberation, the twins initially travelled with older twin Zvi Spiegel (the “Zwillingsvater,” or “twins father,” who supervised the male twins while imprisoned at Auschwitz) to try to make their way back to Hungary. Soon, however, they split off because the twins wanted to go home. On March 4, 1945, Otto and Frank returned to their mother’s family’s city and located three uncles, an aunt, and three cousins. Frank remarked that it was “one of the happiest days of his life.”

Both boys had contracted illnesses while at Auschwitz. Otto was hospitalized in Switzerland to recover from tuberculosis, and he made Geneva his home. Frank and sister, Agnes, eventually immigrated to the United States, making their home in El Paso, Texas.

On many occasions, Otto recounted his time in the death camps on video as well as in French-speaking schools. He felt it was his duty to serve as a witness when asked of him. But he didn’t want to present himself as a victim; he did not want to live in feelings of revenge. Frank, too, did not want to live in bitterness. He considered the Nazis his enemy for as long as he lived, but he also believed that he had developed more empathy and understanding toward other people because of his ordeal at Auschwitz.

Frank died in 1986. Agnes died in 1998. Otto died in March 2014.

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