

Miklosz and Tibor Bleier

Miklosz and Tibor Bleier were born in 1932 in a small town in Hungary, in what is now part of Russia. Miki and Tibi were the youngest of four boys and had a wonderful life on a large estate and farm. The twins' father owned two plants that manufactured liquor; he grew potatoes and fruit and made liqueurs from them.

When German soldiers invaded in 1944, they took all of the Bleier family's possessions. They were not even permitted to live on their farm. With two suitcases in hand, they reported to the village synagogue; from there they were forced to move to a ghetto in a large city. They only had the shirts on their backs.

In May 1944 the ghetto was liquidated, and the Bleier family endured eight days on a cattle car without food or water. When the train doors opened at Auschwitz, Miki remembers that many children had died, their mothers killing them so that they would not suffer.

On the selection platform, soldiers yelled "Men on one side; women on the other side." Some guards were also shouting for twins. The twins' father told Dr. Mengele personally that he had twin boys, and Miki and Tibi were torn from their mother. As Miki was led away, he saw an SS officer beat his father, who fell to the ground.

One morning at roll call, Miki's and Tibi's numbers were announced as part of the group of twins selected for experiments. They were transported by ambulance to a laboratory, where many X-rays were taken of them. Dr. Mengele walked into the lab wearing a white gown over his SS uniform; he gave Miki some candy and then injected him with something that caused him great pain. One day, Tibi was taken away for "special" experiments -- several surgeries, one of which left him paralyzed, unable to walk. After the fourth surgery, Tibi disappeared. Miki was the only person in his family left alive.

After liberation, Miki suffered from many nervous ailments. He had seizures, and he couldn't sleep or concentrate. He could not erase the memories of the horrible tests and surgeries, and he could not get over the death of his dear twin brother. In the 1950s, when he was drafted into the Israel army, he was terrified of bullets. He eventually suffered a nervous breakdown and spent two years in a special hospital for Holocaust survivors.

Miki was offered a job in a film lab in Tel Aviv, run by a German professor. The professor taught Miki day and night and took the struggling man under his wing. Unfortunately he was also stealing silver from the lab, and when he was caught, Miki was placed in charge. Because of Miki's expertise, he became known all over Israel. One day, Israel television offered him a job in which Miki would earn a lot of money. So he left the laboratory and began a career in television.

As the years past, Miki was able to patch his life together. He married and helped raise six children. Yet despite the passage of time, Miki thought more and more about Tibi, wishing he had his twin brother to confide in, to show off his children to.



In October 2005, Miki's wish came true. Over 60 years after Tibi disappeared from Auschwitz, he and his brother were reunited on a popular Russian television show titled, "Zhdi Menya" – "Wait for Me." After the war, Tibor ended up in Soviet Ukraine, while Miklosz settled in Israel. Each thought the other had died, and the Cold War meant they had no opportunities to consider looking for one another. In an emotional scene in the Kiev airport, the two rolled up their sleeves and showed each other the numbers tattooed on their arms while they were in Auschwitz: 5103 and 5104.

(adapted from *Children of the Flames*)