

No Known Address

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No Known Address – a collection of 63 poems and one short story are one person’s response to the Holocaust, on a personal level. The author has traveled several times to his great grandfather’s native village in Bavaria. He has seen the village increasingly embrace and preserve its Jewish heritage. But even before that, the Jews of the village were warned of Hitler’s intentions, so they were able to sell their homes and immigrate out of the country with dignity – and survived!

Below is a selection of 9 poems; purchase the entire volume at poeticapublishing.com

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A FATHER'S WORDS

You will survive, my son,
even if we don't.
You are young and strong,
you will survive.
Have no regrets
live life fully
only that will show
that we aren't beaten –
They won't win!

(a father said to his son upon entering Auschwitz)

THE EARS

“Take off your clothes!”

It was strange,

but we did,

the whole room full

of women and girls

watched by male guards.

Take off all jewelry!

Bracelet and necklace

were easy –

off they came.

But earrings were a problem.

I'd kept losing them,

and still would.

They slipped

from my pierced ears

so mother had

them soldered closed.

“Now,” she said,

one pair

will last your life,”

and they almost did

except for now.

They must come off

but couldn't.

The simple, efficient,

final solution?

Cut my ears!

KITCHEN CHORES

On arrival
at the camp
separated
from my mother,
from all I knew –
never to see again.
Assigned kitchen duty,
I survived
stealing food.
Sometimes
ordered
to fertilize
the gardens
with ashes
containing
bits of bone
and
human teeth.

DOWN THE RIVER

“Go down the river,
Little Moses, go down.”

Said the officer
to the infant
firmly held
under rushing water.

Only minutes old,
still learning to breathe
tiny boy gasped,
breathed water,
and died.

Throwing the body down
the man went home
not dreaming of any wrong
or eternal pain,
while the boy reveled
in the Mercies of God
forever more.

MIKLÓS RADNÓTI

1909 - 1944

I didn't want to do it,
the others – I don't know.
They'd been marched to Bohr
then back to Hungary.
Thirty in our charge
of three thousand that had left,
they needed care in hospital
yet that could not be.
There was no place for them,
no choices.
What were we to do?
We could not continue.
We made them dig a hole,
their last labor,
then shot them
and filled it in.

May Christ Redeemer
have mercy on my soul!

CHILDREN FREE

At labor camp,
while mothers worked,
children were free:
no school, no teachers,
no adults, except for guards
who ignored them,
until one day
mothers returned –
all children gone.

NEVER TROCHENBROD AGAIN

Never should a town
be destroyed
eliminated, erased,
no stone left,
simply
because the people
were unlike others.

Trochenbrod,
an all-Jewish town
in a sea of Gentiles,
obliterated
for their beliefs.

After all the residents
were slaughtered,
a truck full of babies,
thrown in like wood,
taken and emptied
only God knows where.

Bodies of mothers
fathers and children
littered the street,
others
filled mass graves
row by row.

Buildings dismantled
or burned,
even street stones
pulled up
and taken away.

Decades later
two rows of trees
only remain
along the street
and memories
of the few
survivors.

I HAVE NUMBERS

It is heart wrenching
to see the film
of little children,
four, five, and six,
pulling up their sleeves
to show
the one who asked,
if they had numbers.

Yes, I have numbers,
here are mine. See?

Not bellybuttons
they are showing,
but numbers
permanently tattooed
on their little arms
marked for life
prisoners
of irrational hate.

RECKENDORF REMEMBERS

Generations resting
in a graveyard now
maintained with respect
by the village
to honor those
who lived before.
Synagogue saved
by sale to the village
when minion
left after warning,
before Krystallnacht,
of Dark Time coming.
Today renovated,
community showplace center
mahrib outlined,
window symbolized
and wedding stone
preserved.