

Zigi Shipper

- Easy to read life story



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST

*Learning from genocide -
for a better future*



Key terms:

Jewish: People who believe in a religion called Judaism. Jewish people are also called Jews.

Nazi Party: The political party which ruled Germany at the time of the Second World War. They thought people who were 'Aryan' (white skin, blond hair, blue eyes) were better than all others. They wanted to kill people from other groups who were different from them, such as Jewish people and Sinti and Roma people (often labelled as 'Gypsies' historically).

Ghetto: A small area in a town or city where Jews were forced to live all together. They were not allowed to leave. The ghettos became very crowded with lots of families living in the same flat or even the same room.

Concentration camp: Places where the Nazis kept many people as prisoners. They were put there because the Nazis did not like them, such as Jews and Sinti and Roma people. The people sent there had done nothing wrong. In the camps people were forced to work as slaves or they were killed. There were many camps like this in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s.

Zigi Shipper grew up in Poland in the 1930s. He had a very happy childhood living with his father and grandparents. His family was Jewish, like many other people in Poland at this time. He went to a school for **Jewish** children.

In Germany a group called the **Nazi Party** ran the country. The Nazi Party and the people who supported them believed that Jews were not as good as non-Jews. They wanted to get rid of all the Jews in Europe. In 1939 the Nazi party invaded Poland, where Zigi lived. This started World War Two.

Zigi's father was worried that Jewish men would be in danger from the Nazis, so he escaped to Russia. Zigi stayed in Poland with his grandparents. His Jewish school was closed down and they were too scared to leave the house.

The Nazis made all the Jewish people in his town live in a **ghetto**. Zigi worked in a factory. The ghetto was dreadful and Zigi's grandfather died because he did not have enough food.

Four years later, the ghetto was emptied and all the people living in it were taken away on trucks meant for animals. They had no idea where they were going and many people died on the journey. It was hot, cramped and scary. There was no water to drink and very little space to sit down.

When the trucks stopped they had arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This was a large **concentration camp** in Poland. Zigi was taken away from his grandmother, his hair was shaved off and he was made to wear striped clothes with a number printed on them. The Nazis used these numbers instead of people's names.

Zigi saw some dreadful things, including many people dying. Near the end of the war, he was forced to walk a very long way every day along with many other people from the camps. He caught a disease called typhus. This made him very sick. He only managed to live because of the help of his friends.

In May 1945 the Second World War ended. Zigi was freed, but he was very weak and spent weeks in hospital. His grandmother had died. He could not find his father. Zigi and the other Jewish people he knew had to try and find a new life. Zigi went to live in England, but he missed his friends who had been in the concentration camps with him.

After a few months he met up with other young Jewish people who had also suffered because of the Nazis. This gave him people to talk to who could understand how he felt.

Up until his death in 2023, he spoke to school students all around the UK. He helped them to learn about the terrible things the Nazis did because they hated people who were different to them. He wanted everyone to learn that this is not right and people should never treat each other this way. Zigi said: *'There is nothing we can do about the past, but we can do a lot about the present and the future.'*

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Find out more...

The Holocaust: hmd.org.uk/holocaust

Other resources for educators: hmd.org.uk/educators

Learn more about Zigi and his experiences: hmd.org.uk/zigi

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Learning lessons from the past to create a safer, better future