

Life of Mr Egon Sonnenschein

Egon Sonnenschein was born in 1930 in Slovenia, former Yugoslavia. His family lived in a small town about 40 km from the Austrian border. In April 1941 the family went to stay with Egon's grandparents who lived in a small town in Bosnia. Shortly thereafter, Germany attacked Yugoslavia and created the Nazi puppet state of Croatia.

The Mayor of the town saved their lives and protected them because he had the courage to care. During their eleven months stay, many atrocities occurred and Egon and his brother were not allowed to go to school. They moved with false documents to Italian occupied Slovenia where they spent 5 weeks in a political prison. Life in the prison was harsh and people were starving. After the Nazis occupied Italy in August 1943, Egon managed to flee to Switzerland where he was semi-adopted by a farming family who were wonderful, caring people. He was then allowed to go to school.

At the end of the war, they were sent back to Yugoslavia in a freight railway wagon. Although they were allowed to go back to school, but because they were Jews they were not allowed to write exams for one month to determine their grade.

After the war, Egon's parents went to Bosnia to look for their family in the hope they had survived, but they only found their three-year cousin who was being looked after by a Moslem family. Most of his parent's family had been killed. His parents adopted his young cousin and she became his sister. Egon had many narrow escapes and is lucky to be alive, thanks to the people who endangered their and their families' lives to save him.

When asked what made Egon survive, his answer was, 'The will to live is so strong, that it is beyond description.'

Marlene Silbert (Holocaust Centre)