

Surviving the Holocaust, *By Chance Alone*

Max Eisen's Story



STUDENT WORKBOOK

Surviving the Holocaust, By Chance Alone: Max Eisen's Story

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TIMELINE

Review the timeline from **January 30, 1933, to August 23, 1939**, to explore key events of the Holocaust that occurred in Nazi Germany and its expanding territory before the start of the Second World War.

1.The Nazis viewed the Jewish population as their primary enemy, but they also created a list of 'enemies of the state,' those who did not fit or comply with Nazi beliefs. Identify 3 key events that restricted citizenship rights for Jews or other 'enemies of the state' in Germany during the inter-war period.

2.How do you feel these events would impact German citizens? Think about the impact from different perspectives: victims, perpetrators and bystanders.



MAP

Select 3 European countries and compare the Jewish population of those countries to the Canadian Jewish population in 1899 and 1931. Calculate the percentage of the Jewish population in each of the countries you select. What similarities do you find? Differences? Do you notice any patterns?

(Left to right) Eugene Eisen (5 years old), Alfred Eisen (3 years old) & Max Eisen (10 years old), 1939
Photo Source: By Chance Alone





ARTIFACTS

“Reading” Photographs

Today, we carry thousands of photographs around on our phones. We can pull our devices out and capture a moment in a split second, whenever we choose. Photographs, however, were not always so accessible. The first camera that could capture and record an image was created in 1816. It was not easily portable, it certainly could not fit in your pocket, and the process was long and difficult. While there had been progress in photography technology by the 1930s, photos remained rare.

Think about the rarity of these primary sources as you **choose one** of the photographs and answer the following questions (also see Appendix for primary sources):

Who created this primary source?

When was this photo taken?

Why was the photo taken?

What is the photographer’s point of view?

What is the subject’s point of view?

Describe what you see in the photo.

Why is this photograph important today?

How has the meaning of this photograph changed over time?

OPTIONAL: Work with another student who chose the same photo as you. Compare your responses and discuss any differences you found. Use your discussion to add to your personal responses.



Eisen Family, circa 1941

(L to R): Alfred, Edith, Max, Zoltan & Eugene

Photo Source: *By Chance Alone*



TESTIMONY

Max shared his testimony with audiences all over the world through a variety of forums. The video testimony we are drawing on for this program include his February 1995 Testimony for the USC Shoah Visual History archive and his July 2018 testimony recorded for a virtual reality program with the USC Shoah Foundation.

Watch the videos in Module 1 and answer the questions below.

1. Write a paragraph describing Jewish life in Europe before the Second World War.
2. How was the end of World War I used by Hitler and the Nazis in their rise to power?
3. What role did historical antisemitism play in the development of Nazi party ideology?
4. Give two examples of how Hitler drew on fear, anger, and/or bigotry to persuade the German public to support him?
5. Choose three adjectives to describe Max's childhood growing up in Moldava. Provide an example from Max's testimony to support each adjective you choose.
6. How can individual testimonies deepen our understanding of the Holocaust?



Max standing beside gas chamber and crematoria II in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Photo Source: USC Shoah Foundation.



TIMELINE & MAP



Using the timeline from **September 1, 1939 to August 15, 1945**, map and Max's testimony, place three key events in Max's experience on the timeline. Include the date and write a paragraph to describe where Max was and what was happening to him.



ARTIFACTS

Objects Tell a Story

Choose one of the artefacts and read the accompanying archival information. Focus in particular on how the artefact connects to Max's testimony. Think about how the meanings attached to your artefact have changed or grown over time. Write a paragraph, minimum 250 words, explaining how your artefact has impacted the Jewish community.

Include **at least one** of the following themes in your reflection:

- How would different groups have perceived and interpreted this artefact?
- How do you think this artefact was preserved, so that we can study it today?
- Objects often begin as "things" in the background of our lives, and become "artefacts" over time and through our interactions with them. How has this artefact's use changed over time? H
- How has its meaning changed over time?

OPTIONAL: Find an archive or museum closest to your school. Search through their collections to find an artifact similar to the one you have chosen. Prepare a short presentation about the artifact you found; include the similarities it holds to the one in this module.



Max Eisen standing in front of Block 21, the hospital where he worked in Auschwitz I.

Photo Source: USC Shoah Foundation



TESTIMONY

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Watch the videos in Module 2 and answer the questions below.

1. Max and his family were arrested during Passover, an important Jewish holiday. In fact, many arrests and/or significant actions took place throughout the years of the Holocaust on Jewish holidays. Why do you think this was planned? Why is this significant?
2. Re-tell Max's arrival at Auschwitz. Be sure to include specific details that Max shared in his testimony.
3. Explain how the "beating" Max received saved his life.
4. Max, like many survivors, spoke about the importance of finding hope when he were being persecute by the Nazis. Identify at least one example from Max's testimony that you feel would have given him hope to survive.
5. What attitudes or responses did Max witness from the non-Jewish population? Be sure to consider both the response of neighbours in Moldava when Max and his family were being arrested, as well as the passersby Max encountered on the death march.
6. Write three questions you would like to ask Max about his time in Auschwitz.

ESSAY TOPICS

Choose one of the topics below and write an essay response to the question. Be sure to include an introductory paragraph with your thesis statement, as well as a conclusion to your essay. You should also have three arguments to support your thesis statement.

1. Responsibility & Complicity

Thinking about Max's arrest and deportation to Auschwitz, consider all who were responsible and complicit in this process. Identify their possible motivations and why they complied. Is there a difference between responsibility and complicity?

2. Resistance & Rescue

The actions of Dr. Tadeusz Orzeszko saved Max's life, along with the lives of many others, in Auschwitz. However, Dr. Orzeszko was never formally recognized for his acts of resistance and rescue. His story remains, largely, unknown. How does learning about resistance and rescue, like the actions of Dr. Orzeszko, inform our understanding of human behavior and choice?

ASK MAX

Ask Max the three questions that you wrote after watching his video testimony earlier in this module. Record Max's answers to your questions.



TIMELINE

Review the timeline from **September 20, 1945 to November 20, 1945** to explore key events that occurred in the months immediately following liberation and the end of the Holocaust and the Second World War.

1. Do you feel justice can be found in the aftermath of a genocide? Explain your opinion.
2. Aside from holding perpetrators accountable and offering punishment for crimes committed, what do trials like the Nuremberg trials do for communities impacted by atrocities?



MAP

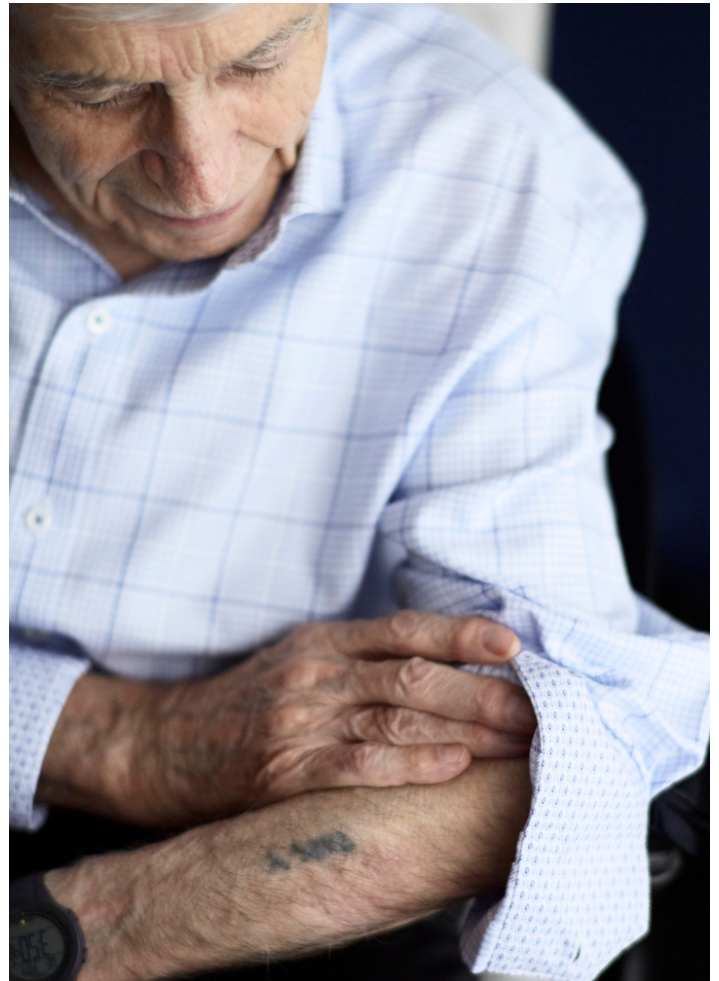
Return to the same countries that you reviewed in Module 1. Now look at the Jewish population in 1948. Compare the Jewish population pre-war to post-war. As you compare these numbers, reflect on how hateful ideologies that demonize and dehumanize groups, like the Jewish community during the Holocaust, contribute to crimes against humanity or genocide.



ARTIFACTS

What is in a Document?

In order to investigate and understand primary sources, historians think critically about objects and ask questions. **Choose one** of the documents in this module and begin by reading what information exists about the document. Now that you know a bit about the document, think about what information is missing. What else would you like to know? Develop at least three questions that you would ask to learn more. Finally, what does this document tell us about Max?



Max displaying his tattoo number from Auschwitz: A-9892

Photo Source: OPC Films





TESTIMONY

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Watch the videos in Module 3 and answer the questions below.

1. After liberation, what challenges did Max and other survivors face?
2. Describe Max's homecoming to Moldava.
3. Antisemitism did not end with the end of the Second World War and liberation of the concentration camps. Expressions of antisemitism today continue to draw on imagery and language from the Nazi era. Describe three examples of when the use of Holocaust language and imagery is problematic.

TESTIMONY - MAX'S LEGACY

Watch the LESSONS videos in Module 3 and answer the questions below.

1. What, do you feel, is Max's legacy?
2. How can testimonies be used to centre the voices of victims and show the diversity of experiences during the Holocaust?
3. What questions do you have for further learning?



Artefact: Postcard photograph of Moldava nad Bodvou Orthodox Synagogue

Source: From the postcard collection of Dalibor Danko

Location: Moldava nad Bodvou, Czechoslovakia

Date: Date of image unknown. Between 1931-1938.

Physical Description: Paper, 9cm x 14cm

Artefact Description: View of the synagogue from Vodná Street. The Orthodox synagogue, measuring 10 x 15 m, was built in 1931. It still stands on the site of the original synagogue from 1853, which was completely destroyed by fire on May 25, 1931. Men entered through the main entrance facing the side (left from the perspective of the image), while women passed through the back staircase covered with shingles to the gallery located one floor higher. Behind the temple flows the Bodva River, which was the source for the nearby mikvehs.

Max's Memory: "My earliest memory is riding on the crossbar of my father's bicycle as he took me to Hebrew school to introduce me to my teacher [...] The school was located next to the synagogue in the centre of town, approximately one kilometer from our home."

(By Chance Alone, page 16)



Artefact: Photograph of tailoring workshop in Kosice

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Credited to Anna Osztreicher.

Location: Kosice, [Slovakia] Czechoslovakia

Date: 1930

Physical Description: Paper, Ink

Artefact Description: Men and women work in a tailoring workshop in Kosice. Adolf Leibovics, the owner of the workshop, is seated second from the right. Businesses like this one would have surrounded Max on his trips to Kosice as a child, and were similar to the fur shop he later apprenticed at.

Max's Memory: "The fur shop was quite large, with a storefront and a workshop behind it. There were ten or so workers engaged in different tasks [...] The hardest job I had was to clean fur coats that were brought in for repairs." (By *Chance Alone*, page 50-51)



Artefact: Photograph of shoe store in Kosice

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Eva Halmos Kuhn

Location: Košice, [Slovakia] Czechoslovakia

Date: Between 1920 and 1930

Physical Description: Paper, Ink

Artefact Description: View of the Kertesz shoe store in Košice, Slovakia, owned by the Jewish businessman, Samuel Kertesz. Samuel Kertesz perished in Auschwitz in 1944. Košice had a growing Jewish population in the 1920s, with Jewish businesses, synagogues, and community institutions contributing to the city's cultural and economic landscape.

Max's Memory: "[My mother] decided to take me by train to Kassa, where her cousins operated a small kosher restaurant. There were quite a few tradespeople who were steady customers at this restaurant. One man had a fur shop, and they asked him if he would take me on as an apprentice. My mother and I went to meet the owner, and I was hired."

(By *Chance Alone*, page 49)



Artefact: Census Photograph of Eisen Family

Source: *By Chance Alone*, Max Eisen

Location: Moldava nad Bodvou, [Slovakia] Czechoslovakia

Date: 1940

Physical Description: Paper, Ink

Artefact Description: Photograph of the Eisen family (left to right): Alfred (age _), Edith (Max's Mother), Max, Zoltan (Max's Father), and Eugene (Age _). Photographing Jewish families was a method of documenting and identifying Jews for later actions of labour, arrest and deportation. While this photo was the only photo that he had of his family (there is no photo with his baby sister who was born in 1942), it was also evidence of the methodology used by the Nazis to implement what would become known as the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question.'

Max's Memory: "In 1940, the government posted more edicts in town specifically targeting the Jewish community [...] Another oppressive edict decreed that all Jewish families be photographed by the police, and we were certain those photographs were then used as a surveillance tool."

(*By Chance Alone*, page 38)



Translation: "The eviction of Jews is taking place in our district today.

As has been repeatedly announced, it is strictly forbidden to hide Jews or in any way hinder the execution of the eviction campaign. Any such opposition to the orders and steps taken by the Commission of Eviction will be severely punished.

Anyone caught robbing will be shot!
Any acquisition or possession of Jewish property is prohibited."

Signed: "Governor of the Galician Region. Commander of the SS 1 Police. Signed Katzmann. SS Brigade Commander"

Artefact: Ukrainian Einsatzgruppen Notice

Source: Darrell English Collection

Location: Ukraine

Date: 1941-1945

Physical Description: Paper, Ink. 38cm X 28cm

Artefact Description: This notice would have been similar to the notices posted in Kosice, which Max would have seen. The *Einsatzgruppen* were mobile killing units best known for their role in the mass shooting of Jews.

Max's Memory: "Within a week of our arrival, posted notices began to appear, directing the Jewish inhabitants on several streets to gather their belongings and walk to a brickyard on the outskirts of the city. [...] Those affected needed to be there on the day designated on the order; disobedience would result in harsh punishment"

(By Chance Alone, page 62)



Artefact: Auschwitz tattoo

Source: OPC Films

Location: Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, Nazi-occupied Poland

Date: 1944

Physical Description: Max's prisoner number was A-9892.

Artefact Description: Tattooing prisoner numbers began in Auschwitz in October 1941. Max's number began with an "A" which marked the start of a new number series to deal with the huge influx of prisoners arriving in Auschwitz.

Max's Memory: "Tables were set up in front of our barracks, and two men sat at each one. They ordered us to come to the table nearest us in single file. Again, my father went first, I was next, and my uncle was last. The first man asked my name, my place and date of birth, what languages I spoke, my height and weight, and the colour of my hair. The next man tattooed a number on my left arm: A-9892. My father's number was A-9891 and my uncle's was A-9893. Wherever we went, I was between them; they were my guardian angels."

(By Chance Alone, page 74)



Artefact: Prisoner Uniform Shoes

Source: Darrell English Collection

Location: Ohrdruf concentration camp, Germany

Date: 1940-1945

Physical Description: Wood, Canvas, Leather, Metal

Artefact Description: These prisoner uniform shoes are from the Ohrdruf concentration camp and would have been very similar to the ones prisoners were forced to wear in Auschwitz. They were not designed to be practical or comfortable for prisoners. Ohrdruf was the first concentration camp to be liberated by American forces - and it is possible that an American soldier took these shoes back to America, and that is how they were preserved as an artefact.

Max's Memory: "When we went to sleep, we only took off our boots. I used mine as a pillow, tying the shoelaces to my wrist so people would not be able to steal them from me in the night."

(By *Chance Alone*, page 90)

APPENDIX - MODULE 2



Lf. Nr.	Häftl. Nr.	Name und	Vorname	
51.	187906	Schreiber	Karl	5094
52.	A-2717	Meyer	Benjamin	74
53.	A-5133	Braunstein	Siegmond	9
54.	A-5150	Chiche	Maurice	130
55.	A-5155	Constantinowski	Jozsef	1
56.	A-5166	Drisy	Victor	2
57.	A-5178	Farhi	Salomon	3
58.	A-5189	Gotscho	Claude	4
59.	A-5190	Gotscho	Bernard	5
60.	A-5195	Goldblum	Salomon	6
61.	A-5225	Kahn	Jakob	7
62.	A-5233	Lenthal	Hans	8
63.	A-5238	Levi	Noise	9
64.	A-5273	Pomerans	Siegfried	5154
65.	A-5285	Roditti	Victor	1
66.	A-5302	Seersan	Josef	2
67.	A-5309	Sabah	Eliate	3
68.	A-5311	Soldinger	Nathan	4
69.	A-5321	seias	David	5
70.	A-5774	Burger	Gesa	6
71.	A-9891	Eisen	Zoltan	7
72.	A-9893	Eisen	Jenő	8
73.	A-9897	Eisler	Mor	9
74.	A-9924	Feldinger	Naftali	10
75.	A-9930	Friedmann	Hermann	1
76.	A-9965	Fischer	Israel	2
77.	A-10230	Katz	Bertalan	3
78.	A-10231	Katz	Marton	4
79.	A-10241	Katz	Ignatz	5
80.	A-10319	Lebovits	Pinkas	6

Artefact: Selection List for Medical Experimentation

Source: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Archive

Location: Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, Nazi-occupied Poland

Date: July 1944

Physical Description: Paper, Ink

Max's Memory: "The SS initiated a wave of selections in Auschwitz I in early July 1944. Simply hearing the word *selection* sent fear through me [...] I knew that selection meant certain death [...] One night, we were abruptly awakened from our sleep. SS guards and Kapos were yelling, "*Raus! Selection! Leave your clothes in your bunk and get down to the ground floor*" [...] The next day, I ran to their [father's and uncle's] barracks, but they were not there [...] I tried to convince myself that they had just been selected to join another work camp. I hoped for the best, but inside I knew that I was lying to myself.

When I returned from my work that evening [...] I ran to a fenced-off holding area where the SS kept the selected prisoners until they were ready to transport them to Birkenau to be gassed [...] I called the names of my father and uncle. Within seconds, they came to meet me at the barbed-wire fence. I was so happy to see them, but at the same time, I knew these were likely our last moments together. I didn't have any words. I couldn't express a single word of consolation or hope."

(By *Chance Alone*, page 107-108)



Artefact: Photographs of Dr. Tadeusz Orzeszko

Source: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

Location: Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, Nazi-occupied Poland

Date: July 29, 1943

Physical Description: Paper, ink

Artefact Description: A photo of Dr. Tadeusz Orzeszko, taken on his incarceration at Auschwitz I.

Max's Memory: *[Max had been operated on after a severe beating and was not well enough to return to work. He was placed on a stretcher on the steps of the hospital to be taken to the gas chambers and crematoria].* "The chief surgeon, Dr. Orzeszko, was standing in the main hallway when we appeared. He was a tall, well-muscled man, with short blond hair and steel-blue eyes. He had an aura of calm confidence about him. When he saw me, he stopped the stretcher-bearers, helped me get up, and took my identification tag. He then led me to the prep room of the surgery, where he gave me a lab coat and told me that I would now do the cleaning and other duties required for the efficient running of the operating theatre."

(By Chance Alone, page 119-120)



Artefact: Stretcher from Auschwitz Camp Hospital

Source: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial & Museum Collections

Location: Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, Nazi-occupied Poland

Date: 1940-1945

Physical Description: Metal, wood and canvas

Artefact Description: Stretcher from the camp hospital.

Max's Memory: "I also owed my life to Dr. Orzeszko, who not only operated on my wound but also took me off the stretcher before I was sent to the gas chambers in Birkenau."

(By Chance Alone, page 137)



Full Name: EISEN TIBOR

Date of Birth: 15.3.1931

Place of Birth: SAROSPATAK, HUNGARY

Present Address: AUSTRIA
IBO CAMP 231, STEYR

Date of Issue: 27.7.1949

Valid Only Until: 27.1.1950

Signature of Issuing Officer: [Signature]

Signature of Holder: [Signature]

Stamp: PRO AREA TEAM II, ELIGIBILITY OFFICE

Artefact: Displaced Persons Identification Card

Source: Ontario Jewish Archives

Location: Austria

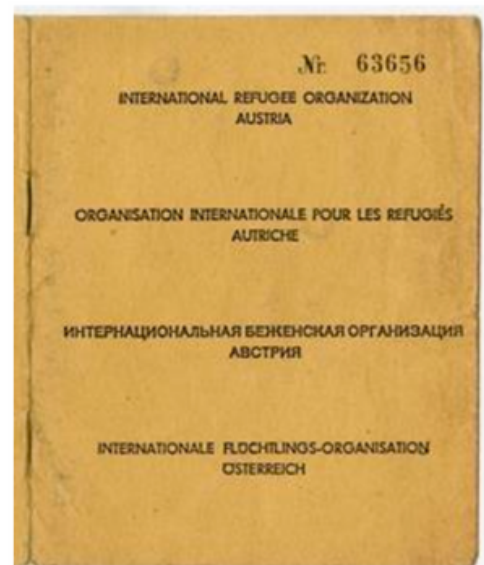
Date: July 27, 1949

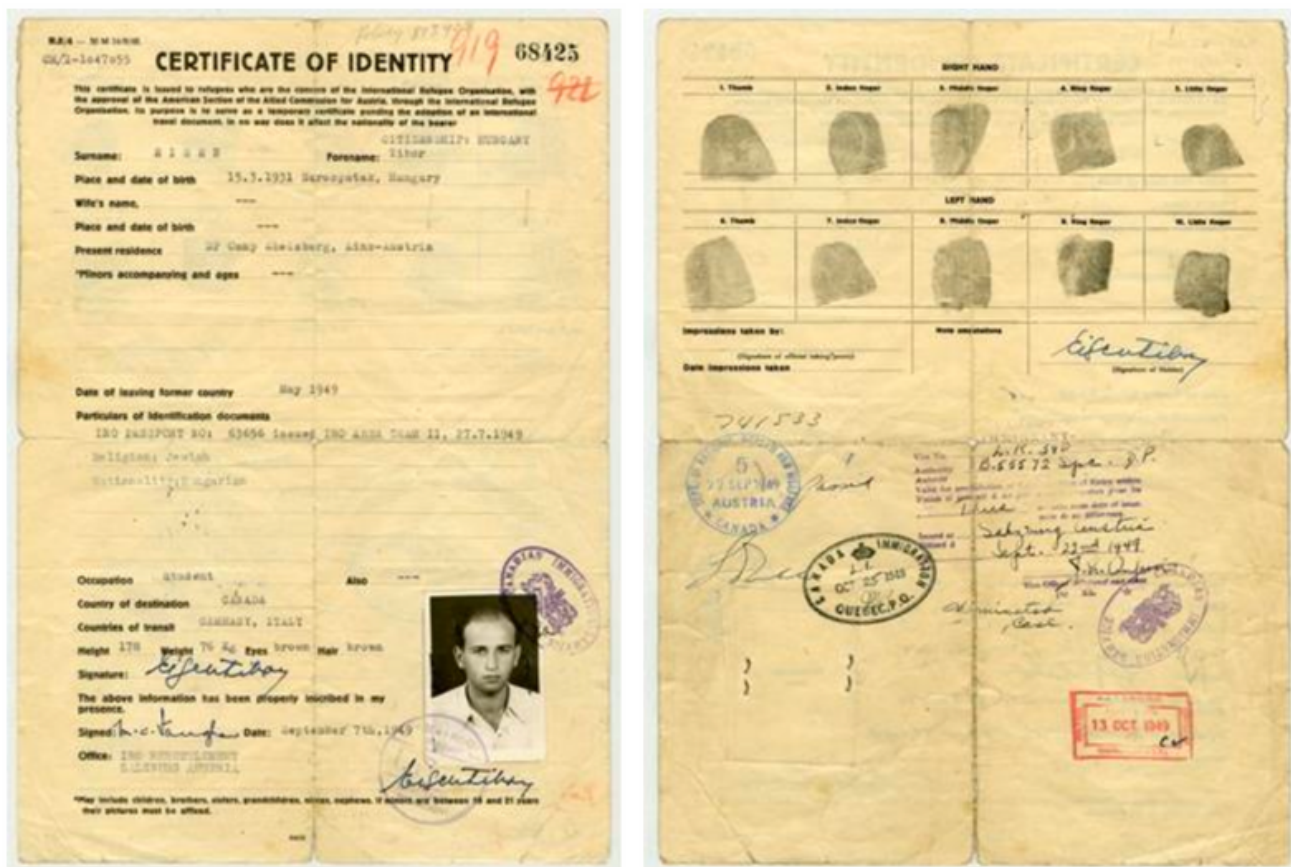
Physical Description: Paper, Ink, Metal

Artefact Description: "Displaced Persons ID Card" issued by the "International Refugee Organization Austria" on 27.7.1949 for Tibor [Max]. Document #63656. Tibor's birthplace recorded as "Sarospatak, Hungary."

Max's Memory: "I went to the UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] office to register, and I was given an identity card. Then I walked around to familiarize myself with the camp and its layout. The barracks - approximately twenty in all - were originally built for an SS tank unit."

(By Chance Alone, page 221-222)





Artefact: Certificate of Identity, Austrian-Canadian Embassy

Source: Ontario Jewish Archives

Location: Austria

Date: 1949

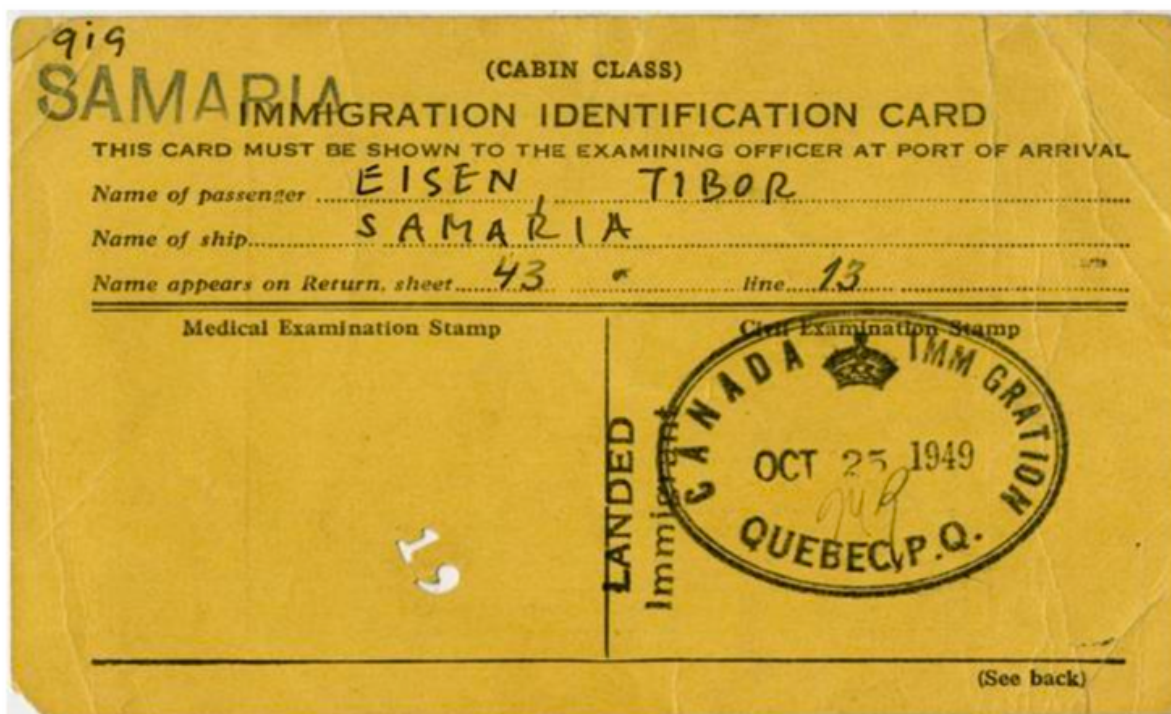
Physical Description: Paper, Ink

Artefact Description: This "Certificate of Identity" played a big role in Max's immigration to Canada. These documents were required in the application for visas. Note how many different stamps are across the document - there were many different departments and agencies involved in the approval and usage of this document. Some of the stamps include the Canadian "Department of National Health and Wellness", the "British Passport Offices" and the "International Refugee Organization Resettlement Department".

Max's Memory: "The secretary was a young British woman, she was very kind. I told her that my permit to Canada was in the Prague embassy, and she said she would have it transferred to Salzburg by diplomatic pouch. In the meantime, I needed to go for medical checkups and X-rays. She told me to come back in two or three weeks to find out the results of the medical exams and see if I had passed or not" [...] "She told me she had wonderful news. 'I have your visa for Canada,' she said, 'and tomorrow morning you need to board the train from Salzburg to Bremerhaven, Germany, where you will get on the Samaria, a Cunard steamship liner bound for Canada.'"

(By Chance Alone, page 222-225)





Artefact: Canadian Immigration Identification Card

Source: Ontario Jewish Archives

Location: Quebec City, Quebec

Date: October 25, 1949

Physical Description: This document would have been given to Max before he began his journey to Canada, aboard the RMS Samaria. He would have presented this document to the Canadian immigration officials when he arrived in Quebec. This was a standardized card for all Canadian immigrants at the time. The phrase "This card should be kept carefully. It should be shown to government officials whenever required," is written in 12 languages on the back.

Artefact Description: UNRA (United Nations Relief & Rehabilitation Administration) was established in 1943 to provide aid to European nations recovering from World War II, including repatriation of refugees and displaced persons.

Max's Memory: "Our UNRA papers were stamped with a landing certificate - it was October 25, 1949. At another table in the terminal, I received a wrapped sandwich and a cup of coffee, and I set off with this in hand to board the train to Toronto, which was ready and waiting."

(By Chance Alone, page 228)

SLOVENSKÁ REPUBLIKA

č. Práv. 129/1992

RODNÝ LIST

V knihe narodení (rodnej matrike) matričného obvodu
Moldava nad Bodvou, okres Košice-východ

zväzok 5 ročník 1929 strana 110 por. č. 26 je zapísané.

Deň, mesiac, rok narodenia	15.3.1929 - pätnásť marec jedentisíc deväťsto dvadsaťdeväť
Miesto narodenia	Moldava nad Bodvou
Meno a priezvisko dieťaťa	Tibor E i s e n
Pohlavie	mužské
Otec	Meno a priezvisko
	deň, mesiac, rok a miesto narodenia
Matka	Meno a priezvisko
	deň, mesiac, rok a miesto narodenia
Poznámky	---

v Moldave nad Bodvou
 dňa 15. 5. 19 92
 SEVT - 03 002 0 VI/90/1


 matričárka

GP 0313194/91/P-1242

Artefact: Re-issued Birth Certificate

Source: Ontario Jewish Archives

Location: Moldava nad Bodvou, Czech Republic

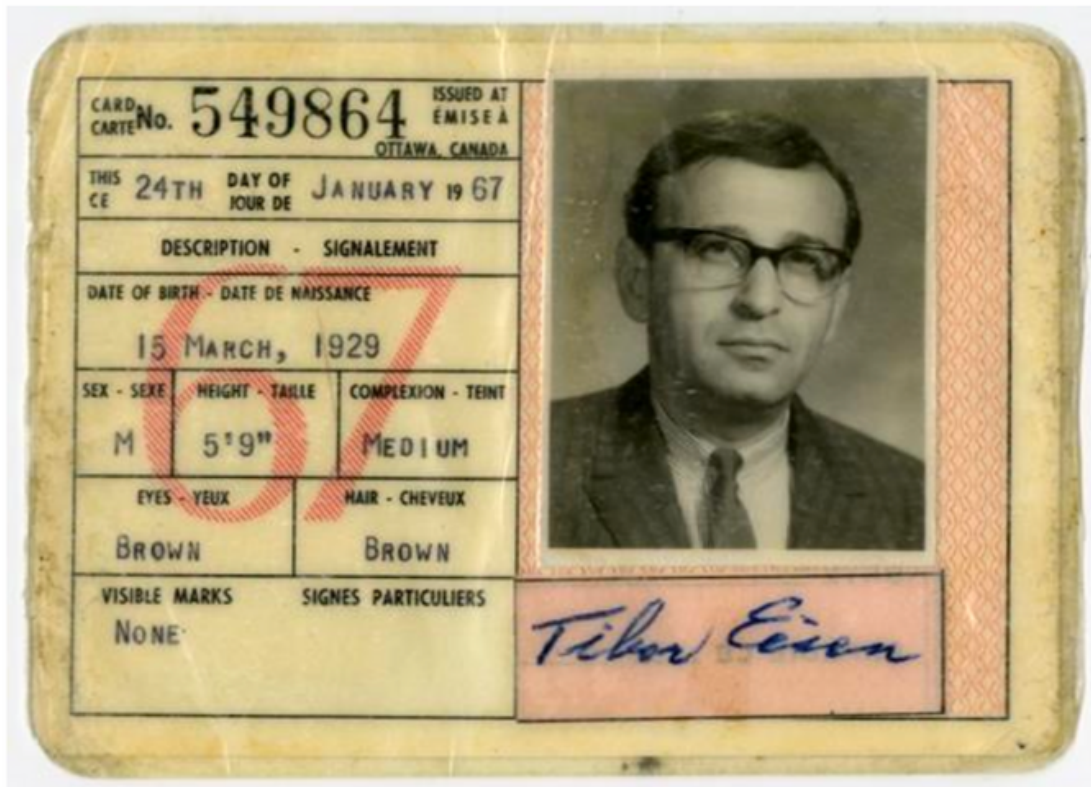
Date: 1992

Physical Description:

Artefact Description: This birth certificate was issued for Tibor in 1992, likely at his request. The document has his birth year as 1929, though some of the immigration documents have his birth year listed as 1931.

Max's Memory: "Our town had a population of approximately five thousand people, most of whom were Roman Catholic and Reformist Christian. There were also about ninety Jewish families, totally not quite five hundred people. The town had a secure atmosphere, and I had many friends, both Jewish and non-Jewish."

(By Chance Alone, page 9)



Artefact: Canadian Citizenship Identity Card

Source: Ontario Jewish Archives

Location: Ottawa, Canada

Date: 24 January 1967

Physical Description: Paper, Ink

Artefact Description: This certificate was given to Max when he became a Canadian citizen. The red "67" stamped in the middle of the card is because it was 1967 - a significant year in Canadian history: Canada's centennial. When this photograph was taken, Max was using his birth name of Tibor, he was a business owner and had been married to his wife Ivy for 15 years.

Max's Memory: "For me, Canada was simply a shining bright light, a place where I could finally succeed in my quest for physical and emotional security."

"My new life in Canada was difficult in many ways. I had to learn a new language, new customs, new values. I was very fortunate to connect with people who were helpful in this journey"

(By *Chance Alone*, page 230 - 235)





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