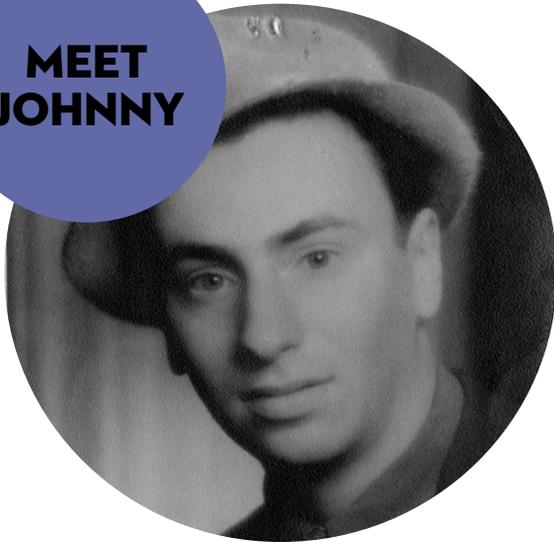


MEET JOHNNY



BIOGRAPHY:

Johnny Jablon was born as Jan Rothbaum in the beautiful city of Krakow, Poland, in 1926. He lived there with his parents, Dora and Schulem, and his two brothers, Roman (Romek) and Joseph. Following the German occupation of Poland, Johnny's life changed dramatically: Jews in Krakow were subjected to forced labour and marked with a Star of David armband. In 1941, Johnny's family and thousands of other Jews were forced to move to the Krakow ghetto, where they suffered but remained together for a while. In October 1942, Johnny was violently separated from his family during a deportation from the ghetto to Nazi camps and killing centres. As a sixteen-year-old alone in the ghetto, Johnny first found work in a factory run by Oskar Schindler and then in a lumberyard outside the ghetto. In January 1943, he was sent to the Plaszow forced labour camp, where he worked in a carpentry shop and feared the brutal commander of the camp, Amon Göth. In February 1944, Johnny was deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, but he and the other skilled workers were spared from being sent to the gas chambers and worked as slave labour instead. He survived there until January 1945, when prisoners were evacuated on a death march to several different concentration camps. Johnny was finally liberated in May 1945. After living in displaced persons camps after the war, Johnny immigrated to Canada as a war orphan in 1948.

“Commandant Göth singled out a man from the line and shot him for no apparent reason at all. Göth then turned to the next person and asked, ‘Why are you staring at me so stupidly?’ And he shot him as well.”

—JOHNNY JABLON

Johnny Jablon is a Holocaust survivor who immigrated to Canada after the war and settled in Montreal. You can learn about his experiences by reading his memoir, *A Lasting Legacy*, or on the digital resource Re:Collection.

Below is some background that will help you understand Johnny's story.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Poland is a country in Central Europe, located between Germany and Russia, that had a large Jewish population before World War II. Jews faced antisemitism and discrimination in Poland, but many also participated in Polish culture and society. The city of Krakow was a thriving centre of Jewish religious, cultural and educational activities. World War II began with the **German invasion and occupation of Poland in September 1939**. The German occupiers immediately began to persecute Jews, and in 1939, Jews in Krakow over the age of twelve were forced to wear an armband with a blue Star of David (a Jewish symbol) on it to mark them as different. In March 1941, the German occupiers in Krakow created a **ghetto** in a suburb of the city. Ghettos were small, crowded areas with poor living conditions that were guarded by Germans. Many Jews from the ghetto were sent to work at the brutal **Plaszow forced labour camp** in Krakow, which later functioned as a **concentration camp** and a transit camp to move Jews from Krakow to other Nazi camps, including Auschwitz, the largest concentration camp complex. At **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, where the killing center was located, nearly one million Jews were killed in gas chambers. In January 1945, as the Soviet army approached Auschwitz, the Germans evacuated most of the prisoners on **death marches** to Nazi camps located away from the military front. Prisoners often had to endure repeated death marches from camp to camp until they were liberated in spring 1945. **Approximately 3,000,000 Polish Jews** were killed in the Holocaust, including Johnny's entire family.

