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Flashlight Used by Alexander Braun

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This hand-powered flashlight was used by Alexander Braun in 1944 while he and his family were in hiding in Bratislava, Slovakia. Alexander and his wife, Cornelia, were both born as Jews, but had converted and had their son Jan (b. 1934, later John) baptized in 1938. The family hoped this would offer them some protection from the dangers which they feared were imminent for Jews. When the Nazis entered Slovakia, the family began using false documents to hide their Jewish origins. As the dangers for Jews increased, the Brauns would take refuge in the home of Nora and Karl Palasthy. Nora was one of Jan's teachers, and had befriended the Brauns. Fearing the frequent roundups, the Brauns began hiding in various other locations, separated even from one another. Alexander used this flashlight while hiding in a coal cellar, and to visit his son at another hiding location at night. The flashlight worked by pumping the lever. After the Soviets liberated Slovakia, the members of the Braun family emerged from their various hiding places, reunited, and adopted the last name Balan. They moved to the United States in 1948.

