Testimonies and Transcripts of World War II Jewish Veterans

RG-31.061

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive Summary

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Reproduction and Use: Publication by a third party requires a formal approval of the Judaica Institute in Kiev, Ukraine. Publication requires a mandatory citation of the original source.

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Custodial History

Existence and location of originals: The original records are held by the Instytut ɬiudaïky, Belorusskaya 34-21, Kyiv, Ukraine 04119. Tel. 011 380 44 248 8917. More information about this repository can be found at www.judaica.kiev.ua.

Processing History: Aleksandra B. Borecka

Scope and Content of Collection

Contains transcripts of interviews and articles regarding Jewish World War II veterans provided by the staff of the Judaica Institute in Kiev. Although the documents are primarily transcribed interviews of the veterans, there are some first and third person biographical accounts. In addition to extensive detail about their military service during the war, there is some information about daily life, religious activities, family life and educational attainment before and after the war.

System of Arrangement

This collection is arranged alphabetically by surname.

Indexing Terms

Jews -- Ukraine -- History -- Interviews
Jewish soldiers -- Ukraine -- Registers.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) -- Ukraine -- Personal narratives.
Veterans -- Ukraine -- Societies, etc.
Holocaust survivors -- Ukraine -- Interviews.

Interviews.

Inventory:

Ariya, Semen L’vovich: Fought in a T-34 tank unit in Mozdok in the Northern Caucuses (Northern Ossetia). Discusses the attributes of T-34 tanks an of “KATYUSH” rocket artillery.

Belotserkovskiy, Iosif Isaakivich: Born on April 15th, 1920 in Kiev. He went to Leningrad in 1935 where he worked as an apprentice at the Northern Shipbuilding Warf. He joined the Navy in 1940 as a cadet in the Baltic Fleet. Participated in operations near Leningrad and he served in Murmansk: participating in the defense of the Kola Peninsula and other operations in the North Defense Region.

Brandt, Leontiy Veniaminovich: Lived in Orsha in the Vitebskaya oblast. Early in the war he evacuated to Tomsk. He joined the army and served in a military intelligence unit. He discusses his unit’s arrival; at Auschwitz toward the end of the war.
Finkel’shteyn, Iosif: Worked as an engineer in Leningrad in the spring of 1941. He discusses the early days of the war in Leningrad. Includes entries from his diaries for August through December, 1941. He then served in the army northwest of Leningrad. At the end of the war, he was in Austria.

Gel’fandbeyn, Yakov: Discusses Operations near Armyansk located near Krymskaya oblast.

Gershman, Matvey L’vovich: He was born in 1925. Joined the army after the outbreak of war in the Gomel Oblast and he was trained as a pilot. He flew YAK-1 airplanes and was based near Bryansk. He was soon transferred to mechanized infantry, and later to military intelligence. He fought in Poland towards the end of the war. He discusses the liberation of Majdanek Death Camp, fighting near the Oder River, and fighting in Berlin. After the battle for Berlin, he was arrested for talking back to an officer. He was sent to the labor camp in Vorkuta. He discusses the occupation of Berlin; activities of political troops, deserters and suicides, and the question of anti-Semitism among the troops.

Gol’braykh, Efim Abelevich: He was born in 1921 in Vitebsk. His father was arrested in the 1937 purges and was shot in 1937. He discusses the evacuation of Vitebsk after the outbreak of war, the retreat from the city, and the German drive toward Moscow. He was drafted in May of 1942 and was sent to tank school in Kazan. He was then sent to the front near Stalingrad. He talks about the liberation of Danzas, Crimea. He also discusses the ‘punishment units’ (Shtrafroty) and Stalin’s Order No. 227.

Gorelik, Zalman, Khaymovich: He was born in 1925. He was living in Zhlobin in the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) at the outbreak of war. He then went to Leningrad. He describes the early days of the war, including the food and morale situation in Leningrad. He worked in a factory and describes what life was like in the blockaded city. His family eventually left for Sverdlovsk and then Bashkiriya, where he worked on a kolkhoz (collective farm). He was drafted into the army in March 1943. He was first sent to Moscow and then to the front at Staraya Russa in the Novgorod oblast. He also fought in Moldavia (August 1944), Krivoy Rog, Kharkov, Romania, and Bulgaria.

Gorentsveyg, Iosif Grigor’evich: He was in Kharkov at the outbreak of the war. He was drafted in Moscow in the first days of the war. He discusses his studies at military school on German POWs and Soviet artillery weapons. There is a short account of war experiences by Gorentsveyg, who was Technical Lieutenant, head of an artillery workshop for the 913th rifle regiment of the 244th Zaporozhsky rifle division.

Gutman, Aleksandr Davidovich: He was a Lieutenant during the war. He was born in Kiev in 1915. He was in Arkhangelsk at the outbreak of war with Germany. He was drafted in 1938. He discusses the ‘Freedom March’ when Soviet troops marched into Poland in 1939. He fought near Leningrad. He discusses troop morale as well as the role of ‘repressive organs’ in the military to reinforce the will to fight.
Kaplan, Grigoriy Solomonovich: After the outbreak of war, he entered artillery training school in Moscow and graduated as a Lieutenant. He was sent to the northwestern front. He discusses military tactics without mentioning any specific geographic areas. He also talks about KATYUSHA rocket artillery. In 1943, he fought near Bryansk. He was wounded in February 1944. In January 1945, the 3rd Belorussian Army entered Germany and by the end of that month, army entered Koenigsberg. Discusses operations in East Prussia.

Kaplan, Yan Pavlovich: Born in 1924 in Belorussia and grew up in Zhukovka in the Bryansk Oblast. When the war broke out, he helped dig anti-tank trenches in Smolensk. He joined the army and was wounded in Smolensk. In August 1941, he started the Zlatoust Machine Gun school and discusses his training there. He was wounded and sent to a hospital in Moscow. He was then sent to Vilnyus as a military recruiter. He was wounded a total of five times. He returned home to Zhukovka in early 1945. He also discusses anti-Semitism among troops, the relationship between officers and enlisted men, and the general morale and ideology of the troops.

Kats, Genrikh Zinov’evich: Born in 1924 in Poltava. At the end of 1942 he was sent to infantry school in Orlovskoe. He fought in Orel. He was wounded and sent to the hospital in Borzhomi in Georgia. He was then assigned to an intelligence company. He discusses his unit, the treatment of captured Germans, and pro-German local fighters (vlatovsky).

Kats, Grigoriy Zinov’evich: In the summer of 1941 he finished school (10th grade) in Donetsk. At the beginning of the war he was evacuated to Kzyl-Orda in Kazakhstan. He joined the army in 1941 and studied at radio school in Tashkent. He was then sent to the front near Moscow. In January 1942, he was involved in big battles near Vyazma. He also fought in the Kurskaya Oblast. He discusses the frequent unfairness in the awarding of medals and the fighting in the Baltic area.

Kats, Leonid Grigor’evich: He was drafted into the army from the Zhitomirskaya Oblast before the war. He was sent to a tank unit in Central Asia. After the start of the war, he was sent to the front near Bryansk. He describes his experiences in the tank unit in various areas, the morale of the troops, and his fears in battle. He also talks about fighting in the Caucasus and in Kerch. He discusses anti-Semitism in the unit, his attitude toward German POWs, and the shooting of German POWs.

Khaskel’berg, Boris Lazarevich: He fought on the Leningrad front in the 109th Rifle Division. He discusses the meager rations the troops received. He was wounded four times. He was mustered out of the military in 1945. He then attended Leningrad University.

Kobylyanskiy, Isaak Grigor’evich: Fragments of the book “Pryamoy Navodkoy Po Vragv”. He discusses the outbreak of war, and his experiences as a student in Kiev during the initial days of war. He was drafted and sent to the Stalingrad area in November, 1942. He later fought in the Rostovskaya Oblast. He also talks about the battle near the Mivsa Rive, the battle for the liberation of Crimea, and operations in East Prussia, Koenigsberg, and the Zemlandskiy Peninsula.
Kolodenko, Lev Shaevich: He was born in 1925 in Tulchin, Vinnitskaya Oblast. After the outbreak of war, he was sent to work on a farm in Chkavovskaya Oblast. He was drafted into the Army in the fall of 1943. He was sent to the Belorussian Front and fought near Kovel. He also fought in Poland and Germany. He discusses operation in and around Berlin.

Levenson, Izrail’ Moiseevich: At the outbreak of war he was in Slavyansk, Donetskaya Oblast. He was sent to the Kiev Artillery School. He describes his training and the early days of war in Kiev. He was sent to Krasnoyarsk, Uzbekistan, and Moscow Oblast. He describes fighting near Moscow and the treatment of German prisoners. He was transferred to the Far East in 1945 and briefly fought against the Japanese in Manchuria.

Likhterman, Matvey Tsodikovich: He was born in 1921 in Shumyachi, Smolensk Oblast. He was drafted in March 1941 and was sent to the Samarkand area. He describes his life in the motorized rifle division. He fought near Bryansk. He was later sent to an aviation warning and communications school. He talks about the school and its function. He was attached to a parachute division and talks about his airborne training and operations. He describes being taken prisoner, his treatment under the Germans, and his fear of being exposed as a Jew. He was at the POW camp in Uman, Vinnitskaya Oblast. He also talks about German recruitment effort among the POWs and the marching of 800 POWs to Romania. He was able to escape. He then talks about ‘filtration camps’; any former POW was sent through and investigated to determine whether or not they collaborated with the Germans. After the war, Likhterman told no one that he had been a POW, until 1981. He discusses fighting in Czechoslovakia at the end of the war. He also lists some survivors of the 1943 Dneprovskiy parachute attack.

Malkus, Boris L’vovich: He was born in Nikolaev, Nikolaevskaya Oblast. He describes the first days of the war in Nikolaev. He was pressed into service with other youth in a pontoon-bridge building unit. He then talks about the evacuation of citizens from Nikolaev, the Soviet troops retreating, and the arrival of German troops. He was sent to build up Stalingrad’s defenses and at that point was taken into the army. After the war, he learned that all of his family had been shot by the Germans. He spent part of the war in Nalchik in the Northern Caucasus. He discusses the fall of Berlin and looting.

Maydanik, Lev Isakovich: He was in a tank battalion in the Kharkov basin in May 1942. He describes his experiences. [Note at the end of the document states that in appeared in “Novoe Russkoe Slovo” (New Russian Word), a New York newspaper, on the 19th and 26th of May, 1995].

Mester, Vladimir Moiseevich: He was born in Moscow in 1926. When the war started, he began work in a sheet metal factory at the age of 15. The factory was soon evacuated to Siberia. He joined the army at age 18. He says that he never experienced anti-Semitism in the Army. He became a machine gunner in the Air Force. He was sent to Hungary in 1944. He describes what it was like to be a machine gunner in a Soviet plane. He also talks about how he was shot down once.

Mishnaev, Mikhail Khaimovich: Born in 1925 in Berezhnoe, Chernigovskaya Oblast. As a child, he moved to Kerch. At the outbreak of war, he was sent to Kazakhstan; his family was
later killed in Kerch. He joined the army and fought near Kharkov and Orel. He discusses the attitude toward Jews in the Army, and the treatment of POWs by both sides.

Orlov, Naum Aronovich: Born in 1925 near Gomel. Before the war, he lived in Odessa. At the outbreak of war, he served as an ammunition bearer on an old vessel used as a coastal anti-aircraft installation. He served in the naval convoy that evacuated citizens from Odessa. He describes the evacuation. Be was drafted into the Army in December 1942 and was sent to Central Asia. In 1943 he was sent to Kursk. He describes fighting in a tank unit and the Voronezh front. He fought in the Dnepr River battle. He also fought in Poland, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. He discusses the attitudes of the local populations toward the Soviet Army and looting. He also talks about his impressions of Germany.

Rapoport, Boris Elevich: He was born in 1922 in Sobolevka, Vinnitskaya Oblast. In 1940, he entered into the Krasnodar Air Navigation School. He describes his course of study. In August 1941, he was sent to Central Asia, and then to Iran. He was soon sent as part of an Air Force bomber unit to Moscow and the northwestern front. He also fought in Poland. He discusses his unit and various operations.

Ravinskii, Semen Khaimovich: Born in 1924 in Semenovka, Nikolaeskaya Oblast. He was living in Odessa at the start of the war. He was evacuated to Yoshkar-Ola and worked in an armament factory. He joined the army in 1942 and was sent to the Arzamas Military School. He fought near Kursk and in Sumskaya and Poltavskaya Oblasts. He crossed the Dnepr River. He also fought in Czechoslovakia. He discusses the treatment of German prisoners.

Rodnyanskiy, Ismail Izrailevich: He was a coastal artillery officer near Murmansk at the outbreak of war.

Rutman, Yuliy Genrikhovich: At the start of the war, he was working for Odessa Oblast radio. He was called to the Army and was a Junior Lieutenant. He was sent to Prut in Bessarabia, and he later fought near Rostov. He describes being separated from his unit and being interrogated by Soviet Secret Police (NKVD).

Sandler, Mikhail L’vovich: He was born in May 1920 in Nikolaev. He was drafted into the army in 1939 and sent to tank school. He discusses life in prewar Army. During the war he served as a driver in Kursk and near the Don River. He discusses political officers, food, and morale.

Shlyakhterman, Vladimir Il’ich: Before the war he worked in an electrical apparatus factory, testing equipment for tanks and airplanes. At the start of the war, the factory was moved to Kuybyshev. As the Germans advanced toward Stalingrad, he joined the army and was sent to infantry school. He fought in the battle near Kursk and was wounded. He was first taken to the hospital in Ryazan and then to one in Moscow.

Simkin, Semen Isaakovich: He was born in 1924 in Lyady, Belorussia. He was studying at a trade school in Leningrad at the outbreak of war. He was evacuated to the east to Derbent. He was later taken to the Moscow area where he joined the army as part of an artillery unit. He
fought near Kursk. He discusses fighting in Germany toward the end of the war. He also talks about the treatment of German prisoners.

**Sinayskiy, Viktor Mikhaylovich:** He was born in Voronezh. In 1938, he went to Moscow to enter a technology institute. He was drafted in 1939. He was trained to be a gunner on a bomber during the war with Finland (Winter War). He was later sent to Zanopozhe. In the early days of the war with Germany, he fought in the air over Moldavia. He discusses air operations, maintenance of aircraft, and air operations over Kursk.

**Sitnitskiy, Rakhmiel Izrailevich:** He was born in 1923 in Nikolaev. He entered the Kharkov Military Medical School in 1941. The school was evacuated to Ashkhabad when the war broke out. He discusses his course of study while at the school. During the war, he served as a medic in the “Malaya Zemlya” area, near Sevastopol, Novorossiysk, and Kuban.

**Turkel’taub, Samuil Vladimirovich:** At the start of the war, he was in a communications battalion in Khanko, Finland. He describes the fighting in Khanko.

**Yamploskiy, Iosif Mironovich:** He was born in 1912 in Dybentsy, Kievskaya Oblast. After the outbreak of war, he was in a tank battalion near Kharkov. He describes the fighting in that area. He was wounded. He became separated from his unit and was reported as missing. He was later sent through a ‘filtration station’ to determine whether or not he was a German spy or collaborator. He also discusses fighting at Stalingrad.

**Zaslavskiy, Emil’ Iosifovich:** At the outbreak of the war, he was made commander of an artillery battery in a rifle division. He describes operations in the Dnepropetrovskaya Oblast.

**Zharovskiy, Mikhail Khaimovich:** He was born in Polesskoe, Kievskaya Oblast in July of 1924. His father was killed on the front in 1942. He was evacuated to Chkalovskiy Oblast where he worked on a *kolkhoz* (collective farm). He was soon drafted at the age of 17 and sent to infantry school. He fought near Stalingrad and Kursk as a Lieutenant. He describes his entry into Germany toward the end of the war. He also discusses what it was like being Jewish in the Red Army. His unit was sent to the Far East at the end of the war and briefly fought against the Japanese. He was stationed in North Korea from 1945-1948.

**Zlatkin, Danil Fedorovich:** At the outbreak of war, he was in Feodosia. He was drafted into the army in Moscow. He describes many personal incidences including disputes with other soldiers, and his being accused of stealing food.