

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Archives

Oral History Interviews of the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center

**Interview with Allen Moskowitz
March 25, 1992
RG-50.002*0020**

PREFACE

On March 25, 1992, Allen Moskowitz was interviewed on videotape by Mark Lender and Joseph J. Preil on behalf of the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. The interview took place in Union, New Jersey and is part of the Research Institute Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center created a summary and time-coded notes for the interview. The reader should bear in mind that these finding aids attempt to represent the spoken word in the recorded interview, yet have not necessarily been verified by the interviewee. The finding aids should not be used in place of the interview itself.

Rights to the interview are held by the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum houses a copy of the interview as a result of a contributing organization agreement with the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. Details concerning the Museum's rights to use and reproduce the interview are contained in the contributing organization agreement.

Summary of the
Interview with Allen Moskowitz
March 25, 1992

Allen Moskowitz was born in Brusnica, Czechoslovakia (Slovakia) on March 27, 1923. His family consisted of his parents, two brothers and one sister. Allen attended a yeshiva in Surany, Czechoslovakia (Slovakia) in 1939. At the outbreak of the war, he returned to his home in Svidnicka, Czechoslovakia (Slovakia). His parents did not trust the Germans and always endeavored to hide rather than follow their orders. In 1944, he was picked up by the Gestapo and imprisoned in Sered concentration camp in Czechoslovakia (Slovakia). Following his time in Sered, Allen was a prisoner in different concentration camps in Germany; Sachsenhausen, Heinkel, Siemensstadt, Ohrdruf, Crawinkel and Buchenwald. In March 1945, while in Buchenwald, Allen fell ill with typhus. He woke up three weeks later and was liberated. Immediately after, he returned to his home town and discovered that his mother, brother and sister had survived. His father died in Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria and his 14 year old brother was murdered in Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. Allen also describes the role of Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandel, his rabbi and a hero of the Holocaust. After the war, Allen's family went to Palestine, while he emigrated to the United States. He is married, and has two sons and one daughter. He currently resides in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

**Time-coded notes of the
Interview with Allen Moskowitz
March 25, 1992**

01:01:00

Allen attended a yeshiva in Surany, Czechoslovakia (Slovakia) in 1939. He returned home to Svidnicka, Czechoslovakia (Slovakia) at the outbreak of the war. His family consisted of his parents, two brothers and one sister. They moved to Svidnicka in 1937. Allen, his brother and his parents were in hiding, in an effort to avoid being deported.

01:06:00

His parents did not trust the Germans. Therefore, they hid. They obtained good false papers for several hundred dollars. Antisemitism in Czechoslovakia and Hitler's threats on the radio convinced them not to trust the authorities, but rather to hide.

01:11:00

Between the years of 1939 and 1942, Czechoslovakia collaborated with the Germans. In 1943 or 1944, the German SS came in. Youths were taken away in 1942 and families were taken away in about mid 1943. Most Jews in hiding were in the mountains. His mother, though, hid with a Gentile family in exchange for money.

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Allen was picked up by the Gestapo during their search for partisans. They discovered that he was circumcised. He was imprisoned in Sered concentration camp in Czechoslovakia (Slovakia) as a Mischling (a person with both Jewish and German ancestry). He shined the shoes of Nazi Commandant Alois Brunner. He was then shipped to Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Germany. Brunner was in charge of transports. Allen tells the story of his mother who was sent away by the Gentile family. She worked in an inn as a cook. Her piety meant that she did not eat certain food, work on the Sabbath, etc.

01:21:00

Allen was in Sered concentration camp from October to December 1944. He describes the initiation of Sachsenhausen, a transitional camp.

01:26:00

He was then marched off to a new camp, Heinkel concentration camp in Germany, a half day walk. He did not see killings committed by guards in Sachsenhausen. All of the prisoners were Jewish. In the beginning, all of them behaved like human beings. They shared their food. He describes his diet, 350-400 calories daily at Sered. He was at Heinkel for just a few days. Then they went, by foot and by train, to Siemensstadt concentration camp in Germany, a starvation camp. Quite a few died.

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They were then taken to Ohrdruf concentration camp in Germany, a real working camp. Some said that this was the worst of all camps. He explains why this is so. This is where he got his first beating. This followed his identifying himself as a student.

01:36:00

When asked what kept him going in this terrible camp, Allen says it was his belief in God and his religion. Suicide was not permitted. He describes the inhumane morning roll calls in Ohrdruf.

01:41:00

He describes the role of the Kapos. The German prisoners were homosexuals and criminals. The Jewish Kapos were Polish, most of them tried to help. In March 1945, they were marched to Crawinkel concentration camp in Germany. Why so many camps? The work was the same, more or less, in these camps. Perhaps it saved the Germans from the Russian front.

01:46:00

When asked if he knew that the war was ending, Allen says, "we heard that the Americans were coming," from some guards. The behavior of the guards did not improve at this time. The soldiers, though, shot the prisoners on their way from Crawinkel to Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany, an organized camp. They separated the Jews from the Poles, Greeks, etc. Allen said that he's going as a Czech, not a Jew.

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He advised his cousin to do the same. Allen fell ill with typhus and woke up three weeks later. This was his liberation. The neighboring Germans claimed they knew nothing of Buchenwald. This is really unbelievable, considering the circumstances. When the Americans came, it was the first time that he had seen a black person.

01:56:00

He went back to his home town. His father had died in Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. His 14 year old brother was killed in Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. A brother and sister survived Auschwitz as well as his mother. He found his mother and brother at home after the war. His sister was taken to Sweden, then she came home. Allen's mother, brother and sister left for France while Allen remained to liquidate family possessions. When he arrived in France, they had already left for Palestine.

2:01:00

He wanted to join them in Palestine. They wrote to him to go to the United States in order to help them financially. He describes the role of Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandel, his Rabbi and hero of the Holocaust.

02:06:00

Four of the six members of his family were saved. Only two survived of his father's siblings and their children survived. The high survival rate in his immediate family was unusual. In the United

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States, Allen started off in Brooklyn, New York. He married a girl from Jersey City, New Jersey. They lived in New Jersey; first in Union City, then in Plainfield and finally, in Elizabeth. Why Elizabeth? The school, JEC, (Jewish Educational Center) was good for their three children.

02:11:00

His American relatives, obviously, knew nothing of the Holocaust. Their questions revealed their ignorance. Consequently, Allen did not talk to anyone about it, not even his children. He would say something at the Passover Seder. His children read, they attended Kean College programs and encouraged this oral history session.

02:16:00

His business has been in Rahway, New Jersey since 1955. The Holocaust has made him disappointed in the human race. He has more pity, than hatred towards the Germans. "They did not consider us as humans."

02:21:00

When asked if there is anything we can learn from this, Allen says, "I don't know. It has nothing to do with education...or religion. Ignorant peasants may have helped Jews, educated Germans and others did not help."