

**United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**  
**Archives**

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

**Interview with David Altholz  
June 20, 1984  
RG-50.002\*0056**

## **PREFACE**

On June 20, 1984, David Altholz was interviewed on videotape by Irene Katz, Sidney Langer, and Bernard Weinstein 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 David Altholz**

**June 20, 1984**

David Altholz was born in Krosno, Poland on May 26, 1928. In 1932, he and his family moved to Chorzów, a large town in Western Poland. His father, a watchmaker provided comfortably for his family. They were Conservative Jews. At the outbreak of the war, David and his family moved back to Krosno to live with his paternal grandparents. He remembers how the German occupiers went from house to house and shot all the educated and professional men. The lists of the men were prepared by the Poles. He also remembers the shooting of those who endeavored to avoid the roundups. David was included in a roundup and after three months, his group was told that they would be in a work detail. He never saw his mother or sister again. After six months, he was moved to Szebnie, a small concentration camp in Poland. He was then moved to Plaszów, another camp in Poland, for eighteen months where he rejoined his father. He describes the horrible living conditions in the camp. He and his father were moved next to Sachsenhausen, Germany. David, along with a number of youngsters, was sent to Ludwigslust, Germany to work in a munitions factory. Very few survived because of the living conditions. He was liberated by the Americans and was placed in a hospital for three weeks. Soon after, he went to Berlin, Germany and was reunited with his father after receiving conflicting reports of his father's fate. He feels they were saved because they were watchmakers. David and

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his father emigrated to the United States in 1949. He currently resides in Maplewood, New Jersey.

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**Time-coded notes of the  
Interview with David Altholz  
June 20, 1984**

01:01:00

David is a resident of Maplewood, New Jersey. He was born in 1928 in Krosno, Poland. At an early age, his family moved to Chorzów, a large town in Western Poland. This was about 1932. David had a sister who was one and a half years younger than him. The population of Chorzów was about 100,000 with a small Jewish population. They were conservative Jews. David's father was a watchmaker. They were comfortable.

01:06:00

David experienced Anti-semitism as a boy via stone throwing. This happened when he visited relatives in smaller towns.

01:11:00

As late as 1938, David's parents and their friends did not expect there to be a war.

01:16:00

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David was on vacation with his mother and sister in the summer of 1939. Did not hear from his father until he joined the family in the small town of [illegible] where the family had been vacationing with maternal grandparents.

01:21:00

Residents of Chorzów dispersed, some to Russia and others to different towns. David and his family went to Krosno, to paternal grandparents. He remembers German occupiers went from house to house, took educated and professional men, and shot them. The lists of men were prepared by Poles.

01:26:00

At age 11, he did not understand anything, he just felt fear. At one time, his parents considered giving the children to non-Jews for safe keeping. He was in Chorzów for 9-12 months. He remembers roundups of people. Those who endeavored to avoid roundups were shot. Together with seven other family members, David was included in a roundup for work detail in a refinery.

01:31:00

Included in the roundup were an aunt, uncle, two cousins, etc., but not his parents or sister. This was the last time he saw his mother and sister. After about three months, they were told they would not return home, but would live and sleep together with a work detail. David heard from Rabbi Wagshal (currently in Long Island, New York) many details of this period of which David was previously unaware. This new arrangement in the refinery lasted about six months, until middle of 1940.

01:36:00

He never saw his mother or sister again. He did see his father about one and a half years later. He was taken by a train to Szebnie, a small concentration camp in Poland. He remembers hunger, lice and fear. Guards were mostly Ukrainian. Some were Jewish Kapos. He was moved to Plazów, a concentration camp in Poland. This was a pre-war cemetery. The men were separated from the women and all the prisoners were Jewish. That is when he met his father and was told the sad news about his mother and sister. Many from Rzeszów, Poland were taken to Auschwitz and killed.

01:41:00

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He arrived in Plaszów shortly after 55,000 Jews were gunned down by machine guns. He refers to Schindler's List and remembers the names in the book, the public hangings. "Why the viewing of the bodies?" This was standard German routine at the "appel."

01:46:00

What saved his father was his occupation as a watchmaker. David also claimed to be a watchmaker and was saved. He lived together with his father. He described their barracks. The lice were terrible. The living conditions were those for an animal, a horse. There were no organized religious services. The Hungarian Jews were more observant.

01:51:00

He remembers his experience at the "appel" where every tenth person was executed. He was in Plaszów for a year or one and a half years. He was then moved to Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Germany. This was shortly after Stalingrad, (Volgograd, Russian Federation) probably in 1943.

01:56:00



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His father was also moved to Germany. Wooden shoes in German snow caused many workers to trip and fall. After a year or so, a number of youngsters were moved to Ludwigslust, Germany to work in a munitions factory. Conditions were terrible. Very little work was done there. The factory was bombed often.

Often work wasn't possible.

02:01:00

David knew about extermination camps. The worst part was just before liberation. Upon liberation by the Americans, he was moved to a hospital for three weeks. Very few survived in the factory. Some died after liberation.

02:06:00

United States officials did not question survivors about their experiences. He was 16 years old at liberation. He decided against going back to Poland. He went to Berlin, Germany with a survivor from Berlin.

02:11:00

David learned from a survivor of the Sachsenhausen camp that his father fell on a death march and was shot before the liberation.

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Another told him that his father was alive when the camp was liberated by the Russians. David returned to Poland to seek out his father. After three months he found a post card with a German address for his father. They were re-united in Lübeck, Germany together with his father's sister.

2:16:00

David's father provided tutoring for David's education. They were together from 1947 to 1949, when they were able to emigrate to the United States. They were helped by a displaced persons camp, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) and the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America (HIAS). Papers were provided by distant cousins. David's father was employed by the Omega company, with whom he had a record of association. David was drafted into the army for the Korean War and was stationed in Germany because of his language ability.

2:21:00

David moved to New Jersey because his wife discovered that the towns of South Orange and Maplewood area had a fine school system.

2:26:00

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David feels that his being alive today is a "pure accident." He does not believe in hating the Germans and Poles today. "We're all subject to some weaknesses and imperfections."