

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Archives

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

Interview with Aron Grynwald
1984
RG-50.002*0058

PREFACE

In 1984, Aron Grynwald was interviewed on videotape by Sidney Langer 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 Aron Grynwald**

1984

Aron Grynwald was born on June 21, 1904 in Bedzin, Poland, six miles from the German border. Aron's father was an honored citizen of this significant Jewish community and the president of many organizations. Aron's family was very successful in business. Aron opened a wire factory in Warsaw, Poland. This factory was confiscated by Germans during the war and given to a Viennese "Treuhandler."

During the war, Aron was assigned to work in what had been his factory. This was a privileged work assignment, as his father's family were already restricted to the Warsaw ghetto. The Kraków ghetto was closed on June 3, 1942, that week 6,000 other Jews were relocated to the East. Once again, Aron's status in his factory saved him from relocation to the East. Aron's work permit lapsed in October 1942 and he was transferred to the Plaszów concentration camp in Poland on March 1943. From Plaszów, Aron was transferred to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria in August 1944. He then went to St. Valentin, a subcamp of Mauthausen, in October 1944 and on to Ebensee concentration camp in Austria on April 13, 1945. The Americans liberated Ebensee on May 6, 1945.

After liberation, Aron was reunited with his wife, Gitla, who recovered miraculously from her illness at the war's end. Aron and Gitla remained in Poland until 1961 in a vain effort to regain Aron's wire factory from the Communist regime. Aron and his wife

USHMM Archives RG-50.002*0058

2

currently reside in Newark, New Jersey. Aron is the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust. It should be noted that this interview contains interesting references to leading Polish Jews during the Holocaust.

**Time-coded notes of the
Interview with Aron Grynwald
1984**

01:00:00

Aron Grynwald was born in Bendin (Bedzin), Poland, six miles from the German border, on July 21, 1904. 35,000 to 40,000 of the total population of 50,000 in Bedzin were Jews. Aron's father was the president of many organizations—Agudah, shul (synagogue), Linat Cholim. His father was a very honored individual.

01:05:00

Aron's father established a factory in 1903. Aron attended technical school in Breslau, Germany (Wroclaw, Poland). After Aron completed his education, his father employed him in his factory.

01:10:00

Aron's sisters attended high school and universities. Aron's brothers attended a cheder. The boys didn't care to learn. After his marriage (to Gitla Grynwald) in 1939, Aron opened his own wire factory in Kraków, Poland. Aron recalls numerous cases of anti-Semitism.

01:15:00

Aron recalls that Poles born in Poland were chased back into Poland from other geographic areas by Hitler.

01:20:00

In September 1939, all men were told to cross the Vistula River in Poland into Korbaskew [PLACE NOT VERIFIED]. After four days, Germans caught them. Aron hid on a farm owned by a Jew. After some time in hiding, Aron returned to Kraków. The Germans imposed a 7 p.m. curfew in Kraków and they did not allow the Jews to buy bread in bakeries.

01:25:00

Through the Judenrat, Germany imposed quotas of money, goods, and labor from the Jews. Germans annexed Bedzin and Zawiercie, Poland. Aron's wife, Gitla, is from Zawiercie. There was a decree the Jews had to wear a Jewish star.

01:30:00

Aron's factory was confiscated by a "Treuhaendler." The "Treuhaendler," a Viennese man, took Aron to the German Labor

Department in Kraków to receive permission for Aron to live in the Kraków ghetto and work in his factory.

01:35:00

This take-over occurred in 1940. The Grynwalds welcomed another couple into their two-room apartment in the Kraków ghetto. The chairmen of the Kraków Judenrat were not intelligent. Aron remembers, specifically, Professor Biferstein and Dr. Rosenzweig. Aron recalls that the Germans only wanted a body that would follow orders.

01:40:00

Aron and his wife gave up their fur coats. Members of Aron's father's family were in the Warsaw ghetto. Because of Aron's privileged status in the wire factory, he was able to send packages of food to relatives in the Warsaw ghetto.

01:45:00

Aron's uncle ate only the honey because everything else in the packages Aron sent was not Kosher. When the Gestapo arranged for the Rabbi of Ger to leave for Palestine with a group of ten others, Aron's uncle was invited to leave. The uncle refused to leave his family. Pinny Levin took Aron's

uncle's space in the group leaving for Israel. Nevertheless, Aron's uncle's family was nearly completely destroyed.

01:50:00

The Kraków ghetto was closed on June 3, 1942 and they made a selection. Aron's Department of Labor papers saved him. 6,000 Jews were sent from the Kraków ghetto to the east that week.

01:55:00

The Grynwalds were moved to a different apartment in the ghetto. This apartment had two rooms for three families. They found these conditions unacceptable. Aron and Gitla sent money and jewelry to both of their families.

02:00:00

In December, 1942, there was a big arrest in the Kraków ghetto. Yitzhak Zuckerman (Itzhak Cukierman) was wounded in the leg at this time. A selection on October 28, 1942 occurred. Aron and Gitla hid in the house of a Jewish policeman of the Gestapo during this selection.

02:05:00

7,000 Jews were sent by rail on this day. Avraham Nieman, a painter, and Mordechai Gebirteg, a song writer and carpenter were in the Zuckers' apartment.

02:10:00

The two Zucker brothers wrote on their door: "Don't grieve for us. Take care of yourselves." They were informed in the Zuckers' apartment that they could get sent to a place where the Polish engineer leaves and the German engineer takes over. They still did not know about murder camps. Three months later, they heard about the Belzec concentration camp in Poland, gas chambers, etc.

02:15:00

A Ukrainian told Aron: "I was in Kiev, Ukraine, when 70,000 Jews were murdered at Babi Yar." Aron's work permit was only valid until October 8, 1942. After his permit expired, Aron worked in a shop in the ghetto instead of in the wire factory, until March 13, 1943. At this date, they were then ordered to gather together to be transported to Plaszów concentration camp in Poland. They were warned to run away in order to save themselves.

02:20:00

Amon Goeth (1908-1946) was the commandant of Plaszów. Aron remembers Goeth as a brutal man. Aron was assigned to technical, mechanical work. Everyday, there was shooting and beating. If anybody slept at work, they were shot.

02:25:00

A man who was shot in the ear came to Aron's barrack at night and told them that he saw a Ukrainian kill a woman and then rape her. Aron's work qualified him for Category 2 status. This kept him in Plaszów until August 1944. In August 1944, Aron was shipped to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria to work on the stone quarries. This meant that he was now separated from his wife, Gitla.

02:30:00

Aron remembers that the work at Mauthausen was horrible and impossible. Aron remembers that the S.S. man at Mauthausen said to one of the Kapos that they had to report 20 less, meaning that 20 men should not return alive from that day's work.

02:35:00

In February 1945, disinfections began. 600 Jews were sent from Plaszów to Mauthausen. On April 13, 1945, at the time

of liberation, only 140 of the 600 remained alive. Aron was transferred to St. Valentin (October 1944) and then Ebensee (April 13, 1945), both subcamps of Mauthausen. American tanks liberated them in Ebensee on May 6, 1945.

02:40:00

On May 7, 1945, Aron remembers walking out of the camp. The Americans looked at the prisoners and took pictures. Aron went with three other Jews, walking for six weeks, to Poland, to Bedzin, to the factory. The director of the factory told them that nobody was left and that they should go to the Jewish committee in the town.

02:45:00

They then traveled to Sadice (Szadkowice), Poland and then on to Kraków. Aron received a letter from his wife, Gitla, stating that she was in a hospital and that she would meet him when she recovered. Gitla was so sick when she arrived in Theresienstadt (Terezín concentration camp in the Czech Republic) that she almost got put in the morgue. However, a Jewish doctor noticed that she was really alive and shipped her to the hospital instead, to bring her back to life.

02:50:00

Aron and Gitla remained in Poland until 1961. Aron continually tried to get his factory back. He lost in a case in Poland's Supreme Court in 1949. After his loss, he was not allowed to leave Poland.

02:55:00

Aron was, once again, refused an exit visa, when he wanted to go to Israel in 1956. This was the time of Gomulka (Wladyslaw Gomulka, First Secretary of the Polish United Worker's Party, 1956-1970).