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Summary

Henry Kolber (b. Hirsch Kolber), born June 6, 1923 in Barcice, Poland, discusses being the oldest of five (one brother and three sisters); only he survived from his family; Barcice as a small village about 60 km from Krakow; his family the only Jews; Stary Sacz nearby with about 20-30 Jewish families; father owned a lumber mill; many residents worked for him; attended public school and cheder; no problems with other students, probably because his father employed many of their parents; joined Boy Scouts; for gymnasium went to nearby town; following German invasion, men held hostage in a school for 48 hours; family returned to their village; men and youths worked for Germans; for about six months possible to live as much as possible normally; April, 1940 about 100 young Jewish men taken to Rabka; only Henry went, father and brother Aaron still worked at the lumber yard; Volk Deutsche worked with them and deemed necessary for German economy; Rabka training school for Ukrainians to be S.S.; internees to build the buildings; describes brutality of Commandant Rosenbaum; indiscriminately shot of ten of them; building of bunker at ghetto near Rabka; weekly Aktion by Commandant; burying the dead; killing of two Jews named Rosenbaum, Commandant did not to be connected to Jews; remained at Rabka until December, 1940; testifying with three other survivors against Commandant at trial Hamburg, Germany in 1968; transfer to Krakow; building camp for SS; walking daily 3-4 km to Płaszów building barracks; spent year and a half there; learning family all killed in Treblinka; deportation to Auschwitz, among group of 200 as specialized workers; showering, having head shaved; given striped uniform; meeting Polish friend from his village who was in charge of unit and helped him; evacuation of Auschwitz December, 1944; learned later his Polish friend killed; marching with no food, eating snow; at Gross Rosen put on train to Buchenwald; hospitalized in Buchenwald; released in January or February; masses of prisoners brought there; no work for them; guards telling them they could get food if they went to another camp and killing them as they left; remained in camp exhausted; describes liberation April 11, 1945; survivors dying from eating too much food from soldiers; remaining in Buchenwald still following orders of what to do when; raiding warehouse with clothes and being beaten by American soldier showing no compassion for taking pair of shoes; transports organized by Chaplain Herschel Schachter, group to France including Elie Wiesel, sent in group to Switzerland; cared for by Jewish organization; went to school; friends of his family in U.S. sending affidavit; immigrating to U.S. in 1947; working as baker, then carpenter; marrying an American woman; building houses; reflecting on his experiences, indifference of bystanders and the world, unfathomable cruelty; meeting Elie Wiesel questioning him about his description of Gustav the Blockälteste; feelings about testifying with his old friends at Rosenbaum trial.