

SAMUEL MICHAELS
RG-50.005.0042. (recorded in California 1983)

Samuel was born in Warsaw in 1927; he had one brother and 2 sisters. In 1939 two months before war started, he was arrested for hanging onto a streetcar and put in a catholic orphanage. His mother thought that was a safe place for him, and he stayed there until the ghetto formed in 1942 when he was sent to a Jewish orphanage. His mother soon died and he was placed with a family with 2 older boys in the ghetto. He was able to crawl out of the ghetto through a drain and get things to sell in the ghetto. He graduated to selling tiger things. He was caught several times but managed to talk himself out of trouble because of his knowledge of Catholicism. Samuel says he was very lucky. He had no ID papers. He described life in the ghetto with so many dying of hunger and people doing anything to survive. The Jewish leaders were made to send certain amounts of Jews on transport. They thought they were going to work camps and couldn't believe they were going to be killed.

Samuel snuck out of the ghetto and managed to get the mother and one boy out, too. They went to a smaller ghetto of about 300 Jews. He worked in a bakery and slept on top of the stove. After he left the whole ghetto was liquidated. He was able to get false ID papers from a Polish friend in Warsaw with a Polish name. He mainly lived as a non-Jewish Pole, buying and selling tools to the farmers He describes having no shoes in the snow and being covered by lice.

At the beginning of 1943 Samuel was arrested and spent several months in different jails. He had many close calls but ended up in Berlin working as a Pole and getting paid. When Berlin was being bombed he left and was caught several times more. He was finally liberated at a town near the Polish border. He went to Warsaw but couldn't find any family. A Jewish Russian soldier told him to go to Germany where there were DP camps. He went to Bialystok. He took papers from a German man on the street and went to Germany as a German. He says he has many emotional scars from that difficult time.