

-TITLE- SAMUEL MICHAELS
-I_DATE-
-SOURCE- UCLA HOLOCAUST DOCUMENTATION ARCHIVES
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY- EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY- EXCELLENT
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
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1:00 In 1939 war broke out in Warsaw.

2:00 I was arrested and put in a detention camp as a twelve year old for hanging on a trolley car. After three days I was transferred to a Christian orphanage.

5:00 I was not required to follow religious practices.

6:00 Meanwhile, the war broke out and mother thought it best I remain there , Jews were moved to designated areas in Warsaw.

7:00 I remained in the orphanage until 1941.

8:00 Anyone who was Jewish was transported to a Jewish orphanage. I was sick with Typhus and was sent to the hospital. When I was well they transferred me to a Jewish orphanage.

9:00 I was glad to be transferred to the Jewish orphanage where I learned the language fluently.

11:00 My father came to visit me in the Jewish orphanage and told me that my mother had died. The home placed me with a family in the ghetto. They had two sons older than I. They were educated people. The man lost his job and he could not earn a living anymore because of the circumstances.

12:00 There was no way to work except in the ghetto. People lost everything and could not earn a living. I was 14 at the time.

13:00 At the beginning the ghetto was not supervised very carefully, but later it was strictly supervised.

14:00 At the beginning I used to sneak out and bring food back. I opened a few bricks at the bottom of the drain and crawled through.

15:00 I jumped on the fence or snuck through the gate when a group went through. I was the only child doing this.

16:00 A made contact with my brother and sister but not with another sister. They should have taken care of me. I was not in position to help them out.

18:00 At the beginning of 1941 , when the ghetto closed, I was selling things outside of the ghetto until 1942. Later, it was more difficult.

19:00 I smuggled larger items. I knew some angle on the outside. I blackmailed the Polish policeman. He walked away from the area. We threw what we had to other side and two others caught what we threw. I was 14 years old at the time.

21:00 I would buy certain items in the ghetto and sell them on the other side and buy food and bring it the ghetto. I was caught several times . They asked if I was Jewish and I said I was not. I had some close calls several times . They would ask me to pull down my pants to see if I was circumcised.

22:00 I talked him out of it. I spoke about Catholic rituals and appealed to him and talked him out of it.

23:00 Later I took the offensive and overcame suspicion. I was arrested a few times and had close calls.

24:00 I had no identification papers. If you walked down the street in the ghetto and bought a loaf of bread it would be taken from you unless it was wrapped up and hidden.

25:00 I did not go to school anymore.

26:00 On the street, you saw that the majority of children and older people had no food. They were stretched out on the street.

27:00 You had to be careful not to step on them. They were dying from hunger.

28:00 They were singing songs. They made up songs making light of their situation. You couldn't do anything for them as we were all trying to survive ourselves.

29:00 I bought some sugar. I was trying to sell it in the ghetto and a con man cheated me out of half what he said he was going to pay me. People would do anything.

33:00 The Jewish police were picking people up on the street for the transport, putting them in wagons for the Germans

34:00 People did not believe they would be exterminated. They did not believe they would die. 2 or 3% of the people thought they would die but the rest did not believe it. They though they were going to work and be well fed and taken care of.

35:00 I was caught three times but I talked them out of it. I told

them I was a smuggler but I was not Jewish. My adopted family lived very well. We had the food we needed.

36:00 Then the Ukrainian police watched the walls. They shot anyone in question. I was still crossing. I was shot at but not hit a couple of times.

37:00 I told my family I was not coming back to the ghetto. It was too dangerous. I met my brother. I did not think of helping him as I was struggling myself. He couldn't pass as a Christian and he could not speak well enough.

38:00 It was not difficult to leave my adopted family. It was too dangerous. They did not have the choice. When you know your time is up you do whatever you can.

39:40:00 Before this happened if you told me I was going to sleep in the forest by myself and all the things that happened to me I would be afraid. I was afraid but I did not think that they would exterminate people. I was busy protecting my life without being afraid.

41:42:00 I communicated with my adopted parents and I was able to get them out of the ghetto-- the mother and the younger son. I took them on a train for Warsaw 80 km where there were Jewish people. I stayed there for two days. I then traveled to another ghetto. We went by train and then walked for miles at night.

44:00 During the day we hid out in the forest. We pretended we were farmers if anyone saw us. We slept during the day in shifts.

45:00 The ghetto was in a small town. 300 jews. It was not as strict as Warsaw. I worked in bakery and had no place to sleep. I slept there two nights. The day after I left the Nazis' came and took them all away, including my adoptive mother and brother.

47:00 I had no money, no place to stay, no place to go. I had a Polish friend in Warsaw and spoke to him. He sold me an identification document. From this time on I was (a name). In 1939 when the Germans occupied Poland, Russia occupied part of too. In 1941, Germans pushed the Russians back close to Moscow . The Germans named this part of Poland the Third Reich. I used to sell tools to farmers.

50:50:00 I walked by night with a Polish friend, slept in the forest. I stayed with a family that did not know I was Jewish. I visited them when I came back to Poland recently. I knew I could not stay in one place too long.

52:53:00 Sometimes I hopped a freight train for part of the trip. I sometimes slowed down the train so I could jump out.

54:00 I was arrested for jumping off trains. Sometimes I was released after being after arrested.

55:56:00 Sometimes it was snowing and I had no shoes when they took my things. When your feet are in snow they hurt. I had no money and did not know where to go.(crying). Also, I was infected with lice. Instead of washing the clothes you threw them out and bought other clothes. Because of not enough bathing, I was infected

57:00 At the beginning of 1943 I was arrested. I was 16.

2:00 We were scared. Cannot be erased. I still have a difficult time with the problem. Like a shadow following me all the time.

3:00 I have a hard time living with the past. What happened to my family and our people. They should not have allowed anything like this to happen. They should fight for what they believe in.

5:00 After three days they transported me from that area over 30 or 40 kilometers to a jail for political criminals. Low benches to sleep on or under, and a toilet in the center of the room.

6:00 The prisoners played tricks on each other

9:00 They transported us to another jail. They put me in a cell then they released me because it was a minor infraction- to a halfway house. They sent us to work for the Germans, then to a doctor who ordered us to let one [???] down. At that time I was scared.

11:00 I knew a Jewish man who worked there. I asked him what to do. He told me to stay. I would be safe.

13:00 The doctor knew but he passed me by.

14:00 I was there for two months. We were taken by train to Berlin to work. I travelled with another fellow. I thought he was Jewish but I did not know.

15:00 They put us in a work camp in Berlin under the Polish men working for the Germans. We were free to travel, they paid us a wage. At that time Berlin was bombed.

16:00 I escaped to Poland by train and they caught me again. If you had a drop of Jewish blood in you, you were not allowed to live. That's what hurts.(crying) Everybody was allowed to live except us. They transferred me from one jail to another, a couple of weeks in each. I was in a concentration camp as a Christian. During the shower where we were examined again, I was detected as being Jewish. I could have escaped if I wanted to but I decided to stick it out. I was there two weeks and I was relieved and sent back to work.

19:00 We were in Germany close to the Polish border.

20:00 The Germans were running away and finally I was liberated. I

went back to Warsaw and everything was levelled.

21:00 I could not find my family. I went back to Poland where I used to smuggle.

22:23:00 I looked for Jewish people. I joined the Polish army. They transferred me to a police division. I was 18 years old.

24:00 I was travelling and looking for someone. I felt there was no one alive. If there was a Jew alive after the war it was like finding something unusual. It was impossible that anyone should be left alive.

25:00 Since I could not find anyone I joined the service. The Jewish Russian officer told me to try to get to Germany to the DP camp. I took identification paper away from a German in the street and migrated as a German to Germany.

28:00 Some parts are easier to tell than others. I feel that these stories should be told. People should be aware and should know. People should defend their own rights and speak up.

.END.