

Bayer, David  
RG-50.029\*0006  
One Videotape  
In English

**Abstract:** David was born on Sept. 27, 1922 in Kozieniec, Poland. His father owned a shoe factory before the war and they lived comfortably. David had one sister and one brother. Shortly following the German occupation of his town, David and his family were relocated to a ghetto. David worked on an irrigation project, and was saved from deportation with his family by his project supervisor. David was eventually captured. He worked in a factory and then was finally taken to Birkenau where he worked in a coal mine. He talks about the animalistic behavior of the prisoners. After the Russians liberated Birkenau, David made his way back to Kozieniec. He stayed in his hometown for a short while due to the pogroms. David traveled to Panama and then to Israel, where he immediately joined the army. Shortly after, David moved to the United States, where he lived for the remainder of his life.

0:00:47 David was born on Sept. 27, 1922 in Kozieniec, Poland. The town was mostly religious, Hasidic Jews with a population of about 6,000.

0:01:34 His father had a shoe factory. Around the time that Hitler came to power, his parents were in their early forties, his sister was 16 and his brother was not yet Bar-Mitzvah age. People lived happily and didn't suspect Hitler would come so quickly.

0:03:40 The Germans invaded Poland. Jews went to the woods because the cities were being bombed. When they came back, Germans had emptied their houses.

0:04:00 He remembers a German soldier saying to him and his father, "You Jews have it rough, nobody likes you. Why is that?" David's father replied, "Because we don't hit back."

0:05:26 Jews were moved from Christian areas to Jewish areas, but these were not yet formal ghettos. The Bayer family was relocated to a "comfortable" apartment.

0:05:40 The Germans started to form the ghetto. It was in the middle of town. David's family was put in one room. They used the furniture as wood for fire. The Germans had started selecting people for labor in the area. One day, they selected David's father. David exchanged himself for his father because his father would not have been able to handle the hard work.

0:06:30 The Germans liked David's work because he was young and strong. One soldier made David his helper. He had to clean the officer's room and shine his shoes. He also acted as a translator for this German to the local prisoners.

0:12:50 The situation in town was getting worse. The population rose by thousands. The Germans had put up wires.

- 0:14:30 Before the war, the Polish government had been working on an irrigation project. The Germans took over this project with Jewish labor. David was chosen to work on this project. He went to work every day.
- 0:15:00 One night, David came home from work and there was a lot of activity with police, German soldiers were surrounding the ghetto. David's father had a Christian friend who worked at the railroad station. He told David's father that there had been a requisition for 80 freight cars from Koźieniec to Treblinka. (later David corrected himself, it was Birkenau.) They had never heard of this place before.
- 0:17:10 His supervisor from the irrigation job came to get him. His sister had been sent back from jail. She had been in jail outside the ghetto but was released for deportation. David said he wanted to stay with the family but his mother told him to go with the officer and save himself.
- 0:19:00 He went with the supervisor to the irrigation canal. He heard the sirens in the distance coming from the town. He ran to the train station but then came back. Left behind at the irrigation job, under German supervision, the men ate well by stealing potatoes and beets from local farms. They took turns going out and stealing the food for everybody. David went out when it was his turn. When he returned, everybody was gone.
- 0:19:10 He learned that they had been sent to more important jobs at Zachodźko, a gun and cannon factory, and Pieruszyce, a munitions factory. There were two or three other men in the same situation. He was tracked down by a German soldier on a motorcycle with a dog. David said the non-Jewish Poles were not very friendly to Jews. Someone had reported him.
- 0:20:04 David jumped a ravine that the soldier couldn't cross with his bike and got away. He hid in a barn for the night and then proceeded to another village to a farmer's house that was a friend of the family.
- 0:21:04 The farmer put David up in the barn, above the cows. They "converted" him to Christianity. They put him in the wagon of their buggy and smuggled him into the ghetto. There were still Germans there cleaning up.
- 0:23:20 Polish police said they were going to Radom. They were to take their possessions with them. His friend, M. Orbach wanted to run and escape. They told him not to run, but he did and was shot by the Germans. This was the first terror he had.
- 0:25:30 Radom was another ghetto. It consisted of leftover people from many places. The Germans said anyone with gold or wealth would get an automatic trip to Switzerland or the U.S.A. Several people fell for this trick. They were put on nice buses. They were dressed nicely and they were very excited, but David learned that they had been taken to a countryside and shot.

0:27:00 David was taken to Schottischen. They were going to be taken to Auschwitz. People were asking for volunteers to go to Pieruszyce to work with munitions.

0:30:29 At Pieruszyce, David worked to make gun powder from paper. The Germans had run out of cotton because of embargoes, so they had a complex process of mixing paper with chemicals to get gun powder. David worked 8 to 12 hours a day at this job. These hours were more than double what the civilian, Christian worker worked. David was a good-looking young man so he got enough food from young German girls that he came in contact with through his work.

0:32:27 There were times when the Jewish workers would sabotage the powder plant. The equipment was very sensitive, so they could just remove a bolt to throw everything off. When they did this, they were severely beaten. Once, because of a problem with the machinery, David was going to be shot. One of the German chemists saved him because he argued that David was essential because of he knew how to work the equipment.

0:35:49 When the German came into his town he was 17 years old. His move to Pieruszyce and Schottischen happened over two years.

0:36:42 One of the people he worked with, Moshe Matis, suggested that they escape. They escaped successfully but then had nowhere to go. A local farmer saw them and started chasing them with a large sickle. They returned to the factory.

0:41:14 They heard rumors at the factory that the Russians were coming. This was at the end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943. They prayed for the Russians. The Germans decided to move everything: the equipment and the people. One day David saw a friend from Kozieniec who had escaped from Birkenau. He said that everyone had been killed. David refused to believe this.

0:44:08 David was shipped to Birkenau in a freight car. There were about 100 people per car. They were packed in "like animals." They traveled for six days in terrible conditions. There was no water or food and many people died.

0:45:45 They arrived at Birkenau. They were at a big loading ramp. The officers were screaming "Out! Out!". Someone whispered in David's ear, "They're going to kill you all." There were nice Persian rugs on the fences so that they could not see the inside of the camp from the loading dock.

0:47:00 Everyone was separated. David was sent to what was called a Gypsy camps, named for its previous occupants. People had to line up naked to be examined. David was chosen to work in a coal mine.

0:51:50 Their diet consisted of a piece of bread and coffee every day and soup at night. The work in the mines was very difficult. The shovel alone weighed 10 kilos. The workers had to travel miles into the caves to get to their work place.

0:58:04 One day, an American plane bombed the kitchen facility in the middle of the camp. The prisoners rejoiced as food exploded out onto them. It didn't matter that the people in the kitchen had died, "as long as one had food."

0:59:00 Bayer talks about how people turned into animals in that environment. He remembers a father and son that fought over their rations. The father would often glue crumbs from the floor on his ration card with saliva. When the prisoners wanted to see over the wall, they would merely stack bodies to climb on.

1:00:30 The Russians started the invasion and the Germans started liquidating the camps. Someone stole David's hat from his head. The walk was that much worse without the protection of a hat.

1:03:31 They marched on side roads "forever." If people strayed from the pack, they were shot. Many fell while walking. They rested at another camp. Bayer was in Block 16. There was a kitchen in the middle of the camp. Although there were Germans on the roof of this kitchen, David and several other ran inside and stole large amounts of bread, salami, and marmalade.

1:08:00 David returned to block 16 with his food and shared it with the people in his building. A young Hasidic Jew named Reuben entered. He prayed and cried because it was Yom Kippur.

1:09:00 Reuben told David that the watch posts, where the Germans usually stood with Guns, were empty. They also discovered that the electric fences were not on. They cut a hole in the fence and climbed through a hole in the next wall. "Thousands of people" follow through that hole.

1:10:32 Reuben had been shot. David carried him until they reached a barn. He left him hidden in some hay, hoping he would be saved, which he was. David met three other Jews in the woods, searching for their way.

1:11:17 They melted margarine off of David's clothes, leftover from the food he stole. They walked on until they saw a few people standing on the top of another hill. As they got closer, they saw that they were Russian soldiers.

1:12:05 David was so thin that the soldier could pick him up with one hand. The soldiers took them and then put them in the care of a German family. After 4 or 5 days he began his journey back to Poland on foot.

1:13:23 David explains that the Russians didn't care about anyone if they were free. They didn't care that he had survived. They robbed and stole things because they didn't have much themselves.

1:16:45 David found an old Polish teacher from his home town. The teacher was in bad shape so he

gave him some bread. David got on Russian transport trains to try get back to Poland.

1:18:53 Eventually he made it back to Krozenienke. He walked up to the Jewish cemetery in his town. He lay down on his grandfather's grave and cried and prayed. A father going by in his buggy saw him and offered to take him home for the night.

1:20:00 The next day, David went to see a friend of his family. He was a former employee of his father's. David's father had given this friend the family's valuables for safe keeping.

1:21:00 The friend celebrated his making it home. However, David sensed that they wanted to kill him. So, he escaped to a woman's house that he knew. Eventually a lot of Jews started to come back and he lived in an abandoned house with other Jews. The house was comfortable, but the Poles had started pogroms.

1:23:00 David decided he should leave. They went to Germany to be involved in organization for immigration to Israel. They lived in a camp for displaced persons. There, he made a lot of money smuggling guns to the Jews.

1:26:05 David got word that someone was trying to locate him. It turned out that it was a friend from home, Ithki Kashenbach. Ithki's father had immigrated to Panama before the war. David traveled to Panama to live with them but he didn't like it.

1:27:00 He and his friend then traveled to Concepcion. There, David lived in a community of Indians. He made leather from iguanas, snakes, and other animals.

1:30:00 One day, David read in the newspaper that Israel had declared its independence. He made arrangements through the Jewish Agencies in New York to get to Israel to join the army.

1:32:00 He arrived in Haifa and immediately joined the army. One day, about a year later, he bumped into an old uncle. The uncle brought him home where he met many cousins he had heard about.

1:38:00 The uncle told him to go away and make some money. He went to Panama and then went on to Washington, D.C. He went to work at a liquor store. Eventually he owned the liquor store. He is now retired. He is grateful to the United States for helping when no one else would.

1:40:00 1. David shows four pictures:  
2. Picture of him when he was young with many schoolmates.  
3. Picture of a group of young Zionists in their movement. Most of these people were killed.  
4. Picture of David after the war in Kozeniec with a concentration camp shirt on. He was number B-74.  
5. Picture of a friend in the army.

1:42:00 David says this interview was important because the survivors won't be around long. This must never happen again, not just to the Jews, to anyone. The Poles, and the Russians didn't care, but the U.S. did. He ends by saying: "AM YISRA'EL CHAI" (The people of Israel live).