

## RG-50.031.0127

### Summary

Matt Lasson (né Lashinsky) born in Warsaw on January 1, 1926, discusses his name, Lashinsky, which was his original Catholic Polish name changed at his US citizenship; his father who was a graphic artist; his mother who was a homemaker; his sister, Wacha; middle class upbringing in mixed race neighborhood, attends public school, according to Matt, "Jewish children could stay or leave for religious classes"; German orders begin, father has Jewish friends so "shop was cleaned out"; discussion/Matt's belief re: Spanish inquisition's ongoing effect into WW2; building of the ghetto, Jewish children coming through ghetto holes to find food; "School closes for everybody, they say 'Slavic do not need education.'"; rumor that "Poland was only country where helping Jews would be shot dead, elsewhere only jailed"; thousands shot in agricultural area; Matt joins underground (funded by sources in England), obtains two sets of papers; acquires Bergmann submachine gun "to impress girls," arrested, imprisoned at Pawiak (where ghetto was being formed), released after couple weeks, parents arrested; Jewish uprising; Pawiak's interrogation torture with broomstick between Matt's legs, "hands handcuffed around knees, beatings"; lined up in courtyard with hundreds, discovered uncle who was arrested with 21 others for printing underground materials (uncle had been in same lithograph business as Matt's father), most in uncle's group shot but uncle does survive Holocaust; Matt packed in train car wrapped in barbed wire, two day transport-no food & water-excrement bucket center of car; Auschwitz arrival, Dr. Mengele points back & forth selecting, "Line on left went to crematorium"; body shaved, tattooed-Matt shows camera his #156275 ("anti-Nazi" classification); receives uniform of civilian clothes/wood shoes; references crematorium "oven 2'x2"; recalls being counted by Jewish S.S., when he came into block pulling out the dead; Treblinka slave labor moving rocks; refers to "chimney at crematorium, smoke was yellow, smelled like burned hair"; known "If someone hit you, never fall down or be killed"; prisoners "stripped to underwear before being trucked to crematorium because a (clothed) woman had shot a S.S." (gun hidden in her clothing); morning coffee "black water", soup mid-day "Tasted like dish wash - if guard liked you, you got soup from the bottom"; evening "1/6, sometimes 1/3 loaf bread, sometimes spoon of marmalade"; slave labor in kitchen; 4 weeks in quarantine; discussion of "*Muselmann* - people under 40 lbs. When you look like that, got half of food as others, they pushed & pushed them until they fell down"; discussion/"Jewish men always praying"; uniforms with different color stars; cattle car transfer (no food/water), first to Mauthausen, stripped of Auschwitz uniform/shoes, in underwear marched barefooted in snow to Gusen barracks (Matt later in interview cites his Mauthausen block "No. 30"), two to bunk, "not beaten, so I thought I was in heaven," requested to be sent to hospital "foot was rotting away" (from Pawiak injury); at "hospital" camp, taken into "very cold shower" (in winter), "no medicine, only salve, looked like Vaseline, few instruments," description of prisoners' dire conditions; doctor scraps Matt's sore without anesthesia, applies bandage, assists healing; patients would keep dead bunkmates as long as possible to obtain their food rations; doctor's helpful assistance to some, encourages Matt that he "would live," but told story of his friends "making paperweights from heads"; Matt sees pile of dead in diarrhea; doctor's other story of how they got rid of failing patients, "heads placed under cover, knocked out by wood, thrown out window"; Matt witnesses prisoners "hosed with cold water until they died"; 2 trucks

“looked like post office trucks” going back & forth between Mauthausen & Gusen (with bodies); doctor protects Matt from selection, able to obtain “very very important” shoes/jacket/trousers; early 1944, forced labor in Gusen II tunnels then labored in engineering/drafting office, able to receive more food; for other Gusen II prisoners, because of rock quarry, conditions “were worse than Auschwitz, little oxygen...in bombings, people dying by the thousands, three to four hundred Jewish children killed, killings of women...close to liberation, killings for hours and hours with axes, heard the screams & people were telling us about it”; at liberation, “Took *Muselmann*, put them in two blocks, gassed them up.”; wiring of tunnels with dynamite; 4/28/1945, S.S. leave, replaced with Linz police; liberation, Matt goes to *Appelplatz*, “They were killing couples, smashing their heads”; seeing hundreds walking the road; how Matt coped with hunger, learning to never talk about food “because it causes juices in body to eat your insides”; seeing first group of American soldiers May 5, 1945.