

**Time-coded Notes for Oral history Interview with Murray Weisman
1986**

Tape 1

17:01:20

Murray introduces himself. He was born in Poland in 1930. In the summer of 1939 his city was occupied. He lived at this time in Lodz a city of about 1 million people. At this time 250-500,000 of the inhabitants were Jewish.

17:02:12

As soon as the Nazi's settled they began setting up for the ghettos. Every day the Nazi's would take people for the work camps. Some came back beaten, others never came back. This went on while Murray was in the ghetto.

17:03:04

In 1939, while walking to school, Murray was forced by SS men to get into a truck. When the truck was full they drove 5-10 miles outside the city to a place where there were long lines of cattle cars waiting on the tracks. People began screaming as they were ordered to get out of the trucks.

17:04:04 They were ordered to get on the train. The young that could run fast made it to the train. Some of the old that were slow were shot right. At this time Murray said things didn't seem real. He didn't comprehend what it was all about.

17:04:36

When the trains were full they were locked in and began to move. They traveled for a day and a half. They were cold and hungry. Murray still didn't understand what was going on. He described feeling more excitement than fear. He states he didn't understand the nature of the problem.

17:05:40

Murray said the SS knew he was Jewish by his looks. Also with the SS men were Poles who helped identify Polish Jews. In the ghetto he lived in there were only Jews.

17:06-07

Technical adjustments made.

17:09:12

When Murray arrived at the camps he recalls seeing the men inside the camps. They were jumping up and down and had shaved heads, huge stripped outfits and wooden shoes. Murray recalls thinking it was like a circus wit many ugly clowns.

17:10:03

They were ordered off the train. Murray describes how they were stripped, searched for gold, given a number on their arm and put into a shower and given clothes.

17:11:11

Murray describes a doctor that directed people left or right. The doctor asked Murray how old he

was. Murray recalls he had been warned to lie and say he was 13.

17:12:15

Murray tells about being given sacks to stuff with straw to make a mattress. He was sent to bed without anything to eat.

17:13:40

The next day they were given black coffee and a slice of bread. Murray describes the procedure that took place every morning in the camp. They stood in line at the Unschallon for hours while they were counted. If you died while waiting in line they counted your body. Later they would dispose of the body.

17:14:30

Murray describes the work he did in the forest. Their job was to build roads from Franker(ph) to Posnen (ph). They worked all day. The SS were there and beat anyone who stood around. At the end of the day they returned to camp to be counted. Murray estimates that there were 10,000 people in this camp.

17:16:19

They were searched every time they left the camp for guns they may have gotten in the forest.

Tape 2

18:00:32

At this camp Murray lived in tents. The camps were not yet complete in 1939. There was no water, toilet facilities or chairs. Each night they got a bowl of soup. It was after they sipped their soup that they realized how hungry they were. The soup was made of water and grass. The soup only agitated his hunger.

18:02:10

After dinner they had to clean their bowls. The SS had an inspection. Murray recalls one night he and the man standing next to him were beaten because their bowls weren't clean enough for the SS.

18:03:20

Murray remembers being made to clean up around the camp. This was an opportunity for him to talk to the older members of the camp. They explained to Murray what the camp was all about. It was at this time that Murray began to realize it was a place of torture, death and misery.

18:04:23

Murray describes that after about 2 months of this routine people's leg's began to get swollen. Some of the prisoners committed suicide by running to the fence because they couldn't endure the pain.

18:04:23

Murray recalls one Friday when about 50 people who were too weak to work were rounded up in front of the entire camp. They were beaten by the SS and machine gunned to death. It was the first mass murder that Murray had witnessed. It was then that Murray realized what was really going on.

18:06:02

Murray remembers how demoralizing this was and that the only resistance they could think of was suicide which many people did.

18:06:33

After 1 year Murray was moved to another camp 20 miles away. This was because his 4 mile piece of the road was complete.

18:08:50

In 1940 Murray was taken to a real camp. It was named Auschwitz at this time the crematoriums were not yet finished. Murray had been told of people being burned in huge masses. When they arrived at Auschwitz all the people that had died en route or were too weak to stand were piled up in a huge pit and had gasoline poured on them and were set on fire.

18:10:39

In Auschwitz Murray worked inside the camp. Murray describes this work as torture work. Here he dug holes then filled them back up again.

18:11:27

Murray remembers that every Friday there were the selections. One Friday he was told to go left which he knew meant death. He ran back to the right side. The SS shot at him but were told to stop saying they would get him next week.

18:11:50

The year between 1941-42 at Auschwitz was the hardest year for Murray. It was during this time that Murray claims the SS engaged in active torture. They tortured the prisoners all day. The pain of hunger and thirst was so demoralizing that sometimes all he prayed for was to die.

18:12:37

Murray talks about the Kapos who were professional German criminals. He states they were just as effective as the SS in the beatings and torture.

18:13:00

After 1 year at Auschwitz Murray was shipped to Buna. Life at Buna was a little easier because in Buna there were factories. Because Murray had told his captives he was a carpenter he was given a job insulating pipes.

18:14:36

Murray recalls once when he was afraid the wind would blow him off of a roof a kind Jewish supervisor told him he didn't have to climb up top to insulate the higher pipes. Two days later the supervisor was shot.

18:15:28

Murray recalls that he and the other prisoners were so hungry that they couldn't function as human beings because they were so preoccupied with getting something to eat. After not eating for so long

he became like an animal-only searching for food all day long. They destroyed Murray's self-image. This went on forever.

18:16:28

At Buna the beatings were less because they had a job to do. When they marched they had to sing. If you were caught not singing you were beaten. If you had to go to the toilet you were beaten. Murray believes that Buna was a kind of paradise compared to Auschwitz and the other camps especially in the later years. But the selections still remained.

18:18:37

Murray recalls being told that his family were all dead.

18:19:00

Murray was in Buna for a year and a half. He recalls two things that happened to him there. When the Russians would bomb the camps the Nazi's would hide in the bunkers. One Sunday during a bombing episode Murray tried to hide in a bunker. One Nazi wouldn't let him in the bunker. He was afraid to run across the camp because he could be shot as a deserter. Murray stood beside a small pool. He saw the bunker smashed to pieces including the Nazi who wouldn't let him in. This gave Murray hope.

Tape 3

19:00:00

As the Russians got closer they had to evacuate the camp. Murray talks about how they were forced to march for two and a half days in the heavy snow with no food. Of the 20,000 at Buna, Murray estimates about one-third died on the march. They arrived at Glivitz (ph) where there were prisoners from other camps as well.

19:02:55

Murray describes this as being a miserable experience. He describes being so hungry and tired that the prisoners were nothing more than broken weeds. They had to keep moving. If a prisoner stopped he was trampled over. No one cared about anyone. The friends that Murray had made were all lost because everyone traveled at a different pace.

19:03:55

At Glivitz there was no place to lie down because so many people were already on the ground. They were so exhausted.

19:04:44

The people were put on trains and traveled for 8 days. They had to pull over many times to let the army's trains pass. When they were stopped the German townspeople would assemble and throw rocks and water at the people locked in the cars.

19:05:31

The people on the train were very thirsty. Murray describes how he had a can and they would dip it in the snow and wet their lips with the snow. This was their nourishment. He was taken to Dourah

(ph).

19:06:12

The Americans bombed the train rails. Murray tried to hide in a freight car but a Nazi wouldn't let him in. Murray hid beside a telephone pole. Murray watched as the freight car with the Nazi in it exploded. Murray remembers this as being "a beautiful experience that I visualized".

19:07:42

Murray's job there was to rebuild the railroad the Americans had destroyed. Murray remembers one Nazi who was very cruel. Every morning he kill some Jews before he had his breakfast. He always had a shovel or pick in his hand. One day Murray was one of his victims. He stabbed Murray with a bayonet and left him for dead. Murray's friends helped him. He was there for one month.

19:08:23

He was sent to Buchenwald which Murray states wasn't bad. There was a special block for youngsters. He carried bricks. There were civilian supervisors. These were his last in the camps. Murray recalls seeing prisoners being taken out of the camps and shot or drowned.

19:10:07

One morning Murray was too sick and wounded to go on anymore so he crawled into a pile of corpses. He stayed there for two days until he heard a new voice. This was when Murray was liberated by the Americans. Murray was taken to France 2 days later. Murray was 15 years old.

19:11:15

Murray recalls while in the camp he thought that if he were liberated he would go into the woods and get away from civilization. Murray had learned what people were capable of doing to each other. He wanted to get away. In Murray's experience he does not recall a single Nazi that displayed any humanity toward the prisoners.

19:12:25

Murray reads a quote from Hans Dietrich (ph).

19:12:50

In Paris Murray was reintroduced to civilization and decided against living in the woods. He had the opportunity to study in America.

19:13:00

Murray is now married and has two kids.

19:14:00

Murray recalls on the truck to the gas chamber a man gave another prisoner a piece of paper from his coat.

19:15:00

Murray sings a song in another language that was a legacy in the camps.

19:19:24

A photo of children in line.

19:20:02

A photo of a young man in a camp uniform.

19:20:36

A photo of a bridge with people standing on it and a train underneath.