

Summary of Oral History: Edward Hilfstein

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This summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on 03/2022

Summary:

Edward Hilfstein born in Krakow, Poland in September 17, 1924; family of 5; two younger sisters born in 1927 and 1934; describes happy childhood; parents were married in 1923; Germans entered Poland in 1939; describes school being closed and hostilities growing; his father's non-Jewish friend spit on him and he was then sent to a working camp 40-50 kilometers from Krakow; family did not know; was able to run away and returned to Krakow; 1940 working as a plumber apprentice; 1940 family moved out to small village Mogila for about 1 year near great aunt who was a farmer; Every Jew from village had to move to Wieliczka ghetto; father was taken to another labor camp; describes Judenrein; around 11,000 Jews segregated, Edward was one of around 800 men selected for work; the rest, including Edward's sisters and mother, were sent to Belzec, an extermination camp; 1941 was sent to a ghetto Bochnia, after being in hospital 4-5 days with malnourishment, ran away to Krakow ghetto; contracting typhus; reconnected with his father; was sent to Płaszów labor camp in 1942; worked as a plumber, built sewers, was a roofer; Describes horror of surviving Płaszów for about 2 years; In 1944 was sent to Gross Rosen labor camp; stayed there 36 hours without clothes in freezing weather; horrible conditions; 2 weeks later he was sent to Oskar Schindler's Brunnlitz; very different experience from previous camps; describes knowing Oskar Schindler; was there 7-8 months; Edward returned to Krakow after war, found some relatives but none of his immediate family had survived.