

**Ludwig Jacob**  
**RG 50.106\* 0032**  
**May 23, 1996**

Abstract

Ludwig Jacob was born on May 5, 1923 Schmalkalden Germany.

He lived with his father, Karl, and his mother Rosa in the center of town in a mixed neighborhood. His brother Rudolph lived in Amsterdam. There were 25 Jewish families out of 12,000 people.

His family was not very religious but attended High Holy Day services. Ludwig had a small Bar Mitzvah. He went to public school and then gymnasium where he was isolated and tormented. His family withdrew him and placed him with an auto mechanic.

A few weeks later all the Jews were arrested and sent to Buchenwald. They were released after a few weeks, and Ludwig was sent on *Kindertransport* train to Eindhoven, Holland. He was well treated until the Nazi invasion, then sent to his brother's house in Amsterdam. Brother was deported and killed in Mauthausen. In May 1942 Ludwig received letter from his father that they were being deported. Ludwig helped brother's wife until he was called up. Went to buy a bike, and by chance a clerk had left an ID card on the counter, which Ludwig took and used to change his identity. Ultimately, he and friend got to Paris and contacted the underground. After D-Day, Germans arrested him. He escaped from train. A few years after the war, he came to New York City, got married, and started his own business. He has two sons, Peter and Philip.

**File 1 of 2**

**0:25**

Ludwig Jacob was born May 5, 1923, in Schmalkalden, Germany (the Eastern section).

**0:50**

Ludwig's father was Karl, his mother was Rosa. He had a brother, Rudolph (Rudy) who was 10 years older.

His grandparents had died before he was born. He saw some aunts and uncles occasionally.

His father was a cattle dealer. He bought cows and re-sold them to farmers or butchers. Most of his customers were non-Jewish.

**2:22**

Ludwig's town had 11,000–12,000 people but only 25 Jewish families. His family lived in an apartment in a mixed neighborhood in the center of town. He went to public school and then went to the gymnasium for three years. He felt very uncomfortable.

**4:00**

There were no Jewish children Ludwig's age, but his family did have contact with the other Jewish families and went to a synagogue on High Holy Days.

**6:13**

Ludwig's family kept kosher until told not to by German authorities. A Hebrew teacher came every other week to teach boys and girls together. He had a very short and small bar mitzvah in 1936. His family spoke German.

**8:06**

Ludwig played soccer, hiked, and skied.

His parents were not Zionists, and he did not join a Zionist youth group.

**9:26**

His brother Rudolph was married in 1936 and transferred by a trading company to Amsterdam.

**9:56**

Ludwig remembers the January 1933 election. At first there was no change in his daily life, but his non-Jewish classmates isolated him. He had one or two non-Jewish friends. He remembers verbal insults, but the last straw was when other students painted his clothes.

In 1938, his parents withdrew him from school and got him an apprenticeship with an auto mechanic.

**12:47**

Ludwig and parents were arrested with all other Jewish families. The next morning, men were taken out to clean streets made messy by the Nazis. Women were sent home, but the next day everyone was put on trucks and sent to Buchenwald where they were put in big barracks and slept on wooden shelves.

Ludwig remembers being put on parade ground and made to sit all day without food, except for cold soup and small piece of bread in the evening. Everyone had diarrhea but could not go to latrines. "People went crazy."

**15:44**

Father's business had failed, and Ludwig said that there was nothing anyone could do about anything.

**25:07**

His father was released after 15 days and went home. Two weeks later Ludwig was let go. His brother had sent papers from Amsterdam for Ludwig to go on the *Kindertransport* train.

**28:53**

Ludwig prepared for trip to Holland. Parents watched him pack, and his father hid an antique watch in his trunk. They thought he would be home in three weeks, so it was not hard to leave. Parents took him to Frankfurt where everyone assembled to go on the train.

## **Tape 1, Side B**

On January 4, 1939, the *Kindertransport* went to Eindhoven, Holland. Ludwig stayed in Eindhoven six to eight months. He lived in a children's home and went to regular school. Kids played together and were well taken care of. He was free to walk into town. Dutch teachers spoke German

**35:07**

Ludwig corresponded with his parents and brother. He went to his nephew's bris in Amsterdam. After 1939 he went to Wiering-meer on Hachshara to train for agricultural work in Israel. Everyone led a healthy life.

When Germans invaded Holland, the Gestapo suddenly closed down the camp, and he was sent in a truck to Amsterdam where he lived with his brother and family. Other young people also went to relatives in Holland.

**39:56**

Ludwig met other young people in Amsterdam. Shortly after he came, his brother and 120 other people were picked up and sent to Mauthausen. Three months later, family got brother's death certificate. After the war, Ernst found out about medical experiments that were conducted there.

**42:00**

Ludwig's sister-in-law had started a little stocking repair business, which she continued after receiving notice of her husband's death. Ludwig delivered the orders and stayed with her and her two-and-a-half-year-old baby until July 15, 1942, when he was called up to go to Germany.

**43:07**

May 15, 1942, Ludwig received a letter from his father saying they were being deported. He still does not know where they were sent.

**46:37**

Ludwig connected with non-Jewish people through his sister-in-law. He had to wear a yellow star, which made him feel "marked".

He managed to buy a bicycle. By luck, the salesperson had left his own identification on the counter, and Ludwig took it. He now had a new identification: Wilhelm Popkin. He took off his yellow star and had freedom of movement.

He and a friend, Heinz Goldschmitt, who also had false identity papers, got jobs working in a toy factory owned by a Jewish family but managed by a non-Jewish German who let them work there.

Ludwig was able to sell the antique watch to an antique dealer for money to live on.

**50:06**

Ludwig tried to lead a very "normal" life," but his Jewish looks were so different from the blond Dutch people that sometimes he was stopped by Nazis.

In September 1943, he and Heinz decided to go to France, where Heinz had contacts with the underground. He was able to speak French, and he and Heinz lived in cheap rooms in Paris. They sold cigarettes on the black market. France was difficult. There was very little food.

**56:51**

They finally met up with underground members, some of whom were Jewish or foreign refugees. Not many French were in the underground. "We somehow managed to get by and exist."

**59:23**

July 1944, after D-Day and before the Americans got to Paris, Ludwig, who spoke German, was sent by the underground to work for a German construction organization that was building highways and housing. While there, Ludwig took some handguns. Unfortunately, Heinz had befriended a German soldier who said that he wanted to desert. Heinz took him into their group, and five days later, the soldier turned the members in, and they were all arrested.

**File 2 of 2**

**0:10**

When Gestapo arrested Ludwig, he said he was Jewish. He was put in a cell in Fresnes. When his two French cell mates heard his German accent, they thought he was a spy and ignored him. A week later he was interrogated for a whole day. Badly tortured and beaten, he was sent back to his cell, and his cell mates were very nice.

**3:43**

As Americans came to Paris, Nazis sent prisoners to Germany, except Jews who were sent to the Drancy transit camp. Ludwig was considered a dangerous person and was put into a very cold cell and then into a cattle car with 50 men and women and sent to Buchenwald.

On the fourth night on the train, he and about 23 others forced a metal bar and jumped out at St. Quentin. They met up with other people, and he paired off with a man and his sister (Philip and Rosemary Cohn).

**12:09**

He was not sure who was in resistance. Nobody talked. The group split up, went through the woods, and came to a farm where very nice people gave them food. They kept walking until they got close to Paris outskirts. Then they met up with other resistance people and joined them for a couple of days. Arrived in Paris on August 25.

**19:03**

Ludwig got job as an interpreter with the resistance. He translated letters and earned a little money from a newspaper. It was a lousy and boring job.

**21:00**

Ludwig then worked for the American army for about a year. His sister-in-law's brother-in-law had started to work on handbags, and Ludwig went to Holland to work for him.

**22:36**

In June 1947 Ludwig came to the United States and worked in a handbag factory in New York City. He stayed with an aunt.

**24:46**

He saw an ad in the *New York Times* for Alexander's department store. He was well paid. He got married in 1950, and he and wife went to France to visit her family. When they returned to New York, he started his own business.

They have two sons, Peter and Philip.

**26:18**

Ludwig is not religious but feels 100% Jewish. He does get reparations.

**27:06**

When he came to the United States, he felt no one was interested in the past, and he wanted to focus on the present and the future.

**28:02**

When asked what kept him going, he said self-preservation and optimism.