

RG-50.120 \*002

abstracted by

Hava Bonne, July 1996

Time Sini Adler

1:01 Tape 1/4 start

Family Background

1:08 He was born in Prague Czechoslovakia in July 1928. His father's family was the only Jewish one in Dobravoda/Gutwasser in the Sudeten area. His mother came from an Orthodox family in Karlsruhe Germany. His father was a rabbi with a broad secular European education. He describes his home as "modern-Orthodox" (whereas the majority of Prague's Jews were assimilated). He has a brother 8 years his senior, a middle brother died at 14.

1:14-1:16 His schooling was mostly in public schools with religious studies provided by family and rabbis.

German Occupation

1:18-1:26 March 1939: He describes the bloodless takeover by the Germans, his decision not to escape to England and leave his parents alone (his older brother had just recently emigrated to Palestine)

1:27-1:35 He describes the gradual increase in anti-Jewish restrictions; deteriorating food, and the "yellow patch" requirement.

1:40-1:48 He moved to a Jewish school and was "Barmitzv'ed" in 1941. HE shows a 1942 photo of his last class and related documents (which have been in safekeeping throughout the war and now are at a Museum in Tel Aviv).

1:48 He tells how Prague Jews sold their valuables as they were told (in contrast to Polish Jews who tried to hide them)

1:48-1:55 He describes their overall ignorance about Jewish-extinction throughout 1942.

Terezin

1:59-2:07 In March 1943 his family was transported to Terezin. He tells about the selection process, their preparations (letter to brother: "we are traveling to Aunt Theresa") the trip, the commanding officers, Czech and S.S.

2:07-2:17 Provides town's history; describes housing system, the work arrangements and self-rule by the inmates.

2:10-2:12 Tells about a specific "Jewish hangman" and his treatment of escapees.

2:19-2:29 Still, there was relative relief in being among Jews. He and other Orthodox youths were able to maintain Jewish studies and observe holidays.

2:30-2:47 Describes the beginning of transports from Terezin to Auschwitz/Birkenau; initial illusion of normalcy

2:50-2:52 His family is transported in May 1944. Describes the selection process. Theirs was the third and last transport from Terezin.

2:52-2:58 Again, describes Terezin self-government and the holidays they could celebrate.

### Train Transport

- 3:02-3:08 Left on May 20 in crowded cattle cars. describes the terrible conditions inside for 3 days.
- 3:08-3:21 Tells about father's "Kiddish" during trip, and elaborates upon Jewish fate, faith, and providence under those horrendous conditions; escape was not considered as it would have been suicide and thus meaning hopelessness.

### Arrival at Birkenau-Auschwitz II

- 3:22-3:36 Detailed description of descent from cars; leaving baggage, separated gender, etc. 500 into each barrack. He is in #13
- 3:38-3:50 Describes the commander's (SS and inmate) and their hierarchy; rules of living, numbering systems for individuals and barracks.
- 3:58-4:00 Tells about food, what and when.
- 4:00 End tape 1/4
- 4:03 Start tape 2/4
- Displays diary which he wrote (in Czech) immediately upon his liberation (it was re-written in Hebrew later and published with illustration by his friend and fellow prisoner Jehuda Bakou). Shows map/diagram of Birkenau II.
- 4:06-4:10 and explains structure of camps, barracks, and services. They are in Camp D, Barrack 1
- 4:13-4:16 With their transport all Terezin inmates are not in this camp (except some twins who "went to Mengele"). There is terrible anxiety as they learn from December '43 -- (second) transport -- what had happened to (first) May '43 transport.
- 4:17-4:28 Describes his own reactions; how he tried to keep religious studies and customs; daily routines without work; inspections by S.S.

### "Selection" to work with a youth group

- 4:29-4:47 Started in July, after 6 weeks of inactivity. Able bodied young were called on; describes Mengele's role in the process and the confusion: his own conflict to go and leave ailing parents. He was among 98 youngsters (out of 500) last to leave this camp, barely 16.
- 4:47-4:53 Last meeting and parting from parents (whose silver anniversary they'd just celebrated with a rare piece of toast).
- 4:53-4:59 Describes the new camp (E or D?) with work-details from different newly-arrived prisoners. They worked outside with slightly better conditions and access to food.
- 5:01-5:07 They were adjacent to "Sonderkommandos" (99% Jewish) who worked in crematoriums.
- 5:09-5:12 Sporadic contact with parents still in Barrack 13. Relations with other prisoners, "Strafkommados" and sport activities.
- 5:15-5:19 He knew when his parents' barracks were emptied to the crematoriums, and so their date of death. He describes his numb reaction then and a recent (1990) reunion of some Survivors of that youth group.
- 5:22-5:27 Describes their assorted work assignments (e.g. "Rollwagen") delivery and one-time visit inside a crematorium.

- 5:28-5:45 Tells about different S.S. Commanders. One especially cruel; but another (whom he was serving) almost protective.
- 5:46-5:53 Describes corruption, black-mailing and anti-Semitism among prisoners.
- 5:53-6:11 Describes attempts to remember and observe holidays and religious customs, fasting.
- 6:14-6:21 Nov. '44 were transferred to Auschwitz I ("saw chimneys were working all the time"). Compares it with previous camp experiences.
- 6:21-6:24 Describes outside work (with horses), freezing, and lice conditions.
- 6:25-6:45 Tells about relation with an older protective prisoner, how they tried to keep faith together and what it meant to him. Elaborates on the role of faith in survival.
- "Death Trek" from Auschwitz
- 6:45-7:00 Around Jan 17, 1945 (with the approach of the Russians and the liquidation of the Auschwitz camps) their farm work group started their three weeks of foot trekking towards Germany. His job was leading the horses pulling the wagons. Tells about the freezing weather, town clothes, little food, and stories about varied reactions of villagers en route.
- 7:03 End of Tape 2/4
- 7:05 Start of Tape 3/4
- 7:05-7:20 At Jamsberg Moravia, the horses were sold and all prisoners were loaded into cattle cars. These zig-zagged through Europe (incl. Berlin, Prague) aimlessly for 2-3 more weeks. (He wonders to this day about the Germans purpose). Describes the lack of sleep, starvation, and humiliations inflicting on the Jewish prisoners by other.
- Mauthausen, Austria
- 7:20-7:25 They disembarked at this place which had been a detention center for political prisoners but now was extremely crowded concentration camp, with diseases, corpses everywhere, cruel commanders. Food was bartered.
- 7:26-7:30 Still, he describes his state of mind as hopeful and keeping faith; the meaning of Passover there.
- Friendship with Holub
- 7:42-7:53 At Mauthausen he met Alvis Holub, a 28 year old non-Jewish Communist prisoner with whom he developed special friendship he describes in detail. Holub got him food and medication but mostly they spent time talking together about ideas, spirituality, etc. (not religion!!) and when separated later, exchanged notes. After the war they reconnected and Holub sent him the notes and poem from
- 8:05-8:40 Mauthausen days (which he kept for 47 years!) He reads from these notes and poem.
- 8:43-8:51 End of April '45 was transported with 20,000 to Gunsterkirche which was the worst of all camps." 4000 inmates were in his barrack, violence among them, disease, starvation. Hell.

- 8:51 Displays a harrowing photo from the book "The Seventy-First Game" b the 71st U.S. battalion which liberated them.
- Liberation
- 9:00-9:05 Describes the day (4-5 May '45), reaction to first Jeep, US soldiers.
- 9:09-9:23 He and fellow inmate and friend Jehuda Bakon leave camp. First food, wash, real bed.
- 9:24-9:30 Both were hospitalized with typhoid and spent one month in convent hospital in Schpeier, Austria.
- Return to Prague
- 9:32-9:50 Returned and contacted brother, asking for papers ("certificate") to emigrate to Palestine. Meanwhile, in refugee rehabilitation centers in and around Prague. Received kind treatment from Christian directors, with whom he had many religious discussions (and subsequent meeting in Tel Aviv).
- 9:53 Left for England where he stayed 6 months initially in refugee ("D.P") centers and subsequently studying in a Yeshiva in London. Explains the legal problems with false passport which delayed his eager trip to reunite with his brother.
- 10:00 End of Tape 3/4
- 10:07 Start of Tape 4/4
- 10:09 Displays photo of portrait of himself (painted by Yugouav, fellow prisoner Anton Yarossi) from Mauthausen, which was sent to him by Holub.
- Travel to Palestine
- 10:28-10:42 Describes his 221 day long sea voyage from Kardiff to Jaffa, where severe storm and his refusal to disembark during the Sabbath delayed the final emotional reunion with his brother.
- Life in Israel
- 10:42 to end Describes his first years in Palestine, studying in a Yeshiva in Jerusalem through the War of Independence; serving as a rabbi in an immigrant town  
Since his retirement 10 years ago, he has devoted his time to educating the public about the Holocaust.  
Talks about the book he published in Hebrew ("In the Valley of Death") and reads long excerpt from its last chapter which presents his beliefs and thought about the meaning of it and the lessons to be learned.
- End of Tape 4/4