

Y A' A K O V L O M A S (#RG – 50.120*0208)

1:00 (start tape 1/1) to 1:31

Background He was born in 1929 in Kovno, Lithuania. Extended family from both sides in and around Kovno. Father and uncles ran big fabric shop. A sister seven year younger. Parents part of Yiddish/Bond culture -- not Zionist and not very observant. Lived comfortably. Describes life's routines, relationships with parents, caretakers and friends. Disliked his studied in the Yeshiva. Jewish community leaned towards either Russian (Soviet) or German culture, but not Lithuanians.. Many languages spoken..

1:32 to 1:53

Mood during the 30's Increased tension between East and West. Some family members emigrate to the west but quotas limited. Reluctance to consider Palestine despite of father's '36 visit. "Missed chances to leave on time", partly explainable by reluctance to give up economic comforts. .In '38 aunt escaped from Memmel to Kovno.

1:54 to 2:25

Russians Enter Kovno ('40-'41) Describes this sudden development as Soviets and Germans divided areas between them. Drastic life changes, especially for "capitalists" like his family; Jews needed permit to exist, and were considered "enemy of the regime"; only Yiddish school remained; economic and social instability; parents initially unemployed and were selling some of their belonging; Jewish communists prepared lists of 'undesirables' to be expelled to Siberia (his family's name was eliminated from the list by acquaintance).

2:27 to 2:44

Critical Interim Period between Russians' departure and Germans' entry. Anti Semitic Lithuanians took revenge against Jewish communists as well as others, leading to horrendous killing and looting .

For the next 5-8 days, their janitor locked the doors and gates to the buildings-and-yard complex where they and 17 other families lived, thus saving their life.

2:33 to 2:39

Liquidation of the Village of Shatti (?) and its entire Jewish population where a branch of his family lived for some generations occurred during this period (though they found out about it only later through the intervention of the British uncle).

2:44 to 3:12

German Sign-Making Unit Occupies their Complex and moved several families into each apartment in orderly manner, using the residents' help in translation and the children in helping paint the signs. Describes life indoors during that period, their

conversations and radio listening. Felt safe indoors and had 'mutually beneficial' relation with these Germans, who used their translating skills and medical help (his physician uncle Dr. Bloomberg studied in Germany) and they in turn had access to more and better food.

3:01 to 3:31

Further Details about the above Period Describes further their life as this German unit was stationed in their apartment complex; how they protected them from

The Lithuanians (whowere feared as the main enemies); how food exchange and bartering was enabled and how German newspapers and radio served as sources

of news, while his uncles the doctors provided medical services to the German soldiers.

3:31 to 3:59 (end tape 1/5)

The Move into the Ghetto The order to move -- each family to find a room in the designated (Jewish) area -- was announced through signs in the street. Describes the difficult decision for his parents regarding how much and which of their belongings to take with them, because their survival would depend on what they have to sell. Describes their gradual horse-and-cart- move; what they took along. Role of Judenrat and Jewish police.

Describes in detail which family members moved in together at the ghetto, what happened to others and how they found out about them. Relationship with Lithuanians and others.

4:00 (start tape 2/5) to 4:44

Coming segments of his story will be: 1) the Ghetto (from '41 to '44) 2) Dachau 3) adjustment to normal life

The Ghetto after the Gates Closed. Aktzias Describes daily routines. Food and medicine obtained through people who worked outside and through bartering. The Germans' deliberate plans to limit the population to able-bodied only, e.g., the first "Aktzia" to minimize large families by transfer to the Small Ghetto, including his uncle and his family. Describes Children's Akzia ('44) when he hid in outside toilet dugouts while his 8 year old sister was taken away. Only understood later because children's clothes showed up at the workshops (Werkstadt). Partly remembers another Aktzia in '43, how 2500 people were liquidated while he and sister (before taken away) ran to parents in the workshops. Otherwise "normal life". There were 6-7 Aktzias during his time there, about one every half a year.

4:44 to 5:00

Strategies for Survival

Describes parents' work; speculates his father was possibly saved because of ties with the uncle Olitzky in the Judenrat. Describes family discussions; life in one room; the difficulties of cooking; saving fire woods; survival depending on ability to barter goods, having money. Does not remember 'real' hunger. Describes his own assorted activities.

Describes how in cooperation with Jewish (internal) police and German police, searching was selectively minimized and food was more easily smuggled; Children learned to listen, whom to trust and how to keep secrets. Knew much of all this through listening to adult conversations, while playing in the single room of the family.

5:00 to 5:30

Everyday Life - Describes father's special 'smuggling belt'; the different ways of obtaining water and his own role in it; the arrangements among families for distributing

Goods and exchanges which took place at the workshops, including some stealing or cheating. As their survival depended on exchanging belongings for food, any limits on the exchange caused more hardship. Only one out of four Lithuanians who received their belongings gave things or help in return. Money or cigarettes were also used.

5:32 to 5:43

Seven families made up his Kovno extended family group. When considering what to do, they tend to select options which will keep them all together. They also hid a large sum of money in a pit, which maybe is still there. Radio news listened to by his German speaking uncle Blumberg, but stopped after Stalingrad news.

5:44 to

His Own Activities and Feeling He had no regular schooling between '41 to '46, (with the exception of half a year of Ort school.), as the population was afraid to send the children, the Judenrat did not try to establish schools. Describes his

feelings of insecurity while observing the murders around him, the adults' lack of control and the fears of the unknown. (5:34 -- mother taught them some in the family room)

6:03

The Judenrat and the Jewish Police What contact he had with them, what he knew about them, their good and bad functions, degree of helpfulness, as heard from others

6:10 to 6:40

The 9th Fort Liquidation facility used during the big Aktzia. Describes the constant fear of further Aktzias, how he developed considerable caution to avoid being caught in them, (also in Dachau later), how he was most distraught when family perished, but considered his escape another hurdle passed. How adults and children differed in their reactions.

6:40 to 6:50

Impact on Family Repeats earlier statements regarding how preferences for various escape options depended on desire to keep family intact.

6:51 to 7:00 (end tape 2/5)

7:00 (start tape 3/50) to 7:29

His Family's Stay in the Malina Describes short stay in a Malina during an Aktzia. Describes the physical characteristics of the place; poor structure, crowding. The major problems: deciding who is entitled to enter, and whether to allow families with young children.

The impossible decisions of what to do with crying babies. His sister crying during a search upstairs.

7:30 to 8:00

Hiding Alone while his Sister Taken by Germans during Children's Aktzia

Describes in details how he hid in latrine structure while German's took his sister from the family . Felt guilty at times, though realizes its futility. All 'solutions' were horrible then. Does not recall formal mourning.

8: 01 to 8:26

Discussions and Speculations Following the Children's Aktzia . Two weeks passed before they knew about the children's death. Alternative actions discussed but none taken. Describes his own and his family's reactions and feelings. Some recollection of 2-3 people returning to the Ghetto from Fort 9, who confirmed the rumors.

8:28 to 8:32

Relationships within the Remaining Family Members Including his relationships with his cousin Aryieh.

8:33 to

Witnessing Death in the Ghetto His parents did not permit him to watch hanging executions which occurred in the Ghetto. Saw only "naturally" dying people and those in the hospital , severe beating at the gates. Describes what parents did.

8:52 to 9:04

Ghetto's End Period between the Children's Aktzia (March (?) '44 and its final dissolution in May/June '44: describes increased tensions; more discussions but no escape plans. The small village Shatti (his extended family connections) was liquidated. Soviets approaching and Germans planning to transfer the Ghetto population westward.

9:05 to 9:14

Train Transfer to Dachau Describes preparation and subsequent five-day trip in cattle cars. What they took with them. Soldiers shooting those attempting escape and seeing the Ghetto burning behind them.

9:15 to 9:35

Schtuthof Stop where Women and Children were Taken Out of Train Half-day stop where his mother and aunt were taken away, with no prior warning or information. He continued to Dachau, with father uncle and cousin, shocked after separation from the women. Toilet and water problems during the trip

9:36 to 9:58(end tape 3/5)

Lager #1 of the Dachau Camp Complex. Describes the camp, barracks' structure and interior. All their belongings taken away while they were given striped uniforms ; food and routines. Describes where each worked, and his own good luck working in the kitchen. New tricks to continue bartering, even without belongings or money; describes in detail working routines in the kitchen, how food was transferred and handled, where, when and how stealing was possible.

10:00 (start tape 4/5) to 10:19

Fate of Children in the Camp Describes how about 60 children were 'selected out' during the first two weeks, and how he escaped detection by the S.S. More youngsters perished due to sickness, beatings or starvation. His German-speaking uncle and cousin could provide some benefits through their work connections

10:20 to 11:25

Deteriorating Situation, Health and Father's Death. Describes his father's and his (after leaving the kitchen job) strenuous work at the Moll construction site. His feet wounded from walking in bad shoes and how he was helped by his uncle; his father's starving, hospitalization and death from Typhoid in January '45.

More about daily managing of food, cigarettes and heat, and the importance of small privileges for survival. Describes his subsequent garage work; supportive relationship with his family; the many deaths through starvation and remaining people turning into "Muselmen".

11:26 to 12:38

The Following Months in the Camp . Describes his gradually improved (leg) condition, possibly due to molded bread as well as the Red Cross package received in April (?) '45. Hearing more news and how they received them, including from women prisoners in the adjacent camp..

Details improvements in his own life, slightly better food, access to water, shoes and cleaner clothes (lice was big problem) Older German guards as well as garage commanders provided some favors, although supervisor was cruel.

Rumors that mother and aunt, in a women's camp, were liberated earlier by the Russians, but died of typhoid soon after (11:50 to 11:54) .

12:39 to 13:00 (end tape 4/5)

March out of Camp as end of war approached (mid-April '45), 2000 relatively physically capable inmates were marched out of camp. Less than 25% survived this terrible march. Stopped one day in Central Dachau (April 30), continued till May 1/2 to stop near Battell(?) in lower Alps. Spent a night in snowy forest, where their guards disappeared. Their group of 40 hid in cowshed. Liberated the next day.

13:05 (start tape 5/5) to 13:54

Liberation Experiences. Encountered American soldiers on May 2nd. Spent first few weeks in hospital; meeting others survivors from Kovno and Lager #7. Contacted uncles in England and USA with the help of a Jewish American soldier (Ben Marx). Describes in detail how liberation was experienced in stages -- starting with food, then medical treatment and then the search for information about relatives.

13:55 to 14:35

Displaced Persons' Camp near Landsberg (transit through Munich). His uncle working again in a hospital, and they live in an apartment provided for him. Jewish DP's administration and Judenrat in Munich facilitating information . Confirmation of Mother's and aunt's death after liberation by the Russians (Aug-Sept. '45). Describes the stages of obtaining information. Like most DP's they preferred to go to the West and details the options available to them. Minimal contacts with Germans. His own activities in the camp involved mostly preparations (documents) for his departure to England. Received money and packages from uncles overseas. Eager to leave with mixed feelings about leaving uncle (Dr. Blumberg) and cousin behind as they had to wait for their papers. Mourning his dead family - father, mother and sister left behind in mass graves - but thrilled about the starting a new life..

14:36 to 14:59

Leaving for England, Adjusting to New Life, Studying. Left ('46) via France for England (with a groups of children and UNRRA's help) to join his English uncle and family in Newcastle. No economic problems but difficulties as a 16 year old facing a new language and a rigid educational system, especially since he had no schooling since age ten.. Eventually matriculated ('48), trained in a 'Bnei Akiva' 'Hachshara' and followed with studying agriculture in England, thus reaching a compromise with his uncle (who disapproved of his desire to immigrate to Israel).

15:00 to 15:15

Advances in Life and Profession, Move to Israel. In 1955, becomes general secretary of Bnei Akiva organization, moves to London and gets married. Studies one year in California where agriculture more similar to Israeli conditions. Moves to and settles in Israel in 1958.

There, he develops the new field of Agricultural Meteorology, establishes training and research center with international connections. Children all born in Israel

15:16 to End of tape 5/5

Evaluation of his Holocaust Experiences. No regrets about the major choices he made in his life. Does not feel like digging into the past and opening old wounds. Did not wish to visit Lithuania, Kovno and places he was during the war. Did not tell others, hardly his children, regarding his past. Possibly grandchildren might be interested one day in "roots", but it must be their decision.

During his several trips to Germany felt discomfort only once -- possibly a familiar street in Munich. Has no doubt much of German population knew what was happening, still one cannot blame all.

Felt pain and mourning initially, but knew he couldn't help. Today feels occasionally guilty because he does not feel more pain, but 50 years passed and there is no vacuum in

His Life.

Translated and abstracted by Hava Bonne'

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