

RG-50.120 #0268
SOLI GANOR

- 1.01 Soli Ganor [nee Zelig, Hikind?] was born in a small town of Heydekrug in the border between Germany and Lithuania. Population spoke only German, as did Soli. His parents hailed from Kovno.
- 2.03 In 1933 Soli's father decided to sell his soap factory and moved back to Kovno.
- 2.14 Soli was born in 1928, on May 18.
- 2.29 In Kovno they had a big family, on the maternal side. Soli enjoyed being with their cousins and uncles. Jewish culture prospered. Yiddish prevailed there.
- 5.05 Soli's school days and happy childhood until 1939.
- 6.54 Soli's father had several small businesses and the family was well off.
- 7.49 Soli had a sister who was 14 years older, Fanya, and his brother was 7 years older, Zvi [Herman].
- 8.29 Soli's paternal grandparents, from Minsk, were very observant, but Soli's father entered the Menshevik movement at age 13. Soli's family, therefore, was not religious. After 1917, Soli's father had a minor appointment in Krenski's government. [He had already met Trotsky and Lenin.] When the Bolsheviks won, Soli's father was sentenced to death, but one of his friends from youth, who was a Bolshevik, helped him flee to Lithuania.
- 11.21 Soli's father was not a Zionist: he was a convinced Socialist, and didn't see the future of the Jews in Zionism. Soli's mother was a Zionist, as were 95% of the Lithuanian Jews.
- 16.00 Soli's one year sojourn in a Lithuanian school. Transfer to Yauneh, an orthodox gymnasium, where he studied 4 years.
- 23.45 First echoes of war in Kovno; analysis of the situation and decision of the family about best strategy.
- 30.55 Family received a US visa in 1938, but they were afraid to start again, and sad to leave their large families.
- 34.51 In June 1940, the Russians entered Lithuania, and all hopes for moving out were squashed.
- 38.21 Meeting with the Japanese consul Sugihara at his aunt's gourmet store. Soli and Sugihara spoke Russian. [Great story!] Relationship with Sugihara.
- 47.27 June 1940, invasion of Russia into Lithuania.

2.21.49 Soli's family attempt to flee to Russia but without success. Father continues doing well in his business until 1941. Then the Russians began deporting people to Siberia.

26.48 Soli's older brother, working for the Russian intelligence, managed to get his family off the deportation lists several times. Brother was found out.

The escape to Russia doesn't succeed. The return to Kovno.

3.29.53 They are caught a short distance from Kovno, and sent to the 7th Fort.

36.06 S's brother disappeared there. For some reason, S and his mother were returned home, and delivered to the door in Kovno. To their amazement, they found the father and the sister there. It was mid-July 1941.

45.44 The story of the toy wooden horse S got on his 4th birthday.

57.00 End of July, order is given to move into a ghetto in Vilijampole [Slobodka].

TAPE II

4.00.00 Friendship with Petras, the Lithuanian, makes it possible for S's family to exchange homes to enter the ghetto.

10.00 The move into the ghetto before it gets sealed; settling in. Work.

15.00.00 S and his father witness the burning of the infectious disease hospital and the small ghetto, with everyone inside, including Soli's aunt who was a nurse there. He and his father were also ordered to evacuate the orphans and other sick people onto trucks. This was the first Action. Those who were not burned alive were transported to be killed in the 9th Fort.

30.00 The second Selection. S is saved at the last minute. The evacuees are sent to the 9th Fort.

47.47 Eye witness to the murder in the 9th Fort. The teller: 'Cookie'.

6.13.26 The name was 'Cookie' Kopelman.

17.07 S works in the carpentry shop which prevents him from going to toil in the 'airport'.

19.07 Activities during that period, illegally reading, studying, with professor Edelstein[?].

21.00 Valuables and books Actions.

33.44 Hiding the books.

43.50 Professor Edelstein is killed for holding a book.

45.30 Professor Chaim Perlman[?]. His influence on the youth. He died of hunger.

TAPE III

- 1.02.06 Depression after killing of Edelstein moves S not to go back to studying. He went to work at the airport, under harsh conditions, to atone for what he thought was his part in Edelstein's death. Return to school after 2 weeks, where S is surprised he is not held responsible for Edelstein's death.
- 26.00 Edelstein's burial. Saying Kadish, even though they were agnostic, S felt some relief.
- 12.00 Relationship between the Judenrat and the chief rabbi. Consultations with the latter regarding obeying the Germans' orders. Cooperation between a body which was for the most part secular and accepted the religious authority decisions.
- 15.57 End of 1941. Harsh winter. Frozen Germans begin arriving, returning from the Russian front.
- 18.27 Nov., 1941. Judenrat receives the order to prepare a list of Jews who will be sent to Riga, to a camp near there, for work. Older people showed up to the gathering point, including Soli's aunt and uncle.
- 21.35 They died there, in very harsh work conditions.
- 23.00 Beginning of Jewish resistance in the ghetto.
- 31.37 Many shops were established to work for the German army. S thinks that's the reason that ghetto was one of the last to be liquidated.
- 37.00 S dabbles a little in underground work.
- 43.00 All the food stuffs the ghetto received were rotten. S worked trying to save some of it.
- 48.00 Soli's sister is taken by the Gestapo for handling food that was stolen from the German army.
- 51.10 Benno Liptzer, the Jewish Peter Pan, tries to intervene with his friends in the Gestapo to save the sister. Finally, she is saved by different circumstances [but another woman is sent in her stead to the 9th Fort].
- 8.01.16 Summer 1942.
- 6.13 Relative quiet in 1942, 1943 in the ghetto.
- 9.45 Vegetable garden.
- 11.47 The ghetto orchestra [Nutcracker was the first work they played.].
- 22.00 Peter, Soli's Lithuanian friend, supplies them food.

- 28.40 The Action [deportation] to Estonia. How it was done.
- 35.12 S continues studying to be a carpenter, helps his father in food distribution.
- 36.42 In 1943, 2 of Soli's cousin [in their 20s] left to join the Partisans of Chaim Yelin.
- 40.50 Jews begin arriving from all points of Europe to be killed in the 9th Fort.
- 43.00 More stories about Soli's sister's release from the Nazis.
- 45.43 They receive rumors that in Siaulai they began to deport the old and the young to be killed. Also, information begins arriving about crematoria, Auschwitz, the Warsaw ghetto uprising and the mass murders at the end of 1943. Anyone found trying to escape to the partisans or doing underground commerce, were taken to the 9th Fort where mass graves were dug and Jews killed and incinerated.
- 50.06 A group escapes the 9th Fort on Dec. 25, 1943 and reported on the method used there for mass extermination.
- 51.25 March 1944, after news from Sanlai[?], all in the Kovno ghetto realized what their fate was.
- 52.18 Bunkers ['malines'] begin being dug to hide.
- 9.02.58 At the end of 1943, the Kovno ghetto was officially renamed a 'concentration camp'.
- 7.00 The Children's Action. He manages to escape it and hide. Old people were also deported. S was able to see it all from his hiding place, which he had supplied with some food before. The deportees were sent to Auschwitz.
- 15.00 While in hiding, S hears about the plan to dynamite all the bunkers the next day.
- 24.40 S managed to go back to the ghetto to alert the people.
- 26.46 Before the Children's deportation, the Jewish police were rounded up and taken to the 9th Fort, where they were forced to confess where the ghetto's hiding places were.
- 34.00 Many people did not believe Soli's account and decided to stay in the bunkers... but the next day they were all exploded. S had gone back to his hiding place. It was March 1944 and after a few days life continued its routine. The hopes were put on the Russian army advance.
- 41.00 Charming story about Lord Yosef Kagan, Knight of the ghetto.
- 44.44 July 1944. Order to evacuate the ghetto to Danzig. Russians were near Vilna already. Many found hiding places until the Russians arrived. Soli's relative built a bunker where the family agreed to hide. It was very hot. There were 12 people.

Russians stopped in their tracks, though. Germans began demolishing one house after the other. When the explosions stopped at night, they came out to breathe. They were saved [S and his family] but the rest, who had decided to stay in the bunker, were shot and killed.

55.00 Those who survived were taken to Stutthof in cargo trains; for 2 days they traveled.

57.00 It was the first time they saw a typical concentration camp. First impressions of the camp.

TAPE IV

10.00.00 They spent the first night altogether, in a large depot. Men and women were together for the last time. Soli's mother gave him a gold coin from the time of the tsar. She recommended he hide it, that it would eventually help him to survive. It was the last time S was to see his mother.

5.00 During the shower and inspection, while they were all rude, S was forced to give up his coin. His father hid his own in his shoes, which the prisoners were allowed to keep.

10.00 Soli's father was able to trade his gold coin for a role as a 'bread slicer'. Thanks to that, he also received an individual bed.

15.00 In July a rumor arrived about Hitler's death, only to be disproved a day later.

19.59 Old women and mothers with children were deported to Auschwitz.

20.00 Mood in the concentration camps. Scenes.

24.00 "The Akraytchick minister", it was as his father was called.

25.00 Other nationalities in the camp.

31.49 They are put on cattle cars, and transferred elsewhere. They traveled 4-5 days and arrived in Kaufering, then to a town called Utting, where they were put on a local train to their destination: an outer camp of Dachau, camp 10. There were no barracks, simply a dug up place underground, with roofs on top.

44.38 Description of living quarters.

52.00 Work detail, bringing food from Utting to the Germans' kitchen: good place to work.

58.00 Stealing a cooked potato from a pig.

11:03 Most of the camp inmates worked in Dickerhoff and Wyndman, which manufactured concrete parts for underground bunkers where airplanes were being manufactured - Messerschmitts.

2.44 The British and American bombing of the area.

- 6.00 Soli's father worked in the concrete plant, and S was able to supplement him with food after the harsh work day.
- 10.00 S requests from the barracks capo to try to change his father's work place. He succeeds and the father becomes a foreman.
- 12.00 Soli's father tells his stories about his youth activities to the head capo, Burgen.
- 20.00 The 'Moll'. S witnesses the suicide of a Jew who pushes a cruel German into pouring concrete.
- 12.01.00 The 'strategist': of the inmates collected news from different sources and then would analyze them.
- 6.53 Winter 1944. Lice presented a big problem. Some inmates were eaten by lice, and died.
- 15.28 A typhus epidemic. Means to combat the lice.
- 20.00 S and his friend Shmuel work in burying the dead.
- 29.00 Christmas 1944. They celebrated Soli's father's birthday with a surprise party.
- 31.16 That night, Soli's father dreamt that his wife died and it was true. She died in Stutthof, from typhus.
- 33.58 Quarantine in the camp was lifted in January, after death from typhus stopped.
- 1.35 Soli's work in the kitchen stopped. He went to work in his father's work detail - loading sand and gravel.
- 38.41 Spring 1945. Return to work in the kitchen.
- 42.19 Father's boots lose their soles. Still snow on the ground, ergo: death is assured. He was also replaced as foreman. The story of how he obtains a new pair of boots in exchange for food.
- 55.31 The American forces were closing in. The hope to survive renewed.
- 57.07 April 24, arriving to work in the kitchen. SS men arrived and took S and other prisoners to a nearby road to dig an anti-tank trench. Then, they were given instructions to bring the inmates to Dachau. They started next day first to Landsberg, then to Dachau via Munich. April 26 arrived in Dachau.
- TAPE V
- 13.01.32 They are directed to the showers. Thinking they are going to be gassed, they suddenly see there are windows there, and that they are open. They are relieved.

- 7.07 The order is given to evacuate Dachau. Soli's contingent had 8,000 Jews.
- 13.03 This Death March lasted 5-6 days. The sights and the suffering.
- 18.00 The weather.
- 20.00 Liberation by Japanese-American soldiers. [Their parents were interned in the US.]
- 36.29 The small town of Waakirchen.
- 41.37 S finds his father, whom he thought had died during the Death March. S knew some English and was able to be the translator for the American doctors who were treating the survivors.
- 48.07 Father and son are sent to a recuperation place for a month. Then they go to Munich where they receive a house whose German dwellers/owners are thrown out.
- 49.32 Many more Jews keep arriving in Munich, where a Jewish committee is established to care for them. Soli's father is appointed culture secretary and, soon enough, he establishes the first Jewish high school there.
- 51.26 The Lithuanian Jewish surviving teachers taught there.
- 52.00 The fate of S's sister, who survived.
- 56.39 S's father remarries.
- 14.00.00 S begins to work for the American army, as a translator in the counter intelligence corps [CIC]. His English was much improved by then. The work of the CIC in the screening unit.
- 29.43 Soli's job with the CIC was over at the end of 1946. Went back to Munich and began working for UNNRA.
- 34.00 Encounter with a relative, active in the British Brigade, and engaged in helping Jews enter Israel without documents [the 'Bericha' movement]. S is engaged to help too.
- 38.00 Acquaintance with the father of a German girl friend who reveals a store of German weapons. S passes the information on to his relative of the British Brigade, and a transaction occurs.
- 40.00 Soli's father and his wife [born in Canada] decide to leave Germany and settle in Canada. They invite S to join them, but S makes up his mind that anti-Semitism [sentence not complete?]
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- 47.00 S leaves Germany on his way to Palestine. He boards a ship in Marseille and arrives in Haifa in June 1948.
- 50.00 First days in Israel. Soli's army days.
- 58.18 After the war, S decides to see the world aboard ships. He joins the Merchant Marine of Israel.
- 15.00.00 In all his travels S had one quest: to find out from the people where anti-Semitism comes from. He interviewed people for 8 years, and came to the conclusion that it was the church's fault.
- 8.58 The Sugihara story. He is recognized in Israel.
- [til 25] Sugihara after the war.
- 18.52 Honors for the man all over the world.
- 21.20 For many years S lived in Israel as former Canadian. He wanted to forget the Holocaust, and somehow succeeded.
- 23.53 Clarence Matsamura, one of the Japanese Americans who liberated S. The emotional encounter.
- 33.10 The encounter with Clarence helped open the flood - gates of Soli's memories: it was an emotional catharsis of huge proportions.
- 18.52