

**HAUPTMAN, Abraham**  
**RG-50.120\*0381**  
**3 Video Cassettes**  
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### **Abstract**

Abraham Hauptman was born in 1925 in eastern Galicia, in the oil rich Boryslav region, but grew up in Skhodnitsa. Ukrainian anti-Semitism expressed itself daily all through his elementary school days. His older brother was mechanically gifted and his father was an equestrian trained driver who had served as such in World War I. Abraham hated the *heder* but loved Gordonia, the Zionist movement. There were about 500 Jews in Skhodnitsa. The Russians entered the village on September 16, 1939. Survivors from the West brought stories of pogroms, ghettos, and burnings. There were pogroms in Abraham's village, with the enthusiastic help of the Ukrainians. Abraham and his family went back to Boryslav. He describes the Aktions there and the divided ghetto in the district of Potok Górny (Wolanka and Debris?). Abraham escaped certain death many times. He talks about the Judenrat. Obtaining a work permit assured his life. The "Keller List" similar to Schindler's, and like his, in exchange for money people were saved! Abraham then went to work in Grazia, with gas cisterns. Abraham saw a flier calling for Jews to revolt (it was after the Warsaw ghetto uprising) and it moved the Jews to go underground in the Opaka Forest. Abraham talks about the Drogobych ghetto and the organization and location of the underground first in Smilno, and then in Opaka. He then discusses liberation and the pogrom done by the Banderovtzim. After the war, Abraham went to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and was spared by the principal from going to the Russian front. His father, whom he believed had been killed, showed up eight months after liberation. Abraham talks about his father's service in the Russian army, driving on the Russia/China border. Abraham Hauptman immigrated to Israel in 1960. He praises his mother, who inculcated "menschlichkite" in him.

### **Time Coded Notes**

#### **Tape 1**

- 1:00:00 Abraham Hauptman was born on April 21, 1925 in eastern Galicia in the area of the city of Boryslav, but grew up in Skhodnitsa, about six to seven kilometers from his birth place. The area is in the north Carpathian Mountains, about 600 meters above sea level. The Boryslav region was rich in crude oil. There were several refineries and many people worked in the oil industry.
- 03:59 Abraham discusses the population in Skhodnitsa and their occupations.
- 05:36 Abraham discusses anti-Semitism of Ukrainians; the Poles called the Ukrainians Carpatho-Russians.

- 7:34 Abraham finished his seven years of elementary education in 1938. The language of studies was Polish.
- 7:40 Abraham's father was a taxi driver. His situation at home was difficult economically. He had a brother who was six years older and loved to work on cars, unlike Abraham. He was intellectually gifted. After a year of preparation with a private tutor, Abraham was accepted into the Blatt gymnasium in Drogobych in the third class. The Blatt gymnasium was a prestigious institution.
- 13:41 Abraham discusses where he was on September 1, 1939 at the beginning of the war. He was living with an uncle in Drogobych.
- 14:08 Abraham talks about his family's observances.
- 19:42 Abraham went to *heder* but hated it. He went to play soccer instead. His father took him out of school under the pretense that he could not pay for it. The community decided to fund his studies! Abraham learned to read and write Hebrew and German in Gothic script.
- 23:21 Abraham's mother was more observant than his father.
- 23:43 Abraham was active in the Zionist movement Gordonia from age seven.
- 28:42 There were about 500 Jews in Skhodnitsa and there were two synagogues.
- 29:41 Abraham talks about the holiday celebrations in Skhodnitsa.
- 34:00 Abraham says that the worst loss the survivors suffer from is the inability to remember their childhood because all of their memories are connected with horrible deaths. So, it is better not to remember. Abraham lost 95 members of his closest family in the Holocaust.
- 2:00:00 The Poles began encouraging Jews to immigrate to Palestine. They recognized the Zionist organizations. Also, Jabotinsky visited the village. Abraham then discusses the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Russians entered the village after Yom Kippur on September 16. The local Polish Communists were sent to Siberia.
- 3:42 Many Jews fled from Western Poland to Eastern Poland. The Russians suspected there were spies among them and sent many to Siberia in the winter.
- 5:46 In 1941, Abraham finished eighth grade and in June of that year, the Germans invaded.
- 6:30 Abraham discusses the difficult times during the Russian rule.

- 15:00 Abraham's father had received his driver's license in 1909 from the Austrians and he drove cars during World War I.
- 21:14 Refugees from the West told their stories about ghettos, burnings in synagogues, etc.
- 32:00 Three days after the Germans entered the village, they carried out a pogrom. Abraham's father had wanted to leave for Russia, but his mother did not agree. His older brother was sick with a high fever.
- 3:00:00  
(2:21:15) On the eve of the pogrom, Abraham was fifteen. On the day of the pogrom, all the Jews were ordered to leave their houses and go to the streets. From there they were ordered into the Culture building. On the day of the pogrom, 167 Jews were killed. The perpetrators were Ukrainians who came from the mountains, not from the town. The victims were aged fourteen and older, including their father. They did not take the women.
- 36:39 On the next day, the people were taken to bury the dead. Kaddish was recited by all the survivors regardless of age.
- 2:38:37 Two weeks later, all the Ukrainians in the surrounding villages killed their Jewish neighbors and robbed them.
- 2:39:41 Abraham talks about the arrival of a young and lone survivor from Dovge who hid in the attic and witnessed the slaughter of his family. It was awful to see him. His name was Sheeye Meshel, and he was taken in by Abraham's family. However, he did not survive.
- 40:45 Abraham talks about the period of Menten who wanted to avenge the deaths in Podgorodishche and Urych. The night before, Abraham and his mother had gone to visit relatives in Urych, and they were asked to stay overnight. At the last moment, they decided against it. The next day was the pogrom.
- 45:28 Anti-Jewish measures were imposed. Abraham discusses the constant humiliation he faced.
- 47:46 In August of 1941, Abraham's family decided to move to his uncle's house in Boryslav.
- 52:49 Many times, Abraham experienced close encounters with death, but was saved at the last minute. He recommends reading The Wall by Sartre, as it is the only creation that captures the feelings of those moments.

- 53:14 A Judenrat was established in Boryslav. There was forced labor and rations were given only to those who presented a work certificate.
- 4:00:00 Abraham discusses trading clothes for food.
- 02:12 Abraham talks about the Aktions.
- 06:40 Abraham talks about his job.
- 09:06 In August of 1942, the Judenrat was to supply the Nazis with 5,000 names to liquidate in Boryslav. There were empty train cars waiting to take the Jews. The Judenrat sent word of what was to happen, and the Jews fled to the forest. When they returned after a couple of days, the Aktion was carried out. This was from August 3, 1942 until August 6. Abraham and his family managed to run away again, since the house was at the end of the neighborhood and near the forest.
- 12:03 Abraham talks about the ghettos. The ghetto, near Potok Górny (Wolanka and Debris?), was divided by the main road. The ghetto was open but the enemies were all around. There were eight people in each room! Work continued on as before.
- 14:52 The fourth Aktion took place and Abraham contracted typhoid fever.
- 16:40 Abraham praises the Jewish doctors (Kapelner).
- 17:50 On October 21, after Stalingrad, there was another Aktion. Abraham's mother went to the work place, and warned Abraham to flee. He did. He found another work detachment where he was supposed to be safe, but he fled when he saw the Germans approach. He was the only one to do so.
- 22:24 Half an hour later, all the Jews were led away by the Germans.
- 25:28 From October 21<sup>st</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>, the Aktion was relentless. Abraham searched for his mother, and was successful in finding her! (This is a very moving story.)
- 28:07 On December 5<sup>th</sup>, the fifth Aktion after the Stalingrad defeat took place. There were three days of mourning and a four week Aktion! It was a horrible period. Jews were gathered in the movie theatre (the Colosseum).
- 30:34 Children poisoned the bread of the parents trapped in the Colosseum in order to shorten their suffering.

32:00 Abraham talks about good deeds during those days.

34:29 Abraham talks about hiding his mother by digging channels.

## **Tape 2**

5:00:00 Abraham talks about his life in the ghetto, obtaining food, and coping with hunger.

08:48 Abraham mentions ration coupons.

10:36 Abraham discusses the infrequent soup kitchens.

11:06 In January of 1942, the entire Judenrat was taken hostage under the penalty of death if the Jews did not give all of their valuables to the Gestapo.

14:07 In December of 1941, Abraham was forced to have oral sex with the commander, Hemetz, after working late. Abraham refused and ran away. This was a big trauma in his life.

23:16 Abraham talks about Hemetz and his destiny. Many Jews testified on his behalf in exchange for money.

27:59 Abraham talks about work in the ghetto and living conditions.

30:00 Abraham's older brother left the ghetto in Boryslav and went to work in Drogobych, in a lumber mill. He had freedom of movement and sometimes brought flour for the family.

33:00 He describes the close relationship with his "adopted" brother, Moti.

6:00:00 The fifth Aktion. The work camp in Boryslav was organized. Workers were brought from Drogobych and they built roofs over former stables of the Austrian army in a place called Litmanova.

3:37 Abraham gives a description of the camp.

05:08 Abraham talks about how the Jews were chosen to work there. The German Keller, was in charge of the selection. Abraham comments about Schindler's list which, like Keller's list, included people who had bought their way into it. Finally, after waiting for a whole day, Abraham received the letter R, which authorizes him to be in the work camp, although he had not been on Keller's list.

14:59 Abraham talks about the importance of R and negotiating with it.

- 16:14 Abraham discusses the beginning of work in the camp. The ghetto was still in existence.
- 18:00 Abraham talks about the bakery and the process of eating the bread.
- 24:38 Abraham talks about trying to save his mother from the Boryslav ghetto, which was about to be liquidated, and bring her to the one in Drogobych which was larger and where relatives were living.
- 26:00 Moti received an R also thanks to the fact that he could drive. Abraham kept the connection with his mother through a telephone!!!
- 27:44 The sixth Aktion took place in February 1943. The Nazis were short fifty people from the ghetto so they decided to take them from the work camp. A second cousin was taken from the ghetto. They took everyone to the Colosseum movie theatre, where they were kept for three days, disrobed, taken out to previously prepared trenches, and shot. Abraham saw it all from the top of the hills.
- 7:00:00
- 07:26 Abraham is transferred to work in Grazia, where there were gas cisterns. These were installed by Polish experts, who were brought by force from Gdańsk. Abraham then talks about the work.
- 09:59 Abraham had knowledge of trigonometry and helped the Pole in charge, Vladek, to translate the blueprints into working language.
- 11:07 Abraham explains the production process.
- 12:09 Abraham discusses Schuster, the Nazi murderer.
- 15:20 Abraham caused an accident to Schuster, but Vladek saved him. Then, Abraham was transferred to harsher work.
- 18:29 Vladek's last name was Jakubousky.
- 18:56 Abraham talks about Yom Kippur at work.
- 20:00 Abraham talks about being saved from a rock assault by some Germans.
- 32:08 In July, after the April Warsaw ghetto uprising, Abraham and the others received a flyer that had been printed in that ghetto, calling the Jews to rebel.

- 33:14 Abraham discusses his reaction to the flyer. Since women and children were no longer around, men decided to start organizing the underground in a forest.
- 8:01:08 Abraham talks about the fate of the brother who worked in a lumber mill. He ended up dead when fleeing to the Carpathian region in Issayev.
- 04:59 Abraham talks about leaving his mother. On Sivan 29, 1943 the Drogobych ghetto was liquidated.
- 07:39 Abraham discusses the beginning of organization of the underground in the forests of Opaka, where they worked anyway during the day. Abraham's group was the one from Drogobych. Every night from Opaka, they would walk forty kilometers with heavy cargo to their base camp in Smilno, which was far away from everything and vehicles could not enter.
- 18:19 They had a radio there, and listened to the BBC. In February and March, when the front was getting close, the entire group moved to Smilno, although they would come back to camp for provisions.
- 20:07 In one of those trips, the group of seven was met by Poles who told them that empty train cars were waiting in the stations, evidently to take them away. At midnight, the Germans opened the camp gates and told the Jews to go. The date was April 13, 1944. However, the Jews preferred to stay inside because it was night. At 4 am, the Germans encircled the camp with machine guns. Orders were given to be ready for camp evacuation in one hour. Abraham refuses to join the caravan. He got a revolver and found an opening in the fence. He fled the camp, and walked the forty kilometers to Smilno.
- 32:31 Abraham feels that those who were docile and followed orders were taken to Plaszów whereas people who sprung loose (like him) saved themselves.
- 9:00:00 Abraham gives examples of one of the friends who was caught: June Haune. He then talks about how he helped everyone despite his own fatigue.
- 15:00 Abraham talks about the suicide of Sigmund, a comrade, in January 1944 near their bunker.
- 20:00 Their bunker is found and they decide to move to Opaka, which is thirty kilometers away. It was February 14, 1944.
- 28:21 Abraham gives a description of the bunker and the group.

### **Tape 3**

- 10:00:00 Abraham talks about the forest in Opaka, which is close to the Boryslav camp.
- 03:05 Abraham describes the road to Smilno and the forest there, as well as the building of the bunker there. Opaka was the gathering place for provisions, a kind of base.
- 05:00 Abraham talks about the funding of provisions.
- 08:36 Everyone who went to the forest had to turn over all his possessions.
- 11:00:00
- 08:58 Abraham talks about the routine while in the forest, two weeks before liberation.
- 22:28 Abraham talks about the liberation and the pogrom in Opaka two weeks before, which was carried out by the worst haters of Jews, Banderovtzim, who were Ukrainian.
- 26:00 After the war, Abraham went to study in a boarding high school which was full of Ukrainian anti-Semites. He was the only Jew there. He was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, one grade before graduation. Suddenly in February 1945, the entire ninth grade class was mobilized to go to the forest but Abraham escaped. He was saved from being considered a deserter by the director of the boarding school, a Russian war-handicapped man. He moved Abraham to the tenth grade, which was not obligatory to serve in the army, in recognition of his intellectual prowess. The private had told him, "You've suffered enough already in this war."
- 12:00:00 Abraham talks about his first love.
- 04:08 Abraham talks about the supplier of the bunker in the forest (Hershlike). After liberation, there was happiness in the forest. Everyone left the bunker except for two people, who could not walk independently. The group promised to come back for them, but they dispersed in the city and forgot them. Hershlike and Abraham went back for them.
- 10:28 Eighteen people were saved in that forest.
- 24:46 Abraham talks about his last year of high school.
- 25:06 Abraham talks about Doctor Raitzes, the "Translator" in Boryslav, at the time of the ghetto. He knew the timing of the Aktions and warned the Jews.

- 29:07 Abraham talks about befriending the wife of the procurator and using their friendship to save Doctor Raitzes.
- 13:00:00 Abraham talks about looking for surviving family members after the war and recovering from the war.
- 07:16 In April 1945, Abraham was studying when his father appeared. Abraham found a house for him.
- 10:55 Abraham talks about his father's condition as a Russian soldier during the war. He shows up with a new wife whom he abandoned for a third one. Abraham's mother had been killed in the war. Abraham and his father never spoke about the fate of his mother and brother.
- 13:55 Abraham's father had been a driver for the Russian army. He was stationed on the border of China and Russia. He had difficult working conditions.
- 15:47 Abraham immigrated to Israel in 1960 with his wife and her family. It was a difficult process to obtain permits to leave.
- 20:00 Abraham praises his mother.