

JACOB BRODMAN
RG-50.154.0008. (rec. 1989 Sarasota)

Jacob Brodman was born in 1920 in Grybow, Poland. His father was quite wealthy and had lumber mills. He had 2 sisters and 3 brothers. The city had 5-6 thousand Jews and 3 synagogues. His family was orthodox and kept kosher. Jacob studied law before the war broke out. The lumber mills were forced to close and 100 workers lost jobs, but for a while there was one mill that still worked. Jacob and his family tried to go to Russia, but there was a lot of confusion and they ended up back in Grybow.

The Judenrat started being in charge of the area. Young men were selected for work and never came back. His father helped hide some of the young boys. He was beaten by the Germans and Jacob saw him shot and killed before his eyes. The Jews were shipped out of town in 1941, but Jacob and 30 others were left to work the mill. He saw the cattle cars loaded with Jews being sent out, and even saw his sister in one of the cars calling for help.

Jacob was taken to Nowy Sacz and worked to clean up the ghetto area after the Jews were taken. He was sent to the forest and had to bury all the Jews the Germans shot and killed in trenches. In 1942 the SS liquidated the Tarnow ghetto and he had to help put the dead bodies on a pyre and burn them. They also killed about 20,000 Russian POWs. Jacob had terrible stories to tell about the commander there, Grzymek.

Next Jacob was sent to Auschwitz and relates the story of Dr. Mengele, the selections, shaving, showering. At first, he was working in the crematoria, but through the intervention of a friend he was sent to the labor camp of Buna, a part of Birkenau. He volunteered to mend gloves, an inside job with more food. He saw his older brother in the camp. Then he was working to build scaffolding and got hearty soup with noodles, which he says saved his life. He worked hard to keep clean and keep the lice off him. He speaks about the appeals which lasted hours in the freezing cold. As the Allies started to bomb the area, the prisoners were sent on a death march on January 18. Then they were loaded in cattle cars and travelled for 8 days to Buchenwald. As they passed through Czechoslovakia, people threw them rolls.

After a few weeks Jacob was sent to Ohrdruf where he worked digging large holes in which to hide airplanes. He met his younger brother there, but he was soon sent to another camp. On April 3 they started on another death march, but Jacob and 4 others ran to the forest and hid there for 8 days. Then they came out of the forest and all of a sudden saw the American troops. He found an American soldier from Detroit who knew his relatives there and Jacob connected with them through the Joint. He managed to get from the Russian to the American zone, and in 1946 he came to the US from Mauthausen (sp). He met the girl who would be his future wife on the ship. Then he went to Detroit and she went to NY, but they miraculously met again in New York on the trolley and married. Jacob ran an antique and decorating store in Manhattan. His daughter and 2 grandchildren live in Los Angeles.

Jacob was called to testify in a trial in Germany of the SS man who killed his father. The man got life imprisonment and then killed himself.