

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

William Helmreich Oral History Collection

Interview with Rachmiel Kurlander
March 23, 1989
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Rachmiel Kurlander, conducted by William Helmreich on March 23, 1989 as research for his book *Against all odds: Holocaust survivors and the successful lives they made in America*. The interview was given to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on Oct. 30, 1992 and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

RACHMIEL KURLANDER

March 23, 1989

WH: Where were you born?

RK: I was born in Poland and I'm now 82 years old. I was one of 13 brothers and sisters. And today I have one daughter.

WH: Where were you during the war?

RK: In Russian labor camps.

WH: Why did you come to Oklahoma City?

RK: My brother was here.

WH: What kind of work did you do here?

RK: I worked for Mr. Wasserman, who makes belts, in his leather factory as a worker. I worked in one job for 36 years. Mr. Wasserman was a golden man. He gave all the refugees jobs. But most of the refugees stayed only two or three weeks and left. I'm about the only one who stayed.

WH: What were the American Jews like to you?

RK: They were snobs. After all, I was a greener. After about ten years I "ungreened" myself and they became a bit friendlier.

WH: Are you a religious man?

RK: No. I travel on Shabbos, my house is non-kosher, and I eat on Yom Kippur. I have a mezuzah on my door only because Lubavitch gave it to me for free. But I do go to shul every morning to davening.

WH: Why, if you're not religious?

RK: Because that's where Jews are.

WH: Do you think what happened in Europe could happen here?

RK: Very easily. Americans have no culture, just beer joints. Not like the French who like literature, music, and art.

Conclusion of Interview