

Summary of Oral History: Irving Hass

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Irving Hass was born May 18, 1925 in Roscova, Romania in a family with a younger brother, who died at age eight, and five younger sisters. His father worked 15 miles away during the week for a lumber manufacturing company. Irving attended both public school and Cheder (Hebrew School) and completed 5th grade. Schools had closed due to the lack of teachers. Sometimes Hungary occupied their land and during one such period, his father had to perform day labor for them. The family spoke Hungarian and Yiddish at home and Irving learned Romanian in school. They had two synagogues for the 350 Jewish families. His father had served eight years in the Austro-Hungarian Army and had been a prisoner of the Russians. His father could read German newspapers where he read about Hitler and Eisenhower. His uncle in America sent them packages of clothes and food which they had to pick up 40 miles away in Czechoslovakia. When the Germans occupied his town, they took young men in their 20s to labor camps and they were never heard from again. Then the Jews were assembled in the synagogues and marched 40 miles to the Viseu Ghetto and loaded into cattle cars by the Germans. Their trip lasted over three days and some of the prisoners on the cattle car drank their own urine, some cried, and some suffocated to death. There was no food or toilet and it was so crowded that it was hard to breathe. Upon arrival at Auschwitz at the end of April, they were met by the SS. During the selection, Irving was pushed to one side and the rest of the family to the other and he never saw them again. He saw the chimneys with smoke and was put in a barracks and when he saw people assembled in a line, he sneaked into it. Again he was in a cattle car and arrived in Thereisenstadt after four days. He received a striped suit and cabbage soup and worked with other prisoners from all over Europe. He learned to keep warm by placing newspaper under his clothes. Irving witnessed people hung who had tried to escape, so he made no attempt to do so. They got meager rations, so he stole potatoes at night and ate them raw. After 10 months, Irving was transported to Koscian for six months where he made powder in a factory. Next, he was sent to Flossenbergen in August '44 which had gas chambers and he cleared highways and lifted railroad tracks. On April 20, he was marched to the forest where the Germans killed 300 prisoners with machine guns. He was saved by hiding under a tree with 40 other survivors. He was shot with shrapnel in his right arm. The Americans liberated them and placed Germans on trucks and took them into the forest to show them the dead they had killed. An American soldier picked Irving up and took him to the Schwandert Hospital in Bayern where he recovered from Typhus. Irving traveled to Frankfurt where he met some townspeople and wrote to his uncle in the US who sent him clothes. There he met Emily Post, the correspondent, who helped him get on the ship Ernie Pyle to New York where he arrived June 20, 1947. There he was thought to suffer from ulcers, but soon learned he had a nervous stomach and received treatment. He was drafted into the Army and stationed at Ft. Meade and a Sergeant forced him to work extra as off on Yom Kippur. He reported this to the Colonel who sent the Sergeant to

Korea. Irving tells of his many promotions, some due to speaking to the top officers. He married and had a daughter and the family transferred with him to his various job locations. He believes the Holocaust Museum is important to educate those who deny the Holocaust.