

-TITLE-SIDNEY WOLRICH
-I_DATE-OCTOBER 23, 1987
-SOURCE-ONE GENERATION AFTER - BOSTON
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-
-IMAGE_QUALITY-
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
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1:00 The population of Sochochin was about 650. There were 250 Jews and the rest were Polish.

2:00 He lived with his parents and sister. This was a happy town with many tailors, shoemakers and butchers.

3:00 Sidney's father rented orchards in the summer and in the winter he made buttons for shirts. There was one synagogue and the family was Orthodox.

4:00 There were many pious Jews in the town. As far as the relationship between the Jews and the Poles, there had always been anti-Semitism, but it began to get worse before the war.

5:00 The Poles began to boycott Jewish stores and they would make jokes about the Jewish religion,

6:00 Although Sidney went to cheder, he still went to regular school with Poles. The Jews felt different and began to stay together. There were many incidents of the Jews being beaten.

7:00 The Poles would help the Germans find the Jews in town. Sidney has a scar from a Polish boy who attacked him with a knife before the war.

8:00 In Sidney's town, there were no movies or entertainment Yiddish was spoken at home, but Polish was spoken on the outside.

9:00 German Jews were running away from Germany and telling what happened to them. The Polish Jews couldn't believe it could happen to them.

10:00 Sidney's parents had relatives in the United States and were planning to go there. In March 1939, they were getting their papers to leave. They were all asked questions at the American Counsel.

11:00 His father didn't pass the questioning, but Sidney, his mother and sister did. His mother wanted to wait for her husband

to pass, but Sidney and his sister would be able to leave in August 1939. However, because Sidney was only 14 and his sister only 18, their parents told them to wait another year. War broke out one month later.

12:00 When the Germans came, they wanted all Jewish men from 16-60. Their beards were shaved and they were made to scrub the streets. The Germans made the Jews bury the scrolls from the Synagogue.

13:00 Sidney wasn't 16 yet. One day he went to visit a friend and the Germans came into the house, beat him up and broke his nose. Sidney was then put to work every day. He would wash the German cars or do any kind of work for punishment.

14:00 The Poles weren't supposed to work; just the Jews. This was from September 1939 to January 1940. It was very cold. Jewish people were being taken to a big church and told to turn in all their valuables.

15:00 The Synagogue was burned. The Germans and Poles wanted all Jews out. This was the first town in Poland to become "Judenrein." The Poles turned every Jew in.

16:00 There wasn't even a ghetto. The Germans and the Poles just wanted all the Jews out.

17:00 Sidney buried his mother's rings in a woodshed, but they were gone after the war. The Jews were taken in trucks from Sochochin to Modlin.

18:00 There they were beaten with whips. They had no food for three days. They were there for two weeks. From there they were taken to Jaldorf and beaten again. There were some Poles there as well. One day 50 Poles and 50 Jews, Sidney among them, were taken.

19:00 Sidney had to leave his family and he didn't know where he was going. They ended up in Metgethen. There they needed tailors and shoemakers for the Germans.

20:00 In Metgethen (Germany), they were put in one big barracks. It was February, 1940. Young Germans, ages 17-22, guarded them. Here there was no Gestapo.

21:00 There were no selections as this was a work camp. Each morning they knew what they had to do. Sydney was an electrician. The Jews wore yellow stars on their fronts and backs.

22:00 The first one and a half years were bad but then it got better because the Germans were taken away to fight. Now the Jews were needed more. Sidney worked for Siemens, a company which still exists today.

23:00 This was an electronics company that had a contract with the

Germans. Sidney had it better than the people in the ghettos. He communicated with his parents who here there and was able to send them money because he earned some working on the German's lawns and doing odd jobs.

24:00 Sidney's cousins were even able to visit his parents and sister in the ghetto.

25:00 They had gotten papers to do this. They returned to Metcaten and told what they had seen in the ghetto. One of these cousins is now living in the Bronx and the other in Montreal.

26:00 All the remaining Jews in Sochochin were sent to Ploiz Ghetto. There were no gestapo in Metgethen so it wasn't so bad.

27:00 Sidney was at Metgethen for three years. With the young Germans fighting, they needed the Jews to do the work.

28:00 The fifty Jews there were from the same town. They wondered what would happen to their families.

29:00 They lived from day to day. The concentration camps began in 1942-1943. Sidney was in a labor camp. In 1943, 49 of the Jews were taken by train to Berlin. They were there for ten days.

30:00 When there were enough Jews, they went on a transport to Auschwitz. When they arrived they saw trucks and naked people. They later found out that these people were headed for the gas chambers. Sidney was only in Auschwitz for one day and then he was taken to Buna.

31:00 This was in 1943 and Sidney was 18. The first day the guards pulled out three or four of his good teeth just for punishment. Sidney believes this was a good camp compared to others. He was put in a work commando. To this day Sidney believes he is alive because he learned to be an electrician in Metgethen.

32:00 In Buna, there were no gas chambers. Sidney knew about them but never saw one. His wife had been in Auschwitz when he had been there for that day. It was March of 1943 when he arrived in Buna. As an electrician, he was treated better.

33:00 There were barracks at Buna. In the morning they got a piece of bread and black coffee. Everyone was counted. If it was foggy they couldn't go to work because the Germans didn't want them to escape.

34:00 They had to march about two kilometers to work. The sick and weak were sent to Auschwitz. Sidney got his tattooed number the day he arrived in Buna. He was the 116,000 prisoner to arrive there.

35:00 Buna was on the outskirts of town. Buildings were pit up for munitions and everything was used for the government. The

Poles got paid for doing the same jobs that the Jewish slave laborers did for nothing. It was a regular job for a Pole. The Poles went home at night and the Jews went back to the camps.

36:00 Jews were punished at Buna simply because they were Jews. People tried to escape. They were hung if they were caught and everyone had to watch.

Tape 2

1:00-3:00 Repetition of the last of tape 1.

4:00 Sidney was able to take clothes from the dead out of Buna and exchange it for food. He was in Buna for two years.

5:00 Sidney was able to help many people in Buna by giving them some of the food he was able to bring in from the Poles.

6:00 There were no women in Buna. Years later he wanted to go back and visit but the barracks had been taken apart.

7:00 Sick people were taken out of Buna and never came back.

8:00 One day Sidney didn't feel well. He had developed a growth and had a high temperature. Luckily he was close with the Kapo, who was a German Jew.

9:00 Sidney was operated on for a large inflammation. A German SS came through the hospital and asked him what was wrong. The next day half the patients in the hospital were sent to Birkenau. Their numbers had been taken, but Sidney's hadn't.

10:00 This was 1943-1944. Sidney knew about the gas chambers from the prisoners who were arriving from Auschwitz.

11:00 Christmas 1944. There were rumors at Buna that the Russians were getting close. The prisoners were given extra bread and one early morning they started marching. There hadn't been enough time to kill off the sick people so they were left behind.

12:00 Sidney was on this march to escape the Russians. It was very cold. He saw the Germans kill many people on this march.

13:00 They were shot in the head if they couldn't walk on. In February or March of 1945, there were two sections of people: those who were dying and those like Sidney who were still able to go on.

14:00 The Germans still had the list of which prisoners could do which job. Sidney was put on a train where he got bread and coffee. He went to a camp but doesn't recall which one.

15:00 There were about 100 prisoners left. They went to work and met French soldiers who told them the war was coming to an end and to "hold on."

16:00 The war ended May 9 and they were free. They got new clothes and shoes. Many of the prisoners got sick and died from eating because their stomachs couldn't handle it.

17:00 The Russian had come into the camp to free them. Sidney got together with some Polish men and took a horse and buggy.

18:00 They wanted to get to Poland. They took eggs and chickens from the German people who told the Russians. The Russians wanted to arrest them but luckily the officers were Jewish and nothing happened.

19:00 They sold the horse and buggy when they got to Poland. Then they all split up. Sidney went back home to find only one Jewish man in the whole town. He couldn't even stay in his own house because the people wouldn't let him in. He knew his parents were dead but he had hopes for his sister.

20:00 His reason for going back to Poland was to find his sister. He found out that she had had frozen feet and couldn't walk right so the Germans took her number and killed her.

21:00 Some Jews began coming back to Sochochin. Sidney went to the government and said that he had a right to live in his own house. Before he did that, he had stayed in his father's orchards and sold cherries from there.

22:00 Sidney realized he didn't want to stay in Poland anymore. On September 10, he left Poland and went back to Germany. He found from here that he could emigrate to Israel, Canada, or America.

23:00 They went to Hannover, which wasn't far from Bergen-Belsen.

24:00 Sidney met Ester, who was to be his wife, here. He wrote his uncle in America. His uncle sent him the papers to come but since Sidney was in the English zone, he'd have to wait three or four years. He and Esther went to Frankfurt, the American zone.

25:00 Esther, who was only 17, was able to come to the United States in September 1946. He wrote his uncle to meet her as she knew no one. Sidney sent his uncle a picture of her so he'd recognize her.

26:00 The uncle took her from New York to Dorchester, Boston. It took Sidney one and a half years to get to America. Because Esther had been so young, she was able to leave Europe earlier. Sidney and Esther were married in 1948.

27:00 Esther worked as a stitcher in a factory. (Here Sidney shares pictures of his family from before the war).

28:00 Sidney joined a survivors organization when he got to Boston. He's still an active member. He and his wife also got

some reparations. Sidney believes he was able to keep going because he was young, wanted to know what life was all about and was determined to make it.

29:00 He says a lot of luck was needed and also very important was the type of work you were able to do.
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