

-TITLE-HERMAN DZIEWIENSKI  
-I\_DATE-DECEMBER 8, 1986  
-SOURCE-CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS - ATLANTA  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND\_QUALITY-GOOD  
-IMAGE\_QUALITY-GOOD  
-DURATION-1 HOUR 10 MINUTES  
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH  
-KEY\_SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-  
-PERSONAL\_NAME-  
-CORPORATE\_NAME-  
-KEY\_WORDS-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-

1:00:00 Background to 1939

Herman Dzierwienski was born May 12, 1916 in Proszowice, Poland. He had five brothers and four sisters. There were about 10 to 12 people living in his childhood home. This father had a farm where he raised cattle and horses. Herman left home at 15, went to Kraków and became a butcher.

1:02:20 He went to ceder with brothers and sisters. The family observed Shabbos. He had Jewish and non-Jewish friends. His father's business was primarily with non-Jews. He was treated OK by the Poles, thought it was natural that he was beaten up a few times and called names.

1:04:50 Feels the Poles hated the Jews, and showed it in different ways. He experienced no other trouble aside from beatings and name calling.

1:05:02 1939-1940

Things changed in 1939 with the war. He ran away from Kraków to Lemberg (Lwów). He was over 20, still single. He went to the Russian border. He left on a Monday; the Germans were in Kraków by Wednesday. He left because everyone was running away from the Germans. He drove for two weeks with horses by himself.

1:05:56 The Russians entered Lemberg (Lwów). First saw the Germans at Jarosław. There was a bridge between the Russians and the Germans, and everyone was deciding which side to go on. He crossed the bridge from the Russian side to go to Kraków. He saw 50-60 Germans. They pushed him aside, calling him "Jude," Jew. There was a pit nearby where they pushed him. He saw what the Germans were doing. When the German turned one way with the machine gun, he ran away through all the people and went to Kraków by train.

1:07:54 He stayed in Kraków one month. There was trouble there. The Germans would catch the Jews in the morning to make them work. He thought this was "not for" him. He caught a train to the Russian side of Poland. He went to the Black Sea, where he met his brother. He wanted to go into Russia, but his brother convinced him to go to Proszowice. They crossed the Black Sea again. He

knew a Pole on the other side who helped them get across. They returned to Proszowice. It was still 1939.

1:09:00 They stayed home. One day the Germans came and told them to get out. They couldn't even get jackets or shoes. They were taken 15 kilometers to Spomniki. The Germans separated them out. The young were to work. The women and children were to be killed by the river. He saw them kill his mother and father.

1:09:40 The Germans took his mother and father about a block away and shot them. He was shipped to Ppaszczw Yankov camp in Krakw. There were no fences at this camp yet, just barracks. It was a recently built labor camp. He decided this place wasn't for him. He got away. There were no soldiers around yet. He and another boy snuck to a nearby farmhouse and knocked on the door. The farmer was afraid to let them stay, but he promised to leave by 5 the next morning. They went to the stable where they dug themselves into the hay against the 40 below weather. The farmer brought them bread and milk. The next day, he joined up with a butcher he knew from before, and went into the Ghetto with him. A friend took him into a house, where 15 people were living per room; 50-60 in the whole house. He worked for money. He found a job as a Schutzpolizei. He would clean horses and shoe them to ready them for the front. He worked there for four to five months. The head of the work detail then took him. During this time, he had lived in the Ghetto. Later on, the workers slept at a work camp near their jobs. The work camp had fairly workable conditions. One night, the Germans came, and told the commander that the Jews were to be taken to Krakw for everyone to be sent out. The commander asked if Krakw was to be made "Judenfrieden," but was told no. The commander told the Jews he was sorry, but he would have to send them back to Krakw.

1:15:13 It was a 12-15 kilometer march to the Ghetto. They were there for two months, then the Ghetto was liquidated. They were taken to Ppaszczw. They had to make a sidewalk from the headstones of an old cemetery. It was a terrible time in the camp. The camp was surrounded by guards and electric fences. They had to build the barracks. This was the start of Ppaszczw. Every day, he saw the Germans shoot 10, 20, 50 people.

1:16:50 In the Camp

They would be sent out to the lumber yard in 30-40 below zero weather with no gloves on. Their skin would freeze. There were many Poles working there, and the Jews would trade any extra clothing for food. One day, the Germans stopped the Jews and searched them. Those Jews who had food were killed. He survived this search, but decided he wasn't going to go to work anymore. He fooled around in camp a couple of days, although if he got caught he would be killed.

1:18:06 He was taken to the kitchen. 75 to 100 prisoners brought in the food and prepared it. It was a good job, because he could get a meal quickly, without going out into the cold. The butcher shop was right next to the kitchen. He knew some of the people in the shop. He offered to do extra work for them for food.

1:18:50 One day he was hauling insides of meat that weighed 75-100 pounds. A head German followed him as he carried the meat to the cooler. The German asked him who he was. He responded that he was a "metzger," a butcher. The German made him head of the butcher shop.

1:19:55 He had plenty of food. He felt like President Reagan. He worked there for two years. Two of his brothers and one of their wives were brought to the camp. They were later sent off. He saw them at the camp. When they left, he didn't see any other members of his family during the war. He was in camp with his sister's child. The nephew survived the camp, but was killed when he went back to Poland. Two brothers survived the war.

1:20:50 After working in the kitchen, he went back to working in the stables for one or two years. Every day of life was living under the bullet. One day he whipped a horse because it was fighting. The Germans took him back to the camp and beat him 15 times for that, until his back was very black. Another day, he got two extra bags of flour while in town picking up supplies. The supplier knew him. He sold the flour in camp, but the purchaser was caught and told on him. He was put in a Steinbunker for two days and three nights. It was a three by three room set up so every move cause him to run against concrete. He was allowed to live because his German boss said he was a good worker.

1:22:25 He had it good in the camp. He had food. Other people were assigned to work for no reason. They would dig a hole one day, then fill it up the next, or move barracks. The food was terrible. They got about one pound of bread a week. Breakfast was a cup of coffee that was really water. Lunch was also water. Dinner was water as well. Some inmates would kill themselves by running into the electric fence. He saw 50 to 100 people killed every day.

1:23:05 If people go sick, the Germans took them away, they were never seen again. There was a big hill in the camp. It was a cemetery. One day, he saw 200,000 people, men and women, outside the camp. They were naked. Five to six Germans were looking at them. If they were still in good shape, the German would put a single mark on their head with chalk. If they looked bad, they would be marked with an "x". Those with "x"s were loaded up, and never seen again. People were coming and going every day. There were children in the camp early on, but then they were shipped out.

1:24:00 He would get up at 6 am, feed and clean the horses. He would work for 5 or 6 hours a day. The others would work 10 to 12 hours a day, and get only a piece of bread, if they were lucky. The people would come to the kitchen to get any bit of extra food. Some of the workers at the camp were made to repair clothing to be sent to the front. If you couldn't work, they didn't need you. If you wanted a doctor, you were dead. Jewish doctors were afraid to help, because they could be killed.

1:24:50 Jews, Poles, Gypsies and gangster Germans were kept in the camp. The German prisoners were put in charge. One group of prisoners would have to go crush rocks. If you were sent to do this, you would die in the same day or the next. The Germans would tell two men to pick up a 200 lbs. rock. The Germans would beat the prisoners over the head with an axe when they couldn't do the work. Their bodies would be taken away at night.

1:26:00 He got sick once. This was while hauling stones from the Kraków cemetery. The men worked in teams, carrying the headstones on poles. He went to pick up his pole, but his partner didn't, and his hand was badly injured. He did go to the camp hospital the next day, because his hand was very swollen. The doctor opened the wound to let the puss out and stitched his fingers together. He decided this was wrong, and later took the bandages off and took care of the wound himself, pouring alcohol on it. The fingers healed together. He saw a doctor in the US who offered to separate the fingers, but he decided they didn't cause him any problem, so they are still attached.

1:27:50 Płaszów was liquidated. There were 600 people left out of the 200,000. Every day the numbers would fluctuate at the camp, as people were sent out to death camps. The liquidation occurred in 1944. The German officers told them they were to be taken to the concentration camp in the city of Czestochowa. Herman asked the officers to find out if his brothers were there. Two weeks later, the officers returned from the camp to tell him that the brothers were there. Two weeks later, the 600 left at the camp were rounded up in wagons and sent to Czestachona. They left Płasz Wednesday, and arrived at the new camp on Friday night. The traffic was backed up on the railroads, and so they couldn't actually enter the camp. He heard some men speaking nearby in Polish and Yiddish. They were inmates of the camp. They were also people he had grown up with.

1:29:00 They told him his one brother had escaped and gone underground. The other was sent to Germany. The next day, the men entered the camp. He met up with some old friends. He didn't have to work Saturday or Sunday. Sunday he went to the kitchen to eat. His German boss had told the kitchen to prepare a table and food for him and five other men who had been with the German for five years. The German met them in the kitchen, and told them the next day they would go into the town to get food for the camp.

1:30:00 Liberation

They got up on Monday, fed the horses. They were sleeping in the camp. He went to the kitchen for coffee, where he met his boss, who told him they weren't going into town for food. The Russians were there. This was 1945. He put the horses to the wagon. They went to the warehouse. He didn't know anyone there. They loaded bread and butter to give to the people. They went to the railway station, where 15 to 20,000 people were waiting like cattle to the slaughterhouse. They were shipped somewhere, where he doesn't know. Tuesday morning he was told they would do the same thing. The Russians were closing in. There were bombs and bullets flying everywhere. It was winter, the temperature was 40 below. They went to the railway station with bread and butter. There were 40,000 people there, but no Germans. The railroad cars were open. His boss ran away. He decided to push all the food out of the cars for the people. They then went back to the camp. It was getting dark, it was 2 or so in the afternoon. They put the horses away. They stayed in a little basement of the stable, which they had dug out since they arrived to enlarge it.

1:31:40 At around 10-12 at night, a few Germans returned to the camp. They wanted to finish sending the people at the station away. There were 10 to 15,000 there, who hadn't left. They heard Polish and Russian being spoken. They waited until the Russians came into the camp, and then they left the basement.

1:32:50 The Russians told them they were free to go.

1:33:50 General Overview of Life During the War

In the beginning, the Jews couldn't do anything. They could walk on the sidewalk. They had to wear an armband with a star on it. In Ppszcw, they had ID numbers on their shirts. The numbers weren't tattooed on like at Auschwitz, because the people came and went to rapidly. The prisoners wore striped clothes. He did for a month, but then was able to wear his own clothes.

1:34:40 The rest of the people would have to enter a building where they had to take off all of their clothes. When they were naked, they would be given a little jacket and pants. No shoes. People would steal shoes from each other. If you were going to work and had no shoes, and saw someone with shoes sleeping, you would steal their shoes. Everyone was looking out only for himself.

1:35:33 People with children or other family would try to look out for them, too, but you only really looked out for yourself. Everyday, hundreds of people died. Some Jews would act like Christians and help the Germans in the town. If they saw someone they knew was Jewish, they would find out where the person lived, usually under false papers. The person would then be sent to Ppszcw and be shot right away.

1:36:20 There was a bulldozer, which dug out a hole. There people would have to undress themselves, lay down, and then they were shot. The next person would have to lie down on top of the previous person. The Polish word for where this happened was "the Hill." If you went to the hill, you didn't come back.

1:37:16 The last camp he was out was Czestachowa. One brother had gone underground. The other was sent to Schlieben. After he was freed, he took two horses. The Russians took these horses and gave him two others. Six or seven Jewish men and three or four women travelled to Proszowice. They stayed for a week, then went to Kraków because it was dangerous in Proszowice. When the Germans left Kraków in 1945, they shot 1,000 to 2,000 Poles "like flies" because they were angry they had to leave. The Polish Army took over, and decided to have a single funeral for the victims. They went to the funeral procession. He saw his one brother at the head of the parade. He had become a member of the Polish Army after the underground. He went to meet his brother. They went to Proszowice two or three weeks later. Then they heard from people who returned from Dachau that his brother Karl had been there and survived. They went to Kraków to meet him and his wife.

1:38:55 There were three members of the family left, as well as a niece in New York. His nephew stayed in Poland, and was shot by the Poles in Kraków. They left Poland because it was too dangerous. They went to Czechoslovakia, then entered the American section of Czechoslovakia and then Germany. All of the remaining family was together there.

1:39:50 It was hard to survive the camps. Karl and Karl's wife had had two children. The children of Płaszów were liquidated. Herman came back to the camp an hour after the kids were taken. He thinks that if he had come back earlier, he could have saved them.

1:40:16 After the death of their children, Karl and his wife were sent to Skazhik (ph). Herman didn't see them again until the end of the war. He didn't know during the war who was alive. No one ever knew if they would survive.

1:40:40 In Płaszów, they never knew where people were being sent. People would have to go stand in the Feld and be marked by Germans in white uniforms. He had to go through the process only once. The Germans would never tell the prisoners anything. The Jews had no one to tell their stories to. When the leader of the camp, Goeth, would ride to camp, he would shoot prisoners who didn't look at him straight.

1:41:55 While in the butcher shop, Herman had to feed Goeth's three Doberman. They got the best food in the camp. If they didn't eat it all, he would have to bury it. This went on for about a year.

1:42:58 People didn't say anything to him about his lucky position. People only cared about themselves. He would try to help people out by giving them bits of food here and there, but once he gave away so much there wasn't enough for dinner. He was told if he ever did it again, he would be killed. He would try to give friends soup from the bottom of the pot. It's hard to help others when your life is in danger. People would tell on each other. People with professions had it better. They could work inside the camp. If you were a good worker, the Germans didn't hate you so much. If you were lazy, you wouldn't be around the next day.

1:44:00 It was not easy to survive in the camps. Your life was threatened every day. One religious fellow was working in the stable. He said he would not work on Saturday, even if they killed him. Herman took the Jew to his boss and told him the man would not work on Saturday. The boss decided to let him get away with it. The boss's name was Anton. The man was sent away when the camp was liquidated.

1:45:28 There were no Jewish holidays in the camp. You didn't even know when it was a holiday, although you did know in the Ghetto, but you had to work. They didn't work Sunday, but did work all other days, even if it was just digging holes.

Tape 2

2:00:00 When you were not able to work, you were gone.

2:01:00 You didn't know where people were sent, or to what. Maria, his future wife, was sent to Auschwitz when Płaszów was liquidated. He was supposed to be sent to Auschwitz. Maria got a number tattooed on her arm. After two weeks, she was sent to Austria or Czechoslovakia to work at a track factory. They met up again in Kraków.

2:04:33 He left the camp with Jewish men. They went to Poland, where he was treated oddly. The Poles were surprised they had survived. He had two cousins who were hidden by Poles during the war, but were killed by Poles after the war. The Poles had nothing and could produce nothing, and got jealous if a Jew made money. He met his brother in Kraków. They went by truck with Russian military units to Czechoslovakia. They went to Prague and crossed to the American side. They were going to Germany where it was safe because the Americans were occupying the area.

2:05:40 He had no papers at this time. Crossed the border at night on foot. Bought food with little money that he had. They went to Egenfeld (ph) and settled there for five years. They received rooms by the Burgermeister of the town. He did business there, buying and selling horses and cattle. In 1950, he came to the US. He had married Maria right after the war. They came first to Boston, then were sent to New York. Then they were given a house in Atlanta by the Jewish Federation. He got a job in a market. He bought his own store two years later. They moved out of the house when their

second daughter was born. The first was born in Germany.  
2:07:00 He was 30 at the end of the war. He was 35 when he came to the US. No one gave him anything; he had to work for it all. When he first came, he didn't speak English. His friends were other survivors. They rented rooms in their house to other survivors to make extra money. They then moved to the room above the store for two years. The store was in a Black (Schwarze) neighborhood. He didn't feel any anti-Semitism then. He didn't understand the segregation in Atlanta.

2:08:50 He has nightmares about the war. He likes to watch movies about the war. His wife doesn't. The movies don't show the camps. He didn't believe he would survive the camps, if someone told him he'd survive, he would have called them a liar. The Germans never asked them what they wanted, they just told them where to go.

2:10:00 He went to his childhood home after his liberation. He found a Polish girl living there. She wouldn't even let him sleep the night in a room there. He went to the Russian authorities. He was told by one officer they would address the matter the next day. The other officer in the office said they'd go right then. The Russian pointed out to the girl her furnishing was Jewish and then told her to leave the house. She came to Herman, crying, and gave him a room. He and his fellow travelers slept there. He realized that if he stayed, he'd be killed, so he ran away a couple of days later.

2:13:30 That was his last time in Proszowice. All of these things were done to him because he was Jewish. He feels sad about that, because he didn't kill anyone. The Germans didn't care about human life. He saw them kill babies by throwing them against a wall, because the bullets, which cost 5 cents a piece, were too valuable to use to kill them.

2:15:33 He once saw the Germans kill a man's son in front of the man. The man hit one of the Germans and dislocated his jaw. They killed the father. To them it was fun to kill a human. He thinks a lot of the Germans didn't know what was being done to the Jews.

2:16:45 He saw little resistance. He didn't see much. Most of the people brought in were taken straight to the hill. Most were taken in to be killed. Some were brought in for work. He didn't see much because he was working inside of the camp. He knew what was going on. He worked three or four blocks from the hill, and could hear the bullets.

2:17:00 He hasn't returned to Europe. He has no one to look for.

2:17:55 He doesn't know if he'll live to see this happen again. He wouldn't want anyone to go through it. He points out there is a lot of anti-Semitism in the US.

2:18:30 He applied for reparation payments, but didn't get any - he thinks he registered wrong. He would take the money if he could

get it. He was in the camps for five years.

2:19:30 Life in the camps was hanging on a thread. He only thought of surviving. If a person had a full stomach, he was a millionaire. He saw many people kill them self by touching the electric fences. He thinks it's not so difficult to tell his story because he lives with it every day.

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