

Oral History: Herman Jam, March 3, 1995

Herman Jam, born in Krakow, Poland on June 18, 1910, one of six children, three brothers and two sisters, describes: his parents from Galicia; attending a state school; speaking Polish in the home; leaving school at fourteen; experiencing anti-Semitism in school; a middle class existence in a heavily Jewish area; an observant, but not orthodox, upbringing; joining Betar [PH]; joining the army from 1934-35, where he encountered heavy anti-Semitism; working in army intelligence and posing as a Christian; reading *Mein Kampf* and being concerned about Hitler's rise; being certain that Germany would attack Poland; his family not considering leaving Poland; returning to the army in September 1939; witnessing the German invasion and mass murder in a village; telling an SS officer that he was Polish, not Jewish, and passing for a Christian for the remainder of the war; returning to Krakow; in 1941, using false papers to pose as an Italian and leaving Krakow for Dresden; creation of the Krakow ghetto; learning that his parents had been sent to Belzec; working for Siemens; changing his identity several times to elude the Gestapo; working in an ammunition factory in Germany; having to wear a Polish I.D. badge when he went out in public; experiencing Allied bombing in Berlin; in August 1943, changing his identity once again and moving to a new job in Organization Todt in Charlottenburg; not hearing about events in Poland; working in Norway; visiting Poland on holiday in January 1944; being certain that his family had been killed [not further explained]; learning about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising; returning to Charlottenburg via Denmark; being imprisoned [reasons unclear] and moved to Trondheim and Akershus, Norway; then Hamburg; being freed by British troops in May 1945; returning to Poland in approximately January 1946, where he confirmed that his family, except for one sister, had perished; having two marriages and two children [N.B., [first reference, in response to question to wives and children]; immigrating to Australia for a better life.