

Interviewee:	<u>BASS</u> , Harry	Date:	March 17, 1981
Interviewer:	Eileen Steinberg		
Audio tapes:	2 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
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Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Harry Bass was born on October 10, 1920 in Bialystok, Poland. He talks about his life, Jewish life in general, educational facilities for Jewish children in Bialystok, and his Zionist activities prior to 1939. He briefly mentions the arrival of Polish Jews who were expelled from Germany.

After the German invasion in 1939, his family hid for a while, then were forced into the Bialystok Ghetto along with the entire Jewish population of Bialystok, as well as Jews from surrounding villages and towns. He describes conditions in the ghetto, how he traded goods for food and activities of the *Judenrat*.

In December 1942, Harry, his three brothers, a sister and an uncle, were deported to Auschwitz in closed cattle cars. He could have escaped and explains why he chose not to.

In Birkenau, his two little brothers were sent to the crematoriums. Harry and his other siblings were taken to the slave labor camp. He describes the daily routine in the camps, living conditions, how prisoners were branded, and briefly mentions attempts at religious observance. Prisoners who tried to escape were killed. Harry worked in the kitchen, later in a *Straf Kommando* (punishment detail) where a German soldier saved his life.

To evacuate Auschwitz, prisoners were forced on a Death March to Gleiwitz in deep snow, then to Mauthausen on an open train on January 18, 1945. Thousands died and survivors were treated brutally. In April 1945, surviving prisoners were brought to Magdeburg and put on ships in the Elbe. Most ships were sunk by the Germans, Harry's boat was torpedoed by the British but he managed to survive.

After liberation by the British, Harry recuperated in a hospital in Neustadt Holstein, searched for family members, and was reunited with some of them. He immigrated to the United States on March 29, 1949, where he became very involved in every aspect of the Jewish community.

The transcript includes historical endnotes by Dr. Michael Steinlauf as well as several vignettes about helping fellow prisoners, help from German soldiers and slave labor.

Interviewee: BASS, Harry

Date: August 22, 1983

SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War, 1939-1945 - Personal narratives - Jewish
World War, 1939-1945 - Concentration camp - Auschwitz/Birkenau
World War, 1939-1945 - Deportations from Poland
World War, 1939-1945 - Conscript labor (slave labor)
Jewish ghettos - Bialystok, Poland
Gas chambers - Crematoria
Atrocities
Death marches
Non-Jewish aid