

Interviewee:	<u>LERMAN</u> , Stephen	Date:	January 9, 1983
Interviewer:	Harriet Richman		
Audio tapes:	2 English	Transcript:	1 vol., 54 pages English
Restrictions:	None		

## SUMMARY

Stephen Lerman, the youngest of seven children, was born on September 15, 1927, to an orthodox family in a small, predominately Jewish town, Zambrow, Poland. He also states that his mother was quite traditional, but that his father less so later in life. He describes pre-war Zambrow including his schooling, Zionist youth groups, and antisemitism. He shares his very vivid childhood memory of his first experience with a Nazi soldier in 1939 before the Russian occupation. He describes a relatively normal life under Soviet rule until 1941.

Stephen describes the marked difference when the Germans came in in 1941 and details an *action* when Jews were told to gather at the marketplace. Stephen describes telling his parents he was going to defy the order and run away. His older brother and parents went and were killed outside of town and buried in a mass grave with hundreds of other Jews. The Germans then made a ghetto of the remaining Jews in the town. Stephen describes the conditions in the ghetto and also describes sneaking out to work for a Pole who was his father's business associate who fed him a little bit.

Toward the end of 1942 the ghetto was liquidated and Stephen describes the deportation in cattle cars to Auschwitz, journey, arrival, and his selection to a non-work group. Due to his quick thinking, he jumped off the truck and snuck into the group slated for work. He became a prisoner of Birkenau from December 1942 until mid-year 1943. Though he was 14, he had a very young appearance and describes several instances when people protected him and helped him to survive. He describes an SS officer in charge of the dynamite commando who snuck him extra food and brought him medicine when he was sick. This officer even helped Stephen not get selected for the crematorium by talking to his friend who was in charge of selections.

Stephen describes a very brief stay in Oranienburg in 1943, a forced march to Sachsenhausen and deportation to the labor camp, Landsberg, a subcamp of Dachau. He describes the treacherous work at Landsberg and how he volunteered for a carpenter position and again was given extra food by his foreman. He was able to stay on this assignment for six months. Stephen describes then end of the war when they were again forced on a march. Eventually as German soldiers started fleeing, the prisoners found themselves hiding for cover in a forest as the American army approached. They were liberated in May 1945. Stephen briefly stayed at Buchberg [phonetic] and then made his way to Munich where he was helped by UNRRA. He eventually made contact with an uncle from Philadelphia who helped him emigrate to the United States August 27, 1949.

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## SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War 1939-1945- Jewish - Personal narratives

Auschwitz-Birkenau

Oranienburg

Landsberg, subcamp of Dachau

deathmarch

UNRRA

Aid from non-Jews

Aid from Jews in the camps

Survival skills