

RG-50.462.0476

Oral History Summary: Solomon Robby, June 4, 1993 and May 13, 1994

Note that there may be silent portions in the middle of each recording.

Part 1

Solomon Robby (né Rabi), born on May 15, 1919 in Müden, East Prussia, the youngest of three brothers and two sisters, describes: his family moving to Germany from Lithuania; his mother dying while he was a child; growing up until the war broke out in Birzai, Lithuania, about 20-25 km from the Latvian border; a religious upbringing, including Yeshiva; Lithuania being occupied by Russia in 1940; a close-knit Jewish community of about 2,000 people, economically diverse and having a rich cultural life; having almost no relation to the gentile community; being aware of events in Germany, including mistreatment of Jews; his family not considering emigrating; restrictions on Lithuanian Jews increasing after Germany occupied Poland; a roundup of Jewish men from which Robby was exempted in return for providing supplies from the family shoe factory to German troops; the men who were rounded up being executed the following day; Jews being forced into a ghetto; his family fleeing Lithuania for Latvia, where partisans forced them to return to their home town; Germans executing Russians; Robby forced into a labor camp at Linkaiciai; witnessing an execution; being treated worse by Ukrainians than the Germans; in about 1943, being taken to a tent in Mildors*, where they were stripped, deloused, and taken to a barracks; being assigned to work as a shoemaker; many dying and the bodies being shipped to a crematorium in Dachau; working with cement and breaking his ankle.

Part 2

Solomon Robby discusses being taken to a camp infirmary and treated by a Jewish doctor who warned him not to return to the infirmary or he would be killed; the doctor also saying that Germany “had lost the war”; forcing himself to work despite his broken foot; Allied bombing near the camp; noting that the kapos were German criminals, not Jews; being loaded into a railway cattle car but the train being abandoned as Allied soldiers approached; being freed by Russian forces; weighing 80 pounds, suffering from pleurisy, and being taken to a German hospital; after recovering, being taken to Feldafing DP camp near Munich; having been told by the Germans [upon being freed by the Russians] “you are free,” but not knowing where to go; the world underestimating the will of Jews to survive; engaging in cultural activities in Feldafing; performing in a choir for Jews across Germany; searching for, and finding, an aunt and uncle who had immigrated to Philadelphia; arriving in the U.S.; the Lithuanians and Russians treating Jews murderously as the war wound down; during 1941-1945, having no contact with any relative or friend; all of his relatives having been killed; there being no explanation for why he stayed alive; never having an instance of being treated well in the camp by a German or Lithuanian;

Part 3

Solomon Robby discusses donating and describing a Yiddish publication from Feldafing featuring Robby’s key role in establishing the Feldafing choir and the choir’s performances

around Germany; no one wanting to return to his country of origin and Haganah recruiting Jews to emigrate to Israel illegally; detailing the process of immigrating to the U.S.