

Interviewee:	<u>ARNEL</u> , Jack	Date:	April 22, 1985 ¹
Interviewer:	Bonnie Bailis		
Audio tapes:	1 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
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SUMMARY

Jack Arnel (previously Yasha Aronovitz) was born on May 23, 1929 in Vilna, Poland (now Vilna, Lithuania) to a well-to-do Jewish family. His father owned a furrier factory and his mother was a custom tailor. He shares his childhood memories of his war-time experiences. He describes their pre-war life, having a maid, and a governess and spending summers in the country. Jack was a member of Betar. Jack briefly describes how their lives changed under the Soviet Occupation in 1939.

Jack describes that in 1941, when the Germans occupied the area, his family was moved into the Vilna Ghetto and from there to a sub-camp for furriers (who were privileged prisoners called *Keilis*). There they made fur vests for German soldiers. Jack describes the family's deportation in 1944 and the fear that they were being sent to their death since they were headed toward Ponary², but eventually passed it. The women were forced off the trains in Stutthof and the men were sent to *Lager* Kreis Landsberg, a sub-camp of Dachau. Jack was forced to work building underground facilities to manufacture weaponry for the German armies and describes Dachau in detail: beatings, starvation, killings and brutal labor. Later he and his father fled from a transport during an American air-raid and found an advancing American Army unit. They were cared for at St. Ottilien Hospital, an American camp set up in a church in Germany. His mother and sister, Sonia, survived as well and were liberated by the Russians. Jack describes how they were all reunited in Munich. They remained in a Displaced Persons Camp for four years and arrived in the United States in July 1949.

¹Recorded at the 1985 American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Philadelphia.

²Ponary – location of the largest site of mass extermination for years 1941-1944 on the eastern borders of pre-war Poland (Kresy Wschodnie)-Ponary, near Vilna.