Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project
P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Dworkin, Anisim

Date of interview: 5/7/1992

Summary: (Liberator)
   Anisim was born on an unspecified date in 1923, in Smirenskiy, Soviet Union. At the time of Anisim's birth, Jews could only live in a few designated towns in the Soviet Union. Anisim's great-grandfather served in the Tsar's army as a cannon operator for 12 years and thus given the right to live in a Russian town even though he was Jewish. Anisim expressed regret at spending his childhood in a Russian town because it stripped him of the rich Jewish culture he saw in his parents, including celebration of Jewish holidays and speaking Yiddish. Anisim spoke at length about his childhood being free of anti-Semitism and being made-fun of as a child for being part of the lower middle-class rather than for his religious beliefs. At the end of his interview, Anisim revisited his childhood and spoke of a teenager from Leningrad who laughed at him and explained how he had to "tolerate the Jews".
   Because Anisim's father (Whose name is not mentioned) owned land in Smirenskiy, he was not allowed to vote. To gain this right, Anisim's father moved his family to a National Jewish Kolchoz in Smolensk in 1928. Through 1931, Anisim's family lived very well at the farming community, where Anisim and his older brother (name and age not given) went to school, mother kept house, and father worked in the forest industry. Anisim describes an incident where an American charity gave a tractor to this farming community, improving his standard of living. In 1933, the people of the Soviet Union went hungry and the farming communities fell apart. The government in order to abolish personal property and create socialism created this false food shortage.
   In 1933, Anisim's four uncles on his father's side and 2 aunts on his mother's side moved to Brest, Belarus, with their families. There, Anisim assumes they all died at death camps except for one nephew. After the war, his surviving nephew told Anisim how his mother, Greta Isachawitz who was an Aryan, refused her right to leave her Jewish family in the death camp and was shot in front of her son. In 1939, Anisim's older brother was arrested for writing a letter expressing anti-Hitler sympathies (this being during the time after the Soviet Union signed a nonaggression pact with Hitler in August 23, 1939). He was then put in jail for an unspecified amount of time, sent to serve in the army, and finished his sentence of 15 years after the end of the war, at which time Anisim lost contact with him.
   When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, Anisim was sent to the East, as he was useless to the army because of an unspecified injury to the eye. After many evaluations, he was accepted to serve in the Allied army for four months. Afterwards, Anisim was sent to study at a University in Urale a large mining town in the Soviet Union. In 1957, Anisim received a letter from his brother, proclaiming an intended move to America, but without a return address. Anisim also talked at length about his work in the oil industry at Urale after the

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war, where he was discriminated against because of his religion. Anisim was fired from a job as head of the research department at a University because of rumors that he was involved in the Zionist movement.

Anisim now lives in Perim in North Urale and has a daughter who is married to a non-Jew. In 1987, Anisim began to search for his older brother and sent a letter to him at an address that was no longer valid. The postman recognized the name and found the correct forwarding address, successfully uniting brothers who had been apart for 36 years. Anisim's brother died before Anisim was able to come to America and take care of him.