

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Cohen, Samuel

Date of interview: 4/26, 11/17 & 12/3/1993

Summary: Samuel Cohen was born in 1923 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was drafted in January of 1943. He was shipped to England in the fall of 1944, and entered France in December of 1944. In the spring of 1945, his division went through Belgium and Luxembourg, and then to Austria. He was not aware of what was happening to the Jews, and when his division caught up with a death march from Mauthausen, the Americans were shocked. About 1,300 people were still alive, and the Americans liberated the prisoners and captured about 150 German soldiers.

The Americans then continued to Mauthausen, where they spent about a day. Samuel took pictures and wrote a long letter to his brother describing what they found, both in the camp and the death march. He read this letter during the interview, and became emotional at certain points. He also took pictures of huge piles of bodies, mass graves in trenches, and survivors who look almost emotionless when faced with liberation. The SS men, he says, were cocky and almost smug. He saw no remorse or sadness on their faces, even after they had surrendered or been captured.

Samuel was sent back to the United States in January of 1946. He had a continued interest in international affairs, and in the 1970s developed an exchange program with Japan. He believes that developing understanding of different cultures will help people avoid these terrible situations in the future.