

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewees: Max Drimmer and Herman Shine

Date of interview: 11/15/1989

Summary: Both Drimmer and Herman Shine were born in Berlin and were childhood friends prior to the war. Both were taken to Sachsenhausen and kept from 1939 to 1942, after which they were moved to Auschwitz until 1944 where they worked building a new camp nearby, to work at IG Farben factory. Each gives detailed descriptions of being collected for the camps, of camp life, and of beatings. Drimmer describes working at the ovens. They both witnessed a quashed riot of the prisoners in Sachsenhausen. Both escaped from Auschwitz in 1944 with the help of Joseph Wrona, a Polish fellow worker. They hid in a hole dug up in a warehouse and then escaped at night walking 18 km to Joseph Wrona's house. There they hid three and a half months in Joseph's barn before the Gestapo came in January 1945 and forced them to move to Joseph's father-in-law's house. They then moved to Gliwice, hiding in the home of Shine's future wife Marion Shlesinger whom he met while working for the camp, and then finally to the home of a German millionaire before being liberated by the Russians on January 27, 1945. After liberation they returned to Gliwice to find it raped and pillaged by the Russians and spent an unspecified amount of time working for the Russians before escaping to Berlin. Drimmer was reunited there with his future wife Helga. Shine brought Marion from Gliwice and they were all married together on February 17, 1946, after which they all made their way over to San Francisco. Shine and Drimmer returned to Auschwitz in 1989 in order to find Joseph Wrona, whom they did locate afterward. At the close of interview they discuss their extreme good fortune in surviving the camps. Shine lost his parents in the war, but both his brother and sister survived. Drimmer lost his parents and aunts and uncles during the war, but his sister survived and lives in SF. Drimmer also has two sons and numerous grandchildren.