

-TITLE-ALAN HERSKOVICH  
-I\_DATE-26 MAY 1990  
-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND\_QUALITY-GOOD  
-IMAGE\_QUALITY-EXCELLENT  
-DURATION-1 HOUR 45 MINUTES  
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH (HEAVY ACCENT)  
-KEY\_SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-  
-PERSONAL\_NAME-  
-CORPORATE\_NAME-  
-KEY\_WORDS-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-

1:01:00 A.H.'s first name was originally Adolf. He changed it for obvious reasons. He was born in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, on 20 April 1916. In the city were 12,000 Jews. He had four brothers and two sisters. He was studying engineering at the time of the German occupation. His father was an industrialist (textiles).

1:02:00 His family had apparently lived in Germany for some years before the war. Living in Zagreb, Yugoslavia at the outbreak of the war. Remembers no anti-Semitism in Germany.

1:03:00 A.H. volunteered for the Yugoslavian Army, but Germany had conquered Yugoslavia before he ever put on uniform. Heard of Germans killing 30,000 in Belgrade.

1:05:00 A.H. was a professional table tennis player of wide international renown. Germans in Zagreb at first just imprisoned the Jews for a short time in order to collect ransoms. Then released, then many shortly re-incarcerated. This done to his father.

1:06:00 Through bribe, obtained German travel documents from a German officer bearing his name, with the German spelling. He had to wear a two yellow stars (front and back) at this time.

1:07:40 A.H. received warnings from friends to leave. After being stopped by a German, was able to board train for Italy, bearing false passport.

1:09:40 Went to Italian city of Split, waiting for brothers. Able to move freely throughout the city. After three months, he and brothers captured for trying to flee to S. America (UNC.)

1:11:40 He and his brothers were taken to court. Interned on populated island off coast of Italy, with other Jews. He had plenty of money, able to help Jews who didn't buy food, etc., from residents of island.

1:13:40 Jews brought to Italy in chains. This, he says, was unpopular with Italian people, who didn't support it.

1:15:40 Caught out one night after dark (past curfew) on island. Apparently, A.H. was having an affair. Was then jailed in Florence, with two of his brothers (UNC.). Then sent to internment camp in southern Italy.

1:18:40 Sister found refuge in Switzerland in 1944. A.H. was in internment camp in 1943. During the American invasion in Italy, the America mistook the camp, with its barbed wire, for a military post. Machine gunned it, killed some prisoners. Camp then liberated.

1:20:40 They were not forced to work in the camp. They had plenty of food, which they were able to buy through the Italian guards. They did not, however, have enough water. Occasionally, a cruel guard would use much of the prisoners water ration bathing.

1:22:40 Camp life posed no danger of death. Inmates played sports, he gave table tennis exhibitions. Was given shots to prevent disease. A.H. followed the American troops north in search of his brother. Made money interpreting for the Americans, giving table tennis exhibitions. Did not want to return to Yugoslavia, no longer a citizen, was stateless.

1:23:40 Father, sister, and her babies were taken in Budapest, sent to Auschwitz, where they were killed.

1:24:40 One brother, who had been safely studying in Switzerland, returned to Yugoslavia to be with family. Was taken with other young Jews, told he'd be put to work, was shot in a ditch.

1:28:40 The Germans who killed his brother took all of his family's belongings. However, as they removed the furniture, a "gentile" friend was able to leave the house with all of the family's gold, diamonds, etc. This the family divided up. Apparently, it was after this that he boarded train for Italy (UNC.).

1:31:40 The Germans emptied Zagreb of valuables within two days of arriving, including his father's textile factory.

1:36:40 A.H. fled carrying \$2200 (Amer. \$) in a money belt around his waist. When he was jailed and searched in Italy, guards did not find money. This money sustained him throughout war.

1:39:40 His eldest brother joined him in Split. He was "religious" then, is more so now. If God existed, would not have forsaken the Jews, he reasons. His Jewish association is racial and cultural, not religious.

1:41:40 When in Italy, only able to communicate with family through his friends. After the war, the Tito gov't. suggested he and his family request reparations from Germany. They did, but either didn't receive them, or, he says, were taken by Tito gov't.

1:43:40    Obtained a paper from Swiss gov't. to the effect that he was a stateless person. A "stateless passport" of sorts. Applied to come to US in 1944.

1:44:40    Had to wait seven years to be admitted to US.

1:45:40    Wanted to get away from Italy, where he had been imprisoned.

1:48:40    In 1950, came to NYC. However, the authorities did not want all of the immigrants to stay in New York. A.H. forced to go to Omaha, Neb. Didn't like it there, went back to be with his brother in New York. Had to take menial jobs which was tough having come from a wealthy family. Found New Yorkers unfriendly.

1:51:40    Left NY, went to San Francisco, where he made his living selling hair-cutting equipment. Repeats that during war, he lost one sister and one brother, and their families. Eldest brother emigrated to Chile.

1:52:00    His other Siblings have all died natural deaths, he is only one left.

1:53:00    A.H. was able to get out of Yugoslavia in time due to good info from "friends." Many of his friends were shot one week after he left.

1:58:00    The Italian island on which he and some of his brothers were interned (in different towns, though families weren't usually broken up) was called Curzola.

1:59:00    He was caught breaking curfew on Curzola while seeing a woman. Then sent to jail in Florence.

1:60:00    They had a great deal of freedom on the island, just couldn't leave it. In all prisons he was in, men and women in barracks, full sexual freedom, some families had own rooms.

1:61:00    The camp in which he was interned in southern Italy was at Ferramonti. The Germans fled the camp in 1943 before the American advance.

1:65:00    Here he clearly gives the names of his family members.

1:68:00    Discusses smuggling medicines, Passover wine to Russian Jews in his tennis bag after the war.

1:73:00    In Zagreb, there were no councils of Jewish elders, no issuing of directives, etc. by any Jewish leaders. No apparent organization to the deportation of the Jews, simply the ones who were caught.

1:80:00    A.H. claims to speak most European languages.

1:82:00 Has returned to Israel twenty times. Does not believe in a caring, interested God. Feels guilty for having chosen easy path of coming to US, rather than going to Israel. Feels strong kinship toward other Jews.

1:87:00 Says Germans were never punished, states that they are arrogant "S.O.B.s," hates them.

1:89:00 Finds it indecent that Christians hold Jews responsible for killing Jesus, gets very agitated reading any kind of unpleasant news due to Holocaust experiences. Can't watch Holocaust documentaries.

1:90:00 Gives names of wife, children. Says they keep Sadirs, etc., though not religious. Names brother who perished.

1:95:00 Says had to have sense of humor to survive in camp. They often did silly things (practical jokes, etc.).

1:97:00 Had more than enough money in money belt to last him throughout the war. Able to keep it throughout.

1:98:00 Says Italians were "incredibly human."  
.END.