

## Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

RG-50.477\*0594

Name of Interviewee: Altman, Ben

Date of Interview: 2/26/2003

Ben Altman was born on February 26, 1912 in Czeszochowa, Poland. Ben and his seven siblings were raised by his father and step-mother. Though Ben and his family were spared from the transports to Auschwitz, which claimed the majority of the Jewish population of his town, Ben was eventually sent to a labor camp in 1944. It was here that Ben avoided being sent to a death camp by using his skills as a tailor to mend uniforms for soldiers. He was then imprisoned in a third camp, and upon liberation, he worked as a tailor for the Russians. Ben was able to return to his hometown where he was reunited with two of his brothers. In 1945, he and his wife attempted to leave Rechbach (?) but they were captured and interrogated by the authorities; they were sent to Munich and eventually back to Poland.

### Summary Version 2

**Name of interviewee:** Altman, Ben

**Date of interview:** 2/26/2003

**Summary:** Ben was born in Czeszohova, Poland on February 26, 1912. When he was a year old, his birth mother died. His father remarried, and his stepmother raised him as her own. Ben had seven siblings, two sisters and five brothers. Ben lived in Susalwitz(?) in 1935 and worked as a tailor. He got married for the first time in 1938 when he was 25 years old. Growing up he was aware of anti-Semitism and was even hit in the head from behind walking down the street.

In 1943 the Jewish population of his town was rounded up and kept in a large arena for 3 days. Many were sent to Auschwitz, but Ben and his family were all sent back home. After a short time those sent home were put into a ghetto. Ben did not stay there long and after only a day in the ghetto he was sent to a labor camp in 1944. At this camp Ben lost his first wife. He also had a dream that a child was just out of his reach beyond a wire fence, and he knew his baby had died as well.

Ben met his second wife at this camp. To get out of being sent to a death camp, Ben bargained his tailoring skills. He fixed uniforms for soldiers. Inside of the labor camp Ben was not at all aware of the outside world and what was happening. No radios were allowed in the camp, food was scarce, they could not even rummage through the garbage. A German woman gave him food on one occasion and was almost caught. Ben lied and said he had never seen her before.

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Ben was at a total of three camps. He had met his second wife at the second camp. When he was moved to the third camp, she was not brought with him. Later he searched for her, and found her.

After he got out of the last camp, Ben worked for the Russians as a tailor. They gave him a room and food in return. Ben tried a few times to go back to his home town and look for his family, but the trains were eventually cut off. He got a ride in a cattle car one time and found 2 of his brothers at a camp in their home city. Ben got his brothers jobs, one became a auto mechanic. Ben left Rechbach(?) in 1945.

He was caught leaving Rechbach and was interrogated separately from his wife. They were sent to Munich and then eventually back to Poland.