

-TITLE-HERSHEL FRANKIEL
-I_DATE-8/23/90
-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-GOOD
-IMAGE_QUALITY-GOOD
-DURATION-30 MINUTES
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS

40 Hershel Frankiel began explaining how at the age of 47 he finally "came out" of the shell he had built around himself after the Holocaust.

58 At that time lived in Tomales Bay. He began to break out by joining the American Holocaust survivors group.

84 Mr. Frankiel went to The American Holocaust Home in Washington DC from April 11 to 14, 1983 during his 47th year. He felt it was a place that could help him escape and deal with his past.

1:02:00 He secluded himself for awhile, because he found it difficult to return to his past. He compares it to coming to close to the front of a stage and fearing that one will fall off, then backing off. he found that the force of life always pushes him back and forth from that unstable position near the edge of the stage.

1:23:00 He felt these forces often while he was in DC and was not sure he wanted to stay. Going to DC was a big step forward for him. He was not sure he wanted to be with the with 10,000 other people who shared only bad memories.

1:50:00 He describes in detail the registration room of the April 11-14, 1983 meeting. he says it symbolized him going home, to Poland, but he could go only as close as he wanted to. He stressed not having made friends from the past at all, just maintaining reality.

1:92:00 At the end of the meeting he felt a great feeling of freedom.

2:00:00 January, 1983 was the first time he was interviewed about his Holocaust past. The interview enabled him to be a bit more comfortable than he would have been otherwise in DC. This interview was the first time he had ever verbally recognized his past besides with a psychologist friend he had come into contact with.

2:31:00 His goal of the trip to DC was to get a hold of his cousin Halic, who he had lost contact in November of 1943.

2:74:00 Mr. Frankiel became somber and spoke of his best friend\cousin Halic who was herded into a train to another camp, he doesn't know where in November of 1943. He has been looking for him since. Mr. Frankiel went into hiding at this some time.

3:10:00 Describes his relationship with Halic and their grandfather, who they both idealized.

3:33:00 Halic and his grandfather, cousins, aunts, and most of the other family members when on this train. Mr. Frankiel was eight years old at the time as was Halic, but Mr. Frankiel's birth records were falsified after his birth. He has since corrected them.

3:62:00 He was eight years old and six months when he went into hiding. Halic was the same age when "he went to his death."

3:87:00 Mr. Frankiel and his parents hid with a Polish family, who with payments in gold allowed them to live in their basement. They lived there for two months.

4:12:00 The living conditions were very awkward and frightening. Any sound or movement would mean death. He likened it to being on a stage anytime anyone was in the house. He was always very frightened.

4:33:00 Stash Robell, the Polish son of the family, dug a hole one night and covered it with straw and dirt, so that the hole was not noticeable.

4:75:00 The hole was six feet by six feet, and less than thirty inches high, dug inside of the shed. Four of them got into it, Mr. Frankiel's father, mother, his mother's sister, and himself. They stayed in the hole for two years, getting out for one night the entire two years.

5:18:00 They passed food and excrement through a shaft for the animal feed in the shed. They had no showers or anything for those two years.

5:43:00 Some things he doesn't remember, but things come back at times.

6:10:00 He lives in Marin County now. One day he had been out walking and smelled blood, didn't at first realize that he knew what the smell of blood was but then he remembered that he recognized it from a day in the ghetto in 1943.

6:54:00 His father has been on a work brigade in his ghetto in 1943 for the Gestapo. The men had been driven so hard that they went on strike. The next morning after the strike. the Germans drove through the town with a machine gun on the back of a jeep and shot everyone they could find in the streets.

7:08:00 At this time everyone in his family piled into his cellar. They heard boots in the house above, but Frankiel claims he has no emotional recall, doesn't want to work at recalling this event. After a while he snuck away, and went up to the fence of his house to see what was going on.

7:40:00 He saw a hay wagon full of bodies passing by him. This is where he had smelled the smell of blood, which came back to him forty-five years later. He was very silent for awhile, recalling, he was perhaps being introspective about his experiences.

7:62:00 Part of him yearns to affirm that there is value and worth of life. When he finds things to difficult, he quits and goes on to something new. Another part of him--the judging part--tries to figure out why he does this.

7:94:00 The one task that made him proud he accomplished while in hiding in the hole. He "brought light into the place: physically spiritually, and psychologically."

8:09:00 Physically, this hole was dark and horrid. There were bugs in the straw that dropped down onto him, and he was always dirty.

8:43:00 He wanted to see and read, but mostly to create. He wanted to be able to do something besides fantasize. he wanted to read. In order to do this he dug a shaft the size of his eight year old hand and the length of his arm in two directions, then used stick and broke through the ground. He used a mirror at 45 degrees and had a beam of light coming into the hole. He reads a story about the Kings of Poland and his father reads a newspaper. He also learned math from his father at this point. They enjoyed this but the but was fearful of being discovered.

9:14:00 His mother was terribly frightened at all times. The light was there for five hundred or six hundred days to their stay.

9:57:00 He doesn't remember much of his Aunt, but thinks she remembers the most of all of them, but is "zombied" by rear of the pain.

9:62:00 He learned to read by the limited light.

9:94:00 He had had a few months of alternative schooling in ghetto prior to their escape. He is now an orthodox Jew, not alternative as his mother was he says to appease his father who died in 1980. Mr. Frankiel claims that despite his orthodox community.

10:32:00 a lot of his life revolves around the summer, 1943 when 10,000 Jews were loaded into the train and his eight year old memory of the experience.

10:51:00 In 1941 he had escaped the first ghetto and lived in hiding in a Polish village, there he had had other friends, but they were all Polish children.

10:71:00 There he had been free to pick mushrooms in the fields and ride on hay wagons. He remembers that the Polish children would yell at him "Get your Jew ass off that hay or the horses won't eat it. It was his most hurtful memory or the entire war.

10:90:00 When his family heard that all Jews had to leave the first ghetto or they would be shot his family quickly tired to run. His father hid while Hershel and his mother were packed up by the Gestapo headquarters in her mothers old home town. This he believes was an act of God. His father then having heard where they had been placed snuck into this Grandfathers house within the new ghetto of that particular town. Then once the grandfather heard that his daughter, grandson and now other daughter as well had been brought to the gestapo in his town he used his money and status to have them released into his custody in 1943.

11:59:00 Mr. Frakiel then returned to the story of the hole. He could feel the war around them through the vibrations in the ground, their fear was heightened with every gunshot.

11:70:00 His mother constantly spoke of being found. She told them all that when they were found they all had to quickly change into their best clothes because she wanted them to die and someday be found in their best clothing.

His mother also told him horror stories of families being caught in order to show him that being silent was the only way they would survive. She spoke harshly to him and would tell him that if he was not quiet she had no problem disposing of him for the safety of the others. She claimed that he was not indispensable. He said that he had a brother in Israel who was a replacement so he had to be quiet. (Whether or not Mr. Frankiel really had a brother was not clear.)

12:19:00 He wants to transform his pas altogether to leave behind something to serve, to raise, to encourage and maybe even to entertain. he thinks this is his purpose, but he doesn't know how it should be shaped. This demand on him is the constructive force in his life; his major life force.

12:45:00 In 1958 he worked on a missile. His job was to invent a way to use the missile for other purposes besides the delivery of weapons. When this speech was completed he cried.

12:62:00 It was his willingness that got him that job his "inner stuff". He believes that God is within us all and that it was Gods voice that enabled him to continue.

12:84:00 With God's guidance his family was kept together and spared from disaster. he is not sure if he wants to discuss his religious philosophy.

13:08:00 He now continues speaking about getting out of the hole. The "war rumbling on with the rumbling of earth" for four months in 1944. They never knew what was going on outside, but had to rely on what they heard going on outside their hiding place.

13:40:00 His father got sick in the hole in January or February of their last year there. When he got out one night they were pleased to know that the Polish were still there. he is reluctant to go back, but feels he should go to see those who saved him. He wanted to escape for a short while away from his parents. He had his own agenda for his few hours of freedom.

13:70:00 He did not even remember how to walk, at first, but learned quickly. He has not felt courage or free will so strongly since, this time at age 10. 1394 He would like to return to that night to get more detail, but it is not available to him in his present memory. He does remember that he went back to his grandfather's house to look for Halic Adler in 1944 that night. He begins to cry.

14:22:00 He is still looking for Halic 45 years later, still crying. But he realized he will not find him now on one level, but on the other levels he is still seeking. He wants to investigate these levels to understand his life now and to identify why he is still seeking for Halic Adler.

14:49:00 "Some day I want to do a presentations of what smell blood feels like".

14:69:00 He doesn't remember how he got back to hole or what he found at his house besides emptiness. He remembers that he saw it, but wasn't shattered by it. His parents had gone out looking for him and found him at the farm house of the Robells, the Polish family they had stayed with before.

15:15:00 Korolina Robell, father Robell, Stanislaw Robell and Rosa, the maid were the people who saved him before. This is where his parents found him the night they got out of the hole. These four people has risked their life for them. Their "guardian angel" was Karolina Robell, according to his mother. This was the last time they ever saw them.

15:74:00 He wants to reciprocate their generosity.

15:96:00 He has a repulsion to other Holocaust survivors. He has had opportunities to meet with survivors of his town, but didn't want to.

16:27:00 His family had taken their gold, but buried other silver and valuables when he left his grandfather's house . They gave it all to the Robells, in payments. When they ran out they thought they would be thrown out, but the Robells did not, even though they were risking their own survival.

16:50:00 Mr. Frankiel feels an enormous spiritual connection to Karolina. His father had promised them their grandfather's home and real estate and instruction on how to run dying (coloring) business.

16:76:00 They did give them whatever was left after the war and did teach the Robells their business.

16:85:00 He believes that the Robells made a living from dying after war. Mr. Frankiel and his family left Poland in 1946 and went to Berlin then to West Germany and stayed in displacement camp.

17:04:00 His father then located his brother in Belgium and one in New York as well. Within a few weeks they all went to New York as immigrants.

17:29:00 They then moved to LA, and started a dying plant there. They communicated with the Robells and sent packages of food and money when they needed it, but some of them never arrived.

17:36:00 The last he has heard from them was in 1972 when Karolina died. At this time he sent money but it wasn't delivered.
.END.