

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewee: Galler, Meyer

Date of interview: 12/13/1989

Summary: Meyer Galler was born in Bialystok, Poland in 1914. He was the youngest of 3 brothers and poor though his family tried not to act like it. He went to a religious school till he was 9 and remembers people throwing rocks at him if he ventured too far from the town, and believed it was normal. In 1933 he attended the University of Warsaw where he studied math. He said that when Hitler first came to power he felt the anti-Semitism right away. The first year of school was OK he said, but the second year people started to pretend not to know the Jewish students and they were later moved to a private dorm far away, for Jews only. He graduated in 1939 and went to Lvov where he was the technical manager in a cannery. He got married after graduation (no name); she had escaped the Nazis and had to get married so as not to be exiled. He later got another job in oil and margarine production, and said he was able to buy food and was content. He and his wife tried to move to Lithuania but on the way stopped at his parent's house. His wife was with child and his mother convinced him to leave her with them till she had the baby. It was the last time he saw any of them. Later he went back looking for his family but could not find them, but he did find the homeowner, who gave him the grim news. He then lived with his cousin till 1943.

He then went back to "the job" though he did not say which, where he said that 2 days after the war the city was bombed. He later traveled to Vilnius on a train but on the journey the train tracks were found to be over turned and broken so he had to walk it, and when he got near Vilnius the city was in flames. He turned south and met up with the Russian army, which was in disarray, and traveled with them to Minsk. When Galler got to Minsk, the city was intact, but the next day it was also covered in fire. He then turned to Moscow, he notes that food was scarce and that peasants would feed him and the Russian army as they traveled. He ended up in Bigorislav where he worked on a collective farm.

Meyer was later sent to middle Asia because many machines needed people to man them; he went to the capital of Kazakhstan and stayed there for 3 months. He moved yet again to Kowari and was paid in full (though does not say as what). He eventually decided not to go back to work because many people were being arrested (no reason), but he needed money badly and went to his work to get it, "foolish" he said. As he approached his office the guards noticed him and quickly called the KGB, and he was sent to prison for 11 months. "They beat you all the time," he said, they even placed him naked in a hot chamber to weaken him. He spent 6 months in investigation/interrogation and 5 months waiting for trial. Though the trial never happened he was sentenced to 10 years in prison and another 5 years in exile. He says he was lucky though because he could

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have gotten the death penalty. He was then transported to a concentration camp called the young eel, temporarily, for about a month and then was sent to Auhubenz in Kazakhstan. He said it was a hard life till 1947 when he was moved to a farm and became a tractor driver. After his 10 years (and one day) were up he was a free man with limitations to 39 cities, he moved to Kiosk near Gask, a city built by prisoners. He lived there till 1956, when he got a clean passport and could go where he pleased.

He wrote letters to everyone he knew, went to Israel to look for friends and family and discovered that he was noted as dead along with many friends and family members. He did find some people in Poland though and stayed with his cousin in Paris. He eventually came over to America and lived in Chicago, where he worked at a bakery until he got accepted to Berkeley. Meyer now works at a college in Kilmer and has worked there for 22 years.