

-TITLE-SOLOMON PETIPA  
-I\_DATE-  
-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND\_QUALITY-  
-IMAGE\_QUALITY-  
-DURATION-  
-LANGUAGES-  
-KEY\_SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-  
-PERSONAL\_NAME-  
-CORPORATE\_NAME-  
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Born January 21, 1914, in Vista (ph) Czechoslovakia. His father was a shoemaker. He was one of 6 children, four boys and two girls. He went to school at age 5 until age 14. Then he left school to learn a trade. He worked for three years as a tailor's

0:00:49 apprentice. His town had about 18,000 people and maybe 180 Jewish

0:01:30 families lived there. The Jews did not live in one section. There was only one shul. Most of the people were working in professions.

0:02:14 There were many Hungarians in his area and not much anti-Semitism. He went to ceder from age 6 to 12.

His one brother was a butcher and two others also were

0:03:24 tailors and his sisters were homemakers. His family was large, his mother was from that area and his grandmothers family. He had non-Jewish friends. As of 1939 things began to change and Hitler marched into

0:04:26 Czechoslovakia and Hungary took over the area he had lived in. Everything was taken away from the Jews.

0:05:19 His brother had joined the Czech Army before Hitler came in but then when the Hungarians came in and saw him in his uniform they were incensed that a Jew could be in uniform and they tied him

to the tail of a horse and dragged him through town. That brother decided to go to Russia and eventually was sent to Siberia where he died.

At that time the Hungarians took the Jews to labor camps

0:06:35 - the young men, even if there wasn't work - just to keep them busy.

In 1940 Russia occupied Poland they were sent to work

0:07:28 there and load things. At that time the Hungarian government had a law that anyone not born in Hungary, also with parents from that area would be sent to Poland and then these people were shot and thrown into mass graves. On the work detail he was on he saw these things. He was not part of it, he was on a labor brigade.

In the labor brigade they worked from 6am to 6pm and had

0:09:37 one meal a day with ersatz coffee in the morning. When he came back from that labor brigade he worked in labor camps in Hungary

0:10:20 until 1944. He had come home in Dec.'43. Sometimes the workers were sent home for the winter months because there wasn't work for them to do and then they would be recalled in the spring. However,

0:10:52 in 1944 the Germans came in the end of March. They surrounded the Jews and put them in a ghetto.

0:11:30 They were put in the ghetto in a nearby town for 6 weeks - very crowded conditions. Then, they were loaded into cattle vans with as many as 200 people in one wagon. His whole family was still together except for the brother who had gone to Russia and his other two brothers who were

0:12:34 in other camps. They still believed the story that they were going to work camps.

0:13:22 The train traveled several days and when the doors opened they were at Auschwitz. The doors opened and the dead were thrown

0:13:44 out. Mengele was there to do the selection. He was put into the gypsy camp. The next day, he smelled burnt meat and asked about it. The gypsies told him "they are burned". He was with 150 gypsies from Germany crowded into a barracks, a man beating them into and out of the barracks every day. He was there a week and a half. Their food was potato peelings in water. Electric wire was

0:15:38 all around. After a week they were told to get ready to work in a labor camp and they all wanted to leave. They were loaded into trains with food for 2 days and

0:17:01 sent to Bunzlau (I). They went to the Trappenbau (ph) factory to make airplanes from wood - decoys to fool the enemies. He was there 6 months.

0:18:17 Then, they were sent to build a factory. The kapos kept hitting them on the head. For three months they worked on making airplane parts. They had a bread ration, coffee and in the night

0:19:50 potato soup. The factory was supervised by German civilians, they had been prisoners in Germany. He was there until January. He had a striped uniform, cap and 2 inch stripe shave in the middle of his head. He stayed there with about 30 people from his home town. Some of those were taken away - the weaker ones. You had 3 days to "sit down" if you were sick, after that you were

0:22:37 taken to the crematorium. As a tailor he was able to do extra work for the kapos and that helped him survive. It was hard to do more

0:24:00 than just keep yourself alive. On Sunday you had a day off and you had to clean your

0:25:00 bed, clothes, etc. You were told by the Kapos that you wouldn't make it. You hoped for a miracle. When the Russians came within 30 miles of the camp there

0:26:54 was a selection of the stronger people and they were taken out. The weaker ones were left but when the Russians came through they weren't able to help. He was in the march under the Germans. They slept in

0:28:00 barns and some escaped that first night. You got some food at the farms. There was an SS man who saved lives - he went to the farms

0:29:30 and arranged for food for the people. After 2 weeks they arrived at G"rlitz in Germany. There was a woman's camp there also. They walked for -- 6-7 weeks and they had no clothes to change, they

0:31:56 went to sleep wet, the lice were terrible.

0:32:48 Then they were taken to Nordhausen. The Americans were getting close and they went to Bergen Belsen by train. The Germans

0:34:36 had prepared poisoned bread and the women's camp was destroyed this way but the English arrived before the men could be poisoned. The English handed out pork but he was too weak for it and it was good

0:36:49 because many died by eating rich pork.

0:38:00 After two weeks the Red Cross took names and his friend found his sister's names. After 6 weeks he and his sisters went to Prague, stopping in German homes and getting food whenever they wanted. The Germans were afraid of revenge; they knew what they

0:39:56 had done. When they arrived in Prague they found their brother and then found the other brother. It was really a miracle to have 5 out of 6 of the children survive. That hardly happened. Of the Jews in his community only 270 survived. He had come home but

0:43:00 there were no relatives and no house. Then Russia started to close the borders and he decided to go to Czech. He had married.

0:45:35 He started to work as a tailor. He went to Aussig, became a partner. (He had met his wife at Theresien Stadt during a

0:46:37 reunion of survivors. In 1948 a daughter was born. They were doing well.

0:47:53 Then, in '49, the government changed to communist and private business was gradually taken over by the government so he decided to leave. He paid a lot of money to have a guide take them

0:49:53 into Austria and it was a very difficult adventure. His sister was in a DP camp and she said to come there and they did - waited 6 mos. and still they would have to wait a year to come to the US. So they went to Canada instead and had

0:54:00 several rough beginning, making it from the ground up, with very little. In 1953 his son was born and he got a third job.

0:57:00 They came to the US and he started over and was successful. Children both married, 5 grandchildren. He retired but hates retirement. He is used to working 7 days a week. One sister is in Oakland, one in New York, one brother is in Miami and one lives in Sweden. He has been to Israel but it is a very hard life, small country. He had been in a Zionist group in his hometown - A Sharat (ph). He cant stand to see about the KKK and the neo-Nazis. He doesn't think they should be allowed. A German is still a German. It is in their blood. There were thousands of camps and the Germans knew it.

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