

1 INTERVIEW WITH: Jack Horn

2 INTERVIEWER: Unknown

3 DATE: Unknown

4 PLACE: Unknown

5 TRANSCRIBER: Nancy J. Campbell, Fort Dodge, Iowa.

6 -----

7 A. If it don't come out good, don't blame me,
8 because it's the first time I'm interviewed.

9 Q. Okay. That's fine. The first thing I'd like
10 you to do is just repeat your name and address and phone
11 number for the tape so we don't get the paperwork mixed
12 up.

13 A. My name is Jack Horn, H-o-r-n. I'm living
14 139-03 72nd Road, Queens, New York. My telephone number
15 is 212-261-6988.

16 Q. Okay. First of all, where were you interned?

17 A. I--in Lodz, Poland, the ghetto. We were 157,000
18 Jewish people was brought into the ghetto in 19--March,
19 1940. I was there until 19--August, 1944.

20 Q. How old were you when you first went into the
21 camp?

22 A. When the war started, I was 17 years old.
23 During the period, the time of the four years, the
24 Germans, the Nazis, took the people. Out of the 157,000
25 people, in 19--August, 1944, this was the last, we call

1 it aufsehung, the last people who left Lodz was 14,000
2 people out of 157,000. The rest of the people will be
3 taken out during the four years. Most of them probably
4 in camps where they never survived.

5 Q. Were you with your family in the camp or were
6 you separated?

7 A. In ghetto, I was with my family.

8 Q. Did the rest of your family survive?

9 A. Nobody survived.

10 Q. How many people did you lose?

11 A. I would say I had a father, and--the closest one--
12 and three sisters, plus uncles, cousins, aunts. I would
13 say about 40, 45 people all together, close relatives.

14 Q. And you were liberated in 1945 by whom?

15 A. Liberated by Polish and Russian soldiers.

16 Q. And where did you go after the war?

17 A. Well, I--when I was liberated, I couldn't walk,
18 so I was remaining there for two or three months until I
19 got together a little bit myself; and then I went back to
20 my home town to Lodz, Poland, trying to find somebody,
21 but I did not find nobody.

22 Q. What happened-- What was some of the things
23 that happened in the camp that really stands out in your
24 memory?

25 A. Well, I had-- My worst experience in camp, I

1 would say this, in 1942 or '43, the Germans, the Nazis,
2 took out 21,000 children. And the first day, I happened
3 to--they just picked up this streets, they went by
4 streets and numbers. My house happened to be the second
5 house. And this was--I have a friend of mine what his
6 child was taken, and he was trying to get him out; and I
7 went with him to get out the child. And I came, must
8 have been about 11 o'clock at night, waited there until
9 about 1 o'clock in the morning. The first day was about
10 40, 50 children from a year up to eight years. And they
11 were sitting with little handbags, crying. Nobody pay
12 attention, because the next day they were taken away to
13 Auschwitz to the camps, gas chambers. This is something
14 what you can never forget.

15 Q. Did you see people killed, tortured, yourself?

16 A. Sure. I was, at the end of the war, I was,
17 myself, 1944, I went to Auschwitz, gas chambers. I
18 happened to--I was young. And out of every transport who
19 came to Auschwitz was between two and three thousand
20 people, I would say about 25, 30 percent went to working
21 camps. The rest went into the chambers. I happened to
22 be one that went to work. I, myself, I passed through
23 the chamber, the gas chamber.

24 And when I was working with a friend of mine and
25 I see that we going into the chamber, I even told a

1 friend who said, "I think we should say the last words
2 before you die." We just happened to turn around. He
3 went into the camp that we was, after three weeks he was
4 sent out to work. And at that time in the period of
5 until the liberation, May the 8th, I must have been about
6 four, five camps. And the last camp was a camp of people
7 who got sick.

8 The Germans--they couldn't--the gas chambers--
9 Auschwitz was already liberated. I would say the other
10 ones, probably two of the gas chambers did not work no
11 more. So we must have been a few thousand people. They
12 took all the sick people into this camp. And I would say
13 every day--we didn't get no food--every day 50 people
14 must have starved to death just from hunger. I got up in
15 the morning, it was no surprise, next to me, both sides,
16 the both were dead.

17 Q. Why do you think you survived and so many others
18 didn't?

19 A. Well, the will to live, that tomorrow we will be
20 liberated, the hope for the next day. I, also, I
21 wouldn't be here if I wouldn't help myself. I mean, I
22 did extra work. I went out-- Whenever I would have
23 grabbed a piece of garbage or whatever it is, this was my
24 survival.

25 Q. Did other prisoners and you work together, or

1 was it more of every person for themselves?

2 A. Well, we are--we did work together. We did work--
3 we did--actually we did not work. We went out to work,
4 but we couldn't work because who had strength to work.
5 But we spent 12 to 14 hours outside and--

6 Q. I mean, really, did you cooperate with each
7 other to help yourselves survive?

8 A. We were trying to best we could to help each--one
9 each the other one.

10 Q. And you think--you say the will to live is what
11 you credit primarily, but did you do specific things that
12 helped you survive?

13 A. Well, everybody wants to live. And nobody
14 believed it that the war could hold on that long. Nobody
15 could believe it that you can just kill people for six
16 years. And people just--every day, another day. The
17 fact is that six million people got killed. I would say
18 the European Jewish people, my population, maybe 10
19 percent survived from just--I would say so. I mean, it's
20 not a statistics, but I would maybe 10 percent. 90
21 percent got killed.

22 Q. But I'm sure everyone wanted to live. What do
23 you think that was really different about you or what did
24 you do differently, do you think, that kept you alive?
25 Do you know?

1 A. Well, first is I was four years in ghetto. And
2 ghetto Lodz, you had your own bed. You had your own
3 apartment. And I was young. And while you're young, you
4 survive. I mean, I did work much harder than normal to
5 get, even the ghetto, to get some extra that I could. I had
6 a special hard job.

7 Q. What was that?

8 A. I was working in the steam room, and it was a
9 hard job to keep up. And it was an oven, what we had--I had
10 to give steam to people in dry rooms and so forth. This
11 was only few people working in the ghetto. So for this
12 work, I got a special extra portion of bread. It helped.
13 Everything helped.

14 Q. When you were in Auschwitz--and did you actually
15 go out of Auschwitz to do work, or was it--were you too
16 ill by that time?

17 A. No. I-- I did not work in Auschwitz. I was
18 there only for three weeks, and then we got shipped out
19 to the camps a few hundred miles from Auschwitz.

20 Q. What camp was that?

21 A. Beg pardon?

22 Q. What camp that was?

23 A. It was in Grossrosen. They called it Grossrosen.
24 This was on the border of Poland with Czechoslovakia in
25 Germany.

1 Q. And what did you do there?

2 A. When we came there, it was a new camp. They
3 just established the camp. I think it was twenty-one
4 hundred people. And for three weeks we didn't go out to
5 work. The Germans just kept us there for three weeks.
6 They gave us some food. And after three weeks we did go
7 out to work. People did die, no question about it. Just
8 lucky. You could say that you help yourself, and the
9 time wasn't up. The time is not up, you live.

10 Q. When did you first really realize what was
11 happening? When did you know that the Germans, the Nazis,
12 were out to kill the Jews and nothing more, nothing less?

13 A. Well, right in the beginning of the war. We
14 know that it was a lot of rumors, that we didn't realize
15 what they're going to do, but we knew that they're going
16 to kill Jewish people. Nobody realized it was going to
17 be such a catastrophe. But we always wonder and we
18 always talked about--I was young--and that how could they
19 do it? Usually everybody knew that the Germans are
20 intelligent people. If for no reason, to take children,
21 to kill them? That's what happened. They did.

22 Q. How were you captured? How were you gathered in
23 with the other Jews?

24 A. Well, they just, in 19--beginning of '40 they
25 came out with regulations that every Jewish person who is

1 in the hometown Lodz will go in the ghetto. The ghetto,
2 they--they took a part of the poorer neighborhoods from
3 the city, and they made a ghetto. Everybody had to go in,
4 nobody could go out.

5 Q. Did you resist going in or do you know of other
6 people who resisted?

7 A. No, I did not resist, and I didn't know nobody
8 that resisted. Probably must have been a few, but not
9 that I know about it.

10 Q. And when did you realize that-- Let me put that
11 a different way. When you first went to Auschwitz, did
12 you know what you were facing? Did you know you were
13 going to an extermination camp?

14 A. No, did not know.

15 Q. When did you realize what Auschwitz really was?

16 A. When we arrived there.

17 Q. And older prisoners just told you?

18 A. When we arrived there with the train, and a
19 woman, she was--must have been about 40 years old. And
20 when the train was opened and she asked a person who was
21 working there, she said, "Where are we here? What is
22 here?" And the man said in Hebrew. "We have a prayer in
23 Rosh Hashana, in New Year's, that we say that God says
24 who will live, who will die, who will survive, who will
25 burn." And that's what he said it. He said, "This is

1 the place, who will live and who will die." So we
2 realize what is this.

3 Q. Did you feel that you were going to survive?
4 Did you feel you were going to die?

5 A. Yes, yes, everybody felt it. Everybody felt
6 that it was--you know, you couldn't take it no more, but
7 you're not going to kill yourself. But that's the reason
8 why so few people got left.

9 Q. While you were in the camps, were there any
10 organized resistance groups in the camps?

11 A. Not--no, not where I was.

12 Q. A lot of people have placed some of the blame on
13 the Jews, themselves, for allowing this to happen to them.
14 How do you respond to a criticism like that?

15 A. Well, it's easy to criticize. I would say that
16 a lot of the people who were working in the management of
17 those ghettos or camps, they talked to the Germans. They
18 were close to the Germans. The Jewish people or other
19 people, they probably knew more than we knew. They could
20 have helped, but they were looking to survive, so they
21 didn't try to help. So just the layman, plain person,
22 did not know what's going on.

23 Q. Do you feel bitterness about the fact that so
24 many Jews were desperately trying to get out of Europe
25 and no countries would accept them? Do you still feel

1 bitterness? Were you bitter then?

2 A. Well, I--personally, I'm not a person of
3 bitterness, but I would say it was very wrong for other
4 countries not to let them out, not to let them in.

5 Q. Do you feel something like this can happen again
6 today?

7 A. Yes, yes. Yes, no question about it. In fact,
8 I think we have it in South Africa. We have in different
9 part of the world today that one is killing the other one.
10 Smaller scale. And the world is--even the United Nations
11 have all kind of organizations and all kind of committees
12 and committees, but nothing is done. People are starving
13 to death from hunger. How many million of people are
14 starving today?

15 Q. After the war, how did you get to the United
16 States?

17 A. Well, it took us--took me a few years. And,
18 well, the--we had organizations, youth organizations,
19 what they worry about the people. And they took us to
20 America, the United States.

21 Q. What do you do now?

22 A. Beg your pardon?

23 Q. What do you do now?

24 A. I'm in New York. I'm in real estate.

25 Q. And what do you-- Do you feel that your

1 experiences in the camp-- Well, let me change the
2 subject completely. Have you had children since the war?

3 A. I have one son and three grandchildren.

4 Q. And have you spoken in-depth to him about your
5 experiences?

6 A. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He knows. He knows the
7 whole story. In fact he's right now with me here.

8 Q. When were you first able to talk about your
9 experiences? Were you silent for years, or were you able
10 to talk about it--

11 A. When--I would say when he was 11, 12 years and
12 he start asking questions, and he's very much interested
13 from that time on. And he wants to know what's going on.
14 He does want to know, yes, no question. And I feel
15 personally that we should not forget what happened. This
16 way maybe by not forgetting, it may not come back again.

17 Q. You said you lost the rest of your family. When
18 did that happen and do you know how it happened?

19 A. Well, it happens during--in the ghetto.

20 Q. In the first camp you were in?

21 A. In the ghetto, yeah, that we were taken out
22 systematically one by one. The Germans took out groups
23 of people each month, each six weeks, so far, whatever.
24 That's where they left.

25 Q. Did the Germans let you know that they were

1 killing these people, or did they pretend they were taken
2 off to work?

3 A. No, never. They never let you know that they're
4 going to do something, never.

5 Q. Did you know, though, at that time?

6 A. No, I did not know.

7 Q. You thought they were just being taken off to
8 work in another place?

9 A. Yes, that's what we thought about, yes.

10 Q. How did you-- How and when did you find out
11 that they were killed?

12 A. When I got to Auschwitz, I assumed that the
13 people, all of them must have killed already by now.

14 Q. Do you have any more to add, anything you'd like
15 to say?

16 A. I only hope that--we survivors went through
17 plenty--that the world should get much better, the people
18 shouldn't hate each other. I hope so.

19 Q. Do you think this gathering, this survivors
20 gathering, will cause a difference in your life or in all
21 of these people's lives? Do you think it's a good thing?

22 A. I think so. I think--personally, I just
23 mentioned before--this should have been done 20 years ago,
24 but it's never too late. I think so. I think that the
25 press and the television and maybe some books will come

1 out of it, that it wake up the people. People should
2 know. The fact is that books came out already that
3 nothing happened. Plenty of books was written.

4 And I heard yesterday and read here myself that
5 a doctor who--he became a doctor in Gottingen, Germany,
6 in 1951. They took away his title. In 1979, he wrote a
7 book that everything was not happening; the whole
8 Auschwitz was nothing, nothing. So they took away his
9 title. And the dean of the college mentioned in the
10 journal that he was surprised when he took away his title
11 that a lot of mail came in from all over the world. They
12 praised him for writing the book, and he was shocked. So
13 people are still-- That's-- It could happen again, no
14 question.

15 Q. When you were in the camps, did you--were there
16 social activities? What did you do to keep from being
17 bored?

18 A. Well, we went to work. We didn't have no time
19 to social activity. I mean, we--our days started 6
20 o'clock in the morning, and we came home at 6, 7 o'clock.
21 And then we have to stay in line to get a piece of bread,
22 whatever we got. And you wash up and lay down and get up
23 next morning at 5 o'clock in the morning.

24 Q. How much did you weigh when you were liberated,
25 do you remember?

1 A. When I-- When the war started, I would say I
2 was--happened to be very skinny. I was always skinny. I
3 must have weighed maybe about 65 kilo. At six years
4 later when I walked out of the camp, I couldn't walk. I
5 weighed 90 pounds. I had to walk with two canes.

6 Q. Is there-- Can you describe what--not in the
7 work camps now, in Auschwitz, itself--in Auschwitz, you
8 were chosen either to work or to go--or to die. There
9 wasn't work in the camps, right, in Auschwitz? Did you
10 ever face a point where you were standing in line and the
11 decision was made that you would work and not that you
12 would die?

13 A. Well, everybody came into Auschwitz to get away
14 from different countries. It was Dr. Mengele. People
15 think that he's still alive some place in South America.
16 He had a small cane. When every transport, we had to go
17 through him. Each person had to pass him. And he was
18 standing and pointing with a small cane. He said right
19 or left. Right meant to go to work. Left meant to go to
20 the chambers. And he's the one who pointed.

21 Q. And he pointed at you?

22 A. He pointed at me to go to the right, to go to
23 work, yeah. And everything was taken away. We had to--
24 just everything, whatever we had with us. We went into--took
25 a bath, so the clothing was taken away. Everything was

1 taken away. And he came in, he looked at the bodies. If
2 he didn't like--if he saw somebody that was really skinny,
3 that he wouldn't be able to work, then he took him out,
4 even after this already, he took him out and sent him
5 back to the gas chamber, right away. Everybody came down
6 to Auschwitz up to 15 years; and, I would say, close to
7 40 years, up to 40, went to the gas chambers.

8 Q. Every one up to 40 years old?

9 A. No.

10 Q. From 40 and up?

11 A. From 40 and up, and up to 15 years, because he
12 felt that those people wouldn't be able to work.

13 Q. Did you make any compromises to survive? Did
14 you do things that you normally wouldn't have dreamed of
15 doing just to stay alive?

16 A. What do you mean? During the war I mean?

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. What do you mean by "compromising"?

19 Q. It's a real difficult question.

20 A. Yeah. Nobody was asked to make a compromise.

21 Nobody was asked what you going to do. You just went
22 along with all the people. We-- When the Germans lost--
23 started losing, it was worse for the camps, for the
24 people. We felt it. They gave us less food, not that we
25 have enough food, but then they cut it down.

1 Q. What do you remember about your day of
2 liberation?

3 A. We felt that it's coming to an end. At
4 nighttime, the lights went out. Must have been about 12
5 o'clock midnight. This is the first time the light went
6 out, and we had a feeling that something is happening--
7 we didn't know about it--that it's coming to an end. And
8 we got up in the daylight, we got up, and nobody was
9 there no more. The Germans just run away. But we all
10 were very, very sick in the camp because we had typhus.
11 Most of the people--I, myself, have typhus and a lot of
12 people have typhus. And I was lucky that I had typhus,
13 otherwise, whoever was healthier and he went out the next
14 day and he started eating and he was not used to it after
15 a few years, a lot of people passed away, a lot of people.

16 Q. What do you think is the biggest lesson that
17 you've learned, and also do you think that the world
18 learned any lessons from what happened?

19 A. I don't know if the world learned a lesson. I
20 don't know. The fact is, as a Jewish person, we, on
21 account of losing six million people, we have now in
22 Israel and still everybody's against us. And we only
23 hope--our only hope is to survive even now, to live, work,
24 and be a free people. And still whenever you read in the
25 papers or television, we not free yet.

1 Q. What does Israel mean to you?

2 A. Very much, very much.

3 Q. Have you been there?

4 A. Many times. Many, many times.

5 Q. Could you be a little more precise about what
6 you think Israel means to Jews all over the world?

7 A. Well, at least we feel that we have a homeland.
8 We have representatives all over the world, if the world
9 likes us or not, but we do have it. At least we have
10 somebody who could fight for us. So we not just like
11 before, nobody could talk for us. We have other own
12 people. And we hope one day that the world will realize
13 that Israel is here to live, to stay. And we hope we're
14 going to survive, no question; and we will.

15 Q. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Good
16 speaking to you.

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25