

## HVT-160

B., Wolf 1920-

Wolf B. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-160) interviewed by Dr. David Lissak and Martine Flaccavento, March 15, 1996.

3 copies: 1 SVHS first camera; 1 SVHS second camera; 1 VHS copy.

**Summary:** Wolf was born on November 12, 1920<sup>8</sup> in Warsaw, Poland. His parents raised him and his sister in a modern and observant Jewish home. His father was a jeweller who owned his own factory. Wolf's father was a member of a synagogue and attended services on the High Holidays and the Sabbath. The family lived in a Jewish neighbourhood. Wolf attended a private school where he learned Hebrew.

Wolf remembers being shocked by the outbreak of the war. By the time the German Army gained control of Warsaw, the city was largely destroyed from bombings. When the Warsaw ghetto was established, Wolf and his family were forced to move there. Wolf describes how the living situation in the ghetto deteriorated during the following years. Food was scarce and people were starving to death. Bodies lined the streets. Wolf thinks that his own family was comparatively lucky because they lived together in one apartment, and they had money and jewellery to exchange for food. For some time, Wolf's father continued his work as a jeweller. His products were smuggled out of the ghetto and sold by intermediaries. Wolf recalls that despite the desperate situation in the ghetto, hardly anybody believed the rumours about concentration camps and the extermination of Jews. When deportations from Warsaw started, Wolf and his family went into hiding. His father managed to find a work place for Wolf in a lead factory outside the ghetto.

Wolf was temporarily separated from his family because he lived with the group that worked in this factory. Every day they left the ghetto early in the morning and returned late at night. They had permission to buy food. When an announcement was made in the ghetto that people were sought for relocation to work places, Wolf and his family hid in a big cellar because they were sure that this only meant deportations and death. When the deportations temporarily stopped, Wolf resumed working. By that time, the family knew that the entire ghetto was to be liquidated. With the help of a friend, his father managed to find a hiding place for the family in the outskirts of Warsaw. They hid in the basement of a house belonging to a Polish couple. Once the house was searched, but nobody was discovered. Wolf and a friend had dug bunkers underneath the basement where eight people could hide. Wolf's father died in his arms while they were hiding.

In July 1944, the Jews in the bunker paid some Polish thieves to take them to an abandoned house in a resort town near Warsaw. Wolf travelled with his mother and his sister by train. He disguised himself by wearing a worker's uniform. On the way to this abandoned house, two members of the group were discovered. While staying in the abandoned house, Wolf was constantly worried that members of the Polish underground would expose and kill them.

When the Russian Army liberated the Warsaw area, Wolf went to Lublin with his mother and his sister. He recalls seeing a camp near Lublin strewn with corpses. Russian soldiers executed German guards. When he arrived in Lublin, Wolf went to see one of his father's former business associates, who gave Wolf a job as a jeweller. While in Lublin, Wolf's family was threatened by a racist Polish organization. The family moved to Lodz and Wolf got

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<sup>8</sup> From file.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

married.

When the family decided they wanted to leave Poland, Wolf, his wife, his mother, and his sister were smuggled out of the country on a Russian military truck. The family arrived in Berlin and lived in the DP camp Schlachtensee. Wolf worked as a translator for UNRRA. Later, they moved to Stuttgart, where they lived for almost four years in another DP camp. Wolf was involved in setting up a trade school. In 1950, Wolf's Canadian in-laws provided his family with the necessary documents and they emigrated to Canada. Wolf and his family came to Montreal, where he established a well-respected jewellery business that is still in operation. Wolf's wife passed away in 1990. Wolf has three sons.