

## HVT-101 & HVT-128

B., Rubin 1923-

Rubin B. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-101) interviewed by Marcia Shuster and Pearl Adams, August 14, 1995 and October 23, 1995.

6 copies: 1 SVHS first camera, part one; 1 SVHS first camera, part two; 1 SVHS second camera, part one; 1 SVHS second camera, part two; 1 VHS copy, part one; 1 VHS copy, part two.

**Summary:** Rubin was born on December 23, 1923 in Warsaw, Poland. The oldest of three children, Rubin was raised in an observant Jewish family whose members kept a kosher home and went to synagogue on the Sabbath and on holidays. The family spoke Yiddish and Polish at home, and belonged to the upper-middle class. Rubin's father owned a furniture store, supported the Jewish National Fund and was vehemently anti-communist. His orientation was exacerbated by a strike in which militant unionized workers vandalized the family's store and threatened to harm the children and, as a result, Rubin's father employed a bodyguard to protect them. The children attended a Polish school. Rubin went to a Jewish public school for five years, and continued his education at Finkel's Gymnasium, where he studied languages, electronics, and aerodynamics. After 1935, life became increasingly difficult for Jews in Warsaw. Due to the high level of antisemitism in Warsaw, Rubin avoided non-Jewish neighbourhoods and parks.

After the war began, the family had an opportunity to go to the Soviet Union, but refused because of Rubin's father's strong anti-communist beliefs. Rubin believes his family would have survived had they left. The family home was located within the walls of the Warsaw ghetto when it was created. When the house and family business were destroyed in a fire the family moved to another house. Rubin's father then started a new business producing and supplying mattresses stuffed with animal hair for the German Army.

Dehumanization figured prominently in the ghetto. Rubin witnessed scores of dead bodies in the street and people with stomachs swollen from hunger. Food and clean water were scarce. Although underground schools existed, Rubin and his siblings were not permitted to attend. In September 1941, Rubin was denounced to the Gestapo and taken to prison to clean the floors and toilets. In August 1942, he was deported to Auschwitz and he never saw his family again.

Rubin arrived in Auschwitz at night. Women, children, and the elderly were taken immediately from the railroad platform and those who remained went to the showers and received a uniform and wooden shoes. Rubin was then sent to a table where he was asked his age, his parents' names, the city he was from, and his educational background. Then, the number 79635 was tattooed on his arm. After three weeks in a quarantine camp, he proceeded to Auschwitz III, where he built barracks and worked for I.G. Farben producing metals and chemicals. Rubin later joined 500 inmates in digging and building a limestone tower. Their meals consisted of bread with margarine and coffee for breakfast, turnip water for lunch, and black tea for dinner. Three Kapos supervised the group and murdered Jews indiscriminately. Each day, approximately thirty dead bodies were carried back to Auschwitz. Rubin considered suicide several times, but never attempted it. He survived in Auschwitz for nearly three years by trading. He sold cigarettes and cognac to one of the SS officers in exchange for other goods.

On January 13, 1945, Rubin was transferred to Buchenwald. Each prisoner received a half loaf of bread, three pads of margarine, and ten ounces of salami before leaving Auschwitz. The journey to Buchenwald took a long time because the train tracks were

blocked. On average, approximately six people died each day. Buchenwald was afflicted with a typhus epidemic, so the group was marched to Dachau. The prisoners walked for ten days with grass as their only form of sustenance. They did not enter Dachau because of another epidemic and, on April 27, 1945, the SS left some German civilians in charge of the group. Rubin convinced the new guards to fear the prisoners. The guards left and a group of 65 men managed to reach the American lines.

There, they met the 10th US Armoured Division. Weighing only 70 pounds, Rubin immediately received medical attention and psychological counselling. During his recovery, Rubin worked for American intelligence helping penetrate Nazi networks and later served as an interpreter at the Nuremberg trials. Rubin received papers from the Americans that enabled him to look for his family. He searched through Poland and the Ukraine, but did not find anyone. Rubin does not know what happened to his family. With the help of the Red Cross, Rubin located two uncles in Montreal. Shortly thereafter, Rubin emigrated to Canada and settled in Montreal.