

HVT-51

S., Arthur 1923-

Arthur S. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-51) interviewed by Alex Cherney and Sandi Hershon, November 14, 1994.

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

Summary: Arthur was born on May 31, 1923 in Kosice, Czechoslovakia. His parents raised four children, two boys and two girls, in an orthodox Jewish home. Arthur was the oldest child. His father sold firewood and charcoal. Arthur attended public school and Talmud Torah. In 1938 Hungary took over the part of Slovakia in which Arthur was living. During the following years, Arthur's family was affected by the discriminatory policies that were introduced by the Hungarian government. His father's license to sell firewood was revoked by the local authorities, and around the beginning of 1941, Arthur's father was taken to a Hungarian labour camp, only to be released after two months for being too old. Due to Arthur's young age, he was not taken at this time.

After Germany occupied Hungary in the beginning of March 1944, the Jews in Kosice were forced to wear the yellow star and a Judenrat was formed. Until this time, Hungarian Jews had lived in relative security. Arthur was put into a forced labour camp. He witnessed Jews who lived in the area of Kosice being taken to the Jewish ghetto or to a brick factory that doubled as a ghetto. His family lived under horrible sanitary conditions in the brick factory. For two weeks, Arthur worked at a train station near the brick factory, giving water to Jews who were being deported. According to Arthur, three transports left the station every day for Poland, but he did not know where they went specifically. In May 1944, his family was deported. By the end of 1944, the army left the town and Arthur was forced to leave with them. As long as he was with them he felt safe. One day, however, he went into a town to get his shoes fixed and lost his unit. He slept in a barn and was captured by a unit of the Arrow Cross. The detachment took Arthur to an office and tortured him. He was released and sent on another forced march. Arthur's feet froze during this march and the guards tortured everyone who could not walk. Of a group numbering 250 men, 120 died during the six weeks prior to liberation.

After being liberated in Sopron by the Russian Army on April 1, 1945, Arthur went to Budapest. The Jewish community in Budapest sent him to a hospital where he remained for two months. He found his two sisters and a cousin who survived Auschwitz. Arthur's parents, grandparents, and brother were all murdered in the gas chambers in Auschwitz. After his recuperation, Arthur returned to Kosice. His family home was empty. To escape military service in the Czech Army, Arthur fled to Budapest where he worked in a textile factory until the end of 1945. He then returned to Czechoslovakia for the next two years and had to spend two months in the army.

Arthur lied about his age and was brought to Canada by the Canadian Jewish Congress as a war orphan. Arthur arrived in Montreal in 1948. He worked in a luggage factory and in a clothing factory. Arthur married in 1957. He has two children and enjoys three grandchildren. Arthur's wife passed away in April 1994.