

HVT-7

T., Harry 1922-

Harry T. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-7) interviewed by Musia Schwartz and Kimberly Rimer, May 3, 1994.

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

Summary: Harry was born on April 24, 1922 in Ryki, Poland. The Jewish community consisted of 1,200 families and made up the majority of the population. Most families were religious and attended synagogue regularly. Harry's father was an orthodox butcher. Harry had six brothers and sisters. One brother died in 1935 and another emigrated to Brazil before the war began. Harry went to school during the year and worked in the summer. He had many Jewish and non-Jewish friends.

In September 1939, Harry's parents were killed during the German Blitzkrieg campaign in Poland. Once the ghetto in Ryki was established, Harry lived there with one of his brothers and his two sisters. Over the next two years he held a variety of jobs including working for the Judenrat, a chauffeur for a German businessman, and worked for the building company Firma Schalinger. On one occasion he drove the businessman to Majdanek and they remained for a week. In 1941, while being deported to a labour camp with his sisters, Harry jumped from the train. He approached a farm, where he was mistaken as Polish, and remained there for three months tending cattle. On Sundays, his co-workers would invite him to go swimming but in order to keep his Jewish identity secret he would refuse. After a while they started to suspect he was Jewish, so he decided to return to Ryki. On the way to Ryki, he was stopped by a Polish woman and was turned over to German soldiers. They forced him to dig his own grave, shot him, and left him for dead. Wounded, he returned to Ryki where he found his brother.

Upon his return, Harry resumed working at the Firma Schalinger with his brother. Due to their employment by Firma Schalinger they were not deported to Treblinka. In the winter of 1942 they were sent to a forced labour camp in, a town located 11 kilometers from Ryki, where approximately 1,000 people were building airplane runways for a German owned company. In 1944, Harry and his brother were transferred to an ammunition factory owned by the HASAG company in Czenstochova. After six months, on January 7, 1945, just before liberation, Harry was separated from his brother and never saw him again.

After liberation, Harry along with 11 people decided to return to Ryki. On their way back they were attacked by some Polish fighters. Unharmd, Harry returned to Ryki and was married shortly thereafter. After Ryki was attacked by Polish soldiers, Harry and his wife left and went to Lodz. Harry was captured and forced into the Polish Army but escaped once again. He and his wife moved to Berlin and then to Wiesbaden, Germany. They stayed in Germany for three years before emigrating to Canada in 1948 with their small child.

Harry and his wife raised both of their children in Montreal. After thirty three years of marriage his wife passed away. He is now remarried to a woman who is also a survivor.

In his interview, Harry deeply criticizes the Judenrat for their corruptness and the Ghettopolizei which he compares with the German police. He also comments on the lack of Jewish solidarity in the camps he was in.