

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Holocaust Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 752

EVA JACOBS

Interviewed

by

Mary Anne Seman

on

April 15, 1980

## EVA FUGMAN JACOBS

Eva Fugman Jacobs was born in the village of Pionki in Central Poland on December 28, 1929. Her young life was interrupted by the onset of World War II when Poland was taken over by Nazi Germany. Of a family of seven, only Mrs. Jacobs and a sister were to survive the war and the persecution of the Jews. During the period described as the Holocaust, Mrs. Jacobs survived deportation and spent three years in concentration camps.

When her village was turned into a ghetto, she was separated from her family, most of whom she would see for the last time. From 1942 to 1945, Mrs. Jacobs was in the infamous camp of Auschwitz followed by the time spent in Bergen-Belsen and Baumlitz. Miraculously she survived in spite of horrible conditions and the contraction of typhus. She bears to this day the mark of the camps--her tattooed number.

Following the war and her eventual release Mrs. Jacobs traveled to Belgium and soon discovered that her sister had survived also. However, at the age of sixteen Mrs. Jacobs arrived in the United States and was raised by a Jewish family. She graduated from Rayen High School in Youngstown, Ohio in 1950 and married George Jacobs. The Jacobs' live in Youngstown to this day and have raised two daughters, Esther and Joy. Mrs. Jacobs belongs to the Temple El Emeth and belongs to the Temple Sisterhood.

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INTERVIEWEE: EVA JACOBS

INTERVIEWER: Mary Anne Seman

SUBJECT: concentration camps, attitudes, personal losses,  
World War II

DATE: April 15, 1980

S: This is an interview with Mrs. Eva Jacobs for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Holocaust, by Mary Anne Seman, at 2485 Barth Drive, Youngstown, Ohio, at 2:30 p.m., on April 15, 1980.

Would you want to tell me a little bit about your husband, your two sisters, and your family here?

J: I have two daughters. My oldest one has graduated from Case Western University with a Master's in Business Administration, an MBA. My younger one is a senior at Ohio State.

S: I want to talk a little bit about where you grew up. I know you grew up in Poland. Would you want to tell me something about your childhood then, before the war let's say?

J: There were six children at home. I lived at a home with six. It was a small town I lived in. I went to school until the war broke out. The war broke out in 1939. And I never went back to school again until I came over here to this country in 1947. I went back to school, and I graduated from Rayen in 1950.

S: What about your parents?

J: I lost my parents and I lost two sisters and two brothers.

S: What did your father do in Poland?

J: He was at a dress shop, butcher shop, and he worked with lumber, selling lumber.

S: What village did you live in?

J: Pionki. It is a small town.

S: Where is that?

J: It is in the middle of Poland. It is about 100 kilometers from Radziejów.

S: When the Nazis first came from Germany, what was one of the first things on how you became aware, and how did they affect you when they began to penetrate?

J: The first few days when they came in we evacuated our hometown into the ammunition factory. The bombs were falling so we had to leave our villages. When the Germans first came in, we stayed with my grandmother for a while. The first few days they arrested quite a few men and kept them for six weeks or eight weeks. Slowly they released them.

S: Then did you experience yourself any harassment as a child? You were quite young then?

J: In the beginning, like I said we lived in a small town. We didn't have any school any more. I wanted to learn dressmaking. My father didn't let me. He said that the war would be over soon and that we would go back to school. My father didn't live to see the war over.

S: Did you experience from the other children any problems because you were Jewish?

J: Yes, that went on all the time even long before the war.

S: What went on?

J: Calling names and certain things like a Jewish person wasn't allowed to go into a factory; it was a government owned factory in my hometown. As a child we could go in. We had to deliver something that was a painful transition then. It was a big factory. Some of the people lived right on the factory grounds. They weren't their homes; they were the government's. My father couldn't go in there if he wanted to deliver something. We as children had to go in. Until you were fourteen you were allowed to go in there. After fourteen you couldn't if you were Jewish. My teacher here from Rayen was from Poland, which was the most democratic country before the war. She didn't know too much about it!

S: Obviously not. I understand in your town that they developed a ghetto. Were you made to go live in that camp?

J: This was in January of 1942. We were taken out of the places where we lived, and everybody was put into one, long street which was considered a ghetto. We stayed there for six months, and

then once again there was an evacuation. They took ones of the working age into ammunition factory for working then the children and all the people that were working to Treblinka. I haven't seen my mother, my two sisters, and my two brothers since August 18, 1942.

S: You lost them all then after this?

J: Yes.

S: What was life like in the ghetto? Did you want to work?

J: In the ghetto there was nothing to work. They took the people out to work into the factory. They used to say that if people worked--if a family would work, say two or three people--they would be able to take in one child in case an evacuation came to send people away. They didn't tell you where they would send them. They were hinting about doing things like this that the other people would be evacuated to other places like Ukraine and further places instead of working. My mother worked; my father worked. My sister who is dead worked. My youngest brother was only four years old. We were told that if everybody worked, it would be easier to get him into the camp because it was a working camp. When they came, they wanted my mother to stay behind. They wanted for her to leave the baby behind. She said, "Nothing doing. Wherever he goes, I go with him." My brother was only four years old. We were capable when they used us for working.

S: Were the ghettos very crowded? Were there a lot of people?

J: When it first started out, it was just the people from my hometown. This was on August 18 as I mentioned already. At the beginning of August they started bringing in people from different villages and towns like the Jewish people. We still had the same amount of housing. They just kept pushing in more people. We started out with eight people in two rooms, my family. Later when I looked around, there were eighteen or twenty people in those two rooms. Naturally conditions were crowded.

S: What about food? Were there food shortages?

J: As far as my family goes we never went hungry for different reasons. We always had our own corral of chicken and so on, maybe because we lived in the same town. People who came from other places had a harder time. They gave you certain rations that you had to follow. I used to go in and out of camp smuggling in things. I took some shoes from a shoemaker and went out and sold it to a farmer and brought back flour or something like this and sold it. So as far as food was concerned in the ghetto, my family--I'm not talking about other people . . .

There was a little girl who was a friend of mine and my brother. He used to come into the house and want some bread with jam or

something. In a few minutes he would come in and say that the dog took it away from him or that the chicken took it away from him. My father said one time, "I have to see what this kid is doing with the bread." He looked out and my brother was giving it to the little girl.

S: Was there a lot of smuggling in the ghettos then?

J: There had to be because otherwise you would be . . . I brought in a lot of flour and things like this and sold it to somebody else. Somebody would bake stuff and smuggle it out again. The Polish people would buy stuff from them and take it to different cities like Radziejów and Radom. Like I said, there was a lot of that in the ghettos. There was always something going on.

S: So then you were risking your life doing that?

J: Yes, plenty of times. One time a mother and her son and two other people were shot. I was out of the ghetto, the only one out of the ghetto at the time. They went out just to pick up some branches to cook with. The forest was across the street. They just went into the forest to pick the dry branches up. That was when they got killed. I was the only one out of the ghetto at the time. My mother, father, and everybody were staring and just waiting for me to be brought in on a stretcher or something like that. I came in a different way and met them there. My father kept saying, "You are never going to go out again. If we starve, I don't want you going out." A few hours later I was out again.

S: Did you have guards when you came in?

J: There were some Polish people outside. They weren't guards. Inside the ghetto there was what we called Jewish police. They kept order and things like that. The orders for what to do and what not to do came from the Germans. The German S.S. Army would come around once in a while and go through and around it. In the ghetto they didn't come in too often. They would just tell you to do your own business.

S: When the ghetto was evacuated and you lost most of your family at that time, where did they send you?

J: I was left in my hometown, in the factory. I didn't want to. I wanted to run away at the time. My father wouldn't let me. They sent my mother home, but they kept my sister there. They didn't send her home this particular day. My father thought that if she stayed by herself she wouldn't survive. She was older than me. As a child she had an aneurysm operation. It affected a good part of her. She had trouble with her head for a while. She was alright later on, but we still were babying her. My father thought she wouldn't survive if she had to stay by herself. He made me stay behind with her. Four weeks later

she just couldn't take it. She volunteered to go back with us, but they took me to the factory. They evacuated my parents to a city about thirteen kilometers from my hometown, to Zwolen. There wasn't a railroad station or anything. They just kept people again from all around villages and so on down there. Then at the end of September on Atonement Day, the highest holiday in the Jewish state, they evacuated those people into trains and sent them out to Treblinka. That was the last time we heard from them.

S: So then how long did you remain in the factory?

J: I remained in the factory until July 4, 1944.

S: And you were with your sisters too?

J: No, my sister--the one that I went into because of this--she was only there four weeks. She missed my parents and she didn't want to stay. She volunteered to go where my parents were in Zwolen. When the evacuation came from Zwolen again, my older sister, who had a child already, ran away from the train. She left the child. She was married. She somehow got the child into his parents which was a chance to help her. She let me know that she was out there and brought her into camp. I was with my older sister in camp. She was the one who survived.

S: So you were in there. You went to see her?

J: That's right.

S: You were in the factory then a number of months, two years almost.

J: Twenty-two months.

S: And then you were sent to a concentration camp?

J: Yes, Birkenau. It was a branch of Auschwitz.

S: How long were you in Auschwitz?

J: Four weeks.

S: Just four weeks? What did you do while you were in Auschwitz?

J: Nothing at all.

S: Nothing?

J: No, because we were recommended as ammunition workers. Again the same thing, this was the only transport that came into Auschwitz with some little children that the people smuggled into Pionki camp. This was the only camp that came to Auschwitz-Birkenau. But nobody was taken, just one old man and a grandchild,

to the crematorium. The rest of us, everyone went into camp which was a very unusual thing at that time. Normally they made selections. They put you to right and to the left. It was mostly right that went into a camp. It was mostly left that went into the crematoriums there. As far as I know our camp was the only camp that everybody got in. All other people suffered. Once when we came in, there were 2500 of us. So there were, let's say, about 1800 men. They didn't have a place for the men at that time, so they had to camp with Gypsies. They burned the Gypsies in order to place our men.

S: So then you were aware that the people were being sent to the crematoriums?

J: Oh, sure, before we got to Auschwitz.

S: So it was throughout, say, Poland, you knew what was happening. What about Auschwitz? I would imagine it was very crowded. How about disease?

J: One of our girls died. We slept in the same bunk. They put ten or twelve people in one bunk in three tiers. If one had to turn, everybody had to turn because there was no space for lying on your back or things like this. I had a cousin who complained of gall stones all straight through the camp. After the war she had surgery. She used to carry around her little sack of stones and show that she just wasn't complaining about it. I guess you just had no choice even if you were sick. You didn't go telling somebody that you were sick because there was no medication or things like this. So you suffered through one way or another. Like I said, when we were in the first camp in my hometown, I was sick with typhoid fever. There were only two survivors from this group, myself and an aunt of mine. The rest of them, they took out. There were eighteen men and two other girls who were shot because of typhoid fever. Again the same thing, I had somebody who intervened, you know, begged them saying that I was getting better and to leave me alone. So there were only two of us that survived this camp. It was very hard. Sometimes you see somebody that lost a sister or a brother in this thing. There used to be a young lady in Youngstown that lost a brother. Every time she looked at me she would say, "Why couldn't my brother survive? Why did you survive?" It wasn't my doing one way or another.

S: Conditions in the camp then even when you were there for only four weeks were pretty terrible, I would imagine. Did you or the people around you ever experience brutality by the Nazis in the camps?

J: Naturally, if they told you to be quiet and you weren't . . . They would put so many hundreds of people in one barrack. All you would have to do is move an arm, and it made a noise. There was a Jewish girl from Czechoslovakia. Once in a while she would



go on a spree and throw somebody around and things like this.

I think they didn't want to keep the people from our camp, ammunition workers. Because when we came in, three days later they took out 400 of us and sent them away to Germany. I was left behind because I wasn't strong enough and big enough. It was the stronger ones that they would pick out. Then four weeks later, we were picked again--300 of us--from different cities that were there too. There were 700 of us, and they sent us out to Germany four weeks later.

S: Then where were you sent to?

J: The first camp I was sent to was Baumlitz. I worked there for six weeks, again the same kind of factory as it was in my hometown. But here there were only women, and in my hometown there were men and women. Men did certain work, but here the women had to do everything and some of them couldn't produce. If you weigh eighty pounds or ninety pounds, you can't lift a 200 pound bag. There were a lot of accidents and fires and injuries. After six weeks I guess we didn't produce enough, and they put us on a train again and sent us to Bergen-Belsen. They kept telling us, "Either produce or you are going out of here." You could do just what you could. So after six weeks they sent us to Bergen-Belsen. I was in Bergen-Belsen for two weeks. The conditions there were horrible. Again the same thing, they put us in a special camp. We were the only ones in this particular thing, under a tent. There were no barracks. I guess there were a lot of people in Bergen-Belsen. I didn't know of them. I never saw anyone except our girls again. We were there for two weeks.

Then they sent us off again to another camp. This time it was Elsing; this was a branch of Buchenwald. There I stayed until the end of the war--not quite the end of the war. A week before I was freed because the Americans were coming closer to this particular place. A German boss came out and said, "I can't leave you to the enemies, my children. I have to take you away from here." Again we were loaded on a train. There was no place to go. We traveled one way and stopped; we traveled back again and so on until they took us close to Berlin. We were about forty kilometers away from Berlin at a big station. We stayed there for seven days in the train, no water, nothing. They took some bread and things like this. They would give us a couple slices of bread or something with it. There was no water. There was water in the station, yet they wouldn't ever give us any water. You could see the pumps and people coming back with it; it would make you thirsty. The planes came around and started bombing. Half of us died from the bombs. We ran away into the woods. From this the Russians came. Instead of going back to Poland--I never wanted to go back--I was walking toward the other direction. I wasn't by myself. There was another girl and a bunch of Italians. They were going the other direction. We stayed

along the road that took you across the bridge. There was no bridge; the bridges were all knocked out. We just stayed there or something. We waited there. When they were playing the Polish March, I was walking in the other direction.

S: You say your train was bombed. By whom, who was it?

J: Americans or English.

S: When you were still in the camps, did you experience any harassment, say, from the guards in a sexual term? Were you ever attacked?

J: Only in my hometown, you know the first camp; we went into shower one time. There were about twenty girls. The S.S. came around to inspect us. We were in the shower. They just came in because they had the right then. They walked in; they didn't bow to us. They just stood there. The boss from our camp was showing forth his workers that were built capable to work.

S: Which one of the camps were you deloused or tattooed?

J: Well, I think Auschwitz. They put us through a shower. They sprayed you here and they sprayed you there. Lice was a very common thing.

S: Did they issue you new clothing?

J: They gave you everything you had. You just walked through one door and you got undressed. All you were allowed was to keep your shoes. Even your shoes were dyed with some kind of solution. When you walked out, they gave you something to put on. It was funny because the big women got small clothes, and the little girls got bigger clothes. Like any place else I was lucky because I knew somebody. I didn't know him; I knew his brother. This young man was sent away two years before to Auschwitz; they returned his clothes because he died. When his sister was married, they put a picture out on the table like he was there. Then two years later his father, his sister, and his brother came to Auschwitz when he was alive. He had grown about three inches or so. He was a real big shot. Surviving two years in Auschwitz was no picnic by anybody. I guess his brother must have talked about me because I had never known this guy before. They didn't cut my hair. I guess he already told them. The haircutting and the dresses and all those things were done by Jewish people or Polish who were prisoners. It wasn't the Germans around us. The Germans didn't come too close to us anyhow in Auschwitz. They just sent somebody else to do their dirty work.

S: Did you ever experience or through other people while you were in the camps people who had lost the will to live?

J: Well, it was like this. We were used to certain conditions for so long because you don't see too many people who survive three years in camp. From us they expected work. If they didn't feed us, we couldn't work. You know you can't work with an empty stomach. If you lose your strength, then forget it. You lose it then and that is about all. At most of the camps when we first came into the camps--I don't know if the factor supplied the food or what because the factories were privately owned, you know, like the cooks and things like that--but the Germans kept stealing from us. Let's say the first couple weeks when we came into our certain camp you used to get a half of bread a day. By the third week around the bread was getting smaller because they stole it. Don't forget that even the Germans didn't have much to eat. They stole and sent away to their parents or their relatives and things like this. I don't think anybody loses their will. Everybody tries to survive as long as they can. This is how I felt anyhow. I wouldn't give in to them. I wanted to see them beaten. I said if I died the next hour at least I wanted to see that the war was over and they got beat.

S: So then what do you attribute your surviving days to?

J: More guts than pains.

S: When you spoke before about receiving help because you knew someone . . .

J: I always knew someone or something like this because of my hometown in camp. I was still with all my people that I knew because even the Polish people came into this factory to work. Let's say that I had two uncles; one was a shoemaker, and one was a tailor. They grew up in shops. They said different and treated differently. I never went hungry because I had those uncles. Let's say my jobs later on, as I progressed I worked in different places; I worked in a garden. I took buckets of potatoes and buckets of tomatoes and gave it away. We used to feed a little girl. She had two brothers. One brother was killed in this typhoid thing. The other one was burnt. He got burnt on the job. She was just a little, blonde kid. My sister brought her in. We used to feed her all the time. When we came to Germany . . . In Auschwitz her last name's initial was the same as ours. When they picked us out to go into Germany, she was left behind. She went up to the German from the factory and said, "My sisters are going. Can I go with them?" She said, "Which ones are your sisters?" She pointed at us. She said, "Okay, go ahead. You can peel potatoes." That is how she got out of Auschwitz. When we came to the camps in Germany, she was working in the kitchen so we already got a few extra potatoes. Let's say she wouldn't eat her bread or things like this . . . So you see things paid back. It is what she did. Just like I said, casting regard to the wind, it somehow comes back to you.

People seemed to be nice to me always. I was a good worker if I wanted to. As long as they watched me I was a good worker. If I could put myself on the machine for them, I did. Maybe it was because I was trained to work since I was a child. I was always very athletic like in gymnastics and acrobatics and things like this. Certain things didn't affect me like it affected other people. What else do you want?

S: In spite of the food you did receive, did you still lose weight?

J: I was never heavy because I have the tendency to eat more, not more, but if I didn't like some turnip soup or things like this, I had a piece of bread to eat. My appetite was never as good as other people. I guess I don't need as much nutrition as other people do. Today my children when they see what I put on my plate they say, "Is that all you are going to eat?"

S: When you were finally released from the camps, you said that you didn't want to return home. Where did you go?

J: We were traveling with Italians. We were planning just to get away from Poland. We couldn't get any papers because we were Polish girls. When we came to the crossing part in the river, they were inspecting papers. The Italians, they wouldn't let cross because the Russians insisted that they were Fascists. So they kept the Italians there. We met some Americans then. They said, "Don't worry. We will help you cross the border." They tried to get papers for us, but they couldn't because we were still from the eastern part of the place. When we came to the crossing thing, the three Americans . . . They found out that the Americans were there and they were war prisoners. They sent a little boat over for them. They just picked them up and off they went. We were lost. We didn't know what we were going to do or what was going to happen. We were lined up four in a row. Two Americans were inspecting the papers to see if you were Belgium or French or Polish so that you could cross. But we didn't have any papers. There were two Americans inspecting the four rows. While the American was inspecting the first row, we were in the second row. One was inspecting rows one and two, and the other one was inspecting rows three and four. While he was inspecting row one, we stayed in row two. As he went through the first row we just went into the first row. While he was inspecting the second row, we were already in the first row. Then we crossed the border.

There was always somebody watching over us even when we didn't know it. There was a captain from Belgium who was a war prisoner too. When we crossed the border, the American trucks were already waiting for us. They loaded us on the trucks and took us into Leipzig overnight. They put the two of us into one room. The Belgium captain put a sign on our door. The next day we were loaded into trains. We just traveled toward Belgium or France or something like this. Those people were from all

different places. It took us a week again until we got to Luxembourg. Luxembourg again had paper checking. We still didn't have papers again. They wanted to return us. This captain started fighting for us. It took half a day of going from one place to the other. We got on the train for Belgium. He got off before Brussels, the capital. He gave us to somebody else to watch us until we reached Brussels. When we came into Brussels, the immigration police were waiting for us already. They took us out to the Red Cross overnight. There was trouble there because we were the two youngest. There were people already from all over the world there. When we came in, they made a curfew again. After 9:00 no one was allowed into the women's quarters. The next day we went down to the Polish Consulate for the Polish. While there, all of a sudden we heard Jewish speaking. Some of our people went different directions north or south of Germany. That is why you had a lot of people around Munich. There were camps and camps of thousands of people. I guess the ones that didn't want to go back to Poland stayed in Germany. But the two of us somehow got sidetracked in a different direction. I didn't see another survivor except the two of us until we reached Brussels. I thought that we were the only survivors. But when we came into Brussels to the Polish Consulate, we heard Jewish speaking. We right away went up to them and talked. They went back with us to the Red Cross and carried along whatever they had into the Jewish community again. The Jewish community places the people. So we were all living together.

S: Then you left Belgium, of course, to come to the United States.

J: When I found out that my uncles survived . . . I knew a man from the camp in my hometown and he told me that my uncles survived and they were in Bietigheim, Germany. I just couldn't stand it any longer by myself, and I went back to Germany. In Germany I was in trouble again because I couldn't stand Germany. I couldn't listen to the language and so on. It bothered me because I was away for almost a year already from Germany. I couldn't stand it. So I went up and registered to come over here as a minor, for being young at the time. Again the Jewish community or something like this brought me over here. I came over as an orphan.

S: So you had no one over here at that time. What about your sister that survived?

J: My sister went back to Poland where she had her daughter there. I guess she liked it there because she is still there. Her husband, when she came back, was already with somebody else. Then she got divorced, and she married somebody else. She had a couple of children with somebody else, with another Polish gentleman. Then she lost him later on. She got married a third time. Her one child died at birth six years ago. She was here five years ago for a visit. That is her life.

S: So what did you do when you arrived in the United States?  
Where did you arrive at?

J: In New York in the Bronx. There they transferred us. There were ninety-some of us who came at the same time, orphans. They cut us up in smaller groups and they sent me to Cleveland. I was in Cleveland for four weeks. Then I was transferred to Youngstown and was placed with a family here in Youngstown.

S: Did you speak any English when you came to the United States?

J: No.

S: How old were you?

J: About seventeen.

S: So then I would imagine later you met your husband that you are married to now.

J: He also survived.

S: Yes, but you met here in the United States?

J: Yes, we met here in 1951.

S: I understand that you had a large family and not many of them survived.

J: Out of 103 or something eighty-three died and nineteen survived.

S: So you have very few members of your family left. When you do see your sister--like you said she was here five years ago--do you discuss what happened to you?

J: My sister suffered a nervous breakdown or amnesia or something right after the war. For twenty-five years she didn't remember certain places because she came here, and we were talking about certain places and she didn't remember them. Surprisingly she lives close to Auschwitz, just a few kilometers. She has been there a couple of times with the children and certain things, but she says that nothing is there, but there used to be once upon a time.

S: You yourself are very open about your experience, and a lot of people won't talk about that. Why do you?

J: I don't know; I just don't want to forget it.

S: I would imagine not.

J: If I feel somebody did me wrong, I'm not ashamed to say it. There are other people . . . I have been reading a lot of books

and so on lately. There for a while I couldn't read anything about it. In most of the books I feel like the people feel that they have to apologize for what happened to them; I don't. But if I don't like somebody, I don't like him. I can't stand listening to a German. I don't like the Polish language either because the Polish people denied us as people too. There were some kind Polish Gentiles, but most of them didn't survive. The ones like certain teachers and druggists and priests, nice people, they were the first to go. There were Army officers and things like this; but your life was crushed. They don't deserve to be remembered as nice people. That's why my father didn't let me run away. He said, "The ones that we could trust are gone already. The ones that are around you can't trust. You are better off if you have to die to die among your own." As a matter of fact some of my friends--the Polish friends--none of them survived because when my sister came back here I asked her. She said, "No, this one is dead; this one is dead; this one is dead." Polish language bothers me plenty.

S: So you really received no help from any of your Polish neighbors?

J: There were very few of them; there were some. The ones, for instance, that knew we were going to be evacuated from my hometown . . . I took a lot of things out to the Polish people. I was in camp and asked for him to bring me a pillow, which was my pillow. He said, "Nothing doing. Who are you? I don't even know you." That is why I buried a lot of things and I wouldn't even let my sister know where they were. I said to let them corrode in the ground. I didn't want her to get into trouble because if she would start taking out something like candlesticks and things like this . . . I said to let them corrode; I didn't want them. That is why I never wanted to go back to Poland.

S: So in spite of the fact that your father ran a business and obviously had Polish customers . . .

J: He supported a lot of them and helped out a lot of them. Only one toward the end . . . They closed us up for a week before they sent us to Auschwitz from my hometown. They took away the water and the electric and everything. They would bring in some soup or some things like this from out of the camp. When one of them came in . . . My father used to support one of the families. One of them came in and he brought some cigarettes in and bread. He looked for me. He could have gotten anything he wanted for those cigarettes, but he wouldn't sell them or anything like this. He gave them to me. He said, "You are the only one that I kept as a friend from my hometown."

S: So in spite of the fact that your father had expended credit only one out of so many . . .

J: We had credit books, four credit books, huge ones left. My father was a very good man. He saw that if you couldn't . . .

Before payday or something like this you couldn't feed your children, he would go out and buy something from some other butcher who sold pork in order for the woman to go home and feed her kids. We had a lot of books, credit books. But that was as far as we had gone.

There was one family that had a little baby girl. This child was a change of life baby or something. Her mother had a baby, and she had two, grown daughters. The whole family could have gotten into camp except for the little baby. So she gave this little baby away to a Polish family and gave them everything she had, jewelry and things like this. They took us each into camp the next day. This woman took this child down to the Germans and told them whose child this was. They came to ask the mother what she wanted to do. "Do you want to go with the child to Zwoleń or do you want to stay in camp and we will take the child by herself?" She let the child go by herself. There are certain things that I just can't forget. In the first place there was no one to trust.

S: How do you feel about the movie entitled The Holocaust? Do you feel that was an accurate representation?

J: It couldn't have been. They couldn't have done anything I did in this respect. What you felt there, for instance, when we stayed in the barracks in Auschwitz, we were very close to the crematoriums. The smell of it and things like this you knew what was going on. How can you show it? How can you feel when you don't smell it?

I happen to have a certain paper here which is a confession of Mannass. On his deathbed he confesses. Every time I read this one I get so worked up myself because if I think I had it bad, those people had it worse at a camp in Auschia. You can't realize how much misery there was. Like I said it so happened that they took us on a train and we got bumped off. At least, what they did with a lot of them towards the end of the war was they kept marching them, mostly men. They died on the roads, and if they didn't die, they shot them. It was wintertime; it was cold with snow and everything and no food, and you kept walking. I guess that somebody was watching over me.

One Sunday in April was in memory of the Auschwitz ghetto. The speaker spoke so on and so forth and you just listened to it. For instance, he said that there was one disease called anti-Semitism, which isn't a Jewish disease, but it only kills Jews!

S: You have quite a sense of humor which is really wonderful to see in you.

J: Well, I listened to the radio a couple of years ago. I think it was at Youngstown State. It was some kind of professor; I don't think he was at Youngstown State; he was a French History professor



I guess he didn't have a job so he got into working on the air and everything. He said, "Well, did you have any humor? How was your humor then?" If you couldn't once in a while laugh at yourself no matter how you looked at things like this, you couldn't survive. You didn't have to say, "I'm giving up." You just gave up. Like in Bergen-Belsen we were lying in a tent, 300 of us in one tent. There was nothing on the ground. We used to tell jokes to one another. We used to sing at night and things like this because otherwise you would go to pieces and you would lose your mind just sitting and brooding over it. You know you had no choice; you couldn't do anything about it. In Germany forget it, but in Poland if you run away . . .

In my hometown there was one man here who was in camp with me-- there were two people here that were in my hometown camp. They were not from my town, but they were in my town camp. The man said after they took us out to Auschwitz, he was left behind to clean up the camp. The Germans were very neat always. They tried to clean up. They were going around the building making sure that nobody was hiding and so on. I guess one of the Ukrainians told him, "Run away. Go ahead so that you won't go to Germany. Go away! Run away!" He went out from under the wire. He saw so many dead people lying all around that he turned around and said, "I guess they will have to send me to Germany then." He is here in Youngstown.

S: Did you follow when they finally tried the Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg?

J: No.

S: You didn't?

J: I knew what was going on. I was in Belgium at the time in 1946. It was in 1946 or 1947.

S: How do you feel about the work of Simon Wiesenthal tracking down Nazis?

J: It so happened that he [Wiesenthal] was older. At the time he was in his thirties after the war. He was around there. They had plenty of Nazis right there where he was. He was a commander of thirty camps. I was talking to the man who gave me this paper. He was an American soldier at the time. He said that they used to go around just looking for them like rats; they were hiding. There were thousands of them in Auschia. So I guess he was sick right after the war, Wiesenthal. But before he got well a lot of them [Nazis] got away.

S: You express a lot of resentment it seems toward Germany and Poland and not wanting to return. It is understandable.

J: If you lose so many people and you go through . . . like, for

instance, my father was taken away to a camp where they were building an airfield or something. My parents were taken away from Zwoleń to Treblinka. This particular German was a neighbor of ours. He was of German origin and lived in Poland. My father wanted to come into my camp. So we tried to get him in through speculations and so on. We brought him into camp. This man had 15,000 other people, but he didn't like somebody taking ones from out of his camp. So he was ready to go to the Gestapo and bring this man back. My father was in my camp for two weeks. This was in 1943. The German who brought him down to our camp had to take him back. Two weeks later all of the 15,000 people were killed. So how do you feel about something like this? Our people didn't have any preparation or any pity or things like this. I don't know how much you read about the Holocaust. You read certain things now. Just recently I read something. I don't remember which one it was. Like, for instance, when the revolt was going on in Brozozów, the Polish people were coming home from church on Easter. The revolt was going from building to building. The Polish people were watching and saying, "There is one more life left there; they could shoot and kill him." How do you feel about things like this? Like, for instance, in my district not far away in Kielce in 1947 over forty people got killed because they were Jews. They were killed by the Polish people or the Russians, not by the Germans then. They were survivors; they survived the war and came home. Most of them had forgotten. In my hometown a few of them survived. One of them was the mother of the little baby. I just found out not long ago when I went to Canada that there is a man from my hometown there. They all got together and lived in a Jewish home, the man and the woman there. In the middle of the night the Polish--I don't know if they were the Left or the Right because Poland always had two parties--came in to beat the man half to death; they raped the woman. There has not been one Jew in my hometown since 1945.

- S: I would imagine your Polish contemporaries confiscated what the Jews left behind?
- J: Well, they didn't have to return it to anybody because very few people survived. The ones that survived, when they went home if they came around to get what belonged to them, most of them got killed. As a matter of fact this one couple survived and went to a certain family that they left their belongings behind to. The wife went out to get certain things back. The husband didn't see her for a long time so he went out. This one Polack killed the woman. So the Jewish man took out a gun and killed the Polish man. This is what was going on in Poland, all sorts of things like fear and greed. They were so afraid that some of the Jews had something better or a little bit more than they had. Greed is a horrible thing.
- S: Before the war started since you said your father really never

wanted to remain in Poland, did you ever, as a family, think about leaving Poland?

J: Who?

S: Your whole family.

J: My father never wanted to build a home in Poland. We had lumber always ready for building a home, and he would sell it. He used to say, "I don't want to build in Poland." My mother had her parents, and she didn't want to leave Poland.

S: How about you yourself? Did you ever consider going to Israel after the war?

J: After the war I was ready to go to Israel. When I was in Belgium, the one lady wouldn't let me, the people that I lived with. She said, "You had enough war for a while." You tried to get away from things as far as you could. That is why I don't like to go back to see my sister. I don't like to go back to Poland just to visit. She hasn't been well, and I would like to see her. Yet there is something that just . . . Like I said, if I go, I go for three or four days. I only travel so far for two or three days.

S: Thank you very much for talking to me. I appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW