

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Holocaust Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 545

HENRY KINAST

Interviewed

by

Barbara Crowley

on

March 10, 1981

HENRY KINAST

Henry Kinast was born November 15, 1930 in Lodz, Poland, the son of Abraham and Perel Kinast. He had three years of formal schooling before September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. At that time Jewish children were expelled from the public schools. From 1940-1942, Kinast was home-tutored.

In 1942, in order to avoid being sent to the death camp Treblinka, the Kinast family volunteered to work in the nearby factory labor camp, Sharzysco. While there, Kinast became an expert machinist at age twelve, and so was not sent to Treblinka. Next, Kinast was taken to another labor camp, Czestochowe, where he was imprisoned for eight months.

In 1944, Kinast, his brother, and father were transported to Buchenwald in Germany, where there were separated. On April 10, 1945, when some prisoners cut the barbed wire fence of Buchenwald. Kinast was liberated. In a few days he was reunited with his father, and shortly thereafter, with his brother.

Next, Kinast had some further schooling in high school subjects and Hebrew in Sweden, where he lived for seven years after the war. Kinast came to the United States in 1954, first to Pittsburgh, and then in 1955 to Youngstown.

In 1958, Kinast and a partner began manufacturing extrusion dies. Their business, U. S. Extrusion Tool & Die Company, employed over one hundred people. In 1985 Kinast split away from his partner and on his own has developed

two businesses, Liberty Extrusion Tool & Die Co., and PSK Steel Corp., which combined employed over one hundred people.

Henry and his wife, Inga, have four children and live in Girard. He has returned to Poland as a guest of the government. First entering a concentration camp at age eleven, Kinast was one of the few children to survive the ordeal.

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INTERVIEWEE: HENRY KINAST

INTERVIEWER: Barbara Crowley

SUBJECT: Family, Poland, Skarzysco, Czestochowe,
Buchenwald

DATE: March 10, 1981

C: This is an interview with Mr. Henry Kinast for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Holocaust Project, by Barbara Crowley, at 110 Trumbull Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio on March 10, 1981, at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. Kinast, where were you born?

K: I was born in Poland on November 15, 1930 in Lodz.

C: What was your family background, the trade of your father?

K: My father was a tailor. We lived a comfortable life in Poland. We owned property and had a summer home.

C: What is your religious background?

K: Jewish.

C: What was your education like?

K: I had three years of school and in 1939 when the Nazis entered Poland they closed the school. From 1940 to 1942 I had a teacher come in once a day for one hour and she was tutoring me.

C: Growing up were there any incidents of anti-Semitic nature and anti-Jewish nature that you remember?

K: From 1940 there were a lot.

C: As a child though?

- K: When the Germans entered Poland our town was one-third Poles, one-third Jews, and one-third Germans.
- C: I know you were very young when it all started for you, but do you remember anything that stands out when you were small?
- K: There were anti-Semitic incidents, but they couldn't compare to the wartime.
- C: What do you recall about your childhood?
- K: Every summer we used to go to a vacation. We lived a comfortable life. We had a big family, with cousins and everything.
- C: When the war started what were the major changes in our life style?
- K: No freedom. Jews got rounded up just for being Jews.
- C: What do you remember? September 1, 1939 the war started for Poland, do you remember that day?
- K: I was nine years old and I didn't realize what was happening. We went out on the street to see the army and the armored cars. It was an excitement to see what modern arms they had. It took about a month before the Germans made us wear yellow stars. We went to school for about two or three weeks. They closed the school for the Jews. The first ghetto was created in March, so my father decided to escape from Lodz. We left everything we had and we went away from Lodz. The Jews were not allowed to ride on the railroad at that time. The Germans made a border between Lodz to become part of Germany. We escaped from there and went to a small town where my grandmother was from. We were there from 1940. It was a small village, very quiet. There were only about 200 or 300 Jewish families. I was there until 1942.
- C: Do you know the name of the village?
- K: Suchudniv, Poland. When I was ten I went to Hebrew school for about a year. There was no public school; it was forbidden for the Jews. I had a tutor who came in once a day for about an hour. She taught history and the Polish language.

When the Germans closed the ghettos there was a bigger town near us and one day my father told us they were taking the Jews away and closing the ghettos and shipping them away. There were rumors that the Germans started to gas chamber the people, but they were hard to believe.

It was going around that they were killing the Jews; as a child I couldn't believe it myself.

Finally, in 1942, in Skardzysko, which was not far from us, ten miles, there was a big ammunition factory. The Germans used to get Jews by forced labor to work in this ammunition factory. For some reason we had a small Jewish community and they decided to go to the camp to work. We figured if we didn't go the Germans would send us to Treblinka. Fortunately we were really lucky in the timing. We were approximately 150 people and just as we left, the Germans came in trucks to round up the Jews. At that time I was probably 11½ years old, and I put my name down that I was 16. It was me, my father, mother, and brother. Anyhow, we got into the camp and they took our clothes off. My mother was with us at the time and for some reason they separated her. This was the last time I ever saw my mother. There were three camps: A, B, and C. They were about six miles apart. So I was working in the ammunition factory and it was very difficult times. I was working from 7:00 in the morning and I was up at night. The first day I worked I couldn't stand it and I fell asleep at 2:00 in the morning. One of the Nazis noticed me and he called me and took me into his office and gave me twenty-five lashes. From that day I became a grown-up person.

Anyway, my mother was in a different camp for six weeks and she wanted to be together with us. For some reason she had a diamond or something and tried to bribe a Nazi. As soon as he found out he took everything away from her and the first transfer that went to Treblinka they sent her out on. I think she died during Yom Kippur.

I was in the camp with my father and brother. Each one of us worked different departments. They were difficult times. The first thing that was difficult was that I had to work twelve hours. Every couple of days we had selection among the Jews; the Nazis would come in and pick out ones who were sick or one who worked in a certain place. They would write up your name and the next transfer would pick up the Jews. They would take about 5,000 Jews from the area, so they would take 200 on the truck and send them to another area. Mostly they went to Auschwitz or Treblinka to the gas chambers.

C: This was the camp you were sent to before . . .

K: I was in that camp in Poland for two years.

C: Did it have a name?

K: The name was Skarzysko. This was the largest ammunition factory. We were guarded by the Nazis and we had barracks

over there. There were approximately 15,000 there. Many of them died and got shot in the forest too. I was in that camp approximately two years. We were about 60 people in a barrack. We had double beds. They didn't give us clothes; the only clothes we had were what were remaining that they brought in for racks for cleaning the machines. They brought them from Treblinka from the gas chambers; when people came in they left all of their clothes. The good clothes they sent to Germany and they sent some to clean the machines so we used some of those. We would find money sewn in them. The men and women were separate in the same camp. We were under guard every morning. We went out at 5:30 in the morning and they would give us coffee and a slice of bread and we took a cold shower and went to work.

C: You were a child though, wasn't there a good chance you would be selected?

K: I didn't realize that myself. I became an excellent worker in the ammunition factory. At the age of 12½, I became first-class machinist. The civilian Germans were watching over the work; they were mostly engineers. There were more humanitarian people in the German engineers who were in charge of the work. Mostly we were making precision parts for making shells and machine guns or rockets. We were more happy when we were working in the factory than when we were in the camp. When we came back from working we slept for six or seven hours. They would wake us up and the Nazis would give us different work. During the summer when it was really hot we had typhus in the camp. They had a hospital, but there was no medicine or anything. They put you on the floor and you laid over there. I had typhus and my father came in there and he told me I had better run away. I ran back to the camp and went back to work. I stayed at the clinic three days. When I left the Germans picked up the people that day and shot them all. It was good timing. Even though I was young in age my instincts were grown up. You had to make decisions in seconds of what you wanted to do.

In 1944 the Russians were coming close to our camp so they evacuated our camp and put us on a train going to Czestochowe. I was there for about eight months. We were making ammunition again. We were working with gentile people. The gentile people came into work every day and then went home. We were coming under guard to work and back to the barracks. I was there for another eight months and one day the Nazis picked us up from the camp and we walked for about three miles. They took us to the railroad and put 150 in each railroad car. I was with my father and brother. It was winter

and about the beginning of 1945. We traveled six days and nights continuously. It was cold, but there were so many people it didn't matter. They gave us a bucket of water for everybody. Some people died. Your system became adjusted to that. When someone died it wasn't a big deal; you just wanted to survive. Probably thirty people died out of that car. There were guards with machine guns on the top of the cars. We came to one point and we stopped for hours and hours. The engine would come back and pick up one carload at a time. When they picked us up they took us to the forest. We thought for sure when we got into the forest we would stop and they would tell us to get out and they would kill us all with machine guns. It's the same feeling someone gets when they are going to be executed.

C: What age were you now?

K: I was about 13½; I had been in the camp over 2½ years. We were going up and down in the car and finally we saw a sign--Camp Buchenwald. We knew it was a very famous camp, but we didn't know we were going there. Buchenwald was on a big hill and they couldn't take the whole train up so they took each car at a time. There was such panic among the Jews; we thought for sure they were going to kill us. Nobody would tell us where we were going.

When I got into Buchenwald I would say 20% of the people died. When I came through there was a doctor, a Nazi, and he asked me my age. For some reason there was a selection. I went to the left and my father and brother went to the right. There were a group of boys on the side with me and they took us away. They took us to the showers next and I thought for sure we were going to be gassed. I took a shower and they cut our hair and they gave me some clothes. They gave me a pair of slacks, a jacket, and a pair of wooden shoes. The temperature was about 10° below zero. There were about 45 young boys in the group and they put us in separate barracks. I don't know what happened to my father and brother. In the camp there was another camp, and we came into the barracks which held about 1500 people, and there were some foremen. They destroyed all the gas chambers, but they had the crematorium. In the end the Germans got scared, so there were orders from Hitler to destroy the gas chambers.

We were starving over there. Every morning they gave us a loaf of bread for six people and a quart of soup. The whole day you got nothing else to eat until the next day.

Every morning they woke us up at 4:30 and they would count us. It was impossible to escape from Buchenwald. It was built in 1933. We had people from all over the country.

At 4:30 we took cold showers, wiped off with our shirts, and then they counted us in the front of the barracks. Every day so many people would die of starvation and they would count how many were left alive. The Germans would evacuate people from different areas; there were a lot of prisoners from all different nationalities. Most of the people who came in from different areas died within six weeks to two months. Their system was not adjusted and it was very cold. We didn't have any heat in the barracks at night, but there was so much heat from all the bodies. They pulled out the dead bodies in the morning. This was January of 1945.

Then the Nazis started to give us less and less food. Some prisoners really felt sorry for us because we were a young group of people. The Germans took all the youngsters and put us in a children's home. One time they brought the Red Cross in and we were trying to show them how they were humanitarian. One time we got packages; they gave us one package for three boys. They were making movies to show the Swiss government how they were humanitarians, the Germans.

C: Tell me about the second camp you were in.

K: The second camp was Czestochowe. I was there for eight months. This was still in Poland. I went to Buchenwald from here and I was in Buchenwald seven months.

When I was in Buchenwald at the end, approximately in February of 1945, the Nazis knew they would lose the war and for some reason they brought in the Red Cross from Switzerland. The Germans were making a movie showing how they were dividing the packages from the Red Cross. The biggest majority the Germans took for themselves. They divided about 1% to show propoganda. In this camp people had been dying about 3% a day from starvation, maybe 7%. People from all different areas were brought in. The Russian troops were going forward through Poland and they were approaching the German border. The Germans had in their mind that they had to get rid of the Jews before they left any trace of anything. First they had to get rid of the Jews before they could evacuate their own army. This was in the winter and we weren't allowed to wear any more clothes; if you wore a sweater they would give you twenty-five lashes. The Germans were very particular. We should be clean and nobody would have a louse. They were very strict because they didn't want any sickness.

When they shoved us out in the morning to count us sometimes they would tell us to run or pick up big stones.

If someone said to pick up a stone and it was too heavy they would beat the person up. There was a special division of SS that were trained how to be cruel and kill prisoners.

C: Do you remember any incidents?

K: The first time I was in Poland and saw my first execution was 1942. It was summer and the majority of people were working two shifts. The night shift would sleep in the day time when it was really hot; when it was really hot some of the Jews would sleep outside the barracks. I saw one of the German SS put a gun against one guy's head and shoot him for no reason. I was twelve at the time.

The second execution I saw was a hanging. They guy worked in the ammunition factory and he was making smoke shells for the guns. When we walked back from the factory to the barracks they would search us sometimes; they searched him and he had in his cuff a shell of a gun. They pulled him on the side and called everybody out and this was the first time I saw a hanging execution. After a while you saw many executions.

Another execution I saw was of a boy fourteen or fifteen years old. The officer pulled out the gun and the gun didn't go off. He pulled out another gun and this boy was really crying. It was really a pity to see some things.

C: Was he about your age?

K: Fifteen or fourteen.

C: What was the day routine like?

K: When I was in Poland I was working twelve hours seven days a week. We were making shells. There was a production line. After one year I was a set-up man; I learned to set up machines. I learned the trade pretty fast. The fact is if I had not learned the trade I wouldn't have survived the camp. 1942 and 1943 were the worst years because the Nazis picked up most of the Jews to send them to the gas chambers. In 1944 they needed us for the labor force, so they kept us. The fact was that they gave us a little bit more food. In 1944 they didn't have any Jews in Poland and they needed a labor force, so they kept us temporarily. In the meantime we were working twelve hours and we were producing a lot of ammunition for the Third Reich.

C: So you had to work like an adult.

K: I was working like an adult, from 7:00 to 7:00. We worked two weeks day time and two weeks night time. We changed the shift every two weeks on a Sunday; we worked eight hours and went home to the barracks.

In the camp we always knew what was going on. We were always happy when we heard the Russian Army was beating up the German Army. When we heard of a German defeat, we were happy. We had a lot of gentile people going into work, so we knew what was going on. We knew if the Germans won the war we wouldn't survive. I would say about 3% of the people from that camp survived from Poland.

C: Out of how many?

K: We were maybe 20,000 or 30,000. I don't know because over the years a lot of them got sick or others got killed or others starved to death. Then people were sent in from different camps and people were sent out. Nobody remained in that camp. When they evacuated the camp in 1944 they took us to a different camp.

C: When you came to one of the camps what is the first thing you remember seeing as a child?

K: When I came in the first camp in Poland in 1942 they put me on a machine and I started to work. I told you I was falling asleep at 2:00 because I had never stayed up all night. When I was beat up the first night, got the lashes, from that time I never fell asleep again in that place. Then I became a good worker and worked very hard. I knew if I didn't work they would send me out on the next selection.

C: Did you see a lot of boys your age being sent?

K: There were about five or six of them.

C: Do you remember any incidents with the guards?

K: The guards that would take us from the ammunition factory to the barracks would sometimes tell us to run faster. For a kick they would beat up somebody or kill someone. They were the masters of us so they could do anything they wanted. The guards were not our superiors in the factory; they were our masters when they were taking us from the camp to the factory and back.

C: You had guards with you when you were working but they didn't bother you?

K: No, when we were working there was a big plant. We had a

lot of civilian German people over there. For humanitarian reasons they didn't bother us at work. The Germans were more interested in producing ammunition. We didn't have problems with them like we did with the Nazi guards in the camp.

C: So no one ever singled you out for being a child and said that they didn't believe you could work?

K: There was an incident one day where a high-ranking German officer from the Engineering Corps came up to me and said, "What happened that you are here, at your age?" I said, "I'm a Jew." He said, "A Jew? What do you have to do in a place like this?" I said, "The Nazis are taking all the Jews and sending them out to the camps and the gas chambers. They are killing the Jews. They have killed off a couple of million Jews already." He said to me, "I cannot believe it." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I've been reading the newspaper from Germany every day and I never noticed in the paper them putting the Jews in a gas chamber." This was just one incident.

A second incident was in 1945 in March. It was the same kind of incident in Buchenwald when the Americans started to bomb the cities. The Germans didn't have enough force working for them so they took us from the camp, about 2,000, and put us on the railroad and we went to a city thirty or forty miles away. They took us on the square and we had guards; there were five prisoners to one German guard. We would go to a building and take out furniture and clean up what was remaining. One area I was working at in March, usually I was happy to come into a place like this because sometimes I would find some food or something remaining. I was looking and the same morning I had a slice of bread and coffee and I was hungry. In the next building where I was working there was a little garden and a German man was working over there. I went over there to help him out. I had no business helping him out, but I didn't care. I started to help him out and the German guard came over and said, "You are supposed to work over here, not over there." I went back and finally I went over again and I figured if I would help him he would give me something. He came out and gave me a slice of honey cake. He gave me a slice of bread too and some garlic. He probably gave me a pound of garlic. This was the best thing for me. I was talking to him and he asked me the same questions. We had a number on our clothes and he asked me what I did that I was in a prisoner camp. I said, "I did nothing wrong. The only thing that is wrong is that I was born a Jew." He couldn't understand. I told him I had been in a couple of camps already and that I hadn't heard anything of my father and brother for a couple of months. He asked me if I ever got mail. I told him I didn't get

any and that it was so sad because they didn't give us any food and we starved to death.

C: Do you think perhaps they didn't want to know?

K: Some of the Germans didn't know. I took the garlic that I had back to camp and it was like somebody giving me ten million dollars. You could trade that for something else, like bread. The worst starvation was in Buchenwald because they gave us so little each time. They kept giving us less and less. We had bread about seven inches long for six people. We would take a string and mark it to be fair for everyone. They gave us a coffee substitute with saccharin and they gave us soup, a quart of soup. They gave us everything at one time. In the morning I would hide my slice of bread for later. Some people ate everything and had nothing until the next day.

In 1945 during liberation the Germans took the Jews out from the camp. We were in the children's home; there were about 400 of us. Every morning they were evacuating 10,000 from the camp. When they took us out in the morning they didn't give us anything to eat. When we went through the main gate though they gave us bread for four people and some soup. Finally I made up my mind that I wasn't anyplace. There was no use to go because I couldn't walk much. Out of 1500 people maybe 100 would die in the morning. They were piling up bodies. When the Americans came in they would bring bulldozers and dig trenches and bury 10,000 people approximately. Anyhow, about April 5, 1945 they gave us soup for the day and not any bread. For the last week then I didn't eat anything. You were looking for anything to eat. One day they came over to our barrack and told us to get out. When we went to the main gate they would evacuate us. I was in line and I saw one person fall down; he wouldn't go out. We didn't know what they were going to do with us. I laid down myself; I made up my mind. It was a big field we were in. They took 10,000 and we were left over; we went back and they would take us the next day. The next day was April 10 and people were dying like flies. We had towers around, so many meters, and the German guards were watching us with machine guns. The fence was high voltage and it was impossible to escape.

C: I was going to ask you if escape ever crossed your mind?

K: No, you could never escape.

About every other day they would take a transport on the train from the camp, maybe 500 from our camp, to work in the city to clean up places. One time we were working on the railroad; the whole railroad was destroyed. We were fixing up the railroad because the American and British

troops bombed it. We were working all day and there was nothing to eat. I ran away from there and looked in the street and buildings for something. I knocked on doors and was begging for food. They opened the door and saw me in my uniform and closed the door. I would knock on the next door and maybe some people would feel bad and give me something to eat. They would give me a potato or a slice of bread. Then I went back. I could escape easily, but where would I escape to. If the police would catch me they would shoot me right away anyhow. Most of the guards were old. They picked up the old guards to watch us because the young ones went to war. When I went back the guard would kick me a few times and ask me where I had been.

C: How did the camps differ?

K: The camp when I was in Poland was a difficult camp to work. I worked very hard in 1942 to 1943. I was very much afraid for selection. When I came to Buchenwald they had no more gas chambers. They treated us better than in other camps. In Buchenwald though we could not get any other food. Starvation was bad. It was getting to be 200 or less calories a day. I saw prisoners go to dead bodies and cut off pieces to eat. Two or three days before liberation I saw these things. The Germans fed us once a day and the prisoners would grab food from each other. The poor men had nothing to eat until the next day. They would cry and say that another prisoner took something away from them. Nobody would even look. You felt sorry, but what could you do. People became like animals among themselves. It was an instinct to survive.

C: When you were going to have liberation did you know what was coming up as a child, did they tell you?

K: The last couple of days when the Nazis took us from the camp we had about 120,000 prisoners. There was a German guard who had charge over the camp. They had orders to blow up the whole camp. We could see planes and tanks coming. We thought they were Russians; we didn't know the Americans were coming. We saw the Germans escaping and a lot of prisoners took guns away from them and captured them. We captured about 200 or 300 Germans. We were worried because if the Germans came back they would kill us anyhow.

C: Did you have a gun?

K: No. Some prisoners came through and cut the wires and we went through the fence. I was in the forest and I saw bodies of dead German soldiers. I was walking and I came into a small village. I saw white flags hanging from all

the windows. I was hungry. I hadn't eaten or drank for five days. I knocked on the door and asked for food. An older woman came out and she saw I was a prisoner and was afraid. I asked for some water to drink and had about a gallon. I asked for some bread and she gave me that. I walked for a couple of miles in the forest and far away I saw an American hospital tent. For some reason I was really afraid. I saw some soldiers coming in and there was a food kitchen. I saw them throwing it in a food barrel, like a garbage can. When they were going away I walked over there and put my head in and it was the first time I saw white bread. I was looking at it and started to eat it. There were pieces of bread, cheese, oranges, scrambled eggs. Everything was mixed in the garbage. I pulled out my head and I saw four or five soldiers standing next to me watching me. I was in shock myself. They could see I was a prisoner. Someone spoke to me in the Slavic language and I told them about the camp here, Buchenwald. I told them it was ten miles away. Some officers came out and felt sorry for me. They took me to the field kitchen and told me to eat what I wanted. There was bacon and oranges and I ate that. They told me to fill up what I wanted. I picked up oranges and put it in a bucket. I thought I would go back to the camp. I did walk and go back and I came into my barracks and everybody grabbed oranges. There was nothing left. In seconds everything was gone. The first American that came into the camp was a captain. Twenty minutes later a few jeeps came in and Generals Patton and Eisenhower came into our barracks. The first thing they found when they came to Buchenwald was that the Germans had children in the camps. A rabbi came in and told us kids that we were free and not to worry. Everybody was saying that we needed food. The American soldiers donated food. The first time I had chewing gum I swallowed it; I thought it was to eat. A couple of days later the Red Cross brought us clothes. They took us outside the camp where the German guards used to live. They gave us a lot of food and the first couple of days everybody got sick. People were so sick they couldn't walk. Many people died when we were liberated. There was a shortage of medicine and doctors.

After the war I knew nothing about my mother, father, or brother. I was sixteen at the time. I was supposed to go to the United States. They took a group of teen-agers, there was no quota. In May 7, 1945 they were supposed to go to France and then to the United States. They had a big party for us, the Red Cross. Officers were invited from the American Army and it was a really big party. I was supposed to leave in the morning with the group. In the meantime, my father was liberated. They put out a list of who survived and he found my name on the list.

He went to a British rabbi and told him that he had a son at Buchenwald. He arranged for my dad to go in an army jeep and they drove to me. It was about 3:00 in the morning. I didn't know anything and someone woke me up and I saw my father. I will never forget this. The first thing I asked about was my brother. He said that he didn't know what happened to him. I remained with him and didn't go to the United States with the group. In the meantime, my brother got liberated in another place. He was working in an ammunition factory someplace and the Germans left him in the forest. There was a group of about 200 and they all laid down. If someone stood up the Germans killed them. The Germans left them there. After a few hours nobody was over there so he went to a farm and took a job. He worked there for about two weeks cleaning horses and cows. He was getting food. Then he found out he was liberated and took a bike and he went into Poland to see who survived. While he was going to another city someone mentioned to him that they saw my father and he had been liberated. Four days after he came and found us. We were reunited, otherwise I would have been in the United States in 1945.

C: What camp was your brother in?

K: When they took him from Buchenwald he went to a camp whose name I cannot remember. My father went to a different camp where they were making D-1's and D-2's.

An interesting story is that in 1943 when I was in the camp at Poland I made a ring out of chrome. I gave it to my brother as a gesture. It was made of chrome; it wasn't of any value. I welded it together and polished it and made a ring. He is five years older than me and he would wear it. When we were in Buchenwald they took all of our things away from us. When we got there the first things they would ask us is if we had gold or diamonds. They would take our clothes and cut our hair and we had nothing. It was at this time they took the ring from my brother. After the war, about two or three days after I was liberated, I saw a prisoner and he was wearing the ring. I asked him where he got it. He told me some German had it and he took it off an ex-Nazi. I had no money but I told him I would give him food or something for the ring. He gave me the ring then. When I saw my brother I asked him what happened to the ring. He said the Germans took it. I told him I had it and I gave it to him.

C: I know the first time you got out of the camp you crawled out of the wire. What was the last thing you remember seeing?

K: When I came through the wire I couldn't believe I was free.

I could walk any place I wanted to. It was a spring day. Later I learned it was the day that President Roosevelt died. I walked in the forest and everything was coming up like roses. The air smelled so good. I didn't care if a German saw me and killed me. It just felt so good to be free. Some of the prisoners were running toward the Americans, but I was looking more for food. I was starving. That was my first impression. The first American that I saw was the incident of me putting my head in the garbage can.

C: Why do you think that you survived?

K: I was lucky, number one. I worked hard and was making productivity. The trade I learned in the camp is how I became a very successful businessman. I have 100 employees and two corporations. Fortunately, I became one of the successful survivors of the holocaust in the United States. I have a home in Florida and in Youngstown. I travel overseas three or four times a year. I've been married for 31 years. I have four kids. The trade, becoming a machinist, a tool and die maker, is what I'm doing right now. I learned that in wartime in Poland.

C: Do you feel you survived out of sheer instinct?

K: Instinct and timing.

C: It was no special will to survive?

K: Of course I had the will to survive, but instinct and timing was very, very important.

END OF INTERVIEW