

TESTIMONY OF TOBIAS S. GUTMANS
MAY 22, 1991

- 0:00 min. Tobias Samuel Gutmans was born in Tukums, Latvia. About 20,000 people lived in Latvia. Came from a large family. Father was a furniture maker and a land owner. People tend the land; there was a blacksmith shop and a dairy.
Have 2 brothers and 2 sisters. Just found out his mother and sister survived the war. Sister and mother lived in their own house until 1974.
- 5:00 min. Born Oct. 23, 1922 - came from a religious family. Grandfather was a cantor and taylor. Attended shul. In 1940 went to Polytech school to become an Engineer.
1942 - education was interrupted because of the Germans. Germans said that he was going to work in Germany. His 2 brothers, father and himself were crammed in a cattle car and shipped south. After many months the train stopped at Auschwitz and that was the last time he saw his father and brother. He found out later that they had been gassed.
- 10:00 The train finally stopped in Dachau. I were then from Oct. 1942 to April, 1945. They were hungry and had diarrhea. The commanders shouting get out! get out!
- 15:00 min. There were many barracks. They were giving a kettle of soup. No utensils. The sign over the camp read "work makes life sweet."
- 20:00 min. When we were put into the barracks, Italians took away their clothes and given T-shirt, underwear and wooden shoes. Overalls and stripes and a Jewish star on the back.

Fell asleep and were awoken at 6:00 a.m. Taken to the kitch and given cloudy hot water called tea and a loaf of bread that 10 people had to share. You ended up with only crumbs. We were loaded on the truck to Munich to clean the streets from the bombing. Children would spit at us and throw rocks.
- 25:00 min. Return to the barracks in the evening, got lots of news that people were shot and beaten. The barracks were cleaned during the day with choline powder, "stunk like hell."
- 30:00 min. Vegetable soup, no bread, peels from vegetables. We were very tired and

had to sleep on a hard board. Different barracks #27, #26 were getting showers and clean clothes. I started to get lice and would eat around your wounds. I was limping because of a wound and didn't heal until after the war.

- 35:00 min. Heard news that there was fighting in England. I was building a bomb, it exploded. I had Shrapnel in my back. I got no medical help; got beaten by a guard (1/1943). He kicked me in my eye - got no medical help.
- 40:00 min. Lice around my eye, but not inside. Once/month you got your hair shaved. You would scratch all the time. One of the guards saw my ring my mother gave me. Chopped my finger to get the ring.
- 45:00 min. Winter 1943-1943 - heard people were screaming and were getting gassed. Was taking a shower and passed out. Austrian soldier spoke to the guard, got clean bandage and 2 white pills.
- 50:00 min. 1945 - end of the war. I was very weak. The bread was from wood. Got diarrhea, had to run to the latrine. Pants were dirty; cleaned clothes and large kettle. Got a beating; they thought I was cooking food.
- 55:00 min. April 1945 - could not move. People were dying. Had to be held up to get bread.
- 60:00 min. Heard that replacements were coming from Belgium, Norway and Bulgaria. The war wouldn't last long. There was no fuel, no ammunition. At night we would say a prayer in a corner. A Rabbi would lead it. Next morning the Rabbi was beaten and taken away. Someone was spying.
- 65:00 min. April 1945 - sunny day. Two black men walk through the door and a stretcher. I had never seen a black person. I thought it was the devil. They were Americans. I was brought to a tent - my hand was clean. Stitches to my eye. They spoke in English, war was over and we were free - did not understand. Then someone spoke in German. Felt relief - was brought food.
- 70:00 min. By summer 1945 - had recovered and free to go.
- 75:00 min. Going back to Dachau, 1942 - to end of the war - very hungry, got beaten. Saw bodies brought in to the field, they were naked.
- 80:00 min. 1940 - Life change, lost freedom. Had 5 cows. Mother had very large

vegetable and fruit garden - made jams. Once/week visit uncle to shower in his sauna - after prayer drank. Talk and played outside.

- 85:00 min. My father had 5 brothers and 1 sister. Live in the middle of Latvia. Nearest shul was 60 miles. Prayers done in the kitchen. Once a month would visit his uncle for a service. Grandfather told wonderful stories. Grandmother made cheesecake - was a great cook. We ate all the time, cut wood for winter.
- 90:00 Noticeable change when the Germans occupied the Baltic. Lived in the city in a dormitory - went to school. Soviets were nice, the Germans were busive.
1941 - things changed when they knew you were Jewish.
- 95:00 min. 1942- wore Start of David - didn't know what was happening. Never heard about Kristallnacht.
- 100:00 min. Thought about Germany - too militaristic.
105:00 min. East Germany needs more punishment.
- 110:00 min. Nov. 1945 - wounds have healed. Free to go, but where? Was on my own. Walk the streets.
- 115:00 min. Was very hungry, smelled food and followed the smell to a GI tent. Started to help out in the kitchen, heating water for coffee, peeling potatoes and washing dishes
- 120:00 min. Capt. said something about volunteering for culinary school. He was in fatigues. Thought he was a GI and ended up at the Culinary school in Zurich, Switzerland. No one spoke English. Learned French.
- 125:00 min. French cooking was in French. While in Switzerland - no word from his family. Wrote many letters, no replay.
- 130:00 min. 1952-53 - Sent package - 2 mo. later packages were returned, refuse to accept.
Aug. 1990 - sent letters to Postmaster and mother (decided to try again). Got a letter back that his mother and sister survived. They stayed in the same house until 1974.
- 135:00 min. Married in Switzerland. 1951 came to USA. 1963 wife died. Raised 6 children from 3-14 years.