

April 9, 1989

SAMUEL GRUNGOLD

Interviewer: Steve Cohen - Louise Goodman

25:00 sec. Born: Poland 1926

Childhood & family history - Schooling - public & Hebrew school education

Home environment - comfortable

1929 - Moved by Germans from home to 1-bedroom apartment.  
Polish assistance to Germans

Labor Camp: At 15 yrs. old - sent to labor camp in exchange for his brother

5 min. Life in labor camp  
Parents could "buy out" Samuel from labor camp

7 min. Release from labor camp. Family were told to move to train station family knew what to expect & hid.

9 min. Camp busing - description of Commander - Ruthlessness  
Life was so expendable - 30/40 people died daily  
Bare subsistence (food/water)  
Fear gave them ability to continue to work

14 min. Beatings - survival despite conditions.

16 min. Camp - bars were put around camp. Work in the camp or at factory.

18 min. Move to Austravitz (another camp). Father was in camp with him.  
One day 105 people killed including father (Samuel was 16 at time.)

Experience of father & friend killed in camp.

Vermacht had controlled camp - Change - control to SS

19 min. Move to new camp. Description of 2 commanders - winter conditions. Kept outside all night/tested to see if workers could

survive.

- 22 min. Austrovitz Camp/"civil" -  
Workers had hair - couldn't believe how much better the conditions were. Food plentiful. Honeymoon didn't last very long.
- 1944:  
Moved to Auschwitz (prior: for 2 years in the 2 camps)  
Impressions - fear. Selection process ... Barracks
- 25 min. Everything was done to make life more miserable (describes clothing)  
  
Every camp separated with barbed wires.  
Experiments with twins.  
Distribution of food/bowls & no spoons.  
Beatings consistent.  
(16 years old at this time)
- 30 min. Camp: Auschwitz 2 (called another name)  
Different environment.  
Showed no. on his arm. Called only by number/never by name.  
Germans took whatever Jews brought with them.  
- Jewelry  
- Money  
- Clothes
- 33 min. Bartered food for clothing. Beaten because commanders found out he bartered his coat. "Lucky" he wasn't sent to head of camp instead.  
Described type of death if sent to head.
- 37 min: Moved from camp by train - 2 day trip. Not given any food during this time. Pollacks - 200-300 people per train. At station, took out dead people to make room.  
  
At camp: rightly heard siren from the bombs.  
"Bombed everyplace, but no us"  
  
Moved from danger after 2 weeks to \_\_\_\_\_
- 40 min. Kapos - survival: Hunger is the worst thing. Typhus. 25-30 people killed everyday.  
  
Painter was killed. Commander was warned never to kill anyone who had a profession. While delirious - told commander he was a painter & survived.
- 43 min. Flosse - Russians came closer to camp - were noticed by train. Attacks from

planes. Night time walked. Daytime - hid in woods. Ate in woods whatever could to survive. Without food, cold - many didn't survive

47 min. Description of beds at Flosse - 1 blanket for 4 people. Cut it up and used blanket to cover feet.  
When commander found out - beaten. In line to be beaten - ran to get out of line.

Ret. to story of being in the woods. Heard planes overhead. Rainy-wet - nothing to cover yourself. Everyone gathered; 5-- people told to lie face down.

50 min. Germans left - Ran away if shot them, thought they could be heard. Life saved - stayed at home of German woman for 2 days.

American soldiers - never saw white bread - "like snow." Taken to hospital.

55 min. Liberated - once recuperated - told by American - free. Went to Check border.

#### 2nd tape

30 min. Chechoslovakia - given bread by Red Cross. Returned to trading coat for food. Talked about bread. Ate whole bread one day (which he had stolen) and got so sick, he thought he would die.

Trailer brought bread to camp - With friend tried to steal bread from trailer. Food - Was so hungry - never enough. Went to where Germans threw food away.

3 min. Chechoslovakia - treated them well. Wanted to get to Poland. - had to go through Prague. First time ate a piece of salami - unbelievable.

5 min. Told not to go to Poland. Polish army were still attacking Jews. Still in clothes from Germany. Decided to go to Sweden instead to Budapest.

1945 Asked if want to go to Israel. Russian soldiers at Austrian border. If don't "smear" - you don't go. Walked over hills into Austria.

9 min. Jewish brigade - Italy - camp modern - not antisemitic.

Went south - near Milan. English government against their going to Israel. Had to wait until Israel proclaimed a state.

- 1948           Went to Israel.
- 12 min.       Life in Israel - Heat could bake bread because of the heat. War still going on.
- Met wife in Italy & married there. Wife 17 - he was 20. Couldn't legally get married in Italy because of age.
- Israel         Found apartment "better than the tents." Worked in construction - apprentice. Had to go into the Army for 2 years. When went to doctor - told to have a family.
- 18 min.       Living in Israel - left army for 1 week to take care of family - they needed money. Court-martial/hearing because left Israeli army).
- 23 min.       Need to money to support family. When finished service in Army - difficult find a job.
- "Fight to exist wherever you go." Had to work 2 jobs - worked 7 days a week.
- Reparation from Germans with money - bought refrigerator "joy". Now living like a human being.
- 27 min.       Started to live a little better. Papers to come to America.
- Review family - find family - received letter from cousin in Italy. Only person to survive.
- Underground - brothers were killed by Polish underground. They were antisemitic. First thing asked by Poles - "Why did you survive. Didn't know what choice to make. Samuel went with father to concentration. Sister went with mother to the train.
- 32 min.       Poland before war - without money, don't get what you want. Needed a dowry to marry.
- When war started everything taken by Germans - ruined property. Sisters probably went to gas chamber. Brother-in-law went to camp. Some women were in camps with men, though in sep. barracks. Woman needed for chores - prostitutes
- 36 min.       Choices - How did you have chance to chose which camp to go to? Took risks - had to survive. In Germany, would say I lose confidence in yourself, you lose everything.

In camps - spoke Jewish to one another. In barrack - Hungarian Jews predominately. Learned some language in order to get food.

Bar Mitzvah - June 1939 - before Germans invaded in 3 mos. (Sept.). First experience beaten by Germans.

42 min: German occupation - Jews required to work for Germans sooner or later. We knew we would be sent to concentration camps. First Germans came to Jewish committee: Required number of people to work - could barter - money for people. Little by little took all the Jews money and sent them to camps.

46 min. Jewish observance in the camp: Attempts to escape from camp. Others shot when anyone escaped. Escapees when caught - hung by feet. No where to run to. Maybe could survive if stayed in camp. Divided food.

51 min. Reaction to food - face would swell because of having soup every day. Steal food - survival. Bags from cement used to insulate shoes. Jackets

53 min. Did people in camps fight with one another? Kapos in the camps.

All work - rules for how to do work were extreme ... as were punishments for not doing it correctly.