

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

JACK PRICE

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Gayle Kammerman

Dates: May 16, 1989
January 20 and 22, 1993

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Holocaust Oral History Archive

Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

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JP - Jack Price [interviewee]
GK - Gayle Kammerman [interviewer]
Date: May 16, 1989
[Supplementary telephone interview]
JF - Josey G. Fisher [interviewer]
Date: January 20 and 22, 1993

Tape one, side one:

GK: Tapes on Jack Price for Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archives. Please tell me where you were born and when and a little bit about your family?

JP: I was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1924, May the 15.

GK: What was your life like before the war or before your life was changed by the Nazi victories in Europe, your family life?

JP: Before the war I was attending school, public school, and then everything was cut off. They close all the schools up. That was the end of it. We were all considered grownups. No more children.

GK: What age were you at this point?

JP: In 1940, 16.

GK: Sixteen. What type of business was your family in?

JP: Import and export materials.

GK: Did your family experience antisemitism before the Hitler period and, if so, please tell me about it.

JP: Poland was known for antisemitic country. People were very anti-Jewish for different reasons. They were prejudiced because the Jews were more aggressive than they were and the Jews were the minority and that's why they could do anything they wanted and get away with it before all the laws with everything.

GK: Did you or your family belong to any Jewish organizations or to a synagogue before Nazism changed your life?

JP: Well, in essence it wasn't synagogues like here. It was on a smaller scale; every other block had a synagogue. It was on a smaller scale where they had a group of maybe 50 people.

GK: So you did belong to one?

JP: My parents did.

GK: Was your family religious?

JP: No, not very religious, but they all went to synagogue if it was a Saturday.

GK: Did any men in your family serve in any national army?

JP: No.

GK: Can you tell me a little about your life in Poland in the early part of 1939 before the German invasion?

JP: As I said before, I was attending school. And I had a home and I had a family, I had a warm home.

GK: About how many Jews lived in your town or your city, approximately?

JP: In our city? Of course that depends after or before the ghetto, after the ghetto it was all over, but before that, I would say about 200,000.¹

GK: Was it a highly organized Jewish community?

JP: Yes, it was organizations, synagogues, all kind of life, Jewish life, schools, colleges.

GK: If there was a *Kehila*, did you or your family view it-- you know Orthodox Jews-- they represent others in the Jewish community?

JP: I don't know about viewing. I know that we didn't belong direct. They were the leaders and they were representing us.

GK: Do you think they represented the best interest of the community?

JP: At that time, yes.

GK: What happened to you and your family during the weeks following the Jewish invasion? [GK means the German invasion].

JP: We were still in Warsaw, we still had everything till they started to liquidate. They started to come around and take away everything.

GK: Did you receive any kind of help during this time from non-Jews?

JP: Well lodge was what I received. You mean during the occupation?

GK: Yes.

JP: Yes, I was staying with them.

GK: You stayed with them?

JP: Yes, different times, different places.

GK: When were you ordered to go to the ghetto?

JP: 1940.

GK: And which ghetto was it?

JP: Warsaw Ghetto.

GK: Did most of your community go to the same place?

JP: Okay, okay. The ghetto? Well, what they did they assigned certain streets. Certain ones that there was a majority of Jews they made a ghetto. Where there wasn't a majority they made them move into the ghetto. Where there wasn't a majority of Poles they made them move into their own district, place. What they did was they divided Warsaw into three places, three districts, German, Polish and the ghetto.

GK: Were you able to leave the ghetto to work at first?

JP: No, I had to, I couldn't unless I would join the labor groups.

GK: When was the ghetto closed?

JP: Completely? In 1942, July the 22.²

¹There were over 350,000 Jews in Warsaw before the war.

GK: Did you meet refugees from other cities or countries in your ghetto?

JP: Yes, I did.

GK: From where? What cities?

JP: In our group one was from France and they were from the surrounding villages, not too, not too far away.

GK: Not far away.

JP: Just from the surrounding.

GK: After the ghetto was closed were you able to have contact with the outside?

JP: It was difficult to get across, because we had to go through the wall, but sometimes we made it and sometimes we couldn't make it.

GK: How did you and your family support yourselves?

JP: I used to go out on the other side and buy food and bring it in to them so that's how. I was the one who kept them alive.

GK: How long did this continue?

JP: Till the liquidation, July 22, that was the end.

GK: How would you describe the Jewish Council in your town or city?

JP: There was a lot of corruption.

GK: Anything in particular?

JP: A lot of, a lot of bribery. A lot of corruption. Poor people were sent to the labor camps to do all kinds of hard work and rich ones would buy themselves out. They would keep their kids home.

GK: Did you attend school or classes of any kind or the synagogue?

JP: In the ghetto? No. everything was out. It was against the law.

GK: Did you have any communication with the outside world or about events through newspapers or the radio?

JP: No.

GK: Now, were you aware of any underground in the ghetto?

JP: Yes, I was, but that didn't start until late.

GK: When did that start?

JP: It started after 1942 when they started to liquidate and they saw the result because there were a few escapees who came back and told them what's happening to the people.

GK: What did they say?

JP: They told them how they're murdering them, how they're gassing them because before they thought they just sending them to working camps and as a matter of fact before they killed those people they made them write letters to their relatives, to their families saying they're having good, they're working hard and they're eating and they're

²The ghetto was closed off in November 1940. In July 1942 the deportation from the ghetto to camps (mainly Treblinka) started. The final liquidation did not occur until May 1943 when it was burned down.

living to send warm clothes and so forth, not to worry, they'll be home. That was before they sent them to the gas chambers.

GK: When did the escapees come back, what month and year, to tell you what was going on?

JP: That was after July 22 when they started every day to take 10,000 people to send them to Treblinka. So on the way some of them succeeded in escaping and they came back to the ghetto and told them what's happening to them.

GK: What year?

JP: '42.

GK: Now, how did you get involved with the resistance group?

JP: I met up with different people and they introduced me to the resistance.

GK: You were what age?

JP: Sixteen, seventeen, and they told me that I'm one from the ghetto and I'm going to help him out and being I didn't look Semitic they accepted me.

GK: Tell me, how you-- the whole story, how you-- this evolved with you being on the Aryan side and everything that happened during that time. How it started and what...

JP: I was going over the wall, on the other side, for food and then they got in touch with me, in the ghetto, with a proposition to bring in arms too and hide them.

GK: Around what date?

JP: In 1942, early '42, and then when I was left on the other side when the ghetto was to be liquidated completely, so I befriended some people and some of them were from the underground, and that's how they took me in.

GK: And did you bring arms into the ghetto?

JP: Yes.

GK: And how long did this continue?

JP: Till '42, after '42 July 22 we couldn't do nothing any more.

GK: All right. Now, tell how you-- what happened when the ghetto was liquidated, where you were and what occurred after that?

JP: When the ghetto was starting to be liquidated I was on the other side, on the Aryan side. Then I wanted to go back and see who was left, if there was any family left. It was the early part of '43 because I couldn't get in before then. When I got in April it broke out, the uprising, and I, I helped them out in the uprising.

GK: How?

JP: Fighting the Nazis. And then they cut off a few blocks and I was caught in the middle and they took us to the trains to go to Treblinka. Then I got over to that little window and I pulled out the barbed wire with my clothes because I couldn't pull it with my hands and I slipped out. I dived down and they were shooting after me and the train kept going and I went back to Warsaw. I was outside Warsaw.

GK: And then what happened?

JP: And I remained on the Aryan side, as an Aryan, the resistance...

GK: Did you have papers saying you were an Aryan?

JP: I got it from the underground, huge Jewish underground, from the Aryan side.

GK: And how did you survive?

JP: I survived by dealing. We were buying up uniforms and buying up arms from the Germans. They were sympathetic to our cause, not the Jewish cause, the Polish cause, and they were just from the regular army. And they were selling, they were [unclear] sending back to the hospital they were the wounded soldiers and we were buying from them for the Polish underground.

GK: And then what happened from then on?

JP: Well, there were different episodes. I was caught a couple of time and I got somehow out of it.

GK: Do you want to explain any of the episodes or what happened?

JP: Yeah. One particular time we went across the bridge. You see, Warsaw was two parts. It was Warsaw and then was a smaller part on the other side and I went with another fellow. We were dressed in uniforms with [unclear] with those arm bands. You know Nazi armbands, and we had uniforms, *droshke*, they called it, you know, a horse and buggy, and we went across the bridge and there were two field police, it's like army police. And they stopped and they hollered to stop. He said he has to stop and I said "keep going", and he said, "No, otherwise they shoot me." We stopped and I walked back to them and I greeted them with "*Heil Hitler*" and I told them in German, I said, "We're delivering those uniforms to a hospital there [unclear] and the officer went by trolley, he didn't want to go with us." And I said, "If you don't believe it you can come with us and verify," and he just let us go.

GK: What other incident?

JP: One second we would have been shot any wrong move, 'cause the other fellow said, "Let's jump in the river." I said, "Nothing doing because you'll never make it."

GK: And what age were you?

JP: About 16.

GK: Do you feel strengthened in your experiences by religious faith, or during this time, or by hope of a speedy Allied victory?

JP: Well, what really was every parent's wish-- they saw the end coming so they said to the children, they said, "Whole generations perished and there wasn't a name left,"-- they said "At least let there be a name left, fight for survival." That was the wish of the parents.

GK: And that's what kept you alive?

JP: There should be a name left because there was millions with no names left, completely wiped out. Of course, there was a fight every minute for life, every second.

GK: Tell me a little bit about the members of your resistance group, their ages and how they survived and where they were from.

JP: You're talking about on the Aryan side?

GK: Yes.

JP: Okay. We were a whole group and everybody had to occupy himself with something. We couldn't walk the streets because it was very dangerous.

GK: Was this the group that the book was written about in the name of...?

JP: Cigarette Sellers from Three Crosses.³ The reason they call it Three Crosses is because we used to meet there, the meeting place.

GK: And this was located where?

JP: On the other side of Warsaw. It was Warsaw, but the other side.

GK: Okay, tell me a little bit about your involvement with them and everybody that was in the group.

JP: There were younger ones, so what they did to occupy themselves and earn extra money they would sell cigarettes, that's why they call it Cigarette Sellers, that the title. The older ones were dealing in different things like uniforms and arms and all that stuff for the underground, and we used to protect them. As a matter of fact, the gentile kids used to chase them and used to accuse them of being Jews and they wanted to denounce them so three of us-- one was a gentile fellow, who was with us-- we would come dressed in these uniforms, and they would escape and we warned them, and they said they're going to come back. One time they came back again and the Polish people joined in to beat them up. They didn't know that the ones they were protecting were Jews. But after a while it stopped because they got afraid of us.

GK: Tell me about the different people, their names, where they were from, and so forth and so on, in the book.

JP: Well, the majority were from Warsaw. Some of them were from near villages, one was from France.

GK: And their names?

JP: [unclear] I don't know exactly.

GK: Okay, and how long did this group stay together?

JP: They stayed, let's see, 19...

GK: When did it start and when did it end approximately?

JP: After liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto.

GK: The end...?

JP: '43 till '45.

³The *Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square* by Joseph Ziemian. Hamenora Publishing House Tel Aviv in Yiddish & English. Mr. Price was known as "Stasiek-from-Praga."

GK: From '43 to '45. And can you tell me anything else that you remember about between '43 and '45, what you did during that time?

JP: Well, this is what I did. I was buying and selling stuff for them. As a cover up I used to shine shoes and in order to get the contact with the soldiers.

GK: That was your contact?

JP: Yes. We couldn't just walk over because one time I walked over to the wrong one and he was a railroad policeman and he was, he told me he would put me into the Gestapo and I finally pleaded and begged him and he let me go because you never know when you start, the only ones you could do anything with was just private soldiers, the regular army. They were more sympathetic. They saw the war was lost and [unclear].

GK: You told me you were involved in the two uprisings?

JP: Yes.

GK: Okay, tell me a little about it.

JP: The second one? Okay, 1944. The [unclear] uprising started in August and we all joined the groups, the fighting groups, and we were fighting the Germans.

GK: Tell me as much as you possibly can about the uprisings, what part you played in them, how you survived, what your contacts were and how you maintained your life style from day to day.

JP: Well, the Ghetto uprising...

GK: And dates, as many as you can remember.

JP: That was in April 1943 that it started and that's when I came, came over to the ghetto. They enlisted me right away, they enrolled me in the fighting units and I was fighting alongside of them till finally there was nothing left to fight, so I escaped from the train that took us.

GK: And then you went where?

JP: I went over to the Aryan side. I was on the Aryan side when I escaped from the train. So we used to meet up with the different children from the group. You always sensed it that we were Jewish-- that the looks, that the signs, that the way we were walking and everything and you had nowhere to go, and that's how we met up with them. We started a conversation and we found out that we are Jewish and they found out they are Jewish and that's how the group got bigger and bigger. Someone would say why don't we meet over here, and that's how it started and every day it seemed like more and more came up.

GK: Where did you live during that time?

JP: Well, in the beginning I still lived in a bombed out house in the cellar. Then I used to live in a garden, then I lived one time in a grave. We used to take out the casket, put it outside and we used to get in there and sleep there until they chased us out of there.

GK: And you said you were-- continue on.

JP: Then I met up with a fellow, he was singing, he was a Polish invalid. He had a good voice. I befriended him in the ghetto and he said to me, "Do you have where to sleep?" and I said no. So he said, "There's a place here for homeless people." But they weren't just plain people, they were thieves, they were drunkards, they were all kinds of underworld element and they belonged to a sect called "*Albert*" you know-- the brothers-- and you paid \$10 and you signed in and you belonged there, you slept there, you came every night to sleep there. So one time I was denounced that I'm Jewish and the Gestapo came for me. When I came later the doorman tipped me off and I took off and I had to change my identity. I couldn't go under that name anymore. I got different papers.

GK: From where?

JP: From the Jewish underground.

GK: And then what happened?

JP: Then I found a different place and I told them I belong to the underground and I told them that I had to travel from place to place, I lived in a bunker for a while.

GK: And where did you get the money for any arms or for food?

JP: I used to earn my own money. We were the only group so we used to earn more than the other ones. We used to support ourselves and help out other ones. The organization wanted to help us, but we didn't accept it. The only thing we accepted was the papers, that we needed the identity papers, because without that we were doomed completely. We had to have something to show, but the younger ones used to receive like 500 *zlotys* a month.

GK: And how did you earn money?

JP: By buying and selling goods. See uniforms-- there were no materials during the war. So uniforms were in demand. They used to bleach them and make different things out of them, German uniforms.

GK: What age were you at this point?

JP: That was '44, so I think about 19.

GK: And '44, from there what happened?

JP: The uprising started, the Polish uprising, and after the uprising they put us out. They sent us to prisoner of war camps and I jumped out and I went to a village and I stood there with some peasants.

GK: And how long were you there?

JP: Till liberation in 1945.

GK: Okay. Try now to tell me as much as you can how you survived in the ghetto and on the Aryan side on the outside of the ghetto and how you were involved in the resistance. Tell me as much as you can about that.

JP: Being that I was the only provider for the family, I used to go over the wall every day in the morning and come back at night and I used to bring in food and I used to bring in underground arms. The way I got in touch with them-- they got rather in touch with me because by the way they suggested that perhaps I could work along with

them and bring back arms, and that's how I got involved and that's how it started. And that was an every day job. Sometimes I couldn't go back the same day. I had to stay over on the other side and come back the following day or two days later. But every day was the same thing, the fight for survival to keep the family alive by providing them with food. That was the main thing. The only way was by going over and smuggling food back.

GK: Now, how did you survive outside the ghetto?

JP: Outside the ghetto, I was on Aryan papers. I received Aryan papers from the Jewish underground. I was dealing with them. When I say dealing it doesn't sound so good, but in uniforms and arms for the underground. They got in touch with me and they told me to get the stuff for them, and the worst time was at night when you had to look for a place where to stay, until I accomplished a couple places-- established where I could stay. We used to sleep in bombarded out houses and cellars in the ground any way we could and that was a fight every night for survival because there was a curfew. At eight o'clock you were not allowed to be seen in the street. Anybody after eight o'clock was shot in sight. We had to hide any way we could.

GK: Can you tell me any of your experiences when you were in the resistance?

JP: During the fighting?

GK: Any of it.

JP: Well, when I was caught and they took me as a hostage-- do you recall that? I did it already, so I am not going to repeat that.

GK: Which one?

JP: When I was in prison...

GK: Tell me about that again.

JP: Okay. In 1944 the Polish resistance was going strong and they were attacking the Germans everywhere they found them. And, what they did one time they blocked off 10 blocks and they put out all the men and boys any able and they took us to a garden there. It used to be a hospital but now it was an army camp [unclear] and we sat on the ground and the trucks came and they took us to prison. They took us to prison and we were as hostages. Being there they brought us downstairs and they integrated [he means interrogated], they questioned everybody. In that group there was one Jewish kid about 10 years old. He was dark complected. I didn't know he was Jewish and he didn't know I was Jewish. When it came to his turn, the officers saw that he's a kid. They had two groups, one on the right, and one on the left. The one on the right was to go to freedom-- and they had a group that went for their working camp and one group for concentration camp. They put him in the one to go free, so a civilian Gestapo man called him over and said to him that you're Jewish and sure enough they found out right away and they put him in the basement in the cellar of the prison. It was not so overcrowded. The next day so when it came to my turn they were looking in my eyes straight for about 10 minutes and they questioned and questioned and they couldn't detect anything about

my Jewish. And I went back upstairs to the cell. A few days later they took us out in the corridor and they had an inspection, medical inspection, and I went out about a third from the table and all I wanted to know whether they're writing down names because I figured if they were writing down the names that I'm doomed. But they didn't. They just asked the number of cell which we were in, and so then I turned around and went back to the cell and they didn't know. But the following day a Ukrainian opened up the little window and asked if there's a Jew there, so I thought I was betrayed. But they put that Jewish kid in the basement. There was such a mess over there and they didn't remember where and they were looking for him and they got him out of the basement. After that we were there two weeks. They took us to that transit working camp which was in the ghetto, consisted of one part for the Polish transit-- 56 days, and then they let him go to freedom. And there was also a concentration camp with an oven for Belgian, French and Holland Jews, so when I was there at night the Polish inmates used to received packages from the outside from their families. Of course, the Jews didn't receive nothing. They were just starving to death. So the big pot of soup they used to tell them to spill out, so I took some out and they were all around me, the Jewish prisoners, and I gave it to them and they thought I was like a god, I saved their lives. But the Polish inmates they were suspecting something. They said, "You got a Jewish heart, maybe you're Jewish," and I had to stop it after a while. So we were there 56 days, and then went out back in freedom. They gave me a job, but I never went anyhow to work in a German ammunition factory, and I continued again with the group. While I was there everybody thought I was dead already from the group, from our group, so when I came there they hugged me and kissed me, like I came from another world.

GK: Did you see anything at that camp? You said part of it was a concentration camp with the ovens. What did you see there?

JP: Well, I just saw the people. We weren't allowed to get near it, but I could see what's going on there.

GK: You could see. What did you see going on?

JP: How they were tortured them, how they were taken to work. They were just about skeletons walking. I was familiar with the place because I was born there and I saw where there used to be a post office before the war-- in the doorway as you walked in they had an oven there. That's where they burned the ones that were dying.

GK: And this was located where in the town?

JP: In the Warsaw Ghetto. After liquidation of Warsaw Ghetto.

GK: And the concentration camp was right in there?

JP: Right in there.

GK: What happened after you returned to the resistance group, after you were in the labor camp?

JP: I went back to normal activities, the same ones and then the Polish uprising broke out.

GK: When?

JP: 1944, August 1, and I joined the ranks. Everybody did to get even with the Nazis, and we were fighting till October 2. We went out-- they took us out as prisoners of war. Then I escaped from the train.

Tape one, side two:

[Long delay before start of the tape]

JP: When they took us out from the prison to go into that transit camp. We had to go for another inspection and there was one door to go in and one door to come out, and there was a sentry at each door and I had no choice I had to go further, didn't know where I was going but I had no choice. When I came to inspection there were two inmates there, Polish doctors and one noticed me and he just winked at me and let me go. And that's how I got through there. He knew that I was Jewish, but he felt that I went through hell. I went through the prison, the Gestapo and all that. And besides he wouldn't give me up. He wouldn't betray me. Besides, he himself was a hostage. He was a prisoner of theirs, a political prisoner, but still he was a prisoner. But not everybody did that. There were very few who did that.

GK: When you were with the peasants, they were non-Jews that helped you during this time?

JP: When I was with-- when I went to that village? I was working for them and as a matter of fact the guy himself was part of the underground.

GK: Is that how you found him?

JP: No. I went to that open market. It's like you buy a horse or an animal. I went over to him and said, "Do you need a farm hand?" "How much do you want?" I didn't care about the price, I just looked for a roof over my head and get away from the city. And I said, "Whatever you give me I'll work for you." So I worked for the food, food and room.

GK: For how long?

JP: I worked for one and then over there one suspected and she said, "You must be Jewish because you have no family, nobody, and you escaped." So the very next morning I took off and I went to a different village and I wound up with a second family.

GK: And what happened there?

JP: There? I was there till the war ended, till the liberation.

GK: Where were you when you were liberated exactly?

JP: It was about 70, 80 miles from Warsaw.

GK: Who was responsible for your liberation?

JP: The Russians, the Russian army.

GK: And from there...?

JP: I went back to Russia and I met up with some friends. I looked around and I couldn't find nobody. The only ones I met that I knew was from our group and I couldn't find nobody. I traveled everywhere.

GK: Now, from there you were liberated and then what happened? How did you wind up in the United States? Tell me what stages...

JP: Well, I signed up for Israel and the United States.⁴ What they did is, we didn't have no quota. There was an international orphan organization that they sent them over here after a week that you signed up and when we came here to the United States the Federation took over and they placed us in foster homes. As a matter of fact, one family wanted to adopt me, but I would never go for it because I didn't want to lose my family name.

GK: How old were you at that time?

JP: About 18. I would lose my family name and I rejected it. As a matter of fact, one family wanted to adopt me, and I would never go for it.

GK: That's what kept you alive?

JP: No, I mean I didn't want to better myself. At that point I wanted to keep my name because that was the wish of my family.

GK: That's what kept you going during the whole time?

JP: To keep the generation, right. Then I got a job. They sent me to school for English and I caught up with English. I looked in the paper and I got a job as a delivery fellow. I came over and the man says, "Are you driving?" and I saw a bicycle and I said "I'll drive this," and he saw how I was anxious and he hired me. And I was working there for 10 years until I went on my own. As a matter of fact when I got married they gave my wedding.

GK: After you were liberated and you went back to Warsaw, can you tell me what you witnessed and what happened at that time?

JP: Well, what I witnessed was a great deal of antisemitism, perhaps more than before the war, and regret that we survived, and me personally with my looks they couldn't tell that I was Jewish and a lot of Jewish people, survivors, who came back from concentration camps and tried to gain back their home or businesses, they were murdered by the same butchers like the Germans, by the Poles because they wouldn't accept them. They didn't want to give them back what belonged to them.

GK: This happened...?

JP: After liberation. It was in 1945.

GK: What did you witness, anything in particular?

JP: I did witness when two men were walking in the street and they were shot right in the side, on the spot, for being Jewish. That was the only crime, like the Nazis used to do with us because they didn't want no survivors, they didn't want no Jews anymore. They were happy to get rid of them.

GK: Anything else that you can tell me about that time that you can remember?

JP: I do remember I took out a Jewish girl, we went for a walk and I was approached by Gentiles and they were ridiculing me. The said, "Don't you have your own kind? You have to go out with a Jew?" and I could see the hatred right then and

⁴Mr. Price's personal history form indicates that he was in Landsberg Displaced Persons Camp in 1946 and in Eschwege from 1946- 47 and emigrated to the United States in 1947.

there and I couldn't wait to get out of there, because-- and I never went back because the hatred was so great.

GK: And what date was this?

JP: That was 1945, end of '45.

GK: And then you were liberated?

JP: Yes.

GK: Okay, another question that I wanted to ask you was you had mentioned here in your history that you have a bullet in your leg. Can you tell me what happened?

JP: I was shot during the heavy fighting in the Polish uprising in 1944. We were attacking the Germans, there was a building, a main building leading to the bridge to connect the other side of Warsaw. Over there the Russians were and we tried to make contact with them to open the bridge and there was very heavy fighting and we couldn't succeed because the Germans' fire power was very great and that's where I was shot in my leg. They tried to take the bullet out, but they couldn't take it, and I told them to leave it go the way it is because in a lot of cases they weren't professional doctors, they were just orderlies and they would just amputate. That was the easiest way out and I wouldn't allow that.

GK: The other thing I wanted to ask you about is when you escaped. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

JP: Yes, after the Polish uprising...

GK: Right, since we're talking about that.

JP: When they signed capitulation, they took us all to a war camp, prisoner of war, and on the way about 200 or 300 miles we were near big woods over there, we were still in Poland, the Polish underground liberated us. They attacked the German guards and they killed them and they took us into the woods to become partisans with them, but they were not only against the German fighting but also against the Russians. I thought it was a bad thing to join them and stay there because if they would capture me they would send me to Siberia and I escaped from there.

GK: You were telling me that you remember about one particular guard. Can you tell me something-- his name and what you can remember happened to him?

JP: Yes. He was at the gate, the [unclear], his name was Frankenstein, and he was very vicious. He made up his mind that he couldn't eat breakfast, lunch or dinner until he killed a few Jews, and that's exactly what he did. He was like the Angel of Death. He was [unclear] the people and the minute he came out, when he came close, one notified the other and the streets got like a ghost town. Everybody disappeared. And when he wasn't on duty he would disguise himself in old clothes, and wearing a Jewish armband. He had a burlap bag and in the bag he had a rifle and he'd come near the gate and anybody in sight he would shoot, and after the liquidation of the ghetto they sent him to the Russian front. The Polish underground knew about him too because he did a lot of harm to the Polish underground. When the German army was retreating the peasants got

a hold of him and they nailed him to a door to a barn door like they did to Jesus Christ, alive they nailed him.

GK: And that's how he died. Did you...

JP: He died the same death as he gave Jews a chance.

GK: Did you remember any other guards? Did you meet up with any other guards that you remember?

JP: Well, we didn't know the names, but this one was known by everybody. He was known by everybody. He was just a vicious murderer.

GK: Now, you also mentioned that you had a friend that finally lived in Australia that was in the underground with you. Can you tell me a little bit about him, where he was from and how he survived?

JP: Well, they were from Warsaw. As a matter of fact, they lived in the same building, tenement house, where I lived in the ghetto.

GK: He was not Jewish?

JP: No. Then they were outside the ghetto but they were smuggling stuff, so they were in the ghetto. They were friends from before the war. She was Gentile and he was Jewish. His wife perished and her husband perished, got killed in the fighting, so she took him in hiding. She hid him through the ghetto. Then they went outside the ghetto and she kept the whole family alive as Gentiles and after the war they got married and the children between themselves got married too.

GK: What is his name?

JP: Kostainsky and they live now in Australia. After their liberation, when they went to Israel for a trip, they were declared the Righteous Gentiles and they gave them big honors and medals and everything for hiding out the Jewish people.

GK: One of the children and then the mother?

JP: The son and the mother, as Righteous Gentiles.

GK: That's wonderful.

JP: We warned them to tell nothing because we couldn't trust them.

GK: Were there any other incidents that you can remember with either you or any members of your group having to do with any officers from the SS?

JP: Well I have in that book of mine.

GK: What about the one with the French boy?

JP: Yeah, I'll tell you that. We had one French boy from our group. He came from Alsace, part of France and Germany. He was selling cigarettes on the Aryan side after the ghetto and he bumped into SS. He recognized them a young fellow, from his own hometown, and he greeted him warmly and he invited him for dinner that night to his apartment. He went over. He gave him a big dinner and he treated him royal and he said the following night he wants him to go to the movies with him. We advised him not to go and stay away, hide, but he gained so much confidence he thought that he's a friend

and sure enough the following night he came over to go to the movies and on the way to the movies instead of going to the movies they took him to the Gestapo and he got shot.

GK: What about any other incidents with any other people in the group that sold cigarettes that you can think of, that are in the book, that you can tell me about?

JP: We had some that disappeared without a trace. We don't know what happened to them. One, in particular, we know, was betrayed because I saw German policemen take him to the Gestapo. He was betrayed by the Poles as being a Jew. We never saw him anymore. Things like this when it happened we always disappeared just in case under torture [unclear] the risk. Because we were one group and they knew exactly where we were concentrated, so after a few days we started to come back, but we always disappeared to make sure nobody sees us around anymore.

GK: Can you tell me anything about the author of the book that you can remember?

JP: Yes. He worked outside of the ghetto.

GK: What was his name?

JP: Yosef Zena, Yosef Zisman. He called himself in Polish Yosef Zena. He worked in a German place; it was like a factory. And they had a group in the daytime they worked and at night they went back to the ghetto. I knew one of the Germans there and he told me-- he didn't know I was Jewish-- he told me, he said, "You see that group? Tomorrow, they're going to be sent to a concentration camp, not a concentration camp, but to Treblinka, to be exterminated." And I tipped them off and he took off and that's how we made it.

GK: What about any of the other members of the group from the book?

JP: As I said before, the ones that disappeared without a trace we didn't know what happened to them and, of course, we never saw them anymore, so we know they perished.

GK: You said that you met up afterwards, when you all went back after you were liberated. Did any of them wind up in the concentration camps afterward? After they were with you or can you tell me something about that?

JP: No. Fortunately that whole group survived. During the fighting some of them went over to the Russian side-- they were lucky to escape-- and those who were caught in the middle of the uprising were there, until after the uprising. Then after the war they scattered in different parts of the world, but we were still in contact with them.

GK: And the author of the book, as you said, died?

JP: The author of the book died unfortunately, in Israel, of cancer. We had one of our younger members of our group. We went to swim one day, and we had one Gentile fellow among us. He was a very good friend of mine. We befriended him and he was like a brother with the group. He knew that we were Jewish and he was very sympathetic to us and...

GK: What was his name?

JP: Plonkovsky, Romick [phonetic] this fellow started to drown, so he jumped in to rescue him and unfortunately, he himself drowned. Then after the war this fellow settled in Israel. He was married, happily married with two children. Then when the Eichmann trial started he went to the Eichmann trial to witness it, and when he came home he was so depressed that he hanged himself. He committed suicide.

GK: What was his name?

JP: We called him "Little Stashik".

GK: I want to thank you very much for Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archives and for myself. I know that it was very difficult for you to relive all these experiences, and we really do appreciate it. Thank you again, Jack.

JP: You are very welcome. My pleasure.

[Additional information from Mr. Jack Price regarding his experience in the Warsaw Ghetto, obtained by Josey G. Fisher on January 20 and 22, 1993 by telephone. The following information is from hand-written notes.]

I re-entered the ghetto at the end of July [after the deportations started on July 22, 1942]. Before the deportations, the 13 gates to the ghetto were sentry-armed. After the deportations started, there were sentries every 25 feet on the outside of the wall. The ghetto was surrounded. No one could get in and out.

I had to find a spot that was not patrolled too much. One rainy night was very dark and the guards weren't so anxious to stay at their posts. They walked over and stood together for a smoke and to talk and we climbed over. On top of the wall was cement with pieces of glass in it and then barbed wire. We put cloth over it to cover it over and jumped over the wall.

[Mr. Price verifies the accuracy of the quote attributed to him in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* article of July 22, 1992, "Two Survivors Who Lived by Their Wits in Warsaw"]:

I went back to our apartment in the ghetto. "The door was open, and the room was empty. There was nobody left. Everything was a shambles, thrown around on the floor. The drawers were open. The beds were turned upside down. The Germans were looking for people, and they were looking for money or gold."

I left the ghetto. I continued to smuggle [arms] as long as it was possible: pistols, grenades, dynamite, stuff to make Molotov cocktails. It was hard. I had to find the right occasion [to get through the wall]. There were two undergrounds, one with the Polish Home Army in London who were fascists and who thought the Jewish resistance in the ghetto was all communist. They were reactionaries and [when the Uprising started] were delighted that the Germans would finish the Jews. The other was from Lublin and had been formed by the Russians and was leftist, the Polish Workers Party. They wanted to help and were sympathetic to the Jews. The Jewish underground on the Aryan side was helped by the Polish Workers Party. This was my connection.

I was on the Aryan side on April 19 [when the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began in 1943] and it was difficult to get in. I re-entered the ghetto about 10 days later. Whoever was there was involved. It was one battleground. The civilian population was in bunkers. Only the able-bodied were kept out for fighting purposes, men and women. The others would be in the way. [Mr. Price's succeeding experience is detailed in his earlier interview. When he escaped from the train going to Treblinka, he describes, "There was a Ukrainian guard on top of every car, SS, to shoot anyone who escaped." He was liberated on January 17, 1945.]

[Regarding his statements in his earlier interview about what Warsaw Ghetto inhabitants knew about "resettlement"]:

A couple living eyewitnesses escaped from Treblinka and came back to the ghetto. They told the leaders-- from the Jewish Fighting Organization and from the *Judenrat*-- what they saw exactly with their own eyes. One, who had been working in the train yard in Treblinka, hid in the piles of clothing from the dead which they were shipping back to Germany. He escaped from the train and got back to Warsaw and told them that he saw the gassing. The leaders [from the JFO] put up placards [to warn people] not to volunteer for resettlement, that going means death. A lot of them didn't want to believe it. They didn't want to resist originally because they feared wholesale reprisal. They didn't believe that such a thing is possible. They were still believing that such a thing cannot be true. But it was hopeless. A lot of people on the Aryan side thought it [these reports] was propaganda, too.

[When the deportations started] every day a transport. They said it was eight hours one way to the Russian territories [for resettlement] and eight hours [for the train] back. But the trains went and returned in four hours. They only went about 80 kilometers. The railroad workers who were in the Polish underground, who did for the Jewish underground in the ghetto investigated. Some of these people made marks on the outside of the trains [before they left] so they knew they were the same trains [when they came back.] They knew they were coming back too soon. They want to investigate it, to see how long it took. They were railroad workers. They knew the timing and the distances. These workers took to the trains to a main railroad place about 20 miles from the camp [Treblinka]. They [the Nazis] changed the engineers to all Germans and the trains went onto a different siding with a small engine. This was on a dirt road concealed by the forest. The Polish railroad workers were suspicious and found out from local population who saw this and were suspicious, too. They couldn't figure out where they were going and then they were empty coming back. What are they doing with the people?