KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 1

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Interview with Abraham Rodstein.

A--B--R--A--H--A--M, R--O--D--S--T--E--I--N. Sound

roll 16. Camera roll number 31 continued.

(Cut)

C: 32, marker 1.

(Cut)

C: Marker 2.

SB: Um, when you--where you born.

AR: I was born in Sholietah, Lithuania in October 16,

1928.

SB: Tell me a little bit about your childhood.AR: My

father was a successful business person. We had a movie

house. We had a cafe and a bakery. And I--we lived in

a very nice part of town. I was an only child--very

pampered. I had uh--I caretaker/nanny and uh my mother

never worked. We had a lot of help in the house. We

lived very affluent.

SB: And tell me how you remembered it as things

changed?

AR: In 1940, the Russians--the Soviets occupied Lithua-

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 2

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

nia. One morning we work up and saw the Russian army

in charge of the country and a lot of things changed

then. The took away my father's business made him an

employee in his own business. And after a very short

time, we realized that if we don't move out of the

town, they would eventually arrest my father. This that

the Soviets and send him off to Siberia. In order to

prevent or delay that occurrence we moved to Kovno in

about the fall of 1940 and our life became changed

because my father got a job someplace. We had enough

money from before so economically we were rather well

off. But everything changed. I uh started going to

public school where I always went to private school. I

also had to become a Pioneer. This could be learned to

a boy scout. I wore this white shirt and a red tie and

belonged to Communist Youth Organization because that

was politically correct. And the uh school I went to

was not a private school anymore, as I said before, it

was public school. And the whole life became on a

different level. In order to be politically correct,

the Young Pioneers, they sent everybody in the summer

to camp in summer of 1941 and so happens that the camp

they sent us was Palanga which was a seaside resort

where I use to go every year with my mother in very

very luxurious way and here they put me into big tents

with many people sharing bathrooms and I wasn't use to

anything like that. So at the age of 12, I figured I

had to try to escape. And I figured the only way to

escape is to some how fool them into that I had Appen-

dicitis attack and maybe they'll send me home. That I

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 3

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

did and it so happens that a surgeon in the camp was

somebody who knew me from childhood. Even though he

realized that I am faking it, he managed to send me

home. That was in the summer of 1941, just a few weeks

before the war started. That may have saved my life

because when the Germans overrun that part of Lithua-

nia, which was very close to Germany--I believe that

most of the children in that camp were destroyed.

SB: Tell me about the actually start of the war: what

you saw, what you heard.

AR: In about the summer of 1941, things were very tense

but the Russians were still in full control and we

really didn't know much. One morning, we heard all

kinds of gunfire, bombs and guns and maybe by the next

day, the Germans occupied Lithuania. It was not--there

was very little resistance from the Lithuanians against

the Germans: 'A' because the Russians were too strong,

'B' because the Lithuanians were very much pro-German

and they welcome it.

SB: Um, what other changes? Did--did you notice any

changes just before or just after the Germans came in,

in terms of Lithuanians?

AR: After the Germans came in, and even before they

fully came in, the Lithuanians started to commit tre-

mendous atrocities. Actually cutting off Jews heads

and putting them on fences. And they were horrendous

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 4

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

to such a point that when the Germans came, we found a

relief because they stopped that indiscriminate slaugh-

ter.

SB: Did you witness any of those?

AR: I personally did not witness it but I had people--I

spoke to people who did witness it. And so at your age

how did you feel in general then.

SB: And so at your age how did you feel in general

then.

AR: Started being afraid. That became the primary uh

modus to operate--fear. Fear, uncertainty--we did

never knew what was going to happen.

SB: And so then the decree went out for the ghetto to

be formed? Tell me about yours.

AR: Did, uh, final time later, the decree came out that

all Jews have to move into the ghetto. And it was very

funny because they actually permitted you to trade

houses with Lithuanians who lived in that part of town.

The house which I lived in, belonged to a cousin of my

father's. It was a very very beautiful house. So it

was very easy to get a reasonably nice in the ghetto in

exchange. And that took place and we actually moved

into a house in the ghetto and those people who owned

that house occupied the house we lived in.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 5

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Was that an even trade?

AR: No it wasn't an even trade but it was the best we

could do.

SB: Do you actually remember moving in? Do you remem-

ber?

AR: Oh yes.

SB: Tell me h--what you took.

AR: We could--they did not restrict us from taking any

belongings but due to the fact that the new place was

much smaller and the living space was allocated we

wound up one or more families per room not

per--not--not even per house. So you really took as

little as you had to--just, I mean, just bare necessi-

ties. It immediately became obvious, electricity

wasn't sufficient for all these people, some of the

reconditions were insufficient and the first thing

people did is build and out house.

SB: And the actually move, how did you get there?

AR: I do not recollect.

SB: Um, we have only a little bit. Tell--why don't you

describe to me the living space. As you

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 6

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

AR: As I remember it, my mother, father, and myself

plus two or more people got one room only and we had to

make bunks in order to accommodate everybody. And

there was--the kitchen--there was maybe one

kitchen--and you wound up having to cook over there

maybe for 20 or 30 people. So I remember that we made

little stoves out of sheet metal and we use to

make--and--and we use to be able cook our kindling

wood. That I remember very vividly. And so every

room, more or less, had their own cooking facilities.

SB: What about heating?

AR: In the very beginning, there was enough heat. That

particularly--that--there was a stove I think in every

room. And that was used for heating and also the

cooking facilities gave out enough heat and literally

favorably there were many people in one room, it wasn't

that cold. But that--that was of course in the summer

and the fall. When the winter came, things became very

bad and we started burning furniture.

SB: We're--I think we're just about to run out.

C: Camera roll 33, mark 3.

SB: Um, in the early days of the ghetto, uh were you

aware of actions before the big action?AR: Yeah, they

always had some thing going on.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 7

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Tell--tell me what you remember of that.

AR: I think they had small actions. The rounded up

people--they round people up and they use to send them

away to the ghetto supposedly for--to work camps--some

Estonia--some elsewhere.

SB: And tell me about the Big Action.

AR: The Big Action, that I can remember. It was in

Oct--I think--it was October 28th. I think it was '43

if I'm not mistaken or--

SB: '41.

AR: '41 okay so I was wrong with the year. Everybody

supposedly suppose to have been a they--they did it in

the guise of a census. And people were suppose to all

gather early in the morning in the place called the

Macratu Place. And I remember very vividly it was a

great cold, drizzly day and we went to this week open

field in the morning. And they had this table set up

and this is where they started to make the selections;

to the right and to the left. Whoever went to the

right was saved for the moment. Whoever went to the

left was resettled out of the ghetto.

SB: What happened to your family that day?AR: We man-

aged to stay intact. One of the reasons, we stayed

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 8

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

intact, I believe, we had an inkling that the ghetto

police is not going to be touched. The house we lived

in was also occupied by a high ranking person from the

ghetto police. His name was Gudinski. And the ghetto

police was identified to be an arm band which had a--I

think a Jewish star and some stamping. I was a very

good craftsman and I actually stole, a night, this arm

band of his and I copied it with uh oil paint on a

piece of canvas and my father put it on. And I figure

it then that nobody is going to look at it that closely

so if I make it appear correct, it is going to be

correct. And that was one of the reasons which we

might have been saved. I don't know.

SB: Did your father wear that the whole time when you

walked to the place or I mean was he scared?

AR: He was scared just put it on everyplace because we

were scared of the ghetto police.

SB: You were scared that you would get discovered.

AR: That's right. The ghetto police, not everybody was

bad but not everybody was good. As a rule the ghetto

police were not terrible but we really didn't know whom

we could trust. And even the person who lived in the

same house where we did, I really didn't--we really

didn't know if we an trust him. And you have to real-

ize that when an action like that takes place, chaos,

shouting, yelling, shoving and pushing is one of the

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 9

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

main ingredients by which the Germans were able to make

people behave a certain way. And that chaos which took

place also meant that minute details are overlooked. I

didn't know it then but I feel this is what must have

taken place.

SB: Tell me how you stole his arm band.

AR: Oh it's very simple. They--his coat was hanging in

uh in a kinda vestibule.

SB: Did he have many of them or did he have--

AR: I really remember. All I--I remember it was a

leather coat and that the arm band was pinned round on

the sleeve.

SB: And how--do you remember how long you had it and

how long you borrowed it. What you weren't quick with

it.

AR: I did it over night.

SB: Um, and tell me what you knew of what happened to

the people who went to the left.

AR: As far as we knew, those people were sent to work

in Estonia. Which was not the ghetto anymore but it

was the concentration camp type situation and the

conditions were very harsh and many people perished.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 10

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

And they must have also taken some people to the 9th

Fort and destroyed them. I don't remember the details.

I can not recollect.SB: And you didn't know about it at

the time. And you didn't see them going?

AR: No, you really didn't see anybody going. You just

uh were separated away and eventually that evening came

we went back to uh our place where we lived.

SB: And did you from where you lived, could you hear

machine guns?

AR: I don't believe so, no. I didn't. If they did

machine gun, they didn't do it right there and then.

SB: And what about the--your father somehow, with that

railroad, and sorted clothes or something?

AR: That was, at the previous time, we use to wind up

working in Kovno on the main railroad. And Lithuania

was a place where they use to bring German Jews and

Austrian Jews to be liquidated at the 9th Fort and we

use to do slave labor on the railroad. And we servance

a uh whole contingent of German Jews, who came in, and

they were brought in in regular cars--not in cattle

cars. The Germans tried to maintain that lie all the

way because they figure it's probably much easier to

deal with the people this way. When those people came

and we saw them, we tried to tell them that--try to

blend in amongst us. We have no idea what's going to

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 11

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

happen tomorrow but today this seemed to be safe. And

if they would have blend in amongst us they could have

gone back to the ghetto at night and uh be safe for the

moment. The German Jews were very arrogant--they

didn't believe us because they really put themselves

apart. The use to call us Austjewden and themselves

they use to refer to as German of the Hebraic persua-

sion. And they actually wound up being killed the same

evening at the 9th Fort. And subsequently when we

worked at the railroad, we use to wind up sorting out

clothes because the German, very neatly, packed up and

did whatever they wanted with them. And my father knew

certain people from Germany or from Austria, from

before the war and we actually came across clothing

with the names which recognized.

SB: Back to uh how the ghetto then kind of settled down

into a routine again.

AR: Yes, the ghetto settled into a lull--into a routine

and there was a lot of work being done for the Germans

in the ghetto. We had shops and we also had a trade

school. The trade school was designed, in order to

somehow convince the Germans that if they let the trade

school, the children who are going to learn the trade,

they were subsequently going to provide useful labor

for the German army. And the men who actually started

this whole school, use to be the director or O--R--T,

ORT, it was an American organization before the war, in

Lithuania. His name was Olinski. And that was a

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 12

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

school where they taught you how to be a Locksmith,

Carpentry and other things--trades. I was lucky enough

to also having gone into that trade school. When I was

there, I learned how to be Locksmith. I also learned

how to do very fine Carpentry and after a while, I was

good enough that I went to work in the shops, which is

obviously a safer place. While I was in the shops, I

did a lot of doll houses. My expertise became doll

houses for higher ranking Germans; to the point they

use to bring photographs of their houses. I use to

scale them and build a doll house to mimic there house.

Furniture, electricity inside--very very elaborate set-

ups.

SB: And tell me why it was safe with you?

AR: Well, when you were in this type of a mode, you

were useful. You did things. So, as long as that

regime in the ghetto administration--the German regime

remained as is, you felt safe. I don't know if it was

safe. It's obviously--eventually it was proven it

wasn't but it felt safe.

SB: Um, what about fun in the ghetto?

AR: The ghetto had an orchestra and it so happens the

first violinist of the orchestra of the ghetto didn't

have a bow and I gave him the bow which I had when I

was a child because when I was a child besides going to

regular school, I also went to music school, took the

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 13

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

violin and the piano. And some how my bow and my

violin wound up in the ghetto. So my violin played in

the ghetto orchestra. And we had, I think, if I remem-

ber correctly, we had some theater. We tried to main-

tain inside the ghetto some roots of a life.

SB: Okay, we have to put another roll on.

AR: Sure.

(Cut)BS: Sound roll 17. Camera roll 34.

(Cut)

C: Mark.

SB: In the ghetto, what about books?

AR: We hid many books when we moved into the ghetto.

And in the very beginning of the ghetto, I was very

avid reader and I read vivaciously. I read Hebrew

books. I read Yiddish books. I read Russian books;

Lithuanian books. We got quite--I--I got quite an

education reading because there was nothing to do so we

read books and played cards as children. Were books

forbidden in the ghetto?

SB: Were books forbidden in the ghetto?

AR: Yes they were forbidden but we did bring in books

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 14

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

because the inner life of the ghetto was really around

by the Jewish ghetto police, rather than the Germans.

The Germans lift up most of their administration of the

ghetto to the Jewish people themselves. The just--they

uh had actually had decrees and they Unerout use to uh

execute the decrees. The ghetto police us to keep

order in the ghetto but otherwise only special actions

took place, the Germans didn't free from the ghetto

that much inside.SB: And um were the ghetto police

pretty much good guys?

AR: As the rule the Kovno ghetto police--they're rea-

sonably decent people. Some of them were bad but I can

not recollect any atrocities having been committed by

the ghetto police in Kovno.

SB: And early in the ghetto, were the valuables taken?

AR: The valuables were taken away and the Germans

actually put in so much fear in us--they said that if

we don't turn in the valuables, the have special dogs

and special equipment to sniff out the valuables. And

one day we had to return the valuables. They put up

tables and people actually went and gave all their

valuables away. I know we did. So people who didn't

believe them, probably didn't turn everything in but

the fear was so great and the believe that they can

sniff everything out was so proper that people turned

them out.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 15

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: And um, did you do any organizing for food? Any

trading? Any smuggling?

AR: Yes, we did a lot of or--sp--uh trading for food

with the Lithuanian peasants. My father had a tremen-

dous amount of very good clothing; suits, shirts and

what not. And we traded in for food with the peasants

for quite a while.

SB: How--do you remember how you did it? Where you

went and--

AR: We actually traded it by going to the fence and uh

they made holes in the fence and we use to give them

goods and they use to give the uh--back potatoes and

turnips and uh bacon and what not.

SB: And so in terms of your health, were you--did you

have enough food?

AR: The Kovno ghetto, I don't believe people actually

starved. We didn't have any luxurious food but we had

enough of potatoes, legumes and food of that nature

that people had enough to sustain themselves. Kovno

ghetto did not have the mass starvation which places

Lodeshovarso had.

SB: And what about celebrations? Did you eh--and

religious uh--?

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 16

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

AR: We managed to uh celebrate our hol--holidays. We

were never--my family was never very religious. So

religion as such never played a big role but we cele-

brated holidays in the traditional way. And that

people still managed to somehow continue.

SB: And how did you? He--like were you able to cook

special things?

AR: Well the--the celebrations were really it defined

by a little bit more food than maybe food which was a

little bit more special.

SB: Um, other things to do with your work, um you

worked on the children's brigade at a farm once?

AR: I worked on the children's brigade. The name of

the farm was Marva and uh my father was actually the

foreman of that brigade. And we use to be taken by uh

truck to the farm and we use to weed uh gardens. The

tomatoes, cucumber, cabbage, potatoes and what not.

And that was a reasonably good place to work because

while you were doing it you had enough food. The uh

people who oversaw--oversaw us were not the Germans,

they were actually farmers themselves who essentially

contracted us to work for--for them--they paid the

Germans certain monies.

SB: And so did you eat food while you were there?

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 17

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

AR: Yes, yes we cou--we--we--we ate food. We ate

vegetables and also we managed to uh have they uh

Lithuanians cook some cooked food for us for exchanging

things. One of the uh--I was very enterprising at that

time and the uh peasants liked very very colorful

kerchiefs. So I use to make kerchiefs. I use to take

white bed sheets, cut them up into squares and I got

hold of some paint. I use to make templates and make

multi-colored kerchiefs and that was a means of ex-

changing it for food.

SB: And um you did also some work with uh making re-

leases?

AR: Well people started to be resettled, they didn't

know really that they were going to be resettled to a

certain death, so all of a sudden people needed suit-

cases, releases and they were not available. So I

have--when I worked in the woodworking shops, I use to

make releases out of plywood; put together four pieces

of plywood, put together two backs. Sew it at a cer-

tain place to make it lead and I got hold, I remember,

of hundreds of piano hinge. I don't even remember

where I got it. And I use to hinge them and make

releases and sell them. Also one of the items, which

became very important were flashlights. Before the

war, in Lithuania, the flashlights were sheet metal

around flashlights, very similar to the ones we have

here. The Germans didn't have round batteries. Their

batteries were square. So I doctored the old Lithuani-

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 18

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

an flashlights to a metal which accepted the new bat-

teries became a very lucrative business for me and I

use to do that.

SB: You--were you assigned to do it?

AR: No no no. That was very very quite. That--that

was clandestine work.

SB: And, so who did you sell to?

AR: To the--to the people in the ghetto. It was a

tremendous--bartering was they uh--whatever you sold,

you didn't sell for money--you bartered; item A for

item B; bread for flashlights, butter for something

else. This is how this went on. Also combs were not

available so I use to make combs out of wood because

when I worked in the workshops, I had access to machin-

ery and to tools.

SB: And um something about blowing fuses?

AR: Yeah, well uh due to the fact that all of the

houses were overloaded and they were never really

designed for the amount of people which lived in them.

Electricity was very uh scarce. And one of the items

for boiling water, we use to make a emersion heaters.

Which was nothing else but two pieces of metal and you

put--you separate them with an insulator and you hang

your cord on it and if you had a tiny amount of salt or

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 19

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

sodium in the water, you create electrolytic action

which essentially brings the water to a boil. And that

became another item which I use to make and I figured

that if I blow fuses in houses they'll call me to fix

it. So I use to blow fuses so I use to--how do you say

I little judge it which made shorts and for fixing it,

I use to get bread, butter and potatoes.

SB: And what about hiding? Did you ever hide?

AR: Yeah we had a uh a lot of places including ours we

had the hiding place which was known in Yiddish as a

Melena and we had one too. And when ever things got

very um tense, we use to hide over there. In retro-

spect, under closer scrutiny, it would have been dis-

covered very easily.

SB: Describe it to me.

AR: I think we had a uh essentially one of the rooms, I

think, are in shed or something was made like a false

wall and you could open it up and uh go in and that use

to connect, somehow, to the

basement. And we had over there, we made bunks out of

wood and we could stay there for a while. I think we

made use of it a couple times.

SB: I think we're almost--we're close to running out.

Um the hanging?

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 20

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

AR: That I remember very vividly the hanging of Mec.

That was uh, I don't remember the date, but I remember

that we all had to gather and I saw them building up a

scaffold. Well the scaffold was built prior to it and

uh they actually put a noose around him and if I remem-

ber correctly, the actual hanging may have been done by

the ghetto police rather by Germans. But of course

under the German coercion.

SB: Okay.

AR: That image never forget.

SB: Okay we need to cut.

(Cut)

BS: --Rodstein. Continue on sound roll 17.

(Cut)BS: Camera roll 35 is up.

C: 35, 5 mark.

SB: Toward the end, did the ghetto change?

AR: The ghetto became really a concentration camp even

though physically it looks like the ghetto but as far

as the German administration it was one of the concen-

tration camp already.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 21

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: And what defined that?

AR: I think what happened to--the S.S. I think took

over the administration of the uh --of the ghetto. And

the whole atmosphere changed drastically.

SB: In what ways did it change?

AR: Number 1, the uh--the dep--prior to that they

deported many people, the ghetto became very small and

it--I think that they sent people out to Estonia, to

Latvia and elsewhere were very often and eventually it

became really a tight--eh uh--uh I don't remember how

many thousands of people stayed but it was a far cry

from how we started.

SB: How did you feel as it got smaller an smaller?AR:

We felt impending doom but we always felt impending

doom. We never felt--fear was an emotion which didn't

go away from me for four years. So it was more fear;

more uncertainty.

SB: And so then at the end, the Kinder Action you

don't--you don't--

AR: I think that I was tall enough and big enough to

have really bettered at the Kinder Action but I can not

remember any minute details because by that time I was

already about 15 years old. I was rather tall for my

age and I worked in the shops. And by that time I

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 22

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

already worked outside of the ghetto.

SB: You were just outside--

AR: I was outside of that because I remember I use to

go to work on the bus depot to fix buses--all the wood

work.

SB: So then after that--that was in March,

AR: 1944.

SB: And then--

AR: By June, I think it was just about the summer of

1944, where the Soviets started approachingLithuania

and the German decision was to uh quote unquote evacu-

ate us. Well--as far as I know, the ghetto is going to

be liquidated and we had to appear at the certain place

just with whatever we could carry on us and we were put

into freight cars. And they closed the freight cars

and we started traveling.

SB: Was the ghetto burning when you left or no?

AR: I remember the burning of the hospital. I don't

remember exactly what happened when we left.

SB: Tell me of the burning of the hospital.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 23

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

AR: To the best of my recollection, they just closed up

the hospital, they put the hospital on fire and they

burn everybody inside. Doctors, nurses, patients and

what not.

SB: And how did you see it? How did you--

AR: Oh, that you could see. But I can not put it

chronologically in a specific time. I don't remember.

SB: And other personal memories that you have of that

time like uh mischief that you got into or girls that

you sneaked off to see. Were there any incidents?AR: I

was too young and too hungry that that particular

aspect of life did not really come up.

SB: What about mischief that you got into?

AR: I don't think I got into any mischief because we

were very uh busy trying to survive.

SB: Any other recollection that you can think of from

that time period that I haven't asked you about.

AR: Well, one of the things that I can remember which

was rather important which must have served me in my

later life is in the ghetto, there was a person who use

to be a mathematics professor before the war, and he

insist that--that I studied math with him of course for

free because that was going to give him some sense of

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 24

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

reality. And he told me if you survive you'll use it

and if you don't survive, who learned some important.

And I basically had a good aptitude for math and when I

was at the end of the ghetto, I was proficient with

math to actually college level. I was one of the few

people who had in the concentration camp, the knowledge

of differential calculus.

SB: When did you--how did he teach you?

AR: Oh just uh--just in--in--in the social--socializa-

tion inside of the ghetto was there. People spoke to

people. I mean there was no separation of people

because after you came work, people just uh caluated

together. And that may have been why there were very

few if any suicides in the ghetto because there was

always a community spirit. And people didn't feel

singled out in by a misery.

SB: So in general, people helped each other.

AR: People helped each other and people supported each

other. And due to the fact that there was a cohesive

community, people did not feel abandoned because what

ever happened, sort of happened to a group rather than

to individuals.

SB: Okay, and what about--do you remember having to

wear the yellow star?

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/ABRAHAM RODSTEIN page 25

Interviewed (early May 97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

AR: Oh yeah, that--that uh I had to wear two yellow

stars; one in the front and one in--in the back that

tied to the very beginning after the German occupation.

And that also became a rather interesting business of

mine because I use to make yellow stars out of plywood

and connect the front with the rear wih a--with a

string so people could put it over their--over their

back and the front.

SB: Okay, thank you.

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