KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 1

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

(Tone)

BS: Wentworth Films Kovno Ghetto project, 5/6//97.

Sound roll #12 continued, camera roll #24 at the head.

Interview with Henry Kellen, H-E-N-R-Y K-E-L-L-E-N.

C: Camera roll 24, marker one.

SB: Mr. Kellen, tell me where and when you were born.

HK: I was born in Lodz, Poland. L-O-D-Z, second biggest

city in Poland, a hundred miles south of Warsaw.

SB: In what year were you born?

HK: I was born in 1915.

SB: Tell me a little bit about your childhood and life

before World War II.

HK: Basically, like I said, I was born in a big commu-

nity, population of 600,000, and just by historical

events, one third of the city was Jewish. Uh, I attend-

ed 11 years in Hebrew day school, basically with the

Polish language as the main language, however we took

up lots of Latin, French, and German as foreign lan-

guages. The system of learning was entirely different

in the United States because somehow my school teacher

thought that somehow learning by heart is very very

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 2

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

important, so therefore our homework was not easy. We

had to learn every single day Polish poetry and French

poetry and German poetry and Hebrew poetry. While in

school I was very fortunate because I had a beautiful

bicycle, playing lots of football, and while I gradu-

ated high school, my father was able to send me to

France to a city by the name Strasbourg where I took up

engineering. And, uh, maybe I was very very lucky

because some of my friends in life, from my class, were

not able to get better education. The community, while

being young was very active, especially young boys and

young girls because we just didnt feel comfortable to

live in Poland due to the fact that the Polish popula-

tion was not friendly to us and we knew that we need a

new homeland. Therefore, there were no persecutions to

talk about in Poland, however we thought that the anti-

Semitism was basically coming from the church and also

economical. Uh, altogether, the Jewish, the general

population of Poland did amount to 30 million and 10%

was Jewish, in other words 3 million Jewish people. The

main concentrations was Warsaw and Lodz. I also was a

Boy Scout and myself didnt feel too much hatred from

the Polish Christian people, because, like I said a few

minutes ago, I attended the Hebrew day school and we

were only Jewish children. Uh, and uh, talking about

the economical structure, as much as I know, uh, 10% of

the Jewish population, if you can say, did belong to

the upper class, very assimilated. 40% were, I would

say, well to do, but lets say middle class. The other

50% of the Jewish population was very very poor. And

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 3

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

consequently, the Jewish Federation in my home town if

I recall, had about 300 employees because they had to

care of a big Jewish hospital, orphanage alone in my

home town had at least about 4,000 children and a big

cemetery. And they were (?) busy, especially helping

the poor people. Well, my name was Henry Katzenellen-

pollen, which was changed when I came to America in

1946 to Kellen because when I got my first papers, the

judge in El Paso Texas said that he cannot pronounce my

name and he did advise me to make it a little bit

shorter, so consequently from Katzenellpollen my name

is Kellen, K-E-L-L-E-N.

SB: Tell me about the eve of World War Two, what things

were like and what you remember.

HK: I graduated college in 1938 in France. My parents,

since they were born in Lithuania, while I was in

France, they moved back home and we were living in a

town by the name of Memel where my father was always an

expert in textile, in textile fabrication. And we were

running at the time a textile factory in Memel. While

Hitler in all his speeches kept always repeating that,

All I want is peace, by what he meant by peace was a

piece of Czechoslovakia, a piece of Austria, a piece of

Lithuania, and eventually, he ended up with Poland

demanding, you know, a piece of Danzig, which did

belong to Germany before 1914. While in January of

1939, a piece of Lithuania was given back to Germany,

we went back, we went to the capital, Kaunus, or Kovno.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 4

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

I got myself a job as a mechanical engineer in one of

the factories. Uh, Lithuania was independent for

awhile, and the war broke out on September the First of

1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Uh, I want to

emphasize that while Poland had a powerful army, they

did surrender in 19, 20 days. And this was naturally

the beginning of the Holocaust because the German army

while occupied Poland started without having a program

what to do with the Jewish population, the Holocaust

started in 1939 and kept on going through 1940 before

concentration camps were established. Uh.

SB: What did you hear when the war started?

HK: Well, unfortunately, my sister, her husband, and

their son Jerry were in Poland and we were cut off for

a long time without getting any news from them. But

since my sister was a Lithuanian citizen, I did manage

to bring her from Poland, her and her son Jerry to

Lithuania. Unfortunately, her husband was staying

behind because he never got Lithuanian citizenship. Uh,

she came, she came to Kaunus, her husband, like I said

was left behind, and while he looked very much like a

Christian having blond hair and blue eyes and very

white complexion, somehow he was on the train going

from Lodz to Warsaw, uh, I dont know, no difference

how he was caught, and he was arrested and he ended up

in Warsaw in the well known prison Paviachin (SP?) and

he was shot over there. Also, we never had a picture, a

photo of him, of his, and this was as far as I know

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 5

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

from a man who survived Paviachin, from all the books

which Im reading, that most of the Jews who were

arrested ended up in the prison shot over there. In the

meantime, in the Spring of 1940, the German army man-

aged to occupy Belgium and Holland and France. And

Stalin who was in charge of the Soviet Union, in order

to prevent the Germans to occupy the Baltic countries,

they marched in on June the 15th of 1941, excuse me

1940. They occupied the Baltic countries so Kovno,

Lithuania, and Latvia, Estonia became part of the

Soviet Union. Naturally to live under the Communist

regime is far away from being pleasant, however, we

thought maybe we are better off under the Communists

than the Nazis because there was not such a thing as a

mass killing. Uh, then just shortly before the war, we8

(Cut)

BS: Camera roll #25, sound roll #13.

C: Marker 2.

SB: So, Henry, tell me about the changes just on the

eve of the German invasion. What you heard and saw.

HK Well, we never expected that we would be attacked by

the German army because the Russian army was powerful

and we never knew that what would happen. We felt

protected, somehow. The night of Saturday to Sunday the

21st of June, I went with my girlfriend to a nightclub

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 6

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

and we had a good time having dinner and dancing late.

We came home about 2 oclock AM, and then by the time I

got home, it was about six in the morning and while the

windows were open, I heard a noise, and I looked though

the window and I saw some smoke far away which was ah,

the airport in Kaunus. And in the beginning we were not

suspicious of something was going on. I turned on

immediately our radio, which was silent, it was about

six in the morning, and then since I heard some more

explosions, I turned into Berlin Radio, and sure enough

the Prop., Joseph Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister,

spoke in German and he said, While Im here on the

radio, we are marching into Russia and in the name of

God, we will be successful, we are going to destroy the

system and the Jews, and then we knew that we are at

war. We were living at that time on the outskirts of

the city, uh, mostly Christian population, we didnt

know exactly what was going on because by the time we

got news from our local radio it was almost noon, and

the rumors were that the Red army was already in East

Prussia, what means in the German territories. However,

I understood that the members of the Communist party

were already packing and they were running to the

railroad station. Monday, there were all kinds of

rumors, but Tuesday afternoon, we saw, I saw on the

outskirts the German motorcycles coming. Next day,

which was a Wednesday, a car stopped in front of our

house and there was some four German officers which

asked us for permission to have breakfast in the gar-

den. And we were sitting with them, and naturally, all

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 7

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

my family spoke fluently German, they never asked us

about our religion. However, I do recall that a soldier

which came with them was standing right by, and he had

a buckle like all the soldiers do have, you know, a

belt with a buckle. And on the buckle it said, Gott

mitt uns which means in English, God with us. And I

figured out, knowing exactly what was going on in

Germany because while going to school in France

(coughs) I was always in Berlin at least one day while

waiting for changing trains. And I figured out that if

the slogan is God with us, God is with us, nothing

will happen, and, to us. Unfortunately, the slaughter

of the Jewish population did not start immediately,

however the terror came from the Lithuanian population,

and Im sorry to tell you that while being in the

Lithuanian army, I never felt any hatred to the Jewish

soldiers who were in my company. Um, I even played

chess with my Lieutenant Mikalowskos and why the Lith-

uanian populations, and I would say population because

naturally you cant accuse the whole population. But

why such a big percentage of Lithuanians started,

especially in small towns and villages, the bloodshed

against the Jews can not be understood, you know, by

anybody because the Jewish, the Jews were living in

Lithuania for 11 centuries, and they were just part of

the country. Two weeks later, naturally, while the army

was going deeper into Russia, the Gestapo came in and

the first thing what did happen in the ghetto, going

back to the ghetto. Before we went to the ghetto,

naturally, we were told to wear a star and then the

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 8

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

other star in the back. And by August 15th of 1941, we

were locked up in the suburb of the city, Vialompula

or Slobodka, and we were behind the fence which was

seven feet high, not a big problem how to escape be-

cause this was not a wall like the Warsaw ghetto. This

was on a Friday and next day there was already posters

all over the ghetto saying in German and Lithuanian

that the German authorities are demanding 500 men,

graduated, college graduated and professional people to

be at a certain place to be sent to the city hall to do

some paperwork with the guarantee that they would come

back that very same night. We were supposed to be there

Monday morning, my brother was college graduate, gradu-

ated, and so was me. And I do recall June the 18th of

1941, Monday morning, my mother, may she rest in peace,

told both of us to go because theres nothing to it and

they guaranteed that we would be back. I cannot explain

why I didnt go, eh, my brother went. This was the

first what we call the Intelligentsia Action, or Opera-

tion Intellectuals. My brother never came back and

while we were waiting for him at the gate from 6

oclock in the evening and the rest of the night, the

rumors came that they would stay there overnight, they

would maybe come tomorrow, and then since they were not

coming tomorrow, uh, maybe they were sent out somewhere

else. After the war was over, I found out that just a

few hours later they were taken to a Fortification 7

and they were all shot over there. And this was the

same problem in every ghetto because the Germans

thought that maybe the people who graduated colleges

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 9

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

maybe they had more brains and in order to avoid in the

future resistance, they wanted to get rid of, you know,

these kind of people. And then the next days, or maybe

a week later, as you probably know, that in the ghetto,

there was a big advantage to being in the ghetto than

the concentration camps because first of all the fami-

lies were together and we didnt have any Germans there

at night and the way the ghetto was established we had

what we called the Judenraute (SP?) which was, the head

in our camp, you know, was Dr. Elkes a well know eye

doctor. And there were just like a city hall because

they had different departments. The most important

department was the Labor Department which would sup-

plied so many people every morning to go for different

assignments. Then the Police Department, the Sanitation

Department, and you mention, and after the Operation

Intellectuals, 3 or 4 Germans came to the ghetto and

we were ordered to deliver everything or value. Our

rings, silver spoons, silver forks, whatever it was,

radios, Filetilistic (?) stamps, and instruments. I do

emphasize instruments because I will tell you later on

what happened with the instruments. Ah, then the next

episode I do recall was sending daily the 5,000 men and

women to build the runways for the German airforce and

theres nothing wrong building a highway or a runway,

but it is absolutely beyond your comprehension what

means to be constantly hunger without having proper

clothes and being beaten up and cursed by the guards.

We go back to a very important event which took place

on October the 28th, 1941.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 10

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

SB: Lets wait because were just about to run out.

What happened to your father?

HK: My father was killed before we went to the ghetto.

Like I mentioned, somehow, a Lithuanian which we will

presume it was considered as maybe a fifth column

because quite many Lithuanian young men had weapons on

the very first day of the invasion of the German army.

Somehow they got uniforms, the one who did not get

uniforms put the handkerchief with the swastika on

their armband and consequently collaborated with the

Germans. And my father, who didnt expect atrocities,

he went to town because his sister called him up that

she didnt have any sugar and he never came back. So my

father was the first one in all to be shot, and form

all the documentation we have now, 3,000 Jewish men

were at the Fortification number 4 for three days, eh,

without food, without water, being tortured and beaten

up and they were all killed on Fortification # 7. My

father was, theres always a miracle because in many

many cases one or two people somehow having some good

connections were able to get out and so they told us

the story. And also, all the events which did happen

all over, not just in Lithuania or Latvia, Estonia,

uh, photos were taken by German photographers, and they

are here. So, I have a photo of Fortification #7 where

you see, se-eh, not really, from the photo you couldnt

count the amount of people, but you people on the

ground over there under the sun, and you have evidence

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 11

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

that this what did happen, they were shot over there.

(Cut)

BS: Go to camera roll #26, slate 3 is up.

C: Three marker.

SB: So, youre getting ready to tell me about the Big

Action.

HK: Yes. Uh, while we were building the airforce, the

runways for the German airforce day and night, 5,000

people on one shift, 5,000 people on the night shift,

we got back to the camp on October the 27th and then

there were already loudspeakers and also posters all

over the camp that Helmut Rauke, who was at that time

in charge of the camp, was demanding the entire popula-

tion of the camp to be at a certain place in order to

be counted. The excuse was that he does not trust the

Judenraute, ah, giving him the amount of inmates in

order to know how much bread to give us, we must be

counted. And regardless of age, children, old people,

sick or well, they must be there. Anybody who would be

on the premises would be shot. The doors must be open.

And we were no na‹ve that we did believe what we were

told. And I do recall that at 6 oclock on the morning

October the 28th, we were at the empty lot, which was

in the middle of the camp, and it was cold, October. In

Europe its cold in the morning, and by about nine

oclock I remember that Helmut Rauke with two more

sergeants came and the selection started. We were at

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 12

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

that time 30,000, 30,000 inmates. We were lined up with

our families, I was standing with my mother, sister,

and Jerry and my girlfriend. And, uh, we didnt know

exactly at the beginning what was going on, but while

we were getting closer and closer t Rauke, we saw

people being divided. Some went left and some went

right. While I was in line a friend of mine who was a

Jewish policeman said, and I want you to know that in

our police force which consisted out of 200 people,

they were very very fine, intelligent men, not like in

some other ghettos, and he says to me, Look, I dont

know, I dont know, but he says to me, he doesnt know

exactly what is happening, but, try to pull always

back, dont try to go ahead. Pull back. And this is

exactly what I did, and more or less by 4 oclock in

the afternoon ah, all the people who went to the left

were taken away. I never faced Rauke because, like I

said, ah, eh, by now we do know that all the orders

were coming from Berlin from the headquarters and on

the 20th of October, 10,500 were sent to the left and

next morning, the 29th, I was staying very close to the

fence and I saw, unfortunately, groups of hundreds of

people going up the hill, which was in the direction of

the IXth Fort, and all day long we just heard machine

guns noise and again, one boy, one boy, ten years old,

he was already in the ditch, it seems to be he was not

shot, and at night time he came back to the ghetto and

he told us more details how the executions took place.

So, for future generation, it would be interesting that

while you saw only hundred people at a time going up in

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 13

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

the direction of the IXth Fort, a group of hundred

people was shot. In other words, in other words, in

order not to create a panic, they couldnt take 10,000

at one time. They were going there, but while a hundred

were shot, another 100 were taken. And uh, next day we

went back to the airport and I do remember that my

particular guard, a German Alpha soldier who was from

Sudentanland, which was a Czech, asked us how come we

didnt come to work yesterday and when we told him and

he said, Well, Im very sorry but I really dont

believe it. But I think that it was, we made a mistake.

Something did happen, by mistake they took away, but I

dont believe that, you know, civilized people like we

are doing the killing. So just imagine, he by himself

didnt believe what was happening. Then theres no way

to tell you what happened in 1942 and 43, all we knew,

since we were completely isolated in the camp, without

getting any news, because there was no such a thing

like mail or telephone or newspapers, but in order to

find out more or less what was going on, when we saw

the guards were smiling, we knew things were very good

for them. But then, at the end of 42, when the German

got as far as Stalingrad and the Volga, as you probably

know, this was the beginning of the defeat of the

German army, at the same time the American and British

airforce started to bomb German cities and I presume

that the German guards were getting news that maybe

their families, maybe their homes were getting de-

stroyed, you saw the faces change a little bit. So,

this is the only way we knew that something is not

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 14

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

exactly they would like to con., to have it, and beside

this8

SB: You mentioned something before about Lithuanian

women who had baby carriages.

HK: I didnt mention it. I didnt, but I can mention

it. Well, its a very very sad episode because I was

watching what was going on and I saw, ah, ah, 10,000

people is a lot of people, and we saw some older Lith-

uanian women following the march, and we didnt know

exactly why, but at about 5 oclock in the afternoon,

some women were coming back from the fort, which was

only about 1/2 a mile away, and they did carry with

them baby carriages. And how sad it is that while the

mother and the children were shot at the IXth Fort, and

I presume the Germans gave away, you know, the baby

carriages to Lithuanians, but this is a very sad epi-

sode. By no mean, if somebody ask me how didnt you,

did you, did you write while you were in the ghetto, a

diary and I said, I didnt know because the situation

was getting so hopeless that I knew none of us would

survive because after the Big Action they were taking,

when I say they, the Germans were taking almost weekly

groups of a hundred, a hundred and fifty people to be

deported and we really didnt know in what directions,

either they were going to Latvia, Estonia or to Poland,

but it came to a point where we knew that none of us

would survive, and besides this, if somebody would like

to write a diary, we didnt have a pencil or a pen, you

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 15

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

know to write it. Uh, let me get to8

SB: Let me ask you a couple of questions. Food in the

ghetto and trying to bring food in, can you tell me

anything about that? Did you smuggle any food?

HK: Uh, it came to a point that our biggest enemy were

not the German guards. Hunger and cold became, you

know, so severe that while working at the airport, we

didnt have any chance to get food with exception at

midnight were getting a little bit warm soup, which if

somebody would have this soup in America, you would

think this is not even good for a hungry dog or cat.

Once in awhile maybe a rotten carrot or potato. Ah, now

once the airport assignment came to an end, a smaller

group was sent to different places, and there was the

possibility whatever we still had left, and it didnt

really, ah, didnt mean anything what it was. A pair of

socks, underwear, a belt, or a suit, Lithuanians were

coming to the places where we were working and giving,

ah, exchanging in other words for a little food. And

the food which we were getting was not easy to smuggle

into the ghetto because they were always, the guards

were searching us and we were very lucky when the

guards were lenient, and we could bring something. And

whatever I could bring in naturally I was sharing

mainly with my nephew Jerry who was at that time six

years old and he looked like a little skeleton anyway,

and a little bit8

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 16

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

SB: Weve got to reload.

(Cut)

(Tone)

BS: Wentworth Films, Kovno Ghetto project, interview

with Henry Kellen continued, sound roll #14 at the

head, camera roll #27 at the head.

SB: So, I want you to tell me about the ghetto, about

the workshops, a little bit after the great action and

before it started turning into a real concentration

camp.

HK: Well, lets put it this way. Lots of things which

was happening in the ghetto, lots of details I really

dont know, because, uh, I do recall that before the

German invasion, life was just s normal as it could be.

Maybe, uh, the food wasnt as fancy as it is now in the

United States, maybe it was better because people

werent getting as sick as they are now, uh, and uh,

complete freedom, I mean absolutely nothing to be

expected what was happening and then, Im not a psy-

chiatrist and not a philosopher, but you wouldnt

believe what would happen to people affected by hunger.

Hunger is not only causing a terrible pain in your

stomach, but your brain dont functions. Uh, people

which we believed our associates and being our friends

before the war, they were not friends anymore because

everybody was looking for yourself how to survive, how

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 17

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

to get something to eat. Which is why we became, you

know, like wile, wile, wild angry animals in the zoo

and all we had in mind, is dreaming, is how to fill up

our stomach. It is very hard to describe. However, once

you dont eat for weeks, uh, your stomach is getting

used to it, it shrinks to a certain extent, just a

little piece of bread which were given, if you can call

it bread, is enough, you know, to keep on going. To

intellectual peoples older than I was, college profes-

sors and school teachers, and lawyers who did, maybe,

who did realize exactly what is happening, what is

happening, knowing that the situation is hopeless, most

these people were committing suicide in the very first

beginning. And I was only 24 years old, and I had a big

responsibility because I had to see to it that my

mother, who was naturally twenty years older than I am,

and my sister and my nephew should survive, and I

thought, Well, if I were, uh, commit suicide, they

would starve to death, so I did the best I could and I

felt that instead to stay in the ghetto to work, you

know, for the authorities, the Judenraute, if I will go

out I have a better opportunity to bring us some food,

you know. So, in order this way we can survive a little

bit longer. But, eh, now I described many books that

were written by people in the ghetto and how know more

details what was happening which I didnt know and

every day doing my homework I discover new things which

I was absolutely ignorant about this.

SB: Why dont you tell me about the Kinder Action.

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 18

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

HK: Okay. Ah, what was happening, I did mention to you

the very first beginning that while everything of value

was given away by the Germans, including instruments,

uh, if somebody is asking me daily, Henry, since you do

lecture8

BS: Were getting some kind of scratching noise. Sorry

to interrupt.

SB: I dont hear it.

(Tape cuts)

C: Five mark.

HK: By September 1943, all the ghettos were already

liquidated. Just by miracle, uh, we got a new command-

ing officer who was sent from Berlin by the name Wil-

helm Gerke who changed the name from ghetto to concen-

tration camp, and concentration camp had better future

to survive the ghettoes because the concentration camps

existed to almost the very end before the Allies were

getting very close. Wilhelm Gerke was a short SS man

who knew exactly that once the ghetto are being liqui-

dated that the Germans in charge of the ghettoes were

being sent to the front to fight the Russian army, and

having good connections in Berlin he got a new assign-

ment and changed the name from ghetto to concentration

camp. I must admit that things were getting a little

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 19

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

bit better because we were getting a little bit more

food since being in the ghetto. Im jumping to 1943,

beginning of March and one day we got the message that

Wilhelm Gerke wants to have a concert in the camp.

Well, this we couldnt understand because we didnt

have the music, we didnt have the musicians, and we

didnt have any instruments. And sure enough, some

violins were brought from the outside and there was

maybe a few men who played music from before the war

and one Sunday morning we were told, you know, that the

inmates who do feel like coming to the concert are

welcome and eh, my wife and myself went to listen and I

even remember exactly what was played. Naturally you

couldnt compare this with the symphony orchestra

because there were only about ten or twelve guys play-

ing. The photos were taken by the Germans and you can

find those photos in Encyclopedia Holocaust (?) and in

the museums. The, something was suspicious what was

going on, because all of a sudden we are being consid-

ered as a human being with a little bit better, with a

little bit more food, and music. But what was happen-

ing, we get (?) dormant again, we still had, out of

about 30,000, still about 5,000 inmates, uh, and a week

later, to be exact on March the 27th, 1944, we knew in

the meantime that the Russians are getting closer to

us. Uh, early the morning I was in the ghetto, it was

about 6 in the morning, we saw some black Volkswagens

coming with loudspeakers, and I do recall exactly the

way we heard voices, Achtung! Achtung! Attention,

anybody whos on the street should go immediately to

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 20

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

the housing, otherwise you will be shot. And then we

saw German SS and Gestapo with Ukrainian collaborators

going from house to house. And there were some rumors

already about a few months earlier that nearby ghetto,

Vilna, they took away the children, but we thought, we

didnt believe, you know, that this was possible be-

cause the Germans are civilized, they wouldnt do any

harm to children. We didnt go to work this day, and my

mother and my sister and my nephew, they was at the

quarters someplace in one house and my wife and myself

were living, if you can call living, in a two story

dilapidated building. What was happening, uh, we were

looking through the window from this attic when my wife

Julia, may she rest in peace, and myself. And this

window was facing the very same lot, empty lot which

the Big Action took place in 1941, October the 28th,

and we saw a truck with high walls, without a roof, and

through the day we saw something which, myself being

today an old man who has more time to think about this,

something which I do, cannot comprehend, while young

German uniformed soldiers, if you can call them, with

Ukrainians, were dragging mothers with children to the

truck and, its really hard to describe what was going

on because we saw mothers who wouldnt let the children

loose and they were beaten so vicious, Dobermans were

attacking the mothers and8

SB: We have to stop.

BS: Go to camera roll 28, slate six is up

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 21

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

C: Six marker.

HK: Uh, you should have seen the hysterical crying from

mothers and then we saw while the mothers really kept

the child very, very strong, they were shot on the spot

and the children being thrown over the board onto this

empty truck. This is something which I will never

forget and never forgive because a crime against civi-

lization and humanity was committed these days. And

this maybe what gives me the strength to continue

talking about this because I feel if it happened once

in a civilized country, it can happen anyplace. And

this is maybe, and I wouldnt say maybe, but this is

the reason why the museums are very important and

theres to my knowledge about 15 museums in the United

States, but hundreds of educational centers8

SB: Tell me how old your nephew was at the time.

HK: He was eight and half years old and let me tell you

what miracle happened, how he survived. Ah, anybody who

was in Europe, Germany or France and Switzerland, and

Poland, Lithuania, uh, the European pillow is four

times bigger than the American pillow. If you would

take two pillows it would cover the whole mattress. I

was not staying together with my mother and my sister

and her son because wherever you could, wherever you

were, wherever you could got a quarters where to stay

over night, you got it. So, consequently I wasnt

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 22

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

there, I was with my wife in a different section of the

ghetto. However, I saw what was going on. I couldnt

see far away my sister and her son next to the truck

because like, some mothers let the children go right

away. So what was happening in their little room, while

Ukrainian soldiers came in, my sister was hiding Jerry

under one of the pillows, there were two pillows. And

she told me that while the soldiers came with open

bayonet and did hit one of the pillows, it seems to be

that the angel of death didnt want to take Jerry and

he was hidden under the other pillow. He was, like I

said, seven and a half years old, but he looked like a

two years old baby because he was like a skeleton

without having food for three years. And after 5

oclock when I saw everything get quiet and the trucks

pulled out, I really dont know exactly how many chil-

dren were taken away. Some people do presume that there

were 600 or 700, but when I, after the Action was

finished, immediately my wife and myself went to see

what happen to Jerry and we saw a chalk, a circle, made

on the door of the house which meant they were already

there and nobody should bother them anymore. And,

basically how Jerry by miracle survived.

SB: Did you happen to witness the hospital burning

early on?

HK: I saw it from far away. This is at the very first

beginning, in the small ghetto, but I saw it because we

were in the big ghetto. As you probably know there was

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 23

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

a bridge going to the small ghetto and we saw the

small, the syn, the hospital burning, and we also saw

the children, the nurses going up to the IXth Fort. But

I wasnt there, I only saw it from a distance, a half,

3/4, no, I would say half a mile or maybe a little bit

less.

SB: I didnt understand about the baby carriages and

the IXth Fort.

HK: While the 10,500 who were selected next day uh

there were quite many mothers and children who were in

this group. And they stayed overnight, in other words

the ones who had been selected, they didnt come back

to the ghetto, they went to the small ghetto, which was

already empty. And then next morning, I wouldnt tell

you exactly if it was 9 oclock or 10 oclock in the

morning, but some mothers had the babies, you know, in

carriages. Today in America, most of the babies are

being uh, everyone, on our back, but those days, you

know, women had carriages. And seems to me theres

always a certain element which is hungry for every-

thing, and I dont know if they knew that would get

some trophies or not, but they were following the

10,000 people over there going up and ah, naturally

once the people got in behind the gate of the fortifi-

cation, I presume that the Germans took the people but

didnt want the carriages. So the women who were fol-

lowing the the the people who was shot got the car-

riages and they were coming back with empty ones.

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 24

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

SB: Okay. Describe how you decided to escape, or how

you escaped.

HK: Well, after the Kinder Action, first of all, Jerry

was alive, but physically was not existing anymore

because if he would be on the street, he would have

been taken away immediately. Uh, until 1944, it looked

like Germany was going to win the war. The very first

beginning I said that it was not hard to escape because

the fence was made out of barbed wires, however with a

good scissors or with the pliers you could cut it and

get out in spite of the fact there were guards outside.

But it looked like first of all Germanys winning the

war, and the local population were hostiles. So, lets

say you would get out, where would you go? They will

catch you immediately. Everybody knew who we were, not

only because we had the star, which eventually we could

take it off, but we looked like like criminals. I

didnt have a warm water on my body to take a shower

for three years, so just imagine the conditions. I

forgot my name because nobody called me by name. They

called me either, the guards did, Damn Jew, or, I

didnt exist like a human anymore, I mean, so what

would you escape. But, by 1944, we were getting already

messages that the Russians are getting very very close,

pushing the German army back. I got once a Lithuanian

paper which on the front page were giving all the time

news whats going on in the front, and uh, I have to

admit the German High Command every single day in

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 25

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

Germany or every occupied country, had on the front

page a report from the front. And it said, in a nice

way, that we were retreating according to the plan,

according to the plan, from one town to another one,

and we knew that they were getting closer to us. And we

felt that the chances of surviving are getting better.

And ah, just by lucky coincidence, lucky lucky coinci-

dence, we found out that the very poor Lithuanian

farmer which also were living in a very dilapidated

house which we would call maybe a farm in the United

States, but this poor man had three children and one

horse and one cow and we got the message that if would

be able to escape from the camp, he would be willing to

hide us. He also said he could only have enough space

for 2, and we were three. My mother and my sister Sonya

were still alive, and uh, we got out, we got out. We

tried at nighttime, we tried in the morning, but we got

out, we got to his house, we slept the night. We found

out since January he was hiding four more people, a

doctor with his wife and two children. And we were in

hiding with this Lithuanian farmer 90 days. Eh, it was

not easy because first of all he was so poor that he

didnt have anything to eat for themselves, but they

were serving whatever they had. After we were there

about a week or so, they took away the cows, so conse-

quently the children were not getting any milk and

there were three children including Jerry. And, eh, we

were in and out because there were certain days when he

said, Look, I have a feeling that tonight the police

will come. It is something worthwhile to mention that8

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 26

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

SB: Let us put another roll on.

(Cut)

BS: Sound roll 15, camera roll 29

SB: You were going to say something

HK: The name of the farmer was Joseph Urbanoff, a very

humble man. And I came to American in 46 thanks to

President Truman who at that time did issue the 5,000

affidavits for Holocaust survivors, regardless of

religion and nationality because the inmates were not

only Jews. And naturally I came to the United States

penniless, however, I didnt take my freedom for grant-

ed because I could walk on the streets and nobody was

spitting in my face and uh, I did appreciate it from

the very first day until today the freedom of this

wonderful country. And freedom is not a gift from

heaven. By no means. We must fight for freedom every

single day in order not to lose it. I, we were here

about one year and we started to send packages to

Urbanoff, letters, we never heard from him until today.

However, Lithuania was occupied by the Soviets until

about three years ago because the country is now inde-

pendent again. The capital is not anymore Kovno, or

Kaunus, it is Vilnius. Last November, a young Lithuani-

an called me and said that he is in El Paso sent by the

Lithuanian government to learn the way we are electing

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 27

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

a president in the United States. And we met, we had

lunch and then he was with me at the museum and I

really didnt want for him to feel bad, but I had to

tell him something that he has to know. How his country

misbehaved against us. At the same time I told him that

Urbanoff saved my life, and I took him to a garden

which is in our museum, the garden is dedicated to the

righteous Gentiles. Ah, I dont think you have in

Washington at your museum here a garden which is dedi-

cated to the righteous. Theres one in Jerusalem at the

Holocaust Museum, Yad Vashem (SP?), and we have plaques

of Righteous from every country and among them Urban-

off. And he was very proud about this and I asked him

for a favor, I said, Look, by coincidence I have a

picture, not of Urbanoff, but I do have a photo of his

daughter, who was at that time twenty years old. Her

name is Anna. And I said, Before you go back home,

heres the picture since you do work for leading news-

paper in Vilnius, have her photo printed and lets do

our best to find her. Well, a few months later I got

from him the newspaper with the write-up in Lithuanian

revealing exactly our interview, her picture was print-

ed, but this is already May, almost six months, so far

I didnt hear from them or from her. Hopefully well

find her because all the righteous, and I met few of

them, and I talked to them and their older people, men

and women, and I called them, You are a hero, because

it was not easy, it was not easy to hide a Jewish

family for different reasons. Because even when the

Germans were retreating from all over, up to the D-Day

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 28

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

of June 6, 1944, the French police, the German police

were still searching where ever they could. A family

that was hiding a Jew or one Jew in the family, the

same thing on the eastern side of Europe. And anybody

who was caught was executed together with us. Especial-

ly in Eastern Europe. In the west they were sent to

concentration camps. So, these people deserves a lot of

gratitude and this gratitude can not just be expressed

by saying thank you or, I was looking in dictionary how

to say thank you to them, there isnt such a thing.

Because they were really sacrificing their life, not

only their life but their familys life. And these good

people, as long as I will be alive, will never be

forgotten because they were such a good good people.

And, uh, what else can we do? There would be less

survivors if it wouldnt be these righteous Christians.

SB: Tell me what a molina was.

HK: They, well, to my knowledge, a molina was a place

of hiding. Uh, it, you know, you know people were

digging holes under the, under the foundations of the

house or attic or what ever it is, because while we

were being deported, or, like I said before, when

rumors were coming from Vilnius that children were

being taken away, some people managed to dig under the

house a hole and to hide the children and this is

basically the term or molina.

SB: And, the pogroms that took place before, just

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 29

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

before the Germans came. Can you tell me what you know

about those?

HK: (Coughs) Well, the pogroms basically I know the

Jewish history and the persecution of Jewish people

already started a thousand years ago, since the Jews

are being accused, you know, of crucifying Jesus. But

ah, if you would just take basically what was happening

in 12th century, the Crusaders were persecuting Jews

all over. Then came the Inquisition in 1490 in Spain.

At that time while Jews had the choice to convert to

Christianity, they were not persecuted. If you didnt

want it, some were killed and some were allowed to get

out from there. Ah, going to pogroms, basically we are

talking about what was happening in Russia under the

Czar, and every time, you know, there was some problems

like, for instance in 1905, Russia lost the war against

Japan, and here the charge was made, and naturally he

would send the Cossacks to kill Jewish communities. But

nothing can be compared to the Holocaust because we are

dealing with highly sophisticated society. Germans were

always considered on the European continent as the most

ah civilized people. You know, it was hard to think

that if this would happen some place behind the moun-

tains in Greece or Albania or Africa, you would have a

little excuse, but never in Germany. I had quite many

German friends. My home town, just for your informa-

tion, that Kovno was only about 40 miles from the

German borders, and quite many Germans were coming to

Lithuania because basically Germany was an industrial

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 30

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

country and Lithuania was agriculture and people were

coming to spend their vacation because food was so much

better and tastier than in Germany. And they were

basically good people. How the Nazis managed to suc-

cessfully poison with hatred people, it would take

maybe years and years from now to explain how it was

done because it was not easy to take good people and

transform them to Bestia Fera which means in Latin

wild animal. Being able to kill people and especially

to kill children. I had a chance after the war to take

revenge, like the Turks after the genocide took place

in 1915 in Turkey where a million people were killed,

and I had a chance maybe to kill some German Nazis. I

couldnt do it for two reasons. First of all, Im not a

killer. If I would have killed somebody, being now an

old man, I would have sleepless nights, because how

could I kill a human being? And then, I never had

evidence that the Germans, right after the war, which

was prisoners of war which I met, I never had evidence

that they are the one who committed the crime against

innocent people. So, consequently, Im glad that I

never did it and I can go away from this planet with a

clean conscience.

SB: Were just about to run out, but I want to ask

about the liquidation. Lets load one more roll.

(Cut)

BS: Camera roll 30, slate 8 is up.

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 31

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

C: Marker 8

SB: So, the liquidation of the ghetto, can you tell me

what you saw?

HK: I escaped 90 days before the final liquidation,

ah, I was liberated by the Russian army July 31 on a

Monday. Ah, we could hardly talk with each other be-

cause while in hiding we were in a little old warehouse

under the hay, eight people. And we were told by some

Russian officers to stay where we are because it hap-

pens quite often that the Russians have to retreat

because all of a sudden the Germans are pushing them

back, so we were still staying at the farm for the next

five days and then a few days later we decided to go

back to see what happened to the ghetto. When we got

there, the gate was swung open, there was no housing.

We entered the ghetto and we saw foundations without

housing because you must know, there was no fancy

apartment or skyscrapers, just little old housing which

most of the times when we got in their three years ago

didnt have electricity and hot water, and some times

not even floors. And what we saw, and unfortunately I

didnt have a camera, and I dont know if anybody took

pictures, but some people did not believe that at the

last minute they were going to be evacuated, and they

were hiding in the basements of the housing and the

Einsatzgruppen, before the German army pulled out, the

Einsatzgruppen, which was a special German unit who was

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 32

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

doing the killing, they were burning the houses and we

saw house after house, bodies of Papa, Momma, and

children burned and smoke. And I went to the house

where my mother and my sister were left, while being in

hiding we tried very very hard to get them out. My wife

went from the hiding twice back to the neighborhood but

she didnt go into the ghetto because otherwise she

wouldnt be able to get out. But the very same people

who helped us to get out she tried to get out my mother

and sister. Unfortunately, she wasnt able to do it and

then I found out that my mother and my sister were sent

west and they ended up in Stuthoff. The men who were

there were sent to Dachau. The tragic story of my life

is that at least I do know that my father and my broth-

er were shot and hopefully didnt have too long to

suffer before they expired. But I found out from women

who were in Stuthoff and we did who did witness under

what under what circumstances my mother and my sister

died and I think Im a very strong man mentally that I

can still take it because I understand that they was

suffering for weeks without food, without water being

affected by typhus before they died. And I tell this my

German general and I see him quite often now in El

Paso, and hes speechless, he doesnt know what to tell

me. Some women survived, some stronger women survived

from Stuthoff. My sister and my mother did not. And I

was still 13 months in Kovno because the war was still

going on, the war was over, being an engineer I got a

good position with the Russians. However I was under no

circumstance wanting to live at that time under the

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 33

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

Soviet Union, and I was very very lucky to get out from

there. And I say lucky because the borders were already

closed and somehow a law came out that anyone who was

born in Poland can go to Poland, and from Poland I

smuggled myself to Germany and a lucky Henry Kellen

ended up in El Paso Texas and had good years in the

second time being born in the United States and I

appreciate this country because, like I said before,

freedom has to be appreciate and not taken for granted

because its a very very wonderful commodity.

SB: Let me ask you a couple of other questions. The

instruments, you were going to tell me something else.

HK: I told you abut the instruments because at the

very first beginning the took everything away from us.

I mean everything of value, including instruments, and

then all of a sudden when Wilhekm, to the very end,

when, ah, the camp was changed to concentration camp in

order to give us another lie, all of a sudden they want

a concert and they brought the instruments back to the,

yeah, this is the story. Because we didnt have any

instruments.

SB: The Fort, how long did it take and what did you

know about the fort?

HK: Ah, the history of the fort, naturally for you

being in America, something which you dont understand.

Going back, ah, Russia, which was bordering with Germa-

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 34

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

ny all along, because Poland and Lithuania and all

those other countries did not exist for 200 years, they

were al occupied by the Russians. Poland was divided

between Austria, Germany, and Russia, and somehow, the

Czar was always from his experience afraid of being

attacked by the Germans, so all the borders were built,

you know, with fortifications, with forts, which, in

America youve got like a night time fort (?) which is

an open space with barracks, they were like fortifica-

tions so in case the Germans will attack, the Russian

army will hide behind the walls of the fort, facing the

windows to the west and while the Germans are attack-

ing, they can shoot at them. You can see the same thing

in England, in many many place going back in history

many many thousands of years. But while Lithuania was

independent, it, everything was open, it was just, you

know, there were some holes in the wall underground and

when the German came, they took advantage of it, and

this was the place of exterminations. But, this is

basically, when I talk about your IXth Fort or VIIth

Fort. The whole city of Kaunus, which was only 40 miles

from the German borders with lots of fortifications.

This is the meaning of a European fort, not American.

SB: Can you tell me about your father again. Was that a

pogrom, basically, that killed your father.

HK: No, this was not a pogrom.. Pogrom, pogrom, like I

said is a strictly Russian expression where the Czar

was getting mad because something was going wrong with

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 35

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

the economy or defeats in the army.

SB: The Lithuanian acts of violence. Tell me about that

and tell me about your father again.

HK: The telephone system in Europe was just the same

like in America. His sister was living in the city, and

we were living in the suburb, divided by a river. And

uh, when the Germans came, my mother, like any other

housewife, has always some food in the kitchen. Uh, not

fresh vegetables, which you couldnt preserve, and not

butter because anything of perishable goods at that

time was spoiling because we didnt have any such thing

50-60 years ago like Frigidaires or iceboxes. But, like

I said, we had a call from his sister asking him if he

can bring some sugar, which my mother presumably had

some. And he just took the sugar and was crossing the

bridge and he was stopped by two Lithuanian uniformed

soldiers who were collaborating with the Germans, and

they arrested him, and this was it and I never saw him

again. And then I found out he was in the group of the

three thousand Jewish people who were massacred on the

7th Fort, because they were taking advantage of all the

forts. But they were suffering for three days, and two

people who were let out, having some connections, they

told us how it happened. Photos are available of this

too. Like I said, my brother, to my knowledge was shot

right away, I was shot in the camp right here (??).

People ask me quite often if I have a number. The

numbers were given mostly in Auschwitz in uh, in ghet-

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 36

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

toes were not getting numbers because from the very

first beginning, when the ghettoes were created with

intention of being liquidated as quickly as possible so

they didnt even register us by name, but, uh, how I

survived is also a miracle. We were sent out one day in

1942 on assignment to unload a train8

SB: Do we still have that short roll?

(End of first cassette)

BS: Wentworth Films, Kovno Ghetto project, continuation

with Henry Kellen. Sound roll 15 continued, camera roll

31, slate 9 is up.

C: Marker 9.

SB: So, you were going to tell me about how you got

shot.

HK: Uh, after the airport was finished, when we were

getting different assignments every single day, my

brother was physically a whole lot stronger than I, I

was mostly, you know, a mommas little boy being the

youngest one. And, uh, even if I would have been not

hungry, I wouldnt be able to carry cement, uh, for

twelve hours and loading trucks. Well, one day since we

were getting every day different assignments, a group

of about 40 men was sent to a railroad track someplace

and there were about 27 cars loaded with pipes, steel

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 37

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

pipes, uh, with a diameter of, I would say, uh 40 or

50 inches. There were two Lithuanian guards who brought

us over there and while were there they told us to

unload everything and have the pipes taken off of the

open railroad cars and throw them on the ground. Some-

how, because I always did my best to keep myself clean,

uh, shaved, and by the way, believe it or not, the one

razorblade I used for three years and somehow I managed

to have it. Today a razorblade is good for maybe 3-4

shaves. He, the Lithuanian told me, first of all he

asked who was in the Lithuanian army, what rank did I

have, and he said, Youre going to be in charge of

unloading the train. And they went away, they were

someplace drinking the whole morning and when they came

back, we did manage, uh, the pipes were like I told

you, at least about two feet long and uh, long, I

couldnt even describe. Just imagine at least about,

uh, I really dont know. Long. Very long, just the

length of the car. We did manage, being very weak, to

take out the pipes which were on the top. But being on

the bottom, only a crane could take them out. And when

they came back at noon, and they saw that the train is

not unloaded, he got to me and started to curse me and

says, Well, uh, why didnt you do what I told you?

and I said it was impossible. He did hit me with the

rifle in the back of my head, this must be made out

steel because I dont know how he didnt kill me. And

then he was just in the distance, a little bit further

than this gentleman here, and he pulled out a bullet. I

bent down, the bullet somehow went over my head and

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 38

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

then he saw that Im still alive and he didnt have

another bullet, and he just hit me right here in this

place. This was winter time, I was, this was at noon,

I was bleeding on the snow for five hours, and he was

sure that Im dead.

Answering machine: Hello, you have reached 365-4411

HK: In the meantime, uh, they changed guards8

SB: Wait, we have to stop.

(Cut)

C: Mark 10

HK: The guards changed at 4 oclock and 3 other Lith-

uanians came in and if it wouldnt be two friends of

mine who were both engineers from Hungary. I was still

able to be on my feet in spite of the blood which I

lost and we marched back to the ghetto. It was about a

4Mile walk. And, uh, there was a little hospital in the

ghetto. In charge of this little hospital was a Dr.

Kaplan who survived and you must understand that at

that time my hair was covering naturally my wound. She

didnt even have a razorblade or razor to shave off my

hair. And, uh, she managed somehow to give me, I dont

remember exactly how many stitches. But next day I was

running very very high temperature. No penicillin, no

medication of any kind. She did manage to bandage my

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 39

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

wound and it is only a miracle, its a miracle, and you

really have to believe that the Almighty wanted me to

survive and be here with you to tell you this story. I

survived without medication, without food, and if this

wasnt bad enough, while constantly the number of

inmates were getting smaller, they were always cutting

the fences smaller, so consequently we wouldnt have a

little bit more room for ourselves. And while I was not

going to work because I couldnt even walk, the order

came out that we had to get out of this particular

house, because in the meantime maybe thousands, maybe

1,500 were deported. And I do remember that my wife,

Julia, may she rest in peace, uh, looked for another

quarters and, eh, somehow we found another place to

stay and I survived. So, there are so many miracles, so

many miracles, and I have I believe, an obligation to

tell my story because if it happened once it can happen

gain.

SB: Thank you very much.

HK: Youre welcome.

(End of interview)

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