KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 1

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

(Beep)

Bob Silverthorne: Wentworth Films. Kovno ghetto

project. Interview with Jacob Lewin.

J--A--C--O--B--L--E--W--I--N. 5-7-97. 23 continued.

Camera roll 48 at the head.

C: Speeding 48, marker 1.

SB: First of all can you tell me the name you were born

with and when and where you where born?

JL: I was born in Kovno, Kaunas uh in Lithuania in

1932, February 19th. Uh my name is Jacob or Janco, uh

Lewin. Use to be Levin but uh recently got changed to

L--E--W--I--N.

SB: And tell me a little bit about the years before the

war began at least as well as you can remember.

JL: I remember that quite vividly. We were--when I was

born anyway, my parents were well off. We ran a tex-

tile business, wool textile. Every summer we use to go

to the Baltic Sea, a town called Palaga, and spent two

months of the--of the summer out there. Uh I had a

nanny uh and uh--uh we had uh I think a very affluent

type of existence in Kovno. My parents had the second

largest uh textile business in Lithuania. Uh, I went

to a uh Hebrew Gymnasia in Kovno. Everything was

taught in Hebrew uh and uh I don't think I lack for

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 2

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

anything in the way of creature comforts and uh we

lived on uh Litvitz or Laya which was the uh--uh

main--uh streets through Kovno in those days. Uh and

it was a very uh kinda bubbling uh area where all the

businesses were and uh all the restaurants were and uh

we use to walk up and down uh the uh streets uh--uh for

relaxation and to go out to various restaurants and

stores and so forth. Uh, use to go to movies a lot and

uh basically uh very happy existence for me. Up in

'till the 1939 when the Russians came in and took over

and uh in 1941, the Germans came in and started the

whole Holocaust business.

SB: Tell me those changes in those couple of years.

Tell me how the things that you remember; the things

that you heard, saw, how you felt.

JL: Well, it was a big change when the Russian came in.

Uh, obviously uh they felt that they were liberating

us. And I remember something that apparently stuck in

my mind a train load of watermelon was being shipped in

from Russia for the hungry Lithuanians. There was a

banner on--on the side of the train--uh the cars

wh--which carried watermelons. Lithuania was an agri-

cultural country, we never lacked for any food or

watermelons at that point; for that uh.

Everybody had to uh fall in step with the Russian

philosophy of life uh because we were uh business

people; my parents that is. Uh, we were classified as

capitalists. Our business was confiscated and put into

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 3

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

uh a uh retell and we were not allowed to hold uh any

jobs. My father was the designer in the business. My

mother was the uh mechanical guroo. Who use to run all

the machinery. She went to Lipestik every year and

bought the latest machinery and we imported wool from

France and from England. And uh when they took our

machinery away, they didn't know how to maintain it.

And she was the only one who knew how to do that so

they gave her a job. My father couldn't work but my

mother did. And we were able to sustain ourselves uh

okay during that period of time with my mother working.

My father, in the mean time, cuz he had--couldn't get a

job or wasn't allowed to work, uh, studied voice and uh

sang in--in the Opera at least once and subsequently

when we came to this country became a cantor. Uh, then

of course when the Germans moved in, in '41, uh it

wasn't very long uh--uh that we were told that we had

to leave our home uh--apartment and only take with us,

what we could carry. And we were moved uh mass from uh

the main part of the town to a suburb and I'm not quite

sure I remember the actual name of that suburb uh and

we were put into a ghetto. Uh, the ghetto was then

surrounded with barbed wire fences and Lithuanian and

German guards were standing around watching us uh with

uh--uh machine guns and towers. And uh we were forced

to live in uh this area uh. The uh--

SB: Let's back up a bit. Do you--did you hear uh

anything when the Germans came in and did--were there

any changes that you heard about?

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 4

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

JL: Uh, well, uh--uh I was all of 9 years old at the

time. And all I can remember is that uh--uh shouting

going on about all the Jews must leave. Uh and masses

of people, some wagons, some baby carriages with all

the goods they could take with them. Couldn't take any

furniture or anything like that, uh left behind, so

they. We marched in like a long train of people uh

moving out of the main uh part of the town into the

suburb. Uh, basically that's all I can remember when

he--uh anything that stands in my mind at that particu-

lar transition.

SB: Gunfire, anything like that?

JL: Uh, I don't recall, no.

SB: And what about Pogroms. What about uh killings or

humiliation or anti-Semitism?

JL: Well there was plenty of anti-Semitism in Lithuania

before the Germans came before the Germans came; obvi-

ously before the Russian came for that matter. Uh, I

as a child uh was causted almost regularly because I

looked very Semitic. And I used to be called all kinds

of uh names walking don't the street. And uh we butted

uh a uh a court yard where we lived where the veterans

of the Lithuanian army and their families lived and

they were throwing rocks at us and at one point uh I uh

was hit by a brick in my head uh from kids on the other

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 5

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

side. So anti-Semitism was rampant in Lithuania uh

they didn't need encouragement of Germans to act out

there anger or frustration or whatever it was uh or

hatred for the Jews. During the period I was--uh I can

recall, I--there were no Pogroms that I was aware at

least not in Kovno itself. Perhaps there may

have been in some of the smaller towns. But in Kovno I

don't recall any particular events of this type.

SB: And the moving in to the ghetto, do you remember

the things your family took or do you remember what you

took?

DL: I don't remember the details, no, but I--I--uh

since we could only take what we could carry; essen-

tially clothing, and whether jewelry my parents--my

mother had uh--uh we took with us and uh--uh that's

basically all we could carry. There were four of us;

my brother, my mother, my father and I and uh there

wasn't a hell of a lot we could take with us. Whatever

we could wrap up in a blanket or something or a sheet

and carry on our backs. And so we managed to take

uh--but the--the--the uh--some of the jewelry that my

mother had helped save our lives a little bit because

my mother use to uh sneak out from the barbed wire

fence through the--at night and barter with the peas-

ants for food and bring food us uh because the food

rations that we got in the ghetto were very minimal.

And uh and she was able to bring in substantial amounts

of foods every time she went across the barbed wire

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 6

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

fence. Uh so it's the first time, by the way, uh I ate

pork. We were Kosher up to that point. And it was

uh--uh change. Uh but uh we were in the ghetto for 3

years before we were evacuated when the Russian front

came closer uh and uh I attribute my mothers ability to

support us with food, beyond the bread and--and the

marmalade or whatever we got for rations. Uh, that

allowed me to survive what came afterwards which was uh

a one year trek through various concentration camps.

SB: Do you remember the how--the what you moved into?

Do you remember the room or the...?

JL: Uh, well, we moved in--a couple times during the

ghetto stay. We were in what was used to be that time

was a small ghetto at first. We live in a house and

apartment and a house. Uh we weren't there too long.

I don't remember exactly how long were the dates but we

were--

SB: We have to put another roll of film.

(Cut)

BS: Go to sound roll 24. Camera roll 49. Slate 2 is

up.

(Cut)

C: Marker 2.

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 7

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

SB: Okay you were going to describe to me the first

place that you live in the ghetto.

JL: Well I said uh we were there for a relatively short

time. Uh and then one uh morning uh there's a commo-

tion. Uh we heard the Germans shouting that we all

must leave and it came around running up everybody from

the houses uh and we were taken uh I don't recall

precisely the route, to a field. I think in afterwards

we were moved into the uh part of the ghetto which was

the major part. Apparently there were two parts be-

cause of the road it ran in between. And as we henced

off and uh there was a bridge connecting the two halfs

or something like that. And uh they wanted to consoli-

date us in--into one area so we were all made to move.

There was one building that was a hospital building.

Quote unquote uh it wasn't a real hospital. It was

just a hospital where pe--sick people were kept. And I

remember seeing that was on fire. Uh I thinking in

terms that uh some of the people that were in that

hospital were not allowed to leave. So they might have

been burned in the building alive. But that's my

surmise. I didn't actually see that other than I saw

the building burning. As we walked by uh to go to the

assembly area and then moved over to the new--uh to--uh

the major part of the ghetto; main part of the ghetto.

Uh there was a lot of shooting and--and uh shouting

going on. Uh and that's about what I recall at this

time, uh about that particular event.

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 8

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

SB: So shooting and shouting and the hospital was

burning--all of that was going on at the same time?

JL: Yeah, yeah. That's--

SB: Did you walk close to the hospital?

JL: I don't recall but there--there was--there was no

uh--there was no uh kinda of--I don't really recall the

detail. I just remember seeing the building burning.

And uh--uh the whole thing's a bit hazy so uh those are

the things that stand out of my mind at this point

uh.SB: And so you went into the big ghetto and then

where did you go?

JL: Well, we were forced into a house where uh there

were like uh three rooms in the house and the main area

on the second floor of the building and there were

three families living in the house. Uh my brother,

mother, uh my father and myself and there aren't maybe

a total of like uh maybe 15 people in that uh one floor

or apartment that we were in. And I believe we stayed

their throughout the remainder of the ghetto, uh peri-

od. Uh (pause) it was uh no particular uh situation

that I can recall uh while we were there except that uh

eh--I should not--not--uh--uh put it that way. Um, uh

while we were in that apartment, I remember there was

some kinda of uh commotion going on and the German

soldiers came around and asked for jewelry and gold and

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 9

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

uh my brother uh had an old broken down watch in his

pocket and he forgot about it and then didn't hand it

over and the German looked and found it, he was going

to shoot him, right there and then in the spot. Uh--uh

and my brother said to him that it's an old broken

watch, it doesn't work, you know, it's worthless. Uh

he talked him out of shooting him and took the broken

down watch and left but uh there was uh--uh quite a

commotion. It was one of the first big commotions that

uh in the main ghetto. As I recall, when they went

from house to house looking for uh jewelry, gold and

valuables.

SB: Did you mother keep some hidden then?

JL: Yes.

SB: Did you know where it went?

JL: No, no. I don't recall where. But uh obviously

she had some--it wasn't just jewelry she was trading

with the peasants uh the farmers. Uh it was clothing

and uh--whether it was small piece of fur she was able

to bring in from uh the home that we have.

SB: Tell me about the--there was a time when everyone

had to assemble from the ghetto. Do you remember that?

It was pretty early...in October--it was the end of

October, in 1941. Do you remember that?

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 10

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

JL: Uh, not by date. But there were several assemblies

that we had to attend to. Uh, there was one area which

was a main square like where the gate from the ghetto

uh was uh. And people use to have to assemble there to

go into work brigades. My brother, my father being one

of them. They uh assembled in the morning. They were

marched out and uh--uh we were standing at night--in

evening rather waiting for him to come back and hoping

that they would come back and in some cases they some

of them did not. Uh there were assemblies for work

details as far as I can remember--remember. Uh there

may have been assemblies for other reasons and but uh I

my family and I were not impacted by that since we all

managed to get back to our apartment, at the time.

There were other assemblies subsequently. Uh we use to

call it the Big Action or the Big Actia where we were

woken up early in the morning and marched to a big

field and uh people were being selected; uh the

typ--typical left and right uh kind of situation. Uh

but that came later. Uh, my father and my mother and

my brother and I uh we were work--worked as family

unit. If you were a uh--a uh woman only without the

man--uh without a husband or someone uh you were vul-

nerable because they would select you to what was

perceived at the time to be the wrong side. Uh so as

we walking towards the field where this action took

place, uh my brother who's eight years older than I,

and he's uh robust young man and a woman came by with a

child and she grabbed his arm and latched on to him and

just to be part of the family unit. Uh, and another

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 11

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

one came in, grabbed me and I was only like about what

about 11 years old? 12 about I think. Uh, fortunately

for us because what my brother and my father who were

young and robust people uh were redeemed to be of

work--of labor quality and so the whole family unit

including the two strange women, heh, that latched on

to us uh managed to be selected into the side that

survived. The other side were apparently taken to

uh--uh what I understand is to be a Fort in where they

were shot. At least that's the story that I--I recall.

Uh so that was uh very trying time for us and a very

dramatic experience. Uh, there was another time when

we had an assembly uh were all of us were forced to

gather around a big place and there was a uh a scaf-

fold, a hanging scaffold and there was a man being

brought out and we were forced to watched uh to the

scaffold. And the reason presumably that he was going

to be executed, hanged. That they uh was that they

found some kind of a weapon on him. And uh I remember

uh being made to watch this uh where they put him up on

a box I believe with his hands and legs tied, I think.

Uh and they kicked out the box from under him. A

German soldier did that and he was hanging. The things

you remember as a child is that uh--uh urine was coming

down his leg as he was wriggling on--on--on the

noose--on the rope. Uh, so uh that's another one of

those uh assemblies that we were made to go to.

SB: Okay, I think we're about to run out. Why don't we

change.(Cut)

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 12

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

BS: Camera roll 50 is up. Slate 3 is up.

(3rd stix)

C: Third stix, three.

SB: Um, after the Big Action, the ghetto--the ghetto

sort of settled down and there was a period where there

was relative routine. Um, can you describe to me what

life was like in those periods? Do you remember having

any schooling? Do you remember playing games with your

friends? Sports? Getting into trouble?

JL: Well, uh I remember that uh we were as children,

hanging around a little bit in the streets. Uh, I

remember that uh there was a cobbler who use to make uh

boots and uh the German officers to come to uh have

boots custom made for them and the uh we watched that

and uh it was uh an impression that made uh me, was

that even in the ghetto, if you had any kind of skill

or craft, uh you could survive better than anybody

else. So that gave me the philosophy in life that uh

what I have in my brain, and my skills and my abili-

ties, nobody can take away, while all material things

can be taken away. Obviously the cobbler is getting

additional rations of food and for--for services for

making boots. Uh, I for a short while there, before we

moved, uh from another house, uh had a garden that I

grew vegetables in the spring and never made it uh to

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 13

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

uh--uh reap they were wards of my labor because we were

forced to leave the place but I had potatoes and other

vegetables that I don't know where I got the seeds

or--or--or--or I got the uh all that and planted them.

My father worked in a work shop and because his grand-

father--my grandfather's father use to be a wood carv-

er--he knew how to carve uh shoes--wooden shoes. Cuz

there's of course wasn't any leather--any cows weren't

available. So the--the wooden soles, you know, were

carved to uh--to fit my particular uh size and shape of

a foot. And he was very good at it. I had no--there

was no schooling at the time, however since I had not

had any uh training in--in--in the Torah, the Bible,

there was a Rabbi who had no skills in that he could

apply, my father's taught him how to carve the sh--the

shoes in return for which he taught me the Bible. So I

uh spent uh--that was the extent of my schooling during

the ghetto period for a period of some months where I

uh got lessons on--on--on the Bible. That was my

upbringing in Religion if you will, uh from the age of

about uh 10/11 years old uh thereabouts 12 years old.

Uh, I worked in the bakery and the uh bakery was obvi-

ously was baking bread for--for the ghetto residents.

And on weekends on Chapeaus Day, women use to bring the

pots with uh stew, potatoes and whatever else they

could find and uh stick it in the hot oven uh so that

uh on--on Chapeaus, they could have a hot meal and

since I was in the bakery handling all that every so

often, so of the pots got uh raided (Giggling) and we

ate uh couple of boys worked in the bakery with the

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 14

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

pots uh and took some food that we ate from somebody

else's pot, uh it was uh a relatively quite period at

the time in terms of any action or any thing of that

type going on that I recall. Uh--

SB: What about--was it cold? Was it--what other kinds

of things besides food were a problem?

JL: While we were in the ghetto, I think uh we as a

family unit seemed to have uh managed quite well. My

father was able-bodied. My brother was able-bodied.

My mother--they were all able to work and or gather

enough food and whatever else we needed which was not a

hell of a lot just to get by.

SB: And what about getting along with all the other

people that you lived with?

JL: Uh well, uh I recall specifically the apartment I

mentioned I mentioned earlier where there were like uh

whole bunch of us--three families in it. And it was a

little bit touch and go there. The nerves were kinda

frayed and people were screaming at each other but uh,

I personally don't recall any major outbreaks of uh any

fighting or violence that went on. Uh, other than the

inconvenience of everybody being on top of everybody.

SB: And um do you remember an orchestra in the ghetto?

JL: Not really. I vaguely remember something like that

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 15

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

but I don't think I took much note of it or if I did,

it's uh long forgotten.

SB: And tell me a little more about your mother. Uh,

the things that you remember that she did during that

time period.

JL: You know it's interesting that you bring that up

because I don't recall exactly what she was

doing during the time. So obviously she had to get

into some kind of work uh unit but I don't recall

exactly at what she was doing. Remember my father was

working in the workshop. My brother was working in the

workshop. I don't know exactly what my mother was

doing at the time.

SB: And do you remember the day of the Kinder Action?

JL: Uh yes. That was the day when I was uh ignorantly

running around playing and hanging out with uh--with a

bunch of kids. My mother came around screaming. She

grabbed me by the arm and ran as quickly as we could.

And she got me into the workshop where my father and my

brother were working. I didn't know at the time what

it was all about and uh other than there's some kind of

uh--um drastic or--or--or life threatening event taking

place. Uh, and I worked alongside my father and my

brother in the workshop during that day. And there was

an awful lot of commotion outside uh but for some

reason rather, they never came into the workshops uh

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 16

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

the Germans and whoever else were helping them. Uh,

afterwards when it was apparently all over, and my

mother came to fetch me, I found out that the children

rounded up throughout the ghetto and taken away and for

some reason or other they did not bother to go into the

workshop; perhaps thinking that there wouldn't be any

children inside. But that the workshop was not at all

effected by the particular Action. (Cough)

SB: The commotion--the commotion that you heard...

JL: Yes.

SB: Can you describe that to me?

JL: Well a lot of screaming going on and Germans shout-

ing. Uh, mothers, I guess, screaming, trying to hide

or protect their children. Uh but we all ran in all

directions and uh those of us who were lucky enough

or--were--had the wits about them, like my mother did.

She got me into the workshop and I was untouched. I

don't think others faired as well even if they were

hidden because from what I understand, the Germans came

around looking through the houses and dragging out all

the children that they could find.

SB: Do you remember that night and the next day? Do

you remember sounds?--things that you heard that were

sounds.

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 17

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

JL: No, no that's not vivid in my mind. I was rath--

SB: How did you feel? Were you terrified?

JL: I was scared, yes of course. I didn't know what

was going on and my mother literally dragged me into

the workshop. She ran as fast as you know I could

barely keep up with her. Uh so the fear was there,

very much so and tried to stay out of sight as much as

I could in the workshop and--and--you know try and keep

up with whatever work they gave me. So my

brother and my father handed me some things, some tools

to do. And I looked like I was belonged there. But I

don't remember uh any of the specific details as we

were running, the surrounding shouting and screaming

and running of people, sort of like uh ca--coming past

me. Uh without my having an opportunity to focus on

anything because we were just looking to where we we're

running to. Uh it was panic but that's basically uh

all I can recall of that particular event.

SB: Okay, we have to put another roll--

(Cut)

BS: Sound roll 25. Camera roll 51 is up.

C: 4 marker.

SB: The ghetto changed toward the end after that Kinder

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 18

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

Action. Were you aware of much of--were you aware of

how different it was? Can you describe that to me?

JL: I'm not quite sure uh to me it was a sequence of

blurry scenes that went one place to the next to the

next. Uh--

SB: There were fewer people at the end?JL: Really,

there were several Actions that took place and people

were taken off and shot at the uh I forget the number

of the Fort it was supposed to have been. So there

were clearly fewer people yes. But things seemed to

have moved along where people mustering every morning

to go out to work brigades and coming back at night or

working at the workshop where my father uh subsequent-

ly--my brother subsequently worked. Uh, as far as I

remember, that was the uh a uh ongoing routine, if you

will. Until one day uh we're made aware that we're

gonna be evacuated and then move to place all over

again. Uh, we didn't know where we were going to go.

We didn't know where we were being taken. Apparently

the adults had heard something. As a child I don't

recall what uh having about the extermination camps of

uh that we subsequently learned about. But uh a bunch

of us--us, me and my parents and my brother as bystand-

ers sort of, made arrangements to prevent being evacu-

ated by hiding out in a sub-basement if you will of one

of the large buildings that was there. Like a concrete

building of some sort. Uh, where they dug up the dirt

under the floor and uh when it became clear that uh

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 19

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

people were being rounded up to be evacuated. My

mother, my father and myself wound up in that basement,

if you will. The basement had a trap door through

which you--we came in, uh under a floor in the build-

ing. And had an exit door that was covered in dirt

from the outside so it couldn't be seen. And we were,

a bunch of us, families, children, whatever few chil-

dren were there wound up in that uh--uh bunker, if you

will--whatever you want to call it. Uh, that was a

very--not only frightening but very difficult environ-

ment to be in. We were there for days. How many, I

don't recall. There's no uh air. It was very hot. It

was in the summer I believed. We stripped our clothing

off, intentionally to be able to stay there. And the

air was foul and uh there was no toilet facilities.

Uh, it became very very difficult to just exist in that

environment. We heard commotions outside; Germans

running around shouting the Uden Roust, you know.

Worstatefect and Verchaust and uh there were some

children who were crying in--in the basement uh, I

guess the mothers or fathers tried to shut them up so

that they wouldn't be heard but apparently somebody did

hear commotion or suspected one, found a trap door and

dropped a grenade down. Uh, at that point everybody

started screaming and uh shouting that, you know, don't

shoot we're gonna come out or words to that effect.

Uh, so we were all taking out from that hole in the

ground, under the sub-floor of the building and uh I

still remember, you know, I had barely any clothing on.

Uh and we were marched off to eventually a railroad

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 20

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

siting where there's some cattle cars and we're all

loaded up in the cattle cars. My father, my mother and

I--my brother was still running around somewhere in the

ghetto and we didn't know where he was and my mother

was very worried but uh just before the train was about

to--those who were about to be shot on the cattle cars,

my brother showed up an jumped on--on the train. He

was a quite, you know, a young robust guy. He was able

to maneuver quite well. And he got joined us in

the--in the train.

SB: Was the ghetto burning when you came out?

JL: Uh frankly, I don't recall. So that it does not

seem to have made an impression of me if it was because

at that time we were just worried we were going to be

shot any where from the time they got us out of the

bunker to the time they go us to the railroad siting.

It wasn't until we were essentially loaded in the

trains that uh, you know, we felt uh somewhat safe. At

least, temporarily. And everybody was looking forward

and not looking to the sides, not to make any eye-

contact with the Germans or anything like that. So uh

I don't recall my surroundings other than I was very

miserable, uncomfortable and uh half naked and uh going

into uh marched--be marched to the railroad siting.

SB: And the grenade? Had it gone off?

JL: Yes, uh at least one person was injured. But I

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 21

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

don't know what happened to that person. Chances are

they were shot or left behind or something, don't know.

SB: Tell me more about that hiding place. Was there

light in there? Could you stand up? How big was it?

How many people were in it?

JL: From what I recall it was almost elbow to elbow

full of people. Everybody who could and who knew about

it and people who worked in the workshop knew about it,

wanted to hide out and they ran in and there's no way

to keep them out. Uh so it--it was very very tight.

Uh I remember my family unit of claiming a little

corner in that uh basement and uh we sort of stuck

together uh close b--because there was no really room

to move around. It was almost like everywhere you

took a step, there's a body there. The people there

with there families. As I said there was no toilet

facilities in that hole. And that there was one corner

where everybody relieved themselves--if they could find

it and get to it in time.

SB: It was a very big hiding place.

JL: Yes it was a very large room--uh something in the

order of this room here uh in size. Uh it was uh

quite--quite a big--well it was prepared--it was dug up

uh to make it uh house many people as possible that

were on the in group of that workshop--that knew what

was going on and what was being worked on. So they

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 22

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

brought there families in there and some families got

there earlier than others and so on.

SB: Do you have any idea how many people were in there?

JL: No, uh not really. If I were to guess, I would say

maybe between 50 and a hundred.

SB: How could you stand up?

JL: Just in your place where you--where you were.

SB: Just sort of like a cattle car?

JL: Just like a cattle car, exactly.

SB: Was there light?

JL: No. We didn't want to put lights on a case. That

would spot it. Uh, we tried to stay as quiet as possi-

ble but I imagine there was at least one child there

who was crying and eventually uh wound up having uh

detected. Uh so, it was--it never intended to be of

such a long term stay. We thought the Germans would

come, take everybody out and in a day or two they would

be gone and we would be freed. But it was we stayed

over much longer than anybody had anticipated and that

was not prepared for that kind of a long stay.

SB: Was there food?

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 23

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

JL: No. Whatever you had with you is what you had.

Literally came with your body and whatever you had in

your hands and pockets. That's it.

SB: No food, no water?

JL: No.

SB: Do you--do you every remember having a run in with

any uh of the Jewish police, the ghetto police or did

they ever help you?

JL: Neither help nor run in. I was kid just staying

out of trouble as much as possible.

SB: And was your mother sort of a hero to--did she put

all of her energy into saving you and your brother?

JL: Yep. (Crying)

(Cut)

JL: Anyway.

(Cut)

JL: She was the brains in the family, essentially. Uh,

she was able to sustain all of us.

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 24

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

SB: Let's wait for a minute and get another roll on and

talk a little about--

(Cut)

(Sound Roll 25 Next)

BS: Wentworth Films. Kovno Ghetto project. Sound roll

25 continued. Camera roll number 52 at the head.

Interview continued with Jacob Lewin. 5-7-97.

(Cut)

C: 52, marker 5.SB: Can you, as if you haven't already

told me about that hiding place, describe to me the end

again and the hiding place and what happened there.

JL: We...I was mentioning, that hiding place was pre-

pared ahead of time as uh when--when we got wind that

there's gonna be an evacuation. The Russian army was

getting close and the Germans were going to evacuate

all of us out of Lithuania. So in preparation for it,

dug this sub-basement uh--uh and the entrance to it was

through a trap door in the building. It was hidden.

And uh there was one other--a door in the uh basement,

in the side of the room but it was covered on the

outside by dirt so that it would not be detected as a

door. And uh when things became more imminent or

families uh all those that were in on that particular

hiding place were uh came over--and came in there and

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 25

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

uh we wound up uh--uh in a room full of people--fairly

large number of people at that. My father, my mother

and I--and my brother was not with us at the time uh I

don't know where he was but he was somewhere in the

ghetto roaming around on his own. Uh we were in that

room for a number of days uh perhaps a week or longer.

It was extremely hot uh and uh foul air. There was no

toilet facilities in there. People use to have to

relieve themselves went to one corner and relieve

themselves there and uh cover it up I guess the with

the--the dirt in the basement uh. Uh it got so hot

that everybody took their clothes off, just about. And

we were uh half naked in there. It was uh dark uh I

guess the primary reason was because we didn't want to

be detected some how by a crack of light coming out at

night so the Germans could spot us. Uh and we sat

there for uh days I said. Uh shouting going on all

around. Uh the Germans uh shouting at uh all the Jews,

all the Udenroust. Uh and uh we heard shots outside

and uh--uh we stayed there until--you know the baby but

it starts crying and the parent tried to shut the baby

up but apparently uh a German cause whoever heard it,

and they found the trap door and dropped a grenade and

uh when the grenade exploded it injured one of the

people who stood nearest the trapdoor. Everyone start-

ed shouting and of course we were discovered. And uh

we opened up the side door and started coming out. We

were--were was it semi-dressed or uh. Uh and uh we're

rounded up--lined up and--and marched off from that uh

place, eventually to a railroad siting where we were

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 26

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

all loaded up in cattle cars. Uh, my brother--my

brother was still not there but uh my father, my mother

and I were in one of the cattle cars and uh--and my

brother showed up and ran from cattle car to cattle car

looking for us and when he found us, he hopped on and

we were all on the cattle car being take out of Lithua-

nia. Uh that was basically one of the uh scariest

times, if you will, for me personally. Uh, although

I've been scared before in the actions that we spoke

about earlier. Uh, this was very frightening especial-

ly when the grenade went off and we thought we were all

going to be shot. Uh, that's basically all I can

remember of--of--of that particular event. But it was

uh perhaps the most dramatic event for me, at the time,

as a child.

SB: And do you think you could talk a bit about what

you're--how you mother worked to save the family?

JL: Yes, my mother uh--uh was pretty much uh the brain

in--in--in the business and in the family. She was not

Semitic looking. Uh light haired and uh spoke uh

Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, German, and uh she was

able to sustain us uh by sneaking out of the barbed

wire fence in the middle of the night and visiting

farmers in this outskirts of the ghetto. (Cough) And

uh bartering and trading clothing and or pieced of

jewelry for food. Nobody had butter for example. Uh

we had butter cuz she was able to get it from uh the

peasants, the farmers. Uh, uh nobody--I shouldn't say

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 27

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

nobody but uh we wound up having uh pork, for example

uh cause there was hardly any meat in the uh ghetto and

from the rations that I recall. We were getting bread

and maybe some margarine and maybe some marmalade or

something and some potatoes. Uh, so uh she was uh--she

did uh--quite often at the risk of her life and managed

to come back every morning with a bundle of food for

us. Uh she was uh--uh obviously awaring--alert to us

what was going on and able to uh win over quite well

under the circumstances. Uh and I believe that uh from

a physical stand point and health stand point uh she

was responsible for us being in reasonably good shape.

At the end of the ghetto period, when we were taken to

concentration camps, subsequently, still survive the

concentration camps. Many people uh didn't quite make

it because of poor nutrition, poor food and health

reasons in the because the way we were able to sustain

ourselves, I think we made it to uh--uh perhaps we had

a little bit uh--uh my father, mother, my--my brother

and I all survived uh the Holocaust and were liberated

in Austria and Germany. So that uh I believe that she

was the main contributor to our well being.

SB: She sent you uh packing with cotton in your boots

or something?

JL: Yes. She uh--I was small stature. As a kid, I was

not very large and I'm only 5'5" now. Or I was 5'5" a

few years ago. Uh, so uh she felt if I looked bigger

and taller that I would uh do a little bit better. So

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 28

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

I had boots, ankle boots and she made me put cotton in

the boots--in the heels to raise me by a couple inches.

And I wore those boots throughout the concentration

camp and I believe that eh at least in one of the

concentration camp help me survive.SB: And you were on

uh--riding down the road on trucks to the boats when

you reunited with your brother.

JL: After liberation in Austria, there were--there were

a hundred and fifty Lithuanian kids who wound up uh

from the Kovno ghetto uh in--in Lansbury which is near

Dakaw and taken from Dakaw to Auschwitz and subsequent-

ly--matter of fact there are about 50 of us survived

out of the hundred and fifty. Uh most of us found

ourselves in the uh--uh town called Welles, Austria.

And we were rounded up by the U.S. authorities and uh

put into a barracks--it use to be a German barracks.

And a couple months later the Haganah showed up and I

says, 'We want to go to Lithuania,' or Palestine at the

time . And of course we had no knowledge of any family

relationship or existence or anything. We were all on

our own, uh we were--we said fine, you know, let's go.

So they pull some trucks, in the kind of a maybe six or

eight military trucks with the tarp over the top but

the front of the tarp was open and I was standing at

the head right over the driver's uh cabin. And uh the

convoy had stopped on a highway in Austria. I believe

there was a problem with a woman who had fainted or

something. Uh, so the whole convoy came to a halt and

as I was standing there uh looking down the road,

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

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/JACOB LEWIN page 29

Interviewed (5-7-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

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

(Crying) I saw my--I saw my brother coming and I spot-

ted him. He took me off the truck and I didn't know

that either he or--or my father or anybody survived so

that uh he took me off the truck and took me back to

where my father was which was Munich at the time. Uh,

the rest of the convoy went on to the uh ships like the

Haganah. Now the uh the edge of the ship--the famous

story uh to uh immigrate legally into a Palestine.

That's why I wound up in Munich and eventually the

United States, instead of winding up in Israel. Uh, my

mother is still not know of at the time and uh we lived

in--in the Falofin DP camp for a while and then we had

an apartment in Munich, afterwards. About a year or so

later, a knock on the door and I open up the door and

there was my mother. (Crying) So anyway all were

(Cough) reunited in '46 or so and the rest is history.

As they say.

SB: Thank you.

JL: Okay.

(Long Beep)

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