

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

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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 didn't feel comfortable to live in Poland due to the fact that the Polish population 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 didn't 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 let's say middle class. The other 50% of the Jewish population was very very poor. And

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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 Katzenellenpollen, 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, Kaunas, or Kovno.

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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 Kaunas, 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 don't know, no difference how he was caught, and he was arrested and he ended up in Warsaw in the well known prison Pawiak (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

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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 I m 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

Video Tape No.____ Camera Roll No. ____ Sound Roll No. ____

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 o clock 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 I m 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 didn t 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 garden. And we were sitting with them, and naturally, all

Video Tape No.____ Camera Roll No. ____ Sound Roll No. ____

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 I m 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 Lithuanian populations, and I would say population because naturally you can t 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 because 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, graduated, 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 there s nothing to it and they guaranteed that we would be back. I cannot explain why I didn t go, eh, my brother went. This was the first what we call the Intelligentsia Action, or Operation Intellectuals. My brother never came back and while we were waiting for him at the gate from 6 o clock 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

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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 families were together and we didn't 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 supplied 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 of 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 there's 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.

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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: Let's wait because we're 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 didn't expect atrocities,

he went to town because his sister called him up that she didn't have any sugar and he never came back. So my father was the first one in all to be shot, and from 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, there's 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 couldn't 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, you're 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 population 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 o'clock 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 it s cold in the morning, and by about nine o clock 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 didn t 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 don t know, I don t know, but he says to me, he doesn t know exactly what is happening, but, try to pull always back, don t try to go ahead. Pull back. And this is exactly what I did, and more or less by 4 o clock 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

Video Tape No.____ Camera Roll No. ____ Sound Roll No. ____

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 couldn't 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 didn't come to work yesterday and when we told him and he said, Well, I'm very sorry but I really don't believe it. But I think that it was, we made a mistake. Something did happen, by mistake they took away, but I don't believe that, you know, civilized people like we are doing the killing. So just imagine, he by himself didn't believe what was happening. Then there's 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 destroyed, 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 didn't mention it. I didn't, but I can mention it. Well, it's 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 Lithuanian women following the march, and we didn't know exactly why, but at about 5 o'clock 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 episode. By no mean, if somebody ask me how didn t you, did you, did you write while you were in the ghetto, a diary and I said, I didn t 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 didn t 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 didn t 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 didn t have any chance to get food with exception at midnight we re 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 didn t really, ah, didn t 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: We ve 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, let s put it this way. Lots of things which
was happening in the ghetto, lots of details I really
don t know, because, uh, I do recall that before the
German invasion, life was just s normal as it could be.
Maybe, uh, the food wasn t as fancy as it is now in the
United States, maybe it was better because people
weren t getting as sick as they are now, uh, and uh,
complete freedom, I mean absolutely nothing to be
expected what was happening and then, I m not a psy-
chiatrist and not a philosopher, but you wouldn t
believe what would happen to people affected by hunger.
Hunger is not only causing a terrible pain in your
stomach, but your brain don t 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 don't 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 professors 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 didn't know and every day doing my homework I discover new things which I was absolutely ignorant about this.

SB: Why don't 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: We're getting some kind of scratching noise. Sorry to interrupt.

SB: I don't 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 commanding officer who was sent from Berlin by the name Wilhelm Gerke who changed the name from ghetto to concentration camp, and concentration camp had better future to survive the ghettos 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 liquidated that the Germans in charge of the ghettos were being sent to the front to fight the Russian army, and having good connections in Berlin he got a new assignment 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. I m 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 couldn t understand because we didn t
have the music, we didn t have the musicians, and we
didn t 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
couldn t compare this with the symphony orchestra
because there were only about ten or twelve guys playing.
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 considered
as a human being with a little bit better, with a
little bit more food, and music. But what was happening,
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 who s 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
didn't believe, you know, that this was possible be-
cause the Germans are civilized, they wouldn't do any
harm to children. We didn't 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, it's really hard to describe what was going
on because we saw mothers who wouldn't 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 civilization 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 wouldn't say maybe, but this is the reason why the museums are very important and there's to my knowledge about 15 museums in the United States, but hundreds of educational centers

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 get a quarters where to stay over night, you got it. So, consequently I wasn't

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 couldn't 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 didn't 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 o'clock when I saw everything get quiet and the trucks pulled out, I really don't know exactly how many children 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 wasn't 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 didn't 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 didn't come back to the ghetto, they went to the small ghetto, which was already empty. And then next morning, I wouldn't tell you exactly if it was 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock 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 there's always a certain element which is hungry for everything, and I don't 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 fortification, I presume that the Germans took the people but didn't want the carriages. So the women who were following the the the people who was shot got the carriages 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 Germany's winning the war, and the local population were hostiles. So, let's 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 didn't 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 didn't 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 what's 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 didn't 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 consequently 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 didn't take my freedom for granted 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 independent again. The capital is not anymore Kovno, or Kaunas, it is Vilnius. Last November, a young Lithuanian 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 didn't 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 don't think you have in Washington at your museum here a garden which is dedicated to the righteous. There's one in Jerusalem at the Holocaust Museum, Yad Vashem (SP?), and we have plaques of Righteous from every country and among them Urbanoff. 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, here's the picture since you do work for leading newspaper in Vilnius, have her photo printed and let's 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 printed, but this is already May, almost six months, so far I didn't hear from them or from her. Hopefully we'll 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 isn t such a thing.
Because they were really sacrificing their life, not
only their life but their family s 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 wouldn t 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 didn't 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 civilized people. You know, it was hard to think that if this would happen some place behind the mountains 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 information, 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 successfully 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 couldn't do it for two reasons. First of all, I'm 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, I'm glad that I never did it and I can go away from this planet with a clean conscience.

SB: We re just about to run out, but I want to ask about the liquidation. Let s 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 because 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 happens 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 didn t have electricity and hot water, and some times not even floors. And what we saw, and unfortunately I didn t have a camera, and I don t 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 didn't go into the ghetto because otherwise she
wouldn't 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 wasn't 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 brother
were shot and hopefully didn't 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 I'm a very strong man mentally that I
can still take it because I understand that they were
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 he's speechless, he doesn't 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 appreciated and not taken for granted
because it's 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 about the instruments because at the very first beginning they took everything away from us. I mean everything of value, including instruments, and then all of a sudden when Wilhelm, 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 didn't 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 don't 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 all 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 you've got like a night time fort (?) which is an open space with barracks, they were like fortifications 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 attacking, they can shoot at them. You can see the same thing in England, in many many places 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 Kaunas, 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

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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 couldn't preserve, and not butter because anything of perishable goods at that time was spoiling because we didn't 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-

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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 ghettos were created with intention of being liquidated as quickly as possible so they didn't 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 train

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 momma's little boy being the youngest one. And, uh, even if I would have been not hungry, I wouldn't 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

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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 we 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. Somehow, 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, You're 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 couldn't even describe. Just imagine at least about, uh, I really don't 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 didn't 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 don't know how he didn't 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

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

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 I'm still alive and he didn't 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 I'm 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 o'clock and 3 other Lithuanians came in and if it wouldn't 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 4 mile 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 didn't even have a razorblade or razor to shave off my hair. And, uh, she managed somehow to give me, I don't

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

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/HENRY KELLEN page 39
Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley
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wound and it is only a miracle, it s 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 wasn t bad enough, while constantly the number of inmates were getting smaller, they were always cutting the fences smaller, so consequently we wouldn t have a little bit more room for ourselves. And while I was not going to work because I couldn t 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: You re welcome.

(End of interview)

Video Tape No. _____ Camera Roll No. _____ Sound Roll No. _____