

Excerpts from Oral History Interviews with Ed Hoffman & Henry Slucki

Ed Hoffman and Henry Slucki were interviewed in the early 1980s by Sara Moskovitz for her Child Survivors of the Holocaust project. Hoffman was born in 1929 in Eastern Europe. He spent the war's early years hiding in the Carpathian Mountains, but was rounded up in 1944 and taken to Auschwitz. He was later moved to Gross Rosen and Matthausen concentration camps, and was the only Holocaust survivor on his mother's side of the family.

Henry Slucki was born in Paris in 1934. When the Nazis invaded, his family traveled to unoccupied southern France before going to Spain. Slucki secured a spot on a ship First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt organized for child refugees to come to the United States. Slucki was eventually reunited with his parents in the US. In these clips, Hoffman and Slucki describe their experiences as children during the Holocaust.

Excerpted Transcript from Ed Hoffman Oral History:

EH: My father was in uh a labor camp. Well, my father was military age and the Jews weren't taken into military so they put them in labor, labor camp instead.

SM: And when was that about?

EH: That was in nineteen, about 1943, beginning of forty-three.

SM: So when you were put into the ghetto your father wasn't with you anymore?

EH: No, he wasn't. What really hurt me is once they start taking us away from the ghetto, the whole town, all the people came out. And they were watching us parade down the street going toward the, the wagons to be shipped out. And actually, they were happy about it.

SM: You could tell that from their expressions or?

EH: Well, they didn't cry or they didn't leave any tears. They were laughing and making jokes yet.

SM: Was the ghetto in your town?

EH: Yes, it was.

SM: In Sevljus

EH: In the town yea. And, so they, they put us in the wagons.

SM: Were these train wagons or?

EH: Train, it was closed like cattle wagons.

SM: Yes, cattle cars.

EH: They left a little space open. Give you an example, my nextdoor neighbor was an old lady, beautiful old lady. And she was blind ever since she was a baby. I know she was born blind I guess. I use to like her very much. She was about sixty years old approximately. And they even, an old

lady like that, they pushed her down and, and kicked her you know when they, they, we were going toward the, the wagons.

SM: And who was doing this? Was this--

EH: It was the people from, from the town. And actually, you know and like my grandmother for instance, she was a nice old lady. She was--Her life was helping people, like donations, helping-- It was in our religion to do it anyway. And I'm the only survivor of my mother's side of the family, nobody came back.

Excerpted Transcript from Henry Slucki Oral History:

SM: On this trip you're a 9-year-old kid, you don't know when you're going to see your parents again. Did you have some ways of comforting yourself? Did you have any objects or anything with you?

HS: Well I did take some pictures. I don't recall anything in terms of any special you know toy or trinket or anything of that sort. My parents had purchased a fountain pen for me to carry with me and I remember that they gave me \$2, two American dollars, which I was to hold onto until I got to the United States, should I need them. I remember experiencing the trip in very positive ways, and then writing my parents, so perhaps that was one of the ways I would comfort myself, I wrote them very extensively, and we do have some copies of those letters, we still have the letters. For example I had never seen a bathtub in a home before, and the Jewish family who took us in in Lisbon, in retrospect I considered them at the time being very wealthy, as to whether they were or not I don't know, but they had a bathtub right in their apartment, and I remember just relishing taking a bath and not having to go to the public bath house, or as we had done in the apartment, or as my mother would do in the laundry basin or sink. I wrote them about that, and the trip was relatively short in the sense that it was really about a two- to three-week separation that I was on my own, and every day was really a different adventure. For example, I remember we stopped off in the Canary Islands, and people were selling pineapples, and you know, there was a little basket to bring them onto board. Just being on that size ship, which was a relatively small ship, but yet for me a very large one, was very exciting. Being in a berth with, I remember there were four of us to a room, with an upper bunk and a lower bunk, those were all very exciting things. No I don't think I really viewed the situation as an adult would. I'm sure that this was much more difficult on my parents than it was on me, but no, I saw it much more as kind of an adventure, kind of going to summer camp.