

DRAFTED IN POLAND

Shep was born in Vilna, Poland, May 27, 1917. Vilna was known as the "Jerusalem of the East."

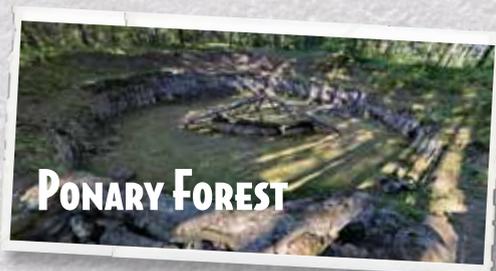
In early 1939, Hitler turned his attention to Poland and Shep was drafted into the Polish Army. On September 17, 1939, the Red Army invaded eastern Poland, including Vilna. In July 1940, the Soviet Union absorbed the Baltic countries of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania.

POW CAMP

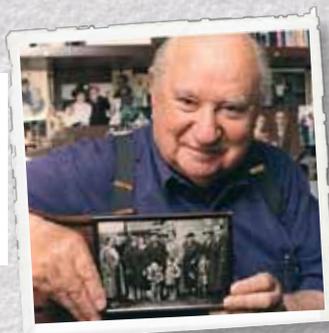
Between 1939 and 1941, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were 'allies.' The Soviets transferred Vilna back to Lithuania and it became a satellite of the Soviet Union. The Germans classified Shep as a Jewish soldier 'of Lithuanian origin,' and no longer a Jewish soldier 'of Polish' origin. The Nazis were 'cautious' with prisoners (like Shep) who came from an ally country, fearing diplomatic repercussions.



Shep and other Jewish soldiers 'of Lithuanian origin' were sent to a POW camp and separated from Polish-Jewish soldiers (who were killed). Shep didn't know why the Nazis didn't murder the Lithuanian Jewish soldiers. Shep and 9 friends from Vilna, spent the next 5 years and 7 months in various German POW and labor camps.



In the wake of the German Army's advance, the Nazis dispatched Einsatzgruppen ('special strike commandos') to shoot Jews and other 'sub-humans.' Their policy was to kill every Jewish individual in Lithuania. Out of 70,000 Jews living in Vilna, only 7,000 survived. Shep's family was murdered at Ponary Forest, a few miles south of Vilna. Jewish people were marched to Ponary, shot in the back of the head, and buried in pits. Between 70,000 and 100,000 Jewish people were murdered at Ponary.



POST WAR

Shep and his fellow POWs were liberated from Gorlitz by the Red Army in April, 1945. After the war Shep and his friends pretended to be members of the Jewish Brigade, attached to the British Army and they were sent to England. In 1948, Shep immigrated to New Orleans where 2 of his uncles lived.