

Finding Aid : GA 230
Jerzy Pindera fonds.

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GA 230 : Jerzy Pindera

Jerzy Pindera fonds. - 1940-1999. - 27 cm of textual records and other material. - 5 computer disks : 1.44MB ; 10 x 9 cm. - 9 audio cassettes (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.

Jerzy-Tadeusz Pindera was born December 4, 1914 in the village of Czchow, in what was then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire (now Poland) and raised in Chelm. Pindera was born into a middle class Catholic family living with his mother who was a teacher and his step-father who was a civil servant. Pindera attended elementary and high school in Chelm. Pindera later joined the local scouting branch and did some paramilitary courses while in high school. In 1933 he graduated and passed his entrance exams for the Technical University of Warsaw. While at the University of Warsaw Pindera studied Mechanical Engineering, with an emphasis on Aeronautics. He was also a member of the Academic Scouting Organization and the Academic Detachment of the Rifleman Association.

After graduating in 1936 Pindera enlisted in the army for his mandatory one year of military service, with an eye on attending graduate school for aeronautical engineering the following year. After completing his military service Pindera went back to University of Warsaw and enrolled in the M.Sc. program in Aeronautical Engineering. Here he gained what would become invaluable experience working on the floor in an airplane manufacturing plant, and in learning to fly.

On September 1, 1939 Germany invaded Poland and Pindera's military unit was mobilized. He was sent to Wlodawa to join the Ninth Regiment of Heavy Artillery. After the Soviet invasion of Poland, Pindera attempted to reach Warsaw in a reconnaissance plane with Polish markings liberated from a local airfield taken over by the Soviet Army. Following a river he encountered an "interesting situation": he was fired upon by both the Soviets and Germans each occupying either side of the river. He was finally was shot down by a unit of regular German Army anti-aircraft battery, captured, and taken to a field hospital outside of Warsaw. In subsequent conversation with his captors he was apparently lucky: a Waffen SturmStaffel (SS) unit was located several kilometers from his point of capture. This unit executed on the spot all Polish officers. He escaped the hospital in October of that year, fled to Chelm, and eventually decided to try to escape to Hungary.

Pindera's war time experience, education, and political affiliations while at University made it likely that he would be part of the group of Polish political activists and intelligentsia that were being captured by the Germans. In February of 1940 Pindera attempted to escape to Hungary with the intent of ultimately joining the Polish military units being formed in the UK, only to be arrested by Ukrainian police working for the Gestapo and taken to a cell with other Polish political prisoners. In July of 1940 Pindera received his sentence from Berlin - he was to be sent to a concentration camp, with the notation "Return Undesired." In August of 1940 Pindera arrived at Konzentrationslager (KZ) Sachsenhausen.

While at Sachsenhausen, Pindera helped to organize resistance amongst Polish political prisoners aimed at slowing down the rate of killings by the Nazi guards and their inmate collaborators, and at carrying out acts of sabotage to slow down the Nazi war machine. He was doing this while slowly being worked to death on various concentration camp work details. His activities attracted the attention of the established resistance group within the camp, comprised most notably of German communists and socialists. The latter formed the original prison population of the camp during the Nazi takeover of the German government and the subsequent drive to eliminate all traces of opposition to the Nazi rule. A member of this group saved him from impending death as his weight had fallen below 30 kilograms by 1942. Pindera's contact and collaboration with this leading resistance group, and friendship with one member who was also working in the camp's construction office, or Bauburo of the concentration camp, as well as his engineering background, made it possible to start working as an engineer for the Bauburo when an opening became available.

After spending five years in various "blocks" at Sachsenhausen, Pindera and the other 95,000 prisoners were marched from the camp in April of 1945 as Soviet and American troops advanced in an attempt by the Nazis to eliminate the evidence of the concentration camp's existence. The Nazis' intent was to put the prisoners on barges and then sink the barges in the North Sea. After slightly over a week of marching Pindera and few others escaped the line and fled into the forest away from their SS guards. Two days after this the Soviets liberated the area and Pindera returned to Chelm and his family.

When Pindera returned home he was responsible for looking after his mother and sister, as his step-father had been murdered in a Soviet concentration camp as a political dissident. He returned to school at Warsaw Technical University and in 1947 he graduated with his masters of Aeronautical Engineering. During the period 1947-1963 Pindera held leadership positions at several research institutes in Warsaw, including Aeronautical Research Institute, Institute of Precision Mechanics, and Institute for Building Research, while working towards his Ph.D. in Mechanics at the Polish Academy of Sciences. He received his PhD in 1959, and subsequently the D.Sc. degree (Dr. Habil.) in Applied Mechanics from the Technical University of Cracow. His research and several books that he had published during this period attracted the attention of researchers on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and made it difficult for the communist authorities to jail him outright for his increasing dissatisfaction with the system and the willingness to speak out publicly. Instrumental in his survival during the Stalinist terror of the 1949-1954 period were his resistance activities in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp

as many of his fellow inmates involved in the resistance were now high-ranking party officials, and some were willing to help at their own personal risk.

While attending an international mechanics conference in Paris in the early 1960's, Pindera met Dr. Felix Zandman, a well-known scientist and entrepreneur from the United States working in the same area. Dr. Zandman, a Polish Jew whose survival during the war was in large part due to the effort of a Polish family in hiding him and several of his family members in their farm house, took an interest in Pindera's plight in Poland and decided to help him. Shortly thereafter, Pindera was invited to Michigan State University as a Visiting Professor, and assumed this position in April of 1963, with his family following in November of the same year. In 1965 Pindera accepted a permanent faculty position as Professor of Experimental Mechanics in the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Waterloo. He, his wife Aleksandra-Anna and his sons Marek-Jerzy and Maciej-Zenon moved to Canada.

Pindera was a professor at the University of Waterloo until 1983 when he retired from full time teaching. After 1983 he continued to research, guest lecture at other institutions, and in 1987 he was appointed as Distinguished Professor Emeritus. Besides his teaching work, he wrote numerous refereed journal articles, edited scientific journals, sat on boards and committees, and held eight patents for laboratory instruments he designed. As well, Pindera was the recipient of numerous awards, including the Cross of Auschwitz and the Maximilian-Kolbe-Werk medal.

One of Pindera's most lasting contributions to the University of Waterloo was the establishment, in 1979, of the Academic Exchange Program between the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Waterloo and the Technical University of Braunschweig in Germany, for which he received the Das Grosse Verdienstkreuz Medal from the German government. Since the establishment of the program over 200 students from Waterloo and Germany have gone on yearlong study and cultural exchange programs. This exchange program has served as a model for others established by the University of Waterloo.

Contents: fonds consists of materials relating to the life and career of Jerzy Pindera, with a specific focus on his time in World War II and as a prisoner of war in Sachsenhausen concentration camp during the Holocaust. Includes correspondence, articles, war records and short stories, as well as tapes of interviews conducted with Pindera. Arranged in four series as follows: 1. World War II and The Holocaust ; 2. Employment ; 3. Interviews ; 4. Electronic Files.

From content of the fonds.

Extent is measured in linear metres of shelf space as occupied by the fonds.

Materials donated by Herb Ratz in 2011. Herb received many of the the materials first hand from Pindera and worked with him on his short stories.

Series are arranged alphabetically then chronologically.

In English and German.

Some material restricted in series 1 and 2.

Detailed finding aid available

Series 1 : World War II and The Holocaust

World War II and The Holocaust. - 1940-1998. - 10 cm of textual records.

Contents: series consists of materials relating to Jerzy Pindera's life during World War II and his time as a prisoner of war in Sachsenhausen concentration camp during the Holocaust. Includes primarily photocopies of correspondence (including those sent to his mother from Sachsenhausen), war records, articles, etc. Also includes ts. copies of Pindera's short stories on the Holocaust that make up "Fragments of Reports" and "Records of Life".

Series is arranged alphabetically then chronologically

English and German.

Some material restricted.

File 1 **Fragments of reports.** - 1990-1995.

Contents: file consists of a ts. copy of Jerzy Pindera's short story collection "Fragments of Reports" about his time interned at Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The stories found here make up the content of "Records of Life" as well.

Originally in duotang.

File 2 **Fragments of reports : a small German girl with apples.** - 1995.

Contents: file consists of a ts. copy of the story "A Small German Girl with Apples" from Jerzy Pindera's short story collection "Fragments of Reports" about his time interned at Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The stories found here make up the content of "Records of Life" as well.

Originally in duotang.

- File 3 **Invitation : German National Day.** - 1998.
Contents: file consists of an invitation sent to Jerzy Pindera on the occasion of German National Day. The invitation reads "On the occasion of the German National Day The Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany Dr. Wiprecht von Treskow and Mrs. Monika von Treskow request the pleasure of your company at a reception on Tuesday, October 6, 1998, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m."
- File 4 **Jerzy Pindera.** - 1945, 1970-1999 [photocopied 19--].
Contents: file consists of materials collected by Herb Ratz on the life and career of Jerzy Pindera with emphasis on his life during the Holocaust. Includes originals and photocopies of correspondence, memorandums, war documents, articles etc. Also includes information on Pindera's short story collection _Fragments of Reports_ , on the T.U. Braunschweig Student Exchange program, and a student essay written on the oral history interviews conducted with Pindera.
From original file folder.
- File 5 **Jerzy Pindera papers.** - 1991-1998.
Contents: file consists of materials collected by Herb Ratz relating to Jerzy Pindera's life, predominantly about his time interned as a prisoner at Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Includes a large CV, articles on and by Pindera, correspondence, ts. draft copies of stories from "Fragments of Life", photocopies of images of Sachsenhausen, etc.
From original binder.
Originally in binder.
Some notes by Herb Ratz restricted.
- File 6 **Liebe mutti letters.** - 1940-1944 [photocopied 19--].
Contents: file consists of photocopies of the 96 letters that Jerzy Pindera send to his mother while he was interned at Sachsenhausen concentration camp.
Originally in duotang.
In German.
- File 7 **Records of life.** - 1998.
Contents: file consists of a ts. copy of Jerzy Pindera's short story collection "Records of Life" about his time interned at Sachsenhausen concentration camp.
Originally in duotang.

Series 2 : Employment

- Employment.** - 1970-1997. - 2 cm of textual records.
Contents: series consists of materials relating to Jerzy Pindera's time employed as both a professor and a professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo. Includes primarily correspondence and memos.
Series is arranged alphabetically then chronologically
Entire series restricted.
- File 8 **Jerzy Pindera : employment.** - 1970-1997.
Contents: file consists of materials relating to Jerzy Pindera's academic and professional work while employed as a professor and as professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo. File is comprised primarily of correspondence and memorandum with some accompanying documentation.
Restricted.

Series 3 : Interviews

- Interviews.** - 1999. - 9 audio cassettes (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: series consists of cassette tapes of interviews conducted with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were done by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. The interviews are primarily concerned with Pindera's early life and life during the Holocaust, but also discuss his founding of the German exchange program at the University of Waterloo.
Series is arranged alphabetically then chronologically
- File 9 **Pindera interviews 1 : "Jews killing Jews" and "Schnoll cont."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording the begining of a series of interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the introduction to the interviews, the story "Jews Killing Jews" and the continuation of interviews about Josef Schnoll.

- File 10 **Pindera interviews 2 : "Josef Schnoll" and "Georg Saur."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features stories about Josef Schnoll and Georg Saur.
- File 11 **Pindera interviews 3 : "The dog of SS - General Pohl" and "working in airplane factory, puff in KZ, whore house."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording featuring interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the stories "The Dog of SS - General Pohl" and "Working in Airplane factory, Puff in KZ, Whore House."
- File 12 **Pindera interviews 4 : "puff in KZ cont., conversation with SS Soldiers" and "conversation Cont., biography."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the stories "Puff in KZ Cont., Conversation with SS Soldiers" and "Conversation Cont., Biography."
- File 13 **Pindera interviews 5 : "biography: university life and first encounter with Hitler Youth" and "biography cont.: war and escaping from German occupied Poland."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the stories "Biography: University Life and First Encounter with Hitler Youth" and "Biography Cont.: War and Escaping From German Occupied Poland."
- File 14 **Pindera interviews 6 : "Pindera's capture, Pindera's escape from Poland" and "escape from the death march, 3rd encounter with Hitler youth."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the stories "Pindera's Capture, Pindera's Escape from Poland" and "Escape From the Death March, 3rd Encounter with Hitler Youth."
- File 15 **Pindera interviews 7 : "penal kommando" and "spee kommando."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the stories "Penal Kommando" and "Speer Kommando."
- File 16 **Pindera interviews 8 : "reason for exchange with German university" and "Dr. Heckerr talks about his reasons for getting involved, resistance movement in the camp."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the stories "Reason for Exchange with German University" and "Dr. Heckerr Talks About his Reasons for Getting Involved, Resistance Movement in the Camp."
- File 17 **Pindera interviews 9 : "resistance cont." and "death of Stanitschek."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the stories "Resistance Cont." and "Death of Stanitschek."
- File 18 **Pindera interviews 10 : "letters written to his mother while in concentration camp."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the story "Letters Written to his Mother While in Concentration Camp."
- File 19 **Pindera interviews 11 : "letters."** - 1999. - 1 audio cassette (90 min.) : cellulose acetate.
Contents: file consists of one cassette tape recording interviews with Jerzy Pindera. The interviews were recorded by Aneta Magolon as part of her Honours BA in History. This tape features the story "Letters."

Series 4 : Electronic Files

Electronic files. - [19--] - 1999. - 5 computer disks : 1.44MB ; 10 x 9 cm.

Contents: series consists of computer disks with electronic files created by, or related to, Jerzy Pindera. Includes copies of stories from "Fragments of Report" as well as transcripts of the Pindera interviews.

Series is arranged alphabetically then chronologically

File 20 **Draft copies of fragments of report.** - 1997. - 1 computer disk : 1.44 MB ; 10 x 9 cm.

Contents: file consists of one computer disk with digital draft copies of Pindera's short stories from "Fragments of Report".

Note that copies have been saved on the M:

File 21 **Transcript of interview.** - 1999. - 1 computer disk : 1.44 MB ; 10 x 9 cm.

Contents: file consists of one computer disk with a 6 page transcript of a portion of an interview with Pindera.

Note that copies have been saved on the M:

File 22 **Transcript of interview.** - 1999. - 1 computer disk : 1.44 MB ; 10 x 9 cm.

Contents: file consists of one computer disk with a 1 page transcript of a portion of an interview with Pindera.

Note that copies have been saved on the M:

File 23 **Unknown contents.** - [199-]. - 1 computer disk : 1.44 MB ; 10 x 9 cm.

Contents: file consists of one computer disk with unknown contents. Files appear to be a program.

Note that a screen shot of the contents has been saved to the M:

File 24 **Unknown contents.** - [199-]. - 1 computer disk : 1.44 MB ; 10 x 9 cm.

Contents: file consists of one computer disk with unknown contents.

Note that a screen shot of the contents has been saved to the M: