

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Benjamin Meed**  
**March 1, 1990**  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Benjamin Meed, conducted on March 1, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

## **BENJAMIN MEED**

### **March 1, 1990**

Q:Ben, we are going to begin. Please tell me your name.

A:My name presently is Benjamin Meed, but this was not my real name...of my real name was much longer, was Benjamin Miedzyrzecki, which is very difficult to pronounce and to spell in this country. And so therefore it was shortened to Meed, the first four letters of my name. I also was known during...in the underground as \_\_\_\_\_. And therefore many people who remember me from the first years of liberation and the underground call me Czeslaw. But actually mine...I was born under the name of Benjamin.

Q:Tell us where you were born. I was born in Warsaw and...uh...the city where I lived, in the apartment...I...in those days people were giving...were born mostly in the homes and I was one of those from that generation...was born in the same house where I lived, probably until the end of the ghetto. Uh...So I lived there a long time with my family. Uh...We were...my immediately family in my house, we were four children in the house of my parents and...uh...we were born...uh... We all were...all our children are born on the same house which was Pawia 31 in the heart of the Jewish community in Warsaw.

Q:Tell us a little bit about your family and your childhood.

A:My...my family and my childhood. When I look back at my childhood, I count..what was my childhood? How many years was my childhood? Today when I compare it with my own children and my grandchildren...uh...my childhood...uh...was only a few years. At the age of 4 I was sent to school. I come from a very religious home and at the age of 5, it was not only me, but my entire family. Every child at the age of 5 supposed to know Hoolish

and...uh...to recite Chumash, the Bible. And uh...I was sent in mine childhood to a Hebrew school where I learned Jewishness, Hebrew, religion for five years. Uh...This was in the age between 6 and 5 and 10. Uh...Then...uh...I was very involved...I was very active in...in the under...in the street. I was allowed many friends. We played ball in the street. Some of us...we couldn't afford to have a ball because this was too luxurious so we were playing with some stacking stuff with...uh...with garbage and this was our ball. I will never forget that there always was the...if the ball will fall into...uh...to a wet spot, become so heavy, I never could have touched, and if you were hit with such a ball I remember it was...uh...very painful. And also all the water was splashed over you, and I'll never forget the...the wet balls which we were playing. Uh...I don't know I was always...uh...in that group of the children...I was very active and...uh...I spent a lot of time also playing in the street, all in the back yard. And I went to school. I only had to make sure that my homework is made because my mother had to inspect my homework every night and then my older sister...she was inspecting everything which was in Polish because she was going to the Polish schools...Polish gymnasium. In my house and...uh...like in other house much more attention was given to the education of the girls than...than the boys. Boys got all kinds of educations, but the girls were spent to special schools. So mine sister was the...the more educated in the home, and she was also the oldest so she was always...uh...watching over our homework. And...uh...after 5 years, I became a rebel and I said that I don't want to go just to a Yiddish school, Hebrew school. I want to go to the school of the country, and I insisted I am going to a public school. For my parents it was a little bit, you know, painful that I don't want to go on with the only Yiddish education, Hebrew education, but I want to get, you know, the general education. But I won that battle as a youngster and...uh...finally mine parents...uh...agreed that I should go to the school. Maybe basically they agreed because it was also much more economical. In the public school we didn't have to pay anything, and the Hebrew school, which was very expensive to us...for us, and...uh...and I joined that public school and I was a very, very pleased and happy good student. There I was not only

with Jewish children, I was together with...uh...Catholic boys, friends and I developed...uh...large friendship among these groups, young people. We belong also to the sport clubs and...uh...the school left on me a tremendous mark on my life. Uh...All my teachers were of my idols. I was very lucky with teachers. I...I think and some other kids thought that way about their teachers that we had the best teachers in the world. They really cared for us and they taught us, and I have a lot of respect for the teachers. Uh...The teacher played a very important role in my life, and...uh...to some extent...uh...even mine parents became jealous. Why do I listen so much to the teachers and...uh....not paying enough attention for...for our rules for generations were established in my family and...uh...the main rules were...the...we call it in Yiddish...\_\_\_\_\_, that means respect for the parents and...uh...although my father never hurt me...my father never raised a hand on...never laid a hand on me, but I was always afraid for my father. He was the authority and...uh...the authority was also in a sense, you know, when we had to go into the dining room and...uh...eating, we never...none of us would sit down at the table if Father will not come in to sit down. This was a way of respect. Also because of the language, we never addressed our parents on a first name...you. I never turned to my Father and said, "You will do this." That will be disrespect. So we always addressed Father and Mother in the way...Mother do or Father do...but we never tell them you should do it. Uh...You will do it, but...uh...always that gave a distance.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your family.

A: My family...uh...

Q: You came from a large family.

A:I came from a very...all Jewish families were large. I came from a family which was for generations living in the same city in Warsaw. My grandfather which was great grandfather which was well known in the...in Warsaw, had a laundry business, and his name was . It was a very well known laundry. He had 18 children and...uh...I don't remember now the names of all the children, but I was a youngster coming to the...for all the holidays to my great grandfather and I remembered big table. It's like a...like a hole. There were three rooms which were opened the walls in order to accommodate all the people, and we sat at the table. My grand great father had, as I said, had 18 children. My grandfather had 9 children, and I come from a family of 4. I don't know if the calculation is correct, but I think we were between 300 to 400 people of one family in Warsaw under the same name. . And it was a Hasidic family, all belonging to the Hasidic sect of the Alexander Rabbi. We all...uh...assembled...uh...on Saturdays, especially on Saturdays. We came to the same synagogue and on holiday, we definitely made sure that we are in one the same place. Even people which were out of town had to come back and to be in the same synagogue praying together. That I think it was something like a tradition that wherever you were...but for the High Holidays, we all came together.

Q:What happened when the Nazis came?

A:When the Nazis came I already was...uh...grown-up. What you call grown-up, a teenager in mine age was a grown-up. As a teenage I already was earning a living, going to school at the same time working, earning a living, being responsible for helping the family, being responsible for helping the education which was very \_\_\_\_\_ went to high school. It was very expensive, so I had to earn money to pay for the high school, help with my sister, and...uh...I was very much already involved in...in...uh...organizational life before the war because mine generation grew up in a...generation of idealism. Most of my friends belonged to organizations. Zionists. Bundists. Socialists. Communists. Religions groups.

We have all kind of groups. And we all had...uh... outlooks on life and we were already...we were...we were knowledgeable about the...the possibilities of...uh...of war ...of the expansion policies of Germany...uh... The first feelings of war came to us when Austria was incorporated, the Anschluss. Then it was the...the taking over by the Poles, part of Czechoslovakia...uh, I don't know it was a pact among Poland in Germany to divide part of the Czechoslovakia and...uh...we already saw more and more militaristic movements and we were prepared that something had happened, but we didn't...were not prepared it'll happen so rapidly and that's why when the German attacked Poland September 1st, they called it "blitzkrieg" [**Ger:** "Lightning War"]. We were...were looking at the...at the American...at the Polish Army, which was already beautiful dressed, the officers of beautiful shiny shoes and we really looked at them like a...a real defense group which will be able to defend the country. But...uh... shockingly enough, I think all the military lines were broken by the Germans within one day, and within the second day, the city of Warsaw was bombarded wherever you were there. And we were not even prepared that they are...when we saw planes flying we...everybody said it's our planes. It's our planes. We did not realize that we did not have an air force anymore that last...the first two days. And there were the German planes flying over us, bombarding us, and within a few days Warsaw was...uh...encircled by the Germans. I think it was...uh...September 7, when...uh... over the radio came...uh...the appeal that all people which are able to carry weapons, men specially, are being asked to leave the city and to go to the east where new defense lines are being created. I was attached so much to my family and I felt that even we are already everyday hiding in the bunkers in the cellars I couldn't leave my family and I did not...uh...follow that appeal, but most of my friends left on that day and they went east toward the Russian side. We did not even know in that days that Poland...that the decision was made that Poland will be divided between Russian and Germany, but we felt that it is safer to go toward Russia, especially those who believed in the...in the possibilities of a socialist communist government felt that the haven will be found on the other side where we had...uh...believed that...uh...after all it's

a communist regime, a more humanitarian regime. We knew very little really about the true...what is...what it is that government. And...uh...a lot of people left, but I choose to be with my family, and I did not leave. And I was waiting in...with the ghetto went through that...was 30 days until the Germans were occupy Warsaw because we were...defending Warsaw. We were doing everything to help each other, but we couldn't do anything against the planes which were bombarding and thousands upon thousands of people...civilians were killed from the German bombardment, Jews and non-Jews. In those days...in the Warsaw we were free...we felt as Polish citizens defending the country and putting up the last stand against the Germans, not allowing them to come in. And that came until the day when Warsaw capitulated. The war came to an end, and the Germans marched in. Then starts a different chapter of my life. We were all hungry. I do remember the first days when the German came in. It was a parade. I was not coming to that parade because it's not in our neighborhood. I was living in the Jewish section, but I recall that...I know that people told us there was a parade in the...in the main \_\_\_\_\_ where the Germans...the victorious Germans marched into Poland. And...uh...everybody was more interested in that time in finding a piece of bread. Finally, we heard that a few trucks arrived at the corner not far where I was living and...uh...they were giving out bread. So naturally I was the first one of the family...the young people, me and my brother and my sis...my sister, we all runned to...to the places where they giving...uh...truck...uh the bread arrived. And...uh...that's true. We saw the trucks with looking only at the big trucks with bread, our eyes shined up that we're going to get a piece of bread. There was so many people were waiting in the line, the bread was not given out. There were two Germans on the...uh...trucks throwing out the breads and there're...and I saw they were at that time cameras filming this whole thing, how they're throwing bread to the population. And I was also waiting to grab a loaf of bread, but...uh...somehow I was recognized by one of my neighbors. He says, "What are you doing here?" This is bread for the Poles. I says, "So I am here." He says, "You're a Jew." That was the first day when I was probably shocked and will never forget. I left the line. I came

back to the bunker and didn't bring bread. Mine brother, he was more lucky. And my sister was more lucky. They came back with bread. Each one of them had a loaf. And I who supposedly was the good organizer...supposed to bring the bread, came back with nothing. I was very much shocked that this was said to me to a man whom I knew and he said the bread are for Poles. And all of a sudden I who grew up with ideas of Poles was hurt that...look at this, my own Polish comrade, my own Polish neighbors are calling me, "The Jew." I know that...uh...there was a note of the anti-semitism before war, but I did not see it because I didn't want see it. I only saw the goodness in the Polish people. I saw goodness in every people. But I will not forget that first day when my eyes of the hunger saw the bread and just was so abused that I went back without bread.

Q: What then happened?

A: Then...uh...We had to come out from the cellars. And whoever was lucky, whose apartment was not bombed out, we went in...back to their apartments, those who had the bombed apartments and there were many of them had to find shelter among others. So to our apartment we were joined by other members of the family which houses were bombed and they were sharing with us the apartment. Then became the daily struggle of finding food. Uh...That occupies our minds. Nobody was expect any...uh...special, different treatments...uh...that we would be chosen. We knew that we lost the war. What...we believed that this is not the end, that war begins, but war has to end. And we were counting on the war to...I know that the France joined immediately and England joined the war immediately, and we also hoped that the Russians will and we felt that this is a period which we have to come through and survive. But then become the difficult...the second difficulty which came was...it was winter. It was...uh...that winter it was September, it's getting cold and we had to find also not only food, but we had to find also means of...uh...of....uh...heating and that was very problematic. What also happened...uh...we found ourselves...uh...that in the groups of

the first people who ran out after September 7, most of us who belonged to organizations found all the organizations closed, which were also by decree, but not by decree, they were automatically closed because most of the Jewish leadership left. Those who had some contacts from this, and we remained without any leadership at all. Uh...Germans created a Judenrat...a Jewish...they arrested some...uh...the most prominent Jews they knew, and they created a Judenrat, and we started to be ruled as a Jewish community by the Judenrat. We were not ruled anymore by the general community...uh...by the city hall which was bombed in that time and completely destroyed, but there was a city hall, a Polish city hall. Uh...Communications was not disrupted yet. We still had telephones in our houses. We had electricity in our houses which was...restored for everybody. It was restored for our community. And...uh...we continued the life...uh...without having any leadership. And...uh...little by little life started to get organized. It was a struggle. It was difficult, but...uh...those who still have the homes and had the families...uh...it was...uh.. probably...uh...much easier. We were very busy right after the bombardment in burying the dead and people were drafted...not drafted, almost volunteered...we volunteered first to clean the houses to remove the dead bodies and to bring them to the cemetery and...uh.. buried them. In those days we still knew the names of the people and people had individual burial. And...uh...we had to struggle for the daily life. That was the beginning of the days of the war. Uh...Finally after a month maybe or two, I saw that...uh...all my friends went to the west. I approached with the idea that I would like to leave. I would like to see how to go into the east. Where will you go, my Father asked, what do you mean you are going? We are here. We should be here together." But I explained to him that there's a possibility that there...I did not leave you on the September 7th, maybe I will go now if there's a possibility that we will be able to live over there, maybe everybody will possible move. My father was in the...nationally doing business. He had many clients and he in the...in the all the areas from the east. Uh...I remember that my father used to sell his...uh...leather on credit, but it was...he was given drafts payable 90 days, 60 days from all over the country. At the end

when I...when my father saw that I decided that I am going to leave, he says, "Here is a bundle for you." He gave me a bundle of drafts of people owing him money in the east. "I cannot give you anything else. Take these drafts. Whenever you're going to be in the east, try to collect something and maybe this will help you to live." Naturally, I was...uh...going around later on, when I arrived in the East, I collected very little. I...people said, "What do you mean. We're not...we haven't got our own money. How can we pay you?" So that was not...uh...not help. I was joined by a friend, who was a very close friend of mine, \_\_\_\_\_. He was...uh...coming from a very rich family. He was the only son. And...uh...when we both decided to leave Warsaw and to go to the East, I promised his parents that I will be always guarding him and they felt more secure that he's going...coming with me. And finally, you know, after two attempts of smuggling the borders to the East, I finally succeeded. And I remember I came to the Bialystok. When I already was on the way, the middle of the night to Bialystok, I had to cross the railroads (pause) station, and I saw the first men on the bridge. And I saw the first men on the bridge...uh...and I says...well....we walked over and we said...the middle of the night, I said, "Sir, we are coming now from Warsaw. Could you tell us where are we now?" So he says, "You are in...almost in the heart of Bialystok. So I asked him, "What is the situation." He says...I will never forget, he said, "It's wonderful." But...uh...I want you to remember you're wearing a hat. You will die in this hat. I did not understand the first moment what he wanted to tell me. Well after walking...after parting with that man, I walked another...uh...few minutes on the bridge. It was cold and I took the hat and I threw it out. And my friend \_\_\_\_\_ asked me, "What did you do?" I says, "You heard what that man said. He said you're going to die in that hat. Why should I walk with that hat? I throw it out." Later on, I realized what that man wanted to tell me. Everything is good, but you'll never be able to buy another hat. So that's why he say, "You're going to die in that hat." That was my first experience...encounter with somebody living. But I came to Bialystok and the first thing I was looking how do I get a work because I...I was brought up with idea that you can only make...earn a living by

working. And...uh...they told us to go to Brest-Litovsk [**Pol:** Brzesc], which is...uh...the city for where...it's known by...for many things, but probably lately, you will be known by better if I would say that Begin comes from Brest-Litovsk. I went to Brest-Litovsk, and there was...uh...military compound, and they accepted us for work for...for digging ditches. And we were very happy. We got to work, and we also had a place where to sleep. It was a place where hundreds of people slept in the same house. Uh...They called them \_\_ which is refugees. So I was a \_\_\_\_\_. And...uh...wherever I...we were earning for that day...working a day...we were paid by the day...it's sad, at the end of the day, we were paid and...uh...after getting the money. I don't...didn't have much of any other money, we passed a bakery and we bought bread. But we were so hungry that when we walked to...from the place of work...from the bakery to the house when we came to the house we did not...both have anymore bread. We had to wait for another 24 hours until we will earn the money and get another bread. So we were very hungry and very, you know, looking for a...what can we do and I did not think that to join the other groups which were traveling by trains selling from one city to the other.... We believed that we have to earn our living by work. And one night I came home and mine friend \_\_\_\_\_ which I... **END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1.**

Benjamin, I want you to know that I decided to go back home. I cannot stand anymore the hunger.

I am also missing my family terrible. I must go home. And if I am not going to go home either I commit suicide or I believe and I do know what's going to happen." I had a moral obligation and I talked, started to talk him out. I says, "Listen. Let's wait another few days." So we decided to wait a week. But after 3 days I came home and he says, "No. I am not waiting any longer. Either tonight or I have to part with you." In the middle of the night I took mine...uh...suit, not a suitcase, mine just little bag, whatever I had. I says, "Alright, let's walk." And it was very difficult to smuggle the border to go back to the Germans. To go back to the Germans finally we succeeded because it was December and everything was frozen and we crossed the river brook on the ice. Naturally through paying for guides to

help us, which was very dangerous cause it was very dangerous to cross the border to come to Russia, but if you were caught of leaving Russia, you were immediately considered as a traitor or as a spy and you were...you had very little chance to...not to be arrested. But we were lucky. We succeeded. We crossed the border, and I came back to Warsaw. I came back to Warsaw. There was no ghetto in that time. Everything was free. I arrived in Warsaw. He was living two blocks away. I made sure to bring him first to his father...to his parents. When I walked in with him to his parents' house, there was such a joy of the parents that I brought him back, that he came back, and I left and then I went back to my house. I came into my house and I will never forget. My father was there, my mother, a lot of people of the family. And he says, "What are you doing?" And I says, "I came back. Why? I missed the family and I was hungry and I decided to be with you." My father did not speak at all, went into another room, and for the first time I saw my father crying. I am sure that he was crying that in his heart although he was opposing my departure of going to the east, he felt while I was away a lot of restrictions, German restrictions came in. He felt probably happy that one of his children is already in the East. Maybe there is a ray of hope. He never spoke to me. I don't know exactly what he was thinking. But probably it was very painful for him that I came back. And I had the difference between one family I brought my friend and here was such a joy that I brought him. Here I came back and just created, you know, a situation where people looked at me. "What did you do? Why did you come back." But I came back. I started to look for work. I started to get accustomed to the German restrict...uh...new restrictions, and I became part again of the family. And I was sick in the first two weeks. I was bleeding. Crossing of the ices, the ices of the brook and frozen. I had some internal, probably, damaged which remain...remained with me for all my life and...uh...I was urinating with blood for a long period. But...uh...somehow I recovered after this from...we had very little doctors. A lot of the doctors left for the east. \_\_\_\_\_ left for the east, so I was treated by a...feltcher [medic] which is a...which is not a...it was practicing doctor, but he was not a doctor, but he helped me to recover. And I came back to

myself and I got started to get involved. Those days already came the restrictions. There was already talk about putting us...uh...Jews were not allowed to have any business. Jews were not allowed to have any jewelries, Jews were not allowed...all the restrictions started to come of us, and then the young people were supposed to go to work, and you could have buy out yourself of not working and pay somebody else to go to work, but the Jewish community had to deliver every day working battalions to the Germans. And life became, you know...uh...we had to adjust ourselves to the reality. That went down until probably February or March. I happened to meet a friend on the street which was one of the leaders of the youth movement where I belong. Uh...He was Mr. Borenstein. He was an accountant, a very intelligent fellow. And he was very pleased to...to meet me and he asked me of my address. And...uh...I did not know why he is asking and he said...uh...can I contact you at this address? And I said, "Yes." About 2 weeks later he came to see me in my house...uh...and he asked me if I would like to join the underground movement, which I did, and I became a member of the underground in the early 40s. We were divided in the underground that I only knew five people of my group. Uh...One of the five...uh...all of them were very good people...was the daughter of Mr. Dawidowicz, which was later on the...the husband of Lucy Dawidowicz. Her name was Topshire (Topcie), and she died...uh...she was not died. She...she was wounded in the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto later. Because she was not physically to be removed she remained in the ghetto after the uprising when the group left through the...the last group left through the sewers. But this is a story later. But she was one of the five which belonged, and then we organized other youth...uh...events. We...I became in contact...I started...was chosen as the leader of the five and...uh...so I had the occasion to meet another five. But really I did not know too many people. I was very, you know...we met regularly every week, but mainly our activities, strange enough, was involved around culture. We did not...our activities was to prepare culture events, to run an illegal library. That was...uh...most of our activities were and to listen to the news. We...that was the work for maybe for a year or two, just...uh...the

underground was a cultural organization. I was responsible of making sure to maintain the library to...and to make sure to deliver the books. People were reading books. People were anxious to...to exchange the books in those days where already the curfew and...uh...there were the house committees created. When I look back today about the time when these restrictions came but the ghetto was created, I think every house in the ghetto became a community because at 7 o'clock we had to remain in the houses and I was...uh...in that house where I was living, probably at 31, as a young man and when a community was created, I became the secretary of the community...of my house. And that were again community life and...uh...since there were no schools...all schools were illegal...I organized a school in mine building, and I became the teacher of that school. I was...I had never had a preparation of being a teacher, but teaching was mostly...uh....singing together with the children, keeping them together and the children came very, very eagerly to school because part of their work was a soup. And everybody of the children was waiting when will we get that soup. So a child was...the children were so hungry so that coming to school is because they knew that during the school hours they will get a soup. And that was the most important thing why they came to school. Then I was...uh...by coincident, I was given a job when the ghetto was created already, to work in a battalion on the Aryan side. That probably...uh...was a very important moment. I did not know after months I for the first time came out...out of the ghetto to work in such a battalion. The work of that battalion was...uh...to... to...all the buildings which were burned out, standing like ...like skeletons...uh....to demolish them, but not demolish them by demolish because the bricks were very important. So we had to take...go on the top of a burned-out building and little by little take off every brick and clean it because later on these bricks were used for building other house...building, not for the...they were shipped out from the...after we cleaned them, they were shipped out. These were not for rebuilding Warsaw. It was for...for wherever the Germans need it. And I was in such a battalion working, and somehow I came to the...uh...very...was...very...very helpful that I was able to buy during the day for the exchange of all kinds of clothing which I

brought from the...from the ghetto and...uh...the Poles to us and were selling bread against...exchanging against...uh...potatoes, against that clothing which we brought out and this was a tremendous help if I was able to come back with the ghetto which is also illegal and brought back some food. So it was not a question of getting a pay or pay for the work. It was a question how much can I bring back to feed the family. And...uh...somehow we were guarded by...uh...a German...older Germans which were probably mobilized as...uh...to...not for duties on the frontiers. And there was one German who was in our group, used to come every morning...uh...to take us out from the ghetto and to guard us while we were working and...uh...bring us back. I don't remember the name of that German. It was probably a man in the 50's, an older man or in 40s, late 40s or 50s. But he never screamed. There were others that were screaming cause we were...we were even afraid for the screaming of the Germans. He was never screaming. That means he was a good man. And whenever I turned to him, asking him for permission can I go across the street, can I buy a...can I take some water or can I buy a loaf of bread, whatever it is, he would always let me do it. And he was very much attached. Uh...One day he showed me the pictures of his children. And he looked at the...one of the pictures. He says, "Here is a...my son. He's in the army. He's like you." I did not understand what he means, he's like you. He said, "He's in your age. It's the same like your age." And...uh...I don't know what went through this man. He never spoke, but somehow he thought about his son, and he looked at me sometimes and he says, "He's like you." He's my age. I don't know what he wanted to say. If he is like you...if he's Jewish or if he's like you as a young man. But he...he was tremendously helpful. The underground, which I belonged, found out which there're doing the work that I was very much...have good possibilities of going out every day to the...with the battalion on the Aryan side and coming back. The underground started to get interested in it. And...uh...once...uh...somebody of that...the underground went with me and he came back the same night. He disappeared in the middle of the day. I don't know where he went, but he wanted probably to check out the way we are going in and going out. And we had to

be counted in the morning how many went out and how many came back. Nobody asked for names or anything. We just were counted. After a week of this...uh...going in and out, I got again a visitor from the underground who came to me...to my house and he says, "I want you to know from now on, when somebody will come and will give you that passport you accept him to go out. We understand it...the problem that somebody has to come back. We will always send somebody with you if we will have somebody to return. And that went out for a few months. And that was a tremendous good channel for the underground of sending people...of exchanging between the...I was...uh...just a simple person in the underground. I did not have any leadership role, so I really did not know exactly what they were preparing and what they were doing, but I felt...uh...like a doing a service. And...uh...this went on. I also was able to contact on the Aryan side some people which became very friendly in the beginning for buying and I made contact with them that even once during the boarding on the Aryan side, I asked the German fellow...the...the soldier who was guarding me if I...I can leave for 2 hours, and I went to a home. For the first time I came into a house after years in the ghetto and to see the way Poles are leaving everything normal. Everything when down a normal life, and that lady, Juliana Persch...uh... gave me a proposal that I can try to bring my family to her. I came back to the ghetto and told my father about this. In the beginning, he didn't want to hear about this. "What do you mean, we're gonna to leave the ghetto?" But this took a few months, but later on we used that contact. And we brought...I brought my parents out from the ghetto and I brought mine sister, the younger one, and my brother. My older sister was taken away, in the meantime, to...by the Germans...to the concentration camps. Mine...uh...(pause)...but one day at 5 o'clock in the morning when the first day...minute when the curfew was opened...uh...there was a knock on the door of...uh...a girl who walked in. My mother opened the door and she asked...uh...that she wants to see Benjamin. Uh...My mother says, "What's so early. He still asleep. He has to go to work." "No, you have to wake him up." She was very insisting. Uh...My mother did not know exactly what to do, but the girl was very insisting and...uh...she went into...to the room

where I was sleeping and she says, "Ben, wake up. Somebody's here to see you." I walked out. And I walked out and here was a girl or I did not...uh...I only...she only gave me the password and she says, "You have to take me out today from the ghetto." And I says, "Listen, it's too early. She says, "Yes." She says, "I am going to sit and wait here because I must leave with you together." At 7 o'clock in the morning, we had to leave the ghetto and that girl went along with me. I really did not...uh...for me was another person of the underground to be taken out. I was used to this everyday. I did not even get into any conversations. I only asked her, "Do you know anything...uh...who is going to come back cause I cannot take you." And she gave me a name of who is going to come back. So I saw she...she was very informed. I took her to the ghetto...uh...to the...to the...to the brigade...to ...and when we came to the...uh...to the gate to go through, somehow, I don't know why....what was the reason, the German who was inspecting us asked...picked on...on that girl which I took with me which it normally was not happen...says, "You go into the booth. I got to inspect you.." Now I know that...uh...what happened with her that she had...uh...documents...the map of the Treblinka which was drawn in the ghetto by people who came back from Treblinka to be sent by the underground and...uh...to...to London. So we had to bring it out from the ghetto. She was carrying that document. While she was in the booth...while she was in the booth, the only thing which I know that her name was Feiga and Vladka, with two names she gave me. While she was in the booth, some commotion started and a shooting started on the outside and the German left her alone, not completing the search and run out to see what's the shooting. And there was a shooting about another group, not in the group with our group. She rapidly dressed herself and she came up with me to the group because we could not leave until and she...we walked...we were given permission to walk. And she was not completely searched. (Sigh) Today, I should, you know if I recall it, you know, later on when I found out what she was carrying, I don't think that I would risk the life of the whole group because if that document will be found on her, probably the whole hundred people or whatever, all of us will be killed. I don't know if I

would make that decision of risking the life of the people, but I did not know. And...uh...she was also not ...uh... prepared that she will be...normally we were not searched. Anyway, after we went through and she came out and dressed and after we were on the trucks a few blocks, she jumped off the truck and I never saw her. I saw her later. Uh...This girl later on was...uh...I met her when I came to the Aryan side. This all story the way I met her. I asked for her because I wanted to know what happened with that girl and when I came back to the ghetto a lot of time the people of the underground asked me if I met Vladka on the Aryan side, and I really did not know who is that Vladka. (Sigh) She was...she got very acquainted with me and I asked...I met another man on the Aryan side and I kept asking if they ever know how I can contact her. This was the time when I already decided to live on the Aryan side. I already got the passport from the underground, not to be part of anything particular on the Aryan side, but just the...the underground gave me...uh...without any assignment, they gave me a passport. Uh...Zygmunt...uh....Frydrych, which was killed the first days of the Warsaw ghetto uprising brought me that passport; and...uh...I assumed the name Czeslaw (Miedzyrzecki). The passport...uh...with all the stamps, all the photographs, all the recommendation and that's how I became Czeslaw Miedzyrzecki on the Aryan side. And I asked for that girl during...in the...on the Aryan side, living as a Christian boy already. I asked for Vladka. Finally, somebody made a date for me to meet at 11 o'clock at the front of the \_\_\_\_\_ monument on a certain day. I don't recall today exactly when was that day. And...uh...here came Vladka. Uh...When she heard about me, she immediately said that she agreed to meet with me and...uh...that was our date, first date on the Aryan side. She as a full blooded Christian girl, you know, very well dressed and...uh...posing with a lot of her energy. I was a little bit timid, afraid...uh...scared. I was not so sure of myself, but we had that date and that's how we started to have that...uh...contact. In the beginning we met once a week. Then we started to meet...uh...almost twice, three times daily, and Vladka became later on my companion, my wife, for until today. It was a whole history how we lived

together as Christians both in the underground. Both of us could not reveal that we have contact with each other, even to our close friends cause that would be impossible to reveal.

Q: We are going to switch tapes now for a moment.

A: Okay.

Q: Tell us a little bit about another date you had with Vladka.

A: Uh... The dates with Vladka was...uh...in the beginning.... uh... we met again...uh...on a Sunday. We somehow developed...uh...a very comfortable relation, much more than a friendship. She lost her entire family. When she was in the Aryan side, she knew that she had nobody left. All her family...the parents, their father died from hunger in the ghetto. The mother and the brother and the sister were shipped to Treblinka and entire family. She became the only person. And...uh...while I was meeting with her, I started to look in what are she doing asking questions, not always she gave me the full answers, but she only kept tell me...I was in the ghetto this week again. I said, "What did you do there." "I brought out a few children from there to place them in hiding places." And...uh...the next week, I found...I met her again, I says, "Oh, I know I have regards for you. I met somebody in the ghetto and....uh...he asked me about you." They in the ghetto knew more about my life than I knew outside the ghetto, and she told me...they brought me regards from them, and she says...uh...that there probably those people were looking for regards to be able to get a contact. Maybe I can help them to come on the Aryan side. I did not tell you the story of mine...how did I bring them...by that time I already had my entire, my living family, my father, my mother, my sister, my brother with me in hiding on the Aryan side. I will come back to that story a little bit later again, because it's interesting to tell which way we brought them out and what was the reaction when I came first to my parents and tell them I want to take them to the Aryan side. But...uh...little by little, I started to find out that...uh...Vladka is

so emerged in that work of the underground. So only on a Sunday we were able to meet because this was the free day. We did not have where to go. We were afraid...uh...to...to go into any public place, so we used to walk on the beach...uh...on the Vistula where few few people goes. It was cold and very few people would walk there because it was too cold, but we felt quite safe there. And most of our dates were just by walking. We never took any chance of going into a movie theater. I don't remember. I was not in any movie theater during the war. I don't know if there were theaters. But to any cafe shops, it was an end. She had a place where they were eating...uh...and most of the members of the underground were during the week meeting there and it was a place, a public place where their eating lunches. So on a Sunday when she was sure that none of the...her colleagues of the underground will be there, she took me to that place to eat lunch. It was a very decent, cultural place where we were coming in and eating lunch there. It was not a restaurant, but it was like a club maybe, but it was a place where for that when it was cold we used to sit there for hours eating lunch and talking. And little by little our...she started to tell me, she got more confidence in me. She said, "Today I was able to buy two revolvers." I looked at her. I says, "What do you know about revolvers? How do you buy it?" And she told me the story how she bought the revolvers. And she came back one day and told me that her...that she was able to test a bomb together...uh...with...uh...Mr...with Klepfisz, Michal Klepfisz, which was an engineer. I says, "Why are you getting involved in such thing? It's dangerous." I was more concerned about her than about the bomb and..uh... Anyway she promised me...I remember that, "I am not going to do such thing anymore." I don't know if she just made me feel good but I was more concerned about her. I became very much attached to her. And I was counting the...the hours, the days when I am going to meet again. Now I know that...uh...our meetings did not...were not able to occur too often because she was involved in traveling to concentration camps. And...uh...once she told me that she's going to Radom and she asked me if I knew anybody in Radom. By coincidence I knew that there was...one of my neighbors was working in a...in a labor camp in Radom. The...the

lady's name...they are both alive...the husband, the wife, Meltzer...for they were neighbors of my house. They were working in that concen...in that labor camp in Radom. So she was...she came to Radom...she had to look also for a contact. So she asked the inmates, she came as a Christian on the other side of the fence and she asked about...uh...who knew Meltzer. Naturally Meltzer came over. And she told Meltzer that she's bringing regards from Benjamin \_\_\_\_\_, so she had confidence because Vladka never revealed that she's Jewish to these people, but...uh...when they heard that the Christian girl is telling them that they have regards from a Jewish fellow which they know, they got confidence and she revealed that she is from the underground and she would like to help. This became a major contact for them and...uh...in that camp was Mr. Meltzer and there were other people. Among them were also Mr. Dunop. And Mr. Dunop...uh...she gave in that time and Mrs. Meltzer...she asked her to create a confidential group in the camp of...uh...put together a group and she will be back a week later and she will bring them whatever they need, money and documentation. Vladka has it quite well written on her book on both side of the wall she has a chapter about Radom. That's how I became a little bit more involved in know what is...what is she doing. As a matter of fact that were...Mrs. Meltzer...uh...gave a piece of paper to Vladka, and she says, "Listen. Before I was taken out from the Warsaw ghetto, I placed my little girl with a Christian woman. Her address is so and so...uh...in Praga." And...uh...Vladka took that address and the next day, she went to visit that little girl, and she took me along. And so for the first time. She took me along because probably she wanted to make sure if I identify the girl that this is correctly. So the first time I was involved through her in...in the work. Naturally, we came and we found that girl and we started to speak and I did not...she did not say anything that I am Jewish. We both arrived. We came and we...we told that lady...Vladka told that lady that from now you are going to receive monthly payment because she needed that money...was a poor woman. A young girl, Emile Coska her name was. Emile Coska. \_\_\_\_\_ Emile Coska. And...uh...there was other children from that camp which we took over so it was twice...so the work was in the

underground of helping get documentation and preparing...you know, trying to bring out children. But that was my first experience of actually working in the underground. I was very restless and...uh...I was in hiding together with my parents. From that contact which I made on the Aryan side and it was in Praga \_\_\_\_ 44, these people had their...some shops in the back of the house and...uh...that lady...uh...agreed to...to bring my family there, which I brought. We were about 9 people in that hiding...in a...in a small attic probably the size of...uh...5 yards or 6 yards, one way. It was a small hiding, but we were all sitting in that hiding. And I was the only one which was going in and out and working officially in her factory, which was a meat factory of cleaning...uh...pieces, you know. It was not far from the slaughter house. And...uh...there were all kinds of parts of the meat which they used for...uh...for butchery after the...for butchers and I was working in that.

Q:How did you convince your parents to come to the Aryan side?

A:Okay. Well, I came back to my parents after working already daily, and they saw that the only place where I come back and I bring bread was from the Aryan side. And they saw these deportations. I start...uh...working with my father and telling to him, "Listen. I have a place. Let's go out." My father was not so much convinced, but we had...we had very close friend from the same building which we were living. He was the chairman of our...of our house committee and my father was very close with him. He was...uh...uh...more, you know...uh...he was not...he was not a practicing so deeply religious Jew, like my father. His name was Ziferman, and when he heard that idea, he said to my father, "Listen. I want you to go with your son, and I would like to join you, but if you don't want to go at least give me a chance to go." So Mr. Ziferman convinced my father that we should go to the Aryan side. He had a only son, Adam no...Adam. They changed the name to Novak. Mr. Ziferman, Mrs. Ziferman came also later and after the war, they liberated...were liberated, came to the United States and they only survivor they brought died already, but the surviving is the son

Novak...Adam Novak. They changed the name on the Aryan side, Adam Novak, who was born with me in the same house...uh...a little bit younger than me. So we were the three people of the Ziferman and we were four people...or...five people of my immediate family in that small hiding. Finally, I convinced my father. But here came the problem of my mother. My mother was already...uh...not a well...was a sick woman and she did not know...very typically Jewish looking. But my mother finally was also convinced and through these labor groups, I brought up later on...not myself, through others, I brought them out to the Aryan side. But my mother came out from the ghetto with a...with a truck, not walking because she could not...not walk such a big way. And finally I placed them all in that place. And the only protection we had was Vladka, which she came to...to us very often to inspect and the other lady, the Christian woman, did not know that...uh...Vladka is Jewish, but she knew that we are somehow connected with the underground. And we paid monthly for our upkeep there, but it was not because only of money. These...uh...this woman...the Juliana which we were not only five....the two families, she had another two other families. She really worked hard for all of us. Whatever we contributed was really peanuts against what it cost, not talking about the risks. Uh...But...uh...Juliana somehow was very much...uh...connected with the Germans. She was...uh...of German descent, a full...she spoke perfectly German. And to cover up, she used to invite a lot of German officers to her house and she used to make parties and we were always in the hiding in the other rooms while they had parties. And this for her in...in the house...the...the Polish people looked at her that she is something...uh...which has contact with the Germans and people didn't want to have to do anything too...too much with her. In the meantime, she was hiding us, the Jews. Anyway...uh...but this place one day we were discovered. And the Germans came to look in these houses for...for the Jews. Luckily they did not find us. Just by miracle. If they would knock on one of the walls, they would found all of us. We were...when they were searching the house, they were doing it in a very rapid way. Somebody squeezed on us, but...uh...they did not know exactly what was going on. And...uh...but the next day, after

that we were discovered. We had to find a place. And I found a place, a contact with the...with the cemetery in Praga...uh...Exactly how I came to him I do not recall, but...uh...Mr...uh...Kartosha, which was the caretaker of that cemetery...uh...I con...I was able to convince him that we will move in with our family...uh...to ...uh...to Mr. Kartosha on the cemetery. He had a small shack on the cemetery living and he had...uh...a place for his goats. Uh...The goats occupied a very small place and he gave us a little bit space in the room of the...not in the room...of that shack of the goats. Uh...We really were not even able to...to sit. It was enough space to...to stand, but at night he was allowing us to come into...to his rooms, small rooms and we were sleeping on the floor, be able to stretch it out. What was...uh...very...uh...probably unusual that my father agreed to come with me on the Aryan side under one condition. That he will take along with him the tallis and tefillin. And the greatest argument I had with my father was, "What do you need the Sadaria? (Sidur?)" He said, "When we will be liberated....we always believed that we will...we get...he will not part with this. Anyway, I gave in to the conditions because if he would be discovered, my father had a very bad Polish accent and he could be discovered just by speaking a few words. I gave in to this when I brought him out and he came along with the Tallis. And my mother...uh... on Friday used to light the candles there on the cemetery for Friday. They were practicing. They were continuing to believe in this. And...uh...I was going to start out and to go out more and more to be in contact with Vladka. This...uh...the one day...this was already in the time before the ghetto uprising which was becoming February, March or March...we knew that there...

Q:1943.

A:Yes. The uprising, not the uprising, the final stand. It was not an uprising. They considered this not as...as the final stand against the Germans. Naturally, it's a whole history because on January 19, there was the first attempt, January 18 I think was the first attempt to resist

deportations. And...uh...the first shots of the underground were for the first time heard in the Warsaw ghetto. That stopped the deportations, but the Germans did not know exactly what...what this prepared...what is...what do they...what the Jews are preparing. And the..that was in January, if I recall directly is the 18 of January. Those who were involved in that...uh...shooting was one whom I remember is a...uh...Fajner, uh...he was one of the top leaders in the...in the underground. His brother is still alive and lives in Canada--Aaron Fajner. He survived in...in Russia, and lives now in Canada. And his wife was...uh...Shiftman, Lillian Shiftman. And they were...both were involved in that incident in Toebens and shoot shop where they shooting. If he was doing the shooting or somebody else was doing, I don't know exactly, but I know they were in that group of starting the shooting where stopped the deportations. But the...the Germans...uh...the underground...uh...became very powerful, not powerful, dominating in the Warsaw ghetto and...uh...the Jewish people realized that there...that this is the only way now is to stand and before everybody was looking to...to find some food. Uh...From fell...from that January on, everybody was looking to start fight...preparing bunkers. And although it was...uh...22 groups of...uh...young people were in the...in the organized underground or which they called by name ZOB, or \_\_\_\_\_ whatever you want to say it is and the leader of the...those leaders were in that time is...was...uh...Antek Cukierman and...uh...uh...Klepfisz and \_\_\_\_\_. Most of them were groups which belonged to pre-war organizations. And they were stationed together as divided parties. The group of the...of the \_\_\_\_\_ had their... their groups. The \_\_\_\_\_...the group of the \_\_\_\_\_ had their groups, and the group of \_\_\_\_\_, each one had their groups and they lived together, waiting preparing themselves for the uprising. The most important thing was to get weapons. They were poorly weaponed, but in that time not only the...the members of the underground were looking for weapons, but individual Jews were trying to buy weapons for themselves. So although the...the uprising was led by the organized group of around 450 organized...uh...fighters, I would say that we cannot diminish anything of the individual

people who were not part of the groups but they were also preparing for the last and not allowed themselves to take a life to be left. And I think that they all belong to the courageous groups of...uh...resistance. And...uh...2 days before the uprising, not...uh...2 days, it was probably...uh...3 or 4 days before the uprising, my father said that it's going to be Passover, and he never spent a Passover not eating Matzah. And my brother which, younger brother, which was on the Aryan side, heard that wish of my father. And he said to me, you know...he walked to me and he says, "How can we let Father suffer and not eat Matzah? You have your contacts. Why don't you arrange I should go back to the ghetto, and...uh...I'll bring the Matzah for the...for the Father because there are people where who are baking some Matzah." And about 3 days before the uprising my brother left and he went to the ghetto. He went to the ghetto, and...uh...and...the only way I heard from him was the day when I was in Juliana's house in another room with...uh...with the Blachowicz family which lives in Israel. He died already, but Sabina Blachowicz which was a girlfriend of mine sister, she's alive. The telephone was wringing in the room where the German officers were sitting, and she was entertaining them. And the phone was from the ghetto. That Juliana Lairge didn't know what to do. Finally...she decided to call me, and I called in...I came in to the room, and I saw German soldiers sitting and she said, "There's a telephone call for one of her neighbors." And they were drinking, almost drunk. She knocked on mine door to be ready to come out and then she walked over to the door from the hallway and she said that she's going to call up a neighbor, that there's a telephone for him. It was very normal not to have telephones so there was a telephone for the neighbor. And my son...my brother called from the ghetto. He told me, "I was...I am able to get the phone to you and...uh...I don't know...everything is burning around us. We are probably going to be deported and those who will be alive will be deported. I'll try to contact you again." And that was the conversation during the uprising. Finally, after a few weeks later, we heard that he's in Poniatów, was deported to Poniatów he advised us. And we were able to bring him from Poniatów...uh... Juliana Lairge had a woman, Maria, which was working for her, and

Marie went to that Poniatów and she found him. And she went with a uniform of a policeman holding in her bag a uniform of Polish policemen and she found him in the woods going marching, and she knew him and she brought him back in the uniform of a Polish policeman. In the meantime, Vladka was very much...uh...involved in the uprising and was the last shipment of ammunition to be taken to the ghetto. And I remember the...the struggle among these couriers. Everybody was very much interested to carry that ammunition to the ghetto. Today I am thinking about this. Nobody thought about the risks they are taking, but everybody wanted to...there was almost like a competition. Who will go with the transport? Anyway, Vladka did not success. She was not chosen in that group, but in her place Klepfisz went. \_\_\_ Klepfisz. He went with the last transport of ammunition to the ghetto. And the uprising started. The uprising started on November...on December...on April 19. It was on the Passover night (sigh). My father on the cemetery somehow...unforgettable....had some wine and we drank the wine and we were sitting and crying on the cemetery. It's Passover. And on the other side of the city, we saw tremendous smokes coming...uh...from the ghetto and everybody said that the ghetto is aflame. The last stand! The next morning after the Seder, I walked out from...from my...from the cemetery and I went to the section of the ghetto and I really saw the ghetto burning. I was sad that over there...I did not have that telephone yet, is my brother. It's...I don't know, maybe it is...uh...too individually thinking. I could not think about the 50,000 people, but I thought about my nearest one which is still alive...that I had, you know, 300 people and they perished. I don't know because of the events I didn't think about them. Today I think about my large family. But in those days I only thought of the one which is survived. Why is he not... I was sorry that my brother is there. I...On the other hand, I was very pleased and happy that I knew that Vladka didn't...not go there, and she remained on the Aryan side. And...uh...also on the Aryan side, those were divided \_\_\_ Cukierman, from Sylvania \_\_\_\_\_. Sylvia (Tzywia Lubetkin) \_\_\_\_\_ was in the ghetto and \_\_\_\_\_ was with us on the Aryan side of the \_\_\_\_\_. And they started to be meetings. What to do? How to do? And that time

Vladka came one morning to...to me to the hiding, and she said, "I just came back and here is the...the appeal to the Polish people, signed by the Polish underground which we are going to paste them on the walls. And it's there. It's a very historic document which is now used. She went to the printing shop behind Warsaw and there in that illegal printing shop they printed that...uh...leaf...those leaflets, and she brought them back, carried them, and I was probably one of the first ones to see the printed copy. It was an appeal to the Poles to help our brothers fighting in the Aryan...in the Warsaw ghetto. The next day Vladka came to me and she asked me if I would be willing to join the group...uh...which plans now to storm the wall, to give the chance to the...to the ghetto fighters to come out and the second thing is to start...uh...pasting these...uh...post...uh...small postures. They were probably in the size 8-1/2 x 11 or a little bit larger, not much larger, a mimeograph on the walls, and we are...we're preparing a group. I..without any hesitation, I agreed to both conditions. I agreed to the condition to be part of the underground of storming the wall, and I also agreed to the pasting of the...of the postures. Anyway, the pasting of the postures, we supposed to meet with a group of...uh...underground people, Jews and non-Jews. But unfortunately.....**END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 1.**

...All three of us, Jewish fellows. None of the Christians came to...Catholics came...even from the underground people, with whom we cooperated, came to that meeting. So we had no choice and...uh...we took some paste...uh...some postures and we pasted them on the walls in the middle...you know, in hiding..as Christians, as Catholics. Now today, I don't know if maybe others did too. I don't know if I was the only...among these groups or the others, but...uh...this is a well documented...uh...posture which is probably one of the open appeals in the streets to the Polish people to help the Warsaw ghetto, which got very...very little help. But what was interesting is the ghetto was burning surrounded with their...with the...artillery bombarded. You could have see flames miles and miles away, black, smoking flames, especially at night. The entire sky of Warsaw was red. Completely red! But the

flames were so concentrated around the whole ghetto that it illuminate the whole city. The next week...the same week was Palm Sunday. I couldn't be anymore in the...in the...with my parents in the hiding. I walked out on that Palm Sunday and I went to \_\_\_\_\_ where there was a church, a very old church, and I felt that my safest place is in the church. I went to that church and I attended the mass and the priest spoke. Not a word was mentioned that across the street people are fighting, dying by the hundreds, and fire. I was just like a good Christian listening to the whole sermon. Then it is...uh...traditional in Poland that when the...after the services, the Priest goes out in front of the church and he greets the parish...the people, probably is practiced here in every country the same way, but in Poland it is a traditional thing. And he greeted all the Poles and across the street was a carousel with a playground and the music was playing and the carousel was...the people took the children on the carousel, beautifully dressed. Sunday. Palm Sunday. And...uh...music was playing and I was standing in that group watching the other side of the block of that burning ghetto. From time to time we heard screaming, "Look. Look. People are jumping from the roofs." Others will make remarks...uh...Jews are frying. That's just a free translation from Polish. But I never heard any sympathy voices. Maybe there were people who looked in a different way, but I never heard it. It was very heartbreaking for me that here I am helpless. I can't do nothing. And I gotta see and watch and I cannot even protest. I cannot even show my anger. Sometimes I felt in those...that I have to do something physically, even have to pay with my life and start screaming, but I didn't do it. I didn't scream. I didn't do anything. I just was hurt. But that scene will probably remain with me for all my life. How does...how was this possible that neighbors on the same block, in the same city, in the same street, on a Sunday coming out from church seeing burning of the people will not make a call, "Let's stop the music. Let's not play." You don't do anything, but at least show some sympathy by only stopping by the music. Nobody! The music went on, and I left the place, still music playing, still the merry-go-round with the children, still very happy people, and I went back to the cemetery. And I remember when I came back to the cemetery and when I opened the

gate and I had the key of opening the gate, I did not want to walk into my parents in the shack. I went in among the graves, among the tombstones sitting and crying. And they were not tombstones of Jews. They were tombstones of Russian people..uh...Star of David they called themselves, and I was just crying. I do remember it took maybe 2 hours before I decided to come in to see my parents.

Q: Where was Vladka during the uprising?

A: Vladka was in daily contact. She was...in...by that time one of the major couriers of the underground. So she was busy. She had an official house on Brookover Street 8, which was...uh...a fine house..house, home, an apartment, and she was in daily contact and.. First I told you that we saw the leaflets. The question of helping, was sending help was impossible. They were...they were involved in contacting the underground and trying to plead for help...sending information to the...to the world pleading for help. And...uh...there Vladka was, as the main courier, moving around a lot...much about this, but came after a few days...came \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ which was a member of the underground. He was...still is alive and lives today in Israel, came out from the ghetto through the sewers. And the first place where he came...I don't know if was this the first place, but the night when they spent was in the house of Vladka and...uh...he revealed everything what was happening, but his plea was, "I came out to you to try...let's try to help. And they became very involved. First of all was the plan of storming the wall, which never materialized because we couldn't. We did not have the people. We couldn't. So we started to work on the plan to get them out through the sewers. And \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ showed us the way that if it is possible to come out of the ghetto, so why cannot larger groups came out. So they got involved how to organize the escape of ghetto from the...because we knew that the uprising cannot succeed. At least we wanted to save the...the...fighters. And...uh...finally they succeeded. They rented two trucks and one day the contact was made back with the ghetto fighters

and...uh...they rented the trucks, the truck men did not know the purpose for what they going. They told them about moving furniture, but...uh...we had some people on the Aryan side already and...uh...there was some involvement of a few Polish underground people, mainly from the...from the political movements which either on the personal basis or...uh...or sanctioned by the organizations were given to us to help us get the people out from the ghetto. Then one day when they succeeded in renting these trucks and they brought the trucks to a place...uh...near the Soboska Street in...in... \_\_\_\_\_, and there was a place where they opened the hatch of the...of the...of the sewers, and the people started come out. Naturally, the drivers, they wanted to run away and they were stopped by underground boys with guns and they say, "You cannot drive. If you drive, you be killed." I was not present at this, but Vladka was present at this...at this taking out the people of the ghetto and by 60 or 70 underground fighters were brought to the Aryan side, among them...uh...which ought to...still alive is Dr. Edelman and Tzywia Lubetkin which died in Israel. And another ghetto fighters, but from the 70 peoples which were taken to the woods near Warsaw, I think more than half was killed in the first two weeks, either by Germans or denounced or by the Polish people and very...very small group survived. Even from the 70 which were saved. I don't think that...uh...more than 20 were remaining in the woods, and then from the 20, maybe 15 survived the war. And...uh...that after this became the activity when the Warsaw ghetto was liquidated....the activities of...uh...the underground was how to help people in hiding and how to help people in their...in concentration camps and contacts, and there was also a thought in those days since we know that they are Hungary...this was 1943...that Hungary Jews are free. So there was...uh...a trend how to be able to go to Hungary. And I was almost ready to go to Hungary. And in the meantime, we were living as and hiding on the Aryan side and...uh...we had a lot of losses, denunciations and...uh...Germans were very active. The Germans knew that there's a large segment of people in hiding on the Aryan side, either by...uh...people...righteous people who tried to save Jews...uh...or by people who did it also by risking their lives and...but using....uh...this

as a means of making a living by hiding Jews. Uh...Both of them...we are grateful to both of them, as long as we were able to survive. But the Germans in those days knew exactly and they got a few collaborators....when the Warsaw ghetto was already liquidated, September...liquidated in May, I don't remember exactly...was it September or October, they spread the news around from it spreads that there's a possibility to buy...uh...foreign passports to be exchanged through Switzerland. The head of this group of that foreign passports...of that...uh...organization...the Germans were...put Mr.[Dawid] Guzik...Mr. Guzik was the head of the Joint Distribution, very well known man in the Jewish community before the war and during the ghetto. He was in the ghetto, and he became the...the head of this...uh...group of repatriation. How he got into this? How he came I don't know? But the fact was he was in this, and he was also with two well known collaborators of the Germans. Uh...One of them is Kosoftski which openly belonged to the work of...for the Gestapo. And he was even carrying...that was the only man which I saw carrying a...a revolver issued by the...by the Gestapo. Naturally, Kosftski was later on killed by the underground in Warsaw. This was a later period. And...uh...it became a situation that was first in a...in a...in a hotel in a different section. I think it was the Royal, the name of the hotel. Then we moved...they moved to Hotel Polski, and I would say that close to a thousand people living as...in hidings on the Aryan side were seeking to get these documentations. In the beginning these documentations were very expensive. You needed a fortune of money to buy such a document. There I used my father. I tell...I came back and I told my father that you know the man whose the head of this thing...the repatriation is Mr. Guzik." He says, "Guzik. He's a close friend of mine. Let me go. Take me to him. I will talk to him. I will make sure that you getting a passport and...uh...we'll pay him back one day whatever is necessary." And naturally I brought my father to Guzik, and Guzik...uh...met my father. There was very little conversation, but Guzik says, "You want me to help your son." And he said, "That's what I came for." "Okay. Are you wanta leave?" He says, "No. I have a wife. I have children. We are too many people. Just take one of our family."

The...Vladka used to come and I...since this was a very safe place to be in Ireland on the Aryan side and if you came into this it was on Luga, the street was Luga I think. Luga 25 I felt very safe over there. The moment you walked in you were free. It was like an island. So I spent most of the time there in that hotel talking to people and transports leave and Guzik sent his wife and his daughter. So this was the best proof and we spoke to Guzik. He says, "You ask me how is it." He says, "I am sending my wife and my daughter." And it's correctly, he did send his wife and his daughter. So we felt maybe it is chance and from the underground papers we knew that something was going on that the Germans are trying to exchange Jews for trucks. We did not know exactly. But the underground never got a confirmation. So as a result Vladka did not want have nothing to do with this. Although she felt very bad that I have to leave and that's...she started to spend the last days to be with me in \_\_\_\_\_, she said, "I am not going to leave. I am not going to leave because we don't know anything about this. We don't trust the Germans. She didn't trust. She didn't want to leave. And I decided since I am one of five people of the family, I will go and I will take a chance and see. And the first transport left. The second transport. I was supposed to be in the third transport. But when the third transport left, it became really very...everybody could have obtained a passport, not for big money but even for peanuts. You could have...if you knew anybody, you got a passport. If you knew anybody was leaving and you went into the office somehow everybody got a passport. So that came a little bit also suspicious to us. Why...why do you giving out so these passports so easily. But in the day which I suppose to leave...uh...mine brother came the day before to say goodbye to me. But somehow, he turned to be and he says, "Listen, Ben." Naturally, he did not turn to me, "Listen, Ben." He spoke to me Yiddish or Polish. Uh..."You know I don't have such good features, Christian features like you. You are very close with Vladka. Here you are the \_\_\_ run. Why don't you give me the passport and I will leave." And the passport was with my picture with my name. It wasn't a passport. It was a..some documentation. Not a real passport. With a Paraguayan stamp to the Paraguay to come to Paraguay. A visit to Paraguay which was also

fixed. It was not a...not a real visa. And my brother turns to me I should give him the transport. I did not think too much. I pulled out the passport. I gave him. He embraced me. He kissed me. He says, "Promise me. I...you'll never forget. The minute I will arrive I will let all of you know, and we will try to be reunited." The next day the Germans came with the trucks to take the people for the transport and I overheard...uh... a conversation between the Germans...and I remained there because it was safe place to remain because I was watching already two transport leavings. Uh...I overhead that the Germans says to one German to the other that he thinks that the Jews don't want to leave today. I wanted...I tried to go to the...when I heard this, I was trying to go to the door...to open the door. I couldn't. The door...the door was already closed with a guard on the other side. I had no chance to...to leave. So I was...uh...my brother already was on the truck. He left already. I did not have any communication anymore with my brother and I was starting to look for a hiding. And I found a hiding on the...it was not the roof...below the roof there was a place where I thought that this was a proper hiding. Anyway, an hour later when I was in that hiding, I already start hearing shooting and screaming. "Raus!"--"Out! Out!" I succeeded to be in that hiding there was another people with a little boy. Uh...I remembered that...uh...that man who was hiding with me went through an operation a few days before. Why...I found out from this later...of changing...changing...uh...pulling up the skin on his penis, he should like a Christian boy. And he was in terrible pain. He was in terrible pain. And...uh...but we laying in that hiding until the night...until it became very quiet. Uh...My brother left before and that day and my name...under my name. I never heard from him. I never knew where he went. People started to tell me that the transport went to Berlin and from Berlin it went to...uh...by other trains, they went to Bergen-Belsen. All kinds of stories. The true is that people went from that transport to Bergen-Belsen. But I never heard of my brother, never know about what's happened. So officially in all the records of the German records, I probably...if they are German records, in future historians...uh...all historians which are very much, you know, interested in documentation, records will probably list me as one of the

dead. But...uh...it was not me. It was my brother in my place. I revealed...I revealed this for the first time after 4 years when I introduced the President of the United States before 20,000 survivors in the United States. But I...those thoughts of the carousel, of the crying of my father, of crying... mine coming back to the cemetery helpless and crying, sitting and crying around the graves, and that shooting and the...probably constantly being with me. I am never free of them. And sometimes when I am even very content and happy and I have a lot of reasons sometimes to be happy because I did brought up a new family and a good family. I established a home here, but they come back to me. And people asking me, "Why all of a sudden quiet down?" But when I quiet down it's the moments when I really go back to the past. You know people tell me that...uh...I was responsible, as you know, during the war, after the war here in the United States for 27 years...of creating a commemorations of probably the largest in the world beside \_\_\_\_\_ award. But the \_\_\_\_ award, Temple of Manuel, and I will not forget when Rabbi Sobel one day turned to me. We had a big sign which read: WE SHALL NEVER FORGET AND NEVER FORGIVE. And he in a very polite way turned to me one day in his office, he says, "Ben. It's a synagogue. Our religion says that we should forgive. I know it's going to hurt you, but we cannot have a sign in this synagogue: WE SHALL NEVER FORGIVE." (Sigh) Those were not the...maybe can live with the thought that we shall...we must forgive. I don't think that...uh...for me to forgive is not to look for vengeance for if we would have to forgive...not to forgive...maybe we would have to imply vengeance. But I don't think that I will be true to mine brother, to my family of 300 from before the war, to my colleagues to our...to which I went to school, to my colleagues who later were the heroic fighters in the Warsaw ghetto, to the simple people, my neighbors who perished for...for nothing. Just for the...because they were born Jews. And not only that they perished, they went through a few years of Nazi...living through the...through Nazis in such unhuman conditions, and they remained human...that we should not...we should forgive. I know...I am not calling to go out and...and to...and to practice vengeance. But when the Rabbi told me to take off the sign that was a terrible blow to me.

Naturally, I had to obey the rules of the Temple which allowed me to do this for a few years but appealrf to me 'take off the sign:' WE SHALL NEVER FORGIVE." We should remember. Leave the sign: WE SHALL REMEMBER.

Q:We have to break for a new tape. So let's take a couple of minute break. Ben, do you want to have a sandwich?

Q:Ben, let's go over a couple of items that we haven't discussed before. Tell us a little bit about how you and Vladka got married and...uh...what happened to your parents.

A:We are both Jewish, coming from a Jewish background. We lived as Christians, but...uh...when you say marriage that means that...uh...going through the formality of having a Huppah. This we did immediately at the first week after liberation upon the assistance, which is a story later, of my parents. But after the uprising, I could not stay anymore in the hiding...you stay over night. I also became much closer to Vladka. Vladka rented an apartment on the corner of Gerboska and...uh...Valitsove, I think it's Gerboska and Valitsove. Uh...She had an apartment, a one-room apartment, and I used to come out from the cemetery, and the only place where I can spend a night was in her house. My parents, who got already adjusted to know Vladka because Vladka was supplying us with food, bringing...because my parents never ate any meat...in all the time when they were on the Aryan side, so my Vladka used to bring some dairy products for them. She also was the protection for us because the people, the...the caretaker of the cemetery knew that we are being...uh...watched and protected by the underground which is Vladka and when we were supposed to take the monthly pay, Vladka was handing over the money to the people, although in the beginning it was my father's money which soon ran out of money, but...uh...we did not want to let the caretaker know that we have money so Vladka used to come every two weeks every month and pay for us. And my parents uh...uh...got...got used

to her, and she was our angel. On the other hand, Vladka, not having anybody of her own, felt very comfortable with the feelings that she comes into a room where people are caring for her. This went down already for a few weeks...

Q:How old was Vladka at this time?

A:Vladka was at this time...uh...about 19...19, 20...and...maybe 19 years old. And...uh... Vladka...uh...uh...used to come in quite often. And when my parents saw that I am not coming at night, they never asked me, "Where were you?" But they probably, among themselves, talked. But one day when Vladka came to the hiding, my mother asked us both to come closer to her; and she was wearing a ring. She took off the ring from her finger and she said to me, "Put that ring on Vladka's hand...finger," which I did. And my mother said, "Let it be with good luck." We did not discuss it. We did not talk about this. But I know what my parents wanted. My parents wanted at least to feel that they are not letting her son...their son just go and live with a girl without making a pledge or a vow, which is traditional before marriage. This is the ring which Vladka is still wearing today. She never changed the ring. Whatever it was left from my mother which...memories and...uh...maybe other things, but this is the most precious thing which we have...was the ring. And that was almost like an acceptance that when I come back, I didn't...I was...I was already allowed to remain with Vladka at night. And we became very close. We never discussed why she was doing this, but I think that this is...uh...something which my parents...even that way of hiding wanted to continue the tradition and wanted to be at least rightful...uh...in their observances...uh...to God that not just, you know, to let us go live together without any vow why we are together.

Q:Tell me about teaching Vladka to ride a bicycle.

A: Yes, we...(sigh) we were young people. It was...uh...we were both very young. We were in love.

I did not know how to...uh...to express some mine gratitude and mine affection with some taking out her to theaters or movies, which I was brought up in a family which was very often going to theaters, concerts, so I did not have any recreation. So I decided that the best thing for me will be to buy a bicycle as a gift for her. But, strangely enough, when I bought the bicycle for her, she told me that she doesn't know to ride a bike. I was sure that she knows how to ride a bike. And I bought it as a surprise. And I felt that it's also very good for her to have a bike in the house that will give her a little bit more credibility for her by her neighbors that you know...here she's not...uh...uh... reacting like just a girl which is afraid. And I took her...therefore, when I found out that she doesn't know how to ride a bike (chuckle) one Sunday I took her in an open field to teach her how to ride a bike. Unfortunately, while teaching her how to ride a bike, she fell off the bike and sprained or broke the ankle. We were really in trouble. She could not...the next day she could not reveal to the...to the people of the underground cause she was...uh...in daily...uh...in daily contact with the people which are heading the underground...uh...special ... uh... mecali and others...uh...people with whom she met lunchtime. She couldn't tell them that she'd broke the leg by meeting...going out there...would have been a crime. So she came and she had even...she could not even reveal how she broke the leg, but she was with a cast with a band aid which was done in a hospital in an emergency room, and very little, very provisional, but that...those days we could never even tell people she broke the leg because riding in a bike. "What you mean? You in the underground? You...you ride a bike? You...you'll going to have...You...you are going out with a boy having a good time." Her whole credibility would be under question. That means that she's not the only one who knows everything. Maybe she shares some information with me, which she didn't. Very little Vladka ever told me what she was doing. And I was never pressing her to tell me. So I really during the underground did not know exactly what she was doing. But it was very embarrassing, but it's a coincidence which remains with us and...uh...but that...those bikes are...were very

helpful to us for the...she learned how to ride the bike because after the Polish uprising, we escaped due because from one place to the other because we knew both how to ride bikes, and we escaped on those...on these bikes. So it was...uh...a good...uh...thing that she learned how to ride...ride a bike. (Cough)

Q:Let me ask you Ben. The...being in love in this period of time, being in love for a teenager for a young man is the happiest time in his life. Seeing the world go up in smoke is the most difficult thing you can imagine. How could you feel both things?

A:Uh...I would say that's very often...she was crying. Uh...Many times we worked together. Most of the time was for me to...to relieve her cause when she was with others, she did not reveal anything about what she lost...her loneliness. She was crying. And I was maybe a good shoulder for her, why she was able to cry. This probably was also part of the love, of expression. But I would...uh...I think that...uh...t's a very interesting question to go back. Here we were two young people. Everything what we did was illegal. Our whole existence was illegal. The work which Vladka was involved...later, I was involved in different work of the underground...was illegal. The people we...we met was illegal. But something was in us...the young...the youth...the young years, which probably you cannot suppress this, and if you...uh...you came to expression, probably our love was probably...I don't know...to measure the depthness, but was a true love. We did care for each other. And I think our love was probably....uh...mostly based on really caring for each other, and that's why it was important for both of us. It was not just a love of...uh...of an expression of sex, which was also, but was more the love of having each other, of being able to depend on each other. She knew that she can always count on me, and I knew that I can always count on her. That love was probably more than anything else a human being has. Uh...Today when we live in an era, we know that their love is probably expressed in the same way, but the...the attraction from...from young people is probably mainly, first of all, based on sex. I don't exclude

this...that this was not among us, but I think...I think it was much deeper. It was much deeper and much more personal affection and personal responsibility although we cannot...we couldn't do anything. Whenever she walked out on the street or I walked out on the street, I never knew that I will come back and she never knew that she come back, and she had many of mess ups. She was arrested many times. I was arrested and thank God that I was not brought to...to the...to the Gestapo. I was able to buy myself out. I was not so much like arrested that I was harassed by the \_\_\_\_\_ people who were going around looking for Jews, and I was recognized twice and luckily that I was able to buy myself out...myself out through the help of some Polish people who knew me. And I took them to them and they paid for me the ransom, which I later on returned because I did not carry the money with me. Whatever I had with me was taken away...the watches, whatever...if I had a ring...everything was taken away, and I always wore something...had something to be able to have it. And...uh... that was...uh...a close relation also. Our close relation became also that I was later on involved... uh...in the underground in a very practical way. I was...uh...brought into the underground as a guy who was very handy and...uh...I was asked to build hidings. Uh...And I was very good in it, and very...had a lot of innovated ideas. And...uh...people which had apartment...houses where they lived could not bring any Christian workers to work and to trust them that they're going to hid Jews in them, so they brought me in. And always this was a contact arranged by Vladka. These uh...uh...orders to...to make these...uh...bunkers were not coming to me directly from the top leadership, but it came through Vladka, so that helped a lot our...also our close relations. And I am very grateful to...to God forever that I was able to build a few hidings of which in which people survived...even they were discovered and that they were denounced that they're staying there, the Germans came in and they couldn't find them. I built several...uh...places where completely...uh...wall matching up in their apartment, only taking away one feet of the...of the width of the apartment, but a complete wall. I built hidings in...uh...in cellars. I built hidings very....which would be every difficult to even...to even think that there's possible to

build. We had very thick walls in the buildings in Warsaw, and they were the window sills where with very thick walls, I used to take out the window sills, the wood, and then scrub out all the bricks which were very thick and leave a very thin layer on the outside of the building which was not touched, and inside the apartment which was not touched and...uh...we used to...to remove the sill of the window, and one or two people were able to get in...in hiding. That's...uh...including myself, helped survive a few people. Uh...I was sit...laying once in such a hiding for 6 hours. Not hiding, because...uh...that was in Vladka's apartment, not hiding because I was discovered by the Germans, but the colleague of the underground came to see Vladka, a girl...uh...she's alive. She is now...uh...living in Chicago. Her husband was the Professor in Chicago University...uh...Mr. Kane, but she came once to visit Vladka, and Vladka could not reveal that somebody is in the apartment. In the underground, you see, nobody knew that she is in the...she's seeing me, what she went through with me. So because of her...her coming knocking on the door...I did not know who was knocking, I jumped into that hiding, and she was quite a few hours in Vladka's house and I had to sit a quite a few hours in that hiding, not hiding from the Germans, but hiding that somebody of the underground should not know that I am there.

Q:The sewer's were linked for life in Warsaw and you spent both a considerable amount of time in the sewers and working in the sewers with people.

A:Uh...In the sewers I spent that the...uh...the time which I spent in the sewers was after the Polish uprising, not until the Polish uprising. I, occasionally, was a few times in sewers for a very short, brief times, but my whole days spending in the sewers was after...in the Polish uprising. That's...uh...a chapter by itself. The sewers...the height of the sewer pipe is not more than...uh...probably 3 feet. That's the major pipes and...uh...the bottom of the sewers is mostly with the mud and...uh...what's came out from the toilets of the apartment. All this is good when the water is running, but when water is not running, when the city was cut off of

water, Warsick...in the Warsaw after...during the uprising, you just not go...was walking on water, which is...uh...but you were walking only on the mud, the dirt, the human...uh...I would say that today, people would say that...uh...gee, to go through such a few hours, I'd rather die. I don't want to do it. But...uh...when you are forced to do it, you're doing it. And...uh...we...it is an experience, but I think this would be good to come back to this if we would discuss the question of the Polish uprising which I was involved.

Q:Let's talk a little bit then about the period between the ghetto uprising of 1943 and the Polish uprising of '44.

A:Uh...That was for me, personally, a period between 1943 and 1944, it's almost a year...uh...or a little bit less than a year, but in these few months, they were so...I was so much involved in the work and living as a Christian that probably...that's probably account for most of my memories of the...of the...of my living in the Nazi era. First, those years...the...I was able to walk around the streets of Warsaw because I did not have the Jewish look. They said I had a good look because I looked like a Christian. Blue eyes, blond, and...uh...well dressed. Dressed like...uh...a tough guy, with high boots, and I had to parade in the city of Warsaw. And I must say that although I was brought up in so much believing in humanity, so much believed that mankind is good, that...uh...goodness is...is only...is in mankind by itself, it's only the bad thing is being manipulated by government, by regimes, and the Aryan side, I was...I realized that governments and regimes are one thing, but mankind by itself is a problem...is a problematic thing. I developed a terrible fear. Probably everybody in my place was constantly under fear. I was afraid for everybody. I also developed a sense of recognizing dangers faster than anybody else. My antennas were tune...tuned much more...uh...delicately, to delicate...uh...more. But what was...what I remember from those days...that practically every human being which had the human feature walking on the streets freely was mine enemy. Possible I passed through the street and I passed through

people which were righteous people and maybe they had in their own house hiding Jews or doing other good deeds, but to me when they had the human features, he became...he...he was a part of the human race. He was my enemy. And...uh...I was looking always to be around animals. And I spent in my free time...a lot of my time in the zoo. Cause everything which...uh... was human was...uh...first of all, it was a place where to spend time because I did not have what to do with my time. And...uh...anything I did...the animals I wasn't afraid. It could have been even a tiger, I was not afraid. But I was afraid by the unknown of the human people. And everybody who legs, hands, eyes and walked like a human being was my enemy, or my potential enemy. In...only my thoughts and my fear....I was probably wrong on passing by a lot of people, but that's how I felt. So I walked around and I was very safe among the cows, the...the...goats, and ...uh...and...uh...and also among the ...uh...horses. But talking about animals, I want to go back to the...to the story of my parents. Where I had to...you know, as I told you, uh...my parents had the hiding, the...the wall which was made in the shack of the two goats on the cemetery, and when there was a funeral and they had to hid themselves they had to use to go into that shack and sit in that shack. Uh...The two goats, which were in that shack, were very abrasive to my parents, never to the owner and never to me. But they always knew that they are weaker, that they can push them and...uh...when my mother passed by and my father, the goats used to really violently push them. And they felt they knew that my mother or my sister or my father will not do anything to them. At the same time, if I walked in or the owner walked in, the goats were very, you know, watching us and listening what to do. I also know that about...uh...remember a lady, Mrs. Shefner, used to tell me she used to be in hiding in a...in a place where there were chickens. And even the chickens after awhile recognized that she's a weak person, and even this chickens pushed that woman, Mrs. Shefner, which came to the United States later, and survived here...survived the war also through a miracle, and...uh....she used to tell me about the chickens taking advantage on her. So it's a very...uh...complicated thing to look back as this... something is in the...in the human race or

in the nature where a living animal recognizes the weakness, but for the human race to...to be without any feelings that the other person is the same...that I walked around the street and was afraid for every human being. That was a tremendous blow to all mine revolutionary ideas of...uh...ideas of mankind, of goodness, of only...only the problem of...uh...of uh...of what is bad in humanity is the manipulation of the regime took a tremendous blow.

Q:Let's talk a little bit now about the uprising, the Warsaw uprising, not the ghetto uprising.

A:(Sigh) The Warsaw uprising. Until the Warsaw uprising, it was period of 1 year. We were living...in the Polish uprising, we were living...uh...before the uprising, as I said, Vladka was living in Warsaw, and my parents and myself which I used to come then the cemetery was in Praga. Praga was liberated probably 3 days when the uprising days started, 2 days or 3 days after the uprising started. Uh...I remember that we were informed by the underground that we should await an uprising because the Russian Army was closing in on Warsaw. This was September. Uh...September...August, September 1944. So we...my parents...the cemetery were situated in a place between two factories. \_\_\_\_\_ Street in Praga. That's where the cemetery was. So there was a talk that the Germans before are leaving this...this...city will blow up all the factories and all the bridges. And I came back to my parents and I told them this is the news. Listen, they have two choices. Either you can remain here. I will go to which of my prayer father...mother asked, "Where are you going to be." "I am going to the city. I am going to be with Vladka" So you have two choices. Either you remaining here, or you coming with me to the city. I will find a hiding. And I...a day before the uprising...I brought them....my father, my mother and my sister and another lady. The Novaks were already in a different place. The Novaks were already in the place where the little girl \_\_\_\_\_ had the girl Meltzer we got to know them a little bit closer, and they took in the Novaks earlier to their hiding in Praga. And they remained in Praga. When the uprising started, 3 days later the Russians walked...came into Praga and Praga was free.

Just across the Vistula. And we remained in the uprising. My parents were placed in a different section of the Warsaw, which was the...the old city \_\_\_\_\_, and they were there...uh...partially in hiding \_\_\_\_\_ in the uprising. But during the uprising, we had a lot of problems. In the first day, it was...uh...Antek Cukierman went over the radio and recalled all the Jews to join the fighters. And we joined the fighters. But...uh...in the uprising. **END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1**

...is the numbers, but I think thousands of people of the...those who were saved in hidings until the uprising perished in the Polish uprising, first by normal bombings which they could have been in that place where the bombing occurred and second by denunciations and third, even you were on the front lines...work...staying together with the...uh...with the soldiers of the underground, in the uprising if they would find out that you are Jewish, most of the time you had the possibility where that you would be killed first by them, although you were both with guns against the same enemy. That uprising took 2 months. Myself having in mind...uh...always to be minded of looking for a bunker of... During the days of the uprising, across the street where we were, Achina, was a bombed out house...building, uh...which was a factory of...uh...pharmaceutical factory, very well known, \_\_\_\_\_. In Poland, they called it . This is more or less a comparitant, like the aspirin in the United States. And I got...uh...uh...acquainted with that caretaker from that bombed out building and I agreed with him that we will start preparing in case the...the uprising comes to an end and it looked that we are going to lose because the Germans...the Russians did not move at all. They stood on the other side of the Vistula without any fight against the Germans...uh... They would not move. We know today that this were also connected with political reasons. They did not want to give the Poles the opportunity to say that they liberated Warsaw. And they let them just...uh...die out. And I built that bunker which was...uh...the bombed out house. I found a place to crawl into that bunker and there was one place...a room where they had that...uh...uh...roof...uh...uh...not a roof, the ceiling was in the basement built round ceiling.

They called it \_\_\_\_ the Klein way of building. That was holding, and I found a tremendous large room. But the only thing is the room was empty because usually all the...uh.. rubbish, rubble was brought in to the holes, but this was about the only place, and I decided to build that bunker and for the 2 months during the uprising I kept building that bunker and supplying that bunker with batteries with car batteries \_\_\_\_\_ water and food and whatever I could have, and I decided to stay in that bunker. But when I took Vladka one day when the bunker was completed, and I said, "Here, we're going to walk in and we're going to be...uh...waiting until the Russians will come." She refused to go into the bunker. She said I am not going to be cooped up this way. I...She really did not have...what could have happened the worst to her was is if she would have to leave the city maybe she will be taken to a concentration camp, but...uh...not...uh... I was afraid that if I will get out and they will recognize me that I am Jewish, I will be taken to the...to the....uh...not to the concentration camp, but probably killed or shot or taken to a death camp. Anyway, I did not leave. I did not...uh...I knew that Vladka is not agreeing, and I decided not to go. At least I wanted to find my parents. I knew that they are on the...on the...on the other party of the city which is maybe a 3 mile walk or...but to go through the sewers and to pass the lines of the Germans, it was very dangerous. We found in there a Polish officer who said that he knows the way how to go through, and he agreed for 4 bottles of whiskey that I...he will take us through. So we were two, and with us was a Christian boy which was very close with us, but very tall and we took him along. And there...when we were started our walk through the sewers in the morning around 7 o'clock and...uh...we were crawling and crawling at around 2 o'clock in the afternoon, I asked the other guy, the officer, "Where are we?" And he told me, "We are at this and this block." I says, "If there is so many hours we made this block, we needed 3 or 4 days until we reach it. We will never make it." And I looked around and everybody...we couldn't be more than 1 person in front, but we only came to a place where there was a connection which you can stand together. I had a gun. Vladka had a gun, and that young man had a gun. I looked at Vladka and I said, "Then, my friend," I said, "We are

not going further." And...uh...I took over and I said to that officer, "We are not going further," and the first time I pulled the gun and I says, "I want you to walk. You go forward. We are remaining here. And I wanna hear your voice, and if I am not going to hear your voice, I want you to know that we are going to follow with a gun." Uh...We were three against one. He had a better gun that we have, but he had no choice. He had to walk and we returned. And we returned...uh...it was also in that...uh...few hours, there were maybe the question of that young man...a wonderful fellow. He was also left alone, a Christian boy, and he asked me one thing, "Please. Swear to me that you will never let me die here. Take me out outside and kill me, but not in the...in the...in the...I don't want to remain laying in that mud." You know it was...it sometimes the question of dying... We knew that we are...we have no chance, that maybe we will...the chances are mostly that we will die. But he did not want to die in that mud. He was ready to be outside and killed, but not in that mud and buried. There's something in...in the human...uh...nature that...it's not only that you want to have the...the privilege of living, but the privilege of dying connects in a...in a...in a way that the human be dies. We know that none of us will live forever. The dignity of dying. And I will never forget that I...although he was Christian and I turned to him in Yiddish and I am saying to him, "I am swearing to you...although you don't understand the language I am talking to you. I am swearing to you that I will never let you die here. I'll help you die outside." \_\_\_\_\_ We were fortunate and we were able after a few hours to come back to the place we come in. And (sigh) you can't imagine how you look when you come out from such a place from the...from the sewers. We were wearing the...my jackets...we were wearing turned over, because the reason we were wearing turned over, we said that if we will come out. whatever the dirt is will be inside. At least on the outside the jacket will be clean. But the inside the jacket came very with mud and human...uh...terrible...smelling terrible. Finally, we came out. I was...I was wearing. I had high shoe. The high shoe where something giving me more the statute of a Christian boy wearing high boots, but in the water, Vladka was holding those two boots and I was just

walking barefooted cause I didn't wanna spoil the shoes, because at least when I come out I should have the shoes. And naturally when we came out from this...uh...mud, it was already dark at night. We knew only one place where the former ghetto fighters were staying...on [Warecka] Veresca Street. They were there. And you cannot imagine, we walked in those terrible and the artillery was going on day and night and we walked in to this...uh...place where our friends are. I did not have a mirror. I don't know...I did not know how I look, and...uh...Vladka did not know how she looks. I did not want to tell her and she didn't tell me. But we knew her place where to go. Our friends when they saw us, they mostly of the ghetto fighters...uh...some of them are...are alive. Some live in Israel. Some live in...uh...in Montreal, Canada. They started terrible to laugh. And I could not take it. Why are they laughing? I went through so much difficult all day. But they couldn't help themselves. Even in this terrible situation, they were laughing. You know I couldn't forgive them. How can you laugh? But we looked probably in such a way, it...looked with mud all around with that \_\_\_\_\_, and but I did not wear...had shoes, so I found some ladies shoes on the street, and I was walking around with ladies shoes because my high boots did not fit anymore. They were wet. In the middle of the night, I left. I says, "I cannot stay with you people," and I went to any basement and I hid myself. Now today you know, when I meet these people, my friends, they cannot forget the way we were looking. But this was also I don't know tragic. But this was the way, you know, in this terrible situation, they in the hiding looking...hearing of the bomb, looking at us...we were more bringing laughter to them the way we looked and it escaped being afraid. This same people when I built the bunker...uh...Vladka did not want to go into that bunker, these were the people who went into that bunker. They were 10 of them. One of them were Mrs. Shefner. Uh...Mrs. Shefner was a very close lady to us. She was much older than we were. When I had to close up...to close the bunker and bring them in, Mrs. Shefner turned to me and says...she wants to talk to me...\_\_\_\_\_. [I s]aid, "What do you want?" "I would like you to give me your hand, and you should swear...swear to me, Czeslaw." "What?" "You see this back

which I am carrying?" They are two sheets. Promise me when you will come back...we know that we are going in and we will never come out. Promise me that you will take me out from that hole, from this bunker and you will bring me to the cemetery and you will bury me in these two sheets." I did promise her, but fortunately I did not have to bury her. But what was her wish? Only to be buried as a human being! Well, we were liberated in January 16, and the January 17, we came to Warsaw, and the first thing what I went...I went to the place of that bunker and I saw the place was untouched. That means the people are there. And I started to dig. I did not know that they were there and alive, all of them. When they heard me digging, they thought that they were discovered. While I was digging dirt, they were on the other side putting more dirt, in effect, in defending themselves and also deciding if they're going to be reached, they will kill the people who will get in. But it became dark at night and I did not continue because the city was...without people. I did not continue digging and I left and I went someplace to sleep...to sleep. When I came back in the morning, I heard that Jews shoot two Poles in the middle of the night. They found them and they took them to the hospital. Uh...Fortunately, they were not dead. They were just wounded. Cause they...after I left, ran out from that bunker and they went into the sewers for 3 days, and after the liberation for 3 days they still were in the sewers, not knowing that they were liberated. Three days later...I did not go anymore for digging because I was scared what I heard. I did not continue. Three days later we found them alive on the street. They recognized us. Uh...This is one of the moments of an individual. Uh...Then I and Vladka left Warsaw with another couple...uh...together ....uh...the boy was a Christian boy and the girl was Jewish. And the whole city has to be evacuated and we were brought to one point. For a few days...uh....before we decided to leave, I decided to get dressed as a woman. And I walked around 3 days dressed as a woman and everybody encouraged...was encouraging me that I looked good. Uh...The reason why I wanted to look like a woman I didn't want to be separated because with Vladka, I felt safer. Parents I did not have anymore any contact with them and I walked out. I walked around with high heels, white shoes, and

with a...with a makeup on my face, but I looked terrible. Vladka used to tell me, "You look like a terrible prostitute." The last day before I decided to walk out, I decided no. I took off all the clothes of the woman of the clothes and I put back my...my men's dress suit or whatever I had, the shoes. I says, "Whatever will happen will happen." The only thing which happened, I had a little bit kinked hair. And that was a weak point because...uh... usually Jewish people had kinked hair. And I did not have the possibilities in all this time to press them. So we decided that I am going to put a big bandage on my head. And I was walking around with a bandage. Uh...the bandage became so dirty that some people said, "Why don't you go in to see a doctor because you're going to get an infection from the dirt. How can you have a wounded head with such a dirty bandage?" So we can walked out of the city, somehow the German did not stopped us, but the Germans prepared...uh...wagons, horses and wagons, and the entire population to take those who are wounded to...because they couldn't walk the 20 miles to Pruszkow to where the trains were to take us to...because others to this concentration camp. One of the Poles saw me walking...me and Vladka, and he saw me wounded...uh...and motioned with his hand come and we jumped on his wagon and he covered us immediately with a sheet and somehow...uh...Vladka he gave a Red Cross...uh...arm band and we were...I never knew who that Pole is. He never knew who I am. He did not think that Hitler was thinking that he's saving a Polish patriot. And...uh...this way we escaped. When the whole column of the...of the...of the horse...the wagons moved, when we came in between the woods someplace, we run out of that wagon, and we run and we came to Pruszkow to another city...town, and there where I was able to remain for awhile. I rented a...uh...a small...a bed, with a Polish woman and husband. I don't think that she...that they were from the high class society. She was.. baby was...was not...she was not such a delicate person. But whether I do, the Germans every night used to go around and look for the party...for the people who escaped to find them. So I convinced them one day that, listen, it's going to be very bad if they're going to find us. They're going to...not us Jews, they're going to take her to concentration camp. And I convinced him on

his house on this 3rd day to build a bunker in the floor. And anytime we heard at night that it's going to be, you know, there're going to look for the people, I convinced them that he should...we should both hide. The woman doesn't matter. But the men should hide. And I pushed him in that hole laying but while...while he was laying with me there for 1 night, the second night, the third night he says, "Czeslaw. I am not going to go in. I am not a Jew, I should be hiding." He didn't turn...he didn't think for a minute that I am a Jew, but he didn't want to hide himself. And that day in the morning I talked to Vladka, "It's time to leave because I think he's getting a little bit nervous and there where the bicycle came handy. We took...we had two bicycles. We bought two bicycles and with these two bicycles, we started to travel to find different spots. And one spot that we found because we knew about a girlfriend of ours...uh...which is now living in Montreal and she's the head of the Holocaust...uh...Center--uh, Krycia Starker. We know...We knew that where she was living. And this was...uh...we went in this direction to her. When we arrived there and we asked for her...uh...this was \_\_\_\_\_, she said, "What did you do? Why do you come here?" I said, "Why. What's wrong?" She said, "This is the command...the command of the German Army." And...uh...we had no choice. "We have to go...you have to tell them that you are here." I had no choice. We took our two passports. We walked into the commander together with her. We told them that...uh...we are from Warsaw. We have nothing what to do, and...uh...we would like to remain here to work and we will accept any work they want to give to us." And...uh...he looked at our two passports. Uh...All the stamps were in order, and he accepted us to be there. And I rented an apartment, small bed, in a...in the place of the...one of the peasants and...uh...we lived there for a few months. It was the time of Christmas of 1944. We were going every Sunday to the church, observing all the...never went to bed without a prayer, never did anything without prayers, and really went around as...uh...quite safe. In the German command, the officers, everybody got used to us. Nobody bothered us. We were only 15 or 20 miles from the Russian frontier, and our aim was to wait until the...the water will freeze over and maybe we will cross the frontier. But

we never started out. Thank God, because we would not have had a chance to cross the frontier. But...uh...we were...uh...these people were very simple, poor...simple poor people. They did not know who we are. We helped them dress the Christmas tree. We really brought in the holiday to them, and they were looking up at us as the people from the city who knew how to prepare the table and holiday. But most of the Poles hated us. Not because we were Jews....the peasants, because we were the people of the city. And the people that...the peasants hated the people of the city. As a result we always got...I got always the worse work. Any type of work which was nobody wanted to do it was given to me. Let's let the guy from the city do the job. But I did not...uh...mind as long as I can survive. But why I want to bring out this and that's also something typical. When the Russians arrived on January 16, we were liberated. Uh...Everybody run to this stable because it belonged...and everybody grabbed a horse, a cow, and a...the liquidated the whole...the whole...uh...farm which was a major farm. And everybody took a horse and brought them to this place. And we did not think about it. I think we went to see the commander. Myself, Vladka and that Krysia. And the commander, I think, was Jewish. We walked in to him and we told him that we would like him to help us to leave the town...the village and to go to the city. And I think that he should help us and I...we turned to him and we says, "I think you are Jewish." When he heard this, he stood up and he got very angry. "Who told you that I am Jewish." I did not want to tell him you look like 10 Jews, so "I have the feeling that you Jewish." But he did not want to admit. And he said, "Please do not show up anymore in this place. Go wherever you want." He...he didn't want to give us any help at all. So we decided to use again these bicycles and we went to Warsaw. When we came to Warsaw and after that incident which I told you about discovering my friends in that there bunker, I...it was so...Warsaw was completely empty. That's a whole history to tell you how they survived. They did not only survive because they were able to be in that bunker. Every night they used to go out from that bunker to a different way and they used to find some food in the...in the basements, but this was also got

the reason how they survived. The survival was they were able to dig a whole in the...in the place where they were, and they reached water. And that what helped them to survive.

Q: We are going to have to cut now, Ben, for the tape.

A: It's finished.

Q: We're gonna change tapes.

A: Well, here I wanted to say something about a Pole which I come back...

Q: We'll switch in a second.

Q: Let's continue talking about...uh...you were talking about returning to Warsaw in the middle...in the middle of the winter with Warsaw empty of people.

A: Yes. Before I going back to return to Warsaw, there were...I told you about the place I went to point...uh...the people in the...which I covered to which I luckily I did not discovered them the first day, but...uh...now I know if I would discover them the first day, they would probably have killed me cause they did not know whose looking for them. So I am grateful that I was not lucky to discover them. But in the same day we also went to another place which I think it...uh...it's very much...very well recorded in Vladka's book. There is another place where Vladka had...was the grave of her father. And so we went to the Jewish cemetery on Gesia Street. And...uh...the reason I went to that cemetery because whenever we were in danger one can never revoke the name oh God help. But you always revoke the name oh father help me. She always thought that her father is watching over her because him she...she remembered as dying and burying him in the cemetery. So we...all the years

when we were in living as Christians I always promised her whatever I'll do when I survive, I'll make sure to build a...a marker for your father because there was no marker. She only remembered the place. And when we came to that cemetery on Gesia Street which has 300,000 graves, we saw something which is impossible to understand. How could people do it? Every grave, almost every grave, was open. Wherever we can look. And the heads were taken out and nobody even bothered to put back the heads to the graves. This was the work of hoodlums.

Q:The heads or the headstones?

A:Not...not the headstones. The heads! The headstones were standing or broken, but the heads of the people of the skeletons were pulled out in order to pull out the teeth, the gold teeth of the people. In those days, people when they had problems with teeth, the fillings and the crowns were made out of gold. So the hoodlums were looking for the gold teeth and...uh...that was done by the local population. Uh...I don't know exactly who did it, but what we found when we came to that cemetery is very difficult to forget and to describe. That scenery of that cemetery with the open graves and it...and with the heads...the skeletons of the heads outside the graves. They didn't even bother to put it back to the grave. But \_\_\_\_\_ visited two places we visited afterward, but it was terribly cold. It was January. And it was a cold winter with snow. And we really in the big city of Warsaw, could not find even a blanket to cover ourself, so we were sleeping in our coats, whatever we had. So I knew that I left a blanket, a blanket probably of the value of a...of a dollar or whatever it is in the place where we were before in that \_\_\_\_\_. And I decided since having the bicycle I will ride out over there to find that blanket to bring that blanket. I arrived the 2nd or 3rd day in \_\_\_\_\_ back and I came in to the house of that peasant where we had shared the \_\_\_\_ bed and I came back and I said that I am back to take my belongings, mainly my blanket, cause I need it. When I walked into that room, the guy, the peasant...uh...closed

the door and locked it and he says to me he wants to talk to me. I was a little bit...uh...scared, but I had to listen. Says, "Listen, \_\_\_\_\_." That time Czeslaw, I was. . "I want to tell you. I'm really in a predicament. What is happening. I am being accused here by my fellow friends, neighbors that I was hiding Jews in my house." And I looked at him. I says, "How come you think this way." Oh he was very polite, nice, he says, "No, I don't think this way, but my neighbors think this way, and I am being harassed that I was hiding Jews." Then I turned to him, "Wait a minute. I don't know what's the story. I think we, myself and Vladka, always thought that you are a Jew because we came to you you did not know how to say the prayers. You did not know how to observe a holiday, the Christmas especially. I taught you all this. And when we went to church I showed you the pages which do...upon which to pray. So I always told to Vladka that you are Jew." He says, "I am a Jew." And even wanted to take off his pants and show me that he's not a Jew. I said, "You don't have to, but don't tell me that I am Jew." And I was very harsh. Inside me everything turned. It got dark. I got the blanket and I says, "Listen. I gotta go and see some other people here. I'll come back to see you." I took the blanket. "I'll see you tomorrow morning." And I left the village. And I left the village and on the way I remembered thinking about this. Here another human being which I spent a few months together should express some happiness that he was able to save a human being. That was already after the war. What would it cost you? What it would be so much to you that if you were saved, "I am glad I was able to save." But before I left I asked him, "Tell me what make you think that I am a Jew." And what made others think that I am Jew.? He says, "Listen, when you were...when we were all liberated, all of us run to the stables and everybody grabbed a cars, the cow, a wagon or some. We brought it to ourself and divided it among ourselves with everything which was in the stables. You the only one, with Vladka and...uh...Krysia which left...didn't take anything. That means you did not need it. So I am...we are thinking that you are rich Jews. You don't need all this stuff. That was his way...the whole population

thinking why we are Jews because we did not want to grab a horse and a cow and all these things. Naturally, I left that village and never came back.

Q:How were you reunited with your parents?

A:Before the uprising, somehow mine...mine...uh....somebody came to contact us from the underground...uh... I think it was \_\_\_\_\_. She lives now in New York...uh...\_\_\_\_\_ father, mother, and she said, "Listen. Somehow it came in appell that somebody is looking for me in \_\_ from the underground. His father and his mother. And all that was a tremendous news to me. How was it? My sister which was that time 9 years old...my father didn't go out from the house where they stayed, not my mother, but my sister the 9 year old was the manager of the family going out to buy and everything and one day she went to...uh... uh...to the market and she saw a woman and she approached that woman and says, "Listen. I think you are Jewish. That woman was a little bit \_\_\_\_\_ did not want to admit, but at the end, she saw a little girl, a 9 year old girl...a little girl and she was very short and she says, "Yes." She says, "I am Jewish." So the lady asked her, "What...how can I tell you." I says, "You can help me if you can get in touch with the underground and found Vladka with Czeslaw, and tell him that we are alive, that we are here in Norpotchno. That took probably a month until the news reached us, because that woman did not have a direct contact with the underground. She had a contact with somebody who had a contact with another one which had in the underground. When it reached me the news...uh...that my father and mother are looking for me, the war broke out. When I came...

Q:The what broke out?

A:The...uh...not the war. We were liberated. We were liberated from the...by the Russians. The Russians came in. And we were free. But on the third day, right in Warsaw, I met that lady

who met my sister by coincidence. And she told me that, "Yes. I met your little sister." And she described to me how she looks. "And I remember her because she was from Pawia Street from the same block where I was born. And...uh...Levine...Levine that lady's name was. She was in Pawia 22, and she said, "Yes. I met her and they live in Norportcho and the house is near a big...uh...ravine. I says, "Norportcho, a house near a ravine. That I..." The next day I told Vladka, "I am going to Norportcho. There was no way of transport of public transportation. I was hitchhiking on trucks, on military trucks. Uh...I came to Norportcho. And I came to Norportcho not having no address at all, but I was looking for a house near a ra...a large ravine. And I came across a...Norportcho;s not such big town, and I found a house near a ravine. I was dressed in a Polish soldiers uniform. I walked into that house and I asked if in that house...the lady which opened the door...if a family named \_\_\_\_ lives here. She said, "What?" They had different names. "We don't know anything." In the meantime, I heard the voice of my mother in the other room. I pushed that lady in aside, and I knocked...I pushed the door and I came in. And here my mother, my father, and my sister. I embraced them. We cried. We talked very little. The only thing which my mother kept while kissing me kept tell me. Remember we are Christians. Don't say anything. Who we are. This was 3 to 4 days after liberation. They were afraid to admit that they are Jews because they did not know maybe the frontier will move back and forth. Anyway, I found them. The next day I brought my father back to Warsaw. Two days later I brought my mother and my sister and the lady which was with them together and I went into Warsaw and I went to the hiding place...the house where we used to hide the \_\_\_\_ of Juliana Larige. That was not destroyed. I felt...I did not see Juliana Lariage because she left with another group someplace to Germany. But I felt that this is place I can open the door and say that am I staying here because I knew where it is. This was \_\_\_\_\_ 44, or 42 in Warsaw. And we opened the house there, and this became the first nuptials of the first Jews coming back to Warsaw. And my mother immediately the first day...my father went out and he bought a sack of potatoes and there was a big kettle where they used to boil laundry and my mother

used to peel the potatoes all day and cook and everybody who walked in just got the soup. The potato soup, a place to warm up. And I remember there the first week the people were sleeping on the floors. We did not have beds. Some maybe a hundred or more people, whoever came to the city. Later on, the next building, the Jewish committee was created. Maybe...I don't know if I was coincidental or not, but the next building Targowa 40, the Jewish Committee was created. And...uh...my father, I don't know, immediately went to Lublin...uh...which was liberated before and I was not with him, but I recall that he told me how he met his brother, his youngest brother. He met with him on the street in...in Lublin. They just came across each other on the street. They embraced, but for an hour they cried together. None of them asked who's alive. My uncle later told me that...uh...the story how he met with my father. That he says, "Don't you ask me who's alive?" He says, "Why should I ask you. I think everybody is dead." So he told him, "My wife is alive." And he told him, "My wife is alive." They were even afraid to tell if somebody is alive and ask about anybody else. Naturally, in 2 or 3 days later, my father came back to Warsaw and...uh...immediately got...engaged himself in the public work and then making a living, buying, selling, whatever he did and that's... A week later my uncle came to me and says, "Listen. I want you to do me a favor. You are with Vladka. We know everything. But father insists on the Huppah. And I spoke with Vladka, and she said, "Why not?" I think that was 10 days after liberation or 8 days in that room where we were hiding, we had a million of people. I think it was the first Huppah in Warsaw after the war. I am trying to tell you things of personal interest, but at the same time I am avoiding to tell you things of our involvement in the types of happenings of others. I spent a life with Vladka together in...as a Christian boy....involved, endangering life, never thinking that we are endangering in work with others. There were many people in the underground. The majority of the people in the underground which did the work what we were doing is sometimes maybe much more heroic of what I have to tell you, did not survive. They perished, not only by being Jews, but by helping others to survive. I don't know if history will do justice, that

those couriers, those young fighters will be remembered. People usually talk of those who survived, but our survival was not built because we were smarter. Our survival was not built that we were more capable. Everything what happened to us was just coincidental. It was sheer luck, sometimes more than your own intuition. It was sheer luck of situations we went through. But I would like to leave a legacy is to leave a legacy of those who did not survive. They are always forgotten. There are many people alive today which survived because others cared for them, and mainly the others were the Jewish boys and Jewish girls...the majority of them did not make it. And I hope...we don't even have the pictures of all of these people. We did not even have the records. We don't have the records of even...I know that in the \_\_\_\_\_ and Dick and Sylvia and others, were trying to put together the names of those who were involved, of those who fight...fought, of those who did not think about the dangers they are gotten involved, but even this is not completed. We don't remember all the names. So the museum which is being built, I hope will, through some way, find a way of remembering the...those...the unknown names, the unknown members of the underground, the unknown young people who paid the...with their lives to help others.

Q:Okay. Let's go back a little bit. This was very important and very, very significant, moving. Let's go back a little bit and touch on a couple of things. Ben, the one thing you didn't give us at all is what life was like in the ghetto when you were in the ghetto way back when.

A: Michael, you are with me 10 years. In the 10 years, I told you many stories. I was trying through you to bring back and you knew...you heard a lot, but it's impossible to speak about everything and much more difficult is to describe everything. There are scenes which are in my mind which I am not able to describe. I am too poor with my language to be able to do it, but I was trying. You ask me about the life in the ghetto.

Q:In the Warsaw ghetto.

A: In the Warsaw Ghetto. The Warsaw ghetto is only a symbol. There were other ghettos and there people were sacrificing lives in other ghettos too. There were concentration camp. But the Warsaw ghetto will be remembered for many reasons because Warsaw represents like the symbols for others. Warsaw, I think, today life, especially Jewish life, is very organized. I wish it could have been organized like this the years when we were there. The war would be different. Jewish life was organized to such an extent that every house had their own committee. And we cared for each other. We had no means, but we shared. We were living under constant terror and more...more important, we were living under constant feeling of hunger and helplessness. We were living in a world abandoned by the entire world, by neighbors. We could have looked into the windows of our neighbors through the wall and our neighbors could have looked into the ghetto. But...uh...there was very little reaction. What was the aim of the creation of the ghetto. Today, I start to understand this. I did not understand this in those years. The other was the concentration, a gathering of...ingathering of the victims under the conditions of making them...uh...impossible to live, deprived of everything. Everything what we did in the ghetto was illegal. Eating bread, which was rationed, was illegal. Beside breathing, if you could, everything was illegal. Schools were closed. Children lost their parents. around the ghetto hungry without any shelters, dirty. We were suffering of that dirt. Everything was lice were crawling about people on the street. You could have seen not...not with the naked eye. You could have seen more lice on the people than you could have seen the clawing. All this was in preparation to give us a slow death. But this was not enough...not at first enough. But in spite of everything, we behaved more humane than anybody could have even thought about this. We had culture events by the hundreds and thousands in those days. Each house had a culture director, not director, a culture person in charge. When we had to stay indoors, we had every night prepared a different lecture. Some of them from well prepared speakers, but most of them by young people. So this was not a life, you know, of allowing to ourself just

to disintegrate or to be brought down to the...to the way the Germans wanted us. But it was done with calculation. Today we know the way we were treated in the Warsaw ghetto, people were treated not a ghetto, there was a pattern. Nothing was done in the ghettos by just by the will of the commander which came. He came with a text book and with instructions how to create Judenrat, how to create ghetto, how to create the rationing, how to create the labor camps. Everything was well \_\_\_\_\_. So when we speak about the ghettos, we should also remember the way the people, not only militarily opposed them, which is important, but the spiritual resistance. In my building was the \_\_\_\_\_ Rabbi, a very, very lone Rabbi. He was in hiding. And I was given the responsibility, because I was the secretary of the house committee to make sure that nobody knows that he lives there, but to make sure that food is being delivered to him. But he has his disciplines, even with those terrible situations, I cannot forget they used to come. And from their portions of bread to bring the bread for the Rabbi. That the Rabbi should be not hungry. The devotion to the Rabbi. He perished later in a concentration camp. Now...uh...from the point of view of getting information.

Q: We're going to...I am going to have to break here.

### **Conclusion of Interview.**