

My name is Dr. Sidney Langer, and I'm the director of the Oral History Project of the Holocaust Studies Resource Center at Kean college of New Jersey. I'm very pleased that Mr. Sam Halpern, who presently resides in Hillside, New Jersey, has consented to come to the college today and talk about some of his insights and memories into the period of the Holocaust. Thank you very much, Mr. Halpern, for coming.

Thank you, Dr. Langer, for inviting me, and I'll be glad to tell you the story the way I saw it with your permission. Would you mind to asking a question--

Sure. Can you tell me a little bit about where you were born, when you were born, about your family, your town?

I was born in a town called Chorostkow. This is in the eastern part of Poland, about 15 kilometers from the Russian border already. Chorostkow was a town for about 6,000 people, where we had about 2,000 Jews, 2,000 Poles, and 2,000 Ukrainians. The Jewish people did live in the center of the town. Most of them were involved in business. Some of them worked in little small factories. Very few, but there were a few that worked on the land, too.

The Polish and the Ukrainian people, most of them were farmers. They lived around the city. Till the war--

What year were you born? In 19--

I was born July the 20, 1920.

1920.

I remember very well life before the war. As you know, the war broke out in 1939. I was 19 years old already. I went to school. I went to cheder, had my bar mitzvah in town. And I had my secular education. And of course, I helped my father in business in the same town till 1939.

What business was your father in?

My father had a grocery store, and he also was doing business by buying from the farmers the wheat, all kind of corn and rye. And the farmers is the bank to our-- what do you call this? Such a little warehouse. And we used to buy from the farmers the grain, and we used to take it over to the railroad station, and they send it away to the bigger cities.

What was the Jewish community life like in the town that you were born in?

Our town, and I would say most of the towns in the eastern part of Europe, lived like in a ghetto. The only part what we had with non-Jewish people were in public school or business. But social life-- we were Jews with Jews together, and very Orthodox town. Most of the people prayed three times a day. They went to the synagogue three times a day.

They were kosher, most of the people. Shabbat-- every store was closed. You really felt-- I don't see any place today in the world-- not in America, not even Israel-- where completely [INAUDIBLE] lived the way the town-- in our town did live till 1939.

Did you yourself belong to any Jewish organizations, Jewish youth groups?

My father was a Hasid, a tokdovar? Hasid and the beard and payos very, very orthodox. And my mother, of course, also was very orthodox. We-- the children-- we were original four boys, but one of them passed away in 1929. So we were three, myself and two other brothers.

You were the--

I was the youngest.

The youngest.

My older brother, [Personal name] was killed by the Germans. And my middle brother, Arie is with me, thank God. He is right here, lives in Union. And I live in-- we're the two survivors from the entire family.

You mentioned before that there was a social distance between the Jewish population and the non-Jewish population.

Because we were very friendly, but we didn't go to their parties. They didn't come to our parties. We didn't go to their weddings. They didn't come time our weddings.

This was, in most cases, probably 99% of this. There were exceptional cases. But we had very good friends non-Jewish people in business, which, later on, hopefully, you're going to ask me the question-- we'll come to this. I'll tell you. In the end, I had people help me to run-- while I run away from concentration camp, people helped me.

So the very vibrant Jewish community that you lived in was --

Yes, we had, in our town, 11 different synagogues. And we had 10 different Zionist organization. I belong to-- my brother and my older brother-- to an organization called [INAUDIBLE]. This was the middle of the road, not too right and not too left, the middle of the road Zionist organization.

And how old were you when you were active in this organization?

I started when I was right after bar mitzvah. Maybe even before bar mitzvah, I probably start. Probably, I started before bar mitzvah to go to this organization.

What were some of the activities that the organization was involved in?

We used to come together every day, and if, during the day, we didn't have time, it was in the evening. Definitely Shabbat. After davening and after the main seudah we met. We discussed Israel a lot. They taught us Palestinographia They taught us Hebrew. We discussed, how can we go to Israel? How can we get our own state in Israel?

How can we-- in that time, Zionism was very, very in a high level. This was-- we're talking in the '30s were not-- still Bialek, Hayim Nahman Bialek still was alive, and it was not too long ago since Herzl passed away-- Zionism about that time at the peak, especially in Poland.

Can you describe some of the changes that took place in your town when Hitler came to power in Europe?

Yes, -- Till 1939, as I said before, we were-- I'm going to talk about our own family. We were in business, and we were-- we weren't rich, but we weren't poor. My father made a comfortable living. We still were able to help some poor people. And most of the people in town-- with the exception of some of the few rich one and a few very poor one, but most of the people in town did make a living.

And in 1939, when the war broke out, when Hitler attacked Poland, somehow our part of Poland-- there was a pact between Molotov and Ribbentrop. And Berlin, as the part of Poland where we used to live, Russia should take. And the other part, Germany took over. So and the result is about 40% of Poland, in 1939, the Russian took over. And 60% of Poland, Germany took over. The part of my town, Chorostkow, including quite a many other towns, did come in under Russia.

And immediately, we saw a tremendous big change. Every businessman had to give up their business. Very big business people were taken away from Russia to Siberia Luckily, we were not such a big business people. So we were able to liquidate our business, and we went to work for the government.

And I and my older brothers became an accountant in a factory of making spirit My second brother, which is now with

me here in the States, became an accountant in a flour mill. And I became manager of a factory of-- an assistant manager in the beginning, and later a manager of a factory which was making spirit.

There, in Russia, this very important item, because they used it not only for drinking. They used this for to-- they used to send-- 90% of their product they used to send to near Moscow in a factory to make rubber. And this is, therefore, a very important item.

So you were 19 years old then in 1939?

Right.

And how long did you work in this particular position that you're describing?

About a year and a half, till the Germans came in 1941.

Now, were you with your family during this period of time from 1939 to 1940?

Yes, everybody was home. And of course, in 1941-- this was in July '41 when Hitler attacked Russia. They start to bomb most of the cities and including our own city. That time, they bombed only the railroad station. And it took maybe a week to 10 days. They came-- the German army came into our town. And this was when hell broke loose.

Were you aware of what was happening in, for example, the German held part of Poland between 1939 and 1941? Was there any contact?

Well, not enough. There was small contacts. We know, as Hitler does not like Jews, because he openly said. He spoke on the radio. We listened to the radio.

But people didn't believe. People thought maybe it was only propaganda. Maybe will go away. Maybe he wouldn't do things what he says. Because there were possibility to run away with the Russian army in 1941, quite a few from our town did ran away.

But I felt that I wasn't a communist, and I have nothing what to fear. Why should I run with the Russian army? I did help us. I didn't want to leave my parents. My parents didn't like to go with the communist. And therefore, I stay at home.

In our town, as I said before, we had 2,000 people, over 2,000 Jewish people. There was maybe 20 to 25 ran away to Russia. The rest of them stood.

And during this period between 1939 and 1941, where were you living?

I lived home. We still--

Was there a ghetto yet in the city?

Not with the Russian. The ghetto became when the Germans came in. I would like to mention, if I may go back, as the Jews in town had-- at this particular town, Chorostkow, had very great rabbi, so once a very great rabbi, [Personal name] the great rabbi, Rappaport, and many other great people. We have people who became leaders in Israel, as Moshe Epstein, very big leader. There are several other.

We had a good friend of mine, who went to school with me even. He was a minister of-- building Minister Abraham Ofer. He came from our town because Zionism and Hasidism was, in our town, very popular. Most of the older generations like my father were Hasidim, but the younger generation became Zionist.

I was going to ask you whether there was any conflict between yourself and your father, for example, when it came to

[INAUDIBLE].

No, my father, although he was a Hasid, but he loved Israel. And I respect him, and he respect me. And we had no conflict. We were all-- Friday night, we were singing, first, the zamirish -- with my father, the Hasidic [INAUDIBLE]. And later on, we were singing the Hebrew songs, the modern songs of Israel.

That's very interesting. So in 1941, do you recall the day when the Nazis entered into your town?

Yes, I'll never forget. This was probably-- I know that the war start the 22nd of July. They came. I think the 1st of August or the 2nd of August they came to our town. And this day, I'll always remember.

They came in and they killed, in one day, 34 people. They came in, and they just asked where the Jews living. There was no problem. This was, as I said before, Jews lived-- most in every house in the center of the town were Jews.

So they came in, and they asked, and people showed them where Jews lived. And they killed them the first day they came in. I don't think it was even SS. It was probably just the storm troopers.

They came in, and they killed many of my friends. One of them, his name was Yitzak Goldfuss, and he was a good friend, he's a brother-in-law of my brother. He just passed away several years ago, but he came to Elizabeth, and he was a close friend of our family. Therefore, I'd like to mention about him. They came in and they killed his father, his mother, his wife, his son, and his daughter. He himself somehow in the last minute ran away.

There was no warning whatsoever --

No warning. They just came in and they shot 34 people in one day. This was the day they came in. Without any questions, without any why, why did it only-- they were shot because they were Jews. This day I'll always remember as one of the terrible days in our town.

The entire town, of course, entire Jewish community was aware immediately of what had taken place?

Of course, everybody we buried. The next day we had to go and bury those people. And everybody know it what Hitler is but it was too late. At this time, we couldn't run away already.

But that was the first time that it was really became--

[INAUDIBLE]

--in your mind concretized that, in fact, the Jews were going to be annihilated.

Trouble. We saw as what Hitler said he means. We right way felt that he probably was going to kill us. Everybody. Before the established government, this was in the day while they were passing by the town.

Later on, they start to establish the government. The army went away from the town. There's only several Germans left, and the Ukrainian took over the government under the leadership of the Germans, SS.

The next Saturday, while Jewish people were going to the synagogues, they came out on horses and called every Jewish man should come to the town hall. Most of the people did go, and I was about to go with my brother, but my mother [INAUDIBLE] told us, don't go. Why don't you hide? And we went on the right and the attic, and we were hidden, and we saw what they are doing.

They took those people that did come to the center of the town. And later on, they took them to the town hall. They were beating them tremendous over their heads, over their body, and they made them fall down to the mud, which was they are not too far. And they were kept maybe for four or five hours, and they made them run.

They were running some of them on horses, some of them just on that. but made them run over the town for several kilometers until they practically all fell down. And later on, they let them go. That day nobody was killed in our town. However, they beat them up tremendous. This was the first Saturday--

After.

--after the German army came to our town.

Was there any attempt made, you said before, at trying to escape by other members of the community?

After Hitler came in, there was no way to escape. Before, the Russians even warned us. I worked in a job, as I mentioned before, in a factory, which was making spirit, and the Russians warned us. They told us, why don't you go with us?

Some young boys and even a few girls did run away, but not too many. Very few. But the rest of us didn't want to go because we felt, why should we go with communism? There's nothing wrong to stay with Germans. Nobody believed such a tragedy can happen.

Right. I mean, at that time, it was--

At that time.

--impossible to comprehend.

This was too late already. When they came in, there was no way to run away.

What happened, then, after that particular day you were describing when the men were asked to come to the town hall?

After the next day, they start to organize the ghetto, and they made the Jewish people come from little towns, which were smaller than ours, from villages, Jewish small villages, and Jewish from the streets. They lived far away outside the city. They brought them to the center, and they forbid to do business with the Gentile people.

They made everybody put an our white bandaid with a blue-- right banded with a blue star. And anybody that did go out of the ghetto without the-- if we did go out, could be shot. And even in the ghetto, you had to have the bandaid. Anybody was trying maybe to go out without the bandaid was immediately arrested and could be shot, too.

How large was the ghetto? How many people would you estimate were living there?

The ghetto at that time came in another 500 people.

Another 500.

[INAUDIBLE] 2,000 our own, another 500 from little villages and from little towns.

Who was guarding the ghetto? Can you sort of describe--

Mostly Ukrainian, and they also made some-- they organized Judenrat where they told the Jews will be able to have to take care in their own affairs by themselves. But yet the Judenrat had very little rights. The reason they organized them, they should help them in the beginning-- they still didn't kill, but they made the young people go to very hard work.

And also they needed-- like in the beginning-- they needed clothes. So used to come around to the head of the Judenrat. I need today 500 shirts, or I need today 200 suits. I need today pillows. We need today quilts.

And they used to come around every day, and this people from the Judenrat had to give it to them, or so much [? textile

?] Later on, they came around. They need gold. Later on, they came around. They need silver.

Later on, they came around, they need fur Jew weren't allowed to have no fur. Everybody had any fur Whether expensive, whether even cheap fur had to give it up. Jewish people are not allowed to have it.

And we were working very hard. They claimed, if people are going to work hard, these are the people that are going to stay. The ones who wouldn't work hard, they will take away.

And of course, my brother and I, now we start to work, and there was a big farm along-- belonged to the-- before the war, to a big Polish landowner. But during the war, the government took it over, and we worked on this farm. This is known as a [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], and until March--

So you would leave the ghetto during the day and go to the farm.

Early in the morning, at 4 o'clock, I used to go already. Go to the farm.

How far away was the farm from the ghetto?

About two kilometers. Not too far.

Were there guards who were watching you from the ghetto to the farm?

Yeah. We had to go to work. I didn't go by myself. There were many people who were working. Most of the young people were going to work.

Some people went to work to the railroad station. Some people went to work to chop stone. All kind of heavy work, and everybody went to work. They paid us no money, but they gave us some food for this. The market in our town was usually the market day Monday, which was the big market day, and every day for a few hours, what you were able to buy certain items in the normal time, but during the Hitler time, Gentiles weren't allowed to come in to the market together with Jews. So actually we weren't allowed to mingle with the non-Jewish people, and you weren't allowed to buy anything.

You were talking about the Judenrat before.

Yes.

How were the members of the Judenrat selected?

Well, they ask who speaks good German. There were some people that were in the German First World War. Some people went to German schools, and they said the people they start to work. They didn't know in the beginning what they'll make them do. The beginning, people thought this was going to be a job like any other job, maybe a little bit easier job.

What was the attitude that you had or that other members of the Jewish community had toward the members of the Judenrat?

No, we didn't like them too much because it is natural. You don't like somebody. They came around to tell me come to work, and I didn't like to go to work. We didn't like them, but come to think about it, they had to do their job.

Did you realize at the time that they had no other choice?

Yes, but for example, I was asked to belong to the Judenrat, and I didn't want to. I couldn't, and I said, I will go and ask my friend to go to work. I'd rather go to work for myself, and I wouldn't do this. Some of them liked it-- to do this. I would assume they didn't know what will happen later.

How many members were there? Do you have any idea?

In our town, the entire Judenrat must be maybe 30 to 40 people.

About 30 or 40. What was the Jewish community life like in the ghetto?

Of course, very bad, because there was a tremendous shortage in food. You had to sneak in some time at nighttime, some time to endanger your life to go out of the ghetto and to deal with the Gentile people to give them certain clothes, to give them certain money, to give them something, whatever other things you have to change for food.

This is the only means or way we were able to exist. They gave everybody during the ghetto time about 20 deca of bread. 20 deca is going to be like a half a pound of bread, a little less than a half a pound of bread daily. But no meat, no other meals. They gave us sometimes beans, so they didn't give you bread. But the equivalent of about half a pound of bread daily.

Or sometimes they give you [INAUDIBLE] bread. Sometimes they give you flour instead of this. Sometimes they give you wheat instead of this. Just fill it out. If they gave you-- for example, for a family of five, they give you 1 kilo of flour. So you already figured out how much you can get, and so you didn't get the next day. There was very tremendous shortage of food.

Were there various Jewish organizations in the ghetto?

My father helped to organize a Jewish kitchen, he and several other members of the town, for very poor people. He couldn't even-- and sick people, they couldn't get out of their houses. So he helped to organize a kitchen and a kitchen we made in one of the shuls. Shul was closed up and they made a kitchen where people are able to come.

The shul was closed up?

Yes, this shul-- all the shuls were closed up. When Hitler came around, all the shuls were closed. Cause, we didn't, We weren't allowed to daven in shuls. And the people used to come and get a little bit soup and a piece of bread, but if they got the soup and the bread in the kitchen, they could not get home already

Now, the shuls, of course, were closed in the ghetto, but were the men coming together, for example, for a minyan while living in the ghetto? I On Shabos.

Yes. They used to do this, but in a very hidden way-- early in the morning, sometimes late at night. They're smuggling through from one house to the other, because as I said before, there weren't too many Germans in our town, but mostly the Ukrainian police watched us. And we were-- if they caught somebody, usually got a beating, and sometimes taken away. So this was still I'm talking in the beginning times.

Were there any underground organizations within the ghetto walls?

Not because this-- our ghetto was liquidated earlier. Our ghetto was liquidated in Sukkos is October. October '42 our ghetto was liquidated. So there was no way, because Hitler still was, at that time, very, very strong. And we were talking about it, about what to do, maybe to go to certain forest, but we did not organize ourselves to make some kind of uprising.

There were Jewish police in the ghetto.

The Jewish-- they call themselves Ordnungsdienst. They had such a bandaid, and you wore a hat, but in civilian clothes. Some of them were very nice, and some of them were very bad. --

And there were a number of aktions in the ghetto.

In the beginning, their function was only to get Jewish boys to work. This was their function. Later on, there came problems to get people to a concentration camp, to get people-- as we going to discuss later-- this-- well I told you about the ghetto, it was still in the first months.

Exactly.

Now later on, for example, while I was working on the farm in 19-- this was March 19, 1942. There was a very big snowstorm and the road from the city to the railroad was black with snow. So they came up, and they took 84 boys. We were 84 boys from our town, and they took us. They told everybody away from the work from the farm, and everybody should take a shovel to help them to clean the snow because the trucks couldn't go through the railroad station.

We thought this is really what they mean. While we start to work on the road, which was probably about three kilometers from the town to the station, the railroad station, and while we start to work we work maybe like a half hour. All of a sudden we are surrounded with the SS and additional Ukrainian police, and they told us to throw away the shovels, and they took us to-- we had to run from Chorostkow to Kopychyntsi.

How far was that?

This is about 10 kilometers. And later on, in Kopychyntsi we met peoples from several other towns already where they grabbed. Later on, another 15 to 18 kilometers to a bigger city called Chortkov. And in Chortkov, this was-- it took us a long time, too, because we were walking and running.

And several people tried to run away. They were shot immediately. Nobody could run away. Several people were shot in the same day if somebody started to go away.

And while we came in, it was already dark. This must be when they caught us, must be around 11:00 in Chorostkow. Till we came to Chortkov, it must be about, in that time, in the wintertime, maybe 5, 6 o'clock. It was already dark. So the snow was heavy snows, but we had to run had to run, schnell anybody. Several people were killed, as I said before, when they tried to run away. And we came there.

There were several thousand people already from different [INAUDIBLE]. From that town of Closter, from that town of [? Chojnice, ?] from Chortkov, Kopychyntsi, Zhovkva ?, Probizhna, from many-- every village. Wherever Jews were living, they brought in people and we were already several thousand people. And they start to-- two lines of police and SS stood on the right side and the left side, and everybody went through had to be counted. But in order to be counted, they have to hit us over the head.

And if somebody want to outsmart them and put away their hat. They just wanted that they should get hit over the shoulder. So they had to go back, and later on, you got over the head anyhow. So the best thing was all ready to go through. And most of us were bleeding. They were hitting with a tremendous, strong, heavy stick. So most of us, when they hit us once, blood had to come out. Finally, till we came into this jail, took several hours.

All of a sudden, I find myself in the jail, where maybe has room, maybe for 20, 30 people. We find ourselves 120 people staying like soldiers, just squeezed in the rooms, locked in. And of course, no food the first night. The morning, somebody came around to count us and with the same method. Everybody had to get a stick over the head. This is the way you counted one, two, three. And if somebody again want to outsmart them, he had to come back.

The first day, the second day, and the third day, no food, no water. Just no place where I could lay down, where I could just sit down. Just stand.

You were-- at that time, you were about 23.

I was that time 21 years. This was-- no, it was almost 22.



22.

This was March the 19, or March the 20 in '42, and I was born, as I said, in 1920. I was almost 22 years old. Thank God I was strong enough, and I guess when people suffer, they're maybe even getting stronger, too. But we thought that time as this is going to be our end. They wouldn't give us any food for another few days. We'll be out. By the middle of the day--

And for those three days, you stayed inside the prison.

Inside the prison, and they only came around to count us. But no food and no water. On the third day, at 1 or 2 o'clock in the day, they opened up the door, and they start to take us to our concentration camp. But while the-- [INAUDIBLE] on the road right and the open big room when we left the small rooms, there was some water, and there was some breads.

Can you imagine? People didn't eat for three days. People got wild to grab a little bit of water. But no-- with no way-- just with the hands to grab a little bit of water or to grab a piece of bread.

Sam, during those three days, I mean, was there--

Was no, nothing.

No, I understand. Was there any fighting? I mean, 150 people together.

120 people in a room.

120 people.

and every room has-- as I said before, there were several thousand of us, because they brought, but in my room, was 120 room. I remember exactly.

And what kind of--

We just thought--

--discussions were taking place?

No discussions inside, most of us said Shema Israel, and we thought that this is already the end, because they wouldn't give us-- if they wouldn't give us another two, three days-- I'm not a doctor. I don't think how long a human being can live without food, but most of us were very, very weak. We felt as if we wouldn't be able to stay longer. We thought that this-- that's it. This is going to be a death of hunger.

You know, just to go back for one second, I mean, before this happened, were you aware when you were in the ghetto of what was happening in other parts of Europe? Were you aware of the concentration camps? Do you just--

They told us at home. As the people are going to work, because it is war, and you have to have work, but the conditions are not maybe Hilton conditions. But you work and you get food, and we were used to this. When they called to go to work, I understood. All right, I'm a young man. It's a war. I have to go to work. As long as I get food, I would've settled for this.

There was no perception, for example, that this was a war being waged against the Jews, for example.

No, no. Nobody-- this was still in the beginning of '42. This is still in the beginning. We know that Hitler doesn't like us, but whether he wants to wipe us out completely-- still, in that time, we still didn't believe it. It is hard to believe. This is a fact that people always-- when they're sick, they don't want to believe that they're going to die. They always think maybe some cure is going to come is going to cure them.

The same was with us. We hope maybe he'll change his mind. We're going to be good workers. Maybe. Some of the people thought so, and nobody wants to believe us. they're definitely going to kill us, everyone of us.

So then you were--

Then finally we came to the railroad station, and the railroad station we saw big wagons, the load usually pigs, or horses, or cows. And there was no steps, and must be-- no step. To go up from the road to the wagon must be about five, six foot, so they made out of people steps. They just made people lay down, and people walked on top on people, because-- can you imagine as the wagon is so high? And so they just made from people steps, and we walked up.

Do you remember the date?

Yes. This was exactly the 22nd of March, 1942. I remember it was third day when they caught us. That day they're loading in one of those wagons also about 125 to 130 people. I don't know exactly, because they didn't count us. I was a little bit more than in the regular room. We came in to this, and they locked us up the same way they lock--

You had no idea where they were taking you.

Where they were taking us. No, no idea.

Did you think that they were taking you to your death?

I thought so, yes. And we tried to look, how can we run out? But they locked the doors, and it was impossible to go away. We were planning. Some of us thought they're taking us to death. Some of us thought they're taking us to work. So there wasn't a sure death. When they locked us up from outside, and the police watched tremendous [INAUDIBLE] every [INAUDIBLE] and several Ukrainian police or SS with bayonets and rifles stood. And they start to go with us.

Of course, there were no sanitary-- no food again, and no sanitary conditions at all. Can you imagine people-- 125 to 130 people in one wagon and no toilet facilities? But this is the way, in fact, it happened. We were going. We came to-- from our town, we came early in the morning. We came to a city called Tarnopol.

Tarnopol.

This was the biggest city in eastern part of Poland. In Tarnopol, we looked out through certain small places where it was possible. We noticed we were in Tarnopol. We did hope maybe they're going to let us-- and somehow, they opened up the door a little bit. When they opened up the door, we thought maybe they're going to let us out. Instead of letting us out, they just spilled water on us, and [INAUDIBLE], and closed the door.

And they kept us for hours and hours in this railroad station, Tarnopol, until they took us to the spot where we came to concentration camp called Kamionka. Kamionka, they unloaded, and they start to holler [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] and beating us tremendous. They yet-- although we were hungry, we were tired-- yet they want us to walk as soldiers. Everybody should walk straight, only four in the line. And if, God forbid, somebody didn't walk straight the way they wanted, they immediately got a tremendous beating. This took several hours until finally we reached the place of the camp.

And there were no other-- your brothers were not with you at this time.

No, I had many of friends-- as I said before, 84 from my own town. Most of them were my friends. I know everybody, but most of them are very close friends, whether I went with him to cheder, or to school, or something. I know him in business or sometimes in the Zionist organization, or just plain some of them were older [INAUDIBLE] this Mr. Goldfuss, what I mentioned, which he passed away.

He was much older than I. He was born in 1902, which is 18 years old older than I am. I was born in 1920. He was with

me also that time. Although they took away-- they killed his father, and mother, and wife, and son, and daughter, but he worked with me that time in order not to be on the farm, and he was caught with us by the snow. And he was with me there, too.

We came to camp, and we found already there some people. They were before us. At home, every Jew had to wear a white band with a blue star. There, everybody wore a yellow star in the front and a yellow star in the back. And when again, by walking from the railroad, tremendous beating and suffering. And no food.

When we stood in line, they came over, and they told us everybody must give his watches, his rings, his money. He must give away. And if you wouldn't give away, he's going to be shot. And of course, everybody took down whatever we had. We throw it into their basket.

And we were fenced in-- double fenced. But this still was March. In Europe in March, you still find some snow by the fences, because for days and days, we didn't have any food, any water. One of the fellas, he was from our neighbor town, Kopychyntsi which wasn't too far. It was very close He used to bend down, and he took a little bit snow just to eat it. Immediately, he was shot, and they kept him for three days to show us, if anybody will not listen, immediately is going to be shot.

And in camp, they start to complete worse life than even the ghettos. Because in the ghettos, we worked hard, but we still came home to our own bed, our own room. There we slept in places close, three lines-- one line, another line, another line, close. Everybody had as much room then he can-- this is for one man. For example, in a place like over here is probably at least three or four fellas. If one wanted to turn around, everybody had to turn around.

I cannot imagine if a normal human being in a free country, in America, can even imagine this, but this is a fact. The way-- this didn't happen 1,000 years ago. It happened-- but people were already civilized. We thought that time a civilization is very high.

Of course, it was done by the most civilized people in Europe, but German people thought that they are smarter than anybody else, more civilized than anybody else.

And they said the time when they start to give us-- 4 o'clock in the morning, they woke us up. We stood till about 6:30 outside. During the time, everybody had to stay in the line for an hour at least to get a little bit, supposedly black coffee, but the coffee wasn't coffee at all. It was some kind of grain-- burnt grain water.

But this was so that we didn't have in our camp for three months any water at all, because there was no way how-- no well, no way to get water. So water, they used to-- some of the fellows with the policeman used to go three miles to a well to bring the water. So they didn't give us water to drink and didn't give us water for washing at all.

I remember, for the first three months, the only way to wash sometime-- I worked by the snow. I used to wash myself with a little bit of snow in the face. Most cases, in the morning, I took this little bit of coffee, a little bit to drink, and the rest I washed my face a little bit. I should look a little bit human being.

Yet you wanted to look good. It was very important to be shaved. It was very important to look good, because if anybody didn't look good, immediately was recognized as he wouldn't be able to work long, so immediately he was shot.

We were working. I worked-- most of the time, I worked by [NON-ENGLISH]. This is known as what they put in certain--

The rock quarry.

You know [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] means that the--

To quarry?

No, no. In the rocks, they make the special ammunition to blast stuff. To put the blast in the blast stone, we have to lift every stone. Or I worked under the [NON-ENGLISH] means to build the roads, or I build by the railroad station, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH].

Now, they were all very tough work. We were working every day. We worked about 10 hours, I would say, at least. And Sunday was a shorter day. We worked till about 2 o'clock.

[INAUDIBLE] we have to get up 4 o'clock in the morning. We used to come back very late. Probably about 8 o'clock, at least, we used to come back. There we worked under the supervision of the Ukrainian police and Germans, which were from the, on the SS. Some of them were German. Other SS, too. [INAUDIBLE] German just the Wehrmacht. They were a little bit nicer, but the SS, of course, was always the toughest.

The food, they used to give us a little bit of coffee in the morning. And in the evening, they came back. They give us a piece of bread and a little bit of soup. The soup was mostly like spoiled cabbage, spoiled beets. Sometimes, if a horse died, so they took the-- they gave us some horse meat sometimes, which I, by the way, never could eat it.

It was terrible conditions, and this was going on for a few weeks until our parents, still were home, were able to find out where we are, and they start to send, once in a week, sometimes once in two weeks, certain packages to certain people, which did help us out.

How were your parents able to find out where you were?

The people from the Judenrat somehow tried to find out. And this wasn't too far away from home, by the way.

Yeah, how many kilometers approximately was it?

This was between 40 to 50 kilometers from home.

OK. I think we'll take a few minutes break. OK?

OK, fine.