

Good morning. I am Joseph Preil, director of the Holocaust Resource Center here at King College of New Jersey. Today, Thursday, September 23, 1923-- September 23, 1993, two days before Yom Kippur, we are privileged to have with us a guest, Mr. Jack Spiegel, who has been kind enough to volunteer to come down and tell us about his experiences during World War II, beginning in his home country, his native country, of Poland.

At the outset, Mr. Spiegel, you were able to get a picture of your family before the war. You want to tell us about this picture?

This picture was made about 70 years ago, almost 70 years ago.

70 years ago, in the 1920s?

In the '20s, yeah. We was in a bungalow in [PLACE NAME], in Poland. We made that picture. And it was sent to my grandparents, to the United States. That's why I have that picture now.

Which grandparents were here?

From my mother's side, my mother's parents.

Your maternal grandparents were here.

Yeah.

And do you want to tell us who the people are in the picture?

Yeah. The first is my older brothers from me, [PERSONAL NAME]

What should we do? Shall we go from my left to right?

Yeah, from your left to right. Or we could--

That would be over here.

Yes. Then is my father sitting there. After that, standing, is my sister. After my sister is the oldest sister.

The first sister, her name was?

Goldarifka.

Goldarifka. And then the second sister?

Manya.

Manya. And how are they in age?

The age, one was, at that time, four years. Manya was about eight years, nine years. After my mother, she was younger time. And my older brother was--

What's his name?

Haskel David. David.

Haskel David.

David, he was, at that time, 12 years old, my figure.

Was he the oldest?

He was the oldest, yeah. And then my younger sister.

What was her name?

Her name was Goldarifka. But the other Goldarifka died. She was not there. But after that, in 1931, was born another--

Girl.

--girl. She was Esetova, Esetova in 1931. So we was always six children-- three girls and three brothers. So that's the picture.

All right. It looks like a well-to-do family. Am I correct?

Yeah, we was a middle-class family. My father was in business-- import/export food from all over the world. He was very well.

And it was offered by my grandparents to come to the United States, immigrate, because the whole family was here. Brothers and sisters, my mother's, was here. He refused to come because he was well-off and said, what am I going to do in the United States? I don't know the language. I've no trade. I'm a business--

You're moving us ahead. You're in the 1930s when this was going on, right? Should you come to the United States or not?

No, that was--

In the 1920s even?

In the beginning of the 1930s, yeah.

When did your grandparents come here?

Oh, they come here about in the '10s, '15 or something like that.

Very early. They were one of the first one's to come.

Yeah. Before them come a brother, a son, my mother's brother. He was very young. And a cantor came to Poland to have a concert. So he needed children in a choir. And my uncle, he was very good. He was at that time, 10, 12 years. He was very good to sing.

And he fell in love with my uncle. And there was nine children. And he convinced the grandparents to let them take that child with him to United States. So he come to the United States. And he was singing with him till he became a cantor. His name was Yossele Shlisky. He's very famous.

That's your uncle?

Yeah, uncle. Now, what was the name of the cantor who brought him to the United States? Do you remember that?

I don't know. But he was so well-off, he started bringing--

The family.

--the parents, then a brother, then sisters, and so. Only my mother, she was the oldest in the family, she was staying because my father didn't-- he was not ready to go to the United States.

I see. All right, we'll put this away now. I want to get some facts straight with you.

Yeah.

Firstly, where and when were you born?

I born in Łódź.

In Łódź.

Yeah, in Poland.

Yes.

That's where I was born.

When were you born?

1918, March 1918.

And your family consisted of, how many? Your immediate family consisted of how many people?

Six children, we was.

There were six children and two parents.

Two parents, yeah.

So there were eight people when the war broke out.

Right.

You have survived. What happened to the others?

My father was sick in the ghetto, Warsaw ghetto, of typhoid. So they took him to the hospital.

Typhoid.

Typhoid. They took him to the hospital. Next day, he was dead.

What they was doing with older people, like euthanasia they call it here. It's like a mercy killing. They didn't bother with over 50. They didn't bother.

Next day, I was notified, like, come and take your father. But nobody could be at his funeral because everybody was closed in that building in Warsaw ghetto because there was typhoid in that building. So they were locked down. And nobody could go out.

I was the only one who was out because I was living in another place because I was smuggling. That I come later. And I went, and I took my father and buried him in that cemetery. One thing that I couldn't forget bothered me. My father used to have a golden bridge, a bridge of teeth.

Yeah.

And I took them out on the cemetery, that bridge, took them out. And that bothers me up to now.

[CRYING]

He could -- Excuse me-- because I needed it for bread because my parents, my mother and three sisters was together there. So that I figure I could sell it and buy some bread, some for my--

Yeah.

But so what happened, when I went back to the house to call them [? thing, ?] they caught me on the street. They took me on their Umschlagplatz That was a place where everybody, the Germans-- they're took there first in Warsaw ghetto. How I come there, there's a lot of stories.

We'll get to it.

And I have it in my pocket, that. When we come to the camp in Bobruisk, there was then, the Germans, and asked if somebody had money, jewelry, anything-- out. Otherwise you'd get shot. So I took out that, where I have it. And I put this away. And that was the end of that bridge. It bothered me.

[CRYING]

Then I went to the camps. I was--

Before we get there, I just want to know what happened with your family. So your father died of typhoid and what you call a mercy killing.

Yeah. If your permission, Doc, let's go back here, what you want to know, the family.

The family, yeah. Your mother.

Yeah. You stopped me 1939, when the German occupied Łódź. They give us the name Litzmannstadt because they took it as a territory, German territory.

Hold on. What's Litzmannstadt?

Litzmannstadt.

Litzmannstadt.

It's a city. "Litzmann" is "city."

Yeah. What's Litzmann?

Łódź. No, it was a German-- German, German.

Oh, they changed the name--

They changed the name of Łódź to Litzmannstadt.

All right.

And they give an order, all the Jews, to where a band with the star, yellow star. And every Jew would see a German soldier, have to go down from the thing and take down the--

Go down from the sidewalk?

The sidewalk.

I was--

Into the gutter.

--gutter.

Yeah, I was a wise guy. I figured I'm a wise guy. I didn't do that. So a German caught me, took me in, and beat me up to hell and let me go by luck. He didn't kill me. That time was not a killing.

And I come home. It was a time that a lot of Jews had ran out to the Russian's side because the Russians, if you remember-- you have to remember-- Molotov and Ribbentrop made a pact that the Russians take the East side and the Germans to the East side.

And all lot of the Jews run over to the Russians at that time. So I say to my parents, let's go. Everybody's going. Let's go there. So my mother said, no. Let's send somebody there and see when we could find a place where they be. We go.

So I was always a volunteer. So I'd say, I go. But that's also my brother-in-law. He married Manya. So we decide that we both go to Russia, we find a place, the Pole territory where Russia's occupying the East side.

We went. We find a shack, like a block, where one big room. That time, we figured the war was going to keep three months, six months. Who figured it's going to take so long?

And my brother stayed there. He paid for the rooms. And I'm supposed to go back to tell my parents we have a room. We have a place.

In the mean time, we have to smuggle from one place to the other. The Russians shot me in my leg, my right leg, shot two things. And I fell. And when they come to me-- where are you going? I said, I want to go to you, to Russia. But actually I want to go back to Warsaw.

So they said, no. In Russia, you caught two people, take me, and carry me back to the Polish side, to the government side, the German side. Down there, it was a train. I went back with the train.

It was cold. My leg was, like, frozen from blood and everything. I come to Russia. I had another, my parents' customer, they were buying food for my parents. Before the war, I went, and they keep me very well. And they said, you better go home when you go and tell your parents to come here because Łódź is going to be a mess.

So I feel better. And I went to Łódź. And I told that to everybody. Went to Warsaw. But one sister--

You went to Warsaw by train that time? That story, that you were at the friend's house.

Friend's house, from Warsaw.

That was in Warsaw.

Warsaw. From Warsaw, I went by train--

To Łódź.

--to Łódź. And I told my parents what the friends say from Warsaw, to leave Łódź and come here, that they're making an apartment for them. And that's what I explained. But my parents had a beautiful apartment and furniture, at that time a radio. We had a beautiful radio. Not everybody had a radio at that time.

So they left my sister. She was 18 years old-- left her. And then they make the ghetto. So my friend's brother and family come in to our apartment, our house, because it was about 25,000 Jews, already room for 25. It was over 100,000 Jews to bring in.

So it was about six, seven people in our room. So I bring my friend's brother and sister at my house. And my sister was there. They promised that they're going to take care of my sister. But in the meantime, my sister couldn't stay there. She wanted to see my grandparents.

Your father's parents.

No, my-- my father's parents.

Because your mother's parents were in the United States.

Right. So from in there, make a ghetto. It was a ghetto, the Łódź ghetto. You couldn't write letters. Only allowed to write postcards.

So my sister would write, I am very comfortable here. I am with Yom Kippur. And [PERSONAL NAME] is with me. We enjoy it very much with them. We understand "Yom Kippur" and [PERSONAL NAME], because you couldn't write different. So we learned like that, they wrote us a postcard like that.

So my mother was busy with the woman organization. So they decide to go to the camp, POW camp, where the Jewish prisoners there only Jewish. She went there. Who she find? My brother.

She paid five hundred zlotys. I don't know who she paid, a German, whoever. And he get a pass, [NON-ENGLISH], direction home. And they let him go. And he come to Warsaw. Then starts the story, what are you going to do with my sister? How do we get out from the ghetto?

In Łódź?

Łódź. I say to my mother, Ma, don't worry. I get out. 'You're looking for the devil. You're looking for the dead. Everything, you're the volunteer.' 'Ma, let me go.' You see?

I took the only form from my brother. And the only form was his paper, [NON-ENGLISH]. And he told me how to behave when I see German soldier-- salute. And I go, and I speak a little German at that time because we deal with German people. Łódź was a lot of Germans. So that helped me a lot.

And I went there. I went there. I couldn't go into the ghetto. But I come with my passport. And they say, Don't make hell. Don't make hell. are you stupid? You come here to go-- and he kicked me. The Nazi pushed me in the ghetto. I was in there.

The whole ghetto was after me. What's happening? Why you come here? Everybody wants out. I said, I have to come. I have a sister here. And I bring with me some food-- cold cuts, you know? It was very expensive in the ghetto.

And in the short time I was there, my sister-- my brain worked overtime. I see that we couldn't survive here. It's impossible. So it happened that my grandpa get a heart attack and passed away.

Where was he?

In Łódź ghetto.

In the ghetto.

So now the ghetto was-- here's the end of the ghetto. And after that was the cemetery. And that was in the territory outside--

Outside the ghetto.

--outside the ghetto. So you couldn't go on the cemetery if you have no reason. So at that point, I figure that now is the time I have a reason, and I could get out my sister, smuggle out from the ghetto.

We took my grandpa away. We took my grandpa because that time, it was not a funeral like today. There was a wagon. And people was carrying it. And I buried him. And I took my sister.

We dressed the way it's supposed to be. We were ready. We told my grandma. She was the second wife of my grandpa. We told her that we left everything we had. And we come in the cemetery.

After the funeral, we hide where dead people was living there. So we were hiding in the night. And I fell asleep. When the night come, there was a rain. The storm was cold. And that was my luck. I said to my sister, now, let's go. We went over the gate, went over. And we--

Over the fence.

Over the fence. We run from Łódź to Brzeziny, from Brzeziny--

Where's Brzeziny?

Brzeziny is about 10, 12 miles from the Łódź, direction of Warsaw. And from Brzeziny to Koluszki is about five miles.

And then you went to Koluszki?

Koluszki, Koluszki-- K-O-L-U-S-Z-K-I.

All right.

Koluszki. From there, we have a customer. My father had a customer. I know him. He used to buy from us food and bring it to the city. So I find him. And he took us in very good. Now, telling him the story, we have to go--

To Warsaw.

To Warsaw. They say, don't worry. My brother-in-law, he works on the train. He is going to go with you. And we stayed overnight by him. And the brother-in-law come in the morning. We eat breakfast.

And I was in a uniform, soldier. He say to me, your sister's going to be with me. She's my wife. You're a soldier. You will take care of yourself.

I said, very good. And nobody was bothering me. I was in uniform. And nobody was bothering. And we come to Warsaw. He took--

What year is this?

That is 1940. There was no ghetto in Warsaw. In Łódź was the ghetto. He took a coach. We call it a coach with a horse, you know?

A coach.

A coach. You call it a coach. And he took us to my house. My mother was in bed sick, very, because while we smuggle out the things, in that night before or the night after they were killing about 20-something people that smuggled out. My mother figured out because I wrote her that I was going to see her soon. So she figured that way we were dead already.

Why?

Because there was dead-- 23 people had died.

Oh, because you said you were going to see her soon. And you didn't come so soon.

Yeah, we didn't come so soon. And 23 people were dying, was killed by the Germans. So she figured we were in that group. But we come. What can I say? It was a holiday, like somebody died or somebody is born at that time. It was very active in our house.

So I was there. We were together-- my brothers, my sisters, and me. So we were the six children together, and my father and my mother. Now we were in a place--

All I want to know now is, of the eight people who were living in your family in Warsaw--

Now, we come in.

--who survived?

Only me.

Only you.

Only me. Do you know what happened to the others? To my father, I know because he died.

He died in the hospital.

He died in the hospital.

Where they killed him, you think?

Yeah, they killed him.

But the others, you don't know what happened.

No.

Your story we're going to get. Now, this is your immediate family. Your father's parents, also, what happened to them?

My grandpa died.

Yeah, in Łódź.

In Lodz.

A heart attack.

Heart-- yeah. And my grandma died before the war.

OK.

So he remarried. He remarried. She was a very nice lady.

All right. And now the extended family, that means your--

Uncles.

--uncles, aunts, cousins, how many do you think you had in Poland at the time?

In Poland, no less than 50 people.

No less than 50 people.

Yeah.

How many survived?

As far I know, I didn't see no one. I'm the only one.

And if any of them would've survived, you think you would have met them?

Oh, yeah, because they know that we have all the family here in the United States on my mother's side. They would come here. Nobody showed up. I'm the only one.

So as far as you know, you're the only survivor of a family of at least 50 people.

50 people.

But you don't know what happened, how the others perished.

No, no.

All right, we're going to come to your story now, I believe.

Yeah.

So you are in Warsaw. You came to Warsaw, when? In 1940?

1940, Warsaw ghetto-- Warsaw, not ghetto.

Because most people from Łódź remained at Łódź and went into the ghetto, I think.

Yeah, not most. It was quite a lot of why people went to Russia.

Oh--

Bialystok, Bialystok.

If they didn't run to Russia--

Russia, yeah.

OK. But you landed up in Warsaw.

Warsaw, yeah.

And you landed up in Warsaw, you said, because--

I was shot by the Russian. And I went back to Warsaw.

And those friends--

My friend--

--said that--

--my father's friend--

--your family should come to Warsaw.

Should come because Łódź is going to be bad.

All right. When did you leave your family?

I didn't leave. They caught me in 19-- at that time October, November in 1942.

So you were with your family until 1942?

Till 1942, October-- October. I was with my family, together. Not together-- I was living in a different place but in ghetto.

So what happened in October 1942?

Before 1942, before October 1942, my father passed away, who they killed him, or euthanasia, whatever. They killed him because they took him in the hospital. I saw him. He was OK. Next day they say, they took him away from here. And I don't know what they're going to do with him.

They took him to the hospital because he had typhus?

Yeah, he had typhus.

Yeah.

But then people, younger people in the window, said, I don't know if they're going to let him live.

So the next day, they notify me that-- not me, my mother-- that he died and I can come to take him out.

So from 1940, when you came to Warsaw, till October 1942--

'42.

--you were in the Warsaw ghetto?

Ghetto, yeah.

And then what happened?

To 19--

To you.

To me? You want to know to 1942 what's happened?

Well, you were in the Warsaw ghetto.

Yeah, what happened in the ghetto, it was a lot of things happened.

What happened in the ghetto?

I met a guy by my girlfriend. I have a girlfriend-- not girlfriend like you call here-- a friend from school, from the neighborhood. She met me with that guy. He was taken in from the other neighborhood to Warsaw ghetto because there were Jews. And that kid was very intelligent. He mostly speak German because they come from Poznan.

Poznan.

Poznan-- and very wealthy. He had a friend, Polish friend, who was together in school with him. They never figured out before the war that he is a Jew. The Germans find out that he is a Jew.

And those friends went in Warsaw. And they belong to [NON-ENGLISH]. We call it [NON-ENGLISH]. That's the partisan, Polish partisan. And they say, the ghetto come. Don't worry. We're going to help you with food, with everything they need.

And I met them. And he was very friendly, very friendly with me. When they put the ghetto in '41, we started smuggling food in the ghetto. So he couldn't sell. He couldn't buy. He didn't know I was the businessmen. So let's assume we bring in valise have cow, butter, whatever. And we sold it.

What's a-- oh, in a valise.

Valise, two or three valise, big valise. And we sold it. We had to sell to get our money back that we could buy, next day, other stuff and enough to be for our families, too, because the food was going up and up and up because there was no income.

There was no business, was no nothing in the ghetto. There was no work. Only they come, they took out people to work in the camps. They didn't pay for it.

And that took about one year. I support the family-- my father and my mother and three sisters. My one brother was married. And the other brother bring his girlfriend the Warsaw ghetto. And he married her in the ghetto. And they were living together, separate.

They were living separate.

Separate, not with us.

Oh, you mean--

Yeah. And my brother helped me, middle brother helped me, to smuggle in some-- because they were building. It was the border from the ghetto-- big building-- the ghetto and the outer ghetto.

Yeah.

And guess what? Nobody was living in that building. So we go over the roof and we smuggled in things. And that's finished out because a German was looking on the thing over.

And they caught us. And we run. And they didn't caught us. They caught us smuggling. And that was always-- it was a Polish policeman or a German policeman down.

We couldn't smuggle. So I find a hole because the wood-- it was not like here, that the sewers went under. There were sewers up. There was a hole. And I was very skinny. I fit to go through that hole.

And I find a hole when no people lived there. And I was going out myself. I took big pants, my father's big pants. And I organized potatoes, bread, whatever-- what I could-- every time.

And I go out early in the morning and come back when it's dark already, that they don't see me. And that's why I was smuggling quite a while till that stopped, too.

That stopped?

That stopped.

Why did it stop?

Because the Polish people, they find out about us. And they--

They told the Germans.

They told the Germans because if they told something like that, they get five pounds of sugar. When they caught a Jew, they get paid five pounds of sugar. At that time, sugar was very expensive, because the Germans took all the sugar for the army. So they caught me. But I ran. They couldn't cat--

You escaped.

I escaped. And they couldn't catch me. They were looking for me because they found my coat. In that coat was an address where I was living. So my parents were living there.

So the Polish police went back and they come there to my parents. And I was not living there because I know they were looking for me. And that was the end of smuggling.

We start selling what we could. And everybody was fine on the streets in Warsaw ghetto. People dying on the street like cockroaches. And every day was big wagons and people carrying dead people-- 20 people, 10 people.

And in the cemetery, they make big hole. And they put everybody in. They were dying day by day. And every few months, they made the ghetto shorter. They take away streets. And they told those people that live here, go live there. And they made it shorter and shorter.

And every week and every day, they come with big trucks. They caught people. They closed the buildings. Every man from 16 to whatever-- out. And who stayed there and didn't come out get shot.

Did you feel there was any leadership in the ghetto?

Yeah, there was leadership. It was a Jewish [NON-ENGLISH], we call it.

Yeah. Who was the leader?

The leader was-- oh. Łódź, I remember Rumkowski. But in Warsaw, I was not involved. But I was a stranger.

So whoever the leader was made no difference to you.

No difference because I met the [? leader. ?] I go back a few months, a few years back, that they sent my father a letter that they have to come volunteer to go to war in a camp. Again, I was a volunteer. I say to my mother, if my father's going to go there, he's going to die. I go for him.

Again, it was written to Joseph [INAUDIBLE] Spiegel, but no age, no height or weight. So I said to my mother, let me go for my father. I get along. So I went. And they took me to Lublin.

What year was that?

1941.

Here you wrote 1940. So which is it? Lublin, Belzec.

That was '40, 1940.

1940.

Lublin, Belzec, right. '40, and--

So you weren't in the ghetto long?

Yeah, I come back. Wait, wait-- and they took me to Lublin. From Lublin, they took us to Belzec to make for fortification on the border between Russia and Germany.

To make the vacation?

Fortification.

Oh, fortification.

Fortification. And we finished those. We come back to Lublin. And they took me out to work to unload coal on the train. One day, I called and I look around. I said, a possibility to run. Why am I staying here?

I went back. And I say to my friend, tomorrow I go to work here. And you don't see me no more. I don't come back. What do you do? I run. You run? Yeah. You know, you do me a favor? What favor? He was from Lublin.

Here's the address of my parents. If you survive, please go up to my parents and say you saw me. I'm OK, everything. And they're going to help you. Don't worry about it. And that was when I run, I run away the next day. And I find the parents.

Yeah.

They took me in like a son. And they wash me. They give me new clothes. And they gave me some money. And they told me how I get to Warsaw. So I went to a [NON-ENGLISH], what made transportation like a cab, to Opole. From Opole, there is the --

What's Opole?

A city. Opole is by a river. And from that river, they go like a ferry-- a ferry-- go back and forth to Warsaw, Opole, Warsaw, Opole, Modlin, Warsaw, Opole.

And I took that ferry, that boat, and come back.

To Warsaw.

After four months-- it was four months after that-- I come back to Warsaw. It was not a ghetto at that time. Still not a ghetto.

Now, how long were you in Lublin?

That time? Lublin and Belzec, four months.

You know, I'm beginning to think this then should be 1941 because you said you came back to Warsaw in '42.

Yeah. No, that was '41.

Yeah, and here it says, umschlagplatz Warsaw, 1942.

'42, right.

So this must've been--

This was '41.

--the end of 1941.

'41, right.

All right. That's probably what you meant to say.

Yeah.

All right, so you came back to Warsaw. Wait a minute. Oh, you're in Warsaw here, 1942. OK. And you--

Here make a '1'.

It's also-- wait. Umschlagplatz Warsaw--

Oh, no, '42. Right.

--'42.

Yeah.

And you returned to your family.

To my family.

And how long were you in Warsaw?

I was in Warsaw up to October '42.

Up to October 1942. What happened then?

Then they caught me, when I told you before, that my father--

When your father-- I buried my father. I have his bridge.

Yeah.

I went looking to sell it.

Yeah.

They caught me on the street. And they took me--

Right, all right.

--at umschlagplatz.

And then you were shipped off to--

To Bobruisk.

No? What's Minsk?

Yeah, the Minsk was like Lublin. In Poland, it was, like, a transfer camp.

Oh, so how long were you in Minsk?

Minsk was a couple weeks.

All right, OK. And then from Minsk-- in Minsk you were in a ghetto or in a camp?

A camp.

In a camp.

Camp.

So you've now been in two camps. You've been in Belzec. You've been in Minsk.

And Minsk. There's also Lublin.

Oh, so you were in three camps?

Yeah, Lublin, Belzec. And then--

What kind of a camp was it at Lublin before Majdanek?

Lublin.

That's what it was called?

[Both talking]

How big a camp was it?

Very big. It was about 20,000 people.

Uh-huh. And Belzec?

Belzec was a small one. We were there, like a kommando. They took us, about 500 people, 400 people there to work on the--

Fortification.

--fortification, yeah.

So you were in Minsk for a couple of weeks.

Yeah.

And then you were sent to Bobruisk.

Bobruisk.

And how long were you in Bobruisk?

Bobruisk, I have a year and a half.

Uh-huh. That might have been the camp that you were in for the longest period of time. You were in many camps.

Many camps.

But that one was a year and a half.

Yeah, that was--

What did you do in Bobruisk?

Bobruisk was-- a big story I have from Bobruisk. We come there, 1,500 people.

In your shipment.

In my shipment, 50. Before us--

Bobruisk had about 20,000 people, you think?

No, no, no, no, no.

Oh, how big a camp was it?

Big, but it was not much. Before us, it was 1,500 people there. They shipped 1,500 people. But left over, maybe 100 from the 1,500 that we come--

Yeah.

--because they need-- [INAUDIBLE], bonus like you say. So they bring us there. When we come there, we're standing. And the big officers, SS, start talking. If you want to be good treated, you have to work. And work [NON-ENGLISH]. Work, he said, makes life sweet. But if people didn't work-- he took out his pistol, shot them and everything, and killed somebody-- it's going to happen this way.

He actually killed somebody then?

Right away. He killed somebody and said, that's going to happen to who don't work. That was the beginning, that part, the welcome at that camp. We start looking at each other. (MURMURING) What are we going to do? Problems.

Then they took us one by one who have jewelry, who have money, who have things. Here, put it here. Otherwise you get shot right away if we find something.

I'm thinking, (MURMURING) what are they going to do? What am I going to do with that bridge? Here, I put this away. And they gave us clothes like in a concentration camp, like pajamas, you know?

Mm, striped ones.

Striped ones. So what we're doing, so they're starting bringing lumber to build bungalows. So they build five bungalows for 300 people, but bunk beds, you know?

Bunk beds.

Bunk beds, three-story bunk beds. I was number five, bungalow number five, about two months. And from the 300, maybe there was 100 left of them.

What happened to the other 200?

Killed. Every Sunday-- every Sunday-- the unter shaf fuhrer the commander from the SS, with his helpers come in. 'Everybody out!' We're out. Come, come, come.

And the rest were laying on the floor sick or beaten up and couldn't go out. They say to them, you're going [NON-ENGLISH]. That's the direction home. And there was a tod commander from the Jewish. But there was from the beginning, the--

What are you saying?

Tod, tod commander, Tod Death commander.

Yeah.

They were burying people. That was their job.

Their job.

And he took the five people with a wagon. The five people took those people who were sick underground and say, they're going home. [NON-ENGLISH]. They took them after he came. There was a big hole. They shot everybody in the hole. And they pile up. So every mound was less, less. From the five bungalows was one bungalow.

Now I come back from the beginning. When we come, I have-- excuse me. I have near me a boy about five years younger than me. And he was a name. But my cousin-- my girlfriend from Warsaw was his cousin.

I say, oh, you're name is [INAUDIBLE]. You know Sarah? Yes, that's my cousin. Their father and my father. I tell you because that has to do a lot with that story here.

And then he was my cousin. Everybody knows that he is my cousin. They would say, where's your cousin? He's there. Where's your cousin? Here. Cousin-- no name.

The first day, when we stand out, when we are still about the over a thousand, 1,500, the SS man chief-- we call him the chief-- he was responsible for food, for us, for the German, everything. He goes over. Look, look, look to my cousin. You, come out. He come out. And he walked with him, walked away.

He took that kid with him to his storage. And he's going to help him work, get him out, cleaning-- perfect job. So happy. Everybody's jealous. That's such a beautiful job. But I don't know. It's like somebody told me something-- be careful. Like my mother, my grandmother, or God, whoever-- be careful.

Even he come from that job, he bring me bread. I say, Jacob? What job? What's the job? He told me the job. We go after food. How much you want? Here's a bread for you. I'll bring it. I said, hold your horses. Wait a minute. I said, it's [INAUDIBLE] please. You're stealing. I think I don't want it.

I know what's going to happen one day. How long is it going to take, you steal, till they caught him and shoot him and me? Forget it. And I got scared.

I said, don't bring me bread. I don't want to have-- I'll have what they have. I don't want to eat and everybody's going to look on me. That's not nice. You eat there, and don't bring nothing here. Eat what you want and don't bring it.

And the next day, he told the chef to give him a bread for a cousin. He said, no, chef, my cousin didn't want it. Why didn't he want it? He thinks that I steal or whatever. He didn't want it. What? Come with me. Where's your cousin? He called me out. I figure--

The chef was--

The chef-- an SS man.

A German?

German. And that German was very educated-- Polish, French, German. He called me out. He said to me, you [INAUDIBLE] do stupid--

You stupid guy?

Stupid guy. He don't steal. I give it to you. So I, chef-- in German-- chef, it's not that he's-- I know that he's

an honest kid. He won't steal.

But I didn't want to take that bread and eat and everybody's looking on me. It doesn't look nice. I couldn't follow this and take bread all the time and margarine and jam and whatever. It doesn't-- so he said, you're stupid, and left me and went away.

Then I go back. There was one bungalow we have left of it. It was about 300 people. So a Sunday I went out walking a little. We had a place where we could walk

Yeah.

So the leader from us walk over here. What are you doing here? I said I'm walking. He hit me in the face. When he hit me in the face, I hit him back. He didn't say nothing.

All right. The leader was, what?

A Jew, also from us, was a leader. A kapo, we call him. When I hit him back-- and I was sorry after that. I saw that I do the wrong thing. He didn't say nothing. He went into German-- two Germans come out.

He called me out in the middle of the field. And he said, what were you doing? You hit your general? I said-- obergruppenfuhrer; he was an obergruppenfuhrer-- I'm sorry, but in German. I'm sorry. I don't know what's come to me. I'm really sorry. I apologize for it. So they don't take that apology.

Yeah.

And they have, like you go on a hose and you see in cowboys, a hose. But at the end of that thing was a totenkopf. You know, the SS have a totenkopf here?

Yeah, death head.

A death head from steel on the end. And I have to stay still. And then, boom. That's what, zz-zz, boom. The end would come. That was a joke for them, play. And I was going like that. And my head become like a watermelon, you know?

Swollen.

Swollen up. There was no satisfaction. They took me. And by the kitchen was a tree, a tree going out this way. They took out from the kitchen a chair, belts. And they want to hang me by the hands.

Yeah.

And when they kick the chair and I hang, I feel that somebody is cutting me. That chef cut me down. He said to those thing, you [NON-ENGLISH], he is not 100% a Jew. This way, this way

So he told them-- ba, ba, ba-- I don't know what he told them. And they let me go. And he called two people to take me-- because I couldn't move-- take me in to the block. And he said the guy who was responsible for cleaning to take care of me. And if in a week I'm not back in my situation I used to be, you're going to take care of him.

He said, I'm not a doctor. What to do? I said, do nothing and bring me water, cold water. He would put cold water. And I started coming to myself. And I start walking out.

Walking, walking. People going out to work, and I don't go out to work. People go out. I don't go out to work. He didn't let me go out to work, the chef.

Yeah.

I said, what is this? Why I don't go out to work? But a week later, he come to me and said, I have for you work, a job. What's the job?

The guy who would wash the clothes-- in the kitchen there was a pot to boil food for us-- coffee. Coffee, it was not coffee. It was, eh, [NON-ENGLISH]. I don't know how you call it-- chicory. Chicory. It was black. How would you call this in English?

Maybe chicory.

Chicory, or something, that would make coffee for us--

Yeah.

--and soup. But you could see potato running around. So that's what the kitchen was. But it was not too many people. They don't need all the bowls to boil. So he give me two bowls to boil clothes for the leftover people.

Boys died out and changed it-- every Sunday, changed the clothes for the leftover people. So I said to the chef, chef, can I take somebody to help? Of course. So I took one buddy to help me out. He still needs help-- from our camp.

You haven't talked about him yet.

No.

Just now? OK.

Just now.

A new person.

A new person come in. And he said, you could take a helper to help. So I took that kid. And he was helping me chop wood to cook. We were in the kitchen. So when you're in the kitchen, you eat.

You have food.

You eat. It was leftovers and before leftovers. Also, we were cooking-- our cooks were cooking for the dogs. It was a camp, German, with dogs.

Yeah.

And that for the dogs-- delicious.

It was better than they gave the people.

So I was waiting when they take out the food to the dogs, the Germans. The leftovers, we scrub it down--

What a story.

--and bring it in, what's leftover for me, and bring it in for the other kids, that they have some food.

But working in the kitchen helped you because you were able to have food.

The kitchen--

It saved you.

--helped me, saved me, and picked me up on my legs.

And it's because you didn't eat that bread.

That bread, what I didn't take from him. I didn't want it. I said, it was like burning but like poison.

Yeah.

And then from that camp, we were, leftover from both groups, from 3,000 people, 91 people.

Ugh. How do you know that it was just 91?

Because we were-- every day they were counting us.

Oh.

Like counting money, they were counting us. And why we're still alive?

Yeah.

Because the younger SS men that were watching us, they took away. They put in the tired people. SS got tired, because they need the youngers--

At the front.

--at the front. So those older people had pity on us. They didn't kill us.

But how long did you stay at Bobruisk? Do you know when you came there in 1942? What month? What time of the year?

Oh, that's in October. You came in October '42. And how long did you stay?

I stayed two winters. I stayed about March-- April, March '44.

Here, it says--

'44.

Well, here's Bobruisk, right?

Yeah.

1942, '43. And then Lublin, Majdanek.

No, that was the beginning of '44, here.

So this is--

'44, beginning.

So this was until October '42 until March '44, you think?

'44, yeah. '44.

All right, now, March 1944, you go to Lublin, Majdanek.

Yeah. They took us to Minsk. But Minsk was a week. Took us back to Minsk.

Yeah.

And from Minsk, we took it back to--
Majdanek. And you came here, when?
'44, April.
About April '44.
Yeah.
And how long did you stay in Majdanek now?
Majdanek, I stayed about a week.
Oh, for one week. And then--
Then Budzin. Is that Budzin here?
Yeah, Budzin.
Yeah, Buzdin, '44, Yeah.
So you came here. And you stayed for, how long?
In Budzin, I stayed about the end of '44, November or December '44-- December '44.
Till November or December.
Yeah.
OK. And then you went to--
Milec, Wieliczka--
That's-- how do you spell it? M-I--
L-E-C.
Milec.
Milec. And then Wieliczka.
What's Wieliczka? Another town?
Another town, yeah. Here was a day. We continue to go to Milec.
And how long were you here?
Here I was about a short time. In Milec, about a couple weeks.
In each town, were you in a camp or in a--
Camps.

Camps.

Camps.

Two weeks in each camp.

Yeah, each camp. Don't go over--

Just a minute, yeah. Two weeks in each camp. All right. And you were in the middle of 1944. What's happening now? It's that the Russians are coming into Poland.

Go over, yeah.

So you're in--

Did I tell you how we went out from Bobruisk, how we went?

No.

OK, so if you want to know, they get an order to evacuate.

From Bobruisk?

Bobruisk.

Yeah.

They get an order to evacuate us. They need us to help because they have a big transport with cows, with all kinds of stuff. So they need us to help unload it, load it.

So they evacuate the whole camp, the 91 people. And we went with that transport because the army started going back. They had to evacuate. So they evacuated. They evacuated us.

So we come with that transport till Minsk. In Minsk, they let us go in a camp. It was a short time. Then we go to Lublin. From Lublin--

It sounds like a confusing time for the Germans.

Yeah, they started going back already.

Yeah. Did you sense a change in their attitude?

Their attitude, yeah.

How did you sense it?

Because they were watching us. That time watching us, they changed from young kids that were killing us to older people, the tired people. They were--

And the older people were not as nasty.

No, they were not nasty at all. They liked clean. They took us to clean. They took us-- a piece of paper to pick up or this. They didn't bother us to kill or do something.

I have a big story from Bobruisk, a big story of how I survived. If I didn't tell you that, 20% I told you what happened to me there, because I have a lot to say. We have--

Most of your stories are in Bobruisk?

No, I have another story, a very important story before I get to Dachau.

Before you get to Dachau.

Dachau, yeah.

Dachau's your last camp.

Yeah, Hirschberg

And Hirschberg.

That was a big story, too.

So you have a story in Bobruisk and a story in--

In Hirschberg.

In Hirschberg.

All right. We'll do that as soon as we turn-- as soon as we change the tape because this one is almost over.

OK.