

Today I would like to bring to your attention what happened in Europe for the small children who played on the sidewalks through all Europe, jumped rope. A decree was issued in Germany, in Berlin, that those children have no right to grow up. And they were picked up from the towns, from the most remote areas, wherever there was a Jewish family, and those children were all destroyed. Some went with their parents, some were hidden by parents and later came out or they were given out when they were hidden by some Gentile people and they couldn't keep them. They were given back to the ghettos where they were destroyed.

Now, when I came to Plaszow the first day, they did put me in a group where we were digging a huge grave. And the Krakow ghetto was at that time cleared. And they brought in trucks with children from infant to 12 years old and they were all killed. And one group was digging further, about 100 feet long grave and about 50 feet wide.

The children were digging?

No, the group where I belonged. And the children, when they brought them in, they were shot right into that grave. And of course one group was bringing with wheelbarrows some chlorine powder and putting on because it was such a tremendous amount of bodies in those graves and they were afraid that this might start smelling out.

So one group was wheeling with a wheelbarrow some powder, chlorine powder, and spreading with a shovel over, one group was digging further, and one group was just covering up the ones which they [? shoot. ?] A little girl, a beautiful blonde girl, sat down in the grave dressed in an Eskimo white fur coat, was all bloody, and asked for a little bit of water, and asked, "Water, water." But as you know, the heart was so like a stone, numb, you wouldn't dare go and give that child a little water. And this child swallowed so much blood because it was shot through the neck, and then it started to vomit so terribly. And then it laid down and it says, "Mother, turn me around, turn me around."

Her mother was still alive?

Pardon?

The mother was still alive?

No, no. This child didn't know what happened to it. It was half shot, half dead. It was after it was shot. And this child sat down in the grave between all the corpses and asked for water because it swallowed so much blood and asked for water. It was still alive. There was no mothers there, just children brought from the Krakow ghetto.

And of course you wouldn't dare move with water because you would be in. As a matter of fact, there were cases where the Germans, the original group who was digging and burying those corpses, they shot them when they finished the work. They were shot because they didn't want any witnesses to remain alive. So there were cases like this, and we were all shivering. We didn't know what is going to happen to us.

So this could this little girl laid down and asked to be turned around. What happened to it, I don't know. It was probably covered alive with a chlorine powder and covered later alive. And I'm sure because they didn't give another shot to that girl because they were too busy going and shooting.

And so things like this you just cannot forget. It is 45 years after the war and this is embedded in your mind. And you no matter what you are thinking of, this thing doesn't go out from your mind. You must remember that.

And so this is the way this highly educated nation became such tremendous, such horrible, murderous criminals without any human feeling, without any feeling for a child, for a crying child. And it's impossible to comprehend. The crime was so horrendous in such a magnitude that a human brain cannot comprehend that.

And this is where the SS, they were the ones who the more they were shooting and the more they were, let's say, fast on the draw, they advanced in the concentration camps.

Did you ever witness any situation where there was some mercy shown by the Germans or some feeling or some compassion?

No. No. No, I did not. I did not because, as a matter of fact, as you know by now, I have mentioned the last time that a German, one SS, I got with him so buddy buddy, and he's the one who took me out once from a group to be shot because he needed me. And he took me out. And I ask him, "Tell me, are you married? Do you have a wife?"

He says, "Yes, I have a wife." and I said to him, "Do you have children?" "Yes, I have children, too." So I ask him, "How can you shoot children here like that?"

And he said, "I have [GERMAN], an order." And he says, "If I would get an order to shoot my mother, I would shoot her." And that was the end of our discussion with the German.

And so I'm going further with was this type of life. And of course, you were at a tension always, so numb. A child, a human being, were laying or something, you didn't even bother to look at him if he's alive or dead. This is the way the situation brought you to it, the conditions.

And then I was once in another camp where other things happened. For instance, for a small thing, they took out an older man who was maybe in the 50s or so, and they took him out to be shot right in the first thing in the morning. And the son was standing in the lines.

And I don't know how he could do it, but he gripped the gentleman by the hand, "This is my father," he said, "This is my father." And that boy was hung by the hands tied in the back, hung by the hands for a whole day on that tree. It was a terrible, terrible thing to [INAUDIBLE]. We went to work and he was terribly moaning on that tree. The situation to look at him was just impossible. The mucus was coming out from his nose and mouth. A whole day hanging by the hands from the back. Finally, we all prayed, we all hoped that they're going to shoot him, that it's going to be the end of his suffering. And they let him hang a whole day just because he gripped the German by the hand, he said, this is my father, not to shoot him.

How old was the boy?

Well, he was probably 20, 19, 20 years old. This is lost in the camp where there were no younger ones. They were, let's say, from 18 to 28, 25. This is the groups what they left for work, if they left for work, some of them.

So when they brought children in, they killed them immediately.

Immediately. The children were crying terribly, and they knew. They the children knew what is happening and what is going to happen to them. They were crying and I still hear the cries today. I still hear them, how they'd cry, and their hands up and "Mommy, Mommy, Mommy."

And this is not just a story where you can forget. This is not a thing you can forget. No matter if you live to 80, you will still remember this.

And so this is the way, how sadistic they were. They didn't have any feeling for a human being or for a child. As I told you, he said that he has [GERMAN], he has an order to shoot, and that is what he was doing.

Then once, they brought in a woman with a child. They caught her somewhere outside of Krakow, either on a train or so. They brought her in and she said she is not Jewish. She was crossing herself, she says, "I am not Jewish," and she was praying and kneeling and praying.

And this SS didn't move a finger. He went over, and this little girl was holding on to the mother, it was crying, and he took her over to that valley there where they were shooting people, and they shot her. And she was crying and saying, "I am not Jewish." And in German, [GERMAN]. And they proved that she is Jewish and that's it, and that's their way of destroying.

As a matter of fact, those who were outside, they were first. They destroyed them faster than those who were inside in the concentration camp because they were still afraid that the people who were outside of the camp have some kind of contact with the underground, with the partisans. And they were very, very much afraid of that, and that's why they never let somebody who worked outside went out to work every day. They were the first thing to be shot.

And so this is the way you have to understand. The conditions, what they created through five years, were not human conditions. People ask me, how could you live? And I said, you couldn't live. That's why millions perished, because they couldn't live.

All this time, I am survived from 46 people, the closest family, uncles and cousins. And then in my brothers and sisters, I'm the only one by a split second. I jumped out the train. And this is only one of who survived from the 46 people.

And you couldn't live. You could not go through and live because you just were conditioned to be shot, and everybody knew that they are not going to live. Today we have buried a group, tomorrow, who knows? We may be the ones.

Could you go back to talk to us about your family?

Before the war-- is that what you want me to? Before the war, I grew up, I went away to Krakow. Krakow was a large, huge town, big town. The reason I went there is because I was raised in a small town about 60 miles away from Krakow. And in Krakow, you had better opportunities to create some kind of a living.

Of course, a job to get was impossible. I was going around and looking for a job for, I think, two weeks. And I was a tailor. I was a specialist in putting up this collar on shirts, a shirtmaker.

I was a specialist, and there were not too many of them. Still, I couldn't get the job. And so once, I went into a factory and I applied for a job.

What year was this? I'm sorry.

This was in '39.

Before the war.

Before the. War That's what I'm talking about, before the war. And I go into the factory and they say, no, there's no opening here. They can't have anybody.

And this was noontime. A girl goes out who was working there, and I talked to her, I got acquainted with her. And I asked her what she is doing here and how long she's here. And she told me the whole story that she's not making too much money, she's not too happy.

I said, how would you like if I would buy a couple machines-- I had a few hundred dollars with me-- and can you supply me with a contractor from the big factories, cut stuff, and we will produce it? She says it's a good idea, she's going to inquire. And it didn't take her too long, took her a day, and she came back to me. She says, yes, she would like to quit that factory and she is going to supply me as much work as I need if I will have the machinery.

And so I started off a factory for myself before the war, and it was going good. I'm not going to go in how much I make and how long it took. But it took about a year when then the war conditions started, when they start talking about war. When Czechoslovakia, when Austria, the Anschluss, and then Czechoslovakia was dismantled, and then they wanted a part of Poland.

And so there's no more business. The stores didn't sell anything and the factories stopped, and there was no work. So I went back home and I left her the machines, and I said look, make yourself, if you can, a living here by private things. And here are the machines and everything, and I went back, and let me know when it will open.

And it didn't take too long, and I was called into the army. And we went, of course. In the army, I left everything, and I'm going to go further. The first day when the war broke out-- that was Friday morning-- a bomb fell into that building where my machines were, in my factory. But this is the way it is because they were aiming for the railroad station and this was close to the railroad station. So this is where my factory went.

What did your father do for a living?

My father was a dealer with meadowland. We were living close by a big range, a huge range where there were thousands and thousands of caddle, and meadowlands, and hay was an article. Now, my father rented, let's say, 50 or 150 acres of those meadows and was selling parcels to farmers.

A farmer came and he wanted, let's say, 1 acre of this hay, and he had cut it himself and he dried it and he removed it. And it was a good business, especially when somebody wanted a better one, they always paid better and they even brought a fat chicken to have a better parcel off of this land. And this was good. Besides

That, we had a dairy taking the milk from this big ranch. And we were producing kosher cheese and butter and then supplying to the bigger towns around. And this was a part of our business. Now going to the hay, not all the hay was sold while it was still green. We were cutting it. They were cutting it and piling in big, big, huge stacks, stocks, huge pile--

Shafts. Yeah. I know what you mean.

Yeah. And this is the way we were keeping them till spring. In spring, the armies around there in the small towns like Tarnow and [PLACE NAME], there were infantry. All horses, and they needed hay. And we were selling this hay to the army. And this is the way we were doing the business.

But when the war broke out, no more-- the Jew was afraid to go out because some of the people, the Gentile people, some of them were very anti-Semitic and they were right away objecting that the Jew going out [INAUDIBLE].

What did being Jewish mean to you then in those days?

Of course, it is-- we had our rights. The government wasn't the worst in Poland before the war. Especially Joseph Pilsudski-- maybe you heard of him. He was good to the Jews. The Jews had their right. The Jews led doing a lot of business and good business.

And when the war broke out, of course, when the Germans-- I'm going to get closer when the Germans move in into Poland. And the Jews had-- the business, the stores in the towns were all Jewish. There were no-- there were very few Gentile stores. All they're Jewish. And they-- the biggest stores, they used to take a German-- he was called a Volksdeutsche. He was a Gentile. I mean, he was a Polack. But he right away became a German because he was living maybe close to the borders.

And they put in a guy that is in a store in all the-- whatever it was, the money, everything was going for the Germans. So people saw what's going on. They started to give out to the Gentiles outside to farmers, some material. They were thinking that maybe the war will end, we will be able to get out and start off again.

So this was one big problem when the Polish people saw that no Jews are being left alive. So they didn't want to have any witnesses that they have Jewish goods there. For instance, I came back from the first German Polish war. I had two aunts in the town D^A™bica I went in there. I hired two horses and a big hay wagon. And I went and I picked up all the-- one was in peace goods business, one was in the other one.

And I picked up all this material and brought it over to our place there. And I put it into a Gentile who was supposed to have been our best friend, supposed to be our best friend. And we were hiding it there in order to get after the war when we will be alive. And we didn't know that it's going to happen to the Jews. So the war will end and we'll have something

to start off.

This Gentile who were our friend, and I unload to him for thousands and thousands of dollars of goods to him. My brother who was hiding there in the forest went out to him at night for a piece of bread. And he said, if you will come once more on this backyard, I will tie you up and I'm going to deliver you to the SS, to the police. That happened. Things like this happened. So of course, he didn't want to go anymore to a place like this.

Now for instance, there was a big shoe store we called Bata. This was one of the biggest factories and biggest shoe stores. He has given out-- he had thousands of thousands of dollars of shoes. And he was trying to do smart. He took all left shoes and gave them out to one farmer like, let's say, in Philadelphia and to another farmer, the right shoes like Atlantic City. That's so far that one wouldn't know from the other one.

Do you think that they didn't find out whether I choose [INAUDIBLE] they had an exchange of shoes. They had-- you give me you give me a pair of right, I'll give you a pair of left. This is how it went. And these people, not only one, but in the thousands and thousands of Jewish goods was given out to the Gentiles because out thinking that the war will end because this way, the German took away. This way that the war will end, they will be able to start off again. And these people who had the Jewish properties were interested in that no witness should be alive. And they were helping destroy the people.

Were these people friends formally?

Before the war? Of course. We had, as I said, we had a dairy farm. And these people came-- they were poor people. They came to us for a glass of milk. They had a little baby that need a glass of milk. And my mother, may she rest in peace, always gave him. Gave him yoghurt, gave him milk, gave him-- they didn't have any. They were poor. But later on, they just turn from here like that.

When you took out the property and gave it to them, they were interested that no Jew will be alive. And they was helping. They really hope because the Germans not always could recognize who is Jewish and who is not Jewish. But they did it. They pointed out.

Were there any exceptions to this in the early stage?

If somebody survived, is only a stranger from somewhere where he wasn't living in this area, and he had a lot of money to pay him. And only, let's say, one of 10,000, of 10,000 people.

I had the two sisters. I had three sisters, but one was married. I had two sisters. The youngest was about 18 years old. And I tried to send her-- there was a time where Polish girls were going to Germany for work. They were sending Polish-- they picked up Polish girls, and they were sending them to work to Germany on farms in Germany.

And I was trying to get my youngest sister a birth certificate that her name is a Polish name, born there and belong to this church and everything. Couldn't get it. For no money, I went to a priest. I went to a house of a father. He's a priest. And I ask for that. And I asked to make me out a birth certificate like this so that she could go away to work. Couldn't get it. And this girl-- go ahead.

Yeah, I'm sorry. Were the priests helpful or were they also informants?

If they would have been at least neutral, thousands and thousands of people would have survived. They were not neutral. They were-- the anti-Semitism was so terrible. And they were in this church. In the church, they were preached about the Jews killed Jesus and the Jews are still-- today-- today, my friends went to Poland. Still say that he was having a cab driver. He says that to the Jews-- he is still teaching his children that the Jews has killed children for matzah. They need the blood for the matzah today. And this is what was-- this was born in the Polacks. And they were so anti-Semitic, especially when they had the right of the hand that a Jew wasn't worth anything but to be shot.

I had heard that there were some priests who were helpful and then were subsequently shot. Is that true? Do you know

of anything--

I didn't get.

Well, there's some stories that there were some priests, some religious, who were helpful to Jews and then were subsequently destroyed.

Well, it was-- it happened. It happened. They were somewhere, let's say, as I said, one of 1,000. It happens in a few. You can see not so much in Poland as it is in other like in Czechoslovakia or in Hungary in those towns.

And of course, those terms Hitler was only one year. In Poland, it was five years. And five years, to survive, it was impossible. We went to the forest. How long can you stay in the forest summer and winter? Winter is 25 below, the snow and everything. You had to go out somewhere and to sleep over somewhere in a barn to put yourself somewhere in the hay and sleep.

You couldn't stay in the forest. And it was impossible five years to survive. And those, if there were a few who survived, that some help. Of course, they were going out with weapon for bread and things like that. And in the beginning, a lot of people went through the forest, in the beginning, thinking that this will blow over, that it will eventually finish, the war will end. And it's going to be maybe still alive.

So hundreds and hundreds of people, when they get this way liquidated, they went into the forest. And those people had to eat. And they had to go out to the farmers for food. And the farmers, they were not the rich people, rich farmers like farmer here who has 1,000 pieces of cattle or something. Gentile peasant who had one or two cows. And this is what this milk and raise the children. And the corn and wheat what he had from his own farm.

And this thousands of people from the forests all around needed to eat. And they were going out to the farmers with weapon because the fathers, they wouldn't give them. And they were up in arms. The farmers were so terribly mad. They, right away, reported to the police and to the German authorities that there and there are the Jews are hiding there. And they were surrounding the forests and killing a lot of them.

Aaron, as you go back before the war, are there some things that you remember particularly with fondness or with happiness with your own family with--

Well--

Some things that you recall that were-- that you cherish very much.

When we were talking about before the war, of course, everybody had dreams, everybody had-- as I said before, I already had established like a factory. And I was having a dream that this is going to be-- someday is going to grow into a big town, and it is going to be what I was producing. And this is what a lot of people had it.

Now, when we ask about-- when somebody ask about how you lived before the war, the Jews didn't live bad. As I said, they are all in this-- the whole business industry was in Jewish hands. And a part of this, the anti-Semitism was so bad because the peasant had to take 30 eggs what he had during the week and collect collected and bring them to the town to sell in order to buy salt or sugar or buy something. And this, all this created--

And later on, I would say, it was called the Intelligence. They were starting off not to buy at Jews. Anti-Semitism was already so awakened all over that big letters were written on the walls. Now how do I translated from Polish to--

Say it in Polish first.

--English.

Say in Polish first.

[SPEAKING POLISH]

That means-- [SPEAKING POLISH] that means don't buy at Jews. And go to your own. Something like that, in order to translate this. All those things was going on. And this is the way before the war. Now if I would tell you what happened to people before the war, some people were living very well in Poland. They had their rights and they had their good business.

And of course, no matter, the poorest had his bread and have worked. He was doing some business. And he was doing fine. This was before the war. And there is nothing special to say, well, this was the best thing what happened to the Jews before the war. Before the war, people were working just as hard as possible. And they were living better than the Gentiles.

Were you and your family always together at holidays and Shabbat and--

This was one of the main problems in Poland why all families perished. The kids, the children will not go away from their parents. They would not go away from their parents. They lived together. They married in the same town and lived in walking distance. Here, a child grows up, moves out to California, moves out to Arizona. And if he marries there, that's it, that's it. They get used to it. They have to live somewhere apart.

In Europe, this wasn't the case. In Europe, the case was that children were living in the same town, married in the same town. Most is a town further away, let's say, 25 miles away or so. And this is how it contributed to the destruction of the Jewish people because children wouldn't go away from home, living together. Even in the ghettos where we saw-- of course, nobody knew that these people who are being displaced and those that they are going to be gassed. Nobody knew that till the last minute. And that's the way children went with their parents.

Now for instance, my youngest sister, she was-- when she went to Auschwitz and demonstrate into the gas chambers with my parents, she wouldn't go away from the parents. Now if she would have gone spent together, let's say, like my wife went-- my wife went-- she knew that this is a certain group who works for a German outfit in this town that this same outfit will be in Plaszow, in that concentration camp in working. She went over there where the men were and then she came to Plaszow. Of course, I didn't know her at that time. But this is what had happened.

And my sister could do the same thing. She wouldn't go away from the parents. She was staying with the parents. And she know that all the people already. We knew that at the time that they have no chance of surviving. And this was one of the main points how whole families perished in one time without any [INAUDIBLE].

Can you tell us about the day when your parents and sister were taken?

They were-- this in 40-- the end of '43. Or was it? Yeah. The end of '43 when the Tarnow Ghetto was cleared. It was called [SPEAKING POLISH] free of Jews. And at that time, of course, in that ghetto, they were two separate ghettos. The older people who did not work lived in one part of the ghetto. And the people who were working lived on the other part of the ghetto-- younger people.

If she would have-- if my youngest sister would have gone to this part where the people were working, she had a chance maybe she would have survived. It's not for sure. But she had a chance. This way, they went straight to Auschwitz to the Birkenau. And this is how they cleared every ghetto. Straight to the gas chambers. And they, of course-- when the ghetto had, let's say, 20,000 people, they made it into three different, in three separate slaughters, three separate, let's say, they called it action, action.

And when you are-- in the beginning, hiding was one of the best thing. For instance, even if you were working, and you had a seal on a German outfit that you are working, they took your anyway and put you right into the group where they supposed to go into the cattle trains. And so everybody was looking for a hiding place.

And there's another problem was the hiding place. You couldn't dig a hiding place where somebody would know about.

But when it came to such a slaughter, people around it, they knew that in this area, there's a hiding place. They were coming in. And how many could you go in?

Now I once was hiding in a place like this. I dug out, under the barrack where I was living, a big hole. There was a problem. You couldn't take out the sand outside because somebody would see fresh sand. They would know that somebody was dug here. I mean, the Germans would know. So you had to carry out the dirt by buckets in somewhere, hiding it so that nobody would know that there was something done.

So I had a hiding place under the barracks. There are few people knew about it. When it came to such an action-- they called action-- slaughter-- people were hiding there. And there was about 21 people. You couldn't go in anymore. It was so terrible there in that place that a candle wouldn't stay lit. No oxygen at all in that hiding. Absolutely no candle. I went out right away because I couldn't let stay there.

And so this is unbelievable. A grandmother, a children were a drugged. When they were going into hiding, they have given the children called luminol. It said drunk where the kids swallowed that. And they're sleeping. And they laying quiet. But a child woke up and started to cry terribly. So this 20 people said, go out! They're going to put us in grave! They're going to shoot us all because of that child. So a grandmother choked that child to death. Now if I would tell you this, it's unbelievable. But this is what happened in DÄ™bica in town. And that's why when you had a hiding place, you had to do it so secretly that nobody would know. Only the few people who were planning to hide.

Was in this child's own grandmother?

Pardon?

Was it the child's own grandmother?

Own grandmother. Own grandmother. Thank you.

Well, the problem is we know that nobody has a chance with the child. When this child started to cry, and in order to-- we saw that these people can save themselves because they were older people. And so because of one child-- the child was choked. And in that hiding place-- it's a terrible thing to tell somebody who didn't go through this because it's unbelievable. And those are things what happened at that time.

Hiding, as I said, was very, in the beginning still when the ghetto we're still on-- knowing that there is going to be still a ghetto left, hiding was a temporary thing where you can survive until the storm would go over. And also, when they were shooting-- in the ghetto, when they're shooting, anybody who had a place where to hide was hiding because we didn't know whom they shoot, why they shoot and-- why, we know-- but whom they're shooting. Whoever came under, they were shooting.

So hiding, it was a temporary relief because you hid. Then later, a ghetto must've left, you went out. And you still could live like [? others. ?] Now you know by now how a ghetto-- when we talk about the ghetto, when you hear in the radio and television that the people were living in Harlem in the ghetto. A ghetto-- they don't know what a ghetto means, how a ghetto was in Poland by the Germans.

A ghetto, they took a part of the town that's a two, three blocks and barbed wire off the front. And if a house was going out to the front of the ghetto, they had to board up the windows and put barbed wire around. We only had one entrance. One entrance, one exit.

And you couldn't go out anyplace else. And this was a ghetto. And you couldn't know-- nothing came in. You couldn't go in and you couldn't go out and buy something because you have no right to be alive there. Only there for temporary in the ghetto you could live. And this is how a ghetto was created in Poland by the Germans.

So when we hear that the people in Harlem lived in ghetto, it's a joke for us. Now I'm going to go further--

I'm going to go further to the way before the war. When I came back home from the German Polish War, I was shot through my leg. And then we were still-- the whole family was still home. And we were thinking that maybe everybody had hope.

In the beginning, of course, they didn't shoot. But they gave you other problems for you since you couldn't-- they were beatings, kicking from the streets, everybody-- if two three people were standing and talking, so they called away-- what did you talk about. So he said something. And then they called the other guy away, if this is the same thing what he said. And if it was the same thing, you can't imagine the beatings.

And so this is the way they-- when two three people met-- still saying there was no ghetto at that time. In the beginning, I'm talking. They met, say, in the square. Before they were starting to talk about anything. They made up a subject. We are talking, let's say, today we are talking about frozen potatoes, that a train load of potatoes got frozen and they shipped it today to the brewery. Such things were made up so when those Germans will call you away-- what did you talk about. So everybody will know that we were talking about this. This is the way they are in the beginning.

And of course, later on-- I'm talking about before the ghetto. And later on when they-- of course, Jews couldn't go in. On signs in the taverns written Jews and dogs prohibited, not allowed, in all the taverns. And then later, you had to wear the arm band, the [INAUDIBLE]. And the reason for that that, whoever had this couldn't walk on the main streets. If you wanted to go somewhere, you had to go behind the buildings. So not through the main street where the Germans are walking or something like that.

And this was in the beginning. We thought this is not the worst thing. As long as they will let us live, people are doing some business, some smuggling. Everybody had to do something in order to live, to get some kind of income.

And one time-- I think I told you that. I was going on a bicycle from my town-- this was a small town-- to the larger town to Tarnow. Tarnow was a large town. There was a huge Jewish community. Huge. There were about 20,000 people there. I mean, Jewish people. And whatever you brought in there from here, from this small town to the big town, you made some money. And this is the way we lived in the beginning before the ghettos. But when the ghetto was on, all these things stopped. You couldn't do that.

So one evening, I was caught. I had about maybe 25 pounds of sugar. If you took 25 pounds of sugar on the bicycle from this town and you went through about 25 miles further to the bigger town, you could make some money to live a week. And so I was caught. I was I ran right into the Gestapo in Tarnow. And they caught me. What do you have here? I said, sugar. Sugar was a product where the Germans gave it-- they opened that special stores where you could exchange for X.

Now the farmers would bring you the X, and you will give them so much sugar for the X. So when I was caught, I said I am a farmer. I gave this sugar-- I'm giving this sugar for X, and here I am. They took away the sugar and put me in jail in town. Nobody knew that I am in jail.

So I was sitting there 24 hours. Somebody was going out from daylight, scribbled a note and gave it to a friend, and the friend came in right away and brought me something to eat. And two days later, they took me out. And I was registered that-- they're sending me to a camp. That time, was no concentration camp. But it was arbeitslager, working camps.

They took me there into-- and I should come and register. They will ship me there. But they let me go first. So the other German says, don't let him go. He is not going to come back here. I said, oh, no, I'll come back right away. If you want me to go to the camp, I'll go. To arbeitslager I'll go.

And so I didn't go, of course. And they took away my bicycle. They took away my bicycle. They left me-- like you take away today a car of somebody. This was my main transportation. And this is my main business at that time.

And of course, the beatings is impossible. He will say, look there. And he takes with his fist bigger-- he had big gold rings there. And he hits me like this and says, did you see that? So at a split moment, you don't know what to say. You say you didn't see-- I didn't see, I said. You didn't see? Look there. And he gives me on the side. Did you see? I said,

yes, I saw. What did you see? And this way and this way.

And there were three of them. And one got tired, the other one started off-- until they knocked me out. And I had a small patches with me at that time I bought for home-- a bottle of vinegar and a couple pounds of onions because in the smaller towns, you couldn't get it. So they took this bottle vinegar and open it and pour it on me. And I was so cut up all over that is that this bottle-- this vinegar woke me up.

And they said, go. And I started to run. And they took a machine gun and after me. I felt the bullets-- the heat from the bullets going straight next to my ear. But I survived. I was so beaten up that I went up with two broken jaw bones.

And can we jump ahead a little bit. I want to know what it was like for you to be on your own in the fields toward the end of the war. How was that different from what you experienced before?

I'll go back when I reached-- when I escaped from the train and I reached my area where I was living before the war. First of all, I went into a farm and to a peasant. And he was-- so you are still alive? I said, yes, I am still alive. So he said, good. The Russians are coming. They might be maybe tomorrow. And you will be safe. I thought that an angel is speaking to me.

And he says, go up on the attic there, and I will give you something to eat. And he brought me up a plate of milk and some macaroni, a piece of bread. It was just mom disguised. And this guy-- the next day he says, run, because the Germans are looking, going around to the farmers and picking up cattle-- because the front was standing about, let's say, 10 miles away. They were picking up cattle for slaughter.

And if they will catch you here, they are going to kill me-- the whole thing. So all right. I said, I'm going to go in the evening, I'll go. He says, no, no, no. You must go right now. I said, if I go out now, somebody will see me and they will kill me. This was already in the area. But I was afraid there was somebody who notice to the police that my brother was hiding. And my brother was cut-- at that time, cut down with a cousin. And also, a farmer was killed with my brother together.

And I was afraid for this guy. If he will see me, he will see there's another witness is alive, and he might be the same thing. So I said, look, I'm going to go out as soon it gets dark. He says, no, you must go out no. So I just jumped out. And there was high corn growing next to his house. I went in into that corn, and I was sitting there for a while. And I went into look was sitting somewhere in the forest. I went in into the forest. When you're on forest, you would just go into the most grown in area where nobody should see you. And-- [INAUDIBLE]

And you sit. Sit. How long can you sit? You sit. And you don't have anything to read, and you don't have anything to do. And the horse fly were drawn in from the sweating, from the heat. It was very hot that time. And the red ants were coming in from the bottom and the big ants and they were biting you and the flies. And you were just shaking your head. You almost got crazy, meshuggah, just shaking your head.

I said to myself, oh, my God. I escaped from this concentration camp. If the war ends, I'll go out a crazy guy because I couldn't-- even if they didn't bite me, I already kept shaking my head.

And there was no water?

No water. No water. Where, water? And so I said-- I was sitting there a day. And you have to eat something. So went out into-- there were those black berries. And I ate myself up with black berries and I have a piece of bread. And I was vomiting later father I could see out because I had on an empty stomach, these black berries in the stomach. So I said, well, it's no way of doing. I'm going to look for-- I know that there are, some in another area, there's some Jews hiding in the forest.

And I was going out there. I took a rake and a bundle of grass on my shoulders so that I should look like a farmer. And I was going into that other forest where I knew that there are some Jews hiding. And I went over there and I was standing on a-- called the fire zone where it was cleared, so that when that fire breaks out here, it couldn't go over this side. It was

a clear pass like.

And I was standing and watching, maybe somebody is going to go through and I'm going to see. And I was standing about an hour. And I saw one run through. I started to run and calling. And he thought that this is a German. He didn't hear me. He was running so fast that it was impossible to catch him. But I caught up with him.

And so I came over there. It was a mother, two brothers-- three brothers, and then another woman was there. And they were living there in that part of the forest. And so being there, I went out at night to somebody. And I got bread who I knew from before the war. Gave me a bed at night. And--

We have to stop for a few minutes.

[INAUDIBLE] OK.

Yeah.

We'll do the rest of it.