

Good afternoon. I'm Bernard Weinstein, director of the Kean College Oral Testimonies Project of the Holocaust Resource Center. Assisting me today is Marcia Weissberg. I would like to welcome Sol Urbach. Mr. Urbach?

My name is Sol Urbach. I come from Poland. I was born in 1926 outside of Kraków, in the town by the name of Kalwaria. After my birth, my family had together five more children, which we were together, then, six children. Sometime in 1928, the family could not earn enough for a living in Poland and saw fit to go to Romania and remained in Romania from 1928 to 1933. In 1933, the Romanians didn't want to keep us as Jews in that country, and the family returned to Poland.

To the same town?

To Kraków, back to Kraków, and at that time, we located outside of Kraków, in Borek Fałęcki just on outskirts of Kraków. By that time, we were, as I said, six children already, and we began to make our life in Poland without the children knowing the language, without being able to enter Polish schools, but nevertheless, they accepted us into a Polish school under the conditions that we will not talk Yiddish or Romanian at home, thereby we would learn the Polish language quickly. And it truly happened that way that, by 1934, we spoke rather fluent Polish, and we could attend classes.

My father was a tailor. From what I know, it was not very easy to earn a living. It was a hard life, and our ambitions were to finish six, seven grades of school and from then on seek a job and try to help with providing for the family.

I attended school outside of Kraków by the name of [INAUDIBLE], which was right in the middle of Kraków, in the Jewish section of Kraków. It was located near the Maccabi, the famous football club. And my sisters, brothers, well, attended schools. I attended the religious school or the cheder in Podgorze, which was across the river from Kraków.

So we lived in Borek Fałęcki I attended religious school in Podgorze and at the daily school in Kraków, which meant that there was a walk from my home in Borek Fałęcki to my school of about 4 kilometers, and that we did on a daily basis. Rain, snow, whatever may come, we walked 4 kilometers. And we were in school.

Walking to school also, at times, created problems because somehow the non-Jewish children would always recognize Jewish children, and we were beaten up occasionally, and thrown stones at, and so on. So it was not such a simple thing as to simply walk to school as one would go to school here.

And life was generally difficult. The living conditions in a small apartment, eight of us, father trying to make a living, was difficulties, so our dreams were not that great. A bicycle would have been enough for all six children. There was no big demands on-- and we were rather happy with what we had. We did not need that much in our life at that time. By the year 1939--

Excuse me. How many people were in your household altogether?

Six children and father and mother. We had the family of uncles and a grandfather in Kalwaria that was a part of the family. And the other, my father's father, came from Oswiecim, which was later on the infamous Auschwitz. In our household, I would say there was simply one room. Maybe there was some small addition, which, at best, was two rooms, and the eight of us managed to be in there. And whatever we had to eat was quite satisfactory, and we did not look for great things.

In 1939, when the war broke out, confusion just hit us all. We had no idea what to do next, whether to stay home or run. There certainly were no organizations active as to help anyone, to tell them what to do next, so everybody was sort of on his own, as I remember. My family picked up, left the house in Borek Fałęcki and went someplace. I don't think they knew exactly where to go, but they did get on the road because they weren't safe at home.

Bombardments started, and on the road, of course, we didn't get too far. We only went about 4 or 5

kilometers outside of the house, and we saw that wherever we went it was much worse than where we left. So eventually we returned back home and stayed home, and by that time, the Germans had marched in, which was in September of 1939. When the Germans marched in--

Did you, yourself, have any kind of forewarning of what would happen, or were there any premonitions, any signs that you could tell of what would happen on September 1, 1939?

There was only this great talk of the imminent war that no one could hear in a radio or people talking, and of course, the Polish army was well prepared to deal with that. And there was never any fear, really. As you were growing up, as a youngster, you thought that Poland was probably the greatest country in the world if you just listened to the--

Had you heard anything about what was happening to the Jews in Germany?

Not myself at my age, no. I did not. I was not aware of any of the goings on, no, and neither was a Jewish population as such by way of being educated or being any-- or all having any leadership to enlighten people to what is happening. Some of the older people maybe had a better idea. I didn't, and I don't know whether anyone in my family--

In fact, it got to that point that when the Germans already marched and the Germans already were posted at bridges, my relatives still wondered who those soldiers are, whether they are potentially English because we heard so much about how England was going to enter the war with us that, actually, for a short while, the elder people thought these were English. So they couldn't be German soldiers because we heard so much of how they were going to be beaten and how quickly. So for a while we thought they were English, but nevertheless, we quickly realized that these were Germans.

The German forces that marched into Poland acted friendly in the beginning and certainly permitted people to get close to them, to the tanks and to the marching soldiers and all that. And we really did not really know what to expect, how bad could this get. In fact, in the very beginning, one would say to himself, well, things weren't that good in Poland to begin with. We were living in a sea of anti-Semitism, so it really can't get much worse. Things will probably improve. At least that's what went through my mind and potentially many other people.

But it did not take very long for us to realize that the Germans did not provide us with an improvement. In fact, things began to get worse immediately. Our schooling ceased. There was no school. There were no schools available anymore for us to attend. Cheders were closed. That was shut. There was no place to go.

In fact, we had nothing to do, no place to go, no way of earning a living anymore. Nobody was neither a tailor, so things got rather tough financially and with food, with kerosene or coal for the stoves and all that. And it required ingenuity, really, in those days, in 1939, 1940 to go through the winter, somehow gathering enough to feed the family.

It required an awful lot of effort on the whole part of the family that included standing on lines for bread if bread was available or going out into the country. And this was all difficult because somehow the non-Jews would spot us and recognize us as Jews, so even traveling into the country, buying some produce was not that easy. It was all very difficult.

And this was just the very beginning of a difficult life, and by 1940 we were forced into forced labor factories where we had to work. So a meager diet was provided by that time by the Germans while we were working. In 1940, we began to wear the armbands. The announcement was out that we have to wear the armbands so they would recognize us in the streets quickly, and we had no business going anyplace else but where we were directed.

And it was difficult to get outside of the city, or go by train, or leave any place. You really were locked into where you were directed to, which factory. And so we worked-- everyone that was able-bodied worked, father, mother. Everyone had some kind of a job to do, which was on command by the Germans.

In 1941, the announcement came out. The Germans announced that all the Jews will be reporting to-- from our area, that is, have to report to a central point in Kraków which would be then surrounded by barbed wires and a ghetto created. Well, my family did not respond to the first initial call that we must report to the ghetto, and they did not go.

My whole family, as a unit, at that time, in 1941, all of the rest of 1941, still continued living in the same home as we lived before in Borek Fałęcki outside of Kraków, thinking that somehow the war will come to an end and possibly we will make it just staying away from the ghetto.

Well, things were not that easy. I began working as a helper to a furniture maker at that time just because I had very little else to do, and I was observing these cabinet makers at work. And out of curiosity, I became a regular worker in that shop.

When I worked for a while for this fellow by the name Kaminski in that furniture shop, I became rather good at it, and this fellow, Kaminski, offered me a position to stay with him. And simultaneously, things became so difficult that my family had to report to the ghetto because the police already were warned to round us up if we did not volunteer and take us to the ghetto.

So my family, as a whole, picked up bundles, and we tried to-- at that time, we really had to find a way of getting in. It wasn't even easy to get in. But we had to make it to the ghetto, or else we would be in trouble. So while my family was already on the way to the ghetto, I still remained for a while working for this furniture shop, but it was entirely too lonesome for me to-- I was too frightened to be able to continue with that because--

Where did you live when you were working in the shop?

In the shop.

In the shop?

In the shop itself. And it was at the age of-- at that time, I was 16. It was frightening. I was out of the family the first time, so I did not last very long. I also had to follow my family into the ghetto.

The ghetto potentially had 40,000 people or so in the ghetto. Since we arrived very late, my whole family was assigned a room in a basement where all eight of us lived. And again, we were sort of in a suspension. We had nothing to do. Whatever was dished out in the way of food we had, but we did not earn any money or were able to buy anything.

Occasionally, most of the members of our family were rounded up and taken to different locations for forced labor. I, myself, was rounded up on one of those walks through the ghetto by a group of SS people who rounded up 100 people in early 1942, and they took us to-- at that time, those 100 people were taken to Oskar Schindler's factory outside of Kraków. Oskar Schindler operated an enamelworks factory outside of Kraków, and he requested that he be given 100 people as forced laborers.

And I was among that group. When we arrived at that group, the German guards presented us to Oskar Schindler. Oskar Schindler inspected the 100 of us, looked at all of us, and he picked me out as well as another friend of mine, who happened to be from the same school that I was. And Oskar Schindler said to the Germans, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], but the Germans, for whatever their reasons were, said, look, we bring you these people. You keep them. And that's the end, and they left. And that's how I was left in the factory of Oskar Schindler.

For the record, who was Oskar Schindler?

Oskar Schindler was a Sudeten German who, early on in 1938, has earned his keep with the Germans as a young, loyal party member and has made some contributions in helping the German Reich. And for that, they rewarded him by giving him a former Jewish factory in Kraków, and he began to operate this as his own.

And so I was left with that 100, and from then on, the SS guards picked us up daily from the ghetto and marched us to the factory. And in the evenings, they would March as back into the ghetto. Now, this was just for myself. The rest of the family was only employed occasionally by being taken to some other factories, or street cleanings, or whatever they needed, unloading of railroad cars and stuff like that.

What were your living quarters like in the Kraków ghetto?

This was a basement, in the basement. It was a room, a small room, in fact, assigned to us, and the whole family lived in that. As I said, we came rather late, so whatever was left we got. We didn't have anything else.

What did the enamel factory make?

The enamel metal factory-- it was producing pots and pans at that time, and on the surface, Oskar Schindler thought that he could enrich himself by simply producing these pots and pans and selling it. But not long after he took over he recognized that he cannot deal very easily with the Polish people and turn these products into cash, and he came up with the idea that if he had the former Jewish owner helping him with arranging these deals he would be able to fabricate, and sell, and so on.

It worked. He brought into his factory the former owner by the name of Bankier, and he located him in the back office. And he was the one that was dealing with the Polish clientele, as he had previously had. So the SS guards would be marching us daily into the enamelworks factory, and at night they would bring us back.

This went on for a good stretch of time, until about March 1943. In March 1943, the Germans decided to liquidate the Kraków ghetto and doing it very hastily. They had orders to liquidate as fast as they could, ship those as they saw fit to different camps and the remnants to the Kraków-Plaszów concentration camp outside the Kraków.

My whole family resided, at that time, in the ghetto, but I was, as I stated before, at work at the factory run by Oskar Schindler. Oskar Schindler was alerted of what is going on in the ghetto, and therefore he did not permit any one of us to be taken back together as we were doing every day. In other words, every day we would March back to the ghetto, but on this particular day, because he was alerted of the killings in the ghetto, he did not permit us to go home. He simply kept us overnight and over, potentially, three nights, until the ghetto was silenced.

In the meantime, at the ghetto-- as I said, this was in great haste, organized in order to do it in the shortest time as possible. And the only word that I heard about it was that my older brother was trying to reach his family, which was in a separated group, tried to run towards them, that he was shot on the spot. Now, this was only brought back to me on some later occasion by somebody what was there, but I don't know it for 100%. But he was the only one that was shot. The rest of the family most likely, but unknown at that time, was taken to Auschwitz.

After the three days were over, where Schindler kept us at the factory, he had to deliver us back, no longer to the ghetto, but to the newly-created concentration camp in Kraków-Plaszów, which was now housing some 60,000, 80,000 people, many barracks, horrible living conditions, watchtowers, the whole bit.

But nonetheless, Schindler had enough muscle to somehow see to it that these 100 that he employed were again being marched out of the concentration camp into his factory, so therefore I continued the-- except for a short while where I worked at a stone quarry until Schindler settled our coming back to work.

I went back to work and worked-- again, from March 1944, I continued my employment with that 100 group. Sometime during 1943 Schindler was told that he no longer can employ any Jews that live in a concentration camp, that no one can employ any people that live in a concentration camp, they would either work in the concentration camp or no place at all.

Well, it was at that time that Oskar Schindler came up with the idea that he would do what it takes to build a

concentration camp on his property so he would be able to continue keeping his labor force. Well, somehow, by travels to Berlin and all this, he discovered that he can build a concentration camp, but he would have to be able to employ a minimum of 1,000 Jews.

So with that in hand, with that approval, he proceeded to build a concentration camp on the grounds of the factory, and after a short stay in Kraków-Plaszów, we were all again delivered back to the camp inside the factory complex. And Oskar Schindler also got an increased force to 1,000 people. He obviously did not have enough work for the 1,000 people force, so he began to build some additional plants, some additional buildings which would produce one or another thing for the Defense Department.

None of this ever materialized. He simply was making motions, and he utilized his labor force mainly for the pots and pans fabrication, and on occasion, he also delivered us to help out with unloading of cars or shoveling of streets from snow and all that because he could not use that whole labor force until the buildings got under way where he was using all of the 1,000 people.

He also made an agreement at that time, evidently, with an adjoining factory by the name of NKF which was also some kind of a producer of defense instruments. And so this labor force covered, now, two factories. One was the enamelworks and the other one, the NKF.

Excuse me. At this time, the Plaszów camp was still standing, was still in existence?

The Kraków-Plaszów camp was still in existence, and we simply became inmates of another concentration camp, which now was located on the grounds of the factory. Oskar Schindler, as a civilian, did not have anything to do with the guarding of us. There was a whole contingency of German SS guards that were providing for the guarding of us.

But I remember incidents during the construction of this camp where Oskar Schindler milled amongst us and talked to us, to the inmates, and his remarks on occasion were that the watchtowers are needed only because we actually will have it so good here that the outside population might want to come in. So they will be protecting us from them coming in.

Excuse me. Was he in uniform, or was he in the civilian clothes?

He was a civilian by and large, but when he needed, he put on a very sharp SA uniform. When he mingled with generals, he also had a very sharp-looking uniform to look like the generals. That's how he got away with a lot of the undertakings that he-- and this factory went on and produced whatever-- pots and pans-- they could. They built a factory. They made attempts to get the factory going.

But in the midst of all this, sometime at the end of 1943 or beginning of '44, an English spy plane traveling across Poland was either shut down or crashed, and it crashed right into our small camp, which housed the 1,000 people. As it happens, this was already towards the time when they were already moving a lot of the people back into Kraków-Plaszów because the Russians were already making advances from the east, and they didn't know exactly where to move next.

This was at the end of-- and the beginning of 1944. In other words, through the winter of 1944. So after the plane crashed, no one was killed in our camp because the plane simply crashed into an area which was already evacuated a short while ago. It was sheer luck that no one lived there because the plane actually fell-- the fuselage fell into that camp with the ammunition exploding all through the night with the pilot still being fastened to the seat in his cockpit. He burned in that fire.

While this happened, of course, they closed the rest of the camp, and they were shipping-- a good number of us they were shipping back to Kraków-Plaszów. Once again, Oskar Schindler tried to retain a small a force as he could to keep up some of the works that were still necessary. So the SS guards were helping him in segregating down from the large group to a small group.

And I somehow stood, and I felt that I was segregated to be shipped out of the camp. And instincts just told me to run out of my line that was in front of the SS guards. I ran towards Oskar Schindler, and declared to

him that, Herr Schindler, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], which meant that-- I told him I just didn't know what else to say. I simply said that if I am not left with the group in his factory, then there will be no carpenter left.

Well, Oskar Schindler took me back, and says, you're right. And he put me back into the group that would be left, and that's how I was left until the last day of that camp in the factory. The rest of the group was shipped out to Kraków-Plaszów, and they were already in shipments to Mauthausen, to Dachau, and so on. And the 300 of us that remained were also forced to close up this camp, and we were shipped to Kraków-Plaszów again in sometime in September of 1944.

And this camp was totally closed. We were up there in Kraków-Plaszów, and we did not know of what is to happen next. But what was really happening is that the Germans, because of the pressure from the Eastern Front, were urged to simply quickly liquidate this camp. And in October of 1944, all the Jews from the camp in Kraków-Plaszów were loaded up into cattle cars, and most of the groups went to either Auschwitz, Dachau, Mauthausen.

Our group, that is, the 300 people from the former enamelworks in Kraków, were shipped to Gross-Rosen. Unbeknown to me at that time, the group of the 300 grew back to 1,000, and what has happened evidently is that Schindler was still influencing these events. And he demanded that he be given 1,000 people again.

Now, of course, of the original 1,000 people he had employed, 700 were already shipped out to different camps, Mauthausen, Dachau, and so on, so therefore some new 700 people from the Kraków-Plaszów camp joined us on the trip to Gross-Rosen, and also-- I did not know it at that time-- this was all prearranged it was Oskar Schindler, that he would still be receiving these 1,000 people for his employment in the factory that he was now obtaining in the middle of Czechoslovakia and hoping to again start up some kind of an industrial complex.

These 1,000 of us traveled to Gross-Rosen. In Gross-Rosen, we were met by SS guards, stripped of all our clothes, marched into the showers. In the showers, we were also sat down, and our heads were shaved, or the hair was cut down to a crew cut.

But in the middle of the head they shaved a 2-inch strip to prevent us from escape. The hair cutting and shaving was done by Ukrainian and Polish prisoners. In the process of it, they helped along the shaving process by spitting on our heads to get the 2-inch strip shaved.

We were kept in Gross-Rosen for about a week. Conditions were horrible. Food was dished out in the form of a soup with nothing in it once daily. People were kicked, beaten, but nevertheless, after seven days, they assembled all of us-- that's the 1,000 group that arrived from Kraków-Plaszów-- and they called us, actually, by name, which was the first time during the war that I have heard my name called, really.

They called name by name in alphabetical order, and obviously, since my name is Urbach, starting with a U, it took a good night before my name was called. And the purpose of that is that they called, name after name, all the 1,000 people, loaded us back into a cattle car for shipment to an unknown destination at that time.

But on arrival, we learned that we are in Brünnlitz, Czechoslovakia, which was near Brno, and Oskar Schindler was there already. He somehow obtained a new textile-- not a new factory, but that was, for him, new, a textile factory in which he was going to set up shop. And whatever he was going to manufacture was not known to us, but we began spending the time of rebuilding that little factory complex and setting up machinery for something that might happen later on.

But from what I know, nothing was ever produced in this camp. He was simply preparing for something that would happen later on, but he never got any production going. But he was able to maintain this camp by occasionally bringing railroad cars in. In other words, this confusion was already going on, and the Germans were losing the war. The Russians were marching forwards. Americans and the English were coming from the other side.

So Oskar Schindler was able to get out to a railroad station and maneuver, manipulate some railroad cars

which were loaded with goods coming from other factories, simply brought them into his factory, and put his own label on it, and shipped it out as a-- shipped it out as something that he has produced. But obviously, nobody knew any better in those days.

When he was not producing anything, how was he able to get away with any kind of accounting of his production, his shipment? Did he have to keep records? Weren't there checks by the Nazis, by the SS, for example?

Simply, he was a opportunist and a quite capable person with a high rank that he impressed whoever he was dealing with as one that knows what he is doing, and he's beyond having to account with anyone. I remember one particular incident inside the camp one time were the population outside of the camp, that is-- I'm speaking of Brännlitz in Czechoslovakia.

The population outside of the camp reported to the authorities that somehow living conditions inside the camp are somewhat better than they have outside of the camp. In other words, they saw that there was some food there, actually, and we were working, and we had some food. And so he was reported that something is going to go on that just isn't right.

And I remember distinctly the time where he got into a car. We were in fear because Oskar Schindler had a habit of talking to some of his inmates. Some of our people were actually close to him, and he would share with them of what was happening. So the inmates knew that we were in trouble somehow, and Oskar Schindler has to leave, and report, and give some accounting of what's going on in the camp.

Oskar Schindler loaded up a truck-- I'm sorry, a car-- with all kinds of goods like chocolates, and whiskies, and everything that he possessed in his warehouses, and he went to wherever he went to report to the higher officials about the goings on inside the camp. And of course, when he got back, he was drunk. His engineers that went with him was drunk. The inmates were sort of hiding inside the camp and looking out of what troubled to expect.

But all we got out of this when he returned is that he was fairly drunk, and he went outside of the barracks and pointed to the engineer that he will have to come up with some kind of a very high fence, a solid kind of a metal fence so the outside would not see anymore of what's going on inside. And he pulled this over-- again, he pulled this one, and we continued living. And we did not have that much food, but we could make it through the day, really.

I, myself, was as a carpenter. I was employed by Oskar Schindler in his own villa. Myself and another friend of mine, who was also a cabinet maker, furniture maker, were marched daily to this villa that was located inside a mill. In other words, behind the water, over a bridge, he had his own-- Oskar Schindler has his own house, in which he very rarely lived.

His wife was there occasionally. He himself rarely spent any time there, but nevertheless, he kept us there as though we were doing something useful. In fact, what we were doing is impressing those two guards that were watching us, that we're polishing furniture, that we're fixing furniture, that we're doing things that could have been done in a day or two. They lasted for months sometimes, and that's how we stayed there.

Now, during this employment inside that villa-- and since this was located in a mill-- and at the end of 1944, the SS guards were already composed of older gentlemen, and once they got us into this villa, they would simply doze off and not know what was going on. So we took advantage-- the two of us would jump out of the window of the villa, not both of us together, but one at a time.

And we would go to the mill and either steal or were given by the people working in the mill some produce products like flour, or corn, or whatever. And we would fill up our pants with tying the bottoms of it or loading them up into our toolboxes, and then, in the evening, we would hand them out to other peoples that needed the nourishment.

And by and large, in Brännlitz, very few of our people died, and if they died, they almost died of natural causes. One of the incidents that happened inside the camp, also, is that, again, somebody reported to the

authorities that, amongst the inmates, there are children, actually, in the camp, and one day the SS guards from the higher up offices came in to remove those children from the camp. And as far as I remember, there were two children of the age of possibly eight, or nine, or 10. Those children were taken away and brought to Auschwitz.

This I know from later on, reconstructing these events, that Schindler had enough muscle to get those two children returned back to the camp in Brünnlitz. In fact, I know that one of those--

Were they the children of inmates?

--of inmates, yes. One of them that I remember distinctly was a child of a man by the name of Rosner. Rosner was a known family--

Musician, wasn't he?

Huh?

He was a musician, wasn't he?

Musicians-- the whole family were musicians, and one of these kids belonged to one of the Rosners. Now, I know that this Rosner kid who was pulled out pulled out of our camp to be delivered to Auschwitz and then returned to us later, after the war, joined the Navy and became a high-ranking officer in the United States Navy.

We had incidents of beatings in this camp, in Brünnlitz, mainly coming from non-Jewish inmates who came to us by way of-- what I neglected to also say is that the women that were together with us in the camp in Kraków were shipped to Auschwitz, and they were also pulled out of Auschwitz to be delivered to Oskar Schindler's factory in Brünnlitz.

Now, those 300 women were marched from Auschwitz to Brünnlitz. Well, I don't know exactly the distances, but it was many, many days and nights of walk. And in those walks, there were non-Jewish guards that helped with that march from Auschwitz the Brünnlitz, and the women were severely beaten, punished on the road to-- and then those inmates remained with us in that Brünnlitz camp.

I learned to steal fairly well, and I was able to steal things from German trucks as they were delivering goods to other places. I had the ability-- I was very quick, very young, very foolish, and I did not fear anything. So I was able to steal and give away things during the stay in the camp.

In fact, many of those people remember to this day that I was very helpful with their diets because of my stealing abilities. During the course of the stay in this camp, some transport arrived in our camp that was composed of Hungarian Jews, and they arrived in our camp in a horrible state, most of them frozen to death in the cattle cars. And the rest of them we had to unload and help them get into our camp, and some of them made it through the war. A lot of them did not. They were severely destroyed during the transport in the middle of the winter.

Our stay continued with the ups and downs, with sometimes having enough food and sometimes not having enough food, but by and large, we all survived. And on May 7, 1945, Oskar Schindler called an assembly of all our inmates together into one factory building. And he announced to us that tomorrow, which is May 8, the Germans will sign a surrender, and we will be free people.

In that declaration, he also told us that he has prepared 30 revolvers which he has placed in his office, that we should get a hold of-- those who know how to handle the revolvers or whatever ammunition or guns he had there should get a hold of them so that we would protect ourselves in case some stray German unit still came by and wanted to harm us.

Why do you think he did all these things?



Well, he began to see early on in the war that things are not that great for Germany as he envisioned as a very young man back in Czechoslovakia, that Germany will conquer the world and he will ride in on that wave and be a big business tycoon or otherwise. When he began to recognize that things-- potentially, he also recognized that what the Germans were doing was not exactly what he had in mind. When people were killed in masses as they were, he began to change his mind as to hanging onto the Germans and helping them, in fact, turned the other way but still always acting as a loyal German.

He had no way of operating if he did not continue acting as a loyal German. There was a time during the war that he was jailed because of suspicions that he was not very loyal, and he was kept in jail with another known Nazi concentration camp leader by the name of Goth, who headed the Kraków-Plaszów concentration camp. But they released him again because of his enormous influence that he had all over the German Empire. So they released him, and he came back to the camp and operated again.

But from my point of view, he was a fellow that was seeking opportunities but did not want to join in the ranks of killing people. I have not known him to lift a hand on any inmate or to harm any inmate, so I would have to judge that he was a decent human being that, for a while, was taken by the great anticipation and promises of the German Reich but certainly did not want to join in on and get in on the mass killings and all that.

So when he made this announcement, of course, it was one of those moments that one cannot forget, people crying, screaming, laughing, not knowing what to do next. The war is over, and everyone was confused. But nevertheless, we continued. Oskar Schindler asked that two of our people volunteer to see him through, get him out of the zone that we are in now. We were obviously in the Russian zone, and if he was captured by the Russians-- he was astute enough to know all these things at that time-- he would be killed. He would be considered a Nazi and a conspirator with the Nazis, and he would have been killed by the Russians, or Poles, or Czechoslovaks.

So he recognized that, and he asked for two of our inmates to help him get across the border, into the American zone. Two of our people volunteered, and they went through battlefields and dangerous territories and helped him escape, essentially, now into the American zone. We were left in the camp, and on May 9, the Russian soldiers marched into our camp. Just like Schindler anticipated, on 8, the Germans surrendered, and on the 9th, the Russians entered our camp and freed all of us.

In other words, we were told that we are free. Of course, most of us did not know what to do next. When we gathered up our thoughts after a short stay still in the camp until we thought out our plans, I joined was a group of 17 people, four women, 13 men. We got a hold of some horses. By this time, the war was coming towards an end, and there were stray horses, wagons.

We picked up a wagon, a pair of horses, and we loaded them up. We loaded them up with whatever little we had, and we began our trek towards our hometown, which was Kraków, Poland, in hope of locating some of our relatives. This trip took us many, many days, still going through Russian territory. All of it was occupied now by the Russians, and it was not very safe.

We were people without any papers. We could not prove that we were survivors of a camp, or spies, or anything else. It was rather dangerous, and we were still subject to being stopped on the road and investigated, what we're really doing there. But in a week or two weeks, possibly, we made it back to Poland, and upon arrival in Poland, once again, this must have been the most difficult time of my life or the most difficult point of my life because, now that I was in Kraków, I had absolutely no idea on what I do next.

I already made the trip back to where my home was before the war, and I discovered that no one has returned. And I have absolutely no place to go. This is already after the war but prior to any knowledge that there are organizations that could help me. I found myself totally in the street of Kraków without the other people. Most of them found some relatives. Or some of them found some relatives, I should say. And some of us that didn't simply grouped together, and we made our home in a former student building in Kraków.

Excuse me, Mr. Urbach. We're going to stop for a few minutes to change the tape, and we'll continue momentarily.

Is it an hour already? Did I do all that?

Yes.