

Welcome. I am Joseph Preil, co-director of the Holocaust Resource Center here at Kean College of New Jersey. Today is Friday, November 13, 1992.

And we are privileged to have with us as our guest Mr. Teddy Zweig, who resides in Brooklyn, and who has a son, Martin Zweig, who lives in south Brunswick. And Mr. Zweig will relate to us some of his experiences during the war, during World War II during the Holocaust, and his experiences there. Mr. Zweig, let us begin by your telling us where and when you were born.

I'm born March 2, 1923.

And where were you born?

Opatów, Poland.

Where is Opatów?

It's middle Poland. It's between Kielce-- probably a famous place now known, which was the pogrom after the war-- and Czestochowa, which is a very, very religious Catholic town.

In Opatów, what was the general population? And what was the Jewish population?

I don't know exactly the population. But it was mostly Jewish-- culture Jewish, Zionist Jewish, and religious town.

What do you mean by culture Jewish?

We had a lot of theaters coming from outside. Mostly, youth belong to Zionist organization.

You were 16 when the war broke out.

Yes.

Can you tell us something about your education until then?

I went to school. I went to Hebrew school, to Mizrahi. I come from very, very poor home, which one-- only a mother, no father. And my father--

When did your father die?

When my father died, I don't know, because my name is after my father.

Oh, so he died before--

He died before.

--you were born.

Which I know, from history, that he was here in the United States. And he left, because he didn't want working Shabbat. And then he went back, and the first war broke out. And that's it, what I know for my father.

As a child, I was one that-- I was playing in the garden. And the horse and buggy went over me and broke my back. And I suffer a lot in my back because of this.

How old were you at that time?

A baby, maybe one, a year.

How large was your family?

I had three brothers, two and me-- I mean, two more-- and a sister.

So there were three boys and one girl--

One girl, right.

--in the family. And you, obviously, were the youngest.

I'm the youngest.

And when the war broke out, there were the four of you, plus your mother, five.

When the war broke up, the two brothers and my sister and my mother was living in the town. But my brother, the other one-- of course, we both are poor. And they went to Łódź. He was working in Łódź, which I saw him maybe-- in my life in Poland, I saw him all my life maybe two or three times when he came for Passover home. That's all I saw my brother.

So that's the oldest brother.

Yes.

All right. Now, what happened to the family as a result of the war?

As a result of the war, three brothers-- we are three brothers. We are alive. Two live in Israel, and one here. And my sister and my brother--

And your mother.

I'm sorry. My sister and my mother were shot.

Your sister and your mother were shot.

Shot in Poland in Opatów, which I'm glad I know what happened, where they were buried.

What happened?

Now came-- in [INAUDIBLE], they got [? the girl. ?] But it was a time where they needed people to work in labor camps. And they took out young-- [INHALES] they took out young kids. We were sitting on a field to go on trucks to ship us out to the factories or the camps.

And I was lucky. I had a brother. He was a-- I mean, I'm sorry, a cousin. He was policeman in the ghetto and told me and my brother that my sister and my mother-- and my sister was hiding, but she didn't want to leave my mother alone. She was hiding in the basement. And somebody went out.

It was 59 people in the basement. Somebody had to go out for air. A Polack called the SS, and they came. And they took all the 59 people on the spot. They gunned them down.

They killed them all.

Killed them all.

And why did the Pole do that to them? Was there some sort of reward?

Probably they wanted-- they got rewards, yes. Yes, they got rewards. There was a lot of cases like that.

You've heard from others about this?

I heard about. But I didn't hear-- later on, this was a lot of places, after they took the people.

When did this take place? Do you know the date?

It's hard for me to know the date.

Was this right at the beginning of the war, or at the beginning of the war?

My brother would know the date more. But I think-- they have yiskor in Israel, and the same thing. I think it was in November for the date. I think, that, I know.

Of what year? Do you know?

The year '42.

Oh, this was '42.

Yes.

Now, your part of Poland-- between '39 and '41, was your part of Poland German Poland or Russian Poland?

No, Polish, Poland-- German. I mean German, occupied by the Germans. It was occupied--

So you were always under the Germans.

Yeah. At that time, the Russian wasn't in war with the German.

Now, what happened after the war broke out in your town?

After it broke out, it was winter time. It was 1939. Little by little, it was like somebody plans, German plans a war. It was everything planning. And they start to put out-- to make smaller and smaller, they put out-- these older people, the Jewish, was living all around the town. So they put us together, little by little, and made a circle.

Would you call it a ghetto?

A circle, a ghetto. And they took us to work in the town. It was a town, a factory, where they make brushes to clean the horses. And a lot of people were working in that places, because they need them. And they need the brushes to clean the horses.

And there it was a lot of work to do. There was a lot of snows. The army came in. They had to clean the snow from the horse.

And you had to get so much and so much, enough time, how much to clean up. If we couldn't do, we got beating. Or they would undress you naked to do that work.

To work naked.

Yeah.

Now, this was in 1939 going into 1940.

Yeah, this wasn't-- '39, it wasn't, so '40. Us, later, they got-- like I said, it was made. It was planned, like

soldier, like the Germans. It was planned. Every time, it got a little bit tougher, and tougher, and tougher. It wasn't right away just bad.

So how long did the work continue? How long did you continue to work?

In the city?

In Opatów.

For three years, till 1939, till they took us, till they shipped us away.

Oh. So you were living in your own quarters?

Own quarter. We was working for the -- for the--

It was like you had your own apartment?

Yeah, we had one room. We were sleeping in one room, four people in a room.

Were you ever in a labor camp or in a concentration camp?

Yes, after 1942, since they took us away.

In '42.

In '41 or '42.

So '41, '42.

Right.

Oh. In other words, when you were in the ghetto, you call that a camp.

The ghetto was a ghetto. We was living in the ghetto. Let's say, like people living in Harlem, all the Black people living in Harlem.

All the Jews were going to there and living. And that's it. But after, they take us away to a labor camp. There was already something else. They was working in factories.

So how long were you in the ghetto? And when did you go into the labor camp?

End of '41, and beginning of '42. This when they took us on the trucks, they shipped us out.

Where did they ship you to?

They shipped me-- at that time, the first camp was Skarzysko, an ammunition factory.

And this was about '41, '42.

Yeah, end of. Yeah.

And how long were you there?

Till about '44. We were shipped out--

So in other words, you were there about four years.

A long time. Yes. Yes.

And you were in the same camp, in Skarzysko.

The same camp.

That was near Opatów?

About 50 miles, 50 kilometer away.

Can you tell us--

Yes.

Can you tell us the routine that you--

OK.

--went through?

When we came to camp, to labor camps, they took us in a big hall. We must be, at that time, maybe 600, 700 people. It was built like bunkers, like shelves, like they go in a factory. Then we had to live like-- we had to sleep like sardines, like you open up sardines, head to feet, head to feet. We got fed.

And from there-- OK. And there was nothing-- on wood, on straw. People was living on the lice. And then we, ourself, threw out the straw, there was living on the wood, on the bunker. We call them bunker. We were sleeping on the wood.

And we got to eat in the morning. Every day, they took us out to count. And then we had a lot of lice. And the kapos-- we called them kapos-- they gave out bread, slices bread, portions. And lots of times, the kapo want to eat their own bread, the slice of bread.

But people was laying dead. They didn't report it, because sometimes they count the people every day. Sometime, every two days. Sometime, every three days, and sometime twice a day, to see how many people there are in the camp till they find out there is less people, less portions bread, you got it.

And I saw people laying, ate at the eyes, from the eyes from the rats, the flesh, because the people was laying dead till they took them out and buried them.

Every day, it was two shifts to go to work, work in the factory. There was a morning shift and a night shift. The factory was across the-- I mean, the camp was across the street from the factory. They count us going out from the camp. And they count us coming in to see if we-- nobody is missing.

In the camp, there was freedom. You could walk around from one barrack to the other one. They didn't stop you. You could walk around. You could do anything you want til you went to work.

You said that, when you came and they counted you, or something like that, there were about 600 or 700 of you.

Yeah, something like that, I said, because--

That was the number of people who came that day?

That day. That day. That day.

About how many people were in the camp?

Before?

Altogether, would you say?

I can't say.

Was it a large camp of 2,000 people?

It's a large, yeah. Yeah, it's large, large. They didn't come only from our town. They came from all over.

Men and women?

Yes. Men were living on one side, and women was living on the other side.

Any children?

No. No. You could go to the women's side. But you couldn't sleep very nice there.

Now, I would assume, if there were men and women, there were husbands and wives, too.

Probably.

There were families.

Probably. Probably. Probably.

Did they have children?

I didn't see no children.

No. But did they have children outside the camp? Did you talk--

We couldn't go out. We was living all--

--to each other?

When you work in the camp, you could talk to the other, each other. Sure.

So were you aware-- now, for instance, you were single.

Yes.

You weren't married at the time.

Yes.

But others could have been married. If they were married, they might have been married and have had children who were not in camp.

Maybe. I--

You don't know.

I don't know. I can't tell you. I know from people what I know. Those people, who I know from my town-- I don't know. I was living all the time. I know, who is close to me, nobody had children. And nobody was married.

Oh. They were all single, your--

Yeah, right.

And you were there for three years.

Yes.

Every day was the same routine.

Every day was the same routine, no day off. We just went--

And no changes.

No changes. What do you mean by changes?

Nothing changed. There was 365 days a year.

Yes.

You woke up in the morning.

You go to work. Or you're night shift.

You get counted.

You went night shift to work. You get counted. You had your food. Then-- but only one thing, we got it. Every time when came a new group, we got new clothing, good clothing.

Really?

Good clothing-- I mean, not new. I mean new for myself. You understand? But I don't say new from the factory. Looks like from somebody, people, from other people. We got shoes. We got clothing.

This sounds--

[INAUDIBLE]

In terms of what you hear about the camps, this sounds--

Yeah. But from where did they get this clothing?

From the other people.

I don't know from where. But from where did they get the clothing? Well, wait. We didn't work in this clothing. They gave the other clothing, good clothing-- nice pants, good pants. And the same thing, like you go into the army, they give you new uniform, that's it. civilian clothing.

This sounds much better than what you hear from the other camps.

Yes, that's true. There's some better camps, and some not such a good camps.

Did you realize at the time that this was what would be considered a better camp?

No, I realized it was a labor camp. They needed me. I was working there. They needed. When new people came in, a new transport came in, they shipped-- the ship went out from the old people.

What were the thoughts of the people, day by day, as they were having this experience?

We didn't know nothing. We came to work. Look, I had my portion bread. I had my soup. And we came to work.

What can you do? We had to go. What can you do? We came to work. What do we know? What can we know?

Did you feel you had enough to eat?

Not enough to eat. So this is why people got sick, and they died.

Was that a common occurrence, that a lot of people died?

Yes. Yes. Yes.

What was the difference between people that died and the people who lived?

Who got sick? A lot of people got the typhus, sick. There was no doctors. You couldn't tell the doctor you're sick. You couldn't say you got-- they buried you, or they shot you.

Anybody who was sick got shot?

Right. If they went in that, they got shot. And if you got typhus, sooner or later, you have to die. But let me make clear. It's different between a concentration camp and a labor camp.

A labor camp, they needed you. They need people to work. They need ammunition. A labor camp is just waiting for the death.

In other words, they let you work.

For us as you're healthy, as you're healthy.

When you're healthy, they ship you away. Where they ship you, we don't know. I don't know.

How many people were shipped? Were large groups shipped away, or small groups?

No, when they came into 1,000, they took 2,000. They were going to make an-- they called them an appell. Then you say, you are, you are, you are, you are. Then they went out and That's it. And they put them in trucks. They took them someplace else.

Did you ever understand how they selected the ones who were called out from the appell and shipped--

No. --away and those who were allowed to remain?

They just looked at you. That's it.

In other words, you went through this for three years.

Yeah, we went through. Sure.

You stood there. And for three years, you were not asked to leave.

Well, you passed by. He didn't like your face, or something like that. And that's it. And matter of fact, the head from the camp was a cripple, a hunchback guy with a dog all the time.

A German.



Yeah, sure. He was the head from the camp.

Yeah.

And then, the other ones was Jewish inside. All those things were Jews. He walked around the whole day with a dog. And what do they call this? What they have on the horses, what they're hitting the horse.

A whip?

Whip. Sorry.

And what did he do with the--

He wanted it, he hit you. He hit you. He wanted to tell you, lay down. He hit you. He hit you.

He did it a lot of people?

He did it.

For what reasons?

Nothing. Pleasure. Crazy.

Did he ever hit you?

No.

For some reason, you were--

That's it. No, he just-- who take it -- make it . He got crazy. He said, today, now an appell. This is people where they live, where they was working night time.

Of course, when people was working, he didn't do that, because people would work night time. To make an appell, he called to the Jewish kommandant. To make an appell, he went around. He said, you are, you are. If he want to hit you, he hit you 25, 30 times on your behind. That's it.

Were you nervous there?

If I was nervous?

Were you nervous?

I was, over there, healthier than any place-- no headache, nothing. After I came here, right away, I had to eat tranquilizers. I had six tranquilizers a day all the time. I live on tranquilizers.

Now. But the--

Aspirins.

But then you were able to--

No pains, nothing at all. No pains.

Do you understand that?

I don't. No pains at all. But who got sick, then got sick more so with typhus. Typhus, this was the main sick.

But I can tell you, for the whole, it was so many hundreds or thousands of people. Maybe that one was sick. I wasn't sick.

And that saved you.

Saved me to work in the camp, so far.

In other words, if you try to understand how is it that you were able to survive three years of this treatment, it was your fortune of good health.

I don't know. Should I call it good health or luck? It depends what you believe. If you believe in luck, then it's luck. If-- look, people are going to work, right? Well, it's common one get killed, but another one, he doesn't hurt them.

So this went on for about three solid years.

Three solid years.

And you were in the camp the whole time. And your brother was in the camp the--

Yes.

--the whole time?

Same brother.

And he also managed to--

Yeah.

--be there the whole time.

He was sick on typhus.

How did he--

But he didn't go to typhus. He sweated through by himself and was all right.

He didn't tell anybody.

Nothing.

I mean, some of the prisoners knew. But they didn't say anything.

Yeah, I know it. His friends knew it. The other one didn't know.

And they covered up for him.

They covered up.

So this was until '44.

This was till '44. Then the Russians start to come closer to this town. Then they shipped from one place to the other. And then they shipped me to another camp, working camp, labor camp-- not concentration camp, a labor camp.

They shipped you to another camp?

Czestochowa was another.

Yeah. They shipped you to Czestochowa.

Czestochowa. It was another camp.

This was-- in what part of 1944 do you think that this happened?

I think it was almost the end of '44, almost the end, maybe the middle.

In Skarzysko, you were about three years.

Yes.

In Czestochowa--

Czestochowa.

--you were how long?

A few months.

A few months in 1944.

Yes.

So you went in in one part of 1944, and you went out another part.

Yeah. Let me make clear. I'm not going exactly to the dates. It's so many years ago, which I can give you no dates. But approximately, this was a time.

All right. So you were there for a few months in 1944.

And then they shipped us to--

Was it-- it was either the beginning of 1944, or the second half of 1944.

Yes. Yes. Yes.

Which one was it?

I think it was in the middle. I--

In the middle.

Is it so important, the month or the date?

No. I'm just trying to get the picture for myself to understand what happened. And then, later on in 1944, you left Czestochowa.

They shipped us to Buchenwald.

And then you went to Buchenwald.

Yes.

And in Buchenwald, you were--

I was--

--liberated.

--liberated by the third--

The Third Army?

--army.

That's General Patton.

Tank. Yeah, Third, tank division.

All right. Now, the number of months that you were in Czestochowa-- let's say you were there about a half a year. What did you do there?

We wasn't working too much no more, because it was a smaller factory. We were just waiting, hang around, sitting around. That's all.

I wasn't working. A lot of people was working, because it was smaller factories. And they didn't produce so much bullets no more, because it was almost ended, the war. The Russian wasn't far away.

See, as the Germans ran away from the Russian side, they took us with them. They didn't let us stay. Let's say they came here, close to here. They took the whole thing to put them here. They came here, they put them here. And this is the way. This is the way it was.

You were transported from one to the other.

Correct.

And--

On trains from the men, and trucks. The trains was closed up like cattles.

And the food in the second camp, in Czestochowa, was the same like the first camp, like Skarzysko?

Same thing. Even less. Even less.

Less.

Yes.

It can't be less. We got only two slices of bread a day. But even less, we got.

How do you go through a whole day with having nothing to do? I mean, everybody was going around. You wake up. And what do you-- how does the day go by?

Look, it's not like here. You're going out. You have nothing to do. You're going out for the Germans. You miss-- you get bored. You do get bored. Just went around, and walked around, and that's it.

And you spoke to people.

We spoke. They let you. Inside, they let you do anything you want.

And what did you discuss? Do you remember? You knew nothing about the war.

No.

What did you understand? Why were you being shipped from Skarzysko to Czestochowa? Did you understand that, that something's going on in the war?

Yeah, we heard it. We heard. We heard it, that the Russian coming close. We heard it.

So the feeling in the camp must have been--

Yeah. That they're closer--

--that was good.

Yeah. That was good. Sure, it was good.

Was that the first good news you heard?

And we was praying every day that the airplanes should come to bomb the camp.

Would you say that was the first good news you heard in the few years of the war, that the Russians were--

Yeah, the Russians were near--

--coming?

--because it would be better, because we knew that they're running. If not, they wouldn't ship us. Why do they ship us out? Must be some reason.

But you--

But we know [INAUDIBLE].

--you received no reports.

No. No. No.

You were sealed off from the world.

Right. Right.

And then you went from Czestochowa to Buchenwald.

See, it could be some people-- I don't know. I just talking for myself. We was waiting between Polacks. Polish people was waiting there, too. Maybe some people knew it from the Polish people what's going outside. I don't know. I don't know.

Did anything of significance, any events, any happenings take place in any of the camps that you recall very vividly?

Except killing?

What kind of killing are you talking about?

Shooting people or hang them?

They shot people in all the camps?

Sure, everybody. If you didn't do it, they took you out. Not in front of you, but we knew they took them out to the woods, or we took this guy out.

We know this one took five people out. He took six people out. And they're shot in the woods. Every camp was in the woods.

And this was going on all the time?

All the time.

Could you ever figure out why certain people were being pulled out?

Some people would run away. Some people went close to the wires.

Just for going close to it. They didn't touch it.

No. Just going close. You had to go be away. If you went close, right away, they shot you.

On the spot.

On the spot.

And this was a daily occurrence.

Daily occurrence. Sometime two, sometime nothing, sometime three, and sometime four. But we heard it, that somebody got shot.

You heard it, or you saw it yourself?

No, we heard it. We heard it. They took us out. They took them out in the woods. And then we heard shots.

But they didn't kill anybody in front of you--

No.

--as an example?

No. No. I didn't see.

In other words, they never announced that they were doing this.

No. No. No. No. No. They announced, if you go into the wire, you'll be shot. They knew that. If you don't stay in the line good when you get your portion, or something like this, you'll be shot.

They pull you right out.

They pull you. Right. If you're going-- we had to go across a street. If you don't stay in line, if you just move a little bit like you want to run away, you'll be shot. That's what I said. But I never-- I heard people got shot. I heard bullets. But I never saw any shot.

And this was a daily-- you could say a daily occurrence.

Daily. Daily doesn't mean it had to be every day. But I heard it.

And sometimes there were more than--

More, of course.

--just the two. Is that--

Of course. It can be a group. It can be four, five, six.

And this is true for all three camps.

This is just in the two camps.

The two camps.

But--

That means in Starzysko--

--in Buchenwald was a different story.

OK.

Buchenwald was a different story.

So you described what it was like to be in Skarzysko and Czestochowa.

If they gave--

And they were labor camps. Not Buchenwald.

In the labor camp, you had a quota to make so much and so much bullets, and something like. I didn't have no quota, because I was a electrician. I went around fixing machines.

If they didn't have it, they took you, and they gave you a beating. If you didn't get it two or three times, then they took you out. And they'd kill you if you didn't make the quota.

All right. Now, what about Buchenwald?

OK. In Buchenwald, we came in, like I say, end of 1944. It was two camps. One, they call a large camp. And one, they would call a small camp.

So if you count the end of 1944, you were there about a half year--

Yeah.

--until liberation.

Right.

All right. So what was your life like that half year?

In the big camps, the large camps, they had all nationalities. They had Communists. They had Americans. In the small camp--

Prisoners of war.

Yes. In small camp-- the big camps was builded not shacks, nice buildings. It's with bricks. In the small was shacks, wooden shacks. And they took out-- it was separate, with wires, with live wires. And then, we were

sitting. They took us also to work.

So who was in the small camp?

Me. Jews.

Only Jews.

Only Jews in my barrack.

You don't know how many were in one as compared with the other. You don't know anything about numbers.

No.

It's just it was called the big camp, and the small camp.

Small camp. Right. Or I would call international camp and Jewish camp.

Oh, international and Jewish.

We called them big camp and small. And we was in small camp. They took us, lots of times, to the town. There was a town-- it was Weimar, not far away-- to clean up the houses, the burnt houses, to clean up the bricks, to clean up the streets. And they brought us back-- not every day, but sometime.

But the people-- I had been a couple of times. People who went outside there was lucky, because sometimes we saw on the ground a tomato or something. We picked it up to eat, because we didn't have what to eat. We just had one slice of bread and water at that time.

There was nobody watching you at that time?

Yeah, sure. With soldiers, all the time soldiers.

So they watched you. When you picked up a tomato, they didn't say anything.

They didn't say nothing. They didn't say nothing. They didn't say. But I was so skinny, like a fish-- you know, when you clean up the whiskers. And if I wiped like this, the whiskers came off. We was skinny like my arm.

And they took us almost every day-- every morning, cold or hot, they took us again out. Or they came in with water hose. They hosed us down, in the winter, we should go outside to count. We went out to count.

In the morning, they came around, everybody from the camp. And they had-- kapos, or something. They had to throw out the dead people before the barrack.

And then they came with the wagon to take away. Sometimes, the dead people could lay a week, or two weeks, or three weeks before they took them away. And if not, they didn't take them out, they was laying in the bunk, or something like that.

I would assume this was getting towards the end of the war.

Yes, this was.

So the Germans probably weren't as well organized as they were earlier.

Right, it wasn't. It was SS around the camp all the time. Once a while, we heard shooting. But we didn't know what kind of shooting, who was shooting. We saw a lot of airplanes. And then the few B-5 was not too far away. You know, the bomb.



The rockets.

Right, not too far away from camp. It was airplanes, they had planes came to bomb. Planes would throw bombs up in the camp. But didn't throw in the camps, but only on the-- it was plain we were not.

You knew whose planes they were.

Of course.

How did you feel about that?

As I said, it was plain that they should bomb our camp.

And if they would bomb the camp--

So you died before.

But they can't have a camp. You would have been satisfied.

Yes. If we died before, what's the difference? You die only once. [INAUDIBLE] it's over.

So in Buchenwald, sometimes there was work, sometimes there wasn't work.

No, we're just hanging around, and that's it.

And when they took you into Weimar to clean up the houses--

Houses, yeah.

--that was from the bombing?

From the bombing, yes. Yes, from the bombing.

They didn't have Germans to do that who lived there?

Why should the German do that if they can get people for nothing do that?

Yeah. Now, can you describe-- do you remember the day of liberation, what happened?

Yes. We heard a lot of shooting. And the barracks stood not on the ground, but foundation, wooden foundation you could hide behind. We was hiding behind.

And then, all of a sudden, we saw tanks coming around. And the tanks, right away, went around the whole camp. I don't know if there was at the other camp, in the small camp. And right away, soldiers went out. And they came in.

Not-- didn't came in to us. They came in first in the front, and then they walk in, because the first was the big camp. And then it was behind. And then they came in. And a lot of people start to run round. They didn't let them go out.

The soldiers.

We couldn't get out. But a lot of people-- mostly, the Jews didn't run. They stood in one place, mostly. The Ukrainian went out, because they was afraid, probably, because they was the kapos that did the dirty work-- Lithuanian.

And the way I see it, they was the first people. I forgive more the Germans than them, because the Germans, it was taught them to do that. They did it. They had to do it.

But then they did it because they was anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish. They did the most. They do the dirty work for them.

They gave the orders and--

That's it.

--gave the beatings.

And then they run around. Later on, they caught them. But no Jewish people-- I don't know any Jewish, because they couldn't run. They were sick, anyway.

Then they came in. A lot of people died in the camp, a lot of people with the American, because they gave us soup, meat too fat. And people got [INAUDIBLE]--

They couldn't--

--a lot of people.

--digest it.

A lot of people died, a lot of people.

So what happened after liberation?

We stood there. And then the Russian-- I think I heard about that. The Russians come into Buchenwald. So the American asked us, what do you want to do? The Polish people went back to Poland. The Polacks came, put them on the trucks.

The Polish Jews?

No, Polish.

Polish.

Me? I have nobody there. I haven't got. They asked me, where you want to go? I said, where you going? Take me any place.

So they took me here. They took me to Frankfurt. In Frankfurt, this was Germany. I was there from '45 to '49. Then I came here.

Where did you live in Frankfurt?

On Hamburg.

No, I'm just--

Oh, I'm sorry.

I want to know, what was the situation, in a private apartment?

A little bit was a little private. And a little bit, they put us up in hotels. But they had a camp not far from Frankfurt. I don't want to go to camp no more, not at a DP camp.

A DP camp.

Yes.

But I was working for the American army.

What kind of work did you do?

Kitchen.

Kitchen?

Yeah.

You were an electrician, to begin with.

Yes.

And now you were doing kitchen.

Yeah, it was-- I didn't go look for work. I said, I don't need no work. I have nobody. I don't need no money. I don't want nobody.

I am satisfied. I get my soup here, and work in the army. And that's it. Sooner or later, we'll have to go someplace.

Now, how did you-- you were hoping to come to the United States?

Any place, I would go.

About four years, it took.

Yeah.

And were you trying to do something in those four years to get out?

Yeah, I had an uncle. And he was working on it.

You had an uncle in America.

Yeah.

And that's how you were able to come?

That's how I came here.

Where did your uncle live?

In Brooklyn.

And when you came here, you went to his house?

Yes, I was living in Brooklyn about two years.

And what happened after two years?

He had a bakery I was working for him. And then I got married. I tried to get a little business for myself. I

was working hard, seven days a week, six and a half days, 14, 15 hours a day till I wake myself up and open another business.

And you have one son that I know of.

Yes, one son.

That's--

Yeah, he works.

And what does he do?

He works for the United States Park department, policeman.

And he lives here in New Jersey.

New Jersey.

All right. So that tells us the story from the beginning of birth--

Yes.

--until you came here, and you became a father, and a grandfather.

It's much more different than I explained, much worse. And like you saw before, I broke down before. I thought I'll never be able to talk to you. But it looks like I'm strong now, because it's not even a half, not even what I can tell you. But I can't tell you everything, just except the details.

When you say you can't tell everything, about what happened in the camps, you're talking about?

Yeah.

All right. I have a few questions to conclude with. When did you start talking about the Holocaust, and with whom did you talk?

When I came here-- we was talking, mostly, since I came out from the camp. Of course, I didn't have to talk with the people when I was in camp, because they went through. And since I came here, I always try to talk in the camp.

I sleep with the camp. I dream with the camp. I always talk about the camp. In one way, I can never forget. I tried to forget. I can never forget.

I was living on tranquilizers since I came here, six tranquilizers a day, 5 milligram, headaches every day. And I think-- even now. And I think that it probably comes from this.

I'm a crier. I always cry. I don't laugh. I like to be alone. That doesn't bother me. I can see hundreds of dead. I wouldn't cry. It wouldn't bother me.

You die only once. But if I see a story on television, or something that's horrid, or something like this on movies, or read something in the paper, I crack down. I can't control myself.

And when you see something-- you're talking about that's related to the Holocaust?

No, anything.

Anything.

Yeah, but that doesn't bother me. In the Holocaust, if I'm going someplace-- I belong to a lot of organizations-- I crack down. I can't talk. But otherwise, somebody-- oh, this one died, this one died, three dead, somebody got shot-- doesn't move me.

So it's had a very interesting impact on you.

Otherwise, I'm very soft.

How has the Holocaust affected your outlook on life and your understanding of human nature?

I don't get excited. I'm not a happy man. I don't care I live I go today. I don't [? care ?] if I go, if I don't go, if I sleep, I don't sleep. I'm not excited.

The first time I went to see my brother after he went to Germany when he was in Germany from Israel, he was in a kibbutz. I hadn't seen him for 25 years. I never--

I went to see him. I wasn't excited. I didn't hug him. I didn't kiss him. Like I say, it doesn't excite me. That is all my life. I don't know if this is from that, but I don't know.

That's how you're saying it might have affected your outlook now.

Right.

What about how you view human nature? That human beings did what they did during the Holocaust-- how do you view that?

They're not human. They're not human. It's a beast. It's a tiger. If they're hungry, they eat you up. But why?

I didn't belong that. I didn't belong to their party. My mother was very religious, was a very religious person.

She went to shul every day in the morning, every day. She didn't hurt nobody. My sister didn't hurt nobody. I didn't hurt nobody. I didn't do nothing.

So how people could do it is something you can't understand.

I can't understand. I saw people was hit and they're killed. [? Two-- ?] I don't know if he's a rabbi or not. Here, everybody with a beard is a rabbi. But over there, everybody orthodox.

And he told them to take off the pants and take a shit. He took a shit. And then take the shit, and put it on his face.

So how can you believe about human being? How can you believe about the religion? And he said, where is your God, and took out the pistol and shot him.

After that, they shot this--

Yes.

--this rabbi?

So how would you believe? How would you want to live? For what?

That's some story.

How can you believe in a human being?

And that happened to many communities.

Human being is like a rat. If you let him loose, he's going to bite you, anybody.

So you have very little faith in human beings.

Only, only, only, only if the government is with you. If the government wants you tomorrow, to do the same thing, what they did, to you, or the Spanish Inquisition or other pogroms, the government change can happen anyplace and everything, anyplace.

In other words, it's not only Germany or Poland.

No, anyplace. When I was in Poland, I was a citizen. They didn't kill my mother because she wasn't a citizen. That didn't help. She was Jewish.

I went to school. They came out, and they threw rocks at me, or snow. And they say-- what do you call them? I don't know how to call name in English. When you got lice, and you had to-- when you get the crust. Jews have everything like that. Or they have signs, don't buy by Jews.

So what's the difference for you? What was the difference between the Spanish Inquisition? What was the difference between the Russian by the [? Czar? ?] Only human, every human.

Depends, everything, on the government. People have nothing to say. It's the government. They can throw you out, even how good you are. This is the way I feel.

What should be taught to your grandchildren and to American students about the Holocaust?

OK. Special the Jews-- fight. don't sit and do nothing. Don't cover up. Don't sit on the-- don't put everything under the carpet. Be quiet, everything straighten out, everything be OK. No. It gets only worse, if you do, right away.

But soon, you say, don't shovel the boat. You're licked. You're licked. Not now, maybe not you-- your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren, because it can happen, and probably will.

Look what's going on now. Look what's going on here in Germany now. 50 years ago, and they're living that good life, and everything was quiet. Soon, they don't live. Why do they have an excuse? Even here. Even here.

You have, all the time, people that work. So what's my fault if he doesn't work? I don't give them the work. I'm nothing. I'm nothing.

So what's my fault? Did I do something? Did I go rob them? Did I kill them? Did I take their money from them? So what's our fault?

Has the Holocaust affected your faith and religious observance?

Yes. Yes. Yes, very, very much.

You felt that at the time.

I give charity to [INAUDIBLE], even I don't go. I belong to a a temple. But I never go, because if I don't do, somebody else will do. If not, the faith will die out. And this, I don't want to.

I'm more that the Jews should be nationalistic than religious. We get weak because your religion. But nationalistic, you'll be strong.

Do you have anything you can remember of particular significance that you'd like to describe before we

conclude?

Describe what?

[SNEEZES]

Bless you.

Excuse me. As we are finishing this interview, is there something that perhaps you didn't tell us about that you want to make sure you say it at this time?

I don't want to say nothing. But I'm going to say, I'm really surprised that I didn't break down now. I don't know what happened to me. When you came in over there, you saw me on the side. I thought that I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it.

Well, you did it very well.

But I was really surprised. And then what I have to tell you-- you know history, just the same thing, like me. Even you didn't see it, but you saw-- maybe you didn't see so much. You should judge what has to be done.

You are the leader. And you shouldn't be-- the first thing, you shouldn't be a part of establishment. And the part of establishment was at that time there Rabbi Wise.

You mean during the World War--

And maybe people be so active, like the Jews now, they don't--

Which Rabbi Wise, today's Rabbi Weiss?

No. No.

The one-- Stephen Wise.

Stephen Wise.

During the World War II.

Right. Maybe the people would be so active in our group president, which I heard about-- the best president in the world.

You heard about that in Europe.

No, I heard about it here.

No. Over there, you knew that we had a good president. Is that it?

Yes. No, I heard about it here. But I was not-- I didn't mix, that time, in politics. But at that time, we had the best president. Right?

A lot of people thought so.

He came here a ship, with how many people? 300 people, 400 people, I don't know. When I came to this country, I was so patriotic. I could kiss every stone on the walk, because I didn't know what was going on here. It was the best.

I knew we're going to America. And when I came here-- and then, when I was working, I didn't have no time. But when I retired, I belonged to a Jewish center. And they talked all the time. We talk now all the

time politics, all these things.

And I find out, came a ship-- few people, old people. Why are they afraid, spies? What are they afraid? They sent them back. Why did they send them back?

So where is this-- where is the excuse? Where is the excuse for those kind of people to come on up and say this like that? Where is the excuse? Why was it? Why was it?

Maybe he was promising at that time they came from Saudi Arabia because of the oil. They sent back all the Jews for to move to the ghetto to Germany. If not, then I'll not BP oil. Why was you afraid? Did he make that deal with them?

So you've taken us from the war time years, to the postwar years, till today.

Yes.

And with that, we'll--

Because I'm still a patriot from this country, because it's the best thing I had, thank God. I shouldn't say, thank God. I take it back. I take it back.

I live nice. I have a nice family, a middle class. But on the other part, there's a different side to me, because money is not everything. Money is not everything. You have to live. But you don't have to sell your self for money.

Well, obviously, you've lived through a great deal. And you have very strong feelings. And you're doing a lot of thinking.

And the main thing--

And you've expressed that here.

The main thing-- you always have to talk about it. If you talk about it, you'll remember. If you remember your pains-- if you remember the pains, you'll remember you know you have to take a pill. And the pill will help you, will do something to it.

Well, we are trying over here, in a little way, to get this recorded--

And the pill means--

--and get the reactions.

--give the young people the pill.

And this is what we're doing by interviewing you. And we want to thank you for being with us.

OK.

And we'll share this--

I'm glad that I could--

--with your family and with ours.

I'm glad I went through, I didn't break down. I'm very--

Very good.



I'm very happy. Thank you very much.