

Mr. Prawer, we were talking about your experience in the [INAUDIBLE] post around 1943.

Yes.

Can you pick up from there and tell us all about that?

Yes, when I was-- I had the privilege to be a cook. I was chosen to be. I was lucky. And then we get some girls coming in. All the young girls in our age.

Did you know any of them? Were they from your town?

No. Only men from our town. Later on, we get-- with connections we brought friends or it -- so then i get my brother after awhile there. So I usually did the most hard work early in the morning, make hot water, and I make hot water for the people to have coffee. And the girls coming out during the day asked me in the morning for water. I said, I have no water. This water is going to be for the coffee for the people. Please, I didn't realize that women needs more water to wash up to be cleaner than men.

So I got up earlier and tried to make water for the girls to please them, and we start to be working together, hard. We accomplished the job for the people, and the people appreciate. We didn't do any wrongdoing because it was like a family. We know we have no parents. They accept young adults.

I work strictly in the kitchen for quite a while. Then somebody took over my position. A friend from my hometown happened to know.

What happened to you?

I went out to work.

From in--

In the field. It didn't bother me. I don't mind because it didn't last too long because we were taken away from there to the [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH].

Which is one of the early --

Yeah, to get whatever you call them, but get-- we called it his name.

These are parts of Krakow?

[PLACE NAME] is a part of the hill and he managed to build barracks, and all the people from all the ghettos, whatever they need to bring one particular spot, this was Krakow from our district. I worked at the lumber shop. That means that agriculture and gardening, and at the field that the air force, where they have the planes, straighten up the things there. I have my brother. I put him-- while I was working still in the kitchen, I had all connections anyway so I brought my brother, the youngest brother, and he was working with steers. [INAUDIBLE] cows.

Yeah.

Steers. He never did this in all his life, but it was a good job. Was at the place where we used to have food for the horses, food for cows, and so on so goes around. And met Polish people with connections to find out what's going on in the ghettos. That's how I found out about my sister through connections while my brother was working there. And we met Polish people what they've been coming to Krakow with food. I think not to us, exactly, but for the German government.

And I found out that they shot all the people they found in the streets or small communities or farming places, and working men and Jewish people, and they killed them all of them. And the place where they killed them was over 500 or 600 people, including my younger sister and my cousin. And the Pollacks told me that the ground was rising up and down because people weren't killed until they got dead. You know, body still works, breathing [INAUDIBLE] for a week.

It was heaving.

Yes. And the place where they're buried is called [PLACE NAME] It was a forest, big forest. It's about six kilometer. We used to go there on Shabbat or Sunday with friends to meet from little towns, our town, and that's why I know the place so well. This I found out with my brother while he was working in the same place where I was working. He was working a different department, and I was working a different department, but we have connections with Pollacks.

We had mail, send it to the ghetto, and then he said it's liquidated. There's nobody there. The rest of what is left is shot. Together with the police and everybody with the Jewish people .

Then after [INAUDIBLE] we went home with the air force every few weeks, every month, or whatever it was, they start taking people for hard labor or you call it camps, working labor. So I was also between to go away. Before we went away, they liquidate the small camp called [PLACE NAME] Next to Janowska all divided was only maybe a highway or street or couple of blocks away. That's where I met my cousin, and it was also the liquidating place to liquidated people and we know-- we didn't trust them with the Germans.

We know that all the people going away just not to survive, to get rid of them somehow, officially like to Auschwitz and the gas chambers or to hard labor not feeding them with disease. And I will come to it how my brother died. Not the younger one, another one, the older brother. Not older for me, but from the second from me.

Then we separated. The whole family separated. They liquidate that camp, my father and my uncles went to Skarzysko. I went to Pionki. Janowska, I was there for a few months, maybe half a year or maybe three quarters of a year. Before I went to the other camp, I knew stories would happen in this camp Janowska how bad it was there. I had with me some money, which I brought with me from home when I used to go home from the Air Force when I was working.

And I tried to be-- and the kommando used to go out from the Janowska we are free walking there under supervision from SS, Ukrainian SS volunteers, as you call it. Men made Germans, bastards, murderers, sadists. The reason I want to get out because I want to run away. I couldn't think-- because I had such a good-- until I came there, I was so free. And I have everything, all the privileges, and I help myself. Of course, I wasn't too hungry there too, because [INAUDIBLE] too, but I saw what happened to all of them, to the majority.

And we walked there-- what you call this, where we break stones in those big--

Quarry.

Quarry you call it. There was one guy from [? Chojnice. ?] His sister after the war married this Weinstein, he was my head cook. He knows about cooking as much as I know, but you made cook, what's the difference? They give you food, you cook. This one learned cooking anyway. At this-- be in the kitchen after the war.

There was one man, one SS man. Wherever he is, wherever he is, life or death. In his death, the ground should go up and down. 100 foot high should keep him throwing up and going down what he did to the people. He always walked with a dog, German shepherd. When he came to the square or whatever you call it.

Quarry. Quarry.

Quarry. He had a [INAUDIBLE] just what you're riding a horse you have a-- a [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] we call it-- what you hit the horse with a brass handle. This man is still in Canada. He lives. I hope he lives until now, but he lived there a few years ago because I was there. He turned around this-- what you call it in English?

Whip.

Whip. Whip. With the brass handle, it was on here, you understand here. And we were carrying those big stones from place to place, just carrying it to a truck or to a wagon. We pulled it. And he hit his head all the way around in slow motion. His head swelled up wider than my shoulder, any shoulder, actually. I was working the same thing. Not for long because I was working in the stable with horses because I had some connections there.

This male that we call Greenbaum took me there because we worked together. He was the lagerfuhrer was assistant boss. And I was in the kitchen so we met every minute in an hour, you know? So I said, why don't you take me there. Over there at least you got food. You didn't see those horrible things, those terrorists, those terror what you saw there. But this particular I remember because I just see it now. He hit him in slow motion. I don't know how long it took him, five minutes or 10 minutes, all in the head, not lower, not higher. He swell up like this. You don't see his eyes, mouth was like one, like-- where you make those from--

A pumpkin.

Like a pumpkin. And the dog bit him. He told his dog to bite them, to chase him, and he got a big stone there. I said, if I have to stay here, I couldn't take it or I killed a man, and I get killed too. But I may be killed in pain like not dying, but just slow motion. This is worse than death. Then I start to realize what this mean, concentration camp or really Nazi type of living. How would they say this, they are--

Finally he collapsed. You couldn't do no more so he was already dead. They were better if they would've shot him. They didn't shoot him, and many more like this. We have to carry barracks where we built. But I was also building barracks. We switched from one season or one man did barracks. When they finished, they put you to the quarry, you know, to work with stones. And other things, clean toilets, or go out of kommandos, or go to electricians. Nobody was sitting doing nothing. Everybody was working hard.

And the dead was every minute because when you worked there, too slow wasn't good. If you worked too fast isn't good. Because the guy with the lornette to me, everybody-- his name, I think, was [? Willi. ?] Even the guy with the short guy, big fat that followed the work, the bitch, whatever his name was I don't remember. And he got names, and later, they came out. They shot him. It was a special place where there was guns. Like military has those--

Foxholes.

Foxholes, but this was square.

Ditches?

Like this. I don't want to say the name what you call it. It's a dirty name in Polish, but everybody knows where it was. All they did, to kill all the people, and they covered up with [INAUDIBLE], dirt, and white calcium powder.

Lime.

Lime. Not to smell. From the ground this was done there since they built this place, then they got this place. I want go out and [INAUDIBLE] a commander. I said I cannot-- I will not stay here long. So I went to this policeman that know me already from working at the stable, working there, and I was all over. And I give him 500 zlotys. One piece to give me [INAUDIBLE] commander. And I went there. And it wasn't too bad. One thing was bad. I don't swim, and have to jump from the third floor high into a swimming pool. The Germans-- in the clothes. They have fun to be sadists. They're fun to do something to you.

Anyway, I survived one day, two days, three days, but the third day or the fourth day, they got somebody else at my place. They replaced me. And I was afraid to open up my mouth because they kicked behind and but even if this was a Jewish policeman, but that's the way it goes. Money talks, because I give 500, the other guy maybe give him 1,000.

What was 500 zlotys? Like today a penny. There was no value of the money.

This particular day, 5:30 or 6:00 o'clock at night they search the whole kommando. And this was a tough commander, butchers with knives, And they were Jews. They took them there under the guard of many more of those Ukrainian men with dogs to be shot there. They told them to take off their clothes. They didn't shot just in the clothes. They save everything.

They knock the teeth out from people with gold with picks. You know, ice picks what you-- what you-- in Europe, they use this more than here. There are other equipment here then to use these in this country.

And I was lucky again. Thank God. I don't know if I should say thank God. I don't know if I deserve it. And I don't want to live. That's the truth. And I'll tell you why I say this because this was the end of the war when I said this, the remark I made. That over there I was lucky. I wasn't [INAUDIBLE] at this hell, you call it, was another four letter word.

And they shot all of them naked. They've been fighting. They fight because they were resistant, because they were rough guys. To get in this commander wasn't easy. This was the best commander. You would [INAUDIBLE] butter and eggs and clothes and all the kind of food-- anything you can get free in a free society. And in the war, and in the world you got there. The Jews can help them so they know how to handle it.

And I start working the same place, and they give me better jobs. And so I went back to the construction, and in the stable, then I met [? Lewis ?] [? Omya. ?] This was his-- his father had passed away. Meyer Greenbaum's father-in-law. And he helped me out, and give me food, and thanks to Meyer and his wife Paula. This was the daughter of-- he was a big shot [INAUDIBLE] this guy get. He's supplying horses and [INAUDIBLE] going out but people were hidden or collected from [INAUDIBLE], whatever he can [INAUDIBLE] and give it to him. 50-50, whatever it was.

And I help myself. Then came a time when the liquidator get her downstairs. My cousin was shot there too. [? I ?] [? was in-- ?] Auschwitz whatever they did with them. They send us back to the barracks, we couldn't see anything. After the shooting, we came out. We were sending out people to walk out of the states to other states. And I went to Pionki from there by train. And I met my father, my uncles, my two brothers.

What kind of place was it?

In Pionki, munition work. Munition work.

This is still-- what year is this now?

1943. 1943. Everything was in this year for '43 and '44. Months I don't remember now, but I tried to--

Reconstruct.

Yeah. Reconsider everything, and call up people with me, and give me more or less. And then I make notes. Pionki and Krakow and ghetto [PLACE NAME] and [PLACE NAME]

OK.

I went out and we met with all of my uncles. No, the uncles went to Skarzysko. My two brothers, my father came to me in the same [? leg ?] of Pionki.

And that was a munitions lager.

Munitions. They were the worst. I was-- I made munitions from the beginning. Not from beginning, but it was made resin. Made resin somewhere else like maybe in Skarzysko probably. The resin came to us. We make the rolls, like scrolls, more or less, [INAUDIBLE] [? drawers, ?] mixed with alcohol, whatever it is the chemistry. You know, and you roll it, and roll it, come down. It came in pulverized.

It came in pulverized in white, and we just throw it on those rollers. Something explode, you have to run out the doors were open. This was legal. But supervision were Pollacks. And I did my work. That's it.

But I met my father there and my two brothers, who were so happy. We really like was the old home, like the whole family. We cry. But we have to forget because we have to go to bed early to get up in the morning and do our work. Then they separated us after a while. And we still have good. I still have good because I brought home alcohol in exchange for cigarettes, which I didn't smoke, and I exchanged the guy for bread. And somehow we survived.

When we were again separated, go different directions, I went to Leipzig. My other-- the Germans, the ones that have families together there was-- they got smarter and smarter, always they find ways not to keep family together, because if you together, family it keeps you longer life. It gives you more interest to live and to do something. But if you're alone, you give up. And eventually, they shot you. So I left with my brother, with one brother. One brother went to different camp. My father went to different camp. From there, we went to Leipzig by train, to Czechoslovakia. We went to Auschwitz.

From Czechoslovakia?

Was it Auschwitz? How do I end up in Auschwitz? Buna, Auschwitz, Buna. Yeah, we went to a place, and they separated us again. I went to Auschwitz. From Auschwitz, you went to Buna. Just lucky that they need people in Buna. It's about 20-30 kilometers from Auschwitz. And this is the number I got.

At Buna?

At Auschwitz. We were in a room with segregated by numbers, and to the [INAUDIBLE] We could see the smoke, we could smell the flesh, human flesh, is a funny smell. It was a rainy day. Those supervisors were murderers, kill us like the Germans, whoever they were. I [? won't ?] [? cry, ?] but there were just wild.

They don't know what they're doing. They wouldn't have to force, because what they did to their own kind-- they met their father. They met their brother. They met their wife, but they don't know because they shaved off all the hair.

By shaving off your hair from all the hair you have top and bottom, they [INAUDIBLE] meat, because they was under pressure and the -- you know fast, fast because so many people came in. Thousands and tens of thousands, you know, in and out. So they have no choice. You could be-- they wouldn't recognize you. Maybe they recognize you before you shave off your hair and by voice. I know cases that said there was fathers and wives, and their own kids. They have no choice.

He did it today to you. Next week, they'd put him in this position. They put new guys to do the same what you did to me, shaving and pushing you into-- you go there. There went all the money from you. They give it to the Germans or they split, but it doesn't matter.

Then when the next week, they went to the gas chamber. For one reason not to have any history, not any proof, number one. They know too much, they see too much. Too friendly with the Germans, and give away the money taken away from the people.

Were you shaved?

Of course. They shaved the whole ripped up piece of meat of me. For women and men, it doesn't matter. To me, you saw-- I saw a woman without clothes. It doesn't mean a damn thing. Like this doesn't mean to me if it's black or white because I'm not interested in it. I'm hungry. I want to live. Who cares. Who knows what?

Maybe it was my sister. Maybe was my mother. Who recognized? Nobody recognized each other. We don't know. They all looked alike.

There was no breast. There was nothing. It was everything straight. We walk this way.

And everything was making noise because there was only bones, there was no meat, was no-- there was no, no, no, no, no nothing there. Skin [SOUND EFFECT] if you walk too fast, you break your leg. If you fell by walking, they shot you. This I tell you all the time, when you walk So I was in Buna.

How did you get from Auschwitz to Buna?

Auschwitz to Buna? We walked.

But I mean why did you get to go?

Because they need people there. I was lucky. I was just picked up. I was already the number there and go to the gas chamber. And I know from B-- I was B-722. This number-- this unit was here, this unit was here, this unit was here, and they picked up. So I was lucky, maybe I'm lucky I don't know. And we went to

Buna.

Buna. They give us a piece of bread, crackers, whatever it was. I don't remember. They give us something, and we walked and went up in Buna. In a quarantine, segregation again. If you're sick, shaving again the same story again all over. Same procedure.

About how long were you at Buna?

Not too long, because we had to evacuate again. Buna, I have my brother with me. One brother. When we were evacuated, Buna, my brother, myself were in the same barracks, but different work we did. We met only at night.

But when we have to go away from the camp again, we move, I worked in a construction company, but making connections with electricity with a chisel and a hammer. It was my job. I don't [INAUDIBLE] was more lucky you worked with the electrician with wiring. It was easy, but everything is in the ladder, you know? Concrete-- because there were bunkers. This was bunkers.

This was Buna that made all the chemicals, all the gas, all the bombs, all ammunition was made there. 35 items that were made there. Like a DuPont chemical, like Union Carbide, and Monsanto, and many more like this, like [INAUDIBLE], you know? The government-- everything was made from coal. I remember because I saw this fire. It was amazing. First time I see coal, [INAUDIBLE] like mountains and it burns. It was new to me.

I was in pipes taller than I was when the English people bombed Buna. And I was in the air with the pipes together, hid myself. I was lucky, happy to see a plane with those round things, those English insignia with the English plane, you know? It didn't bother me. I didn't feel any pain. My whole body was in pain so I didn't feel anything.

But I have good, too. I have connections with my supervision. He went out for lunch and gave me his lunch and he's in the barracks. I went in, clean up there, share with my brother. have a bad kapo. I have a good kapo -- a guy from Czechoslovakia is very good to me. He knew it. But my kapo from Greek was bad. He fed me because I got fat-- you know, fatter than he was, and I got connections, and he was only the whip. A kapo was just a whip to watching and be sure nobody runs away, you know? But I was watching so many buildings, I have connections.

And if I didn't have the connections, I wouldn't have done as well with the air raid. I went in to go eat food. Who was doing it? What do I care? I look for me because I have to survive. I have a brother to support. This was also lucky. On the way from Buna, we walked for miles day and night. Everybody who tripped got shot. When it come to night, and the Germans walk with us. They have a rucksack. What do you call it?

Knapsack.

Knapsack with food, and drinks, and everything. They got tired and heavy too. So I always go next to him. So he's tired just carrying the rifle with the bayonet, and those boots, and the coat. He got tired too. He cannot-- there was a wagon. On the one wagon maybe four kilometer for people, five, six width and another fall, somebody trip, they shot him. There was no control. So I took the knapsack from him, you know, I clean him up. I run maybe a few hundred yards to find my brother and share with him.

He couldn't yell, who has my rucksack? He don't know me, I don't know him. This way I also survived. And not only me, not only I did it. Everybody did it. You'd be stupid not to do it. He can go in any store and get food because he's a German. He's a German and he goes with a gun. Everybody's to give him food from the Germans. So it wasn't bad.

They looked away. They know it's the end of it. Then there wasn't end of them. Or maybe the end of them first before us. They try to be nice. Some of them. The ones that were smart and old, they realized. The young, no. From there--

Where did you march to?

From Buna.

Yeah. [INAUDIBLE] you said Buchenwald.

To Buchenwald. We went to Buchenwald. When I went to Buna, I worked there for a while, and then was evacuation again. This is the way to Buna. When I was in Buna, I was working inside. There's nothing outside. Piling up dead bodies like a mountain, and taking out the gold from the mouth. You know, piling up and then burying them. You know, we made like steps, steps, two people up, two people up, higher and higher and higher. There's pictures with the American soldiers. I was twice in Buchenwald.

Finally, I reached Buchenwald. I didn't like it because Buchenwald was all the International murderers and killers. Not only Jews, all nationalities.

Political prisoners.

Political, and murders, killers, and anti Germans, intellectuals, a lot of them, a lot. But it was all the plain anti-Semites, too. But it is, don't bother me because I had no choice. I know I am in the middle, squeeze, and nothing I can do. I can't turn around nowhere. So I have to accept it and make the best of it.

The first night we came, they put us in a big machine shop. [INAUDIBLE]. A machine shop, machines. Laying at the floor the first time. I'm laying on the floor, I grabbed some cardboard, lay down, this is truth. This is the truth. I saw lice in my life. In Europe before the war, everybody had lice, because there wasn't enough convenient water. It cost money to go in a mikva or to go in a shower to the city. Once a week you go. And you did the best at home, but food was the most important thing.

More important than having lice.

Just don't bother. They eat you anyway. Alive. But when I came to this place, Buchenwald, and they put us to sleep overnight, this we go with the train, too, from Buchenwald. This was far away. Auschwitz was Poland. Buchenwald was Germany. Took us a week to get there.

But the Germans throw us food from the wagons, and they-- and the railroad cars-- it was open railroad cars. And they [? shot ?] another-- and the Germans they weren't in the wagons, but every wagon has on the end a brute with what you can use handbrake, you know, this is old type. It was-- they shot a lot of them from the bridges looking down to the trains.

Kids threw food from their lunches they took the school. Not necessarily Jewish kids because there weren't no Jewish kids. There was non-Jewish kids and non-Jewish people. Gentiles, they were good. Czechoslovakia was nice people, very friendly. And it doesn't matter it was Jews, because normally Jews were transferred on this train. There was

Germans. There was Pollacks. There was [INAUDIBLE], all the nationalities was in the other places with us.

When we arrived there at Buchenwald , I couldn't sleep. It bit me so much. When I got up in the morning, it was light. I could see. I saw lice with dots, you name it, how many colors exist in the world I found on those lice. And I couldn't understand -- I said, how could lice be over here? There's machines, there's a floor, no people here.

Before we came, and other people came, and other people came, and many more came. Hundreds of thousands probably lived there for a few days or nights. There was no water. There was no food. It was dirty, filthy, smelly, dirty, and no lights, no nothing. You just laid down wherever you got a space, one between each other, one next to each other.

And I said, my god, this is typhus. You've got typhus. You get sick from that, from those. That must be different kind of lice. Though when we spoke later on with people, they said, well this is typhus, this why so many people get typhus. You know what typhus is?

Yes.

Is there also in English typhus?

Yes.

Is there another word?

Typhus.

Typhoid fever.

Yeah. So I found out as many, many, many people were there before us and for years. Then I found out there was one-- I forgot her name already [INAUDIBLE]. When she walked in Buchenwald before we came, I think she was there when I came the first time, too. She likes the men's skin. She made lamps for it. This is the truth, because everybody knew about.

People try not to be so good looking, because if she saw a good looking man, they skin them, and they made shades of the lamps. This is true. She went to jail, and then she got pregnant, and then she got free. It's American made. American soldier did it. A watchman, whatever it is.

And all the horrors, beating up, no food. I wasn't there too long. I went with my brother from Buchenwald to Crawinkel. My brother, the third in the line, was my-- I was the oldest one, then my sister, and then my brother, Pinchas, and my brother, Isaac, and my sister, [PERSONAL NAME] to Crawinkel. In Crawinkel, I was building barracks, wooden barracks, pre-cut, premade.

I got friendly with the boss. He was also from Poznan and then made Deutsch. Maybe his parents were Deutsch, were Germans, could be. He was tough, but I did my work. This is from Crawinkel.

I don't know if you're going to get on the camera. Just put it in front of your face. Put it in front of your face. OK. This is a cut from electric saw. And what I was helping him out. I was like is helper and he trust me. I'd been working for quite a while for him and I did good jobs. So I went with my hand under the table, checking, something went wrong, and the saw wasn't shut off. I didn't-- maybe I should do this, and I still cut it. Just lucky I put away my hand and I was saved.

Do you know roughly what time this was, what year this was when you were in Crawinkel?

This was end of '45. End of '45 or beginning-- end of '44, beginning '45, because this is my last trip from there to Buchenwald. They we were liberated. That must be '45, beginning of '45, yes.

So you didn't stay too long. You didn't stay too long at Crawinkel?



Well, maybe from the end of '44 to beginning '45, maybe February or so. Because maybe March '45, maybe less there, because we walked there. From there, from this [INAUDIBLE] because they need us. The Germans think that this is forever. They were so wrong, thank God. Thank God.

But the story was there too I have a good job. People give me money, gold pieces, I trust my supervisor, my German man. I told him, I got this. It's not mine. If he likes to have it for bread, a piece of bread. This man gave me this. I remember like now it was a ten piece rubble or American money, I don't know. I wasn't familiar with [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], and foreign [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], and foreign exchange money.

So I was known with [INAUDIBLE] groschen Poland where I worked for him. I wasn't this rich. I know because my father was brought up from the Germans. He was with money. I don't know what kind of money. If they give them foreign exchange or whatever it is money, or [INAUDIBLE], or Polish money.

The guy took my gold piece. He brought me bread. Give me bread, how much he has. This much he give it to me. Just bread. Every morning. I split the other guy the way he told me. You take half, give me half, just to survive.

In the same place, other nationalities were working too. Not close, but I have connections. I have connections with them because I was his second man, helping everything, and we have a big pile of sawdust because this will make everything from wood. And I like to mingle between industry to learn something, to be something, to pretend I know, you know? So he wasn't anti-me, maybe he was anti-Jewish, but I did the work.

He could be free. I did his work, my work. He was happy. He trust me. Same what I did with the other guy with the steamroller. He gave me everything I need. I was never hungry. I shared with my brother.

My brother, Pinchas, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] rest in peace. Got sick in Crawinkel. And he has the rear with blood. I don't know what will you call this here.

Dysentery.

Dysentery. I didn't know because I wasn't too long over there, and if I was, I wasn't thinking about because my brother was working the different kommando. I was working a different kommando. There were three shifts in the same barrack, the same bed. We kill each other to have a few hours to lay down.

I have good clothes coming from Buchenwald to Crawinkel. To have food, I volunteered to bring the food for the people in my barrack. I sleep less, but it was worth it for another portion of soup for my brother, for myself. It's worth it. My brother was younger. I give away my boots for the shift from the-- [INAUDIBLE] from the workers, but he was-- like I had, lucky he was a cook, I was a cook. I told him I have a good shirt, I have good shoes, give me another shoe, give me another shirt. I come to you tomorrow night. Give me some soup and bread.

I came off work. My brother isn't there anymore. He didn't feel good, and they clean up everyday. This was something new to me. And said being sick and taking care, they took away in a special place.

I don't remember the name. It's very difficult because only to die, to suffer and to die. They laid him down there. They threw him down from the truck. The people what went there with him found out. Laying down was used to be stables for cavalry for the German army years ago when they used to use horses instead of motorized trucks.

Vehicles.

Vehicles. You know vehicles. So they lived there and they died there, and who knows how long they're laying there until they die, until they clean them up. They just fill it up, fill it up, fill it up. Then I was shocked. I was crying. I tear my clothes. I didn't know what to do. But life has to go on. I went to the kitchen, not the same day. The following day, I went at night. I saw him. He wasn't in my barrack or the next barrack to mine. And I told him, my brother, who was the guy? I will kill the guy. Why did he took him away?

And I told the men what was this barrack, take care of my brother in case he gets sick. He was younger than I was. I take care of you, I help you out, because I'm going out kommandos. I work outside and have a good job. Not only the guy from the barrack, whatever you call him he was in charge. You never go out on a kommando.

Leave only what he stole from my portion. I said to cut a bread for eight. He may cut for 10. I could give him plenty because I'd gotten that. And I prove it to them, but he didn't. He said he couldn't help him. He couldn't.

After I found out this is the lagerfuehrer, the man from the barrack was in charge, he could hide him if he wanted. He could hide them in a corner somewhere. For only, tell them come and look, how many people you got here sick? Take him, don't write up the list. So nothing I can do cause I was afraid of my own life.

After my brother was gone, the following night I went to the kitchen with my shoes and my shirt, and he gave me his. He brought me some [INAUDIBLE]. He give me a pail of soup, a whole pail of soup. I don't know, maybe a gallon, two gallons maybe? It's big. And he give me a whole loaf of bread, plus my portion that I ate before.

I should live so I don't lie to you. Would you believe that I finished everything by myself? I got so sick, and I swole up, and I can't throw up, and I didn't get any bowel movement. I got [INAUDIBLE] my [INAUDIBLE] turn around, I roll to the stoop, at least to the barrack. There was a kind of drunken house, kind of--

Infirmary.

Yes.

[INAUDIBLE]

What is -- just to-- a headache they give you a pill. If you die, they give you a pill if they wanted. You to have connections. I roll there. Finally I got there. The guy put a-- I remember it now-- at thin, black hose in my stomach. I didn't know what it was, for what reason, and I started vomiting. I puked out everything.

He says to me, those words, you threw up more than the whole barrack eat together in a week. Where'd you get it? What's the matter with you? Where you got this?

I wasn't afraid of him. He knew that-- I said, I don't know. I had three portions. I got mine, and have a pair of shoes I change with somebody. I didn't want to say the cook. So he give me a couple portions and a couple of portions bread.

This couldn't be. An hour, I keep vomiting. Vomiting until my stomach was empty. It is [INAUDIBLE] I was, but I didn't know what could happen. And I didn't give a rip what will happen. I knew I was like a animal. Hungry, hungry, hungry, and I don't care what's been eaten. Now. Now. I am hungry now. This was Crawinkel. My brother passed away. They got him there. And then they evacuated us again to Buchenwald.

In Buchenwald, I was about six weeks, maybe two months, something like this. And they're starting again evacuation. Thank God. And I want to go. I was always pushing forward. Don't stay in one place. My two cousins were there, but they are still in Chicago, Polsky's. My uncle should rest in peace. My father's brother, had also the disease from eating after so much food [INAUDIBLE] it.

He says, if I die, I die here in Buchenwald. I'm not going anywhere. I'm sick and tired, and I can't take no more. Let me kill here. Let them kill here. I says, [INAUDIBLE] here, we're going to die for sure. They're going bomb us or they're going to kill us. No. 90% of people volunteered to go out. They killed all of them.

Whoever left and pretended dead a week. They didn't do nothing. I get a few kicks. I was laying like pretending I'm dead or dying. I'm weak and I'm sick. I don't want to go. We go, oh, oh, that's it. I was skinny. I was nothing-- you can count those ribs. Not by me. I am good, but everyone, including me, you can still count rib. Because it eats up first, you know, whatever-- it doesn't matter how much you eat. There's not enough vitamins. There's not enough.

Thank God. The Americans-- we hear bombing and shooting. When was it night, I went back to the barrack after the most, 90%, was evacuated, and it was killed by the guards, the volunteer guards, the Ukrainian [INAUDIBLE] or Polish guards. I don't know because I didn't go.

The following day, people started running out from the barracks, and I didn't want to go, I was afraid. And I lived until now. I don't want to go now. I don't want to get killed. Let me stay now. Maybe a find some way to survive. I was even thinking my brother will survive, even as I [? entered ?] this place where they die. You know, it's a miracle, maybe you will survive.

But thank God I found the two cousins and my uncle, and we survived. And some guys went out, and I said, I can't go out, and I don't want to go out. I'm staying here. What I did, I went out to a warehouse where they took all the clothes from all the people from all the concentration camps, death camps, and barracks, whatever then, they brought everything to Buchenwald. everything came to Germany. The good things they give to their people, to the poor people, working people, I don't know.

But I went in a place and I took a pair of underwear and a jacket. And I shared a pair of Hungarian shoes from Hungary. Because they got those boots with the--

Laces.

And I didn't know who's it was, but I took it, I thought it was Gypsies. But I was good. The guys came back from the city did better than I did because they brought food, and they brought good clothes from the store. They robbed the clothes. I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it.

Because I was together with my cousins and uncles, I wanted to stay together. Then I got with me. But the guy brought me a piece of meat. To be honest, was as sweet as honey. Good as better couldn't be. Was burned from bombs, but I don't know what kind of meat. It was of human flesh or from meat from an animal, I don't know.

They brought a piece. I ate it. It was good. The time came to me later, maybe it was human. I don't know. I don't know. Till today, it bothers me till today when I think of it.

The guy told me they got this in a barn where sheeps were there, and they were were burned to death alive. So who knows. I didn't-- I don't care, and I didn't care. But that bothers me now when I think of it. Not this minute. I mean, generally, who knows who's meat I ate. Maybe it was my brother's, maybe my father. Who knows?

Anyway, later on-- and I didn't know the difference between a lady's jacket and a men's jacket. I don't know left, right, right, left, left, right, it was a jacket. It was a two way, you know what do you call it --

Lapels?

Yeah, but--

Double breasted?

Double breasted. It was a lady's jacket. I didn't know. It was the button I think was this way, correct? I didn't know. Somebody told me. From the people during [INAUDIBLE] all the people and I was and they got already suits. The third day I went to Weimar. This was the capitol I think from the state of Bavaria. I think it was the capital of Bavaria. Or it was a big town. And I went for coffee. Germans with the coffee, everybody drinks coffee.

Was your sense that the war was over?

Yeah. We know about because we've got the [INAUDIBLE].

What did you feel?

Oh, great. Great. I prayed to God. This is the truth. You asked me before what the feeling. You asked-- several times, you asked me. I don't want to live. God as my witness. Because for whom and for what?

If I didn't have the parents, my brothers and sisters, who cares? Who cares? So long I live the day that the Germans been defeated, they lost the war, this is my-- not only my-- our-- all the people, not only Jewish people, all nationalities.

Even they have good, they don't have it good. Without parents, without family, you know, you've got a bus what is a rotten people. Only German, German for German, German my fatherland, the whole world is German. All the songs, all of the music, all of the look, all the desire, all the thinking is just German and me. Blue eyes, big tall and blonde. That's all.

They don't care if you were. If you are a man made German, they know you a second class citizen. They go for the pure race, blonde, blue eyes, and tall.

So at the end of the war, you felt that you wanted to live or you did not want to live?

No. I didn't want to live.

At the end-- after you were liberated.

I didn't want to live because I have no interest to live. They meant-- because the Germans were defeated, not because on account of me they are defeated, because what they did to the human beings, to human beings from all nationalities, even to the own Germans. They did to their own retarded people the same what they did to me. Maybe not the same way, but with injections they killed them. They took away to special houses for cure. That time proved after war that they will be taken away.

What made you decide to live?

What made you decide to live? Good American people. Good American people, not only Jewish people, good American people. They talk to us. They come to us. They feed us. Even somebody said a lot of people died, 40% died after the war from too good feeding, too much being nice.

Yes.

I saw General Eisenhower. Good man. The Chaplains, Jewish and non-Jewish, the American people. The HIAS.

Do you remember the day, the first day of your liberation?

Sure. I told your associate, I was so desperate for some good things, [INAUDIBLE], chocolate. They give me some. But that was [INAUDIBLE] I want more. When I was free, I want to go to the American, give me a piece. They came to visit us. Here is chewing tobacco. I don't know what chewing tobacco is. I never saw in my life.

I don't know what it was, but it was bad. This is bad. But I don't care. I want a piece. I thought it's food, maybe it's like vitamins. Chewing vitamins, you know? Now I think what it was, but this time I didn't know.

The tobacco would get me vomiting. And I give all the guts of what I have all week, and I was so sad because I get such a good food out. I didn't need like a hazard to get a lot to get sick, but they gradually, you know, because I saw what happened to other people. Let me-- maybe I could find somebody from my family. Maybe I could find somebody from my family. Till I find out--

Yes.

This gives me courage.

Yes.

And desire to live and to build a family. And to build a family.

Mr. Praver, we're at the end of the experience that we're documenting. Is there any way that one could sum up how your experiences have affected your life?

Compared to what? To hatred to joy to what my life-- what my desire was after the war or what I accomplished after the war you mean?

How have those experiences marked you, affected you?

Mentally.

In a general way, yes.

Mentally. Mentally, deeply, I had-- What made me be happy is thanks to my wife. My wonderful wife.

Was she also a survivor?

And a good mother, a good human being.

Was she also a survivor?

Yes.

And a good person not only to her own kind, to Black and white, Jewish, Gentiles, anybody, even to an animal. I was told by people, by my neighbors, she's too good. She was here [INAUDIBLE] break a leg, she would exchange a leg. And if you want to know about the Praver, ask Springfield, ask Hillside.

Till today, I don't throw away bread, even my wife works nine hours a week in a bakery. I dip my bread, and it's old, so long as it's not stale, in coffee. And this I taught my kids. [INAUDIBLE] but bread.

Thank you very, very much.

Any time.

Done.

Done. How it affect my life, how I met my wife and son, it's another story. That's a big story to tell. You now, how I lived in Little Rock. What this mean, honey, sugar. I says, hi my name is not honey. My name is not sugar. My name is Aba. What do you want? I didn't really-- in the South, it's honey and sugar.

Well thank you for your reminiscence so far.

Yeah.

And for sharing with us a very courageous and a very interesting story. And we thank you. We are very grateful that you shared with us.

We are privileged to have you share.

Will this be continuations?

I think that it would be very important for you to tell more [INAUDIBLE].

[MUSIC PLAYING]