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Good morning. I'm Joseph Preil co-director of the Holocaust Resource Center here at Kean College of New Jersey. Today, June 18, 1992. We are privileged to have with us as our guest Mr. Michael Hersh, who will relate to us his experiences in the Holocaust. Mr. Hersh, let us begin by your telling us something about your family and hometown community in Czechoslovakia before the war.

My family, with my parents, and we were five children. Three brothers and two sisters. I was next the youngest one. The area we came from was in the Carpathian area, it was called Carpathia, and it was part of Czechoslovakia when I was born. Later on, it became, during World War II, when the war started, it became Hungary.

The small town that I lived in was called [PLACE NAME] Velyki Luchky, depending on what language it was spoken in. Nearby there was a larger town, or a small city called Munkacs.

What was the name of your town of birth?

Rakoshin.

Rakoshin.

Which is, again, within a couple of miles from where Luchka Is. My parents had a small grocery store. They made a very sparse living, enough to put food on the table, but not much beyond that. My brothers and my two sisters completed high school.

Could you tell me the years of birth of your parents and your siblings?

OK, that I may have a little problem with. OK. You can-- OK. My father was born 1993.

1893.

1893, and died in a concentration camp in 1944. My mother-- my father's name's Aaron. My mother's name was Yehudis, and she was born in 1903, and died in 1944 in the camps. Avaraham was born 1924, and he died in 1988 in the United States. Olga was born in 1927, and died in 1944. And Frankie was born in 1931 and died in 1944, all in the camps. I was born in 1929.

The ones who died in the camps, were they in different camps, or in the same camp?

They all died in Auschwitz.

All in Auschwitz.

Yes.

Now, can we go back to your description of your community, and the extent of religious life in the community.

Religious life, the community was basically inhabited by farmers, mostly poor farmers who were basically Ruthenians, they were sort of Russian-Ukrainian combination. Among them there were about 80 Jewish family in that town. We had our shul, we had a cheder, and we went to public school, and they also had a high school there.

I mentioned before that my two brothers and a sister had graduated from high school. By the time it came for me, I had completed three years, by skipping some classes, and therefore I had advanced. By the final year, I was-- they wouldn't let Jewish children go to school anymore, at the high school. So my final year, which would be the eighth grade-- which was a requirement, that all children complete eight years of education-- I went back to the eighth grade, eight years of grammar school as my final year.

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The situation was that the farmers, these Ruthenians, were very prejudiced people. And they disliked the Jews to such an extent that it pushed us all, the Jewish people were closer because of that. They had nothing whatsoever in common with them. They didn't want it, and even if we tried, we couldn't get in with them. And we were pretty much abused, and called names. And whenever they could get a hold of someone that was by himself, they'd group jump on him, and beat him up, and things like that. This was basically where the setting is, where we come from.

That was in your part of Czechoslovakia.

Yes.

Is your impression that this was typical of what was going on at the time, or was it something specific in your community?

It was typical for the region, for the whole area.

Where were you when the war broke out, and what happened to you and your family?

When the war broke out, one, they would not let the Jewish people own their own businesses. So our little grocery store was taken away from us. We were exchanged with a person that took over the store, in our home, who was an extremist, he was a Nazi, by at least what we look back now. And he had lived in a very small little home, which was basically of two rooms. It was sort of a living room, which was everything, bedroom, dining room, and a small ante room, and that was the home.

My two brothers were sent, first went to yeshiva, to another town. And then in order to earn a living, because the family had no means of making a living, they went to learn trades. And they would come back from time to time for holidays and so forth. I myself was sent to an uncle of mine, to another town. And he was he was a farmer, and he had the means that he could support another person.

I was told the reason they were sending me is because they had better Hebrew schools and better schools there. I later found out that I was just one mouth less to feed in the home. This is what I was told later on. That was terrible. I was there for a year, and that was a terrible time for me. There wasn't a night I didn't cry myself to sleep, I was homesick. I was 12 years old when I went there, but I was back in time for my bar mitzvah.

I'm sort of lost here for a second. OK, as far as making a living was concerned, we couldn't work, no one could work legally or anything else. So we were forced to do things on the black market. My father, we lost our regular Hebrew teacher that we had him in town because they couldn't support him. So my father took his place, and he received a very small, very small salary for it, which didn't amount to very much.

My mother was really the sort of go getter for the household. She bought materials, there were coupons at that time for sugar and flour, and she was able to redeem some of the coupons that were used already, and buy new sugar, and flour, and sell it on the black market. Later on, she learned how to make some candies out of that. And I was the one that went to various little villages, dressed in peasant clothes, and to deliver these things.

And if I was caught with it, or anyone was caught, it would have been a big problem with any part of this business. But the only close thing that I came that it was, I came across some soldiers in a field on my trip back. I had money in my pocket. And they searched me, and they found the money and took it away. But had it have been on the way up there with the candy, then there would have been a big problem already. So luckily, even though they just took the money, that part worked all right.

One of my brothers had come back, my oldest brother, which was Avaraham, he came back and we just in time for Passover. My other brother living in Budapest, Albert, and he worked there. And this was the first Passover that the entire family was not together. He came, we still had our usual Seder, we had matzah, which was very hard to come by, but nevertheless, we managed to do it.

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During that time, we received a notice that all the Jewish people are to report within two days at a plaza in the center of the town with whatever belongings they can carry, and to leave their homes. And the gendarmes, which was Hungarian gendarmes at that point, came and made sure you left the house, and they locked the house. And then we were told that they were taking us to a ghetto for safekeeping. Because for political reasons, we could not be free and among the other people.

We did as we were told. We took whatever belongings we could carry, we reported to the square, and there were wagons waiting there. While I was going to high school, there was a professor I had, his name was [? Mayachik. ?] Tremendously bigoted person, hated the Jews, make life horrible for me where I was in school. I was only one of two children at that time going to high school.

One of two children?

One of two Jewish children. And he was in charge of this whole wagon, all these wagons that were taking us into the city. Going back for a minute, prior to that, there was a law where certain men of a certain age were going to a work camp. These work camps were tied in with the armed forces. They follow the armed forces, they were supposed to dig their trenches, and do this kind of detail work.

Every so often they would let them come home for a week or so, and then they would go back. My father was doing that. We, as younger people that were around the town, also had a meeting once a week. And likewise, the gentile children had to do that. But they marched around with weapons, and we marched around shovels until we got to a site, and they made us dig holes. And then at the end of the day when we were finished digging, we had to put it all back. Just to keep us in practice.

Anyway, getting back, we were on the way, we were sitting now in the wagons, packed, and we were going to Munkacs. We didn't know what to anticipate, whether it was a ghetto, or what the place was going to look like, where it was they were going to put us. Everyone, we told one another-- at least, we were told by parents and other people-- that the ghettos, the Jewish people are used to ghettos. They've been through it for many years, through programs and ghettos. The war can't last much longer, and we'll go, we'll just wait it out.

Turned out that we were unloaded into a now unused brick factory, and a lumber yard. There was a railroad track going into the brick factory, and there were barbed wires around it. For the first time we found ourselves that our guards were now German. Up until now, we only had Hungarians, Hungarian either soldiers or gendarmes that we dealt with.

They gave us places, where we all slept there, like big barns, we all made our place where we could sleep. We had straw we put down, and we were all-- that was our own little section where we stayed. They had soup kitchens set up which we went to. We still had a little food, we still had our matzos. Ironically, like in Egypt, we also had our matzos.

We met certain people, people there from our town, of course, that were there, people in nearby villages that either my parents knew, or I knew some people. Including my grandfather and grandmother, who was my father's parents. They were very old people, and they were there.

Then an announcement came that there was a train coming in, and we were going to be-- they're going to start relocating us. They found better homes for us, and we were going to be moved to a new area. My older sister had developed a sore in her leg. She was three years older than I am. During that time when we were in this brick factory, her leg was getting worse. There were some doctors who were also confined there. They didn't have medicines, they didn't have any way to treat her. The only thing to do is keep it bandaged and try to keep it clean. But she had a lot of pain with that leg.

So every day certain people were called out to go to the train, which was right there inside the compound now. They were all cattle trains surrounded by German guards. We were jammed into those cattle trains, that only about possibly one third could lay down. All the rest of it had to stand up, and we were standing up and packed like sardines. They had a couple of buckets there for human waste, and the soldiers were sitting on top of the trains, and the trains moved out.

I think it lasted-- I don't remember the exact time, but it lasted for about two weeks. We moved mostly at night time.

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During the day time, we were sidetracked in other tracks. They passed some sort of food to us through an open little door that they had. We were latched in, the big doors were all sealed in, and some food was coming in.

The conditions inside those trains were probably the worst thing that can happen to a human being. Although the Nazis found things that were worse than that. The smell from the waste that was there, no one was bathing, constant crying, crying from babies, from children, from all the people that just couldn't stop crying, and so forth.

My sister, the one with the bad leg, Olga, her leg was getting worse by the day. She could no longer touch the floor with it. Finally, we hear a tremendous noise from the outside, and the gates opened. The door to the--

Train.

Train opened. And there we were surrounded again by a lot of German guards. And they started screaming we should get off. "Los, los." That word los is what we heard, the most used word, meaning hurry up in German. To leave everything that we have on the trains, and just get off.

While we got off the trains, there were some local, there was a working detail of inmates who were Jewish, spoke to us in Jewish. They were dressed in this blue striped uniform. And they kept saying to us that if someone is less than 18 years old, to say that they are 18. And they took a chance by saying that, because they were there, obviously-- I think what they were there for is probably to clean everything off the train, what was left there. But it was a big chance the did by just saying that.

Ahead of us there was this large gate, with the now-famous sign, "Arbeit Macht Frei," work makes you free. And we were all marched in through that gate. On the right side, once we got through, and again, we were still together. My father held my sister on one side, my mother on the other side. Then they separated, they separated. They said all the women, the females would go one way, to one side, and all the males on the other side.

So no one could let go, or to hold on. But anyhow, they came, guards came and they pushed them apart, and everything else, to go. My sister was then supported on the other side by another woman, I don't know who she was. But she was helping her so that she could only walk with one leg. And my little sister sort of held onto my mother's skirt. For a little while, they were in sight, and then we could no longer see them. That was the last time I saw my mother and my two sisters.

My father and my brother and I were in the other line. Then that line, it's obvious, you had it where the line was splitting. And there there was very well-dressed German officers. And one in particular was holding a stick in his hand, and he motioned to go left or right, or he put it against your chest, and say, you, this way.

They asked me how old, the younger ones they asked how old they were. And I said that I was 18. Being German is, it's similar to Yiddish, and I was able to understand that. How they let me go is beyond me. I wasn't-- I was small. I was, again, I was 14, but I was small for 14. I couldn't-- trying to think about is why, why did he really let me go there, because there were other people who were larger than me that went the other way, to the right, actually. Because, find all the young people and the old people were on the right line.

Nevertheless, I found myself following my father and brother. They marched us into an area where there was, it was a delousing station, we had to strip our clothes. We went in the showers, and they gave us our new clothes, which was consisted of wooden-soled shoes, a pair of slacks, a jacket, and a cap. We also had to have our hair done, hair clipped. There were people all sat there with clippers, and they clipped your hair short.

Then there were other people there with razors, and they shaved your head about two-inch stripe, going from the back down to the front. This they said, in the event someone would escape, they would be easily detected. There's no way anyone could possibly escape from those situations. I mean, the guards were on top of you, the fences were electrified, with the lights shining down, and then guards on raised platforms with machine guns pointing at you. But nevertheless, that was their thing.

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We were sent into a barracks, which probably slept like, five, six people across on three decks. And we were also given a blanket and a dish. As so as soon as we got in there, we were told to go out, because lunch was going to be served. So I took I took my dish, and we all went outside, and they gave us the soup.

The soup itself, the only way I can describe it, it looked and smelled like vomit. There's no way you could eat it. So there was a man there who was there before we got there, and he looks at me and he says, are you going to eat your soup? And I said no. He says, can I have it? So he took it, and he put in his cup. He told me, tomorrow you will not give it away. And I never did.

We were then gathered and given the rules. The rules were-- we were also given our numbers. I never got my number tattooed. I think, you obviously try and say, why wasn't I tattooed, and most people were? Some of us weren't, we were only in Auschwitz for approximately two weeks. And I suppose they just didn't get around to it, and we were not given the-- didn't have tattoos of numbers.

But they impressed upon us the fact that this number, if you don't respond to it, you're not going to be called by your name. You're going to be called by your number. And if you don't respond when you're called by that number, you'll be greatly punished. Punishment could mean, from giving you a good beating, down to outright destroying you or killing you.

I have a problem with names, names and numbers-- even telephone numbers. There are certain numbers I remember, and mostly I have to look up all the numbers. There's a block, in fact, it's getting worse. There's one number I will never forget, which was 68,326. I was in the army in the United States, I don't remember my serial number. I don't remember anything like that. But I do remember this number. Anyway.

What was it?

What?

What was the significance of the number?

The number, that was your prisoner's number.

Oh, without the tattoo.

Without a tattoo. But you still had a number. Anyway, we were then told that twice a day we have to line up before breakfast, as soon as you get up, to this plaza. They call that an appelplatz. There, every barrack had to come out and stand together, and the barracks leader, the guy who was in charge of the barracks was standing in the front. And then the Germans, the German officers came by with dogs in their hands, and they counted the people. And if someone had died in the interim, block leader had to have a note written, which was documented by some official to let them know this one and this one died, and I have so many.

This happened every morning and every night in between. The food was typical, throughout the time that we were in the camps. The mornings were generally a piece of bread with either coffee or tea. Lunchtime was the famous soup. And in the evening was, again, either a piece of bread, sometimes a piece of margarine, or if not, a piece of salami, again, with tea or coffee.

Every day when we were in Auschwitz, right after breakfast, we had to line up again, and they pick details for work, work that was within the camp. It was the kind of work that had to do with maintenance. Some days my father was taken, sometimes we all went. And the times that we didn't, we stayed behind.

On one of these days, my father was called for, and they needed 50 men. And so he left with them. That was the last time I saw him. Again--

They didn't say why he was--

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He was just taken on detail. And nobody told you anything there. Again, I found out later on only because my aunt, who was my father's sister, was a nearby camp adjoining to where he was.

That was Birkenau?

That was in Birkenau. And somehow they were able to communicate through the fence, and she would see him on a daily basis. What he did, he worked carrying the bodies from the gas chambers.

Your father?

Yes. And this went on until, no, it was Passover-- it was Yom Kippur, excuse me. It was Rosh Hashanah. It was at Rosh Hashanah, my aunt says he just didn't show up anymore. Prior to that, there were some explosions. Some of them had blown up one of the gas chambers. And through another source that my brother discovered was that he was part of that group.

Your father was?

Yes. Anyway, while we were there, every day, trucks would come in and take various inmates or prisoners to other locations. They were taking them out of the camp. Our time came, and we were told to board this truck. We were on that truck, and we went to the Mauthausen, which is in Austria.

Now when did you go to Auschwitz, that was when?

Auschwitz, I probably can't give you the same time. The only thing I can tell you--

Spring.

When we left was Passover, the week of Passover. We were in that brick factory for about two or three weeks.

That's the ghetto.

We were on the road for about two weeks, and then we were in Auschwitz. Time, you know, was totally lost. That was about it. So it was-- April, May, it was probably May or June.

Of 19--

That would make it 1944. Mauthausen was a fortress. It was not built at all as the other camps, or any camp that I have seen. It was built mainly out of marble, brick, stone, and they had a crematorium there also. But it was a transfer camp. When people got there, they intern, they stay there for some days, or sometimes a week, or maybe even two weeks, and then were transferred to other camps.

I hope my time will allow me to go into some little details on that, but let me put this in. One of the days, my brother and I were then together still. We were--

This is Mauthausen.

Mauthausen. We were walking along a certain street, and we saw a cousin of mine. He was my father's brother's son. And we recognized him right away. He was not dressed as a prisoner. He had very nice civilian clothes, looked good.

This was in the camp.

In the camp.

And it turned out to be, he was an orderly to the kommandant of the camp. He supplied us with some food, and he met us, for as long as we were there, at least once a day, and gave us some additional food and so forth. I might as well, as long as I'm on it, I may forget to come back to it.

On another trip that I found myself back in Mauthausen-- this is later on-- I had found a civilian cap, a warm cap. It was wintertime, a warm cap. And I put it on my head, it was sort of a little bit fur-lined. I found it on the road, as a matter of fact. And another one of the other prisoners, who was not Jewish, came over to me and says, I want your hat. I wouldn't give up my hat. It was like a big thing to have.

And he started punching me and beating me up. And an SS soldier spotted this from a window. There were barracks there where the Germans were using. He saw it and he came out, and he says, what's the problem? The guy says, this Jew just stole my head. He took my hat, and he gave it to the other guy, and he says, come with me.

It turned out to be, was directly opposite from where my cousin was, across the street, and he watched us. He took me inside, and he used me-- it was in a room that was like a racquetball court, and I was the ball. And he hit me, bounced me, and did everything he possibly could. I knew I couldn't take much more of it.

My cousin intervened, and got a hold of somebody, and told him that there's somebody in there that's being beaten up, that they should do something about it. He let me out. So in some way, he's responsible, for possibly, me being here. His name was Arden [? Shiah, ?] just for the record of that.

He went to Israel after the war?

He went to Israel. OK, we were, again, loaded onto trucks again, and we wound up in another place, in an entirely new camp, also in Austria. It was called Ebensee. This camp was just being built. The area was a beautiful area, with mountains and forests. All the new inmates that were coming in had to cut down trees, and build their own barracks.

Conditions there were terrible. It was all mud. They made you carry sizes of logs that you couldn't possibly move. If someone tried to help with another end, to help you carry along, they got beaten as well. Anyway many, many people perished during that time of just constructing these barracks.

Finally we were in the barracks, and the whole idea was in that camp, that in those mountains, they were building tunnels. Inside those tunnels they were equipping with ammunition factories. Here too we were needed, because they needed this production. So these things had to be built. Yet they were so brutal in their ways that when a group marched out, let's say a group of 100, at least 25 were not coming back.

Every day.

Every day. I mean, it was absolutely terrible there. My brother who was with me was always delicate in his way. He was never a strong, big person. One day, he was carrying concrete drainpipes, and one of his fingers got caught between the two pipes, and the whole upper part of his finger just disappeared. He was in tremendous pain.

There was no hospital. They had an excuse for an infirmary, but they didn't have medications. The only thing you could do, if they took you in, there was only room for about 20 people, which was run by civilian doctors, who were inmates, who in civilian life were doctors. So he suffered this whole thing.

And we were also, an order came out that everybody that is under 20 to report there. Now, you didn't have to report, but they had ways of finding out. They had very good records, and they know just exactly what everybody was. So if you didn't report, they came to look for you. When they came to look for you, you were in trouble.

That was it.

So there was about 100 of us that they collected. And we stayed in that barrack. In that barrack, I was made into an orderly. And the other people working there went out to work, but they didn't go to the tunnels anymore. It was lighter

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work. Then the order came that they were going to take us all away from that camp. And--

How long were you there?

The entire time in Ebensee?

Yeah.

Again, this will be a rough guess, but I would say five to six months.

From about May or so?

Say from May--

Till November?

Till November.

1944.

Yeah. This is one time I had a chance to say to any part of my family that we were parted with, because the others, they just went away. This time, I knew that I was going to leave, and I met with my brother.

Which brother?

Avaraham, who was the only one that was with me there. He was not living in the same barracks with me, but he was in camp. And I saw him daily. Not only did I see him daily, but being an orderly, I was able to scrape up little extra pieces of bread, of food, and he was waiting for that with open arms.

He looked as he's just about had it. He was skin and bones. There was almost nothing left of him. It was a pitiful situation. We said goodbye to another, and I, in my heart I knew, I'm just-- I'm not going to see him anymore, because there's not much longer that he can possibly last.

Turned out that he got so ill, someone just took them to the hospital. And they took him in. And while he was there, he just basically rested. And I suppose the people liked him, whatever, they kept him on there as an aide. And that's really what saved him. Anyway, we were on the way back towards Mauthausen.

After the six months in Ebensee.

After in Ebensee. At Mauthausen, again, I met with my cousin there. And things were rougher for him already. He couldn't get out and see me as much as he did before. But nevertheless, whatever little bit of something you could give me, it was great.

Ebensee was in Germany?

Austria.

So you went from Auschwitz in Poland to Ebensee in Austria.

Yeah. It was always, from then on in, it was all Austria where we went.

Because Mauthausen is also--

Is also Austria. Mauthausen is not far, right off the Danube, somewhere there. After Ebensee, we went to a place near

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Vienna, it was called Wein Schwechat, in the suburbs in Vienna. And it was the Heinkel factory, they were making planes there. They trained us how to be helpers to the mechanics and the engineers and so forth.

I was assigned-- incidentally, this was the first jet ever to be produced. And that was it, that's what we're working on. They had one jet engine on a fighter plane. The United States didn't have any at this time.

You didn't know what you were doing at the time.

We knew we were working on a plane.

Yeah. But the significance of it you didn't know.

I didn't know. It was still experimental, because first of all, by the time we got there, there were only three buildings left. All the others were all bombed out. There were still, they hit them, the bombers used to come, the Allied bombers used to come and take them out one at a time. And then there was just one.

But we stayed on until there was -- when a plane was completed. It took a long time for it to be done. And the test pilot took it out, and then we saw just going right down. And it was very experimental at this stage. I don't think they would have really used.

Then an order came out that we had to leave the camp. We heard guns, we heard artillery. Incidentally, at this particular place was the best as a situation could be.

That's in Schwechat?

They did give us food, for whatever it was worth, enough to not starve. And we didn't do strenuous labor.

Do you understand why?

Well, because what kind of work we were doing.

They needed your labor.

They needed labor. So they were ready to evacuate the place. But there was a choice. They had a little bit of what they called some sort of a hospital, which wasn't much. I think there was like, eight beds in it. And there were some people that were in there, and they were taken care of. It wasn't a danger. If something was wrong with you, you could go there safely.

So we're told that those who are not able to march or to walk should report that to that hospital. Now, this was a very, very chancy thing to do. Because from the past we always know, if something is wrong with you, they got rid of you. I chose not to do it. A couple of people did, and were liberated the following day. My big problems first started from that point in that.

And we were put on this, what they called the death march.

From-- you're back where at this point?

We were from Vienna.

Yeah. Which camp was this?

Wein Schwechat, it was called.

That was your last camp.

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It wasn't really. It was really an aircraft factory. Was not typical. It was set up, again, they put their barbed wires around, they did their thing to the confine you. We marched, and we found ourselves back at Mauthausen again. They gave us absolutely no food. At night--

On the march?

On the march. We slept on the fields. While we were in the fields--

This is in the middle of winter?

Yes. While we were in the fields, we could-- it was rain, it was slush, it was just, it was past winter. Was already spring. Was still cold there at night, it was cold.

Spring of '45?

'45. But in the fields, you could dig for things. You could dig for worms, you could dig for snails.

What did you do with the worms and snails?

You ate them.

Oh my. We all had our little tin cans. Sometimes we were able to make, take a couple of twigs and make a fire, and heat it up. But nevertheless, it was it was a big help, because that did keep a lot of us going. Behind the column--

Were there any people who said, they just can't do this, dig for worms and snails in order to eat it?

There was not a question of can't do it.

Everybody did.

Of course. Not only that, but a stronger person, he'd find you were digging in one place, and someone was stronger than you pushed you over, that's a good place to dig. And he pushed you out of there, because he was going to dig there. So as the column marched, there was a burial detail following. People were dropping like flies. I mean, all along. And they were just buried, right along the road.

And we kept moving, and people got behind us. As soon as you started falling towards the back-- now as you were in the last rows already, the guards kept pushing and punching and hitting. So if you're not totally-- you're not ready to die yet, they made sure that they're going to finish you off, and you just drop. And then people came and buried them alongside the road.

But somehow or another, we came to the end of our line, whatever was left of us. And that was this place called Wels, which was in the area of Linz. Wels was not originally a camp, it was really a warehouse-- warehouses, buildings that had warehouses in them. We spent approximately two or three weeks in that place with absolutely no food. Nothing.

This is where we saw human flesh being eaten. Again, things, grass didn't grow there. Things were dust, they were digging in the grounds and whatnot. Every so often-- there was some very, very good looking warehouse there, which had a loading platform on it. Every so often, some guards came out with packages, and just threw it to the people. With things like chocolate, food, salamis, whatnot. More people were killed trying to get at those things. They did it deliberately. Because whoever got a hold of something, he was killed, because it was taken away from him.

And who threw it them again?

German guards.

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German guards. And they did that for sport, you think?

Sport. Unknown at that time, that was a Red Cross warehouse, sent there for that purpose but never distributed. On one of those times I had gotten a hold of a chunk of butter, actually butter. Immediately, if you hold on to it, you know, your life is not worth a nickel, because other people just come and get you. Stuck it underneath my shirt. It started melting.

From the body heat.

Body heat. And I was trying to get away to a place where I could have it. Probably, had I had a chance to eat it, I would have died, because my stomach could not take straight butter at that time. At that time, we were ridden with lice, lice were everywhere. My hair was completely gone. My teeth were so that I could take my tongue and just push them out, totally out of malnutrition.

Anyway, they found me with the butter, and they took it away, and at least my body was well greased. But anyway, I still licked up whatever I could from that. During that time, I found, again, you tell about relatives, this was like a distance relative, again on my father's side. His name is David.

David came through the war camps, but not through the concentration camp war camps. They were war camps like my father originally used to go to. But towards the end of the war, when there was no need for them anymore, they were sent to the concentration camps. So he was in fairly good shape.

And when we met, he sort of took care of me. He couldn't do for me as far as food was concerned, but he made sure I was comfortable, he helped me walk, I could barely walk at that time. Anyway, he was really, in the last days, he was-- again, if I'm to be grateful for anybody, it would be to David.

And do you know something, when we talk we talk about the Holocaust, it was always difficult to talk about. I couldn't even get my-- David lives in Brooklyn. I even couldn't get myself to call him up and say, David you know what you did for me? I meet him, I meet him at affairs, at weddings and things like that.

After I wrote my story, I sent him a copy of it. Oh, I did call him up. I called him up, and I said to him, you know, I never thanked you for what you did for me. He says he didn't know, what'd I do for you? After liberation, anyhow, he says, I gave you some food. It meant absolutely nothing to him. He'd forgotten almost everything himself, so he didn't know.

Anyway, the camp was liberated by a lone American soldier that came in on a Jeep.

By one soldier.

One soldier. By this time, the guards disappeared, they were no longer there. And in fact, he was in danger, because everybody was just all over him. And the only thing he did, he just held up his rifle in the air, and everybody went through his pockets. He didn't care, he just-- he just let everybody at him.

The question was right away, how do we get food? Some people would say if you stay here until they get to you, you'll starve. Other people said, we're too weak to do it, so they just stayed.

I think the--

What, time is up?

Tape is about running out. So we'll pick up from this moment of liberation.

Oh, OK.

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Very shortly.

All right.

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