--my eyes. That light.

But don't look at the light.

I know.

My name is Dr. Sidney Langer. And I am the director of the Oral History Project of the Holocaust Studies Resource Center at Kean College in New Jersey. I'm very pleased that Mr. Enoch Trencher, who presently resides in Union, New Jersey, has come to the college today to talk about some of his experiences during the Holocaust. Mr. Trencher, I want to thank you very much--

You're welcome.

--for coming. Could you tell me a little bit about the town you were born in, your date of birth, what life was like in your town?

OK. I was born in a large city, Krakow. But I was raised in a small town named Krosno in Galicia. The town had approximately 2,000 Jewish families.

How far was the town from Krakow?

Oh, over 100 kilometers. It's about a couple hours' ride by train.

And your date of birth was--

My date of birth is March 10, 1926. My town had a nice Jewish community. My father was a local butcher. And we-- our family consisted of eight children, four boys and four girls. When I was also was living our mother-- my father's grandfather and grandmother.

We had our own home. We also had livestock, like our own car or a horse, horse and buggy, because the situation was not like in America when you were-- a butcher, I suppose, had to do everything. Buy the cattle. Bring it to the slaughter house. Slaughter it. Skin it. Bring it to the market. Cut it up and sell it. Everything in one.

And there was no refrigeration. And when there was any meat left over, there was a city icehouse where you kept the meat for the following day or week. The town had what they called a rav and two rabbis. And there was a nice--

The rav was a [NON-ENGLISH] leader?

We did not know of any-- what is the American-- what is the three--

Orthodox, conservative, reform--

There were no conservative. Everything was Orthodox. But there was Orthodox and very Orthodox. And each--

So the rebbe was very Orthodox and the two rabbis were Orthodox?

Each one has their own sect. And when it came to [NON-ENGLISH], those kind of thing, so they had their own clique where each rabbi had their own [NON-ENGLISH], their own part of the community, Jewish community.

And there also was a Jewish community, [NON-ENGLISH], what they call when we were slaughtering animal, you know, a cow, you had to pay a certain amount because there was a shochet. And--

A ritual slaughter?

Ritual slaughter. Right. And from that money, I think they got part of it. And that's because none of those rabbis worked near their children. The community kept them supported.

What kind of school did you go to when you were growing up?

Well, there was a public school. And all I finish is just sixth grade. Then the war broke out.

Did you have any education in religious studies?

Oh, yes.

Did you have--

In the afternoons. The public school was in the morning. And in the afternoons, we went where they used to call a cheder. And I got my education, my religious education. Read and write. And those cheders, those special rabbis or teachers which they conducted.

You say there were approximately 2,000 Jewish people living in this town. Do you have any idea what the total population of the town was?

15,000.

15,000 was the total population. Your cheder, could you describe that?

It was a one-room school, if you can call it. And you start at a very young age, four or five, and you continue as far as you can go. And then you are promoted to go to a different cheder, different rabbi. And I never had a chance to go to any higher. But I went several years.

It did not cost anything. It was free. I don't know who paid. But it was very--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Probably. Very strict. And anything was said was not supposed to be divulged at home at all.

Really?

Yes. But some memories cannot be forgotten. Very interesting.

Was your family Orthodox?

Yes. Of course. Well, nobody ever would think to do anything on a Saturday. Telephones in our towns, maybe was a half a dozen altogether. There was approximately-- the town and Poland in general was very poor. Our town, I think, had two cars, automobiles. The rest was just horse and buggies.

Who owned the two cars?

Well, we had a factory by the name was called [NON-ENGLISH]. And employed approximately 1,000 people. So one of those cars belonged to--

[INAUDIBLE] factory.

The factory. And the other one, I think, to the mayor. Or there were a couple of cars for, for instance, the fire department, the police department. Otherwise, there weren't any. Our town also had airport, which the Germans put to good use when they came in.

What was the relationship of the Jewish community in your town and the non-Jewish community? What kinds of experiences did you have when you were going to the public schools?

The Polish people, especially the children, were taught in school-- I have to start-- let's go start again. We had our subjects-- of course, history or reading, writing, arithmetic, whatever the public school gave you.

And we also had one hour as Jewish, as non-Jewish. Priests came to school, taught the non-Jewish kids religion and also once a week came a teacher to teach us Jewish religion. But whenever the priest left, he left such a mark on those non-Jewish kids that in order for me-- and that's why I'm talking about anti-Semitism-- my oldest brother had to come and take me home because there was always fights that ruining and to the children starting from very little by the priests.

It's unbelievable. I can still today of today I cannot forget how the children were brought up that-- what was that bringing up? The priest taught the children that a Jew was the one that killed Jesus. And for that reason, I am the one that am part of the Jews that you should be killed, too.

Why did you Jews kill Jesus? And what did I know? Of course I knew that the Jews did not kill Jesus. But I couldn't tell him. The only way you do was to defend. So whenever we walked out of school, we always went in a group of five or six or 10 and just sneaked out of the school, never alone.

We went sometimes alone and I got hit. So my mother complained to the principal. Said, this is nothing. It's an everyday occurrence. We can't help you. That anti-Semitism went much further. There is one month of the year where the Christian-- and ours was a Catholic state. Poland is very Catholic-- where they go evenings to the mass.

Our house was almost on the edge of town. And our roof, we had a tin roof, not usually from lime or whatever they call it. So whenever they used to go to church or from church, as many stones were on the street were on top of our roof. And you would think the roof was coming down, so many stones.

One time-- my older sister was married. So my brother-in-law was a husky guy, six foot, with two of my oldest brothers stuck in a corner in the back of the house. We had a fence around the house. And waited and wanted to see, who are the ones that really throw not only stone-- many times they broke the windows, too.

And fortunately they caught three. Of course, there was no telephone. They took them to the police. And they came to court.

Do you remember how old you were at this time?

11, 12.

So this is already--

In 1937, '38.

'37, '38?

Yes. And they came before a judge. And my mother came. And this, again, I will never forget. They were found guilty and they were found one zloty for the crime that they committed.

My mother interrupted the judge. And she stood up and said, excuse me, your Honor. But if they are found $1 for a crime like this, I'll go and I'll knock somebody's window out, too, and scare the people to death for $1. He told her, sit down, woman, because if you don't sit, I'll hold you in contempt of court. And that was the finished of it. And things like this, you cannot forget.

I can go on and on, but I don't think that will do any good. On the walls, where ever you say, don't abide by a Jew, that's anti-Semitism.

Do these kinds of experiences-- now, of course, you're young. You're born in 1926. Do you think the same kind of relationship existed, you know, in 1926, '27, and '28? You were too young at the time between the Jewish community and the non-Jewish community. Or could there have been some relationship between the time when Hitler came to power in 1933?

And there were changes, you know, after 1933 in Poland. Before Hitler came to Poland, before the Nazis came to Poland, there were changes. And I'm just wondering if--

We had a factory, a glass factory, and some half German, they called them, from Oberschlesien. They came to live in the town because they were there and the mechanics, they knew how to operate the factory. And, well, too much of a change that does not have to be done in my town because, as I was-- I'm trying to explain, they are-- the Polaks, the population, were so rooted in that hatred of the Jew that's unbelievable.

One other thing comes before me that is so-- it's like the picture before my eyes. I think I mentioned it. If I didn't, I'll mention it now. My older sister was married. And my brother-in-law was a husky six foot guy.

And he also was-- and he was in the buying and selling department of the cows. He used to go to the villages, buy the herd, care for a heifer or a cow or bull, and bring them to town and sell them. But before you brought them to town, then you had to go to the village elders and get a certificate that you bought it legally.

So many times-- he took me along one time. And this is usually about 3 kilometer in the village to go to that-- like, mayor in a town, there was elders in the village. And it costs, whatever, a few cents of your thing.

And he had to give you a death certificate because that was the legal way. But my point is, I did not dress any different than anybody else. Going into the village by myself, I would have never dared. But going with my brother-in-law, I did, because he was a husky guy.

Walking through those couple kilometers as many kids as they were-- Jew, go to Palestine. Jew, get out of here. You do not belong. How did they-- and stones were thrown at us, too, of course. But they respected my brother in law for his height, for being so big.

But how in the world could they recognize that we were non-Jews, I do not know. I'll never figure this out.

How they could recognize that you were Jews?

That I was a Jew, because our clothes-- we dress the same. And that's how that anti-Semitism was rooted in them. And they stuck to it. The only thing that they came to town is because they had to deal-- oh, excuse me.

Most of the Jewish people you ask settled in towns, not in the villages, because we-- and it goes back hundreds of years when the Jews came into Poland. They did not get a chance to settle into the villages, become farmers, so they had to do the best they can to live in towns and cities.

Now, once you get into a town and a city, you just want to make a living. So they became merchants. Of course, tailors, shoemakers, you know, craftsmen, and of course, lawyers, doctors, dentists, and professionals. And very few of the Jewish population ever became farmers, because they never got the chance to go to the farms.

Correct. Were there any changes-- I mean, there were changes in-laws of [NON-ENGLISH], for example, ritual slaughter--

Yes.

Do you remember--

Yes.

Again, you were very young at the time.

But I do, because my father was one of the five butchers that were in town.

Right.

The year before--

What year would that be?

1938.

1938. So you were--

The Polish government-- I was 12. The Polish government brought it under strict control the proceedings and slaughter of-- ritual slaughter. And what they did, they put out a contingent. They give everybody this ration.

And five butchers-- my father was the oldest. I mean, so for instance, they give you 2000 pounds of lightweight-- life weight. And the other butchers accordingly. So the 2,000 pounds life weight was one heifer.

And that's all-- actually, we were-- the town lost half of the amount of the meat which were allowed to be slaughtered legally. Of course, there was-- illegally, you could still do it. Illegally, what does it mean? Illegally to the Polish government. But as Jews, if my father or my brother-in-law could get a calf and bring it into our stable, we got the shochet, and he slaughtered it and he skinned it.

And we-- instead of doing this in our store in town, we did it in our little--

Secrecy.

--in a little room. And done the same thing. But they did. They gave us-- they rationed the meat. Why did they ration? They said that we can use the hind quarters of the meat. Of course, according to the Jewish law, only the fore quarter is kosher. It has to be [INAUDIBLE] and de-veined.

But there is also a way that the hindquarter, if it's properly de-veined-- and there's only a couple-- few people in the whole region of ours that could do it. So you can use the whole animal. The thing happened that near us, there was nowhere.

And we had to actually have it done-- somebody did come, because if we would not de-vein it, they would have cut off completely. But after it was de-veined, we could not sell it as kosher, because our rabbi would not allow it. We had to sell it to the non-kosher butcher for about a tenth of the value.

And what happened--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

The tenth of the value of a pound of meat. What happened is, say, for instance, the pound of meat was $1 for 100 pounds. And the other 100 pounds you get back only $0.10. So the other $0.90 had to be put on on the dollar.

So the Jewish person, if we [INAUDIBLE] the meat had to pay $1.90, almost double the amount, in order to have a piece of meat on the table. And this was already before the war.

Any other laws that you recall that were passed in Poland prior to--

Oh, yes. Certain-- I don't know how many miles from the border. No Jew could buy any property. Now, we lived about 24 kilometers from the Czechoslovakian border or the Carpathian Mountains. And it was as close as you went there. No Jew were allowed to buy any properties by yourself.

This was the law passed?

That was my town that I remember.

OK. Do you remember the day when the war broke out?

Yes, I do. Can you describe what you were doing, what happened? Did you have any warning?

No. We didn't. It was September 1, 1939. And it was about 5 o'clock in the morning. And all of a sudden, we hear bombs. We didn't know what it was. And next thing we know, a big fire. They bombed the only factory which I mentioned before. It was a shoe factory, the [INAUDIBLE].

And a couple more rounds. And they went. And that was it. And 7 or 10 days later, the Germans walked into town because within two weeks, Germany occupied whole Poland. I think it took them a little longer by Warsaw. They had a little more resistance.

Or the was another problem-- no problem. What it is at that time--

Let me go back just for one second. Before September 1, 1939, did you-- again, you're young. You're 12 years old, 11 years old. Did you have any idea of what was going on in Germany at the time? Was there any discussion in your family, among friends?

Yes. Yes, we did. We did know, because the Germans-- the Jews, which were stateless, they were thrown out of Germany. Was about 100,000 of them. They were brought to the Polish border and just thrown over the Polish side.

The Poles still come in. And they were scattered all over. Our family did come to us. That was a year before. You know, half of all those people-- they consider themselves German Jews. But somehow they were stateless. Half of those somehow decided not to stay around and kept going.

Many of them-- I never been in Israel yet-- live in Israel now, and of course, their great grandchildren already. But I do remember that fact. He threw out the stateless Jews. He said, they belong-- they are Polish citizens. We don't want any Polish citizens. This was before the Crystal Night. And--

You were aware of Kristallnacht?

Yes. Well, I may have been a child. But we discussed and then that's what we did know about it.

But you didn't think that what was happening in Germany would have any--

No.

--impact on life in Poland?

Not only this. Even after the September 1, 1939, there were in our town-- in fact, our-- Germany went very off course when they walked in--

Yeah, let's go back. You said September 1, 1939. But then you said there was some bombing of the factory. And then you said there was a period of 10 days or six days.

Yes, before they actually walked in.

What happened during those days, during those six, seven days?

There was propaganda put out by the Polish, how resistance they putting up, how they fighting. And seven, 10 days later, we had the German army in our town. So that was just propaganda put out by the little Polish government that was left because all the big [NON-ENGLISH] left.

They left the Polish army. The general was the leader. He picked himself up, went, I think, to London, to England, left everything. That's right. Poland, whatever they had, they had-- my brother was on active duty and the other one was recalled to active duty.

In the Polish army.

Into the Polish army. And all of a sudden, after a couple days, there was nobody to take care-- no captain, no major, no colonel, nothing. And it was just-- they let them loose. No command. No headquarters.

And that's why, because the Polish army was good trained. But how can you have a good army without any commanders? And they occupied Poland in two weeks.

And you remember the day that the Germans came into your town?

Yes. What I can understand, what I remember, is they were-- concerning, especially, Jewish people. First of all, they took out the rabbi and ten biggest Jewish people-- I mean, known people-- and shot them right on the spot. And they were buried in the middle of town. This was, like, showing what they are.

But slowly--

This is immediately when they entered--

Immediately after they took over, after they came in.

Were all the Jews told to come and watch this execution?

No. No, no, no, no, no. Then somehow they let everybody. And we were in our own house for over a year. It's not like the other countries that he invaded, like Hungary in 1944. Poland, he did not choke you completely to that. Maybe he knew sooner or later you haven't got anywhere to go.

But he let you. We still had our car and our horse and our house. Of course, it was a much harder-- everybody had to wear their armbands. I didn't, because I was very little and I was riding on a bicycle. So I was the only one that could go around and see the town, what it is, and do things, do a little shopping, because everybody else were adults. I was little.

And then slowly, slowly I choked until 1942. July. I think, July, August when the end came. But we knew ahead of time what's happened in other cities and towns. They started making ghettos.

But we did not believe-- because if you ask what's going to happen, that's going to happen to our town. And in fact, one time, they came out. And every corner in those days, they used to come in and they gathered together.

And they said, any Jew wants to go-- oh, by the way, Poland-- 1939, Poland was taken apart in two. From the East came the Russians and from the West, the Germans. And the river, 24-- 42 kilometers from us was the river. River [? Sanok. ?] That was the river where the Russians stopped and the Germans backed off a little bit. And that's where they divided Poland.

And that time when I said, the man came out, the whole town, anybody that wants to leave Poland this side, Germany, go to the other Russian side. Many did. And they survived. And they are alive.

And this was 1940?

1942. '41. '41. 1941. He gave a chance to people to go. My mother, let her rest in peace--

When you say "he," you're referring to Hitler?

No. The people in charge. Yes, the Germans.

Well, what percentage of the people went, you know--

One, maybe. We did not-- even so, we knew Lodz. We knew Krakow. We knew other cities that were being evacuated. In fact, some of the people came to our town, our house, where we lived one family and took in four other families, divided, and put them together into our own family because they were the people that came from other towns-- other cities-- to stay.

So we gave our rooms, our house to people because we knew what was happening. But we still didn't believe. That's how naive people were, including my parents, especially my mother.

And what are we going to do? We have a house. We have a home with 30-some-odd years? Where are we going to go? Just on the shirt on our backs going to go to the Russian side? What are we going to do? Let's stay here.

And we are still in our home They're not doing to us. And they will only know. And then slowly, slowly, they started choking.

Is there any council by the kehilla, by the leaders?

Yes

Did they make any recommendations?

They were worse. They were set up by the Germans. And all they did is follow the Germans-- German wishes, like winter came. Snow. And feet-- I don't know, 3, 4, 5 feet. Oh, by the way--

So we're jumping a little bit in years. So we're going from '41 to '43.

Yes.

OK.

Yes.

And so this is basically a consistent pattern.

Yes, yes. You know, because you mentioned the kehilla.

Yeah.

So they-- the German army was not completely mechanized. They still had horse and buggies, those heavy horses. Not all that many people they had the heavy horses. Some of the equipment were carried on big wagons.

Now, you see some of the Western movies. And so they needed to make passages go from my town to another town. And only one road. And it was snowed in. So the kehilla had to put up 200, 500 Jewish man and women onto the roads because there were no snowplows. And just shovel the snow.

Many times I substituted for my sisters. And I helped out and I let them go home. And then I sneaked away because I was little. Well, we had to. And we made the passages for miles and miles in the snow there. And this they gave the authority to the kehilla that they should organize. They had their police and they should go into the homes and tell who has to go what day to do that work.

Well, what kind of attitude did the people have toward the leaders?

There was no attitude, because they were the surrogates of the Germans. So there was no resistance. No.

But the people believed that they essentially had no choice. They--

Then it became ransoms, too. And all of a sudden, they ask for so many thousands of zloty and dollars. And then just had to go and they were the ones to appraise every family. You come up with so much money. You come up with so much money. And then the Germans took it.

And then eventually came the day when they said, everybody has to come to the main-- what you call it-- marketplace. We knew what it was going to be, because we heard on the other towns.

What date was that? Do you remember?

It was in '41 at-- June, July. The middle of the summer. And one of my sisters--

'41?

Yes. --was a dressmaker. And she worked and made dresses for the German aristocracy. They had colonels and all those things. So we thought that we will have some kind of a little bit push so that they can help us.

And I think we'd have been done. We hid out for a week by our neighbors. But what happened, we got scattered around.

Well, the entire town, Jewish population was all together in the summer of 1941 to the marketplace.

Yes.

Your family went?

No, we did not go to the first one. The first one, whatever it was, they came. They took everybody into trucks and to the station on trains and sent-- oh, I forgot the city. They were not gassed, but they were electrocuted. Near Lvov. I forgot the city. I was so young. I just don't remember anymore.

And we were heading out, except another thing what happened was never any-- there was no plans made. So, like, my sisters and I were in one place. My mother was in another place. And my father was in another place. And my married sister and her husband were in another place.

Somehow, a week later, because we were in that place, my sisters and I went the second time when they said, come together. We supposed to have been saved by those Germans who my sister worked for.

He did come, but they did not give him even the right time. He said, you have no right to be here. And we'll do whatever. That was the Gestapo thing. Do whatever you want to. I was only 13. How I survived-- I was 14 then already. How I survived, a call came through. Any man between ages of 18 and 35 step out.

Somehow God must have been with me. I stepped out. We were 32 boys. They took us and they put us in one-- in a hall in a corridor of a building. And they locked us up. And it was the corridor of the kehilla, the building where the Jewish community was there. We were there.

And the rest we hear outside shooting going on. Everybody else who was there-- my sisters included-- were taken away on the cars and to the station.

This was the-- I'm sorry-- the second time that--

Within a week later.

OK. Because the first time your family was still--

Yes. OK. A week later, my sisters-- my brother-in-law, somehow he got away. The following day, they let us out. And there were still people coming into the town. And there were quite a few.

Do you know how many people were taken from the town that day when--

Half the town.

Half?

More than half. And by then, they already organized the second time a little bit like a ghetto. They only made one big street. They closed it up. Get yourself together. And here where you're going to stay and live from now on. Can't go back to the house.

But the 32 people that we were in that-- they gave us a pass for, like-- stamped our ID cards. Go and do whatever you want to for 24 hours. Get yourself together. Because they knew you have to.

And I went to look. I couldn't find where my mother was. Later on I did find out. My grandmother and my father were all scattered and they were all eventually caught. And my nephew, he was about five years old. He just ran around. by Gentiles. They kept him.

And when we came back to the ghetto, a truck pulled up. And they took 50-some-odd people to the first camp. It was called Grabownica. It was oil fields we worked. And they gave us a home where we lived.

And a week later, two weeks later-- I don't know how my little nephew found out where we were-- he wrote us a card that he's running around, would we come. And I was there with my brother-in-law.

That's it. Just you and your brother-in-law? The rest of your family you had been separated from?

No more. And we did get mail. And each of us-- this, my mother did remember-- got in the pants sewed in several hundred dollars. In case we get separated, you should have some money on you. So when we arrived there, we got that card-- a postcard from my nephew, we made out with one of those German surrogate Polack that they used to go for supplies to town. They should pass by my hometown, Krosno. So I should be able to pick up my nephew.

And I did. And I brought him with us to the camp.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Grabownica.

OK. Your nephew was six years old?

Yes. Somehow, he stayed with us.

Now, what is the name of the camp?

Grabownica. It was a village. There was no camp. We were not guarded.

OK, because you said-- the last thing, again, I'm sorry for interrupting-- but you were told you have 24 hours. You were together with the 32.

Yes. So get some clothes and come back to ghetto.

Come back.

Into the ghetto.

To the ghetto as you described.

Yes. In the ghetto, a truck pulled up and 50 people got into the truck. And they took us into a village about-- I don't remember the mile. About 30, 40 kilometers into the oil fields. On my part of the Polish state had oil fields. And they needed laborers, plain laborers, to work in the stones, digging, thing. And we were there for about six months.

They gave us a house. The house belonged once to a Jewish family, which [? no one ?] [? there. ?] And they gave us bunks. We had to cook our food. We each had a little money. They did not pay us anything. But in the morning, one of the men came and took us to work and brought us back. And unguarded-- we were not guarded by any Germans yet.

How many people were in this?

50.

That's it? Just the total number who had been taken--

And on the truck and brought to that little town, that village.

Was there anybody else in the village?

Yeah. Non-Jews. Polacks. Sure. It was a nice village. All around were gentiles. But in fact, we used to go sometimes to go and buy one to buy. One time we bought a rabbit. To have to be able to cook, we had one big pot and cut it out where we had some food.

And we had our nephew with us. Somehow, we paid some to that man who was in charge and he looked away and he let our nephew be with us.

Who watched the nephew while you were working during the day?

You see, all of a sudden, within two weeks, you grow up five years when you're on your own. It's not like today. And he knew not to go out. He lived through those two weeks. And he stayed with us. He stayed with us until they evacuated Krosno ghetto and they liquidated-- not evacuate, liquidated-- and liquidated this camp.

And what they did with us, they took us to train and to a ghetto, a larger ghetto.

Do you remember when you left there what date it was?

No.

Approximately?

Six months later.

OK, so we're still-- we're in mid-1942.

Yeah, the end of '42.

The end of '42.

Yes. And to our ghetto, which is called Rzeszow, Reichshof. And there was a ghetto quite a few blocks away. And there we find out many things that we did not know. First of all, they gave us-- there were two ghettos, one a working ghetto and one was a non-working ghetto. The working ghetto people went out to work in the towns or whatever they wanted.

And the non-working ghetto, you just-- they gave you a ration and you lived. You lived like an animal. Also, there were Germans who were watched over. But inside, there was the Jewish police . They are the ones-- there were the German surrogates. And they were so bad-- they were even worse than the Germans, some of them.

In fact, truth has to come out. Some of them were so bad that they themselves killed the Jewish people. A Jew killed a Jew, some of them. But fortunately-- unfortunately-- this episode that I remember, when they liquidated the Rzeszow ghetto, they liquidated those policemen, too. They did not want to have anybody to tell what was going on.

Fortunately for me, from that ghetto, another truck came up from--

How long were you in the ghetto before the truck came?

About a year, or maybe a little over a year.

Can you describe life in the ghetto for the year?

Yes. Terrible. Typhoid broke out, which I had, too. But unfortunately I did survive because I was young. I had still a little money. And I could buy my-- not medicine, but juices, drinks and things, to hold me alive. The fever was terrible, the typhoid.

An epidemic broke out. An epidemic broke out because of filth, lice. In fact, people were dying left and right. And--

When you were in the ghetto during that year, did you know about the death camps?

No. No. Because you did not think about the death camps. You only thought about one thing-- survival yourself, how to survive from one day to the other.

Were there any underground organizations in the ghetto?

There were people-- I was going out on a working-- the work force to outside the ghetto. The only thing that we did-- like sometimes some Polacks came in to take out some garbage or things like this. And you also saw those undertakers taking out all those dead people back and forth, back and forth.

So you sometimes did a little dealing with some of them. And I don't know, for a clothes, a loaf of bread, something to that effect. But not on the grounds. I did not know. I knew of one fact that a mother came to pick up her son. She left home. The name was [PERSONAL NAME]. They still alive.

And the boy was my nephew's age. She got her papers. And she was already two years on Irish papers. She was blonde. I happened to see-- because my windows looked outside the ghetto. She came in. She took her son. She got out. The name is [PERSONAL NAME].

And she left Poland. She got papers. Went to Austria and then to Germany and back to Austria. And she survived with her son. They are still in the United States. They live in Passaic. The boy is a doctor now. He's in the 50s.

Her father survived, too. And he's in the 70-- 79 years old. Another story. But very few were-- she was the only person that I know that took out her son and survived and came to America. And they are here.

Did other people try to escape?

I don't-- not from the ghetto, because there was always that thing. Maybe something will happen. People always lived-- they were in Hebrew [HEBREW] with hope. And hope never came. We just had illusions. Maybe we did not want to. Maybe we want to, we couldn't do much.

I want to just go around like a sheep to the slaughter. And if that truck would not have pulled up and they took me-- they took me by force into that camp. And that was a camp-- I don't even remember. All I know, it was in the woods. We were cutting forest.

That was about three months before they evacuated the Rzeszow ghetto.

OK. Do you remember the date when you were taken from Rzeszow ghetto to the camp? So we're already in--

The end of '42.

OK. How many people were taken with you in this truck? And how did you have to get on this truck?

I was caught. They were just taking young people off the streets, wherever-- those policemen, wherever they could find.

You had no idea where you were going, of course.

Oh, I knew that-- I knew the trucks came all the time because that death camp, that was already a camp. But it was not a concentration camp. It was a work camp. And every four weeks they used to bring half dead people back and pick up a contingent of young, healthy people from the same camp.

So where ever you saw those trucks pulling up, you tried to hide as much as you could. And I was on a workforce, on detail in the camp, working on one of those roofs. They found me. I hid. Again, they found me. Didn't hit me. Just took me into a holding cell.

They didn't give you a chance to go to your room to get-- even pants or nothing, just the way you stood onto the truck. And that's where I parted with my brother-in-law and my nephew. And then to that forest where we-- what we did, they just cut down trees.

I forgot the name of the camp. Anyway, that was-- and about three months later, about, they liquidated that camp and they liquidated Rzeszow ghetto. But liquidating that camp, they sent us to another camp. But liquidating the ghetto, they took them straight to the forest, dug their own graves and shot everyone. Only one or two survivors. Eventually you are all. No survivors.

And then from that forest camp, we went to a big camp called Pustkow. Still in Poland. Still in the center of Poland. And we would have been in that forest camp another three months. There wouldn't have been any survivors.

How many people were able to get out of that forest camp?

The whole forest camp was taken apart, everyone, except it was divided into two groups. Half of them went to Pustkow and another half went to a different place. I remember mine. They build us barracks. And we supposed to have been already people that knew professionals.

They asked me, are you a professional? I stepped out. I don't know why I did. When we arrived in that camp, they gave us two weeks leisure. They fed us. They gave us good food. And we didn't do a darn thing.

And there were already other people in this camp when you got there?

There were preparing-- yes, there was already some people in that camp, but in the working camp, we were in transition. They didn't know what to do with us.

So you were isolated from the other people who were already in the camp?

Yes, separated. Not isolated. Just separated by wire. Yes. And then there was a very big camp which were-- we were all Jews here and they were Polacks, Polish people. But they were completely separated from us.

What they did in those couple of weeks, they finished up factories like-- or workshops, better to say. Shoes and plumbers, carpenters, all kind of workshop. Why? Because they set up those workshops and us are supposed to be the-- the workers in those shops to-- right around there, there were SS. 40,000 SS. A camp, a town.

And we're supposed to fix their shoes, do all their work. Me, they put in to a division, a new division they made-- brushes. And would you believe that within four weeks I learned how to make brushes? They gave you-- I gave you the chance.

Within six months, I was a brush maker. Of course, hand weaving. About 20, 30 people in that apartment. And we were there for over a year. And I can say truthfully that was the best camp-- I came back to my normal weight.

How many people were in that camp, do you know?

600. And there were a little more. But the people they could not put into any work, they sent them away. But everybody else, those 600 stayed. We were in two big barracks, barrack one and barrack two, separated from the Polish side again. All separate.

There were already SS but we were still in civilian clothes. And we were there a good year, '43. And from there, we were sent to Birkenau. We didn't know. All we know, they came. They took us on trucks again to the trains.

And I don't know how many days. Next thing we know, when the doors opened, everybody down and we smelled-- we didn't know then what it was-- human flesh. And then there was the famous Mengele, which I did not know until come to America. Left, right, left, right.

My group, the whole group was left unselected except for a couple six people.

This is at Birkenau.

Already at Birkenau.

A date-- you don't remember?

Approximately you can know because they started with numbers up to 500,000. They didn't have any A series. Could be figured out. Then they started A series. The A series ran up to 20,000. Then they started a B series from 20-- from-- instead of A is B.

And this were-- after us, or the same time with us, the Hungarian Jews started coming in. That was '43, '44.

Can you describe exactly what happened when you got off the trains at Birkenau?

Yes. That was the hierarchy, which we didn't know. Now I do know. That was the Mengele. And they were just pointing the finger left and right. Of course, most of our group, because we came highly recommended by the SS from Pustkow, that we are working people. We are mechanics, craftsmen.

So we were all sent to our holding camp to be sent immediately or as soon as possible to a factory in Germany because they needed-- they always needed workers, mechanics, because their soldiers went to the front, so they need a mechanic, especially here. 600 people come from a camp, which they supplied 40,000 SS.

So we were considered mechanics.

Out of the 600 who came to Birkenau, everybody--

Was not touched, except for a couple people who were sick. Them, they sent away. We, the whole group was left, except we went through processing, of course. We did get soap and water. And after we got it, we were tattooed. That's when I have got this tattoo.

And then we were signed--

Can you describe your feelings at the time?

There was no feeling after you'd ride in a car for a week or 10 days with hardly any food or anything. You have no feeling. You were an animal. And that's not the finish. We were assigned the barracks where we were in Birkenau. On one bed, what is it, six feet? You didn't sleep in the long. You slept across.

And there were people-- eight or 10 people were lying there. When you turned at night, all over you had to turn, because you couldn't turn around. No mattress. No nothing. And we did see, when you go--

A wooden bunk.

A wooden bunk.

And we were there-- I don't remember, two, maybe three weeks. But when you walked out, you did see women, but separated. They're going back and forth, working. And we also saw some gypsies, but separated. Everyone was separated separately.

And fortunately, when the time came, again, trucks came and loaded us up.

So you're in Birkenau for three weeks?

That's all. And they assigned us to a working camp.

All 600 people?

No-- all 600. But again, they divided us into three different groups. Not all going into one the same camp. And I wound up Oberschlesien and LaurahÃ¼tte. It's still part of Poland. Half Poland, half German. Oberschlesien. But I don't remember the Polish name for it.

And there we came into a factory. And a factory that worked for the German defense. And we were in a very, very big hole, like a factory. We did not go out. We were in the factory complex. They had a big-- There were already 2,000 people there.

And there again-- and I still didn't have no kind of a-- no craftsmen. I was nothing. And here I volunteered that I am a craftsman. What am I going to do? They assigned me to a command or two.

I come there, and they have 10 people. And there is a foreman. He was a half German, half Polack. But with him, you cannot tell any lies. You have to tell him. I said, I don't know anything. He said, don't worry. He [? was right. ?] He was a straightforward man. Says, I'll teach you.

He put me to a vice and put in a piece of iron. And he--