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What's wrong with the equipment?

I'm sure he has to come back to control it, isn't it?

He moves the camera. OK. Continue please.

I [AUDIO OUT] that my real name should have been Issing. [AUDIO OUT] She was already dead, also two of her children were dead. One of them was still alive. She is in the late 70s. And we were trying to reminisce about the past, about our mutual grandfather, and so on.

We also found letters and some pictures. I found a picture of my mother with me and my brother when I was about 2, 2 and 1/2 years old, and my brother was a year older. I also found a picture of my older brother who was already married that I met in 1944 in Auschwitz. We found a picture of my grandfather, which I have never seen. He died before I was born. And I was named after him. And I can see the resemblance from my grandfather to my father, the same profile, the same Jewishness, the same type of attire of like this fur hats and so on.

And in the letter, we found a letter, which was dated back in 1917, that my grandfather wrote to his daughter in Germany. And it says in the letter about the observance of Shabbat and to be sure that you read the Torah and to remember that she is Jewish and et cetera and et cetera.

You still have those letters and photographs--

I have at home all the letters, all the copies. And in one paragraph, it says, I want you to remember it, because you come from a line of rabbis. And it mentioned that their grandfather, which was my great grandfather, was a rabbi in a little town called [PLACE NAME] which is on the border of Poland and Czechoslovakia. And when he got old in the 80s in the 1870s or 1860s, he wanted to go to Israel, like some very pious Jews wanted to be buried in Israel. He came to Israel, and he became one of the three rabbis, which is called Rosh Beth Din. He was the head of the three rabbis. Like if you perform a divorce or any kind of ritual thing that you have to have the three rabbis--

The Jewish court--

The Jewish court. And he lived down there. And my daughter at that time, my younger one, Lisa, who is now in Israel, was going to Hebrew University. And I called her and I said, honey, you must go and find out, do some of the research. She went what we call in the Jewish, called the Chevra Kadisha. And there is also a place where you go through to look for your inheritance, who the grandfather and so on and so on.

She found a rabbi who really had a book. It went back all the way to the 1800s. And they found out that he definitely was a rabbi. He was the head of the Rosh Beth Din. And he died around the 1870s. And he was buried on the Mount of Olives.

Of course, the second thing was to find the grave. We went to the Chevra Kadisha. And sure enough, they had the name and the date and everything. And it took us quite a few hours to find the grave. The grave was beaten up, I guess, from the weather for so many years. And we bought some special ink. And we traced the Jewish Hebrew letters. And as we traced it, all the letters came out exactly the way the letter was.

Then, ironically, we found out when we went back to the rabbi in telling him that we found everything, he said, I want you to tell you something, that there is a rabbi in Jerusalem now. His name is Itzinger. And he's a very young man, but he's a rabbi. And he claims that this was also his family, because each Itzinger, wherever they are, they're related to each other.

So now, we have found relatives in Jerusalem, in Columbus, Ohio, by everybody the name of Itzinger. It was very-- I don't know. I put this in to show you if you trace thing to find out. Anyway, it was a very beautiful occasion, and we went back home.

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I decided then, my wife inspired me to go back to Poland. And the reason we want to get back to Poland is for-- actually that I decided to go. I really-- to be very honest with you, I was very reluctant to go back to Poland, the country that I was born. I never had a happy childhood. We were very poor. Antisemitism was rampant when I was a youngster. We were scared to associate with any other boys except Jewish boys. And you could feel it in your bones all the time.

What year was this, Leo?

This was in the '30s.

No, I mean the year that you went back.

1983.

'83.

I never wanted to go back. But this was the first time. In 1983, my wife and my daughter, who graduated at that time Boston University, she said, Daddy, let's look for some roots, you know. The roots factor was then predominantly in the United States. So we went back to look for the roots.

And then I went back, before I went back, I was trying to think, what do I want to see? And four things came to mind. Number one, the first camp, Ruchocki-Mlyn, as I described it to you before. The second thing was to find this precious little lady, this Catholic woman, who her son was my friend. And I said, well, if God is good to me, she is still alive. I hope so, because based on my age, she got to be in the late 70s, early 80s. The third thing I wanted to see was the home that I was born in, which was very, very old when I left. Now this is 40 some odd years later.

And the fourth thing is I wanted to see if I could possibly find the grave of my older brother. At least, I would have a feeling that one of the members I know for sure is buried here, because the rest them is hearsay. I know they took to Chelmno. And I know my brother died in Dachau. But I could never pinpoint actually where is he buried? When was the funeral? And this is the dilemma that I have been confronted all my life until even now.

So we went to Poland. We came to Warsaw. We stayed at the Victoria Hotel. And since I know the language, Polish, so it wasn't too hard to get along. I rented the taxi driver that we are still friends since 1983, a very fine young man, also, very devout Catholic, but precious young man, really nice, a taxi driver. And we hired him for the duration, for the two weeks. He went everywhere with us. The only problems we had, we could not accommodate him with lodging. And he had to find his own lodging, because you could not get lodging unless-- if you're an American, you got to make your lodging arrangement before you leave, like you have to go through [? Arbus, ?] through New York and so on.

So we traveled. We went to Warsaw first. And, of course, the second place was Lodz. We went to my city. And I was trying to tell the taxi driver where to go and I will direct him where I used to live to remember the streets.

We first went to the house. The home was still standing. In fact, it was so ironic. When I came to the front of the house, the paint at the entrance of the doors to the building-- you know, the building was a brick building, four story. And they had a door, because there used to be horse and buggies that used to go through to the backyard, and usually the water in the toilets, but in the back, and so on. The paint was still the same, identical, when I left back in 1940.

So I said, let's see what other improvements there was. We went to the second floor. And I remember the apartment numbers was 13 and 14, which was two rooms. And I knocked on the door. And an old little lady opened up, and she was scared to death. And I talked to her in Polish. And I said, don't worry. And I said, I came from the United States and I used to live in here. I was born in this room.

And she let us in. She was very gracious. And I came in. And I was, believe me, when you talk of poverty, it was so pathetic to see a woman in the 70s live really in poverty, in one little room, shabby looking, and so on.

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And we stayed a little while. We left her some presents. And I was trying to describe to my daughter, who thank God lived very comfortably in Dallas, I was trying to tell her of the four walls of the room. One third of the room was divided to a kitchen, because now they already got water piped in. We didn't have it. We had to go down and pump the water and bring it up.

They already got gas. And I said, you know, my mother and I and my father used to chop wood with coal and do this burning. And she asked, Daddy, where did you take a shower? There was no shower. We had a little tub that my mother used to wash the children from one to the next and the ext and the next, and this is the way it was. And you used to take the water and have to drag it down, because there was no sink.

And I was trying to show her the walls. And I said, you see this wall? We had an iron bed with a little straw bag. And me and my brother-- I never remember having that I slept ever in my life by myself. There was always me and my brother. There was another side, another bed, two little sisters slept. In the third row, two other little children.

And then in the other room, my father and my mother. Of course, you know, Jewish tradition, you cannot have one double bed. You had to have it separate. So it took up some room because my mother had to have a separate bed and my father had to have a separate bed. And then it was two other beds for the rest of the children. And I was trying to see what America really means to me. It was unbelievable really. It was very emotional and to see the poverty that they live-- this was 1983.

We left from there. And I've traced myself back where I used to smuggle across to the next street, which is Kapliczna. And I went to the Kapliczna 12 to see if Mrs. Grabowska is still alive, the precious little lady. I came down there, and I had to look for somebody who was old, otherwise they wouldn't know who it is. So I said, do you have anybody in this building who is in the late 70s or 80s? She said, yes, there is one the third floor another-- another walk-up, no elevators, no nothing.

So we walked up the three floors. And there was an old little lady. And I said, do a woman by the name of Grabowska? She said, yes. She said Grabowska moved a few years ago to Limonowskiego, another street. And she gives me the number and gives me the apartment. And sure enough, we drove over down there. And I tell you, you talking about emotions. It was horrible.

And we walked up, and I came into the room, all in the one little bitty room. And unfortunately, she lived in such poverty. She lived now-- this was 1983-- the same as we lived before the war-- no water, no gas, no toilet. You have to walk down.

And I came in. She had one little room. And one of them was little-- I took some pictures. Sorry, I didn't bring the pictures. And she with a little curtain corded off part of the room for the little kitchen. And you can see the pipe going into the wall and the buckets that she has to drag this water from downstairs two flights. The woman is over 80.

And I looked at the window, and there was an old man sitting down there. And I said-- and after we got acquainted-- she didn't remember. And I said, Mrs. Grabowska-- of course, there were four people coming in like army invading, my wife, my daughter, the taxi driver, and myself. But I recognized it from the profile, she was a very beautiful looking woman. But now, you know, I looked at the profile and said to my wife, honey, this is Mrs. Grabowska, I could swear.

And we walked over. And, of course, she didn't recognize. I said, Mrs. Grabowska, in polish, I said, do you remember me? She said, nie. And I said, if I tell you that I am Libek they used to call me in Polish instead of Leo was Libek-- and I said, do you remember we smuggled from Kapliczna to Dolna. And I thought she's going to have a heart attack, really. And both of us just embraced. And really, we cried. It was very, very emotional.

And I asked about her son. And her son is dead. He died. So I couldn't talk--

Your friend, the one who--

Yeah, her son was my friend. But he died during the war and so on. And then she told me that this is her husband, which

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I've never met. In 1983 is the first time I met her husband. He was so crippled, he couldn't get up. She's taking care of him.

This was the old man you saw.

The old man, right. And he was her husband. He was in the army for years and years and years. And he came home with wounds. And, you know, he couldn't he couldn't walk practically, no wheelchair, no nothing. He sits on the chair. And he goes from the chair to the bed. And this is his life.

How did she support herself in all those years do you know?

They get some pension. They got social services. They get a pension. And, of course, doctors and everything is--

Disability--

Disability, and so on. But the way they live, believe me, when you're talking about poverty or below poverty, I think this is 100 notches way below poverty level. Of course, we stayed on there as much as we could. And we reminisced about the past. And she remembered. And everything was beautiful.

Then I found out to my amazement that I did not know before that she has two daughters. One of them lives in Lodz and the other one lives in another part of the country, because the next day one of the daughters came over and became very friendly. And, of course, whatever I and my wife and my daughter had in our pockets money-wise and presents and whatever, everything was left to her. Nobody got anything after her was finished. We really left her everything, because I really cried. It was unbelievable. And we were very much in touch after we left back.

The second thing, we went-- there was a little small synagogue that remained. Of course, the big synagogues were all burned up and so on. A little small synagogue, they telling me that the reason it survived is it was camouflaged as a warehouse during the war. And after the war, they took off this camouflage and it became-- it was a very small place. And this is where the Jewish people of Lodz actually hang out. Mostly of them are elderly, in the 70s and up, very reluctant to leave Poland because of the pension and the social services and so on. 90% of them have been in Russia fighting the war, during the war. 90% have been intermarried.

It was a real trauma to talk to them. They still spoke Yiddish, just like I do. And we reminisced about the past. And every day, they come during lunchtime. The United Jewish Appeal from the United States sends some money. And they do some cooking. They come like a Jewish kitchen and they come down there every week. And there is always usually a minion, not too many of them.

And it broke my heart to see what happened to the Jewish people in a country that in a city that had over 250,000. It broke my heart. I honestly felt that I would have loved to pay for everyone to go to Israel, because they can have such a more fruitful life down there, instead of staying down there without anything.

Did any of them speak about going to Israel? Or did they want to go?

No, a lot of them did not, because mostly of them over 70. I had one incident that really broke my heart, that I still cannot forget it. And I want to mention it. One elderly man-- he was 76 years old-- fought during the war with the Russian army, married a Polish woman after he got back, has two children, grandchildren. One of them lives in Lodz, the other one a different part of Poland. And he was crying to me, telling me that my own children don't want to see me because I'm Jewish. And this is to me [INAUDIBLE].

And I told him, why don't you go to Israel? He says, he is still hoping that maybe they will talk to him, because when his wife died this is when the tragedy happened. When his wife was still alive, the children used to be around. And he used to see them. And now, he has lost complete contact with the children. They don't even want to see him. There's a lot of stories like this which broke my heart, but we kept on going.

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Did you experience, while you were there, any kind of antisemitism? Did anybody say anything to you that--

Not officially. But I will tell you my next trip in 1987 that I took that I felt that the climate in Poland was a country that I would call, what Hitler used to say, Judenrein. Poland is a country, which is really free of Jews. The whole country got probably 5,000 Jews. And out of the 5,000 Jews, 90% are over 70. And I believe in 5 to 10 years, unless some miracle happen, nobody will be left.

Anyway, I was looking for a cemetery. One all older men in the synagogue told me that they have a little Chevra Kadisha. And they're going to try to find a-- they've got a box with names from before the war. Believe it or not, we found a little yellow piece of paper, which was so brittle-- I was so thankful that I did go. I found the exact day that my brother died. It says in this thing what hospital he even was that he died, which was Poznanski's hospital. There was a very famous, very rich Jewish man, Poznanski. That was his hospital. And he died in appendicitis. And they buried him. And on this ticket, it shows you what street in the cemetery and what cemetery.

And sure enough, I took this little Jewish fellow. We took him in the car. And I said, please, come with us. I'll pay you. We gave him some money. And he went with us to try to find the grave. It took a long time.

We came into the cemetery. I don't know, being Jewish, it hurt me so much. And I'm sure Gentiles would probably feel-- Christian would feel the same way about a cemetery. It should be holy, protected by the government if it's a democracy or if it is a communist country, doesn't make any difference. It's a place where no Jew or no Gentile is going to get out of the grave and fight you to death. It was so broken up. Every stone was turned over. It was the most horrible sight to see when you walk into this old cemetery. It's called [PLACE NAME]. That's the old Jewish cemetery in Lodz, which is probably hundreds of years old. And you walk through the stones, the sidewalks, and everything was broken stones from-- what do you call it, the [NON-ENGLISH]?

The headstones.

The headstones. It was horrible. And I hope to God that I will find my brother's. And we traced and we worked. And we finally found it. And it was about seven foot overgrown. And we found the grave. And then, as I told you before--

Was the stone intact?

Yes. That we were so poor that my father probably didn't have money to put any marble between the signs, you know, and so on, because it was a plain, cement thing, which was engraved in. And to my amazement, I was so delighted that my little daughter Lisa, who was with us-- and since she graduated Hebrew University, she was very briefed on Hebrew. I couldn't read the words. I couldn't decipher the year and so on. And this beautiful girl translated to me every word and wrote it down in English.

And then, of course, we got a man from the cemetery to chop the woods, you know, the grass and all over. And I paid him. And I left some money to perpetuate it. There is a caretaker down there. He and his wife supposedly take care, but it's impossible to take care of such a big place.

And I looked at it from a point of a survivor. And I said, at least here, I know my brother is buried. They had a funeral. We cried. We weep. But it was God's will and he died, unfortunately, as a young man. But the rest of the family is I don't know where there are. And this really meant to a whole lot.

Then we went to Poznan. We traveled to Poznan. And I looked at the map. And I found a town called Wolsztyn, which is near Poznan. From Wolsztyn, we traced ourself back to Ruchocki-Mlyn. When we came to Ruchocki-Mlyn, we confronted a bicycle driver, a woman who was going the opposite direction. And we kind of got lost, because it's a very, very remote little villages and so on. And we stopped her. And the taxi driver asking in Polish, do you know where Ruchocki-Mlyn is? And actually, Ruchocki-Mlyn is a village. But if anybody ask you about Ruchocki-Mlyn, they direct you to this mill that we were in 1940.

So this woman stop, comes over to the car. And we start to reminisce. She said, you go about another mile and you will

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see a white house on the left side of the little road-- it's like a dirt road-- and make a left. And you go a little farther, you will go in right to the gate to this farm.

So I said, this white house, is this yours? She said, yes. And I said, how long have you lived down there? Oh, all my life. This was my papa's home. And she is I would say around in the late 60s, early 70s. And I said, my gosh, if you lived in here, you must know about Ruchocki-Mlyn. And she did not know who I am, because we look very good fed, you know, my wife and my daughter, and the taxi driver. And we asked her a question. I said, how long have you lived here? All my life. And I said, what do you know about Ruchocki-Mlyn? Was there anything during the war?

She said-- and from her, I got even the name of this farmer, this Volksdeutsche, who requisitioned these 200 youngsters from Lodz to work on this river. His name was Buda. And she was telling me he already died. And she was telling us with such beautiful words, what a beautiful Schwab-- they used to call the Germans, the Poles used to call the Germans the Schwabs, the Germans. We used to call them Polish expression Schwab. He said, this Schwab was the best I have ever met in my life.

I said, really? And I said, why was he so good? What did he do? She says, during the war he had a mill. And I knew about the mill. And she said, he gave us bread and everything. And she said, when the Russians came, she was hiding him, his wife, and a daughter in her house, so the Russians wouldn't take him, because the Russians were looking for these Germans. So she was hiding him in her house, and she was so proud of what she did.

Then I kept on asking the other question. And I said, do you remember in 1940 around the latter part of October, November, December of 1940, there was about approximately 200 Jewish boys who worked on the River Dolca? Because when I looked at the map, I saw the river. And the river is called Dolca-- D-O-L-C-A. And I said, do you remember we used to straighten up the Dolca River, so the mill could grind the corn? Do you remember we slept for almost six months in this big barn? And by the way, is the barn still there? She said, yes, but the mill is gone. It broke. The water mill, it broke, but the barn is still down there.

And I said, do you remember all this? She said, nie, no, I was too young to remember. All of a sudden, the--

Memory--

Whole thing changed. She knew about the German. She was hiding him because the Russians came in. But when I asked her about the Jewish boys, who used to work on the river, she says, I was too young to remember. And, of course, you know, I'm in a strange country. I left it the way it is. I couldn't think.

We went to the farm. We made a turn. We came into the farm. And I told my wife and daughter, and I said, honey, when we come into the gate, you will see the barn to the right, a little house to the left. You will see another barn straight down there. And sure enough, we came in and there's another farmer who spoke half Polish and half German, also Volksdeutsche, he bought the farm in 1945.

And we went to the barn. And I showed my wife and my daughter, I said, honey, look at this. See the cows inside? This is where we used to sleep, almost 200 youngsters. And I tell you, I found even the big pots that they used to cook in the kitchen-- the kitchen was outside, like a little small place next to the barn. It was dilapidated. It was already through the weather, I guess, fallen down. But the same pots are still there now in 1983, the same pots.

Then as the farmer, and I said, I want to ask you something. I say, you've been here since '45. In the back of the farm, I said it's somewhere not far away, there was a little private cemetery, which was blocked off by cement blocks. And he said, ja, ja, ja, ja. I said, can you show me?

We took him in the car. In fact, when we took him to the car, he looked like a real farmer. You know just came out from all the manure and everything. It was horrible. We closed our noses just to the smell of it.

But he took us down there. And I looked at it. And I said, honey, take a look. Here's a grave. I bet you nobody knows that a lot of our youngsters are still buried down there. And if I would dig real deep, I can probably find some bones

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still. And I told the farmer about it. And, of course, he did not know. He, of course, came in '45.

And then I decided in the same city to go to the city hall. It's a little bitty place. And I went to the city hall, and I talked to a Polish woman. And I told her the story. And she told me that they have no record whatsoever the Jewish people were there in 1940. They do have a record that in 1941 that some British soldiers, who were prisoners of war, used to work also on the Dolca River in 1941.

And I said, do you have any documents? So she showed me some documents that she gave me. She made some copies. And she signed it. And I said, do you have any other documents what the Germans had, I said. Because this was a real little German town, really most of them are Volksdeutsche. So she gave me some documents where it shows how a Jewish camp should be formed. It's called Arbeitslager fur Juden Totus Kommando. The storm troopers had this--

The death's head--

The death's head--

Insignia--

And it tells you outline how it was. You should have one shirt, whatever kind you find, one pair of pants, any kind that you have, one pair of shoes. And it shows you also in the barrack that you have a nail to hang your things, outline exactly the way a Jewish camp. And then I got some other documents that she showed me about a lot of different camps in Poznan, where they had 100 Jews, 150, 200, and 300, and so on.

Were these instructions written in German?

In German, all in German. This is dating back during the war. And, of course, I was very thankful that I found it. And my kids, my daughter, couldn't believe it that this is the way the Germans-- what they have done to us.

From there, we went to Poznan. And I couldn't find any other camps. They all looked like they're totally obliterated. We left, and we saw all the four things that I wanted. Then we went to Krakow.

From Krakow, we went to Auschwitz. When I went to Auschwitz, of course, the sign in Auschwitz you still Arbeit Macht Frei. And this used to be a famous song with us. You might think it's-- we used to even laugh, because you get so immune to it. We used to say, Arbeit macht frei zum crematorium nummer drei. In English, which would mean labor makes you free to crematorium number three. And in fact, it rhymes in English, and it rhymes in German. And it was common. We knew about it.

And we came in, and I was trying to show my daughter, of course, lot of barracks in Birkenau has been totally disassembled. There's not any there. But the gate is still there. The sidings is still there.

And then I showed her, I took it to the end of the block, which was the latrines, the toilets. The toilets are still standing. And my daughter couldn't believe it. We got a barrack, which is the same barracks that we left, but you got this cubicle. You know, it's made out of cement with little holes, probably maybe 50, 60 of them in the same barrack. And this is where the toilets.

We went over to the crematoriums, which are demolished and so. I had a Polish girl, who was standing down there, and she said to me in Polish, she said, if you dig even with your hands a little deep, you might find some little bones. And believe it or not, I dug. I found little bones. And I found little teeth. Of course, I took it with me, and I was trying to describe the camp and how we lived and what we did, and et cetera and so on. And of course it was a horrible sight to see.

We went to the museum. We went to Auschwitz. We looked at the museum. We left. We went back to Warsaw. And I really had so much agony. It really hurt me.

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And then I came back and I reminisced. And I said, how God was good to me when I looked what would have happened if I wouldn't have survived. There would be no shadow at all that ever a family existed.

But the irony of it is the following is we all concentrate on these large camps, which was unfortunately a Vernichtungslager, a camp to eliminate masses. But these little small camps, there were so many of them in the thousands that nobody has ever written about it, know about it. It's totally annihilation.

And I remember when I went from Poland-- we went back home and then I took a trip back to Israel. And I went to Yad Vashem. And I went to the director, Mr Krakowski, which comes from the same city, from Lodz. And I told them about Ruchocki-Mlyn. Whoever heard about Ruchocki-Mlyn?

So I opened up the book. And I asked this farmer, has anybody ever came back to here? He said, no, nobody. He say, you're the only one who ever came from America to look for a farm. And there was hundreds and thousands of these farm areas that 100, 200, 300 have been eliminated. There is no-- there's not a shadow. I guess I had enough courage to go back.

My second trip-- while I was in Israel, somebody told me that there are some archives in Lodz. There is some data on what happened in the ghetto. And then since the first trip to Poland, I was more anxious to go back to pursue some more activities. In 1987, I decided to go back again. And this time, I took my older daughter Sharon.

Sharon already had a master degree at that time, very sophisticated young lady and very professional. She worked in Jewish organizations. She worked for the JDC. She worked for [? Nekrich. ?] So she knew about what the Holocaust was all about. And she, Daddy, we're going to have to make notes, and we're going to have to take a camera. So we get a video camera, and we took it with us and went in 1987.

And when I came in 1987, when I came to Warsaw, and I had the same driver. We contacted the same driver prior, and we went all of two weeks. I told the driver that certain days you're going to have to be by yourself, because I want to do my own research and so on, because I didn't want him to be in with.

We found a very fine young man who has a PhD specifically on the Lodz Ghetto. And it was amazing to see a young fellow who is a very devout Catholic, married, two small little children. And he devoted his life to write chronologically about the days occurrence in the Lodz Ghetto. And I said, my God, I said this would be the guy to really get acquainted with.

He didn't have a phone. We drove over to his place. And we took him out for dinner. We became acquainted. A very, very bright, fine young man. His name is Baranowski. He wrote a book about Lodz Ghetto 1939-1945.

And I said, how did you get a PhD? I said, you must have a lot of documents. He said, yes. He says, I work at the Archives. And I said, where are the archives? He said, on Platz Wolnocsi. It was like a square, you know, before the war. And I knew where it was. The magistrate in the building.

And I asked him, and I said, listen, is there any way that me and you could go down? Maybe I will find some documents. And what I was really looking for, because some people in the ghetto-- the way the situation worked in the Ghetto is the following. In 1940, when the ghetto closed, each household had to have their people present, physically present, not say he is downstairs or upstairs. You've got to be physically present. They take a count. They take your name, born, when, the whole business, and everything. And then you have to sign it yourself. This was for rations, food rations that you got.

And I remember, not positively, but I remember you go through-- and, of course, and I found it and I recognized my signature. So everybody had to sign this thing. And this was called Anmeldung, registration. Of course at that time, we were-- Shmuel already moved out. He was married. And one brother died. So we had actually six children and my mother and father was eight people. And all eight of us were down there in 1939 and in 1940, May 30.

And I asked him, and I said-- and I was thinking some of them used to have took pictures of. They had pictures on the

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documents. And this is what I wanted so badly, because I don't have anything of my brothers and sisters to show my grandchildren or my children who their aunt and who their uncle was and so on. And we went downstairs. He said, I'll take you.

We went down to the basement. And I saw a basement of about hundreds of thousands of documents, pictures, photographs, all kind of paraphernalia what was going on from 1939 to 1945. Then we found a box, a little primitive plywood box. We opened up the door. And the box had letters like L, like alphabet order. We slide this door open, and we started looking. And it was like a card, index card when you look through.

And, of course, mine was practically in the front, L-A, L-A-U. So we went to the L-A-U. And I picked up. And the first one was my mother's document. And I thought I'm going to die. I didn't-- Laufer, Tauba. And I was just getting very hysterical. And then I wanted to look some more. And I fought back, you know, my tears. And I was looking for more. And then I found my father's, my brother's, my sister's. I found even Shmuel and his children.

And I found one of them which is my cousin, which was the same name, Shmuel Leib Laufer, who is now in Israel. I found his. And here, I took it out, and I hold it in. And I don't know, all I wanted is a copy. I said I want to have because I don't know their birthdays. I don't know when they were born. I don't know nothing. I don't know what happened to them and so on.

And, of course, this young man, this Baranowski, was such a precious man. He cried with the same tears as I did. And he was getting worried somebody might come in and caught us and so on with is the original document. And he said to me, Leo, [NON-ENGLISH]. He said, put it away. So I put it in my pocket, and we walked out and all the documents, original.

And then I go back to the hotel and try to console myself, get back and sit down and really study it. And as I studied the document, with each document, there was an attachment to it in the back. They were all very brittle. Mind you it's 1940. And with attachment with two little staples on the top, the next one in the back says Abmeldung, which is-- Anmeldung is registration. And Abmeldung is when you leave.

And it gives you everything. It gives you the name of your father and mother. It gives you the date of birth. It gives your religion. And I thought all my life that my religion were Jewish. But in this paragraph religion was [NON-ENGLISH], Moses's religion--

Mosaic.

Mosaic. And then it gives you that you were registered on this day and day, and you have lived in this apartment since whatever day going back to 1919 and so on. And on one side, there's a stamp signed by someone, which I couldn't decipher. On the left side, on this Anmeldung, each one's signature, my father's, my mother's, my brothers', my sisters', all the children, with their own signatures. And on the bottom, it says on my mother's and my father's and so on, except my father's, it says [NON-ENGLISH], which means they have been resettled outside the ghetto.

Then on the Anmerkung, which is the remarks in English, it says, transport, T-R-A-S-P, you know abbreviated, III, Roman numeral III. And then I was going bananas. What is transport III? The next day I called up Baranowski. I said, Baranowski, tell me, what is transport III? I study. I said I couldn't sleep all night I wanted to know what transport III was. I know there was some transport because they were shipping out the people.

So he said-- so I went over back again to his house, to his apartment. He showed me a book, where he showed me about Chelmno, what happened with the transport from Lodz to Chelmno, which was only about 30 miles away. He said the first transport was the 16th. The second transport the 17th. And the third transport of the 18th of January, 1942. He said, Leo, I can assure you they all went to Chelmno.

And my father's was on the ausserhalb, the ghetto, on the transport. It doesn't say anything. But it says later on, Ausgewiesen, March 15, which happened to be my birthday, 1942. I found out later from Israel, from my cousin, that my father ran away from the transport. He let his wife and the children go. And he ran away to try to save himself. But

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they caught him, and he went probably with the next transplant on March 15.

So, of course, we went to Chelmno. That was before I saw Shoah, before I went to Poland. And I never heard of Chelmno. But I listened to Shoah and I knew what was happening and so on. But I never dreamed that my whole family were gassed in Chelmno. So we went back to Chelmno after that.

We came to Chelmno. I don't know how to describe it for you. I'm sure you've read it and you've seen it. It's wooded areas, which is cut out in the woods with graves like football fields. I've never seen this in my life, football fields. And what do you see on all these graves? A big cross. And I know that not one single Christian were buried down there.

It hurt me, because what are they trying to do to us after already buried. Then I wanted to see, to follow the steps of Shoah. So my wife said, you know, you remember the church, and there was a castle, and there was a mill. So we traveled the road. We went into the church. The church now, in 1987, is the most magnificent beautiful building. It looks absolutely beautiful, real nice with all the ornaments inside and so on and the crosses and so on.

And this is the place-- and, of course, the mill is already torn down. You can see the remains of it. And also, the castle is torn down. And you look at it and you try to visualize what happened. And what happened, as you saw in Shoah, what they did is they took them into these three places. And they undressed them. And they pushed them in on some wagons, on these trucks. And three miles from there is the graves. And they put the gas in reverse, and they gassed them.

It is hard to describe to you. I don't know-- you feel anger-- excuse me.

You're OK?

I'm all right. You feel anger. You don't know who is at fault. Who do you blame? Who are you going to tell the story? And here, you look at this monstrous grave, like football fields. And trying to figure out, where are my parents? And you don't know.

Of course, I was trying to get the idea of what we call the bystanders. What would I do? And what did a bystander do when he saw all this thing? About 75 feet away from the church across the road, there was a farm. And I saw farmer coming to the gate, elderly man, about I would say in the early 70s. And I walked over. And I said, [NON-ENGLISH]. And I greeted him very nice. In fact, I gave him a package of American cigarettes, which was unusual.

And I started talking to him. I thought maybe I'll strike up a conversation. Maybe I can get some information that I don't know. And I talked to him, and my daughter Sharon and I ask him permission if you don't mind if I take some pictures of you. He said, no, no, don't worry. It's OK.

And we started talking. And I asked him if he has lived here a long time. He said, this is the third generation. His grandfather owned this farm, his father. And during the war, his father was very sick. So he was mostly at the time in here. And I asked him, I said, tell me what did you do when this happened? He says to me, nothing I could have done. And we left.

When I came back to the States, I wrote everything down. I made memoirs and so on. But the most important thing that I think that I want to mention before it is really getting too late is about four years ago I was contacted by a lady by Bonnie [? Gourevitch ?] from Brooklyn. And Bonnie told me-- she knew-- I believe I gave a testimony and she knew that I was liberated in Ohrdruf. She said, Leo, you wouldn't believe it. We have the most precious man you would ever want to meet. His name is Jack Colston. And he a liberator of Ohrdruf.

I said my gosh, and I said, this is going to be something added to my memoir. I said, beautiful, how can we get in touch? And since I'm a member of the National Holocaust Survivors at the ADL, so she said let's meet at the National ADL office. And I believe Bonnie and Jack, we met down there. We talked to Ned [? Kemeny. ?] And they took some pictures. And it was the most beautiful thing to meet a handsome, heavyset young-- I mean a man you could see he was with Patton's army. And we were reminiscing. And he was telling me stories.

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And I thought, the sincerity of a man, not of the Jewish faith, to be so involved. I said, I don't believe it. And then, of course, we became very, very good friends. Believe me, I think he was probably one of the angels who was sent to liberate us. Otherwise, who knows? And then we became very, very good friends.

I remember one incident about Jack Colston is a couple of years later, after we met, he kept on sending me literature constantly about the Holocaust. And my wife got so involved that we became really very good friends. He wrote me one time, he said, Leo, the 182nd Tank Destroyer Battalion is having a gathering in Denver, Colorado. Would you mind-- would you like to come and address some of the few who still remain? He said, they're all old men, but believe me, they were fighters then. And, of course, I'm not a youngster myself.

I took my wife, and we went to Denver. And I told him how it was inside while they were coming in from the outside. And it's ironic to see how much really went on that we on the inside did not know what was going on the outside. And when I addressed all this group, I had so many people come over and really embrace me. In fact, one of the GIs-- I can't even remember right now his name-- came over and gave me a little booklet of pictures which was taken by the Army, by the Signal Corps, all the way from Normandy through the Battle of Bulge and all the way through the liberation of Ohrdruf.

But the most ironic thing I must mention in conclusion, in the 70s when I saw a book-- and there was two books written. One of them was In Review written by President Eisenhower after he was president, his, memoirs. And another one was written by Patton called Patton's Best. And when I open up the centerfold and I saw the picture of the three greatest men-- Bradley, Eisenhower, and Patton-- and the translator. And when I looked at it, I said, my gosh, I was probably 20 feet away from this incident, which happened April 12, 1945. Again, I would like to dedicate this to Jack Colston, a great man. I am sure he is with the angels now as he was when he liberated us.

Thank you.

Thank you.

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