

We have a teachers workshop.

We'll talk more with [INAUDIBLE]. We reached the point where you came back to Poland. And you came to Waldenburg, which you said was part of Germany, and now is Poland.

Correct.

Is this still Poland today?

I think so.

And tell us what happened when you came there. What did your family do and how long did you stay? We're in April 1946, or perhaps May.

That's correct. Mom's cousin gave us the apartment, because like I said before, the sister didn't come. And they said, if she comes, we'll worry about it later. Now we needed a job. We had to have food and eat. I went to the Jewish Committee, asking for a job. They had none to offer.

How many people were in Waldenburg? About how many people were in town at this time? A large crowd?

Yes, but I have no idea what was going on then.

They had no jobs to offer. There was very little help that they could give, because they didn't have. Not they didn't want to, they didn't have. Well, that didn't help the situation at all.

Now, by then, I spoke Russian fluently. I found out that there is a place. One of my friends told me, why don't you go there and apply for a job? Maybe you'll get one. OK. I went up, was a big place. They were manufacturing all kinds of stuff. But I ask for an office job. I explained what I did in the last two years over there. And I was given the job as an assistant bookkeeper. That was great. I made money. My mother and father, we can live and we can pay for the apartment.

I worked--

Did your father look for some kind of employment?

He did, but he couldn't find.

They wouldn't take him?

No. He was too old already to get the job then.

How old was he?

199--

You were 21.

50-- 46 and 10, 56.

56 was too old.

56. It's old. It's an old man already. I had the job and supposedly everything was all right until we were trying to find out what's going on and what happened. And at this point, the cousin, she was a survivor of concentration camps. And she

told us most of the story, most of what happened to the immediate family. The others, she didn't know. And she said, I do believe that your brother survived.

Now, how do we get out of here?

So here you have a cousin who survived.

Yeah, but this cousin is already deceased. She was in Israel, and died about two years ago.

In other words, what we were discussing at the beginning of what happened to your extended family.

That was my mother's cousin.

Oh.

My mother's cousin.

It wasn't the first cousin.

Exactly. Exactly.

Well, one day, being on the job in afternoon, an NKVD comes in with a-- I don't know, a rifle.

That's N-K-V-D.

That's correct.

That's the secret police?

Right. Comes into our office. And he says, I must speak to the head of this department, to the head bookkeeper. He's not in. Can any of us help you? No. When do you expect him back? This afternoon. I'll be back. As I looked up at him, I don't know what happened to me. I thought he must have something to do with me. Not that I knew why, but this was my first thought. Probably being afraid, I guess. No other reason.

Well, he came back. And it didn't take two minutes, I was called into that office. And he says, this young man is from NKVD. He came to pick you up because you are to answer a few questions. Then you will be free. I said, no, I'm not going with him. He has to take you to the NKVD headquarters. I said, I'm not going with him, I didn't do anything and I have no reason to go.

So the head bookkeeper says, listen, it does not work like that, because when you are called, you have to go. But I'm not going with a man with a rifle. I didn't do anything. Why should I go?

I knew that he has a Jewish wife, that head bookkeeper man. He was a captain himself. And he says, look. You want to listen to me? Just go. They'll ask you a few questions and you will be back in the office in no time. He sort of persuaded me. I said, all right, under different circumstances. He says, what do you mean by that? I'm not walking with him, and he's not walking with me with a rifle next to me because I am not a criminal. I didn't do anything. Tell me where to go, and I will walk by myself. He can follow me, but he's not going to walk next to me. Isn't it awful?

For a young girl, that's something.

So he says-- he looks up at him, and he says, you know what? I personally will vouch for her. Is that good enough? Tell her where to go, and she will go. And that's exactly what happened. I came up. Building with the red carpets, like they all have it. Second floor, he opens the door for me, I walk in. Man is sitting behind the desk. And they lock the door behind me. As he opened the door, I walked in, and he locks the door.

I walk up to the desk, and he doesn't say anything to me. He just looks me up. And I said to myself--

Is this the same one?

Nope.

A different person?

This was the real NKVD office. I said, what are they going to do to me here? They're going to rape me? What will they do with me here?

After a few minutes looking me up, he says, sit down. I sat down. Then he keeps quiet, because this is how they interview you there. I said, why did I come here? What for? You will find out soon. OK.

A few minutes after, there's a curtain like this one. And I thought it's a window. Window-- curtain covers the window. Somebody walks out from there. Another NKVD, you know? Now I have two. He says-- he tells me this whole story. That he knows about my father, he knows about my mother, he knows where we live. He knows exactly what I am doing every single day, where I am going.

I said, all right and now what? And he gives me a piece of paper after all was said already. And I know that your mother is going to wait for you at 6:30 in the evening because you have to go shopping to buy something for the house. But he knew exactly every little step of mine, and my family, too. And your father is a short one, and your mother is like this.

OK. Here's a piece of paper to sign. I said, I'm going to read it. He said, of course. So I read-- I started only the beginning. I said, you will excuse me, but I'm not signing this paper because I'm not a volunteer. I came here because you sent for me. You sort of forced me to come here. And the top of the paper says that I am volunteering to do the job as a sort of a spy, and I did not. OK?

You're not going to sign it. I said no. If you rewrite the wording, then I will. We will have it rewritten for next week the same time and the same station. You're not to tell anybody about it, where you were. Not your mother, not your father, anybody. You're not to talk about it at all. Of course, my mother asked me, and I was afraid to say. And I didn't say.

I came next week. The paper was rewritten. It didn't mention the word "volunteer." And I signed it. My first assignment was go to the Jewish Committee on this and this day and find out exactly what's going on there. We must know. I went to the Jewish Committee because I knew that somebody was following me. At that point, I knew somebody was following me all my minutes of the day. I was there for a length of time. I did not ask anybody any questions.

I came back for my-- next week for my assignment. What did you find out? I did not find the right party to speak to. They were not available. And I am working. I have no time to go there every day. And that's the answer. Nobody was pleased with the answer.

Here's the next assignment. You go to this and this street, on this floor. There is a couple coming from Warsaw. And you find out what they have to say, what is the situation, why they coming back, and who are they, and so on and so forth. So I went to Warsaw-- street was Warsaw Street.

So I went up. I went to the second floor. And I stood there for a while. I didn't even ring the doorbell. And I looked around, whether there's nobody around me. And I went down. I came back next week. The people were not home, I'm sorry. I could not get any information. They were not home. That assignment stays for next week. I said, OK. Can I go? Yes. I left.

At this point, I said to my mother and my father-- I told them the truth. And I said, we have to run from here. The job is one thing, but I cannot do this. My mother and father got in touch with a friend like us that came back. They were leaving with the Berihah through the border. What I did--

That was the, at that time, Palestine-- the Israeli--

Exactly.

--program to get people--

To get us out from there. And--

Out from wherever?

Wherever we were.

To get them to?

Palestine.

Right. Which was illegal at the time--

That's right.

--of course, because of the British White Paper.

Exactly. A week after, before my assignment-- now that took place a few weeks, these assignments. Before my assignment-- and I was-- I don't know, I trusted him. I don't know why, even now. The head bookkeeper, I said to him, this is my last day. You won't see me anymore. I'm leaving. I should not have said it, but I did it.

At night, on a truck-- of course, with the Berihah-- we left. We didn't know where we were going. Over a border, on a train. They put us on a train. And of course, my mother and my father were very much afraid because of me with this latest story. You wouldn't believe it. Somebody had a big box, like a valise. And they put me in that because on the border, you had to-- and they put me in that valise--

You shouldn't be discovered.

Exactly. And this is where I stayed until we crossed the border. I got out. We all got out. And we wound up in Vienna.

When was this?

What is the name of that hospital? Not a hospital, hotel. That was in 1946 and must have been in September.

You came in April, in the spring, so--

I came to--

That's about four or five months after you arrived.

That's right. We came to Vienna. What was the name-- [INAUDIBLE]. I think that was the name of that hotel where-- we were all there. We were there for a few days, and they shipped us to camps. The first camp I arrived was Steyr. I was only there for three days. Maybe it's not important.

Would you spell it S-T-I-E-R?

Uh-huh.

All right.

And I was there for just three or four days. From there, I went-- we were told where my brother is. We-- I-- not my parents. I went by myself to the camp, where you probably noticed--

Steyr in Austria?

In Austria. A number of-- I don't know how many kilometers from the camp that we originally settled because of my brother. I went to the Bindermichel.

Yeah.

And this is where I met my brother. Now, I don't have to tell you about the reunion, because this is understandable.

A very emotional one.

Exactly. And then I took my brother to the Steyr camp to meet the family. And of course--

How did you know your brother was in Bindermichel?

Through a letter from my aunt from America.

So you are beginning to make contact.

Exactly. The letter came to Walbrzych.

That's Waldenburg.

Waldenburg, excuse me.

Now, you're in Austria.

Right.

You discovered your brother.

Right.

How long did you remain in Austria?

Four years.

What did you do?

I worked, like I always--

Did you support the family again, or did your father get something to do also?

My father got something very little to do. They had a entertainment club or something. He was-- what should I tell you? Cleaning it up, OK? That's the best that we could find.

What happened after four years? You're into 1950.

1950?

It's the end of 1950 already, right?

Yeah, well, I worked in the camp, in an office, in a supply office.

Again bookkeeper position?

The same position. The camp was liquidated in 1949. We went to another camp-- the name was Ebelsberg-- where I spent another year.

How would you spell Ebelsberg?

Ebelsberg, E-B-- E-B-E-L-S-B-E-R-G.

Also in Austria.

Also in Austria. And from there, we came to the United States of America, November 14, 1950.

How did you-- how were the arrangements made for you to come to the United States?

Through my mother's brother.

Who was in America.

Who was in America since before World War--

All right, who came to the United States with you?

My mother and my father.

Your parents. And your brother?

No, my brother-- and my brother with his wife in 1949.

He married--

He married in Austria while we were there.

And before you left, he went to Israel.

Not to Israel. To America.

To America. Right. Oh, he's in America, right.

He went to America. And before the liquidation of the camp, we went to the other camp. And then in 1950, came to America.

In America, you started where? Where did you live?

We lived on 151st or 152nd Street of Broadway.

In Manhattan.

In Manhattan.

How long did you live there?

Until I got married--

When were you married?

Which was about 1956.

You married in '56?

1956. That means I was there for six years. Six years.

Right.

And your parents?

With my parents.

In '56, you moved where when you married?

When I married, we moved-- I moved to New Jersey and my parents remained in New York.

OK. You have children?

I do. I have two sons.

What do they do?

What do they do now?

Mm-hmm.

The older one is a certified public accountant. And the younger one is a Assistant United States Attorney for the District of New Jersey.

Very nice. And you have grandchildren?

Yeah.

How many?

I have four grandchildren, three girls and a boy-- and one on the way.

Very nice. And they're divided two and two.

Two and two is right.

All right. I just assumed so.

That's correct.

Well, thank God the end of the story today--

Is a happy story.

--is an upbeat story.

That's right.

You went through a great deal. Your family went through terrible-- obviously, terrible, terrible experiences. This is a story of what Hitler and the Nazis wanted to do.

Exactly.

They really meant to wipe everybody out. And they could have had such wonderful people, professionals and people that want to contribute to society. So he didn't-- he and they did not appreciate it over there. The United States is the fortunate country that has here with your children and grandchildren.

That's right. And that was very nice.

Thank you very much for coming down--

Thank you.

--and telling us this very important story of your experiences and your parents', especially--

Thank you

--during the course of World War II. Thank you for coming.

I thank you for listening to me, very, very much.