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13:01:28 My name is Beba Leventhal, and from home I am Epstein. I was born in Vilnius, which is now Vilna, in 1925. I come from a family of four children. I was the oldest. My grandparents, my great grandparents, come from Vilna or from the vicinity around there. So we have traced it to five or six generations in that city. My grandfather was in publishing of religious books. He was a partner. He was in charge of export to all countries of the world, because Vilna used to be a very big publishing center for religious books. That's on my father's side. My grandmother had several businesses, like factories or stores.

13:02:50 When I was born, the fortunes were already not quite that well. Still, we lived quite comfortably. My father was in sorts of banking. He wasn't like an American banker at all. He was managing a branch of a Jewish bank. My mother didn't do anything. Both of them had middle education. My father went to commerce school; my mother did go to a Gymnasia Russian school. They were fond of literature and enjoyed what may be better things in life as far as culture is concerned. Even though the city was quite poor, but things weren't that costly.

13:03:43 On my mother's side, the family were merchants. They had stores, weren't rich, they weren't poor. On my father's side, the family had quite a number of children and they all managed to get university education either in Moscow or in Paris.

13:04:07 Until 1939 life was interesting, uneventful, but still difficult compared to American standards. Things weren't so plentiful, we had to study hard, watch our manners, never discuss money.

Q: What did it mean, "never discuss money?"

Well, like with the parents. This wasn't our business. The father made all the decisions. For us, for something, we either could afford it or not. But normally they wouldn't discuss money in front of the children.

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13:05:00 I had gone to a series of private schools, and so did my sister, and my little brother--one of them, the other was too small. We also had dancing lessons, piano lessons, whatever. I studied in Jewish schools, which were not government, but were private. Because my father believed in that. He was actually involved in the education of Jewish children. He was on the Parents' Committee of the Real Gymnasia. That's the school I attended. Before that, I went to a private school, that is six grades. They were all not government. The same for my sister. I was a pretty good student. I wasn't anything spectacular. But I worked very hard for my grades. Everybody had to do that, because we were always under the threat: "well if you don't get the grades, then you don't pass, and then you stay for another year." And that was a shame.

13:06:17 I had thought, or my father would tell me, that perhaps I would go to the University. But we already knew of the anti--Semitism in Poland, that it was very difficult. My father said that perhaps it would be necessary for me to go to Europe. But this was very far, perhaps to Paris. I don't know if it would have been a reality or not, or perhaps I would go to a university or perhaps not. I excelled in languages and history. My sister was very good in arts, performing and arts and crafts. Then I was quite good in sports. My father taught me how to swim.

13:07:06 Every summer, we'd go to the country to a little house, where we'd stay most of the time. We'd rent some places. Winter we'd also go. Sometimes I'd go to a little village where my relatives had some land.

13:07:32 Everything was rolling along more or less normal. The greatest interruptions being the anti-Semitism. Because my father would always complain that maybe he wouldn't have his job. Until the Russians came in. When the Russians came in, there was a major upheaval in my family. My father and my aunt, that lived with us, were politically involved in the party of the Bund. They were great enemies of the Russians; and we were on the list to be evacuated. This was going slowly. First that evacuated the Capitalists, then would take the political people. Well, we had to take precautions. We got some summer places to stay, not sleep home--not me, but my father and my aunt. Well, this didn't happen. We went on to our schools. They were completely changed to the Russian and Lithuanian languages.

13:08:36 In 1941 of June, the 23rd exactly, the night of graduation. I remember coming home and the parents were there, too. We heard all this canon, and we didn't know what it was. We didn't pay attention to it. But we knew the next morning that the Russians had evacuated and the Germans had come in.

Q: Just as suddenly as that?

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Well, it took 24 hours, perhaps. When the Germans came in, we didn't know what to expect. In the beginning it was passible, but right away they started coming out with the edicts, that Jews can't do this and that, can't have jobs, go to school, had to maintain curfew. It was getting very difficult in that respect. At that time, Warsaw was already occupied by Germans, and a lot of refugees came and stayed with us. People were making plans to leave Vilna, to go to the U.S. or Japan through Russia. I didn't understand very much. I didn't know what was going to happen, and how long this terrible situation was going to last. However, we didn't make any plans. This was very bad. And still today, I think about it. It could have been much more different. Especially maybe if the children were sent out, because we could have written to other families who had already gotten papers. We could have started something, but we didn't.

13:10:38 Q: Were the other families aware enough to do that?

The families that came from the other cities, that had already experienced stay under Hitler knew more what it was. We were caught in that very first. In the U.S. there were some organizations that were helping. Some of my teachers and friends were already leaving. But my father didn't do anything, so that's how it was. We thought, "this won't last long."

I remember the days quite well from the 23rd of June to the 6th of September, 1941. We were in our apartments. We didn't go into the ghetto yet. But we had to wear a yellow star or and armband with a "J" for Jude. Our neighbors, the Poles, weren't of help and used to laugh at us, add fuel to the fire. We were made to walk in the streets, turn in our valuables, and had to stand in lines for long hours under threat of death, that if we don't turn them in (radios,bicycles), they're going to shoot us.

13:12:15 Curfew. You could go out into the streets from six in the morning to eight at night. After eight at night, you couldn't get out. So next day, if you go out in the street, you would see some people lying dead on the street with a note clipped to their suit, saying "8:20."

Q: They were shot?

Right, so we wouldn't think it was joke.

13:12:55 I had a girlfriend, a very beautiful girl who lived in another part of town. Very good friends; her name was Buba, my name is Beba. Her father was a very prominent person in the city; she didn't have a mother, she was brought up by her grandmother. I went one day to see her. She lived in what used to be the old ghetto, because Vilnius was started in the 16th century, so there was the old quarter. She said to me, "something is happening. The Germans are coming around, and they said we have to be evacuated.

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" So I said to her, "Buba, why don't you and your grandmother stay over at our house for a few days, and we'll see?" And she said, "no. Maybe I'll do that tomorrow, or I can't, my grandmother is too sick." And that was the end. Ww were talking that we'd see ourselves the next day or the day afterwards. And when I came there two days later, the apt. was completely empty. The concierge--they owned the apt. house--the caretaker, the woman was in tears, because she worked for the people. She was a Polish woman. She said, that in the middle of the night, the Germans came and told everybody to pack up their belongings. And the entire apt. house, and the next one, and the one after. When I went back to Vilna, I took pictures of all that. They were just evacuated. I didn't know what it meant, in the beginning.

13:14:00 I said, "well, they took them to another city." But they didn't take them to another place. They took them to the place, that's called Pinari. A village outside of town, where we used to go skiing. And they shot them. Now. And this is to make place for us, for the people from the other districts to come in.

13:15:01 The Jewish community didn't function well anymore. You see, the heads of the community were taken hostage. My father was taken, and then he came back. There was complete chaos, like a breakdown. But we knew that the city jails were full with Jewish people. And people said, maybe they'll let them out and maybe not. We didn't know what was going on. However, they didn't let them out. Whoever had some special protectia (ph) could pay money and get a relative out. But by and large, they would fill the jails up, and then empty them out; fill them up and empty them out to Pinari.

13:15:51 My father was taken hostage. And everyday the Germans would come into the courtyards and shout, that all the men and boys should come down and take soap and a towel, maybe a change of clothes for work. Naturally, the Poles would indicate to them where the Jews lived, because the Germans didn't know. So they would go from house to house. Well, my father was hiding, because he had already come back. He had managed to stay with my uncles.

13:16:34 A few days before September 6th, there was an edict on the walls and everywhere, on the loudspeakers, because we weren't allowed to have radios. All the Jews will evacuate their houses and will be going to a place specially reserved for them, a ghetto in town, which was very close to where my Gymnasia was. It was going to be all orderly. We were all going to go in the way we lived, with the courtyard that we lived. We were going to be given a marching order, and we were going to walk. Well, it was pretty bad. We could only carry what we could, either a rucksack or a suitcase. People weren't sure whether we were going to go to a ghetto or a little further.

Q: Pinari?

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Pinari. So we all lined up, and we went. I remember my little brother, he carried toys. I forgot what I took. Some clothes, something. And we came in there with all the other inhabitants, when our marching orders were given. Before that, we managed to hide some things, get some things out of town, to some neighbors. Essentially we took very little. We were herded into that ghetto and were assigned a room with a couple other families. It was raining. First we were sitting in the courtyard; rain was coming down. Then we found ourselves in a room with some other people.

13:18:35 O.k. My father managed to make some contact with the outside. He knew a guy. Polish officer, and he agreed to take me to Goda (ph). That was around October. They came for me. I could see life was terrible. We didn't have what to eat one day, one day we had what to eat. The kids were crying. The ghetto was being emptied out. I started to realize, we weren't going to make it there. It was a holding tank. Bring in the people from other towns, and then take them out. There was the Jewish police. Some of my friends from the high school were going to escape; and some were going to stay.

13:19:40 Andrei came for me. I was smuggled...I looked pretty much like a Gentile. I was blond, blue eyes. I put on this long coat. At night I was taken to the farm, where I stayed for three months. And I went back now to see that place. It was alright for me to be there. And I had contact...

Q: Did you have any Aryan papers?

No. They were in the process of making a birth certificate for me. We were going to the church. They had started to talk to me about conversion. There was a birth certificate they had for me. I didn't see it; I didn't know... Most of my time I spent on the second floor. It was like a little estate. But people, the neighbors, were far away, and they knew.

13:20:37 I used to have contact with the family from time to time. I used to get, through peasants, a little note. O.k. after a while, the peasants would come there and say the most terrible things were happening to the Jews. "They're taking them out and killing them. It's just a bloodbath." And I stopped getting letters. I wrote one letter and the other, and I didn't get anymore letters. I decided, that it makes no sense for me to be there. I don't know what's going on. And I told them, "I want to go back to the ghetto." I can't say, if they were heartbroken. They tried to dissuade me. But I was taken back to the ghetto, brought in a special working place, put on a yellow star, and marched back. When I went to the ghetto, I didn't find any of my family. But there was also a smaller ghetto. People told me it was a holding place for people who would be sent out to other places on work. My family was taken there in December. I wanted to go there. People said if you go there, you can't come back. I was young and inexperienced. I found an uncle, and he said, "you can't do anything." So I went to a policeman and said, "maybe you can go and find out if my family is there?"

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Q: What policeman? German, Polish, Jewish?

Jewish. They can go from one ghetto to another. It wasn't that far, a quarter of a mile. But it was all locked in. He said, he thought they were there. Anyway, I couldn't do anything. I don't know if they were there, or weren't there. I never saw them again.

13:22:38 Then I lived with an aunt of mine. Her husband was also taken away. Two children and the brother of her husband. I had to work. So I went to the Judenrat, where my father had a lot of friends. I needed a job, because if you didn't have a job, you'd be deported. They gave me a job working with ration cards. It had something to do with pasting coupons. I worked there during the cold months, like January, February, March. I don't know how long. There were some older people and some girls who worked there. I knew this wasn't the place, because most of the people that you could get something to eat or anything worked outside the ghetto, in the columns...

Q: Columns? What do you mean by "columns?"

Every morning the work force used to go out to work outside the ghetto. They used to line up with their leaders. So I was thinking about that. I tried to make contact with our old maid. She had some of our things. And then at night once, I went out with the policeman to a neighbor. I could recover some things, but the reception wasn't very good. And she says, "Don't come here. It's very dangerous." But she gave me some things I could sell.

13:24:25 After the three months had passed, I went to my cousin. He lives in Israel. He was an engineer, a grandhomme, in charge of the many gardens they took away from the religious orders. I said, I needed a job. He said, "o.k., I have a lot of parties that go out to work in the gardens in the Rossa (ph)"--which was very close to where I lived. So I used to go in the morning to work in the gardens, which was very good. Fresh air, and there weren't many Germans. And I worked with lettuce, and tomatoes, and beehives, and incubator chickens. And on the way going, sometimes the maid would come and bring me some things.

13:25:17 That was for a couple of months. And in the ghetto, it was relatively quiet. But in winter the gardens were shut down. So then, "What am I going to do now?" And he said, "Well, the work force will revert to the headquarters of the Gestapo, because they gardens belong to the Gestapo." So I went to work in the headquarters of the Gestapo, which was different scenario. I worked in the buildings that used to be the Polish Circuit Court. It's very interesting. It's always the same. It was the now Russia, so it's...that was the Gestapo...Polish, it was the same police things.

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13:26:00 Since I didn't have any training. The Gestapo was set up with a lot of Jewish workshops. People that were tailors, metalworkers that did the locksmith and bullet thing with rifles, there were cooks, painters. Since I didn't have any particular skill, I was put with a group of girls who were chambermaids. We used to clean the empty rooms. Then we used to make them dirty again, 'cause we were afraid then we wouldn't have any work. If we didn't have any work, then they'd send us home. After a while, our work actually changed. I was sent in the afternoon to the officers' private quarters to clean, which were the nicest Jewish apts., not far from that particular complex. I wound up quite often in the house of our doctor. I used to look at the textbooks that were there. They were friends of mine.

13:27:20 We then worked out a little system. Since in the ghetto we weren't allowed to have radios under threat of death. And the people from the Underground already knew where we were working. They had asked us to listen to some news. So the way we worked that was, we would come into the courtyard where there were many apts., and we knew that we had to go to 5, 17, 19, etc...A group of us. And in every apt. there were radios. So the first thing, in the courtyard were the guys who used to prepare wood for the fireplaces. They had saws and would make a lot of noise. So we'd go out there and start listening to the radio. We'd listen to whatever we could. And we'd always get somebody with us who understands German better. We'd listen to what's on the Front. After a while, we'd break one radio. We didn't break it; we'd have a guy remove some tubes and put it back together. The German, sure enough, would come and say he couldn't listen and take it to the radio shop. We'd always have one radio in the shop that was working. This one we'd fix, put the tubes back, and bring in another one. They didn't know. But it was necessary.

13:28:43 I worked there for quite a while. It was terrible in other respects. After a while, it was shifted to the Lithuanian unit. The Lithuanian unit was the execution unit, the Einsatzkommando. I was assigned to them. This was a group of 20 to 30 barbarians that the Gestapo commanded and kept drunk all the time. At the dormitory all you could see was vodka, guns, and bullets. Their faces were always flushed. Morning they were always drunk; at night, they worked. Killed Jews.

Q: What did you do for them?

I cleaned, the rooms of the German officers. And I was assigned sixteen rooms. I had to dust them. They'd tell me to look at their papers and ask me if I knew German. I used to have to fire the furnaces with wood. It was cold.

13:30:09 The most terrible thing was when they would go on this killing of Jews and bring back the clothing. And people had to sort it. I didn't have to sort it; but some of the people would recognize the clothes of the people. I worked on the third floor.

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On the second floor were the rooms for interrogation. Half the windows were painted, so I wouldn't see in the courtyard. I recognized some of my friends were brought there. Never got out alive there.

13:30:48 Then I had a job also in the basement of the Gestapo. It was a prison. People who were brought in there, never saw the light of day again. I had to go in there. They had little cuts that would come out of wall (wool?) made of canvas. Sometimes we'd have to sew it back to the metal frame. Sometimes, we'd meet prisoners, read things on the walls, people wrote before they were taken. Terrible things. I met a few of my friends there, in those rooms. They would ask me, "what's gonna happen?" I said, "nothing. In a few days, you'll be out." Some people also knew where I was working and would ask me to bring in bread. Which was another thing threat of death to do it. There was a group of girls accused of Rassenschande, of sleeping with Germans, which wasn't true. But they were good looking girls. And they brought them in. And Germans maybe spilled...I knew two of them. That was part of the job. It was a terrible thing. But I didn't have anything else to do. I was there already. Some of the guys that worked in the Gestapo were in the Partisan, in the Underground. ~nd they stole some ammunition. They were good with the chauffeurs. I don't know how they ended up with two revolvers. I don't know how the Germans found out. Maybe the chauffeurs said something. At one time, there was an appel. We had to come down. They called out the two guys. They shot them in front of our eyes. That's all.

13:33:06 That much for the Ghetto. I started to hang out with some of my friends in the Underground, but I wasn't quite that active. I was aware that, towards the very end, some groups were departing the ghetto for the forest. Some were caught in the cross fire, and some were shot, but some managed to get to the forest. I thought of doing that, too. However I didn't do it. The ghetto was getting closed, and we no longer worked in the Gestapo. We were told, we were going to be evacuated.

13:33:50 Between the 23rd and the 24th of September the ghetto was emptied out.

Q: What year?

1943. I did not really say anything about the ghetto, which I should. Because it was a very terrible place to live, but also a very interesting, in as much as we had our hospitals, high school, literary evenings, theater. Most of the songs that are survived came from the stage of the Vilna ghetto. There was a small newspaper. The library was the only place really to escape. We used to try to cheer each other up. Teachers would teach in the schools not knowing, if next day they would come, or the children be there, because there were actions. One day they'd take the sick from the hospital, one day the children from the schools.

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13:34:45 Parties were also formed. The Underground, it was a coalition FPO, Forenic Partizanisha Organizatia (ph). It was a coalition of all the parties which functioned in Vilna.

Q: What were some of the parties?

Labor Zionists, Revisionists, the Bund, the Communist...some other splinter groups. The general staff consisted of, I believe, 7 people. The Bund had two people on the General Staff. The General Chairman was Mr. Aberkornbner (ph), who is now in Israel. Then there was Mr. Wittenburg, who was killed. It is very interesting how he was killed. But I can't go into that. He was more or less let go by the staff. The Gestapo put a price on his head. They would bomb the ghetto, if the staff doesn't hand him over to the Gestapo. There were negotiations, and he tried to escape. But he said if the ghetto has to go, if it was his head or all our heads. Course some of the people in the ghetto started to scream, that he must go to the Gestapo. So he took some cyanide with him--wound up in that same basement.

13:36:21 I don't really know how to tell you. The ghetto was in the very beginning 80,000 people. It was being brought in from all kinds of places, from all surrounding little towns, from the Pelif settlements, and it was being emptied out. At the very end, I would say that there were about 20,000 people in the ghetto. And nobody could go anymore and work outside the ghetto. In all the places, where the Germans were--in the Schneiderstube, where they were sewing uniforms, or in the Verpflegensamt, where they used to have their food delivered, or in the Panzerkommando--all kinds of places where the Jews used to be the laborers. They said, the Front was coming close; the ghetto was going to be liquidated. The Underground, the FPO, at that time knew that this was a sign that we are going to be killed off. They decided to take a stand. The ones that were in the forest, were in the forest. But those that remained would take a stand. And there was a shootout with the Germans. I saw it through my window. After that, they lined up some people, some were executed.

13:37:46 And then, on the 23rd of September, in the morning...

Q: What year?

1943, I'm sorry (microphone fiddling). We again had to line up with our packages, whatever they were, and march to the railroad station. It was a terrible thing. It was raining. We were walking in the middle of the street with our bundles, like you see in all the movies. It wasn't very different. Most Poles, really, were too ashamed to look; but some of them were standing and cheering on the Germans: "Good for you, Jews." "Wind up on the bottom." "Got what you deserved."...Some maybe weren't like that. We thought we were going to the trains. We were going on that road, but we weren't. We were going to a place near the trains, about a mile away, which was a convent.

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They herded us all in through a gate. What we saw was a big church, but we didn't go into the church. We went into a side yard. It was an enormous mountain. And we were all herded in there. And we were lying in the rain for two days. With lights ablaze and machine guns all around. And we thought, "they will finish us off over there." Two days it rained. Lots of people died over there. On the 24th or 25th in the morning, we all had to pass through a very narrow door, like this, the way we came in. And one of my immediate men from the Gestapo, Weiss, he was there. Martin Weiss. He knew me. And that was the selection. To the right. My aunt was there with her children, some other people. To the right, it was one way; and to the left was the other way. I was to the right. In the beginning, I didn't know. I thought, "well, who knows what they're doing." They always intimidated people. But then I could see quite a difference, that the little children and the older people were over to the left. I tried to do something for my aunt, and I didn't see her. Everybody said, "when you go there, you go there. You want to stay here, don't..." In a little while, we were all in a kettle wagon.

(microphone fiddling) We got in the kettle wagon and they locked us up. It was with people I knew, young people. It was like standing room only. We went and went for a long time, two days. People were dying; people didn't have anything to eat. The Germans would make a panic and start slowing down. We thought, they would chase us out, maybe shoot people. They would intimidate us. Terrible. One of my friends jumped out the train. I never saw her again. Sister of a friend of mine. She's in New York.

13:41:15 Came to Kaiserwald, which is in the outskirts of Riga, Latvia. In the middle of the night to the usual, what I found out later, "Welcoming Party." You come in with the searchlights and a big gate which says, "Arbeit macht frei," which was the Meisterplan for all the camps. The dogs were jumping at us. "Raus, raus, raus! And leave all the packages behind and jump from the train!" And if not, you got it over the head. Right away, the group to the right, to the left. Who knew what it was. It was the middle of the night. And then they said, we're gonna take showers. "Showers!" Everybody started to holler and to cry, because that's for sure death. But the Poles, there were Polish people in the uniforms. So we'd start to say, "what about the showers?" "Well, you take a shower. They take away all your clothes. And you'll put on this Pasacki (ph)." It means the striped uniform. Gotta trust somebody... So they herded us into the showers, and the Germans were standing all around, looking. I had no more clothes. But I did manage to leave a briefcase someplace. And I had some clothes there and some photographs. I went in the barracks. In the morning I could see a lot of people walking around with these little hats, men. They were all wearing this uniform, the stripes, and a white towel or some rag around their neck. I would ask them, "why you wear this white rag?" They said, "it's not a rag, it's a towel." "So why do you have to wear a towel?" "Because there's no place to leave it. If you leave it, it gets stolen." It was kind a crazy. You land like

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on the moon. You don't know what's happening.

13:43:13 Finally they gave us a barrack. I wound up with a lady from our courtyard, from Vilna. Very beautiful looking girl. And she was kind a like older sister, took care of me. She lost her whole family and wanted to be close to somebody. She had this thing. I always used to be envious of her. When she walked home, the Polish guys would always carry her books, and she used lipsticks. She was 3-4 years older. She managed to have her clothes. The German prisoners and the Polish prisoners spotted her right away. At night, through the barbed wire, they would talk to her. All of a sudden, she got a job in Kleiderkammer, which means where you take away all the clothes, in the clothing department. All the best clothes. Every night she'd bring me panties, a blouse. And I'd wear everything, she'd bring me, everything, 'cause there was no place to leave it. She would go out there at night, the guys would talk to her. And I'd go work in the Kleiderk.u--er. I didn't know from nothing. Come home to the straw sack, lie down, eat the soup. And she would do the same.

13:44:43 After a couple of weeks, I come home and she wasn't there. Her name was Basha. I asked about her. And they said, she wasn't here any longer. They took her to the ghetto. Riga still had a Ghetto. They accused her of flirting with the Germans and Poles. I never saw her again. So I knew, they took her there to shoot, because Kaiserwald didn't have the place for, I don't know. They said, they took her to the Ghetto. I was very upset, because she was such a nice person. I really liked her. And then I started to think, "They knew that she was with me, and they usually work by association." So I gotta get out of this place. So I said, even though I have this little good job, but what am I going to be in the camp? And every time, here today or tomorrow? People started saying the Germans come in and they need workers for farms or factories. I said to myself, what am I going to be choosey? I don't know farms from factories. Tomorrow morning I'm going to go and see who's come. And I talked to some girls and they said, "yea, it's time to get out of this camp." Because we are just sitting here in the S.S., in the lion's den, you know. I also worked a little bit in the hospital. I saw what happened in the hospital. It was terrible. The abortions. Polish doctors, Jewish doctors, no supplies, nothing. People came to the camps pregnant. They wanted to get rid of the babies. Screaming, no anesthetics, dirt. And I didn't understand all those things. But I said, get out to a steady place.

13:46:25 So in the morning, I see a lot of people, after the appel, we were all forming a company, and I am standing there with a lot of other. And an assessment with some workers come, and they started counting, counting, and they took me on a truck. I didn't know where we were going. We went to Riga. We wound up in a factory that's called Vef (ph) by the Latvians. And Aiga, algemeine electrotechniches Gesellschaft, which is a very big factory now in Germany. That's where I wound up. It was a big factory, for not electronics, used to be for radios and telephones. But this time,

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equipment for submarines, for airplanes, all kinds of things, cables.

In the mornings, after we'd stand for four hours maybe in the rain, to count us back and forth, we'd go there. And the whole day we'd work on the machines. I worked on electric bore machines. And, I forgot what it's called in English...I worked there for a long time...

13:47:37 Q: Was this where you were able to do some sabotage?

Yea, a little bit. O.k. We worked there for a while. The food was very meager. We were getting skinnier, and work a whole day. And then I had an accident. A bore machine went through my hand, in here. And since we couldn't get into that little hospital, I thought I was going to get poisoning. They took me to the barracks. There was a doctor. And all we had was water and paper bandages. And I was afraid. They wanted to send me to Kaiserwald, but I was afraid to go to. Because I go to Kaiserwald, I never come back to work, you see, or be sick.

13:48:20 Anyhow, after a while, I came back to work. I managed to get on the swing shift. The swing shift used to be like from five o'clock 'till two a.m., which was better. There were fewer people and the pace wasn't so terrible, and there weren't the hoards of people. But we had a problem. When we came there, we had this problem with the German Jewish girls. They were also prisoners like we, but they had a better understanding with the Germans. They thought, that they had to put in their maximum effort. Which we, of course, didn't think. We were not interested in helping the Germans win the war. And besides, some of the girls had mothers and they couldn't work that fast. So a Meister, or a foreman, would take a girl, a German Jewish girl and tell her, "this is what has to be done. And I am going to stand and time you with a stopwatch. And we'll see how fast you can," and she would work like a bat out of Hell and make sixty parts. Then he would come to us and say, "you all have to do that, sixty or..." Although we couldn't do it, break the needles, and get the needles through the hands. So we thought at night, we'll have a friendly talk with the girls. And we told them, "next time the new parts come in, you don't have to work that hard." "No," they were afraid, this and that. Anyhow, it didn't help. We talked to them several times, and they didn't do it. So we decided that we have to do something. To just show them how it is worked where we come from. Since we were all covered with a lot of metal shavings, because we worked with it. We only had a air hose to clean ourselves. So when we come to the barracks, we would have to take a shower. Because, really, we were aluminum shavings. Before we got into the showers, there was a little passageway, a little dark one. And we thought, we'd just beat them up over there. To teach them a lesson. So when they came in, we were prepared. And we threw blankets on them. We sat them down; we let them have it, three or four of them. We told them not to cry, and not to yell, and that's for not listening. And we also told them, that if they're going to say one word to the German authorities or to anybody else, so that means that they won't take us, because they

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didn't know who exactly it was, but they had an idea. They kill us.

But I said the moment they kill us, your people will be killed, too. Our friends kill. That helped. From that time, they started to slow down a bit.

13:51:04 We worked there, in that factory, for quite a while, until the Front came closer. And when the Front came closer, the Germans said they need all this machinery. The Russians were advancing, going West. So they said we will evacuate the factory to Torin, which was a Polish fort in the northern part of Poland. We again went on those trains, I don't know, forever. And we came there. There was pretty good. We lived underground in some fort with a moat. And there were actually prisoners, English prisoners, with their quarters, and they had maids. They felt sorry for us and would throw us parcels with food. Meanwhile, the machinery didn't come. It was the end of the war. They didn't have good connections.

13:51:52 After being there two months, we were shipped to Stutthof. Stutthof was the worst of the camps.

Q: So when, approximately, did you get to Stutthof?

That was in October of 1944. I was in stutthof from October '44 until April of 1945. Stutthof to me is Auschwitz, because it had a crematorium burning. It had thousands of prisoners. People were dying of Typhus. There were no bathrooms. I was continually hit there. I was hit by the German Blitzes. That means the German S.S. Fraus. Like once, I had to go to the bathroom. I always was on the third bunk. So that the people, if I had been on the first step(?), they'd throw their lice on me. So I was on the top, could throw my lice on them. I was there with some friends. People were dirty, starving. Everyday we'd get up, there were more people dead than alive. But the floor always had to be washed. When the floors were always wet, and I had to go to the bathroom. They wouldn't let me go to the bathroom. So I decided, I have to go...

Q: Who wouldn't let you?

The doors were closed. And there were the guards. The German guards were standing, because they washed the floors. So you couldn't get through. So I decided, I went through the window. I went to the bathroom. I had, by that time, bloody diarrhea. It was terrible...

Q: That was the Typhus?

That was Typhus, yea. I think by that time, I had it already. Coming back was another matter. I had to come through the door. I couldn't climb back through the window. They were waiting for me with the Welcoming Committee. The Blitze knocked out a few of my teeth and kicked me good. And my friends came down and scooped up some snow. I thought that was the end at that time, but it wasn't. More and more people were dying.

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13:54:15 And then all of a sudden, towards the very end, they told us we are evacuating the camp. And they put us on barges, boats and barges, and put us on the sea. I was on a cement barge. And we were going on that sea for ten days. We had nothing to eat, like sea water. I already knew, that I wasn't going to make it. I really didn't...It was interesting that there was the battle for the German sea. We would go and look out. Planes used to fall in the sea, shooting bombardments. There were a lot of boats. I remember a beautiful boat the Capicorna (?) with a lot of prisoners of war. Polish. They were dressed in their uniforms, the stripes, but very clean. The weren't emaciated like us. And they were just waiting. It was going to be Liberation. A day later, we came back and that boat was standing with the bow up here. And the whole thing was a living grave for them, you know. They were bombed.

13:55:25 We were with the S.S. And there were also Norwegian prisoners with us. All of a sudden, the boat came to the middle, to a halt, and the S.S. put in to a small launch; and they went away. We were just left there on that boat. I didn't understand anything. But the Norwegians, they understood it. They said, we had an explosive charge tied to that boat. And they tried to dismantle it and somehow, this was on the third of May, and the boat made for shore. But it wasn't a port, someplace. I remember we came into the water. And we were quite far. And there was one German. The Germans saw that we, on the launch, that we stopped and were getting out. And they started to shoot at us. And we started to run. And they said, "run as fast as you can!" Our prisoners said, "don't turn around!" And we were all shot at, and some were falling. I wound up in a forest. And the British were there, and I saw Russian prisoners. It wasn't quite like I tell you, but I realize our time is getting short. I don't know how I ran, I can tell you that. I don't know how long I ran, but the shots were all around, and people were screaming and falling. I wound up in some dense forest. And there were prisoners, and some of my friends were there. And I was actually delirious by that time. Now I remember that they said, "you have to go to a hospital." And I didn't want to go to a hospital, because I was afraid the Germans were going to kill me there. If they didn't kill me in the camps, they'll do it in the hospital. So for three days I was in some kind of forest. And then I had to wind up in the hospital.

13:57:26 End of interview.
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