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My family name is Liebster, and my first name is Max. I was born in Reichenbach near Bensheim on the Bergsträsser Hessen, 60 kilometers south from Frankfurt am Main, and everyone knows Frankfurt.

In this time, as Hitler came into power in '33, was very much a persecution for the Jews. And Kristallnacht they call it in 11 – in November 11, '38, they destroyed all the synagogues, most of them all over Germany. And they were stealing all objects, all things which had value and gold and silver.

You could feel the war would break out. I went to my friends in the Black Forest in Pforzheim. I thought I could get by without getting arrested. And as the war broke out, they got me in the home there with my friends and was put in prison four months in Pforzheim, Black Forest.

After four months in January '40, an SS brought me over to Karlsruhe or 30 kilometers. And there they prepared prisoners' train, take the prisoners to the concentration camp. And SS looked for were always in each cell two persons. They looked for a cell which was only one person. So he opened the door, gave me a kick with his feet, and I was shoved flowing in. And he told me: "You dirty Jew! You never come back alive. You pass by the chimney in the concentration camp."

And I found there a man which was sitting content to suffer for righteousness. And he told me he's one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Later on, as we arrived a Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg after 14 days' travel, then the war broke out. As we arrived in Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg, SS asked each one why he was brought to the concentration camp, and they were separated. The criminals, they got triangle green, and all different kinds had different triangles.

I was identified as a Jew. They put a David Star, a yellow part, which point up, and a red one, which points down. So red sewn on yellow so they gave the David Star, and below was my number, number in the camp. And the Witnesses got the violet, so I could see that only one Witness was in the whole transport, and I was just kicked in with him to learn about the Bible. I never heard about Jehovah's Witnesses.

But in this camp in Sachsenhausen, they isolated the Witnesses. There were about 400 Witnesses in two barracks. And they were isolated with barbed thread [wire]. No one had the right to get in contact with them.

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The camp commander every day said, "60,000 prisoners have been in Sachsenhausen." If anyone would get in contact with the Witnesses, he would get 25 strokes, get punished. Twice a day all had to stay [and] be counted in the morning after breakfast and the evening before eating. We had to come home from the work, and all had to be counted,

all prisoners. When one was missing, they let them stay outside. It was cold or rain or no difference what kind of weather. So, we had to get active the whole night. Otherwise, you get frozen—10, 15 degrees below. Many people their ears were falling off, their noses and the fingers and the feet. You had to stay very active that the blood circulate. Then you could keep quiet or sit down. You have been finished to do that. You didn't get up anymore.

All 60,000 had to stay in the center of the camp by hundreds, each group hundred in ten lines. And they counted them, and usually when they found them, they hanged him on a galleon, and they put **door in French** on the stake—how you call it in English—before all of us. At many times, with a water hose and wind in January '40, they killed many and got them all wet and let them freeze outside in the cold, yeah. So, very few survived that.

And also, in Sachsenhausen I had one day that my father was in [an]other barrack, another Liebster. So, I didn't know that my father was also brought to concentration camp. As I found him, he was already very sick. The legs are swollen. The feet are frozen. As he saw me, he made a prayer in Hebrew and asked the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to protect me, to help me to come out. So, he said that God's will that I can survive.

And after 18 months [*clears throat*], I was brought to Neuengamme and they need – they had many working camps in Germany, labor camps, and about 30 young Jews. I had been 24 as I got to the camp, and I came out with 30. So, they sent me up to Neuengamme to get – build a harbor for boats to come in from the North Sea. And they did everything with the hand, everything with one wheel. And you had to carry it on rods the whole day around—couldn't stop. One loaded it. The other side was taken off, so that got many prisoners down to their knees. They couldn't work anymore. Then every morning the prisoners, which could not work anymore, were loaded on truckloads to get put in the gas chambers.

But I want to say the 30 Jews, the camp commanders in Neuengamme sent them to the Witnesses. There was one barrack with 120 Witnesses. And, happily, we were sent with Jehovah's Witnesses. Then the camp commander said, "They believe in the same Jehovah in there." The barracks were – this was a working camp there. They had three beds—one, two, three—and I was up the third bed. [*Gesturing upward with right hand*] And lower was on the other side. They were staying like across then. [*Gesturing across*] So we could – the heads in the evening had been together to talk about the Bible. So there, I got really a better knowledge about God's Kingdom and the only hope for mankind in Neuengamme.

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And after a year, the Russians came by. And they sent us over to Auschwitz to exterminate before they came. And Auschwitz – I was sent to Buna, to working camp again. So, which had been too old or too weak, they were right away gassed, the gas chambers. So, as we came to Auschwitz, there the Jews that was their goal [to]

exterminate them. And they put numbers on them, tattooed numbers like you see it here. *[Rolls up sleeve]* And sometimes they started with A, B, and C. Then the number got, see, very long. There wasn't enough room. And they were afterwards all put in the *Dusche*, in the shower room. And in place of water came out gas, so they killed about 4,000 an hour. Twenty million people died in Auschwitz—20,000,000—5,700,000 Jews. That's the number of the extermination for gas chambers *[Points to tattoo on left forearm]* Then they put them all naked in the *Dusche* room, and in place of water came out gas, so they had the dead bodies. They could see which one was this body and which one was exterminated, which one was still alive. They had no clothes, no papers, nothing, only the skin. So, they were identified with the numbers, the dead bodies. In Auschwitz they burned them. We could smell the smoke from burning flesh all around Auschwitz. We could smell it.

From Auschwitz there, one day I was so weak I couldn't walk anymore; had diarrhea. Next day that would be my end. An SS from Manheim, which I worked with in the construction, he recognized my accent and talked sometimes a little bit with me. So, he called me out, and two boys were carrying me. I couldn't – had no strength to put one leg after the other. And he called me in the morning over in his office. And he let me work in the cafeteria for the SS so I could find more food and get back to strength.

And time when the Americans also came closer and there they want also [to] exterminate all the Jews, which have been left in the camp. The Jews in each barrack have to come up to the railroad station of the concentration camp of Buchenwald and get loaded in such animal cow cars, train cars. And they put them out in the woods to dig their own graves, and then they were _____ with a machine gun. They killed them and the other ones had to bury them, so they killed some thousand in the last moment.

So, in May '45 just in this condition we heard *unterstreichen* and Heikorn, another Jew, I met him coming home from work. So, we went up and he had some pages from Brother Emler of Freiburg in Germany, which is a constructor of houses. So, we were reading that in a corner behind a pile of wood, woods. So, the train left and SS didn't see us. The same evening, it was announced that all Jehovah's Witnesses can come together now in Barrack No. 1. They will be the last ones to be transported to another camp. The Russians came closer and closer. They loaded all prisoners in train boxes like for the cows in open coal cars.

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They transport them in January 1945 to Buchenwald, so I was on this transport. And we had 30 or 40 kilometers to walk on the Gleiwitz. And, again, the SS called me to give SS, which stationed around the railroad station, their rations—bread and sausage. And it was in the sack was one left. "Max, let it disappear." And with this sausage, I could survive 14 days on the transport from Gleiwitz to Buchenwald.

In January **on straw** every morning the dead ones were thrown in one **wagon** and the living ones in another. And it came more dead ones than living ones in Buchenwald.

There typhus broke out in the little camp and many, many people died. So I thought, 'If you stay here, the little camp, you will stay long. You get also the typhus sickness and die.' So, I told them in the barrack I could come up to carry the food. Also was still weak, but I heard some Witnesses working in the kitchen. Then the [SS] – the Witnesses didn't give up and kept integrity. They had more confidence in the Witnesses, and they got the privilege to services outside in the SS homes or in the kitchen.

One brother was in Buchenwald, served there. Léon Blum, the president of France had built a little house for him and said Jehovah's Witnesses took care of him during the imprisonment. Fritz Adler and the other brother each worked in this home for Léon Blum. There was a bathtub, a bathroom. So, we expressed our desire not going home, leaving the concentration camp without being baptized. So, Fritz Adler baptized us, Fritz Heikorn and me in the bathtub of Léon Blum in a little home, which was in the camp, in the concentration camp, built for the great man in politics.

Kindinger, he was responsible for the whole barrack—one side 200 prisoners, other side 200 prisoners. And as they wanted [to] destroy the Jews, they have many destroyed. Kindinger explained it to me what will happen when you go up. And he say, "I will protect you, but not Heikorn, the other Jewish boy."

And I told him: "If you don't can protect him, you don't have – I don't stay alone either. I don't want that he goes to death, and I will be saved." So, I went up with him. In spite of that, we got saved miraculously.

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