

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Mayer Adler
April 24, 1991
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PREFACE

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MAYER ADLER

April 1991

Q: Will you tell me your name please?

A: I'm Mayer Adler.

Q: Will you tell me where you were born and when?

A: Berezova (ph), Czechoslovakia, 19...October 6, 1929.

Q: OK. I wonder if you'd tell me something about your family, you early life before the war?

A: Well, we were more of what I would describe as a typical Jewish family in a small town. I had two younger brothers and my parents, and a lot of aunts and uncles and cousins. And just as I said normal kind of orthodox Judaism. Every Friday for example the sort of the world stopped. Everybody came home for Shabath and I went to services on Friday afternoon, on Friday evening rather, and Saturday it was just very peaceful and no...no labor, no money, none, no commerce of any kind.

Q: What did your father do?

A: Well, he was a merchant. He was doing several things. We had a lumber business and farming and things of that sort. Basically that's what he was really doing.

Q: Do you have many recollections of that period?

A: Mostly the hardships really and also as things were getting tougher and when I remember...I remember the terrible...I guess it was a world depression at the time. There was a lot of famine and hunger during that period, but the hardship that came with the war I remember. I remember seeing the planes going over our town...our town, for example, when they were attacking Poland, when the war started I believe, and then the hardships that...once we were occupied.

Q: Can you tell me something about that from the detail of your first introduction to the war, when it happened, experiences you had?

A: Well, we were...and I'm not sure when it was but I...at one time we were taken over as Czechoslovakia I guess was taken over by ...by Germany. We were gave...we were given to Hungary, so we became part of Hungary and I seem to remember that we had to re-establish citizenship, and that took quite a bit of effort and money to become Hungarian citizens, and that was maybe in...I don't...I'm not sure...it might have been 1940.

Q: But do you remember when the war started? You say you heard the planes...

A: Well I remember at the time seeing planes going over to Poland. That's what I was told. We saw just a sky full of planes going over us, and that was in...I'm I'm pretty sure...I know the war...the war was in '39, so but that had very little effect really, just we were concerned for the world but and I was too young to really, to make much difference in, but I remember that scene and leaflets used to drop every so often, but so then we were taken over by Hungary and we became Hungarian citizens and life seemed to go on with some difficulty almost normal, but at one time soon thereafter Jewish kids could not go to public school. I used to go to parochial school and public school, and my father used to have to pay or hire somebody to give my private lesson more and you know, we were going more to parochial school which was like a...like a cheder (ph) and that's what I remember.

Q: Go ahead. Tell us what happened as time went on.

A: Well, it just that it seems to have become more difficult as we went along. In other words, your rights were taken away. Jews could not have any businesses and at some level I remember that I was...I had to work. We had a lumber business and there were ways to bring lumber down from the mountains, that I was working at that. There was a lumber mill and in fact my cousin ran the lumber mill, but this wasn't the one there. but there was a lot of lumber. That was the major business there, was transporting lumber from the mountains into the lumber mill and chopping it up and making lumber out of it and shipping it off, but it was a rural area. There was no public transportation. I mean there was no train service or no buses or...those are some of the things that I remember.

Q: Then the things began to close in, things got more difficult?

A: Well it was getting more difficult and Jews were going...were being beaten on and off by Hungarian police, and but really that what's I...all that is foggy to me.

Q: How about your own family? How did...what was the impact of the events on your father and mother and brothers and you as time went on?

A: Well, my brothers were quite young and for that matter not that I was an old man, and there was a two year difference between each of us, so ...but the family was close. I think you...during time of trouble you seem to get closer, and also we had...you know, there were in my hometown we had let's see...one uncle, two...we had...I had two uncles living in town, and some of the...some of them were living in surrounding towns, but we had, you know, a bunch of cousins, but there was...you know, the community was quite close to begin with. What happened to everybody, you know, was affected by it.

Q: So you were able to live in the same place....

A: We lived in the same home until...until the end really. We lived in our own...you know...with less rights but, you know, and things were getting tougher and as I said, we had to spend whatever money we had I think to buy off officials and and I I remember

those things. It was very difficult to becoming a Hungarian...establishing some...for some reason we had to establish Hungarian citizenship, and that took I seem to remember, a lot of money.

Q: Were your folks scared? Was there an atmosphere of apprehension around?

A: Yes. There was a...in fact in 1941 I believe our town...there was some talk that we were going to be deported at that time. Of course we didn't know what it was all about. We had heard some some things going on in Poland, that they were killing people but those were isolated...you know, nobody really believed it but for some reason in this little _____ we were not deported. In fact the whole town, and there were several towns...we were not the only ones...who were left in tact.

Q: Did you see the Nazis or were they...?

A: I did not see any Nazis until...I'm not sure whether I saw them before Auschwitz.

Q: Well...

A: The Hungarians...the Hungarians were just as bad.

Q: Were there instances of Hungarians beating you?

A: Beating us. Oh yeah.

Q: Do you remember any of those?

A: Oh not personally. I remember seeing them beat...you know, beating people and I remember particularly one guy they had arrested and beat the heck out of him for some trumped up charges, but there was...we were...in all fairness we were sort of shielded from a lot of it. I mean we were in a small town and we were off the beaten track, so it wasn't coming through daily. It wasn't the kind of the thing that you would see daily.

Q: How long did that state of affairs last and when did things start to change materially?

A: Well, I think it was really not...on and off I think we went through periods where, you know, there were some problems coming or at least anticipation of some things, but basically the troubles didn't really...they were getting worse as as we went along, however in perhaps the end of '43 and certainly the beginning of '44...that's when things were getting bad, going from bad to worse daily.

Q: Can you tell us about that period?

A: Well, it just...we sort of...we knew we were going to be deported, and it was a question of trying to prepare yourself for that deportation, and to our knowledge we were, or at least from what I recall, we felt we were going to go as a family to a camp and being used as

labor camp, in other words to do labor, physical labor, and we had family gatherings and meetings about that as to how we should handle that and how we can handle it. After it became sort of a fact that we were going to be deported, we were really trying to prepare for that and also you baked and you prepared and like my mother _____. She used to make...she made all kinds of things including small pillows we can take with us so we'd have...in other words all...whatever we can carry, we should have a new home, and it was really...I remember one of the discussions my mother used to complain to me that I'm not preparing for wherever we're going to be deported to and I said don't worry about it. I don't need pillows. I can sleep on the floor and my arm is going to be used as a pillow. And that didn't go over too well, because as I said, they were baking cookies that would last a lifetime...those real hard "Kichl" and all those things and those are the things that I remember. Just preparing for that day, and having meetings as to what we can do about it, and there didn't seem to be very much that we can do about it.

Q: So when the day came, what happened?

A: Well, several things happened before the day came because as it was getting closer, when we finally realized what was happening and when, I was becoming more and more vocal in the family, saying this seems stupid to sit here and wait to be arrested and taken somewhere. And my father after this used to say that he really doesn't know what we can do. However, he felt that we would be better off as a family. At least this way we can help each other and it seems...you know, it would make a lot more sense and I just didn't want to buy it. It just...it just seemed...I liked the idea of being as a family, but I didn't like for being picked up and just hauled off to some place, and we had had several discussions on that subject in, you know, in it might have taken a period of two or three weeks that we were...when we had finally realized that it was going and it was just...when it was pinned down pretty much as to when it was going to happen, so I had just kept on pushing for that, and I was going to go to Russia, and my father had never said no, but he didn't say yes, and then I...when we finally...the day before we knew we were going to be picked up like tomorrow...the announcement I think was made that tomorrow you all have to be home because they're going to come and take us. Early that morning I had decided...in fact I had said to my family that night that I'm going to go, so I had decided that I was going just to take off and very early that morning I got up and left town and started to go to where I thought was going to be Russia, and my kid brother said he'll come with me, so we went and I went out of town in the direction toward the Russian troops I thought, or Russia, and as soon as I got out of town, some gentile, a gentile we used to know, met me and told him, told us that my father had paid him to take us in the right direction, at least part way so we wouldn't end up in the German lines. And we went into the mountains and hid out for several days. Had heard what had happened, and we were running into...because we met several other people who ran away during the turmoil when the chaos started, when they picked people up, so we ran into several other people in the mountains and we sort of hooked up together and two weeks later in fact I met my father and my other...and my brother who also...they took off at the last minute and we hid out for a period of about I think it was two...two or two and a half weeks in the mountains and we kept...we were just hiding and kept on staying in touch with the local...local areas. Somebody used to sneak in and at night in a town, try to pick

whatever information he can get, and at the end of two weeks we had had picked up that the Germans had issued an order saying that anybody who is hiding who is in part of the family...in other words, if they had part of the family in custody in the ghetto, and the ones who are missing, if they do not surrender within forty-eight hours, they're going to kill the ones they had. So that we had surrendered.

Q: That was your mother...

A: My mother and a brother. Yeah. So we surrendered and they didn't do anything to us. They just took us to the ghetto and we were there for about six weeks in that ghetto. And which was in a town...in a town called Izza (ph) and then after several weeks they had shipped people out to which turned out to be Auschwitz, and we were the last ones...

Q: What town was the...excuse me...what town was the ghetto in?

A: It was called Izza.

Q: Izza?

A: Yeah.

Q: I - Z - Z - A?

A: I'm not sure...it was I - Z - Z - A or I - Z - A. [iza probably correct]

Q: Could you tell us something about what it was like there, what you can recollect of that?

A: Well it was a a small town, a farming town really. It was very close to a big city...to a big city...it was a larger city called Chust_ and we were there more in barns. In fact, we lived several families in just a plain where cows used to live in, because it had the...I mean that's the kinds of floors...I mean that's what we lived in, and everybody was on top of each other and we had no privacy. I mean it wasn't a room. It was just like most most of it as I said barns and I imagine there were some houses but I don't remember seeing any...you know...because towards the end as they shipped people out, they kept on making the ghetto smaller but we were the last transport that were finally shipped out of there to Auschwitz.

Q: Were the Nazis killing people or doing anything to them in the ghetto?

A: No. I I didn't see any of that or at least I don't think there was any of this. They kept things pretty much hidden. Now I know they shot one person before we were shipped out because he had hidden...he used to hide as I told you earlier the women were busy sewing and baking and cooking, whatever, and people were hiding money and gold in like they dug out the heels of shoes and money was put in the lapels of your...I mean in coats and seams. They were hiding money, you know, to take with us. Some of those things I remember.

Q: Can you tell us what happened when the day came when they shipped you off and tell us about the trip to Auschwitz?

A: Well, they took us to Chust. I remember it was a sunny day, and loaded us into these boxcars. Crowded in...it was very, very crowded, and you were locked in with almost no air, just that one window, and the door was slightly ajar but it was mostly, you know, you were locked in there. and there many people. I don't know how many there were but it was...there was barely room to sit on the boxcar. Certainly there was no room for anybody to stretch out. In the meantime all of us had all these dumb suitcases that we packed and baked and you know...clothing and food to take with us to our new home, which took up a lot of room. Inside for bathroom facilities, we had a bucket and that's it and everybody...in fact a couple of people die...died in our boxcar going there and we were in that I think for three and a half days that we traveled. We had no idea where we were going to but we did end up in Auschwitz.

Q: What were conditions like in the trans...in the in the boxcar among the people?

A: Well, it was just everybody was very...there was no problem. I mean people were just all miserable and sort of like misery loves company. Nobody has...I mean, you know, somebody is very sick and somebody died and, you know, it's like chaos. We were all not too far from it. We were given no food from what I recall. I don't remember being given any food except the stuff that we brought with us.

Q: What time did you get into Auschwitz?

A: We came in...I think it was early in the morning. I mean, you know, like maybe ten. I I have no idea, but I seem to remember it was early morning kind of, not...in other words like tenish type of...

Q: Tell us exactly what happened when you got there, as much as you remember of that.

A: Well, we were...many people, the ones who could see...we were trying to get to the window just to see as we were going by different areas... but I remember when we pulled in and as the boxcar...you know, the train finally came to a stop...we had stopped several times before that but I mean this really looked like a final destination. You can hear rackets and pris...the prisoners in Auschwitz that I I didn't know incidentally that was Auschwitz, but the man who opened up our boxcar door did comment quickly to say tell the young people that they are sixteen, that they worked in a factory, and he just unlocked the car and _____, but that was the comment I remember, and then as we got off and then we were told to deboard the train and we deboarded the train and one of my uncles had collapsed. He was...he was an ill man and he was very sick. He was just sitting there. I'm not sure whether he died that day or not...you know, right there or not, but he was...and we had to leave him and then the ____ because they were announcing to say men should go here and women with children under sixteen to go some place else and I remember

getting my two younger brothers and saying go with Mommy. We'll see you later, and I got them off to go there and we were just lining up to go through what turned out to be the line, the selection process or whatever it was called. And that was what was going on.

Q: You thought...you didn't know what was going to happen?

A: I had no idea what was going to happen. We weren't told...I I thought, and I would imagine everybody thought, that that we were just going to go through a serious search. We were told incidentally to leave all our belongings on the train, just to leave, and they told us you'll get it later and just leave it there and just go...go...you know, separate men and women and small kids. They go someplace else.

Q: Did they treat you brutally or did they seem...

A: No. I don't think...to be _____ somebody, if there was problem, they hit...were hitting people if you didn't go. There were people with clubs and they were hitting people if you didn't go where you're supposed to, just to get you quickly off the trains and into these lines that they wanted you to go to, but that seemed to go, you know, very...you know, it seemed to progress quite well but there was, you know, commotion, chaos and there were a lot...it was a long train. There were quite a few people on that train, because we were not the only town that were on that train.

Q: What happened to you?

A: Well, as we were going through, and I don't understand this till this day and I've thought about it many a time, we were going through the line and of course I was not first in line. Needless to say I wasn't last either, but there were people lining up and my experience as a kid...I always used to tail my father. Wherever he went, I wanted to go where he went and even when he didn't want me to go, I used to sneak behind and go. My father was right ahead of me through this line that we went and a cousin of mine was a couple...a cousin that I had who had a club foot, who was limping...he was a little bit ahead of us, and as he went through this line and I don't understand really this till this day and I've thought about it as to my I would do this because when we came to the head of the line, he sent my cousin to the right. He sent my father to the right, and then he came to me and asked me how old are you. I said I'm eighteen. Did you ever work in a factory? Yes, two years. And he told me to go to the right. And I noticed...

Q: To the right?

A: To the right is what he had told me. I think that's what it was. But I noticed that the people...

Q: Did he tell the others to go to the right also? So he told you to go in the same direction.

A: Right. But as he told me that, you know, and and I had noticed that these people were lining up behind him on the left, so that I just didn't pay any attention and just went and

got in, you know, right behind them and turned left and went in, stood in line with those people. And I didn't...in other words I didn't follow my father.

Q: Did you...have you thought why you did this?

A: I had no idea. All I...the impression it made on me...these people are all in their late teens to twenties and you know some I guess...I should say really late, late teens...nineteen, twenty, and maybe in in their thirties, so all the people that were lining up... I had a lot of friends who were older than I but this just seemed like...as I said it was a split [second] decision. It was...it took all of one or two seconds for me. I didn't stop walking through the line. I just kept on going and I just turned to to go where these people were.

Q: Did you see your father on the...?

A: I saw him go...go to the other side, and never saw...never saw him again, never said goodbye to him or anything. Never said goodbye to my mother or my brothers for that matter either. I just told them go with Mommy. We'll see you later. I'll see you in a while.

Q: That was the last you saw them?

A: Yeah.

Q: Then what happened?

A: Well, then we were marched off and were taken to some barracks where we were lined up and we were...they were shaving everybody, every hair on your body, and I remember really because when it came to me, I had just gotten a haircut and in that time we used to cut our hair... I had no hair at all and the guy who was shaving me, he couldn't find a hair on me. He said what the hell is the skin doing here? And he said...and I remember a guy from my hometown, he said what do you want from me. I didn't have a hair on my body, and he was surprised that he didn't have any pubic hair or anything to shave. That was his problem. He seemed to have had a problem with it, but he passed me through and then we went...after after the shaving, we went in to...took a shower and we were told to lay our clothes out before we went in there and it it was a shower in there and we got new clothes afterwards, the striped pajamas. And then we were marched into this camp and that's when the reality sort of hit, that I was on my own. That was the first time that I was ever on my own totally.

Q: When was this? What month and what year?

A: It was June '44. I think it was on June 14. I'm not sure.

Q: Go ahead.

A: And as I said, I found myself in this huge camp, dreary and with no ...I mean no...I mean the clothing only on my back and whatever I had was on my back, which they gave me

that pajama uniform and just with many people and I was sort of separated from everybody...there was nobody there from my hometown. There were a couple of people but this was a huge building, and we were just being pushed around and shoved and I had finally met a couple of people from my hometown but they were most of them a lot of people I didn't know. And we spent several days there and ...

Q: What was a day like? Can you describe what the days were like there?

A: The days were...the selection...you hoped that you're you're going to be in there to get work. Now what I realized after being there, just actually this happened a few hours afterwards really, because when I realized what was happening, I ended up in a in a in a building that was mostly kids, more my age and that didn't seem right to me for some reason, so I ran away from there. I was trying...you can go...they let you go...you were in a camp compound but you can go to the next building. I mean these were...there were several buildings there. So I sort of mixed...I was looking for places where there were more adults, people who were more working class, you know, people who were working because we could see people working, carrying stones and stuff like that, so that I mixed in with some of those and I was just going from place to place where for the better part of those weeks, is what I was trying to find myself someplace that I'd end up with more adults, and every time I ended up doing that, they had...they were looking for work details and some reason they always threw me out. I was too small and they would ...in fact at appeal we used to march and be counted. I was standing half of the time on a stone so...just so I'd I'd appear a little taller, or a brick, and when we marched, five people locked arms...you know, locked in. I used to ask the guys to lift me up so that I wouldn't be that much shorter and that's...it worked, you know, pretty much.

Q: What were the eating and sleeping like then?

A: Sleeping...we slept in these barracks where I was at, where you sat down on the floor and you spread your legs and somebody else sat right in front of you, next to you, and that's how we sat and it was just a total row of people sort of just like that, and on top of each other and you dozed off as much as you could, but there was people to people. There was a person leaning on me. There was a person...I mean there was a person that was leaning on me. There was a person behind me, and there would be a person touching me from both sides, so to get up, it was almost impossible to turn over. You had to disturb everybody if you had to go to the bathroom or anything like that. In the meantime they used to come in at night and the barracks had a center I don't know what you'd call it...like, almost like a runway, and a guy used walk there with a whip and start hitting people and they're running around this and this happened...it seemed to have happened every night and sometimes several times a night, just hitting people with a whip and running around us. And there were...in this particular camp there were a lot of gypsies. They had the...they were sort of the authority, the ...they seemed to be running the camp during that period.

Q: Were they helpful or...

A: Not really...well, they were...they were not helpful but they they were not...it was mixed.

There were some who were really more sympathetic than helpful, but they weren't exactly detrimental. Some...even though some of them were who I think were putting on a show. They had to beat you, and they were doing a lot of that. But the trick was to try to get some kind of work that you go on a work detail, and the food they used to give us was some kind of a soup that was more like some kind of just warm liquid of some sort. And I mean that's what I remember as a food, and I remember the...for breakfast they used to give us a coffee that I used to use, and I I never drank coffee in my life before that...I used to use that to wash my face with because it was warm and and I don't remember any...any...any other thing that we got for breakfast. Once in a while you'd see a little small piece of bread.

Q: So you ate very little?

A: Very little, yeah.

Q: How about toileting...how did that work?

A: They had ...there was a building just for that purpose that you had to go to, and it was across...across the building there was a...a central building that was just as big as this building. You had umpteen holes you know...they called them WC water closets, that's what it was called.

Q: What was going on inside of you during this time? What were you feeling?

A: Very lonesome, very depressed, very sort of lost. I really...at that time I I really didn't have any idea what was going on but I also knew it wasn't good and you didn't have time to think. You were just...you were trying to survive, and during that period I remember one time where I had finally met some people...I said...I told you I was running around these different buildings within the same compound, and I met somebody, some people from my hometown and I met this one guy who had a brother, one fellow who was my age and he had a brother that was two years old, and they were there and so we were sort of stuck...trying to stick around together and we used to get beaten for wherever you went, many a time you run into somebody who'd beat you.

Q: You yourself were beaten?

A: Yes. So that we decided one day and I suggested to the guy, you know, here it's terrible, so that we should...you know, they had the electric wire fences. We had decided to go and touch it and just so we...so we can die, and somebody had done that before us and the guy...

Q: You saw them?

A: I saw the guy who did it just before, and the guard was walking around their perimeter came in to kick the guy to see he's dead, so I told this other fellow, I said look, I said...it's stupid here I said. They beat you even after your dead, so maybe we ought to try, maybe

we'll make it, and that's when we decided not to commit suicide and we would to stick it out, and we did, and it seemed to me...I remember seeing people going to work and I I was just very seldom was I picked for one of those labor details. I was always thrown out. And then when it finally came...right after several weeks that I was there, I was at one place...there was a work group. It turned out to be it was over a thousand people. We were carrying rocks and at the end of the day...you know, after several hours of work, they counted off a group of people for some reason and they picked out...first before they started counting, they picked out some some people and put them aside and I was one of the ones they picked out and then they counted off which I learned later were a thousand people, so there were just a few of us left and they corner...cornered off those people that they were...that they had taken and put them in a...it was...the sun was shining. I remember it was a hot day and they were sitting in the sun and waiting and we were being separated and we were told to disperse, so we were carrying water to these people because they were begging for water and the guards let us give them water, so I made several trips to these people with...we found some dirty bottles of and containers and we gave them water to drink, and in the meantime these two fellows that I told about, this fellow who was my age and the older brother...the older brother was in the group that was cornered off and we were not. These two brothers wanted to stay together so we had...every time I hand them water, we made a couple of comments and and I told them that the brother, that they wanted to stay together and he said definitely that they would like to get together, so after making several trips with these water bottles, we had pre-arranged the next time I'm coming with water, the guy is going to flip that it will make it appear that he's handing me the water and I'll stay and he'll go with his brother, go out and...but he'll stay with his brother...the older brother came to stay with the younger one, so that when it...when I made that final trip he had, you know, changed sides to appear that he's handing me the water and I ended up with the water and he left.

Q: Why did you make that decision?

A: Because they wanted to stay together and I knew that I needed to get out of there.

Q: This group...you knew it was going to go...?

A: We just knew they they all looked healthy. They looked, you know, and I assumed that they're going to go someplace as a as a working force, and after that, maybe an hour or so later, we were being loaded on trains. They took us...it was a couple, a two or three day trip and we went from there to Germany, which turned out they took us to a train and we ended up...we came in the middle of the night to a a place which was one of the satellite camps of Dachau. I think it was called Landsber-Kaufering, and there...and I remember this was scary...when we got off the train, it was late at night and we walked in this satellite camp and we had to walk between a like railroad tracks and it was like two mountains, two...it wasn't mountains but two hilly areas that looked like...you know, really I though we were going...we were being taken there to be shot. That's the first time that I thought of being...that I'm going to be killed, and we marched into this camp and that's where we ended up being...I was stationed there for several months doing building and stuff like that.

Q: Can you tell us about that, what life was like there?

A: Well, this was a camp where life was sort of normal to some extent. We were...the biggest problem we had was a field that they put cardboard huts...there were huts around made out of compressed... some kind of very heavy cardboard, because in rainstorms they used to sort of bend and also we had a little straw on the floor. We slept...we slept on the floor and if it rained, it came in, water came in so we sort of put dirt around it a little bit and we were getting food, you know, a normal...I mean our regular ration. It was certainly wasn't normal. I mean again most of the food was soup. Very seldom was there meat in it. Once in a while, you know, we get a little piece of bread and sometimes we get liverwurst and stuff like that and you're doing normal, all kinds of buildings, construction. We built factories. We...I remember that we for example, we built a factory and our job was to put...what the hell do you call it already...not soil but we were putting like sod on top of it. We had to carry physically sod and just put it, so from the air it looked...it didn't look like a a building. It just became a hill. We...

Q: You were still a pretty small boy at that point weren't you? Did you have trouble doing that?

A: No. I mean, I was doing it. I was...I was small. I remember that the camp commander had complained bitterly when when he had looked the next morning when he came into the camp. He says all these kids that are on this transport...there were a lot of, you know, several you know young...youngsters. But the camp was run...I mean we worked long hours when we were doing all kinds of stuff and there was some food. There were beatings on and off, but basically if you did your job, it wasn't too...you know, there wasn't too much meanness.

Q: Were you yourself beaten by any of the guards?

A: There was one guy used to beat me...every time he saw me he used to beat me. I used to run away from him. There was another guy who helped him many a time, but in this camp, you know, it was just...we were really true laborers, and I remember going because of the fact that I spoke Jewish, I was able to understand German, and it turned out in this camp that I was at, in this particular camp there were about twenty-one or twenty-two hundred of us. Most of them, and I think in excess of two thousand were Hungarian Jews, and they were idealistic and these people didn't speak any Jewish and we were sort of out-casts to them, and there were about a hundred of us, the assorted nationality...not...we were all Jews but assorted from different countries. There were a few Polish, a few stragglers from here and there and so I used to be able to go sometimes and do like interpreting so if a German asked for a detail, like I remember on several occasions we used to go to farmers to deliver something or pick something up, then I used to be part of that detail only because I was able to communicate with them a little better. And then there was an Austrian who was not in the army. He was in the work...I'm trying to remember what they were called...the work details, in charge. He was an engineer. He was the one who was...who had us build all these projects and he gave us and he he did a

lot of things for me that was very helpful, such as he used to go to his kitchen, for example, at lunch time, we'd go to one place where we'd get our food and of course the Germans got it some place else, and he'd go for seconds many a time and take two bites out of it and call would you go and wash my dish out. Of course it was full of food and you know, that was the greatest thing he could do for me. So there were some that were helpful. But we worked really long hours and every morning and every night you had to stand in line for hours to be counted, rain...rain...sun...it didn't make any difference and also another thing that I remember really that made an impression on me at the time...we became sort of religious, not to the extent of that we were religious, but we would have services. We'd have a minyan [religious quorum] every morning and every night, while we were waiting for appell, for people...you know, for them to come and count us. We were sitting there. You...you know, when a German came by, of course, you shut up but you were all praying all from memory and we did that quite a bit. And...

Q: Did that help?

A: I don't know what helped really. It helped. Yes, it helped. I guess it helped. But we were just really existing day to day. What...what did happen, there were people who did give up. I mean it's...there were suicides and the people used to go to the latrine and hang themselves. That was one of the most dangerous places to go to, because people were just, you know, falling. Then it happened I remember I was involved...we used to look forward to when the daylight bombing started, which I call it daylight bombing now, which I didn't know at the time, but every day at 10:30 the planes used to come over. We used to get a break from work. We used to love those things. Just go and stretch out on the grass and rest while...while, you know, while the sirens went off and we were allowed to stop the work, but I was also involved...I was one of the fellows when Munich was first bombed, I guess, or the first big bombing they did a lot of damage to it. They destroyed pretty much the railroad station, that I was taken there to...I was one of the guys who went to work to try to put that train station back in some kind of a work order, and that was where we used to have to go on the train a long time and come back. We spent really...in that train we were working very very long hours, between work and being on the train to and from Munich took a long time. But we did, as I said, many projects. They were building buildings. I remember laying railroad tracks, and that's when they used to lay...laying railroad tracks in the wintertime with no gloves and the hands used to stick to the tracks. You used to have to literally shake it to get it off because it was so cold...cold, and people used to haul things and I was in that when...when, you know, you had to pull stuff, you couldn't do it and that's when they they'll whip you like a horse, you know, pull, pull, pull. You have to do a lot of that, and but some...on several occasions I was able to get myself some jobs that were helpful, such as I used to clean out officers' ___ and that gave me a lot of benefit only because in trash cans and in ash trays that I used to empty, I used to find cigarette butts. That was like gold. That's...in fact, gold...that was more like diamonds because every...for every butt you can give somebody, you can get his ration of bread. There were people who really traded that away. And so those things were helpful, but the big problem we had it was very, very cold because we had the same clothing for winter...

Q: What clothes did you wear?

A: Striped...these striped pajama uniforms, and that was just a shirt, like a shirt and a pair of pajama pants and what I did in the winter time really is use cement bags as liners. We emptied the cement bags from cement and we use to use them to put them in our clothing and the shoes fell apart. In fact I had frozen off my toenail...my toe on of my feet was frozen and my the bottom of my feet in fact were frozen. I have had problems with that, and then I was just...it was...the big problem I remember really is being extremely cold and these working conditions were absolutely atrocious.

Q: How long did that last?

A: Well, that...that lasted pretty much till the end. It lasted till let's see...I came there...it must have been...I think it was in August when I got to Germany through December. I remember Christmas Eve being moved from that camp to another camp that we were building a new camp and that was...that's when my troubles really...because life was sort of normal between the period of August through December in this camp. You worked hard hours but it was more a normal kind of thing. But then when we were shipped to this other camp, things seemed to have changed. We had no idea...we had no news what was going on. I do remember seeing one fellow who...we knew that they came in and made selections every so often of people who were not fit anymore to work and took them away and I remember one Romanian doctor who told me that he was once...because he had told us he is going to go and volunteer for that, and we told...you know, we were telling him this is not the thing to do and his comment, he says I can't take it. He was a big fellow. He had swollen up. He really had puffed up. He was very...he had volunteered for...I mean he wanted to go into one of those transports, and they were shipped...

Q: He knew he would die?

A: Well, we sort of felt that, but also when they started to take us on train projects to work, people used to jump in front of the train. You'd see that.

Q: You saw people do that?

A: Yeah. Yes. Yeah. When the train was coming into the station, people would just jump in front of it, so you saw things like that.

Q: What happened when you got to the other camp?

A: That's when we were building that and and it was...really it was very cold and we marched all night. We came there and no place to stay. They said we have to build some kind of makeshift building and I was just deterior...starting to deteriorate. Soon there afterwards there were a lot of people who got very sick and that must have been I would guess maybe January or February, and people were just getting sicker and sicker and then they had started where there was one building they had put up which was in a...in fact we were moved to another camp because it was just...it was terrible and when we got there,

more and more people...it seemed like the whole camp was sick, so they had buildings that had people who were, you know, just sick and...

Q: In what way were sick? Did they have common characteristics?

A: They would just...well, it turned out...I didn't know at the time but they had typhoid fever. I found out afterwards that's what...

Q: What did you observe of them?

A: Well, they just couldn't move. They were just terrible. They were...and I remember I went through a period there...in fact, then for some reason and I don't remember how it came about it, but I was thrown into one of those buildings with these very sick people. Every morning I remember all people did is go through...and that's how it started...that's what I did...they're going through...people slept on these...it wasn't a bed. It was like a platform. It was...and just next to each other. You slept in rows and we used to go in the morning and just pick up the dead bodies and throw them from the building and then they'd come and haul...haul them off, but I remember after a while I was...I was put put in one of those buildings to stay and that's where I...I mean I was down to...

Q: Were you sick then yourself?

A: I was starting...had some sym...but I didn't...certainly didn't have...I developed typhoid fever I think while I was there but I wasn't when I...I was still working. I was able to, you know, go on, you know, because most of the people couldn't do anything.

Q: What do you think you weighed at that point?

A: Well, I don't know what I weighed at that point, but I was...when I was liberated I weighed thirty kilos, which is about sixty-two, what is it...about sixty-four pounds I guess. But I was laying in this place and I remember I had sores, because I was nothing but skin and bones, and I had huge sores on my backside and uh because and I also remember one period where I didn't go to the bathroom for thirteen...three weeks rather, and that was the most painful thing when I finally did try. By then we were being pulled back as as the war...as April...March came and then April came. We were being consolidated, pulled back, which I didn't know for what reason or where, but...and then life seemed to have improved slightly and then we were...at the end of April we were being taken by train. We had sort of gone...gone together into an area where we were being loaded on trains.

Q: You were no longer in Dachau?

A: Well, this is still in that same general vicinity. They had...Dachau was a major camp and a lot of satellite camps around it, so what I guess they were doing at that time is pulling all the people back to what turned out to be Dachau, but we were loaded on this train and I remember it was April 27th when we finally got on the train, and we were pulled into

this train station where we were parked, and the train was open cars, all open...open boxcars and next to us was an anti-aircraft gun train, with anti-aircraft guns and the planes came over that morning like they always did and looked at us and saw us in these open boxcars and took off. As they took off, the anti-aircraft guns opened fire and they shot down several of those planes.

Q: And they had hidden the anti-aircraft guns there...

A: Right behind us. Yeah. I mean I imagine they should...should have been able to see them from the air, because you can't hide a train and because it was an open train station. Well, that day they kept...the planes kept on coming back all day long and bombing the hell out of us, and the train station and the anti-aircraft guns and during that period really the lull...while the shooting had stopped, of course, there was chaos you know, people...we got out of the boxcars. We were climbing over and the Germans were disappearing and I remember this was April 27th, so we roamed around and we hadn't eaten because before that I mean we hadn't eaten for quite a while, so I saw a lot of bread on the German train, so I climbed on the train station...on the on my train and then up to the Germans and asked them to please, please give me some bread, so he started to hand me two loaves of bread and as he did that, one of our guards came over and pointed his rifle butt to my forehead just like this and pushed me across the track and told the German not to give it to me and he really pushed me physically across the track and while I was begging him he didn't say one word, just pushed me across and as soon as he did that, there was another prisoner who did exactly the same thing that I did, and he went and reached out for the bread and the guy shot him on the spot and killed him right there.

Q: One of the guards are doing this?

A: Yeah. And he didn't say one word to him. So, _____. But that day went on and we got...we thought maybe we were liberated later that day because after...we looked around. There were just no Germans left and we got into the woods and then it seemed to have quieted down when the Germans round us up again and put us back on the train and took us into Dachau, because I remember getting there and the the people who guarded us at Dachau, the new...new prison guards who took over there were...the rifles were bigger than they were. They were all little kids it seemed like and they marched us into Dachau and also prior to that what happened was during all that chaos, I saw that train with food. I broke...you know, took a lot of food and we had uniforms...they were just very sloppy and loose so I...whatever I could stuff in my shirt, I took...all kinds of food, so that evening some prisoners came and took it all away from me, whatever I had but they missed a package of butter that I had noticed a little later because I felt it sticking to my body. It was mel...it started to melt, so when nobody was looking, I kept on putting my hand in my shirt and breaking off a piece of butter and eating it. I ate up that whole package of butter, and if you want to know what happened to me after that...I was...I became so deathly...deathly sick that it was terrible, but I was dehydrated to begin with and I had diarrhea from that. That was...that was absolutely was a disaster, and then I was just really waiting to die. I was just lying there...I remember in Dachau because I was lying in this barracks and somebody came and told me, somebody who knew me really

from Europe said just hang on. He says it won't be long now, and I had told him...I said it won't make any difference to me. I don't have long, but on April 29th, we were liberated.

Q: Can you tell us about the liberation, what you what you saw of it?

A: I saw really...as I told you I was very sick. I really didn't get out of bed. I had heard of the commotion and didn't pay any attention, so I saw very little of it. Fortunately for me as it turned out as when I came in...when they came in and they had seen what was going on, and I was close to the gate where I was, that I was taken to a...by the military personnel to a military ho...to what seemed to be a military hospital by Americans.

Q: American soldiers...?

A: American soldiers...yes...by American doctors had taken me in and they were treating me.

Q: How did they react when they saw what was going on?

A: They seemed to be very _____ and very disturbed but they really...around me I mean you could see these corpses, or you could see people who looked like corpses. Most of us...there were quite a few people who died after the liberation too from illnesses or dehydration or it was very...you really...like my first food that I recalled that an American gave me, it seemed like charcoal to me, some kind of a...it looked like really and it tasted like ground-up charcoal and believe me I tasted enough food because once I even went, while I was in the camp, we hadn't eaten for several days that I...people were eating grass, so I went to...I tried that, and you know, dirty grass...it...to me it tasted as I said I'd just as soon die if I have to eat it, and I didn't eat it again, yet I used to go and eat behind the kitchen...I used to go and steal the rubbish because the potato peelings, that was...that was a great food, or anything the kitchen threw out, so...but and when...when, you know, in remembering stuff like that, when you went for example prisoners who used to work in the kitchen detail, that was a good job if you can get it, because if they knew you like you used to _____ soup which just as I said was mostly warm some kind of liquid. Once in a while you get a potato in it...very seldom any kind of meat in it. I I don't recall ever seeing a piece of meat in it but it was basically potato soup kind of more soup than potato. But that was...they treated me quite well,

and then they had moved me because I remember more of a reaction when a German nurse came into see me.

Q: Where did the Americans take you?

A: It was in same vicinity, some place in there in the Dachau area.

Q: A hospital?

A: A hospital, and I was being treated and I remember when this German woman came in, and she was very young and when she saw me, she collapsed sort of and almo...she

fainted kind of. And I remembered having a discussion with somebody because I said they claim they didn't know what was going on, and my question was how can you not know what goes on here when you see day after day train loads of people coming in, and nobody...and the trains are leaving empty. Now after this goes on for several months or years, you'd have millions of people there so we can't possibly...you know, something had to be going on there. So...I was also told that afterwards I was supposed to go to Dachau, that we were being taken there to be killed. But we didn't make it. We were...we were delayed on the trip.

Q: And they...when they got everybody together...?

A: Then they got everybody together towards the end of the war...right. See, as I said, to me I was liberated April 29th. The war was over just a few days later, you know...on May 8th so it wasn't much, but I stayed in that hospital for several months.

Q: When you were able to make the transfer from Auschwitz to Dachau, you, of course your family was not with you. What were your...what did you think had happened to them and when did you realize that you were alone and without any of your family? What happened at that time?

A: I really didn't know and...I mean I didn't know really till after the war that they may...that they are probably dead.

Q: When you got out of Auschwitz, what did you think...what did you...?

A: I just knew...at that time all I wanted to do...when I was in Auschwitz, I just wanted to get out, out of there, and I was told that we're going to go...I mean the people and the prisoners were saying they're being taken to a labor camp, and they're going to work, and that's really what we were trying to...again we were being taken and it was cold...that was one of the problems even on that train...you know, the nights were cold that we drove through. And I remember seeing we we we were moving constantly. We did stop in Vienna. I remember somebody had pointed that. He recognized it was Vienna that we went through. But we were just trying to survive really and didn't think too much. I assumed at that time they were just in a different camp, that they were also someplace working.

Q: Might not be.

A: Oh yeah, not might be. I was...I mean there was no question...I assumed...I had no idea that they were dead or about to be dead. As I said, it was just...I assumed and I think most had assumed that they were just in a different camp. We were told there were a lot of camps.

Q: When you were in the hospital after Dachau, how long were you there? How long did it take you to...?

A: I would say that was from say the end of April till maybe two or three months anyhow,

because I remember that I had trouble walking even. I was very weak and they tried to build me up some. When they had finally released me, which maybe...I must have been at least two months because I remember then they took us on trucks, the Czechoslovakians, to Prague I think. And we were going on the truck and I remember getting off the truck and I had to walk up steps and I really had trouble walking steps. My legs hurt. It was just...it was very difficult because I didn't have the strength, and I had gained back some strength by that time already and then I remember getting, you know, after kicking around for a few days there and there was...

Q: They just took all the Czech citizens?

A: Yeah. They were taking you back...taking you back to general vicinities, and we used to ride the trains then cause we didn't bother with tickets or anything, just...it was pretty much a free-for-all, everybody...the trains were moving and they weren't moving. You got on a train and it moved and it got stopped and stay stopped for two days sometimes. The Russian troops had, of course, I mean you know military trains had priority and it was...Czech was in the Russian hands at the time...most of them, and I used to hook up and I found to go back to my hometown, that the best way to travel was hooking up with Russian military trains that were going in the general vicinity, and it took me a long time to get home, but...

Q: After you got to Prague, you...

A: Yes. I mean after...after that...right...I was looking back to go back to my hometown and I was not...I mean and you know, the rumor mills and they guys who were older, who were more able physically of course were investigating and finding, you know, rumor mills thought this...this is how you can go here and this is how you can go there and did you see so and so, did you see...you know...what do you know, but we were going back and after several weeks, you know...it was...it was a very tedious and very long trip because as I said at the time you're moving, a train could stop for no reason and just stay there, and then the next train was passing us so we hopped that train from train to train.

Q: How about the people in the countryside? How did they treat you? Were you...?

A: Most of them sort of ignored us. There were some some people who were, you know, not hostile. They wouldn't dare be hostile but they certainly I wouldn't say friendly. The most memorable thing that I remember from that whole journey is when I finally got into my hometown and as I said this took several weeks because I had stopped in the biggest city near us. I stayed there but when I finally decided to get into my hometown, I'll never forget getting off a bus and there were three of us who got off the bus, and there were young kids standing on the corner, and somebody I heard made a comment...look, there are three more Jews Hitler didn't kill. I heard that.

Q: I think this is about this tape, so let's stop at this point and I think they have to change the tape.

Tape #2

Q: OK. So you got back to your own hometown after this arduous journey. What did you see when you got back?

A: Everything was pretty much the way we left it. Nothing was destroyed really. It was...many yards were sort of over-grown and they looked wild. In our house there happened to be a caretaker who used to help us and he used to come in on _____ and put wood on the fire and stuff like that...was living in it and but the town was very...you know, it was deserted. Of course, there were, you know, all the Jewish population was gone. There were only a handful of people who came back and even most of those didn't settle there.

Q: Was that mostly a Jewish town?

A: No, it was mixed but there were a lot of Jewish in there. Probably...I, I wouldn't say it was mostly Jewish. I think it was probably more gentile, but there were a lot of Jews in there.

Q: And when you got to your home, tell us about that.

A: Well, the people that who were there, you know, were very nice to me. They put me of course and they, you know, they did what they could, you know, for me and they...I'm I'm not sure I should say they really resented that I came back but they did...you know, they were just...I just didn't feel comfortable in it and our neighbor who was a good friend of the family in fact had wanted to buy the house.

Q: Well, before we get into that, did you...were you able to find out anything about the state of your family ...?

A: Not there. No. I had already found out pieces and things did not look too promising. Before...it took me as I said several weeks and we were talking to other people in...

Q: This is in Prague?

A: This is in...not Prague as much but soon after, you know, through this several week journey. Then, you know, when I came there were people in this bigger town called Khust that there was like a Jewish community, and you know, I went there and I had learned already that who came back and who didn't and also I was one of...because of the fact that I was in this hospital, I was one of the later ones to come back plus the fact many people who liberated earlier, like some of them were in camps that were liberated as early as January of '45 who were home already and they were...so you had picked up, you know, all kinds of pieces.

Q: What did you find out?

A: That the only thing that seems to be, you know, seems to be is that I had cousins. I had heard of some cousins, saw a couple, but no immediate family...aunts or uncles, nobody, no parents, so after being there for a while and then there was...you you know, that you sort of had a feeling that there doesn't seem to be, you know, you're keeping your fingers crossed, you're hoping. Then there was...in Romania they had a place where everybody would...was gravitating to, the ...somehow as I said we were moving more by the seat of the pants. Nobody had any...there were no plans. You went to the train. You got on the train. You moved. Somebody bugged you for a ticket...if it was a Hungarian or somebody, you just threw them off the train. A couple of people that I saw, they threw people off the train, conductors who were bugging them for tickets, because we didn't buy any tickets. But we ended up going to Romania.

Q: This was after...?

A: After the war. After home.

Q: When you got home you were telling us that somebody wanted to buy your house. Can you tell us...?

A: Right. This fellow wanted to buy the house and I just felt and I don't know why, but I didn't want to sell it. I felt number one, I had hoped that there...that somebody survived, yet and else I didn't want any money from...it just didn't look right for me to take money for it, so I told him that he has my permission, he's free to stay in the house as long as he wants to or if anybody...if any other member of my family comes back, it their's to decide to do whatever they want, and he asked me to give him that in writing and I did. I signed this piece of paper that he had written up, had somebody write it up for him, that gives him sole possession of this property that we have. We had other property, but the house basically, and he can stay there, and as I said only one stipulation...any member...any other member of my family can void that. And he gave me two sandwiches for that and I was...and I left. The next day I left town...

Q: He gave you two sandwiches for that?

A: That's it. I...

Q: Ever see him again?

A: Never see him. Never saw him again. And I'm not sure that I have a desire to.

Q: And then you say you went on to Romania?

A: Then then we were going...you know, because we were told that people are gathering there, everybody seems to be gravitating there, and they had more records there, you can find out, so I went to Romania, and that was another...it took maybe a week to get there...but the...and you know, you're looking, mingling. There were all kinds of refugees

there, you know, people in my position, mostly young people, you know, older than I but in their...

Q: You were about sixteen then?

A: I was about sixteen at the time, and they were all looking and mingling and, you know, did you...what town are you from? Do you know so and so? Whom...whom did you see? And after being there for I don't know how many days I was there...but learned nothing, so that's when I went back to Czechoslovakia, but not my home...home area.

Q: By this time, had you sort of given up hope or...?

A: Right. And I'll tell you what else happened. I ran into one of my older cousins and he had survived and his sister, and he said to me, you know, he says you are too young...you know, where are you going? I said I don't know where I'm going. We don't know either. He says why don't you come with us so where ever we'll go, at least...you know...and he was older. So I ended up going with them at _____ and we stayed together till ...oh gee, that was...till 1946 or '47, and then we ended up leaving and going to Germany.

Q: Was that when you realized that everybody was gone?

A: Well, I'll tell you I was not unique. It wasn't...I'm not sure that I really know exactly how I felt or when I felt. You had hoped...I hoped that at that time still that there is...I'm not sure as to what level really I decided that everybody is gone. In fact even today sometimes I I hope, I think maybe but...everybody was in the same boat and there was really...there was...you were no different and you sort of started to live, to...you know, _____ will come back, because after doing searching and as I said I feel bad about it today, and sometimes as I said, I I have hope that I may run into one of my brothers.

Q: Ever dream about them?

A: I used to at one time, a lot. I used to blame myself.

Q: You blamed yourself?

A: Yeah. I used to blame myself for taking my brother and sort of push him...go with Mommy, in Auschwitz and he wanted to come with me and I said no, you're too young. Go with Mommy and I'll see you afterwards. And I had felt that if he had come with me that maybe I could have pulled him through. That that was the problem that I had, but really that that was...but that was soon after the war and I thought about that many a time, but I used to have nightmares and things like that.

Q: For a long time?

A: I don't know. How do you describe long? I think that was..it must...certainly several months maybe, maybe a year or two, but more...it was more probably a month.

Q: After you get back to Prague with your cousins, what happened to you? How did you get...?

A: Well, we settled in a town called Usti nad Labem where we stayed there and in fact it was easy to get quarters because there were a lot of Germans that were deported or that had left and we moved into one of the some, you know, nice residence from, you know, from a former German and, you know, you lived there free and things started to deteriorate there and then we finally decided we're going to leave, and then to Germany to go back to try to get to Israel. That was always...try to go to Israel, and I had registered finally to go to Israel and it was very difficult to do, in fact and I went...I was on several transports going and I remember, you know, after trying and trying and we got stopped every time, finally the same cousin of mine had told me let's stick together and maybe he says let's see what happens and as I was going through...and then there was a chance...I had a chance to come to this country. I wanted to go to Israel the worst way, so my cousin did tell me on several occasions that we should go together but then when it was so difficult to go to Israel, he said and it looked like I had an opportunity to come to come to America so...and I didn't want to go and he sort of convinced me to go to...he says don't be a fool. He says go to America. He says get an education he says, then Israel will need you more...can use you more with some education he says than today. There are enough people like you. We don't need any more. And that's how he wound up registering for this it's called the U.S. Children's Committee. The organization...an organization that was called the U.S. Children's Committee and I think it was sponsored I was told by Eleanor Roosevelt but at that time if you were under eighteen and had no immediate family in Europe or no immediate family in America, they would bring you here, and I lived in a children's home for a while and this was '47 I think. So at the end of '47, October finally, we were...we...finally our papers had cleared and I came to this country November 10th, '47.

Q: Where did you go?

A: Well, they took us off the boat in New York and they took us to some kind of a...I don't know if it was a home or a hotel and we settled in. In fact it was very interesting. I was there no more than a half hour and somebody was paging me and I said they can't mean me, so somebody says it's for you. I said it can't be. I said nobody knows me. I don't know anybody in New York. I never even heard of...I said it's impossibility. So the...somebody came and told me this is definitely for somebody who came on this transport. His name is Mayer Adler, and I went and grabbed the phone and it turned out it was a cousin of mine, a second cousin who was...who lived in America, who saw in the newspaper...I guess they printed names and towns that people are coming from, who lived in New York and came to see me, and I had seen them, you know, for...but the whole purpose was at the time for the people who sponsored us is to farm us out and get us out of New York, so they were trying to encourage you and just to go anyplace but stay in New York, and I had a friend of mine who came before me who ended up settling in Cleveland so somebody had suggested towns, you know, any place and I I knew nothing about America really, absolutely nothing, so suggested to me...Cleve...I said fine.

Cleveland is a good place to be go, and the interesting thing to me at the time was that I was going to Cleveland and they put us on the train and somebody met us from the...it was like family service or it was called Jewish Family or Jewish Children's Organization, and on the train going to Cleveland I didn't know if I was going to Cleveland, Ohio or Ohio, Cleveland. That's how much I knew about it, where I was going to. But I arrived in Cleveland and they put us in an orphanage and the orphanage had a little problem with us because basically we were...most of us were about eighteen, nineteen, thereabouts and we were all very old people, and they were trying to treat...I mean we were with an orphanage with kids who were under...basically most of them were under fifteen and sixteen and they were trying to treat us like kids and that didn't go over too well, so finally they had decided they better...you know, and they were trying to find homes for us. Some people had had found family here that they can go and live with, but I was one of the last ones out of there. In fact and then we were going to a school till...

Q: Did your family take you on?

A: Well, finally one of my teachers had taken...had requested that I come and live with them, and that's what I ended up doing. I lived with them for a while.

Q: And what has happened to you...without going into much detail, what has happened to you since that time?

A: Well, we were going...and first of all we came in this class that I attended to and this teacher was teaching that class, was in a temple. It was all for people like myself who didn't speak English or spoke very little English who were being taught English and what ever else we could be taught and they were all boys and girls my age and it was a relatively small group and we were being taken, you know, we were going there and living in this orphanage and then as I said they were farming out. After being in that ..., that was November...I guess November then for several months I had finally, you know, I moved out of there and I wanted to get a job and this teacher talked me into it and I entered high...you know, public school, so to go into public school I had a problem because my English was far from what they wanted, so that I had gotten...and they gave me some tests and I qualified. They said they can put me in seventh grade, and I told them forget it. I'm not interested in going to school. I sure am not going to seventh grade, so after some mediation they gave me further testing and they took me on probation into high school, tenth grade. If I can cut it, I can stay there. If not, they're going to have to kick me out. I said that's fine, because in other subjects I qualified. I can be in high school, but English was a big problem, so that I entered high school and I went from...in a year and a half plus summer school...one summer school...and I finished high school. They kept telling me...they were very nice to me because they helped me with English and I had to take accelerated courses and I had to take, for example...I was very good at math and one semester I remember I took Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry in the same semester, and that created some problems because when I came to Trigonometry, the teacher used to tell me to go and do homework and see him after class so he can tell me what's going on because I didn't know what the hell was going on.

Q: Your experiences hadn't gotten in the way of your making an adjustment?

A: No. It didn't seem to be. I mean, you know, you...every so often you felt, you know, down, but as I said there were other people like myself and I had to go on with life. I mean you can't...there were people who felt sorry for themselves and I worked for those people and I didn't see any sense to that. In fact I, you know, nobody owes you anything. You have to go out and you can't blame people. Like the other people who even I know now who blame what happened and they blame their problems today on what happened to them...

Q: And you've made a reasonably OK life for yourself?

A: I think I did well. I think I'm...I've done financially OK. I've have good family, a couple of sons and a wife. You know, they seem to be self-sufficient. Everybody seems to be OK. But I I don't think I have, you know, anything to, you know, feel bad about. I did go through periods, for example, that I remember early, you know, after I had been in this country for some time, people came to me. People were applying for...I don't remember what year it was...but people were applying to Germany for "Wiedergutmachung" [financial restitution]. Germany was paying people like myself...

Q: Resti...restitution...

A: Restitution. I think it's called Wiedergutmachung, but I didn't want any part of that for some reason, and I still don't know why. I do...I sort of suspect I felt I just felt at the time and I still really feel that I didn't want to get paid for it. Whatever happened, happened. I wouldn't want it to happen again but I sure as hell don't want to get paid for it because it would sort of...it would sort of make it...it's like buying a piece of gum and paying for it. It just...I'm not holding anybody responsible but to get paid for it just didn't seem right. That's all and that was one of the problems.

Q: I think that's a good point, place to stop at. Unless there is something else that you want to tell us about or something you'd like to...

A: Nothing really. That's...

Q: There was one other area, and you you were in the army in in Germany?

A: Well, first of all let me back-track a little bit. There's a point that I remember for example I was with people in a camp where people were being killed and I...this is my...I kid about this because I was with people that if you're really going to get killed, if you go someplace, you know...you know you see they're shooting people, so don't go there, and I remember when I was at a place where they were killing people and you could see it and I told guys, don't be stupid. Let's not go. He says what can you do? He says you've got to go there. I said what can they do you? They're going shoot you here. Let them shoot me as least where I want, not where...I could not convince anybody to follow me. I walked

away from there and I'm standing here to say that I survived. I tried to talk to people and you know, you couldn't do it wholesale but you certainly could look for a chance. If you see a guy shoots you fifty, a hundred yards from where you are, try not to go there and I had a problem convincing somebody, you know, a bunch of people to do that and as I said you couldn't do in bunches but you could do it one at a time. I just got up and walked away, and nobody stopped me because, you know, of course if somebody had seen me, I would have been shot. Well hell, I was going to be shot anyhow so that was...just interesting how people are, but to go back to when I finished high school, I tried...I first of all, the same teacher who had...who really worked very hard with me, who was taking me, sort of helping me had wanted me to go on to college and it was very difficult because number one, six months before graduation, before I finished high school, I wanted to quit because it was very difficult. I was working part-time. I was studying a lot and I was doing accelerated courses and I was doing extra courses so that I can graduate faster than the normal...I kept on skipping grades. I went from ten the first six months to the last month of eleventh to the last month of twelfth... I just...I was fed up and and then friends of mine who were...who were in the same boat as I who didn't go to school, who were making good money, and here I had no money, working hard and so I was very...you know, it was difficult, so prior to that I had plans to go to college, but I just as I said it was very...it was getting impossible so this teacher had me promise that I I would...for her sake I would graduate high school, and after I got out of high school I couldn't get a job at all. It was very difficult and at that time there were just no jobs so I ended up...Jewish vocation _____ got me a job with this company that I hated from day one and I wasn't going to stay there...it was just temporary. And that was 1950 and while I, you know, was there, then the Korean War broke out, so in the meantime I still couldn't find a job so I said the hell with it. I might as well stay till I get drafted, till I go in the Army, so I stayed there till I get in the Army. Now I didn't want to go in the Army but I ended up going in the Army and while in the Army...it was during the war and they shipped everybody to Korea and I had applied for the Intelligence Service and because of my languages I was accepted. Now I...but I was shipped off to Germany. In fact my whole battalion that I traded with...that I trained with, most of them went to Korea and four of us were shipped that wanted to go into Intelligence Service and shipped uh to New Jersey, ultimately to go to Europe and in New Jersey they decided they only take took two of us and I was one of the two they shipped to Europe, where I ended up.

Q: How did you feel about being in Germany?

A: I didn't...I didn't particularly want to go to Korea so it didn't...it really didn't bother me. I had no problem going back to Germany. Some of the things I had to do ultimately were a little more difficult but I had to live... when I got in this was a very good job because number one when I got back to Germany for the first six months I was with 7th Army Headquarters and they didn't need me. I had absolutely nothing to do. I used to go payday and I said are you sure my name's still on the pay...on the pay roster. But it was because we were exempt from duties and there was absolutely...I used to just get up in time to go to the for meals and then go and do things.

Q: Did you...I understand that you ended up in the intelligence service.

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us something about that and about interrogating...talking to Germans?

A: Well, part of the job then, finally when I had gotten an assignment, it was to gather information and we were doing and interpreting and uh and I was dealing with Germans. That what I was dealing mostly with Germans, not mostly...in fact ninety-nine percent. In fact I was sat up in a place, in a home where they rented a huge mansion. The Army owned them as intelligence outposts and while we were gathering information on Russia and subversion and all kinds of things, and then I think it was in 1950...must have been '52 that we had decided that we needed...they're going to have a West German Army, because East Germany had formed their...their own army, so the United States decided we wanted one of those and my...one of my jobs was at the time to go and select some officers for the army.

Q: They ____ you with selecting German ...

A: That was...that was a little problem. I was talking to people, you know, and I had done a lot of things with Germans. In fact I had a very good job because they built me up in fact to because I could pass off as a German. I spoke fluent German at the time and there was really...there were all kinds of things that I did for...for the Army. You know, I had the a good life as far as, you know, I lived with maid service, no, no army kind of crap of any kind, but this one job, as I said it was to go dig out officers who looked on paper to be, you know, who were Wehrmacht, not Nazis, and try to decide who we will OK as...who would be, you know, who you can trust more. And I remember writing a report on one saying that I had a problem, that if I had a Germany army for my friend, for my allies behind me, and I the Russians in front of me who were my enemies, I wouldn't know which side to look first at. So...but that was...

Q: Did you detect any Nazi background on some of them?

A: Oh yeah. There was a lot of that, but none of them were always Nazis, and then, you know, the office social life really was...I had to socialize with a lot of Germans too, and it's really...I lived, as I said it was...the fellow who had my job before me didn't succeed and he was a seasoned army person, only because he didn't know how to...he couldn't get along with Germans really. You had to be able...it was important to do what I did and but to do what I did I had to be able to get along with them, and the Army didn't care much about my background and it was really...

Q: Any conflict about that?

A: Not really. I did what I I had to do. I didn't do anything that hurt anybody to the extent, certainly nothing that I wouldn't talk about. I didn't do anything that was treating somebody unfairly. But it was an interesting part of an education for me and it was...and it was actually it was good experience and it was...it it meant...it...I was com...I was

comfortable with what I did. It was difficult to do it many a time and some parts of it were very difficult, but I enjoyed the freedom that I can do...I like to do what I do with very little...as long as whatever I have to do, I have no restrictions, I can do...I can do a good job, but I I don't like to follow...to follow rules too much and...

Q: It's a good thing that you didn't follow rules, or you wouldn't be here today.

A: That's right. Well that's...

Q: Thank you very much.

A: OK. Thank you.