

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Abraham Lewent
October 20, 1989
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Abraham Lewent, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on October 20, 1989 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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ABRAHAM LEWENT

October 20, 1989

Q: Could you tell me your name please?

A: My name is Abraham Lewent. This is mine original name. I was born in Warsaw, Poland, July 1924. I came from a family from many, many sisters and brothers and cousins and uncles and aunts. And we lived in Warsaw for many, many years. Even my great grandparents came from that town. I lived mostly in the Jewish section of Warsaw. Uh, to be specific, I lived...my parents and me, my sisters lived on Zamenhof Street. I went to school. I went to a cheder (ph), and a Yiddish school, and matter of fact, I went to a cheder with the famous Mila 18, and that was the place I went in a cheder. On the first floor, this was already, when I was about maybe 12...11, 12 years old. After I changed schools and I went to a school on Niska 4, and this was a school run by, I think, by some, uh, party, or...it was a religious school. That was not the thing. And that school I went until the war broke out. And I remember this was September 1st.

Q: Let's not get to the war yet? Yes. Let's take a little time. I would like to find a little more. Tell me about your parents?

Q: My parents were very young people. I guess my father, when the war broke out, he was only 37 years old, and my mother must have been 34 years old when the war broke out. I had three sisters. I had three sisters...let's say, when the war broke out, one sister was 13, one was 11, one was 9. They all went to school, and we came from a middle class family. What I mean middle class, mine father was running the factory, mine grandfather owned. We owned a factory in Warsaw that was very well known. It was called Firma Baranek. This was located on Nalevki 35. The first floor was the factory, and downstairs was the store when we sold...we used to manufacture women's underwear, men's shirt, winter clothing for people, and we used to buy the raw merchandize in lots in Poland and they supply to us, and we used to have cutters and machines and we make the stuff. And my father ran all the factory. We used to have probably about 20 people, or 25 people working inside. And I guess I was a little boy that time. I didn't know what money means, but I guess we were pretty good off. I mean, I had shoes, I had clothes, and summertime, we used to go away in the country once in a while, so probably we weren't that bad off. And I guess my father...grandfather was better off. I remember he took trips to Israel. In 1935 and 36, he was in Israel, and he came back and he told us all the stories about Israel, and we all sitting by the table, listen, you now, what happened in a distant land and I guess in that time if you could afford to go for trips, you must be very well off. I had...this was one grandfather, and after I had a grandfather, my father's father, and they used to live near the famous Warsaw cemetery on Geinsha Street.(ph) Actually, it's not...the cemetery is on Ocopova Street, but my grandfather had a store, a hardware store, Geinsha 87 and his name was Moshe Lewent--Mothai Lewent. I am sorry. His son was Moshe. And I guess all those people over there, the did know him. As a matter of fact, I have to give you an incident. I was in a hotel in the mountains a couple of

years ago, and I met people who ran away from Poland in 1956 when they chased them out...the Gomulka Regime, and I met a couple of people what actually they knew mine grandfather. And we happened to talk about Warsaw, and I asked the person...he asked me, "Where did you live?" And I said I lived there, but I had a grandfather living over there. And he says, "You mean to tell me Mothai was your grandfather? I used to go in. I used to buy kerosene with him. I used to buy soap by him. I used to buy shoelaces by him. And this was your grandfather! And Esther was your grandmother!" I says, "Yes." (Sobbing, Sobbing, Sobbing)

Q: It's alright.

A: So after this, we started talking about it.

Q: Let's pull back. Let's go back to your childhood. Okay?

A: Yah.

Q: You are growing up. You want to take a break. Let's hold it a minute. Let's take a minute. Okay.

A: And that picture is my grandfather. That picture which you have in your hand. This was him.

Q: Okay. Already. Alright, start the camera. Are we on? Okay. Alright, so we are talking about a childhood, and you had sisters and brothers?

A: Yah.

Q: Tell us then, uh, what happened to this family when the Germans came?

A: Okay. When the Germans came in, my father...I mean actually we were...we had no food in the house. It was not like here. You had always something in the house. In Europe, everything you need, you used to go out every day in the store, and you used to buy. When the war broke out, the water was cut off. There was no gas in the house to cook anything. There was no food. So my father used to go out once in a while and we used to get some bread or the necessary things. And I remember for a couple of weeks, we lived just on sour pickles because not far where we used to live, a couple of streets, there was a factory, they used to produce pickles. A Polish factory! And they call it Original, and they used to have the pickles in tents like...small tents, and large ones. As I found out, so I went with a friend of mine and somehow we got in to that building in the night, even when the bombs were falling and we used to run in the middle of the night and we grabbed about 6 or 8 cans, about 5 pounds and we dragged it home, and this we lived for a couple of weeks. Just on pickles! And once in a while, we got bread. But we had some rice. So we had rice and pickles. And this went on for...for weeks. There were houses burning. I mean it was...to describe a regular

hell, because there was no water to douché the fires out, so the only thing they did was let the fires go. It just happened the house we lived that nothing happened. Like next house, third house, in the night when it stopped, people used to go out from the houses and look for something to eat. And this kept on for 4 weeks. When the Germans came in, so they didn't know what's going to happen. New rules. New Regime. They first thing they did, they made a curfew. You are not allowed to walk the street. But still there was no food. So the only thing they did was on the corner someplace like it happens someplaces, they used to have field kitchens, and they used to give to the people bread and salamis. This is the truth. Right when they walked in. I found this it out through a friend of mine. When you go over there, let's say maybe 3 miles, 4 miles, there is a field kitchen. You gonna go over there, you gonna get something. I remember like now I took my older sister. We walked and we walked and...and still the fires were on both sides, but the war was ended already. They occupied the city. We came over there. We saw a line of people, and we stood in the line for that bread and the salami and sometime they gave you two breads. When I got to the line, a Pole...a Polish kid came out and said to the German, "He's Jude." You know like...the German didn't even know that time...he didn't make any difference between a Jew and not a Jew; but the Polish kids, they were pointing out to the Germans, like "Don't give it to him. He's a Jew." So now they got the way... So the German couldn't do anything, I mean. So he chased us away. So when he chased us away, we stood again. So now, the Polish kids, they chased us away and they grabbed all the bread, and all the things. So we had to go home without bread and without anything. And it was a fact that we had to go carry water from the Vistula, from the river; and this is like 4 miles. So we took 2 pails of water. Me and my sister took 2 pails of water, and we walked. We carried the pails so when we had to pass by a Polish neighborhood, those Polish kids came out and picked up the pails of water and threw it out and make us walk back. Now this is in a time when the Germans took over the city. Every citizen was on his own, and they know they lost their country. Still the hatred. The anti-Semitism those Polish people had toward the Jews. For no reason at all! Now they felt that they can do with the German help what they always want to do. And here they got somebody to point out he's a Jew's and he's a this, and he's a that, and when they walked around with the water, they used to turn the water out from those kids, cause elderly people couldn't carry that far pails of water. So this went on for a couple of weeks. You know with that thing. Finally, the occupation was starting, and they started giving you anti-Jewish laws, and I remember like now, in November, I think it was in November or September, there was a street in Warsaw, the Nalevki. And somehow a Polish...a German soldier got shot. I don't know how or why. This is the first time I heard about it. They took out 53 people from that building, men, women, children, and they killed them instantly. This is maybe 2 weeks after they walked in...in the town. And...and I don't now that...what happened with that soldier, how he got shot over there, and this was in the Jewish district, you know, and they took out 53 people and they killed them. And since then everybody knew that something terrible is going to happen to the Jewish people in that District. Now what happened to our place is that the German's find out about my grandfather's factory and the store, so every day you see trucks came in and they loaded up. They cleaned out little by little everything. My father and my grandfather, we grabbed some stuff and we kept it in the house. Not much because you

couldn't grab too much. And little by little, they cleaned out the warehouse, they cleaned out the factory. They took away the machines. Everything they loaded up in truck, and I don't know where they had it. So from that little merchandize, what we saved from that factory, we lived awhile. We sold little by little and somehow this kept us going for let's say, maybe 2 years, you know. And after...this was around 1941...1942. 1941 or 42 it start getting very bad, because the ghetto was closed in. They made a wall around the ghetto. I had to wear a arm band with the star of David. Say everybody, even the smallest children...my littlest sister, a little tiny girl...she had to walk out on the street, she had a arm band, you know, with a...with a star of David. And everybody in the house had always ready, uh, how you say a rucksack with a piece of bread, some stuff, in case something happened every kid will be protected. That was my father's idea. We don't know what's going to happen. First day here, they clean out this street. They clean out this street. You walk out in the street. You don't know if you gonna come back, because they ...you walk on the street and they need 100 people to go to work, they grab you and you don't...they don't know what happened to you. When we lived in that building, we lived near a courtyard. One time each house had like a committee, and they were directing all the rules. One time there was a meeting and they said they need 35 people to go to work. So who'll they take? Elderly people, they can't take. The youngsters they can't take, so they took 17, 18, 19 year old people. And from that house by us, we had to give them 3 people. So each house, like 10 building, used to give 30 people. And 3 people that went, 18, 19, they were 6 weeks away. When they came back, nobody recognized them. Each one was swelling. I remember that I had a friend. His name was Schemick. He came back. His feet, his hand, his head were twice the size from the beating, from the undernourishment those people had. What did they do? They dig some kind of dam in the water. They were standing all day long in the water in digging the ground, and from this they got swelling, and they were undernourished, and this kid lived about 2 weeks after they send him home he died because he was so sick. And this kept on like this, and my father was still home. My mother was still home. My sisters were home, and still we went some...and...in time of the night, we had schooling, like people made a school for 3, 4 children. They shouldn't forget what they learn, and we had libraries. We went in the libraries. We read books. We still think sometime sometime will get better. In the meanwhile, we had...there was a Polish newspaper. Actually it was a newspaper where the German printed but in Polish language, and this was smuggled in in the ghetto and we read it. We heard only about the Germans winning the war and they win this and this and this. We didn't know anything. The radios was not allowed to have because they took all the radios from the Jewish people. They took away one night and made a decree, everybody has a radio, fall coats, good clothes, this has to be given away. And we didn't have no news actually what happened on the other side of the world. And this went on like this until 1942. 42 came the big day when they start staying to the people well, we need people to go Ost [NB: to the east], means for work. And the hunger in the ghetto was so great, was so bad, those people were laying on the streets and dying, little children went around begging, and, uh, everyday you walked out in the morning, you see somebody is laying dead, covered with newspapers or with any kind of blanket they found, and you found those people used to carry the death people in little wagons, used to bring them down to the cemetery and bury them in

mass graves. And every day thousands and thousands died just from malnutrition because the Germans didn't give anything for the people in the ghetto to eat. There was no such thing. You couldn't walk in and buy anything or getting any rations. It's your pot luck. If you don't have it, you die, and that's what it was. Finally when they start bringing people out from the ghetto, they promised the people, if you gonna leave the ghetto, we'll give you 3...3 pounds of bread and, uh, a can of marmalade and sugar and stuff like this. And if you just register, you want to go to work. Some people if they heard that word, 3 pounds of bread and marmalade and sugar, they didn't care what's going to happen to them. They just went and they signed up. Actually, it's not signed up because when they...when they went to that place, they got the bread and the marmalade and you see every day women, children walking to that place, Umschlagplatz, and get the 3 breads. And they pushed them into the trains; and they pushed in so many people in the trains that they actually couldn't eat that bread. There was no room even to cut the bread. So what happened. Well, they send them to Treblinka. The trains came back with the same bread because in the trains they used to put in 350 to 400 people in a cattle car and you had standing room only. You couldn't even sit. You couldn't even stand. You were just pressed like sardines. So the bread and the marmalade when the people had it in their hands, it was still in their hands because when they get to destination in Treblinka, they had to undress and they had to leave everything. So the same breads and the same marmalade came back for the new transport. And this went on constantly. Now the 22nd of July 1942, that was the day when I was home and there was, uh, a...a raid. The SS came, start shooting, start hollering everybody down, everybody down in the court yard, and I said to my mother, "What we gonna do?" So she says, "You don't have to worry. I got a paper. Your daddy works." My father was working as a mechanic in a...in the ghetto for the...for the...in the factory they used to make fur coats for the German flyers...for the pilots. So he was like taking care of all the machineries and she has a paper that her husband works for the Germans so she says, "Don't worry, I mean." I says, "But I have to worry because I am over 17. And if they see me, they will grab me." So she says, "Don't worry. You go hide." So I was hiding in the house and she went downstairs with my 3 sisters. Everybody was having that...that thing on the back of the thing with a piece of bread with a...with a schmatles (ph) inside. I don't know what they keep inside. And that's how they went downstairs. And this is the...the last time I saw them. Because the Germans even if they saw the paper, they just took the paper like this and ripped it apart and they took them out. That time they took about 10,000 people to the place Umschlagplatz took the people to Treblinka. I was laying, hidden in a room on the top of the ceiling. They made like a blind room. If you wouldn't know it, you wouldn't know it's a room. But it's actually was like a hideaway on the top of the ceiling. And I was laying there, and I heard the Germans came into the house and they take them out downstairs, and I was laying there. I didn't know what to do, what to say. And I figured because of the paper, he's going to read the paper and he's going to say, "Oh, well, and he's going to let him stay." And he tell them to go downstairs. In the courtyard, there was already hundreds of people like this, and they took them away. This was around 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock in the evening. And this was that day on July 1942. And another thing happened. If they have, uh, a norm. That means they need 10,000 people every day, and if they had 8,000, they just went around on the street and just grabbed everybody who comes

along to make the 10,000 up. And that's what probably happened that day. They needed a couple of hundred more, and...and where we used to live was only about 10, 15 minutes from their Umshagplatz where all the trains went to Treblinka, so the first thing they did, ran into those court yards, and they grabbed the people. And after this, uh, 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock, my father came home and I told him what happened and I said to him, "Well, I...I...I can't be here anymore." You know, like I just can't find myself a place. First of all, I says you go away in the morning to work. I have to stay here by myself. And I don't know what can happen. Any minute they can grab me too because I have no papers. I don't work. And if you don't have no papers, you don't work. It's just like, uh, you don't exist. So I don't know what to do. So I spoke...I had a friend of mine...a kid I went to school with him, and he told me, "There is a guy who lives next house, and he works on the on the airport in Warsaw for the Germans and he says for a couple... for some money he can arrange...that he can have a few people going to work in the airport. This is a good job, and you can stay there and at least you're going to be safe a little bit. I told this to my father and I said to him, you know, we're going to need 2 or 3 thousand zlotys to pay off this guy cause this guy is going to pay off a German. And in that book I gave you is the whole story from that thing, but I just gonna tell you what happened. That's...some day he came. My father gave him the money. I took with me...I remember like now...I took with me a leather briefcase. I took with me maybe 200 zlotys. That's all there was left, and I took with me some underwear and tfillin. My father says, "You take this." And I went because I was Bar mitzvah year before. So I didn't have a chance even to wear it. He says, "Take it with you." So I went and I took this. And I remember like now the guy took us and we walked on the street in the ghetto...what nobody is allowed to walk, but he had a paper from the...from the...from the German Air Force, that he's bringing some people to work for the airplanes or something, so... And I saw these German SS. They're walking around and looking at us, see somebody and here they see four people walking in the middle of the street with any kind of fear with this look in them, so one soldier came over he asks for Ausweiss, so we showed him the paper and he says, "Go ahead." If you walked about about maybe 20 minutes and after I saw...I was there, I saw a German in an air force uniform waiting for us. He had half a hand because he must have been shot or something, so he's got...one arm was loose and he came over and he spoke to this guy and the says to him, _____ three guys. He put us in a street car, you know, because a Jew was not allowed to ride the street car. And here we got those things you know because we are afraid to take it off. So he said to us, "We should take them off and he is going to stay with us, and he paid for us on the street car, those tickets, and we went all the way to Okence (ph). Okence (ph) is like Kennedy Airport from New York, you know, like. And I was over there...in Okence (ph), I was over there 16 weeks. RRight. I was in Okence (ph) from May...No...from July, August...No. I went to Okence (ph)...I went August, September, November...3 months...4 months...16 weeks. And we didn't know what happened to the ghetto. We know that there's no people left over there. Everybody is out. I didn't know what happened to my father. I didn't know anything. And I was there 16 weeks, and we worked by coal. We unload wagons of coal for the Germans used to use for heating up the systems and some wagons of coals went to Germany. So this was mine job, to unload and load coals. And once we clean airplanes...once in a while they took us to clean out the

airplanes, the military airplanes, little things like this, not major stuff. And they used to feed us, maybe 2 slices of bread a day and a soup, a watery soup. But we had good quarters to sleep because in those quarters used to sleep the soldiers and this was an empty barrack so we had to sleep, we had good quarters. There's no... We had a little bed with a mattress. This is very unusual and, uh, the only thing was no was no food. So that money that I have, a couple of hundred zlotys, this lasts me for awhile to buy myself, and over there where we used to go to work, I used to take coal. I used to stuff myself in mine coat, and the coat used to weigh 20 pounds because I used to cut out the underline and used to stuff with coals. When I walked from the...from the air field back to the barracks, I used to ask the soldiers, the German air force...they weren't that bad...the air force. They weren't that bad because they probably were not indoctrinated like the German SS or the Gestapo, so I used to say to him, "You see how dirty I was. (in German) I have to buy soap to wash my face." He said, "Sure." So they used to walk slow. I used to run across the street. There was little stores from Polish people. They have little stores. They used to sell bread. They used to sell soap. They used to sell candies. And I used to go in and I used to say in Polish to them, "You want a coal." Oh, they were...they went crazy, because they weren't allowed to have coal. I mean the Germans took everything away. And I used to walk like this. I bend down, I scouped everything up, put in the pail and they gave me sometimes...they gave me a half a bread. Sometimes they gave me some a piece of salami. Sometime they gave me some candies. Sometimes a pack of cigarettes. I mean, that's all I need. I didn't need no money. I need to bargain with them. I need to deal with them. And this went on for quite awhile. Once I heard there's people starting to run away, from that camp, and I says, "Where do they running?" They found out that some people still live in the ghetto. And I didn't know what to do. I didn't know where to run...to who to run. And this every night, I used to sleep and I used to think how will I get out from here. Maybe my father's still alive. Maybe my mother came back. Who knows? And I was a young kid at that time. I was a baby. I was 16 years old, I mean I didn't know even how to think straight. But once it was winter...it was very cold. Was dark already when we walked back. I heard a Pole calling my name. He was standing on the sidewalk. And we walked to the middle of the road like to the sidewalk, and he called my name. He says in Polish, "Is there a Lewent here?" And my name in Poland is Levent, not Lewent. And I heard that, I says "Yes," and I started to run to him and the German thought I am going to run away, he walloped me with a rifle right in my stomach and I fell right down. So the Pole, he saw that he said, he's going to be back tomorrow. Like this. I went home and I couldn't sleep anymore. I didn't know what to do. I really hurt. This is the first time I saw them hitting somebody. He thought I am going to runaway you know because he saw me running out from the line of people and after that, tomorrow, the same time, he's there. He calls me. That time, I was smarter. I kept myself to the end, not in the middle, and to the end, and I said to him, "I am going to go buy something." And he went and he gave me a piece of paper...put me a end a piece of paper. And I grabbed a hold of piece of paper like this, and I went back in the line. I came in the barracks. I opened up the piece of paper. My father wrote me a letter, and he says that he is in ghetto. He still works in the same place. And I shouldn't try to escape. He's gonna get me somebody to take me out and bring me to him. And this was in December 1940...42. I couldn't wait. After 1 day...after the second day or the third day,

nobody shows up. It's a week already, nobody shows up. So I says...I said to my friend, Landau, I says, "You know I am gonna...i am gonna run away." He says, "Don't do it. They're gonna shoot you. Don't do it, you know." I says, "No, I'll figure out something." So one night I remember like now, it was about Thursday. This was the 30th of December before New Years, between Christmas and New Years. And I did the same trick. I had coals with me, and I was dirty black, the face and the hands, you know, like anything...and I asked the same guy. He was an elderly man. And I said to him, "I'm gonna buy soap to wash myself." And he says, "Go ahead" "Come right back," he says. "Come right back." I went over there and I got all these coals, and at that time, she says to me...the woman, she says to me in Polish, "No," she says, "Little boy, what do you want today? Do you wanta bread or you wanta milk?" I said, "No. I need some money today." She said, "I can't give you no money, you know." I says, "I'll tell you what. For the whole thing, just give me two dollars--two zlotys. I am going to have fare on the street car. I didn't tell her this. So she took out and she gave it to me. But she gave me change. That's what I needed. And I went and...I never went back to the formation, and I walked...I was dark. I was dirty, so they didn't recognize me, and I took off this. This was the worse thing I did. You should never take this off. And I went and I jumped on a street car and I didn't go inside, you know, so to speak. The street car was on the end...the end...and I turned my face and I gave that lady 30 groszen (ph), and I says, "I am gonna...because I have to take another one. I remember now what street car to take. She didn't say. She gave me a ticket, and I was standing and standing and standing. Then I said to myself, "Oh, I wish it's over. It's over again." And I went with this street car about maybe 10 blocks, 20 blocks. Next to me there was a Pole standing, and I remember like now, he was a little hunchback and he had, uh, a sack. Maybe it was garbage inside or something, and I saw he looks at me, he looks at me, he looks at me, and I tried to turn my face away, and he keeps looking. Finally, he got right next to me, and he says to me in Polish, "What are you doing here." I didn't answer. I make believe I didn't hear him. And he says again, "What are you doing here." Finally, he got violent. He did it like this to me, you know. "What are you doing here?" So, I says to him, "What do you mean what am I doing here?" you know In Polish I says, "I am going home." He says, "Don't give me that bologna, Jidek (ph)," you know. This is in Polish. "Don't give me that bologna like what are you doing here? You know, you see that, uh, gendarme outside. I am gonna turn you in." And when you turn in somebody who doesn't have this, on the spot they shoot you." So I didn't say anything. After he says to me like this, "You got money." You know this is those people they used to call them in Polish in the ghetto, Schmaltzovnik (ph). Schmaltzovnik (ph) means he wants the gravy. He wanted always money. I says, "I don't have no money." He says, "I know you have money." I had 20...20 zlotys with me and I had it in my sock, not in the pockets. He says, "You have money." "I tell you what," I says, "we gonna go down and I'll give you the money." So I picked the street...I remember that now, the Jelasna (ph) Street. All the houses were bombed out. And when that street car stopped, I said, "I am gonna get down now, and he followed me. So he walked in with me in a bombed out house, and he said, "Now, give me your money. If not, I am gonna turn you in." So, I bend down and I wanta take out the money from my sock. And he was so greedy and he looked on if I don't leave anything over there, you know. And he bend down...he wants to see. So I grabbed

a stone and I just hit him in the face. And he fell down. He fell down. I didn't hurt him or anything. He just fell down. So when he fell down, I run out. And I ran out...I ran...I don't know what happened to him, but I ran so fast because I lost...I lost the 20 zlotys I had, and I ran out. And I know if I will catch, the next thing that will take me to the ghetto. And I had the change where the lady, the Polish woman gave me for the coal and I ran to the thing and I got the street car and I went to the ghetto. And I know up to 7:00 they let in all the people. Here was already 7:30. And I says, "Where will I be." I went over there. I saw about 20 people still standing over there. In one group 30 people. In one group 50 people. There's still a lot of people. And I mixed myself in and I had no papers. I haven't got anything. I couldn't say I worked any place. I just ran away from a work place. And here the SS stand by the ghetto, by the wall, and they let in the people where they worked outside on German arbeits, German work places. I went over there and I went to one man and I says, "Where's these people from?" So he tell me. He says, "We work in a...in someplace where they cut food all day long." I was looking for a place where they do with coal because cutting wood you don't get dirty in the face and the hands. Finally, I found people that were working some kind of masonry. They were all dirty, no... I says, "I am gonna hitch myself out to hem." I go over there to them and everybody passes by and everybody has to raise their hands because they are frisked. One carries a bread, one carries potatoes, one carries red beets...red beets, and one carries...any little thing. I don't have anything. That's suspicious already. I don't have anything. And here the people were. They go through and everybody stays like this with their hands up. When I get to them, the German...the...the man that stays by the gate...the SS calls me and says, "Where are you from?" I says, "I work for those people." He says in German, "How...how come you don't have anything with you. You see all those people...one has got a bread, one has got potatoes, one has got this...and you don't have anything. I says to him I am very poor and I says I don't have time to buy anything to day because I worked very hard. I had to unload a whole train with coal. He says, "Is that so." He went over to the next guy. He had two breads. He took away one from him and he gave it to me. And this is the same guy who wouldn't even let me in next to him. And I passed him and I went in to the other side. I went to the other side and I had a bread. So this guy ran over to me and says, "Give me back my bread. That's mine." So I was afraid to start making a commotion because there were Jewish police, there were German Police, there were Polish police. So I gave them the bread and I said, "Thank God, I am on the other side. Forget about it." I came in to the other side and I have to look where my father is. Now I found out I have to go through three...three...how do you say it...three posts, with the soldiers to go through these. So I went to a friend what I know he was in ghetto, and I asked him what to do. He says, "I can't give you no papers. There's nobody here. Everything is bombed out. There's no people here. People...very few people. He says, "You have to figure out for yourself what to do." I found a way how to do it. I saw there's people going in groups. They're going in groups, like six people, they go through the gate or 8 people. I went to the gate and I said to the six people, "where are you working." Some speak German and some don't because I learn a little bit German to speak when I was working over there at the...at that military airport. So I make believe that I am the leader of those 8 people and I said in German, "You should all stand in one line. You give me all the papers." And I went over there to the soldier and I

says to him in German, you know like big deal, I says to him, "Look, I got 8 people going to work and this is the papers." He looked on the papers. He didn't ask me for the papers. It was a miracle. He didn't ask me. He just saw...because they have respect for people they are...they are, let's say, leaders. So there he thought as I'm the leader for them, so...you don't ask a leader for papers. So those 8 people went and I went with them and that's how I went over there and after I went on the house where my father lives. And I remember like now, it's fourth floor and I walked up, opened the door. It was in the morning. Here he saw me. He said, "What are you doing here, Ike?" I says, "Look, I couldn't wait until you send somebody to take me." So...and this is the time when I stood there and my father took me in in that factory. He went to the boss, the German boss what owns...he was like...and he took me in and I was working over there until... I went through three, four selections over there when they took away the people. I...one selection was January 1943. One day... You remember that. One day they called us all downstairs, came in a big deal from the SS men, the Gestapo. They lined us all up. I remember like now I had a pair of boots and I had coveralls or overalls. I don't know what it is. And I was sitting there and he went 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 out. He didn't make 10. Every sixth men he took out. I was 4. My father was 5. I was standing right next to him. The 6th one was out. After he went 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 out, out. And a truck was standing right there so they took out about maybe 60 people or 80 people, put them on the truck. Didn't see them anymore. This was the first selection was that time. And I was working in that place until the ghetto uprising. It was the ghetto uprising, that's the time it started the whole problem.

Q: Talk...tell me what Warsaw looked like then and what happened.

A: In the ghetto uprising. Well, in the ghetto uprising, I was not actually where the shooting was. I was in the small ghetto where the people were working, but we can see the flames. Where we were standing outside, we saw the flames. We saw the flames _____. You didn't believe it. Those people can do this. Burning up houses, whole streets, everything was one flame. We had a wall in the ghetto wall. When I was standing in the house, you look down on the wall and you see Polish people. They making Christmas. They making all kind of holidays, and they know there's the other people going through that thing. They didn't even mind that they had to help anything like this. So...for instance, when they liquidated that ghetto and they took us to the...to send away in the camps, they took me and my father and we were carrying suitcases. So we walked over the streets. Now this is true; this is not made up. One side of the sidewalk the Polish people from the town of Warsaw were standing and saying to us in Polish, "People, you don't need this. You leave it for us. You going anyway on...to make soap out of you." Now this is people that lived with you for hundreds and hundreds of years. You pay taxes. You live in their town. You were just a citizen of this town, just like anybody else. Where they had the chance to show how the anti-Semitism was built in...in the people of Poland. It was so built in, the anti-Semitism for those people that they...even if they lost the country, they still they have won their anti-Semitism against the Jewish people. Even if they lost the country because German occupied it. Still they had to show it. And there's a reason why Germany made all that camps and all the concentration

camps, made it on Polish soil because they know that they will have good help from the surrounding, from the people because he didn't do it in any other country, not in Poland those things. I was in a camp...I mean this is something else. I was in a camp...in Skarzysko.¹ This is a camp near Radom. I could of...everyday, I could have run away from that camp. I could have just walked over the fence. Where am I gonna go? Who I am gonna go? I was working with Polish people, they didn't even look at you. I was working in a...in Skarzysko, in a camp in a...in a machinery. Next to me, there was a Pole. He saw that every day I looked skinnier. I didn't have a glass of water. I didn't have bread. Nothing! They used to sit down just like home. Bring it in. It come the holiday. They had all thoses holiday breads. They used to say, "Here, you want a piece." You don't exist for them. You did not exist for them. And...and the point is it hurts you so much that you were living in a country for so many years...for hundreds and hundreds of years, and the people turned their back on you, actually turned their back on you. Like they were...like they liked, they were enjoy this what happened to you. Sure, naturally, they say a lot of Poles, they were saving Jews. But how many? How many? From 6 milion Jews, 3 and one half million was Jews from Poland. So how many you got in 50 or 60 or 100 Poles they saved. And for what they saved? With money! Because if the money ran out, they used to turn you in anyway.

Q: Let's come back to Warsaw. You were in the little ghetto watching the flames?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do? What happened to you and your father?

A: Well, in the minute the ghetto burned and this what went start, they closed the factory. And they made a raid. A raid means they came in. They told us, "Everybody has to leave, and we gonna get shipped out for work." My father and me we sticked to let's be together. Let's start being together now the best way we can. One day in the morning the factory didn't open up. Everybody has to be outside in the street. You are not allowed to go up anymore in the apartments you lived. Everybody has to be outside. Around 10 o'clock, it came trucks and start loading up all the goods from the houses, from the apartments. Not us. They cleaned out everything and we still was sitting on the street. Around 12 or 1 o'clock in the afternoon, they tell us to get ready, we gonna walk. We gonna walk. It's about 6, 7 miles. So my father and me, my father's friend and his friend, we all stick together and we walked. That means we walked about I'll say 8 or 10 miles towards the place, the Umschlag place, the famous Umschlag place, to get on trains and take us someplace. We don't know where. We went to that...and that's the time when I told you where we carried the suitcases. Only what you are able to carry. That's the time the Polish people came and said, "Leave it here on the street because you have no use for this anymore." Like vultures, and if somebody couldn't carry anymore, they left it and you see them running and grab it. We went to that Umshlagplatz.

¹ Formally known as Skarzysko Kamienna. Located near Kielce, in Radom province.

We were sitting three days over there without water, without anything for 3 days, and it was hot. The third day they gave us water and they said, "We're gonna leave." And where we're going we don't know. They put us on trains. I was together with my father with this man and his wife or his sister was it. And they took us to Majdanek. Majdanek was a camp near Lublin, and over there was 5 fields. That means every field had 8 or 9 hundred people and it was barracks and there's nothing to do Majdanek. The only thing you were Majdanek, you did you sit sometime all day long and sometime they took you out to work and half of them never came back. They make you sit all day and breaking up from big stones to make little stones or digging holes, digging ditches and covering the ditches up. That was the way. That's what you call, uh, a camp that actually is an annihilation. They annihilate people, actually. Very little food. Very little food. And my father was with me together, sleeping next to each other. One day, this was...we got to Majdanek was in July, I think in August 1943. We were standing in a ditch and digging and my father was standing next to me, a Pole passes by, grabs a stone and throws it onto my father. And he was a prisoner too, you know. The stone hit his leg. I don't know what happened if he broke a bone or something happened. He couldn't walk. And in the night when we went home to the barracks, he couldn't walk. He had to hold me here, like this, and...some how we dragged him...me and that friend, we dragged him in the barrack. He was laying down. And his foot swelled up like this. All of a sudden it swelled up. So one guy said we should go and call a medic or a doctor or somebody. Over there, they used to call sanitar (ph). Well, I didn't realize what's gonna happen if somebody gets sick. I didn't realize it! I thought, well, when a man got sick, something like this, that medic came. He wore a red cross. He came. He took my father. He says to him, "You know what you have to go on Revier." "Revier" means the hospital. And he took him away; and he says tomorrow he's gonna bring him back. I never saw my father anymore. And this is for no reason at all. Pick up a stone and throw on somebody. And he was...he was just standing there. The stone could have hit me, but it hit him. And it went 2, 3 days. Finally, I found out where the hospital is. I didn't even know where the hospital is. So, I walked over to the hospital and I looked around in the windows. My father is not there. So after I found out they took him away and where I don't know what happened to him. Two weeks later, I found out that's people have to go away from here. That means there're looking for 3 thousand, 2 thousand people to take them to a German ammunition plant.

Q: Hold it for a minute and we can change tapes.

A: Okay.

TAPE #2

Q: Your father has been taken away. Tell us again what happened?

A: Yes. A few weeks later, about 2 weeks I found out that there's going to transport. That means that transport will be some kind of factory. And the reason the factory, because people say this camp, the Majdanek camp, was the worse one because I remember when we came in...in that camp, the commander for that camp made a speech to us. He says in this camp nobody walks out yet. The only way you good people is going to walk out is to through that chimney. And here I heard that they need 2 thousand young men to work in an ammunition factory. I says, "How can I sign up for this?" So they told me to go in a place over there, and they had a list. I gave them my number and I signed up for this. And I was waiting. Let's see what happened. And here everyday I went to work. No food. And you getting weaker and weaker, and I figured if I can only get out from here, cause this is finished. In this camp nobody walks out. Finally, I found a place where you can register and I went and I registered for this. And there was 800 women I think...800...400 women and about 800 men. And they registered us, and we had still the striped uniforms and wooden shoes, and they load us up on trains, and before we went, the same guy, the commander came, and he says you're the first people walks out here normally. What is... And they took us to a camp, and this name was Skarzysko.

Q: Try...Can you describe what kind of train you were on, and what the transport was like?

A: Well, the train was actually cattle cars. It was a train, open with no roof. Just barbed wire was on the roof. They put in the people in the cattle car, how many can go on. If you were the lucky one, the first one, you got a seat against the wall, you were very lucky. If not, you had to stay in the center. There was no...uh...toilet us to go out. Everybody used to do what he feels like it and instead a trip should take a day, they used to make it 3 days because who didn't make it, that's alright. So who was young...the elderly people didn't make it. Only the young ones, and that time I was about 18 years old, 17 years old. I was a healthy kid, and somehow I made it. And when I came into that camp, so the first thing they asked me, "What do you..What do you know what to do?" So I told them this. Everybody says if you say you are good in mechanics and metal work, you will have a better job. That's what I said. Some people said as a tailor, some... So they asked me, "A young kid like this?" I said, "I learned at school." So they gave me...they put me in a...in a building, and they used to make pots for...ammunition pots, and I was working over there maybe 2 months every day, sometime nights, sometime days. Food, very little. Very little food. You couldn't even exist on that food they give you. But somehow you...you just survive. I don't know how but you survive. You work a whole night. In the day they brought you back. One day they told me they're gonna put me in a different machine to work. What this machine does, it cuts little pieces of metal, and from this they make bullets, like for machine gun bullets. I was working with that machine, and I had to go always to the wall, and grab a long piece of metal and put it in the _ and cut it. One day I go over to the war, I see there is no metal. Here the foreman walks

around in a uniform, he comes to me and he tells me, "Why you standing around? You don't do nothing?" I says, "I have no metal." He says, "What do you mean you have no metal. You tell me that the German Reich has no metal to work?" I says, "I am looking for metal and there is no metal." First, I got a beating right away for saying that. I have no metal. He saw there's no metal. He beat me to a pulp, the head and the feet. He kicked me. Finally, he went to another guy and another give me metal and I was working and I was talking to myself and I said to myself, "I have to get out from here cause if I am gonna stay in that factory, I am gonna die here by that machine. They don't give you to eat. They watching you all day long or all night long what you're doing. You can't walk away for a minute. I found out that there's other people...there're work outside on the plant. They're organizing something. Even if you pick up garbage, you pick up a potato from the ground, but still you can do it. You can't eat metal. I didn't know what to do. After this, all of a sudden I felt sick. I got sick. I don't know what happened to me, but I feel sick, and this is the first time I got sick. I came from work. I lay down. One guy came over to me and says, "You have a high fever. You burning up." I didn't know what it is. He says to me, "Why don't you go in...in the hospital. It was not a hospital. It was like a pig sty. People were laying on straw. I walked inside. There was a doctor. He used to be a doctor before the war, but here he didn't practice doctor. And he looked at me and he says to me, "You got typhoid." (sigh) He laid me right down. He didn't let me go back to the barracks. But I know that every third day a truck came to that thing and cleaned them, all the people out and take them out. Because they have no medicine to heal typhoid. I was laying about 2 days and my fever must have dropped. And I didn't eat. I didn't... They didn't give me anything for 2 days. The third day I got up and I was dizzy and I said to the doctor, "I feel alright. I am going to go back to work." He says to me, "What do you mean you are going to go back to work. You can't even walk on your feet." And he started to laugh, you know, like who cares. And I said, "I feel good. I like to go back to work." He says to me, "You know what. You see that long table standing here." Table about 12 feet long, maybe more. "If you can walk around that table three times and you not going to fell down, I let you walk out." You know. And do you think I didn't do it? I walked around three times, and I walked that. And he told me, "You can go back in your barracks." I must of have this already about 2 weeks, you know. And finally, it was the breaking point was the last 2 days, 3 days. When I walked out, the trucks came over and cleaned out the whole hospital. This another thing. When I walked out, I just walked let's say 100 yards and I saw 2 trucks came over, and they took everybody, everybody out from the...from that hospital. I call it the hospital. It was not a hospital. Was a pig sty. Was just..when I came back in the barracks, I had no hair. I hardly moved. Some people had mercy on me, and one give me a piece of bread, and one give me water. One give me hot water, and finally I got back a little bit, and I said to myself, "I don't go back anymore to work over there, and I will work in a place like...like building _____. I should be outside. If I'm outside, I will organize something to eat. And that's what happened. I went in and somehow I got hanged up with, uh, with people that worked outside and I was working with a...and everyday I found out how to organize food. I had a friend of mine...he used to teach me how to do those things, and...and...once I used to go to the kitchen, and I used to pick bones and I used to pick this and they used to throw it out and this brought me back a little bit to my health. I felt a little

more stronger day by day. And this kept on...I was in that camp...I was 16 months. 16 months! And when the Russians start to move and more they start to evacuate in all those camps. So what happened? I was from the last people in that camp. There was left maybe...maybe 200 from...from a lot of people, and they took us and they brought us to Buchenwald from that camp. Some people they took to Auschwitz, the first transport. Us, the last one, they took to Buchenwald. We came to Buchenwald, it was a new world altogether. Because Buchenwald was a camp, a political camp. It was not a camp like to annihilate people. So the first thing, they brought us in. There was a lot of Jews from Germany, a lot of Jews where they were already there from before, and there were a lot of Jews they were... I found out that they were in the Polish Army in 1939. And they're trying to escape from the camps so they took away the uniforms, and they send them to Buchenwald. So there was all kind of people mixed. The first thing they asked me and asked me if you were mistreated in that camp. I says, "Yes." "Who mistreated you?" I told them. We had Jewish police. We had a commandant, and we had this guy, we had this guy. I told him all those guys. And not only me, other people too. And somehow they took care of those people. They did. It was an instance I had a guy, his name...German Jew, and he was a policemen in that camp, Skorjisko (ph), and I was working in that camp and I found out that when you go to 12 o'clock, he gives out food. What was his job? He was working with people they used to clean the camp. You clean the camp, and you used to give out food. I saw people walking around with little..how do you call it...brooms and clean. I want to get a broom like this. I had to sell my bread to get a little broom from somebody. When I got that broom, I make believe I cleaned so I got an extra portion. This went on for couple of weeks cause I was working nights and during the day, I got extra food. One day, he says to me, "Where you work?" And I didn't know what to say. He says to me, "You mean you was cheating. You were taking from me soup every day?" Well, I said, I was hungry. He start hitting me. He beat me up so much in...in and after this he called over to the German and he gave me 25 on the back. Just for this! Now when I came to Buchenwald, I went to him and I told him, "I told you I am gonna get back on you." And I told those people that he was mistreating me. I don't know what they did to them. They say they took him out and they killed them or they send them away in a different place. They didn't wanta have that.. I was in Buchenwald quite a while, and...and...for maybe a couple of months, I was in Buckenwald. The food was bad because nobody had to eat and they didn't take us out to work. They put us in a barrack like they were waiting something should happen. One day they called us out from the barrack and they wrote everybody's number out, and they took us in another camp. In that camp they used to make bazookas, German bazookas. And I was in that camp...oh...maybe 2 or 3 months with German bazookas.

Q: Do you know the name of the camp?

A: Yes. Schlieben. I was then one time...I...by that thing, and working and somehow I remember like now, a airplane was flying over my head and I was thinking...I says, "Oh I wish I am that airplane. Maybe he'll take me away someplace. And I was just thinking. All of a sudden, the German, that guy who used to take care of all those things, and he was the

manager, the foreman, and he took a bazooka (he must have been drunk or something) and he threw on me. And if this would explode, everybody would explode. But it hit me here, and it chipped off a piece of bone in mine hand. And I was bleeding profusely. And I was standing like this and the blood was gushing. Still a piece of bone is chipped off. So another guy came and grabbed me and took me in a place to put a bandage on because they were told, they shouldn't hit those boys from Buchenwald. The Germans were told that all the people that came from Buchenwald shouldn't be hit. And here he did hit something like this. And I was walking around with that bandage. Next day, there was an air raid...English airplanes that dropped bombs on the whole plant and 300 people got killed because it blow up. Everything blow up. And I was that time...I wasn't working. I was in camp because of that arm. Next day, we heard that all the wounded people they going to take them back to Buchenwald. So I went and I make believe I am wounded to, because I had a bandage. I go over there to that car...was a car I remember and was a big truck and was about 20 people sitting with blood gushing down from their hands and their feet. No bandages. They were sitting down, half dead. And I had a bandage on here, and I went over there and I says I am gonna go back in the truck, and they asked my number, and there was a doctor over there. He says, "You can't go up here." I says, "Why not?" He says, "Because you're not wounded in the air raid. You were wounded in the..." I said, "Why do you bother...why do you worry about it. Let me up on the truck just to get out from here." He says, "I can't do that." And he let me down. And when he let me down, it comes the German officer and he writes down the names and everybody's gonna go in the hospital and he saw me standing here and he says, "Why...why don't you go in the truck. You wounded to." I go up in the truck. He wrote my name. That...everything is a miracle. And they took me back to Buchenwald. We came back in that camp. They gave us a reception. They made a movie, and they claim that see what the English pilots did to the poor...you know, all propaganda. And they gave us food. They gave us a meal. They goes...they gave us a bed to take. We hadn't a bed for years. Here they gave us a bed. They take us a shower. The first time when it was the bath, I was afraid to go in. Because I was thinking...because in the hole, I remember like now there was shower, but in the hole there was a big gigantic pool with some green liquid, and everybody had to go into that green liquid. What was it? This was disinfection. I didn't know. Nobody know. Everybody was afraid to go in. Cause they think, you go in, you gonna melt and nothing will be happen from you. So we were standing, and everybody used...they used to say schnell and everybody was afraid to go in. I personally was afraid to go in. Finally, he started taking people by force and push them in, and I saw they go in and they come out. So that's how we..everybody went in because they thought nothing is gonna happen. So they gave us new clothes. They gave us bread. They gave us a soup, and they put us in a barrack to sleep there until the doctor will come and look, so the doctor came and put a splint (my hand was bad) and put a splint on. This is a miracle. Put a splint on, and they tell me I shouldn't go to work for a couple of days, I should stay home. I should stay in the barracks. So I was standing like this, and every 3rd day I had to go to the big commander from Buchenwald. He should look on that arm. He only felt sorry for the people who the English pilots dropped the bombs, but every day they made selections and they put people to death, he didn't feel sorry for them. It shows to you how the mentality from the German was like this, cause they did things you

couldn't understand. Here, half dead people came out; they gave care; they put bandages on them; they gave them food; they put them in a barrack to sleep, and the rest of the people, healthy people, they took out and they put them to death because they claim the English had no mercy and see what they did. As a matter of fact when I was in Buchenwald, I was in the same barrack with a redactor (ph), with the editor today from the Forewords. His name is Strigler. M., if you know, M. Strigler. He..he was the guy who gave me every day my piece of margarine in the barrack. I used to sleep here. He slept about three beds from me.

Q: How did he get the margarine?

A: How? He got...the Germans! They gave each block, let's say they had 200 people. So they gave 3, 4 pieces, and they had a little machine in there made from wire. If you put the block of margarine in that machine, you push down, so each one came out perfect square. A little piece! This I will never forget. And Mr. Strigler, he is the editor from the Daily Foreward, he was the guy who used to cut that wire. This was in Buchenwald. From that...that...and I came back to Buchenwald, and this was already 44. And from Buchenwald we went to another camp, uh, this is near Stuttgart. They call it Bisingen. This was very bad. Over there was mostly Russian prisoners of war...mostly Russia. And they didn't have no barracks like 20, 30 people, 100 people. It was one long barrack, maybe 1,000 people can sleep there. And there was no beds. You slept on the floor, one next to the other, one row here, one row here, and you see 500, 800 people sleeping the same thing. And over there was very bad. The temperature was always cold. I don't know why. It was always raining. It was always cold. I mean I don't if it was the time of the year, but I had no clothes on. I had just that little paper jacket, no underwear, wooden shoes, no socks, just a pair of pants. No hat. No hair. You were standing in that cold. It was miserable every day. When you standing on appell for 2 hours in that cold weather. And the...and the bread they used to give you on the end in the barrack. So when they call your number, no name, you used to walk through thousand people to get your piece of bread. And when you got hold of the piece of bread, to walking back to your place, they jump on you and they grab the bread out from you. So the only thing to do, the minute they gave you the bread, you should push it in right fast in the mouth and that's the only way you could save your piece of bread. And this went on for maybe 2 months...maybe 10 weeks in that camp. This was already in the end of the war. What do you mean the end of the war? We didn't know even that was the end of the war, but you hear rumors..people used to say things but this was already the beginning of 45. And that place, they used to make oil from shale. You know, those stones. The operation I never saw. The only thing I did is digging the shale from the mountains and loading up on lorries and pushing the lorries to a point and over there, there was no trains. People used to stay with shovels...and dump it on trains or trucks and they used to take them away. And I was over there until around 45, maybe February or March. After they took us away from over there and they took us to Dachau. That's another camp. And no change in clothes. The same clothes for the last 2, 3 years. If you're lucky, you had...they survived. If not, somebody died or you saw somebody laying there, you take off his jacket and you put it on, and that's how I kept kept going on. And they took us to Dachau. We came into Dachau. I don't have too

much recollection from Dachau because I think I had a very bad cold, and I had headaches. I don't know what happened. It was just a cold or something. But I couldn't concentrate very much because I remember I had a friend what I always stick with him and somehow I lost him. He disappeared.

Q: Talk about him a little bit.

A: About my friend?

Q: About your friend.

A: Oh, he was a friend what I met. He was from the home yet a friend. He lived about two floors above me and his name was Landau. His father died in the beginning of the war. He left with the mother. And we stuck together, to each other most of the time. Most of the time be together, and once there was a time that somehow he was taken away in another place, maybe 10 miles and by miracle he came back. And we stuck... But this time in Dachau, I don't know what happened through a...or he was taken away in another place. We just split and I don't know what happened to him? I really don't know. And from Dachau we...that was the time when that was so bad, we actually didn't know if you gonna get up next day. Cause they didn't give us food. They didn't give us water. There was no cooking. Absolutely nothing! And about a week later, they tell us all to get out from the barracks and we gonna march. We marched about 2 days. I don't know where that is in the woods. I don't know where it was, and they put us on trains.

Q: Before you get on the train, tell me about the march first please.

A: Well, the march was like this. We walked about 8, 6 people abreast. And let's say 50 people in a column and if there...there was...there was like a distance, maybe 3 or 4 feet, there were two SS going in the back and two SS in the front. And the rifles were always aimed on the people, and we walked. And who couldn't walk because of lacking of food or water or something happened to him...he got sick, he get shot immediately. There was no mercy. Get up or carry you. And if they see somebody was carrying or dragging, you both get shot. So somehow we walked. You can hear only the clap clap from the wooden shoes, and we walked, let's say, maybe a day, maybe a day and a half. And I...if you tell me where I was, I couldn't tell you. I..I know we was...how far can we walk? But you were just...your mind was on blank. I mean, there was no thinking anymore. And we walked and we came to a place, there was standing maybe 15 or 20 trains, cars, cattle cars. And they told us to sit down and take a rest. We sit down and we rested, and everybody was screaming water, you know this. And the minute we said something, right away they take the rifles and shoot in the air. And in that thing there was not only SS. There was a lot of Ukrainian soldiers what they were guarding some camp or something and they wore those uniforms, and they were very mean, very mean. They pushed us in the cars. Somehow I went to a place. I was laying against the wall, and it was so bad because after 3 days nothing to have in your mouth..

Nothing! And I figured that they are going to starve us out or something, so they're trying to run the trains. We went into the trains. You can see only the sky. The trains were open. There was just wire on the top. And I was very delirious...delirious. I mean I really don't know at that time what happened, I mean. And I was laying in the train. And I didn't feel even hungry any more. You know you get to the point, the end of the line you don't feel anything. And we went in that train maybe a day...a day and a half. All of a sudden I hear the German soldiers they jumping off the train, they going on the train, they stopping the train like there's something going on, and they didn't know what. So one soldier, he was already an elderly man because the youngsters were away already. The youngsters were sitting on the roof and the old guys, they were sitting in the train with us to guard. He says, "You know your President died." That's the time when Roosevelt died. "Your President." in German he said it. I mean you couldn't even make it out what it means your president died. I mean I didn't know if the president was a Roosevelt. I didn't know those things. But the way he said it, "Your President died." Now..and this was like in the afternoon. I remember like it's getting dark, so we trying to ask the soldier, "Where are we going?" He says he doesn't know...he doesn't know. And he was sitting and eating, cutting the bread and eating, and here were people sitting and starving. And the night the same thing. The train stopped. All the soldiers go down from the train. After they come back to the train, there's something going on they didn't know what happened. Next day in the morning, we saw all the soldiers with no insignia anymore. No insignia. Everybody you noticed that is the same. There was no officers. There was no sergeants. There was no thing. Everybody had no insignias. The uniform had no insignias. We didn't know what happened. We didn't understand what it means. Now...now we realize what it means. And this was April the 30th, 1945. And this was a town named Staltah (ph). This is maybe 30 miles from Munich. And you imagined the train was going around in circles. They didn't know what to do with us. One probably says we shoot them, one says no, one says the Americans are coming probably. They didn't know what to do with us. That's the reason...it's only 30, 40 miles distance and they traveled 2 days just around the clock. I was sitting in the train and all of a sudden the train was standing on the top and the bottom was the highway, and we saw the tanks coming. And this was American tanks. And we saw the stars and all the soldiers...the German soldiers saw that, they start jumping from the train. They dropped their rifles and they started running. Well, everybody from the train...barely we opened the doors because the doors were closed. We opened the doors. They weren't locked. We opened the doors. Nobody could get out because it was so high to jump. And here you got half dead people. If this will take another day, nobody will be alive in those trains without food. So they start falling out like this, who got hurt, and they started rolling down to the ravine, all the way down to the bottom where the tanks were coming. So I said to a guy, "Push me." So he pushed me out and the same thing. Just keep rolling like this until the end and I stopped. And here the tanks are coming. I just remember like now, a guy came over from the tank. He came over to me and he says to me...I don't know if he spoke German or half English...if I am alright. I says yes, and I says wasser , wasser , means water. He took that field tank and he gave me some water and he says, "I am a Jew." I says, "Yes." He says, "I am a Jew too." And he says...and he took off a mezuzah he had and he put it on me, and he says (sobbing) "You're gonna live," he says.

He took out a chocolate and he gave me and he says in Yiddish, "___ I have a job to do. I am busy. The war is still on, and I can't take care of you. He says, "I leave you here and somebody will come after (sobbing) and take you." I was laying there on the ground maybe 2 hours and all the tanks passed by and soldiers and trucks and jeeps and they didn't care about the people because they're going to the front. And maybe 2, 3 hours later, probably the...those people they clean up, you know...they reserved for this...or the medical corps, and they saw what happened (sobbing) What a sight! What a sight! You see thousands, hundreds of people laying half dead. A young man had that body they moved, and I remember I was laying there on this guy says and he said, "Oh my God, what a sight!" (sobbing) They start picking up the people (sobbing). They picked them up one by one. Most of them were dead because they could... And the water...and those that were alive they put them in trucks and jeeps, and they took them to hospitals or they made tents and they put them in. They gave them water. They gave them packets from the Red Cross. And this was bad too because people when they got those packages, there was powdered milk, there was chocolate; there was a can of meat, and they were so hungry, they didn't care and they ate it. So hundreds died from eating this stuff, because their stomach was no used to food. And I had a guy next to me...I don't know if he was a doctor once or something...he was half dead too. When he got that package...and I think he was Hungarian or Rumanian...he says to me, "Don't eat nothing. Don't eat nothing. If you gonna eat anything, you gonna die. The only thing you do, if you have sugar, take the sugar in the mouth and suck on the sugar. That's that the only thing you should do, he says, the rest of them throw away. And if you want to keep it, keep it, but don't eat anything. Don't take the milk in your mouth. Don't take the chocolate. Don't take the meat because they used to give you a can of meat, Spam. Don't eat it, because if you're gonna eat it, you're gonna die. And that's what happened. Those people, they eat the stuff, they got diahrrea and they died. So what I do and I had that sugar, Domino sugar, the little tiny pieces, and I used to suck on that sugar. I was so hungry I could eat an elephant. But he said to me, "You're gonna die if you're gonna eat it," this guy. Well, this guy died. Yah, he died next day. He died not from eating. He died because he just...just his heart stopped. He just died. And this guy saved me because he said, "Don't eat anything. Just suck on the sugar." And that's what I did. And for 2 days I laid there. They didn't give us no food. They used to give us cereal. A bowl of cereal everyday. That's the only food. And they used to say to the people, "Don't eat this stuff because..." People didn't listen because they were so hungry. And after a while, they gave us start giving us a piece of bread and like a little baby, they nudge us back to normality, like a little child. Here you see people after they gave us a little piece of bread. The next day they give us a little piece of soup. You know...cereal soup. No soup with meat and all that stuff. And little by little, you know, you get back. And I was in that tent maybe a week. And after...and they didn't give us clothes. No clothes. I still was laying in the same thing. The only thing I have is a Army blanket. You know those green blankets. After this, and this was, let's say about near Munich someplace, and after the sanitar corps went away there too. There is nobody there. Because the war is still on. It was not the 8th of May yet. That was the 2nd of May, the 3rd of May. But they were nice to us. You know they still say to us...a lot of Jews was there and they still say, "There's the front and we have to leave you and the only thing what was in those tents was

two men and they were taking care of those tents. And left us tents, and the German from this town had to come every day and clean those tents out and all that stuff. And after the German had to come and dig a big hole and they buried all the dead people that was laying around the train. It was a sight! It was a sight because the train was on top, and the bottom was the highway, and the people used to go from the train like this, falling down and you see all hanging on the bushes, near a tree, in the grass, and you see men and women, and small men, and large men. Everybody was laying spread over. They were dead. They were just couldn't...they just couldn't hold it on anymore. The minute the train opened up, you see all falling out. They were half...every car had half dead people inside. Like I told you, only young people could have survived. Only the youngsters. And after this, me and one more guy went over there. We took our little strength and we says, "We're gonna walk to a town. And we walked in that uniforms. We felt more strength, and I remember like now we came to a house with a German woman inside, and she saw us and she started running. She run away. She saw both of us and we wore striped uniforms. We walked in that house. What a beautiful house. All kind of china, with closets with clothes. First thing I did I took off my things. I took out a shirt, and I put on a shirt. This is the first time in 3, 4 years I had a shirt on my back. Shoes I couldn't find, but I found a pair of rubber shoes. I put on the rubber shoes. And a pair of pants. And after I saw her looking and I hollered to her, "Come here. You know what I need some food, you know, to eat." So she gave us some food. But I saw her looking outside. She looked...she looked outside. I don't know what it was. And there was a dog house. And what do you think? In the dog house, there was a little girl, maybe 4 years old. She was...she hid. I went to her and I says, "Do you think I am going to harm you little girl? Do you think I am going to be just like you people were? I am not going to harm you, little girl. You don't have to hide on the dog house." She didn't say a word, you know, when I said this to her. But this little girl was laying in that dog house hidden because she thought that...because this what they did to us, we're gonna to do to them. And the same thing is when the Germans threw away those rifles by the train, I couldn't have picked up a rifle and killed all I wanted. I couldn't even move. I couldn't even pick that rifle up from the ground. Probably maybe if I could, I would have feel maybe I would do it. I couldn't even do this. I couldn't even lift up the rifle that was laying on the ground because first of all they are very heavy and second of all, I am not the type to kill anybody or to shoot. First, in...in...especially when the war was going on, you could have walked around in every home and do anything you wanted. Nobody did those things. Nobody did any revenging and killing just for no reason at all. I don't remember those things. And I saw people like me...there was no men, only women and children, because older men were in the war. Nobody did any revenge. And after this, they took us...yah, the MPs stopped us...2 MPs...Yes...and asked where are we going. So I told him we were on a field hospital from the army and now we gonna go. We're looking for friends or family. You know, do you say, "That's the only thing you had on your mind." So they say, "You can't do that. You are not allowed. No. You're now allowed to do this." That was just war time. You are not allowed to do this. So they took us, put us in a jeep, and took us away, and point was already more people over there. And this was that Camp Felderink. (ph) This was in the time...when in that camp was still the German Army was still living in those barracks. So, the American Army

wants to put us in over there. There was 30 people. So we said, "We are not gonna live with them. You chase them out. You chase them out, we're gonna go in. We're not gonna stay with them." So anyway, they went out, and they moved us in. And that's how that camp started to become a camp. That's how that camp Felderink started to become a camp for DP. You know a lot of people came from all kind liberation camps and they put them in..in that camp. And there was other camps, not only Felderink. There was Saltzheim (ph). There was Landsberg. There was, uh, oh, there was a lot of them all around, you know. All those people that were liberated from the Army. And after awhile you start... even right after the liberation, people right away starting to...to make committee, to start learning, to make a newspaper. There was printing a newspaper. Right away they're looking for libraries and I remember like now, there was a newspaper printed with...with German ABC, but it's written in Yiddish, because there was no Yiddish words in Germany. And who was doing this? The Germans were printing that newspaper. And all kind of little things shows to you that's how fast the people...the Jewish people raising up from the ashes, and right away they start building up a home. And some people got married. Some people find girlfriends. Some people travel to Poland to see if anybody is alive. Some people went to another camps and put little names on the walls. I am looking for this and this and this man and maybe you saw my sister. Her name was like this. Maybe you saw my father. I was in a camp with them. And any place you went, you saw hundreds and hundreds of little pieces of paper written down with names in case somebody saw somebody. And that's what kept us going to look. Maybe you'll find somebody. Oh, did you see this? Or where is this? And maybe you found somebody. Oh yes, I saw him over there this camp. Right away, you went and you...you went by train or by somebody to this camp and look up. What that means after 5 years of torture! What we went through for no reason at all. Only thing is because you were born Jewish. The...they say...uh...I remember for instance in the time when I went from the ghetto...one for instance, and I was in the ghetto and I was working for a person in the ghetto. I was a kid. He paid me 20 Zlotys a week. He collected schmettes from those tailors, little leftovers. He made big veils, and he give this...he sold it to the Germans. Not he sold it...this was his job. And I was working for him, so one day we loaded up a full truck of those things and we have to take them to the German place, and he had a piece of paper that's to let us out from the ghetto. And a woman used to have the piece of paper. She carried the piece of paper for six people. And this was around Christmas 1940 or 41. And I saw Polish people that were dancing. Christmas is coming. Everybody...the stores are nice, decorated and here the people being laying on the street swollen from hunger...we haven't got a piece of bread to eat...and everyday they take out thousands of people and they bury them in mass graves and here on the other side of the world, life goes on like it's a normal thing. Life went on so normal. And...and one day, that woman must have went shopping. She left that standing on the street, and here we stand 6 people. I remember like now. Six people destined to death, and here that woman walked away with a piece of paper. And what will happen if any German comes along and asks what we're doing here, and we're going to tell him that some woman that has a piece of paper and this piece of paper says these six people have a right to stay here. So that means 6 people's lives depends on a little piece of paper. That was our destiny. So finally that woman came. It was like Mesiah came. So that's...

- Q: Thank you very much. Hold the picture up close to you. Tell us what that is please. Don't move it. Just tell us.
- A: Okay. This is my grandfather and grandmother, my mother, my father and me as a little boy, my three little sisters, my aunt and uncle.
- Q: Okay. Hold it very still.
- A: My grandmother and my aunt, my father's sister. This is my uncle.
- Q: Wait. Don't move. Now tell us.
- A: This is my uncle and my aunt. My father's brother and his sister-in-law.
- Q: Okay. I just want to do one more here. I want this one.
- A: Well, this is when I got married. Yah.
- Q: I know. Hold it up. Okay turn it. Wait a minute. Don't move it. Let the camera do its thing. Okay, tell us what that is please?
- A: This is mine...this is one week after we got married in New York City in August 1950. Me and my wife.
- Q: Okay. Very nice. That's it.
- A: That's it. And that little girl? You want to show this now?
- Q: Oh, yah. Bonnie, I have a photo here. I want to do the one with the little girl.
- A: Shall I say her name too?
- Q: Yah.
- A: Her name was Tola Grossman. Okay.
- Q: Let me take the other photos. They are not ready yet. Okay tell us.
- A: That little girl is 8 years old. This picture was taken 1946. Her name was Tola Grossman, and she comes from Tomaszow and she was in Auschwitz. She has a number on her hand, tatooed.

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Q: Okay. That's it.