

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Abraham Malnik
May 10, 1990
RG-50.030*0145**

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Abraham Malnik, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on May 10, 1990 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. The interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

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ABRAHAM MALNIK

May 10, 1990

Q: Can you tell me your name please?

A: My name is Abe Malnik.

Q: And where and when were you born?

A: I was born in Kovno, Lithuania in 1927, January 31st.

Q: And you had wanted to dedicate this tape to someone?

A: Yes. This tape I would like to dedicate...uh...to my father. Because of him I...I'm alive right now. He has dedicated his life for me. Though I was separated with my mother she...she was also beautiful and wonderful for us, but he was with me until the end of liberation.

Q: Okay.

A: And he saved my life in many ways.

Q: Okay. We'll get to that as we go. Thank you.

A: Yal. Yal. Sure.

Q: Tell me first....I would like to know about your childhood, about your family, your parents in Kovno and your childhood before the Nazis came.

A: Yal. Sure. Sure. I was very fortunate. Uh...My wife tells me. She's from Belgium. I was born with a silver spoon. At that time I did not know, but...uh...uh...my parents were quite off. They had their own beauty shop and barber shop. They have...we had couple apartment houses. I was going to private school. We had a maid in the house and we also a...uh...a maid for me, a German lady. When came in school, she took me and my brother...she took us around and we spoke German with her, and I spoke Russian at home so I...I learned to speak around six, seven languages. And...uh...every year my parents used to send us with a maid to Kovno (ph0 or a summer...wasn't a camp for...for the summer. And...uh...I didn't know from poverty really. I didn't know from not having...and...uh...my life I was set quite in the highest standard. I learned music. I played music in the orchestra in school. I skied. I made all kind of sports until...uh...naturally, the Russians came...before the Russians came. When the Russians came in 1940, they took away everything over night, all our belongings, our...they nationalized the barber shops, the homes, everything. They gave us only one apartment and they gave us a...uh...my father a job. But when the Germans came they did away our lives. And...uh...there were...I remember I came from a concert. It was at night time, and at 2 o'clock the first bomb was dropped in Kovno airport, and my...uh...whole life

was shattered. I mean we took 180 degrees turn. And fortunately enough my parents never pampered me. And...uh...always said, although I maid, I always had to do thing myself in the house, and this was a good thing because ...because when the war came, I...uh...I wasn't lost. I wasn't a pampered child. I adapt myself to the problems, even when the war started right away and we ran and...uh...we tried to escape, went...went with the Russian army. And it was...I remember that...that night we went through a town and the whole trees are burning where the Germans throw incinerator bombs over there and we ran right through the fire and right through the misery. People were dying and did not...uh...affect me. I did not...uh...for some reason or another I...I roll...even...even being a child of 14 or so, I can roll with the punches and accept...uh...much reluctantly our...our problems for the future. And we knew that the future is going to be nothing but hell. But we were cut off. The offensive, German offensive was...was pretty fast and they cut us off and we had to return back home. We returned back home. Luckily in our...in our homes we met our aunts and uncles over there in our apartments and...uh...the Lithuanians didn't do nothing. All because they...we...we treat them...my parents treat them prior to or we lucky they did not attack our houses, but they killed during the week. During absence, absence. They killed at least about 10,000...uh...Jewish people before the Germans came in. See, they...they were proud what they have done, and they didn't kill just with machine guns or guns. They beheaded, they raped, they murdered, they robbed in the...I remember I went in a...after we came to the ghetto, I came in a house where a friend of my...a friend of a schoolmate lived and they killed...they raped her and her mother and they killed her father and with this blood the put a sign of the wall nemne kome (ph) take revenge. That was written down on the wall. Now...uh...when we came back and we were...uh...put together we had no right to go out nowhere. We were sitting in the...in the house and waiting for further orders. The...the Germans came in and they started giving orders. The Lithuanians were very happy to fulfill their orders. They were actually the front man. You can...they called themselves the partisans. And they were taking people to the Seven Fort and Nine Fort. Any body they can grab, they're killing. That's the Lithuanian. Beside the German before...before the Germans started giving out orders what to do, how to organize. Then after a month or two they decided to have a ghetto, and the ghetto was made in...they call a little place called Slabotki. It's right before Kovno. And...uh...in Slabotki was known to have...there was a terrific...uh...blood bath because the...there was a religious group of Rabbis and Hassidian and they...uh...they killed a lot of them. They tore their beards and they kill a lot of them. And this is a...a chapter which I...uh...I hated to speak about it.

Q: Tell us...tell us what happened exactly.

A: Uh...They...they pulled out the Rabbis from the apartment, from the learning house...the (ph) and they cut their beards off and they hung em and they cut their head off and the hair and they made em take a Sefer Torahs in the shul and the holy books and put em in piles in burn it. And then...then the Lithuanian partisans killed them right...right there and then. They...uh...killed them and they throw them in in shallow graves next to the river all the Niemen or the Velier. There are two rivers over there. And...and after when they closed...in the ghetto. And when the ghetto was established and the water...the water took away the

sand and they were exposed, so we had to take out all...take them all out from inside the graves and rebury them. It was a...a terrible experience. And...uh...then they establish a ghetto and I was...they grabbed people to make the fences. I was also one to make a fence. And we had to encircle ourselves in our own fence, and...uh...the _____ (ph) and we were gathered together around 30,000. It was a small ghetto...was two ghettos in fact, a small ghetto where they had a little hospital and they put the old people in the hospital, and then there was a larger ghetto. It's one they decided to liquidate the hospital and liquidate the doctors and just burn the whole thing up...the whole flame, and didn't let anybody to go and help them. We were standing outside watching how the sick people and the people are burn...are burning up...the whole ghetto. And we asked them questions. How come you do...that you do that? There wasn't answers. We want to eliminate...we wanta liquidate as many as we can they said. They give us all kind of excuses that from now on, we aren't going to do anymore. We ain't gonna burn. We ain't gonna do... We put you all to work and...uh...you're gonna work. And then it was the 28th of October in 1942, they had...uh...sent out some...uh...fliers that next day all the people should...should get together and they should assemble themselves in a place called the Democracy place. So I...and at that time around 20, 29 people in the morning...they got together and they...anybody...they're gonna find a house, they said they're gonna kill. They're gonna shoot them to death. So we got up in the morning...6 in the morning and families, with all...with children and babies, everybody assembled themselves. 7 o'clock exactly. We didn't know what...what is gonna happen. We didn't know what's...because they told we just gonna count them...count you out how many you are, and in the evening you're going back home. But 7 o'clock in the morning the...we were surrounded by the Lithuanian police, Lithuanian partisans and...uh...in columns. We all stayed in columns. And German officers they were there ____ (ph) a people and they start sorting us. Right and left. We didn't have at that time an idea what's all about it. But we felt that something is wrong because all the older people and the sick ones were going on side and the one who could...could still work was going on the other side. When it came to us, we were standing in line together, my father, my mother and myself and my grandmother and my aunt, they were elderly. And because of them, he put us all in the bad side. We...my mother got very scared and she told my father, "Maybe you can run away. Get out." Because he work...worked in the fire department. He had a arm...arm band. And...uh...the police department, and also a arm band and at that time the Germans didn't recognize if you're police or not police, so he...she pushed him out from the line as they were taking us to the side for the sick people and she said, Maybe you can help us. Maybe you can...uh...you save our lives." And ...uh...the Lithuanians just pulled us away and with a...with the guns, they beat us up and they throw us in the other ghetto. You could call a small ghetto which was all fenced up. In the evening there were accumulated about 10,000 people in that...uh...small compound...small ghetto. What our destination we still didn't know. We...we thought that maybe they're gonna give us other work. We never thought they're gonna kill us. After all 10,000 people. But the Germans had their own plans already. They had all prepared. They had taken out the Jewish and Russian prisoners to Ninth Fort and they dig...dug trenches. And then...uh...they...uh...put machine guns and then they're going...there they they're gonna kill us and...and bury us. As we were accumulated...as we got assembled in that small ghetto (sigh) we didn't know...we were

confused. We didn't know what happening. The people were crying. They were separating children from old people. We didn't know. My father wasn't here. I was just my mother. For some reason, a instinct we should keep on moving further away and not to stay in the beginning. All through the night...we shouldn't run away there...the Lithuanians were shooting in the sky with...with guns. It was like a battle zone in order for us...to keep us scared. Now in the middle of the night without our knowledge....we didn't know that, they start pulling out people already, and putting them in..in trucks and taking them away. In our...our place was the going in the morning. We were in line to go in the morning. For some reason or another I was...uh....told my mother, "Let's ...let's stay back. Let's don't be in a hurry. Maybe some day...maybe my father's going to help us. Something is going to happen." And...uh...as we...was already 12 o'clock, and we were less than 100 people and everybody was taken away to the ninth fort to be short. We were staying and there was a lady standing in front of us and the German officer recognized her. She worked for him. And she was with a baby, and he pulled her out from the line and dragged her out. As he dragged her out on the good side, so called, so-called, the (ph) it was...my father happened to be there. My father...because he all night long, he tried to come...begged people, begged the Germans to help...to...to save...you know, he said, that's my wife and my child is there. He didn't talk anymore about my grandmother or my aunt or his sisters were there because they're older you see. Because of them we also got lined up on..the bad side. So as she was pulled out he...he fell on his knees and he...uh...and that woman happened to recognize my father. She said, "Your wife and son is still there." And he start begging the German and there was next to him sitting...standing the chief of police, a Jewish chief of police, and he also start begging the German. "He's a good man. I know him," he said, "Help him." He said, "Come." And here, all of a sudden, as I stay in line with my...my grandmother and my aunt and myself, my mother and myself, I hear a scream, "You're husband's (ph). Your husband's running." I...like a wild man, I...I...I jumped out. I was only a child, 14 or so. I saw my father. It like a Messiah is coming. I had a feeling that...I don't know what...what is going to happen to us, but the feeling was there that something is going to happen to us. And the German looked at me, at my father and we looked alike...facial expression. He said...and my father was running like a wild man...he's eyes and his hair. I still remember the...the way he looked. And I jumped on him. I said, "Papa." The German said, "Is this your son?" He said, "Yes." "Whom else do you have here?" He said, "My wife." "Take your wife and come on." And as we walked out people were screaming, "Take my child." They take the last hundred and took them away to be killed. And it took us...he saved our life and that... this was a scene I'll never forget. And they...they took the people on the ninth fort...they were...they put in bunkers and heard at that time told...they stripped until the underwear and they walked out a hundred at a time they were machine gunned for 3 days and then they covered them up with dirt. For 3 days the graves were moving up and down. They took tractors and run over the graves in order to squeeze out the last breath. And when the front came closer and the Germans did not want to leave no evidence, they undug the graves and they found mother with children hugged together by dying and with parents, grandmothers. They saw people together. And they burned them all off. We could see from the ghetto. Wasn't far from the ghetto. We could see the flames all the way to the sky. We still didn't know what it was until people escaped from there. There

were Jewish people and the...and the Jewish prisoners and the Germans and the Lithuanians told them to undig them all. And while they were undigging them they told them to take out all the gold from their teeth and...and put it for the Germans...to save them. They also they themselves stole the gold and before New Year's Eve...It was in 40..43, before they go finish the burning, they have bought for...for...for the guards the gold...it was a whiskey. And...uh...New Year's eve or Christmas eve, they made them all drunk. And being winter and being white...they took white sheets and they escaped that way. They all 200 escaped from ninth fort. It was a...it was a tremendous thing what they have done. And they..they delivered the witnesses. They were there by the killing and they were there by them digging and burning the Jews...the people up. And they saw what the Lithuanians had done. There were very few Germans. Actually the whole thing was done by Lithuanians. They were Germans were just guiding the whole operation. And they were the witnesses which escaped from them. It was a tremendous..uh...the German hierarchy was tremendous upset. They looked all over for them, but some...naturally, some didn't get...they hide in ghetto. They caught couple of them, but most of them escaped. After that tragedy, we still did not know what happened to 10,000. From 10,000 just myself, my mother was survived, and my father. And the rest went in...that lady, which we still didn't know who she was. She recognized...she knew my father. The ghetto was chaotic. It was...uh...unbelievable. People didn't care to work. They didn't care to...to do anything. After all, the ghetto cut almost in half and every family had somebody taken away.

Q: What did you do? You went back to the ghetto?

A: I went back to the ghetto. Yal. Back to the ghetto and back to the room where we were in barracks over there. And the life quote unquote become normal.

Q: Tell us about that life. What...how did you feel?

A: Okay. As...uh...as we were in the ghetto...you know, the ghetto had own police department, fire department, had a Jewish community committee and...uh...they had an order for...the Germans also wanted the ghetto...ghetto to...to exist because the hierarchy for the Germans didn't want to go to the Russian front. So things are...starting getting better on the Russian front. They thought they going with the Blitzkrieg. They going in...in 2 weeks, they go and kill the Russians. The war was over. I remember one...one thing a...a...a German told my father as we running there. We were caught between the Germans and the Russians on the front and the Russian dug in all the...bunch of young kids. I remember then. They told us keep on going because the front is going to be...after the 24 hours they shouldn't know each other. And they held out actually the whole German army. Young boy...German officer told my father. Hitler said 2 weeks going to be Blitz. The war be over. In 2 years if the Russian fight that way, 2 more years the war won't be over. He said this the first day or the second war started. They didn't realize because the whole Europe, they took very easy. You see, France and Belgium and Holland, but here they...they were getting very resistance, you see. So the German himself had an interest in the Kovno ghetto operation because it killed the people from the small towns, a kill with nothing left over there. In the ghetto, they...they

established that as their...their place. They...they had a Jewish people working for them like the Judenrat and...uh...they tried to establish something good for us and good for them. Mostly for them. But they had...they need us too in order to control their destiny for awhile they need us too. The front was still away. There is still a successful. So I...uh...I had a job youth organization for small children got a job to teach us a trade. And I worked a little bit over there. Then they made a brigade to go to air...air...airport for small children or for small children to go to work in fields. Now the older people they...they promised they ain't going to do more less things you had to assemble all 10,000 someplace else and they...uh...still was trying to fool us. They were very smart and they knew how to psychologically. They set up a special office to fool us psychologically. They were very, very ____ (ph). And we...we had to believe them. In order to survive we had to believe them. Help we didn't get from nobody. Escape from the ghetto we couldn't...we couldn't do. If we escape, a Lithuanian saw us and you were a Jew, he told the Germans on us. Help was not coming. We couldn't create and get a partisan groups because we did not have enough woods like in Poland, like in Russia to escape. And..uh...the Lithuanian population had no interest in helping us. They were happy. In fact, we were a burden to them. We took away their place and their homes. They took away everything we had was okay. But we're living in their homes in small shacks over in the ghetto in...uh...Slobotka, it was no good. Pressure on...they put pressure on the German government to...uh...to get us out. They didn't care how they get us out or kill us or whatever, you see. Now...uh...after they start creating the brigades and they told everybody that...uh...things will be better. They gave us enough food...and they gave us for awhile enough food in ghetto in order to calm our nerves we should start believing them. It was all done psychologically. And it worked.

Q: What...what was your father doing at this time. You told me he had to go someplace.

Q: He...Yal. My father was...uh...in the...in the fire department and there was a lot of...we didn't have many fires because we didn't have even in case we had a fire, small fire some, you had to...uh...run with like bucket...bucket brigade or we had an old fire engine, like a pump fire engine. And the roads were full of stand. There were no roads. So you had to push them by hand to the fire. By they time...they came to extinguish the fire, there was no house, no fire. But...uh...there were a lot of suicides going on. And my father...uh...used to...people used to jump in the wells to commit suicide and any time they called...they _____. They called my father because he was...he knew how to go down in a deep well and with a rope, hold himself and bring the people up. He saved a lot. Also a lot drowned because by the time they call him...they had no telephones...uh...the problem was, so lots of them died. But because of him...people knew him...what a good many was...how he saved people in ghetto. This way...other incident I told you before, this way the police department...police chief as a German told him, "He is a good man. Save his family." He was...he was known. And ...and also because of him I got also a easier job in ghetto rather than going to work on air force...airport being I was still young. He gave me also job called elbote that I was...I worked in the ghetto. There were no telephones, just taking messages for him to the...from...from their office to other place. I was like a runner. It was my...my job. Uh...They gave me a little...uh...hat and they gave me a band here, a uniform. This was my

job. And this kept me...kept me alive...kept me out from doing hard work. Uh...Being still young, he wanted kept me around him. Then they organized, as the war progressed and as the war got worse, the German...we got involved in...uh...in the cold weather.... the washing...we got bogged down there. They needed fur coats. They needed shoes. They needed gold. So they had one time a...uh...flier out on the wall...All the fliers came on the...on the walls by the Jewish community committee that next week in 3 days, all the Jews got to bring in their gold and their furs and their leather boots, everything. They start bringing in their leather coats, leather coats, the boots, but gold was not coming in. So...uh...the Germans had a remedy for that. For a week, they walked around the ghetto and they was killing people on sight. The SS brigade came in. Every morning 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock and everyone in sight they killed, like dogs. And after a week, they said, "If you don't bring back...We'll do...we'll stop it only if you bring back all the gold." And...uh...this...uh...they shook everybody up and...uh... naturally, everybody brought...in order to stay alive, in order to continue with their life, they brought all the gold they've taken out the most fur and gold from the Kovno ghetto than other all the ghettos together. And they said, again after...after you bring us the gold, again everything will be nice and fine. Don't worry about it. It's fine. How can...but meanwhile they organized...they took out five intellectuals they needed intellectuals to drive them from ghetto, scholars, teachers they needed them for a special job to go in Latvia. And sure enough people ... they trust .. so how can they trust? We were so...we became so minimized our life...like they de...degenerated you see. They made for us...uh...a resistance of culture, a resistance of being a humanbeing became so nil...became like...like animals. And this was their intention to minimize. They took five hundred of our people, registered the best, the most intellectuals and we never saw from them anymore. We still goal...this were the aktion ...aktion from the 500. Then they created a brigade...a workshop...in ghetto workshop where they...we produced like toys for the Germans, wooden toys and...uh..dolls. Uh...Also, we washed all the clothes came from the front, the bloody clothes and everything. We washed over there, and we sewed them up. We made a shoe factory to...uh...repair the old shoes from the front. Many times became frozen. We pulled off ...we pulled off the...uh...many times you find skin and blood in the shoes and the boots. We washed them out over there. They had...there were 500 people working over. I was also fortunate to work there too and I was also working there in ...uh...as a runner. And I was working as a runner and also I was working as...uh...learning a trade as a...uh...smith, making different things from iron. And this kept me...kept me going in order not to go out from ghetto, not to get out and...uh...be worked day and night over there and use up my strength something else. You see, again, I have to thank my father for...for help me doing that. And then at one...uh... one day, it previously...as...uh...I got a call to come in...in the office from the big boss from the...uh...from the ghetto workshop over there...in the office over there. And there was sitting Gecke. Gecke was Obersturmbannführer Gecke. I mean I looked at him...he...his head was like a...he was like the SS Obersturmbannführer sure. He was...the top man from the SS. He was taking care of the whole eastern coast...shore...eastern coast, all the east ghettos, and the lager and the concentration camps and all that. In fact, I found out later, he was one of the 15 people involved with Hitler when they...when they decided to...uh...to make unify, to make eliminate the Jews. He was one the few people. His eyes just penetrate me. I was

standing there looking at him, and his head was like a dead head....like...like a skeleton. He was...uh...he asked me to take some papers to the Jewish committee. And if they give me papers, the boss from the Jewish ___ (ph) over there in charge, told me to take off tomorrow cause it's late already and don't come in to work tomorrow. This was...uh... that...this was not the best thing for me, but because next day as I got up in the morning I heard speakers, loud speakers, going around the ghetto with...uh...the bull horns, and they tell everybody whose not going to work, whose not at the work to accumulate to go and assemble themselves on that place where...from where they have sorted people out. The memory still lingers with me at that time. I did not know what to do. I was sure...I sure wasn't going to...to go again over there. I didn't know what's gonna happen. The ghetto was already surrounded with Lithuanians, the partisans they called. Uh...The people have went to work. All the brigades were gone already because they go 7 o'clock...6, 7 o'clock over there the whole ghetto's out. Whoever is left in the ghetto I didn't know what's gonna happen. I got...uh...I went and hide in the room right away and start try to find a place to hide. It's like a...uh...a rat looking for some place to hide. I didn't...I didn't know where to go, and I didn't know where they find us. I saw a little shed. You see the ghetto was made in a...where farmers used to live...farmer country. There was a shed like a...not a out house, a shed with a cellar inside where they keep hay. It's a little barn, a small barn. So I opened the barn and I saw through a...a trap door in the bottom. So I pushed away the hay in the side and as I was trying to go inside two mothers with little babies came to me and said, "Please help me. Please help us." I said, "What are you doing. I know...I know what I'm doing." They said, "Please let me go in with you in that...in that basement...in that hole. It was not basement, was a hole with a cellar they dug out." I said, "Come down." I didn't care. And I put hay on the trap...on the trap and...uh...I just went down. And it was dark, but I could see through that crack in the door, in that little...uh...trap door. (cough) Exactly 8, 9 o'clock, I don't know exactly when, the Germans came, the police and...uh...they start banging houses, raus, raus, Juden raus. I didn't know what was going on. And he opened...the German opened the door, flinged the door wide open and he comes in and he starts feet...starts shaking around all that...that...uh...hay, straw and he's standing on top of that door. And I...I'm...the door is almost collapse, and I'm trying to hold up the door shouldn't collapse over there. And I say, "God, help me." I mean why...what can I do? And...uh...he looked around and looked around and took...took his bayonet...I could see all that...and shoveled around in all that hay and he walked out. But he didn't walk...he was like a post. He was walking back and forth. As soon he walked out, one baby start to cry. So I said, "Please. Please. Help us. Help us." So, she stopped. The baby stopped crying. And...uh...I know if he didn't grey and he didn't have a heart attack. I was only 15 years old, 15 and a half years old, and I could see the German all day long going back and forth. And the other baby start crying. So the mother urinate in her hand and the baby to drink, you know, to keep quiet. Exactly again they came in and look but didn't...didn't step no more on that...I was ready to hold up again. He didn't...just looked outside in. Other guard came and they joked and they...they...they had a good time going back and forth. And...uh...exactly 4, 5 o'clock the whistle blew. Every...everything was done exactly perfect. And...uh...A...uh...a German truck picked them all up, all the post over there. And I made sure and seen them off and walked to the first and looked around. I told the mothers came out. And one baby was died.

She...the mother... the mother choked her own baby. And this left a tremendous impression on me because now (ph) I saw her and my grandfather. And one baby is still alive because the mother she urinate and she get a drink but the other baby from...from fear, the mother choked her own baby, choked her own child...choked her own child. I didn't see them anymore because the Germans did not finish the job that day. The next day they came again. This is called the kinder aktion. They had picked up all the...as the parents when they went to work, the children are left. Some parents was left their children. Some grandparents was left their children because that...everybody went to work on the air port or whatever...the brigades. So they...they were going around with dogs and finding little babies and children and 5 year old. I didn't know what happened that time. The whole thing happened in front of my father where he had the fire department over there by the Jewish committee. They came in buses, and they line the buses in Germans. And as they assembled the children they thrown the in...in the buses. So if a mother would not part the child....she wanted to be with her child...they sicced...a German dog was trained so, to jump on the mother's face and bite his face so the mother dropped the child. They grabbed and brought her child in...in the bus. They didn't care for the...for thee parents. They want only the children. And...uh...next day, naturally I went to work and...uh...next day by the same thing, they...whatever left children one day, they picked it up next day. When the parents came from...from work at night, (Pause) it was...it was hard to describe what...what happened...what happened there. (Pause) They came from work. (Pause) And you find...you find children. So they...they picked up the pillows and blankets (Pause) (Sigh) and they ran around in ghettos screaming (Pause) (Sigh) (crying) and pulled their hair. I saw a...a woman came up to one of the Germans and the guard somebody by the fence and start screaming at him and and calling him swine. He took out a gun and killed her. A...a Jewish life didn't mean nothing. They had no...they had no...uh...I don't know what kind of people they are. I mean I saw a German...a young man came in ghetto, played with a little poodle, little tiny dog, puppy. He played with him. He gave him chocolate. He finished playing, took out a gun and killed him. I mean it's unbelievable. And as you live all this through, small incidents, which are not written up in the books...just right here, it's...uh...you just can't believe. You can't believe it how people can be that cruel. (Sigh) After that, thank...thank God, I was still with my parents, my mother and father at that time. But...uh...for the rest of the people life became really nothing. No...No...it wasn't worth living, but people have children. People have families. People have the grandparents and grandparents...grandmother...grandparents and uncles and aunts...they were all annihilate taken away. We were...you became...we became nothing. We became like zombies. But how little did we know that the future is still going to be worse. Uh...My all...only luck they say...I was that time maybe 15 or so, and I could still be...come every night with my parents. My father protected us, my mother and me as much he could, but this also limitation...limitations. Because the...uh...Russian front came closer and closer. They lost the Stalingrad. And...uh...that I'm also...became heyday for 24 hours or 48 hours. You can go go around and get and kill all the Jews. You want them and just get out and take out anger on Jews. So they lost the Stalingrad and we suffer. They want we suffer. So we were like a pawn...you know, like a...like a nothing. And it became closer and we heard news that...uh...they're losing everywhere because we got more and more wounded soldiers

coming back from the front and people...people worked in the unclothing means where they were...in Kovno was that a point where they stop and they clean them up before send to Germany. And the people, the Jewish peopled them undressed, helped them to clean up bodies, and helped them in the shoes and in the uniforms came in ghettos to be washed. And...uh...and the mood from the soldiers where they were cursing and, you know, the German government. They were cusring Hitler, but still there was not a big spark to...to get him to make a new government or to kill him or something. But nothing that even get reunited, but they're too afraid of doing something like that. So we knew that if they having problems on the front...we knew the front is getting closer. And...uh...Gecke came, the Oberstrumbammfuhrer...Gecke came and he told the...uh...the Judenrat...Jew...the Jewish leaders, "Don't worry. We...uh...we won't annihilate you. You'll still...they figure back in Germany, you work for us. They have factories over there. But...uh...we still did not know the concentration camp. We still doesn't...didn't know. We didn't have the connection. Uh...Some people did, but...but we did not know...the ghetto itself didn't know that there was concentration camp. We thought we the only ones survived. We...we didn't have the communication. We didn't know the Warsaw ghetto. We didn't know the uprising. We were completely isolated. We were...we thought we only ones survives. Until they start liquidating the liquidating the ghetto. And they start...they say in the ghetto, "We're going to liquidate on that and that day because the...uh...we knew...we knew the reason why they want to...and evidence when the Russians are coming closer, want burn everything up. But naturally we want to save ourselves. We start hiding. So the...the first transport, they got together as many they could and...uh...and they couldn't find them all. The brought in a special...uh... trained people, killers....special killers to find the find the people who were hiding. We were...my father and me, my mother, we're trying to find a place to hide. But where can you hide? I mean the...in basement you can't go and hide in the attic you can't go. You might...we knew they're going to destroy all the houses so we saw outside a outhouse and we saw people like going in there. Somebody built a bunker. So we said, "Please, let us also in." They were nice enough to let us come in there too. So it was a big...uh...big room and on top was a camouflage outhouse. People didn't know there was a room downstairs. And people used the outhouse. And we were downstairs. So...uh...now it was....but to save your life, you do everything. There are no end. (Sigh) And the Germans found us. Next day they're looking with dogs and they...they came. I see a German SS man and he ripped apart the bunker with a luger in his hands and "Come out, Juden fechstunke (ph) Juden." You smell of Jews. If you don't come out, we'll...we'll kill you. Sure enough, we came out. We all came out and...uh...they assembled, you know, from the other bunkers, they assembled people and...uh...we looked and we smelled all of us....maybe they had over there, maybe 500 or so. We're last transport they sent to Dachau. After us, they burned the whole ghetto down. We were the last ones. And...uh...we sit together and it was a terrible day. It was rainy, and we were sitting in front of the Jewish Committee. The people discussed the...the future and...uh...was a parallel thing happened which I still remember. There was a small cat ran through. And the German SS sicced his dog on the cat, and the poor cat was all pulled out...going, trying to get away from him, going move toward the fence. And she was...when she was close to the fence, he say...he told him, "Give a command to kill her, and he jumped and killed her." And this was so parallel to our lives. We are in their hand. They're the dog,

and we're the cat, and we're at their mercy. Whenever...whenever they want to kill us, they kill like that. And that small, little incident, is so engraved in my brain that...and it was all...it was like a play. The weather was bad, was windy, was cold, and the whole atmosphere was right there. Next morning they assembled us all, and we walked all the way to the railroad. They put us in as much as they could...as many as they could in the freight cars, without much air, locked us up and we're on our way Germany. Where we...we went...we were going, we didn't know.

Q: Tell me about that ride? Tell me about that ride?

A: As we were riding and...uh...and we're cramped together and packed together without place to urinate or toilet. Nothing. Was not...and no water, no bread, no nothing. Some young guys...myself and few others decide...decide...decide to escape. So...uh...the German was...was in front, sitting with the driver...driving over. During the day he was sitting in front...the front door. In the back, I took a...I took out a knife and I tried with the back door cut a hole. And there was a...uh...a seal there on...on the lock. I cut my arm. It went right through my arm. I got a mark here still here. And it was bleeding all over. But this...and once we opened the door, and I put my small hand...I put my hand in there, I cut a seal, broke a seal, unlocked the latch, and there was no way to...to jump because they specially picked out a double line all the way to Germany. They were a line...we were on one track and the other track was going and the Germans were going right behind us...in case the German get killed. So we closed back up and this was a adventure of trying to jump out from the train. But my cousin, I found out later did jump and his wife...a train...the first transport. And...uh...they did make it. But the Lithuanians gave them...uh...told on them. They were killed later. These our friends...these are people we lived all our life together...were in school together and the business together and when...uh...when the war came, they kill us, as many as they could. (Sigh) Our first stop I remember was some place in Germany. We saw...the reason I knew it was in Germany over the border because I could read sign. The wheels are...are turning for the future on the trains. _____ for the...uh...Zieg means...uh...When they win a war...when they win a way, the wheels are turning for to win the war. So I knew we were in Germany then. The train stopped the next day. A German soldier came up to me...I'll never forget it...with a paper in black letters written down. And if this is said would be true, would happen, we be free right now. They missed...Hitler was being...they...uh...they tried to kill Hitler, and Hitler survived. In big letters. This is our luck. So...uh...they gave us some water. I remember that time. And again they shipped us off. They shipped us off to Stutthof. At that point I was still with my parents, mother and father. In Stutthof...

Q: Excuse me. What I need to do now is to stop. If we may, we'll change tapes, give you a chance to breath and then you'll tell us the story of Stutthof.

A: Thank you very much.

TAPE #2

Q: Okay.

A: Here...we arrived...the train. We still didn't know where where it was. And all of a sudden the trains opened up...the cattle cars...wasn't a train....the cattle cars it was. And...uh...some dead people...some fainted people, and a few survivors who made it...the younger ones came out. We assembled ourselves and the screaming from the Germans _____. I...I can still hear in my...my head...also.... the raus, raus, Jude. And they put us all in the...in the trucks and they brought us in...and they took us in a gorgeous, beautiful runway with trees, with a lake with...with swans on the lake. I said, "Where are we here?" Are they going to give you...gonna give us the work here or what...what's happening. Little did I know, that's the worst hell hole. And as we assembled ourselves in a big room, in a bigger hall with...uh...and people had to go to the bathroom. They were special place...altogether woman and men, they didn't care for the toilets. People went on too them, and they were standing up and there were filled up with human waste. Two...two Germans tried to amuse themselves. They start laughing. They took the end of their...uh...guns, rifles butts, and they hit two men in the head and they fell in...in the human waste. And they were laid there drowning. They drowned over there. And they were laughing. They had a good time. I...all these things I wasn't used to that at that point. This is...completely different thing. And at that time in that place, I lost my mother. I...I was separated from my mother. I saw her the last time. They...she kissed me. I kissed her. And she asked my father to take care of me. And we hugged. The last time I ever saw her. They took at night to the...all the men...they took us to the...unclothing...they took us to the...uh...the place where they kept us all night long, all naked. Take all the clothes off, and we had to go in a...in a unclothing place which they shaved us, the hair, whatever, and...uh...we washed. They gave us some clothes and clothes...it was whatever...whatever we grabbed. Anything. Different shoes and different...uh...jackets and different ...not a different...uh...different hat, but anyway, luckily we were not sent in the crematorium. We all assembled...and I was standing with my father...and next morning they sort us out...the Stutthof. They kept us a few days over there, probably a week or two weeks I would say. And they...uh...they beat us up good. I start to feeling what it means already being in a concentration camp cause the atmosphere change everything and they...uh...they separate the young...young kids from their parents or from the other ones. They send them away. Luckily I was still at that point with my father...uh...because I was...and when the German came in and followed me, I got up and extended my...I was tall and skinny and they let me go with my father. And they shipped us all to Dachau from there. And there was special...uh...camp because Dachau in camp 2. In...uh...in camp 2 they are a brand new camp. Brand new barracks and brandbrand new....the Germans and the whole thing and there was only one Lithuanian from Kovno. Everyone knows him which...uh...he was wearing German uniform. And he was officer there, and he was the worst one. He was beating on us. He was the worst one. Again, my father, being a barber, got a job working inside the camp, not to go outside. In the beginning I was working outside. It was a night shift, and day shift. And it was very miserable. They....they are building there...it was a place build...factory for Messerschmitt...for the

German...uh...more in the inland, underground factory. They had slave labors and we were building that. That's our job. And...uh...at that place I didn't have it too bad because after awhile working outside, I was working inside the camp itself. My job was....as they progressed....as the camp continued, people start dying off from diarrhea, malnutrition. It really was very bad. It was...people were working in mud...have...up to their knees because the rain was very...very...red mud over there. It was terrible place to be. But...uh...my job was every morning when the lice came in...people had to be full of lice and they died. Every morning I had a little cart. It was a good job. Go from barrack to barrack and pick up the dead people. And me and the other young boy...we used to go on from barrack to barrack and pick all the dead people. And me and the other young boy, we used to go on from barrack to barrack and every morning take em like a rickshaw and...uh...in... both...dump em on top of the...on top of that little wagon until they accumulate. Go out with this. Dump them outside again. Do the same thing again. It's a job for the day. I was very lucky by doing that because I was in camp. I didn't have to go...and I had some little more soup or more coffee or more hot tea or hot water rather. And one day I come to that pile of people and I...uh...I saw a person laying there which...it was still breathing. He opened his eyes and he said, "Don't you recognize me?" He was one of my father's friends. He worked also in ghetto as a fire...in fire department, which I knew him like I knew my father. I look at him. He was still of flies. His whole body was full white...I did not...I put him on aside. I couldn't do nothing about it. We didn't put him on the truck...on this truck...on this little hand cart. But the thing was that the lice took over the camp so dramatically and diarrhea and diphtheria that people are dying in masses and nothing you can do about it. They de...decide then to liquidate after about 4 months to liquidate the camp altogether. And they were going to send my father...you see, they...they weren't interested to have families together. They want to send separate...father and son separate, brothers separate. Though they liked my father. They wanted to send him in a better place and send me out to Czechoslovakia in a different camp. They accumulate about 500 people to send to Czechoslovakia to Theresienstadt...no to...uh...Flossenburg and...uh...my father said, "No. I won't go without my son. I helped him so far. I want to help him further." And it was...uh...it was my luck really that we went with me. It was almost his undoing, because he could have had a better place going in other camp in Germany. We were shipped away in...in...uh...Flossenburg. From there to Leitmeritz (Litomerice). Leitmeritz (Litomerice) was a...Leitmeritz (Litomerice)yelling was a place from Flossenburg, other part. And there was a hell hole. There was a worst we ever...ever saw. From the 500 or so people, maybe 10 survived. First of all, it was old camp already. And the Pollacks were in charge of the camp and...uh...we worked over there in mines in...uh...cement mines. And naturally the better jobs is taken already, being an old camp. So they...uh...they _____ all got new . I mean we got some new people. And they came...they grabbed us next day and they put us in all kind of jobs...work. We are working in the...in the coal...it's like coal mine. It's the same thing. It's miserable inside. It's wet. It's...uh...muggy. It's...uh...fog all the time...little small lamps and you gotta drill, with a big drill you gotta drill the...the cement mines. It's all cement in Czechoslovakia. I...uh...I was working luckily with my father and the bread was...the ration was terrible. You get less and less....one slice of bread and...uh...we had to get up...get up early in the morning. It was cold...was...uh...maybe 20, 30 below zero. We

had no shoes. We had wooden...uh...wooden shoes. And the wooden shoes, when you go in the snow, they became like...uh...like ice skates so you could hardly walk. You had...uh...the uniform...one a pajama. You had to stand in a appell in the morning for 2 hours. Woke you up 6 in the morning, 5 in the morning in order to count you...they count you. They count you out. If someone is missing, they had to count again. And...uh...it was miserable. Was just...and people start dying off dying off. One day I standing with my father over there...comes to me...there was over there...also over there besides Pollacks, besides Jews, all the Germans...criminals, homosexuals, whatever. I didn't know about that. I...I wasn't that...that...that known what's going on in the concentration camps. I was still new about that. As I stand by my father and worked, a German comes up to me and he orders me to go with him. He was a...uh...a colonel from the...uh...from the air force. I didn't want to go, but he says, _____ I have to go with you. I was still...we just came up from new camp....from...from Dachau. I still did not look so dilapidated and so worn out. I still looked pretty good because I had a clean uniform. He tells me...as we go deeper...he takes me deeper and deeper and he see nobody one here...just fog with little lamps burning and the railroad trellis because the little railroads where they bring out the...all the cement over there. He started hugging me. I started moving away. He said, "Hug me." And he...uh...he wanted to kiss me. I started pushing him away. I didn't know...I was all...I was all confused. I didn't know what happening. And he un...he unzipped his ...uh...pants. I start screaming. As I start screaming, people...uh...kapos from other brigades over there, the Polish kapos, start running. And I...uh...start telling you...what happening. As I telling him the story, they called right away a SS guard and...uh...bayonets, they guy took us down in the headquarters. Here my father...he works over there by the cement...that big machine. He cutting cement. He sees they're taking me with the guard away over there and I can't tell him nothing. He looks at me. We look each other. I had...they took us in a general staff over there. I had to tell the story what happened over and over gain. They took a petition from me about 20 times. They came over, "How did a...a German officer try to kiss a Jew?" That was the most...uh...I...I told them the whole story. I told them A to Z. He pulls his pants off and I start screaming. So then was tremendous thing for the Germans over there. The Germans SS. They telegraphed to Berlin. They came to Berlin, people coming down there....coming down. I had to tell the story. And they kept me completely isolated. Him and me, completely isolated. I thought that's my end. I'm finished. In the middle of the night...they called me down one night. They called me down....12 o'clock, 1 o'clock in the morning. And they took me down in unclothing. There where the...uh...showers are. He stand undressed...the German officer, colonel, and Germans and Pollacks beating him with cold water and I had to watch how they were beating him. By the time he got through his head was twice the size it was. And I...they...the more officers standing around me. I had to tell them the whole story. And he was yelling mutter, help _____. Mother, help me. You see. His head got so big his head used to _____. Fit right on top here. I find out 2 days later he died from the beating. But the tragedy was they made me watch him being destroyed. And I...I'm a young kid. I mean how...how can I cope with that? But I did. My...my...the lucky thing was they did nothing to be me. They tell me to go back to my father after that. Actually, this was a miracle. It was a miracle from God. Because see, they didn't prove that I participate in anything, you see. And here...he said not...and I totally (ph).

He hugged me and he kissed me in the face, and I start screaming afterwards. I went back to work. (Sigh) And the one...and we got weaker and weaker and weaker because the food wasn't there. They tried to cut the portions less and less because...the Pollacks got bigger portions. And the Jews got almost nothing, and a kapo was a Pollack. So one day, we are carrying cement. I mean bag cement, I could hardly walk myself. I fall down. I can't carry. The German said...he was...was not German...a Polish German. He lived in Poland. He said, "I'm going to kill you today." I said, "Why" He says, "I'm gonna kill you." And as I picked up a bag...a barrel...a bag cement and walked, he knocked me down and jumped on he and with his heel, hit my face and my nose and my teeth. And he let me lay there like...like I was dead...like blood...a piece of meat...raw meat. My father standing next to me. He could do nothing. And the end of the day I was laying there. End of the day, my father picked me up with the other kapo, Jewish haftling, there or prisoner, whatever you call them...they were...were called. And I started getting fever. I didn't know what it was. I started getting fever and it took me down to the...to the so-called hospital. When they call it hospital, and my father left me there. He didn't see me...see anymore. And in a time he came in and asked, "What happened to my son?" They told him, "Your son is long dead." But he never gave up hope. I knew while...they told me it type of fever. They threw me in a small little army cot with...uh...three more...four or five Russian prisoners. They were actually Russians.... Russians...everything was there in the concentration camp. (Clearing throat) As they start dying off. You imagine the cart is so small, and we were all laying there. As they were starting...and they wouldn't give me no water and they wouldn't give me nothing. They did give me a bunch of aspirins in my hand, and they told me swallow them. But I chewed up...how you...you can't hardly chew one aspirin. So I almost choked myself, but I...I...maybe it helped me. Maybe it survived me. I don't know. But a hand...handful of aspirin I swallowed or I chewed it up. And I was laying with the guys on the cot. And four guys...four big guys, and they started dying off. And the less died I kept them on the blanket for 3 or 4 days in order to eat his bread...his ration, and survive. I mean this is...this, you see, like a tiger. You have to survive some how. I laid in the hospital without food, without eating...so after they start swelling already, I told them he's dead. They move him away. I...I was complete delirious. But I remember so vivid I want to get...get a drink of water. They wouldn't give no water. But they had the hose...uh...the hose that cleaned the floor, the concrete floor in that hospital. They put cold water on top of me. They wouldn't let me drink me the water. And I was delirious thinking that I explore their minds where I worked, and I wanted to kill myself. Cause the Germans after me...they run after me. I gotta kill myself. So I some how find a wire, like a hanger...a wire, and in Europe, the toilets have a...a single...a container on top of the water you pull down. I went in the toilet and I...I made a loop my head and I hooked up in front and I jumped off the toilet. But the...but not being rope did not pull. I start gargling and I gaged myself. So somebody...prisoner or one...one next to me, they got me off and I pull this off and I ran away. But I heard they were right on the blanket and I heard they were looking for me. Somebody was tell in Polish...at that time I spoke Polish well because being there you learn to speak Polish and Russian. And...uh...as I was laying there in the blanket and it one day they came and I...I felt I'm getting better. How I don't know. Without food. They did...the polish prisoners, they give a little soup, more bread. For me, nothing. I was laying there...was laying there. One day they liquidate the

whole hospital. They took them all to be burned or gassed, whatever. They forgot me. They complete forgot me. And people ask how I survived. I don't know how I survived. This way I survived. They forgot me here. I was saved in the big aktion. I was...it's a miracle really. I...As I lay in bed, I see my father's eyes in front of me. I was laying next to the...I'll never forget it. I was laying next to the window. He...he never gave up looking for me. He looked at me. I looked at him. He start crying. I...I know the way he looked, it's like a muslim and he was half dead. I'm sure I looked worse than him. He made with me the hand and he walked away. So I knew that he's alive and we're still alive. Now I had to get out. I had to get out of here. Next to...as I was laying there a whole day by myself, but the next day they brought the other group of sick people. (Cough) So I decided...again, who told me how to survive? I decided to get out from the hospital. They called shonung (ph). This is a place where you...after let's say you, you are cured quote unquote, you stay there until it get better and then they put you to work. But you died there anyway. They don't feed you and you die there. So I say, I want to go to the shonung (ph). The only thing I had in my pajamas from the hospital, the uniform over there, and...uh...a pair of wooden shoes. Nothing! And a hat. A hat...a...uh...a prisoner's cap. So I went in the _____ and I laid their a couple of days and I said, "If I don't get out of here, I'll die." Because a bunch of zombies walking around there, old people and they're dying. They're walking around with their blankets. No food. And they...uh...they wait to die. You don't get better there. You die. I decided to go to work. I could...I could hardly walk. Now...but the brigades were already formed, you see. And they I was just extra one. They grabbed me in the place. And my father saw me...that I'm going in a brigade, but he couldn't help it because he was...his brigade passed by already, and it filled up....his brigade already. So here I'm going with all new people, all new kapo. Nobody know me. And we're going to a big mountain, and on top the mountain, snow. Just to walk to the place, working place, was a effort. At least a good hour to walk. Cold. Miserable. Hungry. I mean it's a miracle. As I came there I saw way on top the mountain they're building a tower...a watch tower. And we're supposed to bring up strands of wire. We have wire carry over there...on the mountains, on the snow and everything else. So they told me I should grab one. And it's heavy and I put over...you can't...you have to put over your neck in order to carry that. I had to walk with that up the mountain...the kapo next to me. And I walk and I fall...and he beats me. So I'm thinking to myself...the funny part was I never said I'm going...I never thought I'm going to die. All 3 years, I never thought I'm gonna die. There is a Jewish writer Shalom Alehem, and he writes whenever I study him and he writes, "_____." It means you should never lose your hope. Be always...think always forward, you'll survive. I never thought I'm gonna die. So as I was going...crawling up that mountain with this big strand of wire on my neck which I am sure it weighed at least 25, 30 pounds, maybe 40 pounds...I don't know...I was falling down. He beat me. I got up. He beat me. So I flashed back like I saw a movie years ago like the Russian _____ the boats over there. They used to fall down...the slaves. They used to beat them. They used to get up. They beat them. I said, "I'm the same...I'm the same...I'm the same...uh...I'm the same boat right now, and I'm gonna survive. How I made that day I'll never...I'll never...and then we go up and we go down and carry some more and up. Every time I fall he beat me. Fortunate again, the next day my father took me in...in _____ his brigade. He talked to the kapo, his kapo, maybe to take me and my son just came out from the hospital. He's sick. Please take him in.

And he begged him working there and also, being a barber, he also...if they're working there 12 hours, 14 hours working in the mines without food without anything he...uh...he used to come and shave people's faces for extra bowl of soup. And my...uh...he comes to me. He would not eat his soup. He comes to me and he say, "My son, I ate already. I had already enough. That's for you." I say, "Papa, have you eaten already?" "Yal. Yal. That's for you." So you cannot go yet." (Crying) (Long Pause) (Obviously crying) I can't forget his voice. Believe me, not...not many fathers done that. And when he...he used to lay on the bunk...uh...and I used to reminisce the food we used to eat at home on the holidays. He used to tell me, "Don't talk," he said, "Don't waste...don't waste energy. Be quiet." And one day when we are laying on the...on the bunk...there were 3 or 4 bunks...laying second bunk, and people had to urinate, make in their pants. It was...couldn't control themselves. Somebody above us urinated on top of us so the...the Polish kapo thought my father done it. So he jumped on the bunk and started beating him unmercifully. So I jumped on my father to protect him. So they broke a stick on me. At least being younger, I survived that you see. Otherwise, he would kill my father. So indirectly we kinda compliment each other. We..we...our spirit. We talk with each, give each other _____. (Crying) (Sigh) And...and as the front again...the front came closer. The...uh...Germans are losing more and more ground. They decide to move us...to move us to...uh...to Therenienstadt. In Therenienstadt they put us...just put us in...uh...barracks or in...uh...officers quarters or soldiers quarters four...four floors high, without food without anything. Nothing really. Nothing! They didn't feed us. (Sigh) I remember...I remember they came...also some different scenes seem to stick in my mind. When they came in there...we...we walked from...uh... Litomerice to Therenienstadt. We walked and we came there...been hungry, thirsty. They assembled so many people altogether...most Jews...they throw...they throw bread in the air. Like a dog, you see. And people grabbed and teared it apart. He said, "Don't do that because you...you squeeze, they're gonna kill you there. See? But..but as I was standing for far away and seeing how the people like a...you take a bunch of hungry dogs and you throw a piece and they were clinging to each other, tearing each other apart. And the Germans laughing and having a good time, enjoying themselves. May the 8th, we were liberated. Another day or two, my father wouldn't have made. Never would have made it. He was...he was laying in bed. Couldn't move. A skeleton! I can see pictures. His skin was like a dead person. I...I still have some walking power. And I couldn't believe it. I looked...I was on fourth floor that time. I looked through the window. I see a tank with a star...a Russian tank. And was all around. So I realized that's our liberation. I never knew how I'm going act liberation. But I couldn't walk down the stairs. I slide myself down on my behind, all these stairs, because my feet couldn't carry my body. And I crawled myself up to the tank. There was no Germans around it. And I...I kissed the feet of the...the Russian. He...for him it was also strange. I mean...uh...he didn't see...he never saw people looking like we were. Dead people crawling from all the halls out. He gave me oh a piece of bread or a piece of something. I...I took it to my father. And I...we both ate and the crumbs together. And next day I know they opened the whole...uh... But they had a quar...quarantine because there was typhus period, you see. Couldn't go any of them. But the Germans are walking in thousand and thousand columns so we grabbed some food from them and some something, whatever they had over there. They were as weak as don't don't kill me. Don't do nothing. Just....Just here whatever

you got. All...all of a sudden they became nice people. They walk in columns and columns and columns. I remember an incident. It's a laughing matter. I started getting my...my energy back already. My father was feel a little bit better already. I gave him...I brought him some food, some chocolates from Germans over there. As I walked...I walked in to the Germans, take their food away or something, I was very thirsty so one German had a...a bottle of...field bottle. I said, "Give to me. I'm thirsty." He said, "No." I said, "Give it to me." I mean give it to me. He's a big, 6 foot German. Here's a little...little Jewish prisoners, you know, but I was liberated and he was right now, he would shoot you and run, you know. So he gave it to me and I opened up and I looked, He had Volka, a hundred proof Volka. I could stand that. I couldn't swallow this. But this...this is a...a thing that I...a comic thing that happened you know. And...uh...we were...we were there quite about 2, 3 weeks. My father got more to his energy, and...uh...they opened the _____. A lot of...the Russians...they actually didn't took care us much. They themselves didn't have it. But everything...they opened up all the...the places, all the warehouses with fruit and with white fruit, and prunes and all that. We had to have it. Also my father starts cutting the Russians hair too. They gave better meals. Because being a barber, you see, he had his trade right there. So we start both coming to our energy. And we had accumulated two...two suitcases and some clothes for ourselves, and...uh...one day we decided to go find our mother. How do you go back when the transportation...that for 2 weeks we were traveling on top of the trains. We couldn't go inside because all...all filled up with Russian...with Russians going back home and with other ones. So many times...many times I wind up sleeping on the...kerosene trains, the gasoline trains. They run once over there. Just keep on going towards...towards Lithuania. And we...uh...we stopped on the way and we were tired, so one day we fell asleep and we woke up and the Russians stole our... whatever we had...the suitcases. Again we were...we start from ground zero until we came to...uh...to Lodz. In Lodz we got off and we said we'll try...rather than go back Lithuania, try to find here because they so few Jews on the...maybe some Jewish people will know where Mother is. And sure enough we find people who have...told us...uh...that she has died with the prayer on her lips we...on her lips we should survive. She only...only begged we should survive. And...uh...they were with her all the way in the concentration camp, and she worked very hard and had typhus fever, and she died. How she died and when she died and exactly the grave, we didn't know. And the date we didn't know. And...uh...when I met after 40 years...I met...the lady's going to come today...Marsha. She...my mother died in her hand. She told me that. And...uh...after 40 years, we haven't seen each other in 40 years, and she told me that they're going...not a week before the liberation. They're going out on the appell to count, and she couldn't make it, and she put her down. When she came back, she was dead already. At least, I know she died in March. At least I know that her soul is not floating empty and and every...every March I say kaddish in a _____ for her soul. She was a good woman. And...uh...the only thing my...my parents really left me was a good name, which I. There was no monuments. There was no...no wealth, which I can give it to my children when I'm... I tried to raise my children the same way to...to be (Sigh) good with people. After we find out my mother passed away in...in...uh...in Lodz, wasn't any use to go to Lithuania. Wasn't nothing there any more. Just (sigh) dead family, so we decide to go back, join a kibbutz in...uh...in Lodz. Uh...They...they taught me that...how to handle ammunition whatever. One more thing I want to insert.

When...when the Russians liberated Therenienstadt, they...uh...asked the people who was in...in Leitmeritz (Litomerice) early camp...they gave us all guns. They say, "Go out and kill the...the Germans. Kill anybody you want." I couldn't do that. I couldn't take revenge. I just couldn't. Let God punish them. I don't....Why do I have to have blood on my hands?

Q: Abe, can you go back for just a minute because it wasn't clear. You were in Flossenberg, in the subcamp of Flossenberg. When were you taken to Therenienstadt.

A: Uh...From...From Flossenberg, they take to Leitmeritz (Litomerice).

Q: Litomerice. After Litomerice.

Q: After Litomerice. As the front came closer, after we were liberated May the 8th, in 45. Uh...I would say...uh...middle of April...middle of April, or end of April, I mean...the calendar...a calendar not that...uh....the only...yal...the only thing I...uh...only calendar there now...I know it was January 31st when I was...my birthday when I was laying in the hospital that time with typhus fever. And Germans was...was raving...I remember the kapos was...was raving that the Germans are taking...had...have the Allied forces on the...on the run. At that time in the...uh...there was a major offense over there. The Germans turned around a major offense in the Allied Forces in the Allied forces in...in Brussels it was...in the Battle of the Bulge, and they were all...and I just kind of... But anyway, as...uh...I joined kibbutz, and...uh...from the...the kibbutz we...we decide, you know, where to go. I can't go...I can't go in Lithuania. I can't go...uh...in any place else, so the best thing for me to go to Israel. But my mother before we are separated, she told me...I knew it all along. She has two brothers and a sister in America. She...she said to me, "If you survive, try to find them." The only thing I know their names and what was doing. They're printers. The only thing I knew her was the name of the printers. I didn't know where they were in New York or whatever. So...uh...on the way to...uh...on the way to...uh..Germany I joined up Bricha. It's uh...and...We...I used to bring people from Poland to...to Linz...uh...to Linz...Graz...Austria. From there go to Italy and give it to the Haganah. And this we carried the people...uh...for awhile was easy because a friend of mine with the Americans CIC gave me some papers to bring his sister to...uh...to DP camp in America...in Germany. So I found her and I brought her and I used same papers to...to bring people over the borders to...uh...for the Haganah to...for Palestine...for Israel....Palestine at that time. Until...

Q: Tell us about those trips, will you?

A: Well, it was very dangerous trips. Was...there were a lot of old people and children. It was cold. Uh...You had to...uh ...walk through...by all the guards. It was not much food. We had some rationed food from the UNRA gave us, the American ration food. And it was a dangerous...uh... dangerous mission to go across the mountains. And was cold. Sickness. We had to cope with all that. And I done it...done it a number of times until the English have found out...they saw my document over and over again and they...uh...they captured me. They beat me up, took away my papers, and they made me work over there close by, by

the railroad. And one day I...uh...I said, "That's...that's the end of it." I saw the train coming and the train leave and I jumped in there on the last train and I wind up in the American zone. And...uh...because it's actually was an English zone....the American zone was...uh...not much to go by. And once I...uh...I went over I decided to settle down. Because the funny part was even...it's very ironic. Even being in concentration camp, not having my schooling...after all I was 13 and a half years old, I was thinking when I...not if I survive, when I survive, "What am I gonna do?" I mean I didn't have no schooling. I didn't have no money. I need a trade. So the little trading I had in ghetto from _____, I advanced it in Landsberg. Came...they had a trading school from the...from the _____, and I learned auto mechanics, which gave me a...a nice start here in America. So...uh...at one point I was...also when I was in Landsberg, or to go to Israel...Palestine at that time, and I registered to go to America. So the HIAS called me first with America. So when I came in the country, they gave me seven dollars on the ship. They dropped me off in New York, without a language, without nothing, without any relatives, without any...any body. And I felt pretty lonely. Because at that point I still didn't know where my aunts lived. I didn't know where to turn. So...uh...I bought me...I remember at that time, a candy bar, a Fifth Avenue candy bar, and a big one. At that time they had big ones. I said, "Well, seven dollars might go a long time." And...uh...I didn't like...care for New York because the by the _____ trains and subways was too much for me....was everything happened to fast for me and...and...to...to be. So somebody asked me to go to Washington...Washington, D.C. I didn't know Washington, California, I would go any place out of New York. So I wind up in Washington where I...uh...I...uh...I went to school here, night school, and I worked and I established my life. I met my wife a year later. She's also a survivor from Belgium. Also went through Auschwitz and Birkenau. And we...uh...yesterday was actually 42 years married... anniversary. We have a very successful marriage. We had the same common...common denominator. You see we're both survivors, and we know each other. Though I'm from Lithuania, she's from Belgium but...uh...the common denominator is there you see. And we have three nice sons with three grand...grandchildren, one the way, and I'm a happy guy. Really. (Sigh) And the final thing, I'd like to read something for you which I have outlined. I want to conclude it in if you don't mind. I put on my glasses.

Q: Before you read, would you tell me...you had left your father in the DP camp. Bring him up...tell about him.

A: Yal. I...I left my father in the DP camp and he married a...uh...a lady he knew when he was a child. And she also lost her husband and two grown children. They also hid in a bunker..bunker and two weeks before liberation, the Lithuanians told on them and they were shot by Germans. So they also broke up...they also broke up people. All of us were broken up people. Just skeletons really. Tried to grow skin. Meat and skin on us. And...uh...it took me two years. After all, he wanted to be with me and I wanted to be with him. It took me two years to make paper for him. Secure him a job which had...the only one job he worked next to the Pentagon. In fact when he...when he met so many important people there...when he was going for the first citizen papers, Eisenhower private...private detectives were...were his witnesses. Was well liked. And...uh...he worked all his life until he passed away here.

And he enjoyed life, and he gave me that...that instinct of life. He gave...I inherited it, the joy of life. And...uh...it's important to me, to my wife to make her happy. And everything...everybody...everything else around us are happy. And...uh...he died a happy man. It was a New Year's eve about 18 years ago. He was dancing in Beverly Hilton Hotel. It thousand people around him. He had a massive heart attack. And...uh...being New Year's eve and the ambulance couldn't come so fast and so they survived...they revived him, but he was too late already. He lived other month or so and he passed away. And his...uh...his wife, my stepmother, passed away a few years later. But he'll always have a big part in my heart. I go often...very often to his grave, so my children go. At least I have a grave here for him where I can go. For good or for bad and...and pray and shed a tear, and talk to somebody. I think that much God gave me. And I want to come to the few words I want to finish with that. I don't know if they're appropriate or not, but...uh...I wrote down something on paper here. Excuse me. The expression I ask myself many times. How can a whole nation collectively turn away their faces from the wholesale murder of the Jewish people? It takes effort to look the other way. Perhaps if you learned the answer to that question, we can prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again, but I doubt it that we have learned. I doubt it that we ever will learn. Because I came one day driving...flying from Israel back to America and we stopped in Germany to refuel. Was in Munich. And the plane stopped and we had to take a little shuttle bus to go to the station where...where to...inside the airport, and they came to us and start even that yelling, austeg, aust eig, aust eig. My wife and I we turned and looked at each other and _____ reminded us of the cattle cars. And this is very, very hard emotion to take. And that's the reason I was present for the Holocaust survives here in Washington for a long time and the reason was we got to leave...we got to leave witnesses, which I am doing right now. The people should know that it did happen. Maybe if we couldn't prevent, maybe they can prevent. Maybe somebody can prevent. Maybe I can...I can leave a token of my experience to humanity.

Thank you.

Q: Thank you.