

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Fred Schwartz
May 8, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Fred Schwartz, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on May 8, 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 Research Institute's collection of oral testimonies.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

FED SCHWARTZ

May 8, 1990

Q: Start by telling us your name, please.

A: My name is Fred Schwartz.

Q: Where were you born and when?

A: I was born in November 30th...October...I'm sorry...October 30th, 1928, in a small town Hungary by the name Kotaj.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about your childhood, what it was like growing as a Jewish child at that time?

A: Well, it wasn't easy in general speaking because wherever you go you got hurt verbally, physically, just because you are born Jewish. And sometimes I went home crying; and my father should rest in peace, he was just like a helpless father. It hurt him. But he says, "___?"-- "What can I do? I can't go to the authorities because we are Jews, and we have to suffer." It's no use to go to authorities to complain that this boy, this and this boy hit me, or this boy cursed me. It was of no use. So we just had to go alone. And there was no other way.

Q: What...what was your family life like? What were your parents like?

A: Hard working people, and they tried their best for us, like sending us to school and providing us with the best like a Jewish parents, but they also had their difficulties on account, because...because they were Jews. And specially after 1940 when all the Jews between 18 and 60 had to report to labor camps and I...and my brother and I, the middle one, we had to take over my father's duty which was to deliver...uh...seltzer to our town and two, three towns around us, surroundings...more towns. And we had to do as I was at that time 13 years old and I had to do my father's work because we still had to live on to survive, and my father was away in labor camp. So we had to do work which was not for a 13 year old. Definitely! In the winter time which in Hungary is very tough winter, the snow comes down in November and it goes away in March. And we had to deliver the soda...seltzer with the horse and carriage. And sometimes, lot of times, the seltzer bottles busted from the...it was frozen, but...so I had to go down from the horse and carriage, step down...had to run, otherwise I would be frozen. So it was very hard. Very hard.

Q: Before 1940...uh...when events were taking place all over Europe that were so terrible, in your small town what did you and your family know about these things and how did they affect you?

A: The outside world did not affect us too much. All we did is we heard things, but it was...what we heard, it was like unbelievable because nobody could imagine it's true, but we heard. And naturally...naturally, the Hungarian newspaper didn't write about it, but we heard

as...specially it was very hard because by the time it came down to a small town like us from the big cities, you know, it's...uh...but people were talking, talking, but nobody had proof until a few hundred Polish Jews run away from Poland, first to Czechoslovakia and from there to Hungary because they figured the Germans not going to come into Hungary. And they told us stories which was unbelievable. They just said they just take people near the water and they shoot them in the water, just like that, and they're killing...taking ...taking fathers and they just killing and killing and killing. But who wanted to believe such things...that could happen in a civilized world? But then we had firsthand information that it is true, because they took away one family from our town. Our town consisted of 35 Jewish family...families. And from that 35 family, one was a family who came about 20, 25 years ago. That means...uh...25 years ago, that was in 1915, 1920, that from Poland. And they were considered as Polish citizens. And they were taken away, the whole family, in '40. And we didn't know nothing about where they were taken. We knew a year later. One person from the family somehow escaped, and he made it back to our town. That time the man was...I don't know exactly, but in the 30s. And then what he told us what's going on. But still we...uh...we're helpless. What can we do? We couldn't run away, and we had to take what he said for granted. But _____(ph) we said this could never happen in Hungary; because the Hungarian Jews...most of them...were assimilated, and they didn't consider themselves as Jews. They considered themselves real Hungarians. So why should we worry? Polish Jews, and Austrian Jews and this and that--there're all kind of...but could never happen by us, that's why and all...we didn't want to believe it. And that went...went on for 4 years from 1940 'til March 1944. We heard people said this, that, but we don't...did not believe what's going on

until the Germans came into Hungary. And that was March 17...March 19, I think when the Hungarian...the Germans came into Hungary.

Q: And then can you describe the changes that occurred as soon as the Germans did come in?

A: Yes. First of all, we...well it took them a week or two to get organized cause they came...they worked on how to organize the Hungarian Jews to do what they did to the rest of the countries Jews. So it took about 2 weeks. First they gave an order that every Jew had to wear a yellow... yellow star. And then a week later, which happened to be Passover...happened to be Passover holiday... You know, in our small towns in Hungary...in Europe, people didn't read no newspapers. Well, the intelligent people did, but most of them didn't know how to read newspaper. So there were ...if there were some news, any news, a guy used to go around and poke...you know what I mean, so when...when all the people come around, let's say in radius of a tenth of a mile or a twentieth of a mile and when everybody got together, then he told the news. The news was that no Jew is allowed to leave town. Anybody gonna caught be killed right away. So that went on for another 2 weeks, and then came the deportation. How the deportation was? First, what they did is they got together all the Jews in the synagogue...in the synagogues of the town, because every town had a synagogue. From there, they got horse and carriage and they took us to the next big town to Nyíregyháza. It's called Nyíregyháza, where also they took us to the big synagogue over there. And we were there during the night and like in every big city, they made one area of the city as a ghetto where most of the Jews lived because usually in Europe in big cities there are special Jewish

quarters you know where the Jew concentrated, you know, so that's...and they put in a couple of families in each apartment, Jewish apartments, and we stayed there for 2 weeks. And then they took us to a farm, but no more carriage. No more horse and carriage. That was only from the small town to the big town. From...from the big town...big city, they took us to a farm and they took us barns, big barns, you know where they used to dry the tobacco and all these things. And that's where we stayed another 2, 3 weeks before the deportation started. Well..uh...we walked back from the...from the farm to the train station of Nyíregyháza. And the wagons...the wagons or the trains...I mean the train...I don't know how many...uh...wagons were waiting for us...naturally, cattle wagons, not trains where people ride, and they put us in as many people as they could put in. And they close the door from outside. There was only a small window with iron gates just to get a little air. For sanitation purpose there was only a pail. Man, woman, together! And that lasted 3 days. I'm never gonna forget there is city by the name of Kassa.¹ It's called Kassa. K-A-S-S-A. But in Hungarian it's pronounced Kassa. And we stayed there, because that was not far from the border of Hungary and Poland. And my mother should rest in peace, through that window...she got up so she can reach the window. And she saw people outside --naturally, Gentiles--and she begged for a little water. And they were laughing. I'm never gonna forget that moment in life. When my mother asked for a little water, and they would...instead of saying yes or no, they were just laughing. On the way to Birkenau, I think that was special

¹ Hungarian name for the Czech city of Košice (known in German as Kaschau). Originally a Hungarian city, located in an area which became part of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Invaded by Hungary in 1938, but returned to Czechoslovakia in 1945.

purpose what they did is when the train went through... uh ...wide water...with a bridge, the train special stopped. Somehow, for some reason, we stopped. And we are over the water. I'm never gonna forget, my father should rest in peace he said, not yelling, just quietly, "I think this is it." He was sure that we are going to be thrown in in the water. The train stayed there for 5-10 minutes; and we were continue the travelling. We don't know where we going, naturally. After 3 days, we arrived to Birkenau. People call it Auschwitz because it's two separate...but it's only, I think, 2 miles separate from one place to other. We arrived. We don't know where we arrived, but we were happy. I mean, let me put it this way--I was fifteen years old, I did not realised. But the grown up said, "At least we see barracks and people around."

Q. The whole family went with you ?

A. No my older brother, David stayed in Hungary in the labor camp. We arrived in Birkenau four of us: my father, my mother, my brother and myself. When we arrived, everybody had to go down from the train. Naturally, there were a lot of old people, sick people had to be taken off because they had no strength to go down from the train, specially those wagons. They have no steps, you know, where to jump. And right away, there were SS, also inmates, from the concentration camp with striped clothing. They...they did their dirty work. Let's put it this way. And right away, they said, "Ladies, one side. Men, other side." And then there came the selection. That time I didn't know who that man is with the white gloves. But after the war, I found out. That was _____ Mengele, because he was famous that he always

carried white gloves. What happened...when they made a selection among the male population, my brother and myself said we go right. And my father should rest in peace, he showed us we should go left. And we didn't know what that time...nobody knew what means that right...right or left. But my father saw that his two sons are one side, and he's on the other side. What can be good about it? So when he thought that Mengele won't see it, he run over to our side. I'm never gonna forget, and I don't how, but he noticed it. He went to my father and he knocked with his white gloves on the shoulder and he showed him...go back. And naturally the result he went straight to the crematorium and we stayed in Birkenau for 3 days and then we were taken for to work in a concentration camp in Silesia, Poland. We didn't know what happened with my mother that time. We didn't know if she went straight or she went to a labor camp, but after the liberation a girl came home to our town and we hoped that my father gonna come home, my mother gonna come home. And one day she said, "I'm gonna tell you. Don't wait for your mother. Your mother died 4 weeks after the liberation in Bergen-Belsen. She made through the whole year working and they took her into Krakow, from Krakow to another camp and from another camp to Bergen-Belsen. But, like thousands and thousands of people, men and women, their stomach couldn't take the food. They were so weak. And they ate so much, they couldn't take it and they died. And that's what happened with my mother. She's...she's resting in Bergen-Belsen. I don't know where because I went...after I found out that she died in Bergen-Belsen and 6 months after staying home in January of 1946, I made my way to Germany...back to Germany. I mean at that time the borders were still like almost like free. You could go and I made my way to travel to Bergen-Belsen to find out where my mother is resting. I arrived, but Bergen-Belsen became...uh...DP

camp, like a lot of these camps. And the Rabbi said, "Mr. Schwartz, I would gladly help you, but I want to tell you four weeks after liberation, they still buried thousands and thousands of inmates without name, without any list, who is buried where. It was...we couldn't handle it because too many...too many died. I can show you, he says, places. Here a place 500 inmates. Here a hundred...two hundred... So what I did, I went to look the place and it was like another place in _____ and I went back...I ran back to my DP camp in Pocking, which was near Mannheim in Bavaria.

Q: Can we go back to...when you were in Birkenau only 3 days days, you said, and then you went to Silesia. Then what happened?

A: Yes. Yes. In Silesia, they took us to a camp. It's called Wolfsberg.² When we arrived, we found 20 Jewish inmates from Poland. They became...one became an lageraltester, and a couple of them became kapos, you know. And to tell you the truth, they were very rough on us. Why? Because they were Polish Jews and they yelled at us. You know, we suffering already 4 years while they were staying from and eating the good stuff and all these things. And they put together not regular barracks but in a real emergency, it was like heavy cardboard, round...round like shacks, you know. And we were sleeping in...on wood, one near the other, about 25 in a shack like this. And many came....October or November...I don't know exactly the month, and we say that they're starting to build regular barracks from

² Subcamp of Gross Rosen, located in Lower Silesia at Friedland.

wood. We know that we have to be prepared to stay there winter time. We worked...I worked night shift in tunnels. We...we made tunnels because there were big mountains and the mountains consisted inside of stones. And we made tunnels over there because that's where they were hiding machineries. Matter of fact, that tunnel what we were building, they told us openly that they're bringing...there was a big machinery factory in Budapest, and they bring machineries from there. Plus they wanted the German soldiers...they knew that the Russians are coming. I mean 1944, they knew that the war is lost for them. But they wanted to kill as many Jews as possible in a hurry. And they wanted to hide over there in the tunnels and when the Russians come to use all kind of heavy artillery to shoot from that...from the tunnels. Matter of fact, my job...you see, I was still not 16 years old. So they had pity on me, the kapos, and I was...I was riding the locomotives because they were little wagons what carried the stone from the tunnel out. And I was driving the locomotive. It was simples ones, you know, so you didn't have to learn how to...and we carried the stones. We dumped it and went back for more stones. And one day I went back to the camp in the morning and I found out the bad news. My brother got hurt. Because he wanted to put together two wagons. Not with the train what I was driving. Somebody else was driving it. And he didn't realize it, and the two trains...one was fill up with stones catched...the two bumpers catched his leg. And that was bad news and I tell you why. Because any little thing happened to a person like got very bad injury on the hand or on the leg, they didn't play too much. They amputate. And the next day I came back to the camp from work and that was the news what they told me that your brother's leg. I don't remember. I think it was right leg was amputated. But still he was in hospital. So I went to visit him every day. He never told me. That's something I never

gonna forget. He never told me what happened to him. He never showed me that his leg was amputated. He never told me. I knew. I didn't talk about it and he didn't talk about it. And that went on for a...4 weeks. But then the Russian came every day closer and closer to the camp. And the camp had to be liquidated and they took away all the people from the hospital. Came wagons, trucks, horse and carriages, and all the people in the hospital was taken away...uh...and it was like a district in that neighborhood which has a crematoria, because by us in the camp was no crematorium. And they took them away, all of them from the hospital and they got killed in the crematorium. And after they left...a couple of days later, we started to march to march from the camp. The camp has to be empty. Matter of fact, sometimes we even heard with our ears the noise from the fighting...the Russians and the Germans, you know. Bombs or heavy artillery or something. We heard it. And they...we marched a full day, and we came again to a farm with a big barn and...uh...that barn could take normally...I'm talking about standing, never mind sitting or lying down, standing I would say about 2,000 people. The other thousand because we have three thousand. The other thousand was pushed in with a bayonet. You know, put in to the stomach and pushed in. The noise, the crying what went on all night, this was unbearable because... uh...anybody couldn't have no strength to stand fell down. People stepped on it. They opened the barn door 8 o'clock in the morning. That time we realized what kind of night it was because they were carrying out from the barns dead people...stepped on the body and dead. Anybody couldn't...didn't have no strength to stand, they were just dead and taken away. We marched another day and we came to a strain...train station. Their policy, the German policy, was, and that was general not particular but general policy of theirs was all the inmates...concentration

camp inmates, summer time was carried in...in closed wagons, in winter time open wagons. By that time it was winter and snow was coming down and we traveled for 3 days. We were sitting, laying, the snow was coming on us. No food. Uh...we were passing by a big hill. The train was below the hill, and somehow...I don't know...a couple of people, civilians, knew...I don't know how...but some trains...some wagons, they threw in pieces of bread, but that was not enough for three thousand people. I mean. And matter of fact, we arrived to a train station Mauthausen; but we didn't know what Mauthausen is, because... Let's put it this way. There are two kind of concentration camps. There are concentration camps where people worked and they gave...they gave them food. You worked your 12 hours. You go home to the camp, and they let you to rest; you know, nobody bothered you. And food...it was not enough, definitely; but at least it was enough to sustain you. But Mauthausen, Ebensee,³ and Majdanek and these concentration camps was just put up for killings. You know, the crematoriums on the spot. So we didn't know what Mauthausen is, but all these places-- Ebensee, Gunskirchen⁴... All these...you see, that's the neighborhood where the Russians and the Americans got together because they're pushing from two sides, and that's the area where they got together. And every time from one side...other side, they always emptied camps and they were bringing them to Mauthausen, to Ebensee. Mauthausen was a very, very big camp...concentration camp, but they couldn't kill so fast the people...as many people came...arrived. So we're staying in Mauthausen. The train...train station, SS with big dogs

³ Subcamp of Mauthausen.

⁴ Subcamp of Mauthausen.

watching on us...they...we shouldn't jump down, you know, because it's still open train. And we stayed there for about 2 hours and and we traveled further and we arrived to Ebensee. After a 3 day traveling with an open...an open train and snow falling on us, naturally, we stayed...it's called an appell. You know, we stayed in the line over there in the...on the...they take...they took us in a barrack. And I'll never gonna forget... Naturally, we had no strength, so a lot of people sit down on the snow. And next to me was a man who laid down...and there was lot of dead people at that time among us...and one SS and two inmates was going around like a you call in English, a cart, you know, with...a cart to put on the dead people and take them to the crematorium. And when they came to pick up the man laying next to me, the two inmates said to the SS, "He's still alive." The SS made a with the hand..."Forget about it. Take him." "Forget about. Take him." Uh...He's alive, but forget about this. He's finished. And then they took us inside the barrack, but we so many people we couldn't lay on our back. We had to lay sideways. They gave an order we should have to lay sideways because there's not enough room to lay on our back. And we are laying there...I remember, but then they took us to other barracks and over there we went also to work in tunnels. Also Ebensee is surrounded big, big mountains. The city is like in a valley. All around mountains, and we worked over there. I had no privilege already, like running the trains. I had to work with shovels to throw stones. One evening another guy and myself we went out to the tunnel. It was dark. And I say...we're gonna take in a little fresh air, and take a rest for 5 minutes and gonna go back. An SS caught us. And he says, "What you doing here? Why aren't you working? And why're you talking to each other." I says, "Well, with that little bread what we got, I lent him half of it and I want he should give it back to me." And they took us in...in a

SS barrack where they were headquartering, you know, watching the people. Actually, they were not in the town. They were outside. They had there barracks. And first they took in the other guy. And I heard yelling and the yelling stopped. And they took me in. And I was prepared, you know, because I heard the other guy. The SS somehow he...he got pity on me because I was not 16 years old. He says, "Listen. We're gonna give you 10 lashes, if you gonna keep quiet. But if you're gonna yell, you're gonna get 20." I don't know where I took the strength, but I didn't yell and I got 10 and they send me back to a tunnel to work. About 2 weeks before the liberation! You see, they...the way they operated so that nobody could figure out what they have in mind. What happened...two weeks before the liberation, three SS came into our barrack and they said everybody has to stay in the line. And we knew right away that those people who still able to work, they're gonna take them to work. And those who are not able to work, they're gonna take them to the gas chamber or the crematorium and kill them. I'll never forget when it came mine...next, I begged them. I showed it that I'm still able to work....they should take me. I begged them like a kid could beg somebody. And they did not take me. So I was prepared that I'm going to get killed. But after we found out, it was just a opposite way. Because they knew the American are coming, and those who they think will die anyway, why...why bother to kill them. They're going to die anyway. Those who figured they could last more than two weeks, they took them...took them out, and they killed them. That's how I survived. When I got liberated...it was a Sunday, 2 o'clock, and that time...not that time, a couple of days later, the Americans, you know, they started to take care of us. And they weigh us. I weighed 70 pound. 70 pound! But it looks like God wanted I should stay alive. What happened is Sunday afternoon they put up a big kitchen in the

open...the Americans. And all we had to do is stand in the line, and they didn't care how many times you are standing in the line. You finished eating, if you want to stand in line again, you get again hot soup. So by...one day I had a little strength and I went in to the city. It was...uh...I don't know exactly...you had go over a bridge...I would say about a mile...a mile and a half. And I didn't do nothing. A lot of people...they went in with friend, robbed, uh...the German families, you know, what they found. Me, I was a kid. I didn't need nothing. What do I need? So what I did is I went from one house to another eating. Whatever they gave me, I was eating. And about 10 o'clock I went back to the camp. And I was lucky. I was lucky. Why? Because I lay down. I lay down and while I was laying...excuse for the expression, I vomited the whole thing out. If that would have staying in, that would finish me. So that's in general what I went through in the concentration camp. Naturally, there's stories I can tell you. And matter of fact, you ask me the story, but I can tell you...uh...you know, we have a book which it says if all the oceans would be ink and all the forests would be pencils, wouldn't be enough to tell the whole story. But that's the general. Then I stayed in that camp about 4 weeks until a couple of us, we got liberated...uh...three people from our town. We decided we're going home. We don't know what we're gonna find, whom we're gonna find. But we're going...we decided we're going home to Hungary. There was no train. There was no transportation. We...when I say we...is a friend of mine...it just happened he died last year...and myself. We knew the train is going that direction toward the border, and we sit...within two wagons, there's a round thing which locks together, you know, between the two trains, and we are sitting... He was sitting one one side, and I was sitting on other side. We traveled 24 hours like that. During the night, our job was every half minute to

watch on each other we shouldn't fall asleep because if we fell asleep, we fell down, and that's a goodbye. We came after a whole night traveling like this...we came to a station. I don't know which station. I don't remember. I don't remember it was still Germany or it was already Austria or Hungary....I don't remember. I remember one thing. When it got...the light came on, it was day...daylight and the train was staying in the station, and I said to my friend, "I'm going to wash my face a little bit so freshen up a little bit." And I didn't know there was another train, full of SS, by the Russians taking...they took them to Russia. And Russians, they were so violent. They didn't care SS, inmates going home, you know...they so...people in that...in the station...middle of washing and a Russian soldier came over. He grabbed by the neck, and he showed me I should go in the wagon. When I saw the wagon with the SS, it...my eyes blackened...what is this? I am just coming from the concentration camp. And I start crying and matter of fact, I showed him that piece of paper what I got when I got liberated by Americans. And usually the Russian soldiers, you know, if they would see a paper like this they don't...they don't care. Somehow the Russian soldier, he didn't know how to read it; and he gave it to one of the SS in the wagon, and he somehow explained to the Russian soldier that I'm just coming home from the concentration camp. And he said, "Go." It didn't took...it wouldn't take not too much that I would wind up in Siberia with...uh...with SS, you know, together with...with those people who killed us. Because the Russians...matter of fact, a lot of Hungarian Jews after the liberation, they took them to Siberia...Siberia. Because if they wanted 100 people, they didn't care who the 100 people is, as long as 100 people go. So after traveling...uh...nice couple of days, we arrived to Budapest. And by that time...you see...uh...Budapest was liberated in January of 1945. Because you see, the

Russians coming from Hungary, they're going to Austria and then to Germany. So it took to May and the war...the second world war ended May 8. I got liberated 2 days before the end of the war. Like I mentioned before that's...that's where the area where they got together, the Russians and Americans. And when I arrived to Budapest, naturally, the first thing we did, my friend and myself, we found out there any Jews alive. Or something. Anything. So they told...they told us, "Yes, they's a...by the Jewish synagogue there an organization where they're getting money from the United Jewish Appeal. And everybody who goes there and say they are just coming from Germany gets a couple of pengö...--like a dollar, you know. And we can continue our destiny wherever we wanta go (cough) go and...uh...we did continue and...uh..and I arrived in the town where I was born. I found my brother in the station. He wanted to travel somewhere. With the same train as I arrived, he wanted to take the same train going further...the same direction where the train was going. When he saw me, naturally, he didn't take the train anymore. You know, the happiness was unbelievable that I'm alive. And later on, 5 months, but...I got home the end of June. The communism in Hungary got stronger and stronger by the day. And by November of 1945, they called in my brother, questioning him. From what he see, living, he's not working. Where is he taking the money to live on? And the anti-Semitism was very bad. All we heard from the Gentiles...from neighbors where we lived together all our lives, they said to us, "How could it be...how could it be so bad? You came back more people than they took you. We came back from 35 families...we were together 105 people got deported, and we came back I think 6. And they had the nerve to say, "How could it be so bad if you came...came back more people than they took you?" So I saw there's no future, and I went up to Budapest and over

there they organized transport to go back to Germany. I didn't know that time what's in Germany, but I know here's no good. Here's no good so I have to leave. I didn't...besides my brother I didn't find...our house was bombed from the Germans. My parents never came...didn't come back and my brother. So I went to Germany. I stayed there 2 years. But my life was...on the road to Germany, we stopped in Austria...in Vienna, and I wrote a letter to my brother. I said, "Look, they're helping us. Get up. Come. I don't know what's the future, but there's no future there. Come." Matter of fact..uh..6 months later, he joined me in Germany. I forget to mention to you...it's very...also a very tricky thing what they did to Germans. When we arrived to Birkenau, they had...uh...sand...a pile...a big pile of sand. And we were...they gave us cap...round cap. In the cap, we had to take the sand, the whole pile of sand, carry...uh...like a quarter of a mile. Filled...everybody had to fill in the cap, empty it, and come back, empty it again...I mean fill it up again and carry it, and we had to make it fast because slow is no good. Fast...we had to make it fast. And next day in Birkenau, they gave us post cards. And we were so naive, so...we didn't know what's what, they gave us as many post cards we wanted to write to our parents, to our brothers, to our sisters. Our parents are dead already, but they give us...they gave us post cards to write. How...this how tricky they were, you know, just to fool people. You never know what they were up to. And I stayed 2 years in the DP camp and it was...maybe I didn't know how to approach, but it was very hard to get a visa to come to the United States because there were too many applicants. Not only Jews, Gentiles....there was other camps with Gentiles also. They said they're also refugees. Polish, Russians, Hungarians. So after staying for 2 years, I...somebody told us there is a way somehow. The way is to go west to France, and from there we can take...we can apply for a

student visa, going, studying. So I stayed 2 years in Paris. Matter of fact, one of the Rabbis in a small town gave me a paper that he's asking the American Embassy to let me go to the United States to study for a year and he's giving me a position as a assistant Rabbi in the town. And I got the student visa. Naturally, I never went back. Well, I got the visa for 1 year and after a year I didn't go back. I'm not supposed to work, but...in the United States because I'm a student and I loved to work. So what shall I do? I have to eat. I have to pay where I stayed for the lady. So I took up a false first name. And I took out a Social Security Card. And I went to work. 5 minutes. Alright. Can you give us 5 minutes? Uh...you can help me?

Q: You were talking about going to work.

A: Yal. One evening...one evening I came home from work and this was around 6 o'clock and one lady who lived on the same floor because I lived in an apartment house, she run...she was waiting for me to come home. And she was so excited she didn't know to tell me. I said, "Tell me what happened?" She says, "Mr. Schwartz, what happened with you?" I said, "Why?" "The FBI is looking for you." The FBI! So I knew right away. I says...I forget already her name, Mrs. King. Yal...Mrs. King. I said, "Mrs. King, Don't worry about it. I guarantee it. Believe me. I didn't kill nobody. I didn't steal, and I know why they're looking for me." So 10 o'clock that evening the FBI showed up and they took me to Ellis Island. But this Ellis Island, I tell you the truth was my second trip because when I arrived with the boat as a student, they also took me there. So I knew. Ellis Island, it's...I...you can't call it a prison, but you were still locked up. So they took me to Ellis Island, and next day I had the right to

call somebody so naturally, I called my brother and he got in touch with a gentleman who was doing this kind of work, putting up bails for people like me whom they took to Ellis Island, you know, as a student. So he posted a \$500 bond. And I went...and I got freed from Ellis Island. I went back to my house, and I went back to work because I had no other...no other way than to work. I called up somebody from the Democratic party in Brooklyn, and he...they gave me a lawyer to take care of my papers. "Yes, Mr. Schwartz, I'm gonna work in behalf of you. But we have to go through a hearing on Ellis Island." I went through a hearing 4 hours. The 4 hours consisted from 10:00 to 12:00 and from 2:00 to 4:00. They questioned me very hard. Mine answer was, "Listen, I can't help myself. I have no where to go. I have no where to go." You see, that time there was not...not even an Israel. Israel was established 1948. I says, "You can...you can't throw me out because I have no where to go." And I was still young. And so they told me that I have to go to any three embassies, representing three countries, and make application they should take me. And I...I did made application, and... So we had to go back to the second hearing, and I told them nobody wants me. And I cannot go back to Hungary; because if I go back to Hungary, I facing the second concentration camp. They questioned me all kind of questions...uh ... if.... They figured maybe I'm sympathizing with communists, and they asked me mine opinion about communism. And I told them mine opinion is the Germans used to wear green shirt⁵ and...uh... communists wear red shirts, but they are the same. And I got permission to stay in the United States. After 2...2, 3 years I got mine green card. After that I got my citizen papers, and I'm thankful to the

⁵ Brown or black shirts.

United States to give me a place. And I grew up a family...a nice family, and I make a nice living. I would say about an average, and besides everyday troubles, I'm happy.

Q: That was very well done. Can you tell me about the last few weeks in Ebensee? What was it like?

A: There's no word for it...to describe it. The cruelty and what we went through, because their function...when I'm talking about their function...the SS function, was the more people to kill because every day thousands and thousands of other inmates arriving to Ebensee because that was the area where the Russians and American meet each other. You see, we were liberated May 6. Two days later the war was over. So it...that's where they met, the Russians and the Americans. So their function was to kill as many people...as many people they brought in from all other concentration camps. But with all their technic...with all geniuses what they put in how to kill more Jews, they couldn't kill as fast as they were coming in. And there was no food whatsoever. Even the SS were going hungry. Even they were getting very little food. And naturally the human nature, those people who are still have a little strength to walk and we still went to work, and because we knew those people who are gonna say I have no strength to go to work gonna get killed. Without food. We got in the morning a little...I won't call it coffee...a little black colored water. And people were so desperate, they were chewing coal, sucked coal, eating grass. And I have to say it that they lost all humanity whatever you call it, and those people who died during the night and few of them they still had on their lower part some meat...some meat, when we got up in the morning, we saw

those people dead. But the way they were carrying them, we saw that pieces of the body were missing. And during the morning or after work, they made somehow a little fire, and they put it on like they say in the United States, they barbecued and they ate it. I am very fortunate to say I never touched it. But there was a lot of them eating it. And it was...it was terrible. We got liberated May 6 in 1945 which came out a Sunday. Saturday, they hanged 12 people in middle of the camp on the gallows, and all those people who stayed who can still walk had to go march in front of them to see how they were hanging from the gallows. Another thing...very interesting thing happened. Looked likes there was some...couple...not some, but a couple Germans who still couldn't take it what's going on. What happened is we got liberated Sunday. Friday evening before we went to bed, there was a message from the Mayor of Ebensee. And the message was that we gonna go tomorrow morning...that means Saturday morning...from appell...appell it's called, you know, where you have to stand in the line. And the SS gonna tell us that the Russians are very close and in order to get saved, we shouldn't get hurt, we all should go in the tunnel. And the tunnel was prepared...the gate, you know, after you go in to bomb the gate and we all gonna die there. So the Mayor sent a message that he don't know if it's gonna help or not, but when we gonna stand in appell Saturday morning and we gonna hear that speech, we should all start yelling with one voice, "We don't care if we gonna go....if we gonna get killed, we're not gonna go nowhere. We're staying here." And it looks like they have got the strength...they didn't have the strength or the willingness to force us anymore because they know it's 1 day or 2 days left and we didn't go. And that was fortunate who had still...uh...had to stand, stayed alive. But it was prepared to kill, and that was the easiest way to kill us, to go in the tunnel and...uh...bomb

the...uh...gate, you know, so all the stones would fell down from the mountains, and we couldn't get out. That's all. And they...maybe they would never find us. That we are there. I don't know how many thousands people buried alive. But somehow the Mayor from Ebensee sent us a message Friday evening that we shouldn't go. So that's the story of my life.

Q: Is there anything you want to add?

A: Anything I want to add? It was...it cannot be described. It lasted 11 months, the concentration camp for me. But it's...it's...I can't...if I would be writer maybe I would write books but somebody would tell. There's only one problem with the book what ____ wrote. They way the say in English. They cover are too far apart. That's it.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.