United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Jerry Slivka
June 15, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Jerry Slivka, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on June 15, 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.

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.

JERRY SLIVKA
June 15, 1990

Q: Can you tell me your name please?

A: Jerry Slivka.

Q: Where and when were you born?

A: I was born July 11, 1915 in the Western Ukraine, which was at that time Czarist Russia.

Q: Jerry, can you tell me something about your family?

A: Well, uh I...my father was born same town. My mother was born in the same town and I had uh two sisters and two brothers. My father was a uh I don't know if you know what it means...kind of a muscue (ph)...it was a modern, self-taught Hebrew scholar. He also had like myself had the affinity for languages, uh nat...nat...natural ability I should say, and he, before the war, before the 1st World War, he used to teach uh the Polish children of Polish nobility who lived in the Ukraine, were the the owners of the large estates, the Poles, and he used to teach their children Polish. Self-taught...himself...taught himself Polish and German, and he also was a Hebrew teacher. In those days it was a very rare thing to teach modern Hebrew, because most of Jewish education was the _____, religious schools. He was one of the first to pioneer, taught modern Hebrew.

Q: Tell me about your childhood as you were growing up?

A: Well I grew up...uh when I was born...I was born during the sec...1st World War, in 1915...the war was...the the front was standing in our town for about a year so Sov...the Czarist Russia and Germans. That sector, that section of the of the front, it was manned by the Austrians and it so happened that Hungarians...the Austra-Hungarian empire so there were lots of Hungarians there too, and Germans. Uh when I was about five months old they evacuated us to the rear, the Germans did. The...at that time it was the Hungarian, the Austria-Hungarian army, and we were uh from 1915, beginning of 1916, we were about forty, fifty kilometers in the rear on this of the of the front. There uh in 1917 my brother was born and in 1918 when the war ended, we came back to our town. Uh the town was almost uh totally demolished and there was nothing to do there, so my father moved to the nearest town which was called Povorsk (ph). Uh the Polish government was just established. Poland became independent in 1918 and my father knowing Polish got a job as the mana...office manager in the Polish uh county county seat. That way he worked for a couple of years till the Poles started settling that that part of the country, because there were no Poles, very few Poles there, and they got a lot of Polish-speaking Poles and my father was fired. Uh this was about 1920. At that time the new Soviet army occupied, advanced all the way to Warsaw. They went by us and uh it was a very difficult time because there was also many Ukrainian uh independence groups trying to establish an independent Ukraine, and among them were many bands of anti-

Semitic uh armies. There was Batura (ph), and there was Bela_____ and there were many others and whoever went by uh the Jews were their victims. The pogroms there were...you know...uh but somehow we survived and in 1920 the Soviets were pushed backed from Warsaw...the the Poles call it to this day the miracle of the _____, and uh we became, Poland became a normal so-called democratic country. It turned out afterwards it was not democratic for everybody but was semi-democratic, and we lived there until 1939. Uh in the beginning it was not as bad a country as being built. Uh my father went into business. He was not a good businessman (laughter) (cough). He supplemented his income by doing some bookkeeping and writing petitions to the Polish courts in Polish because the majority of the population were Ukrainians, of course, and Jews where we lived and they needed somebody to...there were a few Polish people that knew Polish, so he used to supplement his income by writing petitions to the to the courts or any other Polish authorities. I grew up uh in this town till about...when my father lost his job before that he he went...he became a teacher in the neighboring town where I, we, where I was where I was born, and for several...for about a year or so I stayed. I was three years old and I already started learning something and my father was a stickler for for education. And uh I stayed there for a year or two. I missed my...it was only twelve kilometers away but it might have been (laughter) you know the the moon. That's that's while, you know, didn't have any cars or we went by train which then you had to walk six kilometers or went by horse and wagon, so it was tough and I missed my family though my father was there. One day I remember my father went for _____, went home, and he left me there and my...and and he took by horse and went to the nearest railroad station which was about six kilometers away and I I was probably four or five years old and I ran after the _____ realize it that he sneaked out I guess. He didn't want...it was expensive to go by train, see, but he didn't realize...to this day I remember it. I I resented it very much, and I ran after him into the forest. They had to go through a big forest. There were wolves in the forest but he...I was yelling, you know, and and he he heard me and he turned back and he took me with him. (Laughter) So I grew up in that town. Then my father went to _____as I told you before, and he didn't do badly. It was...he had a uh military garrison. The the the terrain around our town was swampy and and lot lots of forests, lots of woods and it was used for training the Polish army, so we used to do business with the Polish army. Uh my father used to have a uh beer parlor like, you know, which Poles used to come and drink. He also had a kind of a so-called department store-like which was probably twelve by twelve (laughter), but it had everything and we used to make a living from the...the Ukrainian peasants used to come and buy from us. Uh later on it was very difficult because in 1936 I think, _____ died, the leader of Poland who established a semi-dictatorship and since then the life for Jews in Poland was very tough.

Q: _____ we've talked a lot about Poland. I would like to know about you as a young boy growing up. What kind of schools did you go, what.....?

A: Well, I went, as I told you before, first of all my father taught me. Later on there were others. When he went to business, there were other teachers. One of them particular

influenced my life very greatly. His name was Moshi _____. He was a modern Hebrew teacher. He taught me everything, you know, all...my my rounded education all in Hebrew, so I learned Hebrew quite well. Uh but it was compulsa...this was...this was schools were not recognized by the Polish government. They were uh...we, we ourselves organized them. You know, we used to hire our teacher and this was a small town, probably about forty Jewish families, so we we were compelled to to attend the Polish grammar school, which in our town went only to the fourth grade. In bigger cities it went to the seventh grade. And and and I was very advanced for that kind of education, you see, except in Polish, which I learned, but I mean uh math and all the other subjects I learned already when I was five years old. I had to learn _____, so I I....I went up through the fourth grade and later on my parents enrolled me into a uh gymnasium which is high school. Uh it was operated by the _____ network of Hebrew schools, Zionist Hebrew...Hebrew language teaching Hebrew uh teaching _____ Hebrew in _____, which is uh about thirty kilometers from my town, and I stayed there. And again I stayed with a family which was uh very crowded. They had two rooms with four kids and I was with them and my uh mother used to send me every week uh freshly baked _____, pastry and butter and all this stuff and I managed by myself as _____ so. I entered...I took an exam and entered the third class. This was a uh...well, this was high school up to the eighth...you graduated uh matriculated uh in eight eight classes. I entered in the third, but they were very expensive and at that time my father's business went down and he could not afford to pay and after a year my younger brother was ready to go to school. He wanted him to get a little bit of education, so I was...I went home and my younger brother, second brother, went to school. So my formal education ended there. I still had the same teacher we had before for about a year and a half, till about my thirteenth year, thirteen, fourteen years old and that was it. That that's where my formal education ended. I tried of course all the time to upgrade my education. I I taught myself. I read a lot and this teacher helped me a great deal. Uh at that time it was a very difficult...what do when you are fourteen or fifteen? And we had some, I had friends...well, my age probably we had a group of about ten kids, boys and girls, and we organized a uh group. Originally it was _____, a leftist Zionist organization. Later on the majority thought that this was too too leftist for them, and we organized a _____, which was the revisionist group and then uh there was nothing to do in this town, so at age sixteen I decided to go to a kibbutz and go to Israel. So we went but at that time it was the most famous kibbutz in Poland called _____. It was a stone quarry where we worked. Uh not enough to eat, lots of work and I stayed there for a few months and then one of my friends tried to leave and he went home and while going home he stopped in my town. He lived a little further and he told my parents about the conditions in this kibbutz, very difficult. So they decided that I should come home. So they wrote me a letter where my mother is very sick (laughter) and I should come home. I came home, of course. Thank God she was not sick and I didn't go back. Besides you had to wait...it was not so much the hard work and the lack of food, but you might have to wait two years, three years, before you get a certificate, you know, to go to...it was then Palestine. So what do you do? Nothing. There was nothing to do in this little town, so my parents decided to send me to Warsaw. My mother had a sister in Warsaw. So I went there and my uncle had a little shop but I wasn't

interested too much in it. I don't know why and I couldn't get established so I went to Lodz (ph). Lodz was the industrial capital of Poland. Had a great textile industry and Jews were uh dominated the small textile businesses, uh manufacturing sweaters, uh socks, uh gloves, these kind of...the large textile mills, even though some of them were owned by Jews, had no Jewish employees. They had non-Jewish employees. It was so-called _____ which was owned by a Jew named Cohen (ph) who was, by the way, a Hasid (ph), a very religious Jew and there was _____ who built great factories for Polish people, but for the Jews he built a hospital, for Jews that could not work. There was strong unions there, Polish nationalist unions, even socialist unions were very much against Jews. So it was very difficult. I went to ___ school there for a few months and I learned making sweaters, and I used to stay there for a few months, earn enough to get a ticket to go home (laughter) for this...you know the season was uh summer. Middle summer and late fall and then there was no work. These were small...people that lived in one room or two rooms and had a...two or three machines, hand-operated sweater making machines. That's what I did for a few years and uh this was known...you know what _____ means? And that's the way life was till 1939. I came home in '38 and stayed till 1939. In 1930...by _____ went from _____, from the extreme right to a leftist organization called the Anti[a]Fascist Front. I didn't know at that time that it was dominated by the_____, the communist youth organization. Later on the Communist Party in Poland was uh dissolved by Stalin but this group...the the uh the Communist Youth Organization was instructed to infiltrate other organizations, regardless right or left. I didn't....was not exactly uh you know, convinced of communism because I was still, I still had Zionist inclinations. I couldn't understand why Hebrew language which was near and dear to me should be banned, which was banned by the Communist Party. Uh many other things which I could not understand of course at that time. I understand it now. And uh so I joined that group till I find out that they were...this was just a uh arm of the Communist Youth movement so I left them but I had some idea about the Communist uh Marxism, Communism, Leninism, so forth, the way it was then...you know, it changed. Especially lately. When I came home and in 1939 when the Soviet Union occupied this part of Poland...the Germans occupied the other part of Poland...I uh became active in the local the uh well cultural Communist uh leadership of the town. I got ...as a as a result of this I got the job as the manager of the village store and it lasted till 1941 when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union.

Q:

A: The Soviet occupation was difficult. We didn't feel it so much in our town because there were no no bourgeois, no no people that were sent away but there were Poles that lived around, settlers. They were not native to this part of the country, but Poland settled them there after 1918, 1920. These were participants in the Polish war for independence, in the 1st World War, and they awarded...they gave them parcels of land to to work and there were they were called colonies. They were not called villages. They were called Polish colonies and one night they called me and _____, cold...it was a very cold winter in 1939-40. They called us to the village uh _____, well the the uh the local the local the

local authorities and uh I saw a lot of wagons there. There was not even a _____ yet. This was still still uh privately owned. They called them all _____. They were sitting there was a some people from the NKBD in charge of this and they told us...uh first of all they screened everyone of us and said can you, can you spend the night, can you spend the morning and so forth, and when they came to me I told them I can't...I have to be in the morning in the store because I have to distribute bread and there was...aga...again a military garrison there which we supplied with bread, their families would buy bread, and I had to be there in the morning. I I smelled there was something wrong there. I didn't know what. In the morning when I woke up I saw hundreds of wagons taking away these Polish families from all around, from the whole region, uh loading them into into uh freight cars. Uh they had, these freight cars had little stoves to heat...not like the German. By by the way, I think that Hitler learned from Stalin how to how to do these things. Of course he improved on it using German technology and German, you know, ___ but originally it was tough. And in one night they re-settled hundreds of families in our region, Poles, and sent them to Siberia. Also some of the former Communist leaders were arrested and you know, it was kind of uh the same thing I think that is going on _____ Israel. They they...(_____) I know, but but there is there is a common thread there. Uh whoever had some grudge against somebody else, they denounced them and they were taken away. I know a very good friend of mine was...a Ukrainian, not a Jew, Ukrainian...leader of the _____, spent probably about four or five years in Polish jails for being a Communist. The Communist Party was illegal in Poland, and he was sent away to Siberia, together with these Poles, the same night. But we didn't have...there weren't very many rich Jews in town. _____ sent away, most of...in the big cities they sent away all these rich Jews...(laughter) you know, a small manufacturers, small store owners, they sent him away, doing him a favor by the way because most of them survived. Most of them survived. Some died from hunger, starvation but some survived, so it was not as...I had it very well, you know, I I had a good job. I had no problems, you know. Whatever came in I could have...the the...there wasn't much available but there was bread, you see, and there was sugar. Sugar was a luxury item, but the little I got, you know, first of all I _____ my family. My father worked as the uh accountant at the regional uh group in the same organization...the uh cooperatives, village cooperatives, and my brother came from Warsaw. My brother was in Warsaw. When I when I left, he came to Warsaw and he somehow got established with my uncle. He managed his business. This uncle of mine in Warsaw didn't speak Polish. He was born in Poland. You know, for for hundreds of years....he lived in Poland but he did not speak Polish. He spoke Yiddish. And my brother managed his business. He was manufacturing uh locks for women's pocketbooks, and he kept the books and delivered ___ the shop here. He employed about four or five people there, but when the war...when the Germans occupied, he left Warsaw. There were, you know, thousands and thousands who left Poland, crossed the River Bork (ph), and came _____ the German or Soviet authorities. So uh it was difficult but it was bearable to live. To us it was...I even believed some of their slogans, see, about uh rights of minorities, because the left persecuted the Jews, Jews couldn't a job. In Poland it was impossible. And the Polish uh from 1920 till 1939 uh there wasn't a single Jewish policeman, not a single Jewish railroad man, not a single Jewish uh letter carrier or street sweeper. All

government jobs were closed to Jews. And here the Soviet Union came in and _____ to calling somebody a dirty, you know, Jew or kike (ph)...it was fifteen years in Siberia. This was Stalinism, and so _____ so uh it was kind of...we didn't realize then what was going on in the Soviet Union. Of course there were millions already sent away. Millions dying. There was there was cannibalism. But we didn't know that... to us this was ideal. It took us some time. In 1941, when the war started between...the the Germans...the the...Hitler's forces attacked the Soviet Union. We were about uh forty kilometers from the border. I was mobilized into the Soviet army. I was too old already to go in the regular army...I was called to reserve training, for about four or six weeks _____ . I was already at that time twenty-six. They took me for a few weeks into a unit which watched enemy war...uh enemy aircraft, in training, of course, because nobody expected a war. This was about the middle of June, June 10th or 12th, somewhere along there _____. I was stationed at the same in town. These people would go home for meals and uh one day, on June 22nd, I happened to be on watch in a tall tower. I was standing there with binoculars watching for enemy craft, and sure enough I saw enemy craft...I saw the German Mescherschmidts (ph). They were flying on their way back from Kiev. They had already bombed Kiev, the last city in the Ukraine, and on the way back they dropped a few bombs in our...at the railroad station, not aiming at anything, just to create a little bit of panic. And when I called the center to tell them ...it was an old fashioned field telephone...you crank it...and I called that this wasn't the uh _____ headquarters. It was ____ here, and I called them and told them that I think I saw (laughter) I saw enemy craft and that they bombed our railroad station. (Laughter) He says is that so. _____. They knew already _____, and so he asked me what kind of _____ it was and I told him. He said well, we were attacked by the Fascists and this is war. We saw a few more...within the next few days we saw a few more uh German aircraft flying over our town. They didn't do any damage _____ bombs, but within a week or so we could hear artillery...uh noise of artillery shells, in the distance of about twenty or thirty kilometers, and that meant that was retreat. So with my unit...uh I went home to say goodbye. We didn't know how long it will last, _____ heroic Red army will not let uh the _____ occupy. It just, you know, happened in the beginning they didn't expect it was, you know, we'll get it back. No question about it. We will be in Berlin probably within...the same the same thought was in '39. I I...a funny thing...in the Polish...I was also mobilized in the Polish Army doing the same thing. It was not the army, but it was like a national guard...uh we watched for for German planes and _____. They never occupied until then. So we retreated, and we kept retreating and the further east we went, the further east the Germans were. They they put...they dropped parachute drops ahead of us. Great panic. Small groups. Uh the Russians were not prepared war. They told, you know, they they killed the great generals _____ and others _____ killed _____, so they were without a uh higher uh staff of skilled officers. They had to train new ones. They were unprepared and we thought that this was an army that cannot be defeated but they didn't have to fight uh Poland. Poland was of course done in seventeen days. And we saw these big tanks, the the all the equipment they had, which we did not see in the Polish army. Of course we didn't realize what the German army had, so the further we went the further they advanced, till finally we came to a town where we we couldn't go any

further, but somehow we got out and we came to Kiev (ph), and in Kiev they assigned me and a few others to to another unit. It was a uh machine gun unit in in bunkers. The...about twenty, thirty kilometers from Kiev. It was called the Kiev defense line all along heavily built cement uh blocks cement un cement bunkers with machine guns in them, and they they had a garrison of about ten thousand people in it, with a commissioned officer and non-commissioned officers. We were supposed to _____. It was camouflaged with a barn, so when they looked from the other side, they saw the barn. The Germans were just across the river, about half a mile away, so then they saw us...and they're not supposed to see us. We had trenches built from the barn _____ but one day they uh a few artillery shells they demolished the barn. There was the bunker (laughter) in its full glory standing. And uh we stayed there for a few weeks. I happened to be elected the uh the editor of the unit newspaper. The Soviet Union has every every every establishment uh the commercial or military uh etiquette, used to have a war paper, paper that was, you know, the praise those who did good work and criticize those who did bad work, and so on and so on. I didn't know in the beginning what it was, so I wrote articles about the glorious Soviet army and Stalin and so on. Finally, they called me and told me this, this is not...Pravda will take care of that. You write who in the unit learned to shoot better than ____, who has been falling asleep on the...one day I did fall asleep, but _____. Uh so they...every so often I used to be called to conferences that the _____, the political uh comman..the political officer of the units, which was in, near Kiev. One day they called me in. They told me to take my rifle, whatever I had...I didn't have much...and report to the headquarters of this...it was a...called...it was the nineteen, twenty-ninth uh independent battalion, machine gun battalion, to report to headquarters in the rear and I did report there and they took me in to a place there and there I found some uh neighboring...uh one fellow I knew which was not _____, was a Jewish fellow from a town near us and I found there many others, Jews and Ukrainians who were from the so-called western Ukraine, that were born, or lived...not just born...lived in in the Soviet...the territory that was Poland before the war, and they took us on the front, with the purpose of putting us in work battalion, because they trust us. _____. The irony of the thing was was that the native Ukrainian soldiers that lived around the Ukraine, they deserted by the thousands. We did not, especially Jews, because we knew where we going to desert. You know, if we fall into German hands we'll be dead, so we stayed to the last man, and we came uh...they took us on the front and again we were in Kiev and within two days that territory was occupied by the Germans. We were in...uh it was September I think. September '41. We were in Kiev and two days later the Germans came in and and _____ happened by that time. They didn't stay long. Right away they organized the Ukrainian police. There there was no lack of collaborators, and they killed a hundred thousand people. I left two days before then with the work battalion. And we we we traveled thousands, hundreds of thousands of people...there were uh Jews, Ukrainians, uh Poles and Germans, Soviet Germans. Germans that lived in the Soviet Union. Uh one...the the commander of my group was a German. I still remember his name...Weiss (ph). He was an officer in the Red Army, taken to the front. Not trust-worthy, and I was the only one in the unit that had a pocket watch, and he asked...he found out that I had a watch and he asked me for the watch because he had to know when to stop to ____ food,

you know. There was no no _____ and I lost my watch ____ because we came to a place where the Germans bombed us and we we disintegrated. Everyone just ran wherever he could, and my friend Weiss with my watch disappeared. He probably surrendered. Till we came uh we came to a place and I made a friend. One Jewish boy from a town not far from us and we stuck together. Just tried to find somebody to be together. Then we joined...we joined a group...no. We came we came to a town in the _____ . I'll never forget the name of the town. The town's name was _____. And there we _____ closed. We couldn't go any further, and it was Rosh Hashanna. Never forget that date...it was 19...still 1941, and we came to a place in this town and the Germans were all around us and they started shooting and we were hiding in a field of uh...what do you call it..._____ what the plant is called...they are tall stocks like....yeah...and we were heading there, hiding there, and there were uh people fell. They...probably half of us fell...before they were killed. And there was a lot of Jewish soldiers fell _____ work battalions who came from our section of the country, western Ukraine, Jews. And some of them had...they were allegedly had prayer books and they sat in the trenches and prayed. I I saw some trucks with wounded soldiers and I I don't know what happened to me...my friend who is now...I don't know if he is still alive in New York...he got ____ got sick...he got Parkinson's disease ____ but I saw ____ but at that time he was sitting _____ and I tried to help this wounded soldier get on the trucks _____. He reminded me of my _____. All of a sudden you I don't think of it as just stupid, but I I tried to help other people. This trait remains with me to this day, and at that time...the next morning...at night the Germans didn't fight...and the next morning we decided, tried to decide what to do. Then we saw a group of uh Soviet sailors...not the sea sailors...they had a group...they had a unit of uh river sailors, marching in formation, trying to get out of town. The only way...it seemed there was a big swamp which the Germans did not control, and they walked right into this swamp and I and my friend followed. When the Germans saw people in the swamp they started shooting from uh ____ artillery shells _____ you know, makes a uh big hole and it explodes uh not...what you call this...straight ahead... not _____ because if you lie down you can, you know, even if it goes near you uh you're still safe, but uh most of the explosions are ____ killed ____, especially in the water, so there were lots of people killed there. One thing I have to tell you. When I when I was walking through this swamp I suffered before...I didn't have a I didn't have a spoon. I lost my spoon. A soldier _____ without a spoon because they used to give us to feed us with a big kind of...well... _____ a container with soup for ten people, and if you had a spoon, you ate. It not you had to wait till somebody gives you his spoon after he ate, but by now it was gone. And while walking I saw a spoon...these were wooden spoons. The Russian still use them...a wooden spoons...floating you know, on the water. I picked up the spoon. I was happy. I didn't care _____, but then I mean I couldn't ____. Picked up that spoon. I had it for a long time, and when we crossed that swamp, there was a river and this friend of mine he's you know a good swimmer. I was not so good. we uh we used to have these things around our feet in the army to ___, you know, to wrap them all around your feet. And I had a pair. We put them together and uh put out, all our clothes...outer clothes...uh great coats wrapped. We had some food and cigarettes and uh he swam over and then he pulled me over with this here and we came on the other

side and there we landed in a village.... The minute we we we crossed, we swam over that river, I decided to have a cigarette. Not food but a cigarette, smoke it, and I took a puff _____ and at this.... I wouldn't be there, I probably would have stayed there, but he _____, and he survived. So we went to the village and the village was burning so we used the fire to dry our clothes and uh the next morning...then we went to a uh big barn and we slept in the hay till the next morning. The next morning we went down and we saw thousands of Russian soldiers, without without officers, without...not organized units. All, every everybody _____ and quickly there were a few officers and we decided that if we encountered some Germans, we'll fight. We had we had a one rifle between us and some grenades and they gave us when we was in that town. Gave us back our _____. We decided to fight if we saw a small group of Germans. If not we will scatter and hid and there were again these tall uh _____...I can't remember the name of that uh place and uh and sure enough when we were talking organizing there's one truck with Germans, German soldiers, that they...machine guns on it, and they're already leading a procession of prisoners of war and they motioned to us to come to surrender and the majority did. The majority surrendered. We, being Jewish, knew that this means certain death, so we headed out to the field. This friend of mine _____ but then a small uh armored car came, and they circled that because they didn't drive into the ____. They were afraid to drive in the field, but they circled it and whoever got up...and there were a lot of us still hidden...whoever got up and surrendered, they shot. They didn't take any more prisoners. We did not _____. They circled it and left, left the place. We got out and then we found a few more Russian...Soviet officers and we joined them and we were a welcomed addition to their group because by knowing Yiddish...I speak a little German too and I understand German quite well...uh they, they used to send us out uh scouting whenever we came to a village. So we traveled for about six weeks...the real uh German forces...uh at night we would sleep somewhere ____. Of course first we had to find out if they are friendly or unfriendly Ukrainians. They, they knew, these officers knew where ____ and uh at night, at night we we walked. In the daytime we would stay in the villages. One uh...in every village we approached they used to send us to find out if German _____. One night we came to a little village and we came to...at the outskirts of the village there was a house and we knocked on the window and a woman came out, a peasant woman, and she grabbed us like this...you've gotten _____. And she came out and she says, the house is full of Germans. They are soldiers. The whole village is full of Germans already. This...where's their guard. He is sitting there over this rifle asleep. So of course we could have uh thrown a grenade in there and killed them all, but we didn't. The family would have been killed, and besides the whole village was full of Germans. They would (laughter) capture us in no time. So we slowly retreated and stayed in the forest till we went all around and came to the next town. And we were like this we traveled for about I suppose about six weeks, till the one point we crossed a a point where the uh town where the that changed hands several times the last few days, and we crossed a little river there and we came out and this was...I still remember...I I remember the date because it was uh the Russian revolution date, of the Russian...November 7th. We crossed and we we found the Russian sentry standing sleeping so we woke him up but _____ and he told us where the headquarters are. We came there, and there they took us and sent us again to

work battalions. That's a whole long story. Took us...they took us to uh Stalingrad, ____ Stalingrad uh and we dug anti...anti-tank ditches. It was already winter. Uh the ground was frozen probably six feet and there was six feet cover of snow and we cleared the snow, dug the ditches. The the Germans never crossed them. They went all around. Was a waste of time. Uh with very little food. We stayed in peasants' houses _____ worked together all the time. We stayed there for a few months till spring and in the spring they took us to another town and there they were building a railroad between...uh started between...on the other side of the ____, from _____, from the Caspian Sea, all the way past...I can't remember now the name of the city. Four hundred kilometers of railroad. There was no railroad on the other side of the Balkan. The Germans already occupied the territory, uh the west side. This was the eastern side of the Balkan. And then they built a railroad and this was administered by the MKBD, the uh prison authorities. And the workers were prisoners. We were not. We were work battalions but under their jurisdiction. So my friend and I were picked to guard headquarters, which was a very cushey job. _____ rifle watch this _____ would be free in the village _____ not too many men, mostly women, but you got some food ____. Then one day there was a quarrel between the MKBD and the military uh _____ don't make the ____ by building that railroad and we stayed ____ guards. _____. This was a very difficult job because it was all done by hand. Uh the territory there, the the topography, it's flat so we had to dig, you know, on the side of the road there and make a...how do you call it when you make a railroad...a trestle...the the high mountain like...all by hand, yes, we did it by hand. There was one of the uh KPDB colonels used to come and inspect it. Happened to be Jewish. His name was ____ and I I remember the name because it was in Hebrew, it was the name of _____, White Russian uh shirt, navy blue pants with shiny boots and he used to _____. And _____. And he used to _____ the rations the prisoners get, so if if you made the norm...it was twelve cubic feet, whatever _____ you had to by wheelbarrow build it all the way up. You got...there were three kinds of soup and a little bit of bread. If you made the norm, you got the one that had more...it was mostly millet (ph) soup, potato soup. If you made less, you got the second one or the third. Also made ____ and couldn't work, you lost your...you had no strength, so I was there for about two months till we finished. _____ survive and never _____, somewhere in the middle, but I survived. And then uh when we finished, they sent us to the front. And the front was Stalingrad, so we were across Stalingrad and on the other side of the _____, training in a forest. Training to join the forces ____ Stalingrad. This was a _____. And we were there for about four, six weeks and then they decided to send us to the front. We were we were not in uniforms even yet. We had old uniforms, torn ____. _____ uniforms ready for the front. We have to go through a political uh examination and then what they called it...a Soviet _____, a special, special division. But they had KBD examine you...are you worthy of dying for the _____, and when they came to me I had I had a cap _____. Veterans wear these kind of caps. In uh the Soviet Union they have red uh red on it, _____ and this, all the officers wore that. I lost mine _____ and the surrounding and once we found a a store of caps, of these and there was officers...all of the wore it, so I took one. I I wore it. Took a look at this and says are you an officer. I says no, I'm not an officer. So were did you get this cap? So I tell him I was surrounded by the German _____. That was it. So they took

all those who were surrounded by Germans, and again those who they seemed uh they deemed not worthy or not trustworthy and the sent us away to the Euro (ph) Mountains. Uh part way by foot we walked and then by trains till we came...I think it was _____...I can't remember the name...but I think it's _____ Euro Mountains. It it was early fall but there was already snow and a thick pine forest in tents, and they said they were...they dig out of a a uh hole in the ground, put a tent over it, put a little uh wood-burning stove which had to be fed twenty-four hours a day. There was no shortage of wood around there, so we used to sit and you know feed that stove and sit around the thing to keep warm. And we stayed there for a few weeks. It was administered KBD, surrounded by barbed wire and that was it. We didn't know what's happening to us. After a few weeks they put us and took us under guard already, under guard, to the railroad station and they put us in...they used to call them the _____ wagons. _____ was the uh Minister of the Interior under the czarist the czarists uh government. And he designed these prisoners, these prisoner's uh wagons. They were like from the outside you saw passenger uh train un you know, railroad wagon, but inside it was the bars, specially designed for prisoners. Even though each car, each _____ uh section was supposed to hold four or eight prisoners, they put sixteen and uh they gave us rations of about two hundred grams of uh dry bread _____ used to get about _____ ten grams of sugar, _____. And for two weeks we were in that train. Hungry, dirty...uh the guards were KBD. It so happened the guards used to have their own little kitchen where they cooked the soup and the bread, and so they ate, and they used to walk by our our uh compartment, our uh wagon, with that pail of soup, you know, _____ go crazy. Very hungry and smell that soup. I I never, never had such a heavenly aroma. So we uh we _____. They were nice. They were all Georgian _____ people, just guards. _____. We came out. It was a uh to the place where we was supposed to be, the coal mines near Moscow, and when we got out of the cars we couldn't walk. ____ cramped and hungry. Slowly, gradually we started walking around and they took us to the barracks _____ internees. We came in there. They didn't feed us for a day. The whole ____ didn't have any food for us. Then we came there and we saw, all of a sudden we saw a group coming in from the shift that worked, all black, rags. _____ dust. Sure enough they feed us about midnight. By morning we went to work in the coal mines.

Q: We're going to stop and change tapes.....

End of tape #1

Tape #2

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

Q: We're back. _____

A: Well, the next day we went to the coal mines. I don't ____ the size of the brigade, twenty, thirty people in a shift. We worked eight hours, three shifts, twenty-four hours. Uh coal mines are very difficult to work in. Uh we used to get a ration of bread which was about what the army used to get, which was not bad. _____ six hundred grams. It reached twelve hundred grams. One kilogram to ____ which was the highest ration of bread that anybody in the Soviet Union...more than the army. The armies get seven, eight hundred, but this was hard, physical labor. Eight hours of it. And we worked seven days a week. We uh...in the beginning it was hard to get used to the situation. We slept on on boards, just like in _____ concentration camps. Later on we got uh straw mattresses, but in the beginning there was nothing. I had a great coat from the army which was already not much warmth in and in this we worked and in this slept and in this we walked...any...everything. There are no no change of clothes. Uh once a week there was a bath. Uh Russian baths are...they give you uh little wooden pails and there's hot water and cold water. You fill it. You're lucky if it doesn't leak and you wash yourself and you can shave...there there's a barber that shaves you, and uh you know, from the whole week coal dust your face was black and when they shaved you and all of a sudden (laughter) white here and black all around. You couldn't wash it (laughter) that much in one..... you got rid rid of it, and uh we stayed there for about a year and a half. Uh the worst thing was in the...if you worked in the winter...we came there in the winter. The first winter was something horrible. Uh this is near Mos... this is near Moscow but a hundred kilometers from Moscow. It was called the sub-Mos...Moscow uh uh coal fields. They dig uh the soft coal, not the good uh quality coal. And uh when they used to call you...they used to call us out by brigades and I was lucky to get in the first brigade. I was the first one to call, so if you worked in the first shift, which was from eight till four, they woke you up at five in the morning. By six some used to wash up, some _____. We had the long uh troughs, uh sinks-like with with cold water, no warm water. I somehow tried to use my fingers as a toothbrush and brush my teeth and wash my face. (Laughter) That didn't help much. There was no soap, and then get your bread ration uh bread ration and then you go to the uh cafeteria and you get your soup and you eat and about a half an hour later they called you to go to work. And you come out and you have to go one by one across the...they they the guard sitting in a little enclosure and they called your last name and you have to answer with your first name and your father's name. And if they found that somebody stole something from the camp...what to steal I don't know...uh, you know, they keep somebody so you stand and wait. They just take about an hour before the whole shift would be called. There was ten, ten uh brigades or so, and we used to stand and wait from the first one. It was horribly cold...forty below zero, and across the street there was a large, a large uh baking factory, a bakery, which was hugh and the smell of the fresh bread...it could drive you nuts. It was the worst thing...and the guards

used to stand around you in sheep...sheepskin uh coats with the kelp (ph) boots and dogs..._____. We were standing shivering and the dogs...you got if you turned right or left they jumped you. Was the worst thing. And then we stand in fours and they take you into the coal mine. One day a a wagon with bread, a horse-drawn wagon, turned over. It was on the road to the uh to the mine. And, you know, it was snow, and it turned over. I don't remember if it was a sleigh or or or a wagon, but it was like a box, you know, for delivery. It turned over...a few hundred loaves of bread and it disappeared in two minutes. (Laughter) I I couldn't get any but a friend of mine...if you lived there, very, you know, very close to each other, regardless. I was the only Jew. Later on I saw another Jew, and there were three...then I found out there were three more Jews toward another part...but that bread disappeared. He gave me a piece of that bread and _____ and we stood at the mine and worked and the norm was twelve uh tons in eight hours. Uh I was...I used to dig the coal. Later on we we got uh some explosives to explode it before we dig it, and I had girls load it on the conveyer belt, metal conveyor belt. That was it. So we stayed there for about a year and a half. Then again, after Stalingrad they started taking uh German prisoners. They needed the place for them. They let us free. But not to move. You had to stay and work in the mine as a free coal miner. By the way, the coal miners are the elite of Soviet workers, you know. They get the highest uh pay...at that time we didn't...the highest pay. They have access to cars now and at that time it was...we had access to a higher ration of bread. Then they transferred us to another mine, a few kilometers away, and there we were free already. Again, we we lived in barracks but I mean no no guards. It was like uh workers' quarters. And there it was a little easier. You know, a lot of girls and young men...you know, it was...uh I have some good memories of that time, even though ___ we always hungry a little bit, a little bit...not too bad and we used to get...if you made the norm used to get a hundred grams of vodka or a hundred grams of uh uh pork, and I used to...(laughter)...suck _____ with the skin on it. To the last drop, delicious. I think I couldn't touch it...we ate it. And we had enough...well, not enough...always hungry a little bit. We had two meals a day, the bread...and and I never had, I have...a lot to eat and I never could save up my bread for an extra meal. I had to finish it from the beginning to the end, but we ate in a in a cafeteria. They served us meals there. Uh this lasted till '45. The war ended and we celebrated. We got beer. We had...there was another camp near us, next to ours, which was the same as we had before. Guarded, but they...up to...they had to be there to sleep in the camp, but I mean they had freedom to move around uh after work, and to work they went by themselves, without guards, you know. This was this was Soviet Germans, not German prisoners of war. They were Soviet Germans. Some of them didn't even know German. They came from they, a lot of them from the Vulga (ph), near the Vulga. There was a German uh autonomic region which had...I I happened to walk by by the way through my wanderings I happened to go by there when they were resettled, in 1941, when the war started. The _____. There were about a million and a half of them. They were resettled. Never came back. And I saw the difference between their villages and the the Russian villages. They were laid off, even streets were laid out, you know. Each one named Karl Marx Straussen (ph), uh _____ Straussen and so on and so on and they had each house was the same, with an oven to bake bread on the outside, with wide streets, not paved but beautifully

laid out. They had autonomy. They had schools taught in German. I met these people in in in the coal mine, in the next coal mine, so they...and and and we celebrated the end of the war. It was May 5th I think it ended, ___ Russian ____ date _____. And we picked a fight with these Germans and I got a black eye. I got drunk, got beer. Didn't see beer, you know, for ages. (Laughter) But we we got drunk. Some of them were our very good friends. There wasn't only the Germans but there were others who they didn't know...there was a fellow there who was of Finnish extraction, a a Moscovite (ph). Very nice fellow. He was an engineer I think. He was...he used to fix the conveyor belts in the mine. _____. Eric was his first name. I met his mother while I was in Moscow later on _____ and we were very very good friends. Then one day I was sitting in the mine. Uh we used to be...we used to welcome if the conveyor belt would break, you see. Then you couldn't work. You had to sit down. It was the (laughter) it was in the fall, and I was sitting there on a pile of coal uh waiting till they fix it, and all of a sudden I heard something _____. (Laughter) It was...(pause)...I get even emotional now about it. He was uh...I walked over to the corner, the next corridor and there's a fellow sitting on the uh...we used to call them coates (ph)...it was a the little wagon on the rails, you know...it was a narrow gauge rail and they delivered the uh lumber to keep these you know...you use lumber in mines for holding up the the roof. Usually it is dry pine but during the war anything will do, so we had very heavy...and they used to deliver it with that wagon and it was not closed but it has four posts, four posts loaded to bring it. We used to laugh at them because this was the easy work, see. We were in the mine and they delivered and go back. And uh we are sitting down resting...I knew him, I saw him with the Germans from the German camp. _____ says who are you? Are you Jewish? I said of course. So they they they didn't know what to do with him. They...it's a Romanian Jew. A Romanian Jew. And they didn't know what to do with him and they put him in the in the uh camp with the Germans, so he had it both ways. The Germans used to call him dirty Jew, and to the Russians, to the Russians he was a dirty German. (Laughter) So he was in the middle. So we had a talk and wished him a happy New Year. We didn't know it. We didn't know then when any holiday is. But this, even now I talk about this. You'll forgive me. (Pause) Good old days. So anyway, we worked there till '45 and the Poles and the Soviets agreed to let all those Jews and Poles who were, lived in Poland in 1939 to leave the Soviet Union. I applied and it took me a whole year before they gave me permission to leave. Wherever there were uh great concentrations of Jews there was no problem. They put them in trains, you know, and sent them to Poland. But wherever there was one or two, you had to go to the NKBD and they tried to dissuade you. What you going to do? What you going to Poland? You are a Jew. They hate Jews. Say well now there are People's Republic of Poland...they are like communists. They said they'll never be good communists. (Laughter) Sure enough, sure enough. So...but in '46...I forgot there was another Jew. The director, the director of the mine was a Jew. The Russians (laughter) couldn't understand how come you are working in the mine. Why don't you....so but we didn't have much in common because we didn't have any social ____. One day I came in and he was taking a haircut and I was waiting for a haircut. And he wrote down...in Russian everything you have to write down a statement, you know, whatever you want, so one day I wrote down I wanted to go to the army. But the war was not finished yet.

And I wrote that I already found out that my family perished. I got a letter when I was in the first mine. I...when the front approached my town, uh they were probably fifty to a hundred miles uh kilometers away...I wrote a letter to my home town, to whoever may...whoever, you know, uh got it and the and the local Soviet there, they'll know who I am. They'll know the family, because it was a small town. I figured whoever will get it, I will find out something. So I wrote and the town was not yet liberated, but the next town east was liberated, and a friend of mine worked in the post office. There were already established post offices and he worked in the post office and he intercepted that letter. And he wrote to my brother who was already, who was in the partisans and he told me about ____. In 19...when when the Germans occupied our town in 1941 uh there was a uh big oil dump in our town that the Soviets built and when they retreated in 1941, from '39 to '41 they built it...in '41 when the Germans occupied it, they exploded it and a lot of this...it was aviation oil, aviation uh fuel...uh leaked into the soil, sandy soil, so they used the Jews to squeeze out that oil, that fuel from from the soil and turn it over to the Germans. Now the Jews had the opportunity to steal some of it and trade it with the peasants for food, so for a year they lived not bad. Although here and there they would kill a Jew or beat up...my brother was beaten up, my father was beaten up, but it was not so bad. They didn't know what's going on in the whole world, or the next town even, but there was no ghetto. They could move ___ and they lived not bad with this, you know, relatively not bad. Uh 1940, until 19...till 1942, for a whole year and then in '42 uh they heard rumors that the nearby city of ____, which had a population of about twenty thousand Jews, was burned in the synagogue. And other towns, here and there somebody will escape and you know, word gets around, so a group of young people decided to leave the town and to go into the forest. They knew that something will happen. So they made some make-shift arms...uh board uh which uh spring that would fire a bullet if you could find one. Probably would kill you first, and uh they prepared to escape, a few youngsters, probably about twenty of them between the age of twelve, fourteen to twenty-four. My brother...my brother was...a friend of mine went into ___ that came and and I got him settled in my town and he then couldn't escape. So they organized a group to go to the forest, uh get some arms so they can go to the peasants and terrorize them into giving them some food, _____, get some food and about...over twenty left. Half of them survived. Among them were my two brothers. They left the night before the ghetto was destroyed. They...there was no ghetto till that day. It was a week before Rosh Hashannah, in 1942, when they decided to kill the Jewish population in this the Ukraine, so they surrounded the town with Ukrainian police. Nobody out, nobody in. They brought in all the gypsies they could find into this ghetto. Uh they brought in all the Jews that lived in little villages, one family, two families they brought. Some they killed right there, but the majority they brought and put into this town and they knew already that something is happening, so the night before before it happened...it was on a Friday, twenty-three days _____ a week before Rosh Hasshannan. Uh my friend...friend of mine who lives in Israel told me this story...came to urge my brothers to join them. They planned it before, but they couldn't leave the family and they felt you know they are abandoning the...my two sisters. One of my sisters was called to white-wash the ceiling in the railroad which was a big, tall you know, high ceiling and she fell and broke her leg so she couldn't even move.

And my father, when he tried to convince them not to let _____ let us...we are young...maybe we will survive somehow. So my mother went and two of my brothers...we also had a cousin that came from Warsaw, to the next guard _____ a peasant of our village that she knew...you knew, you know everybody. And she gave him some uh warm clothes that we still have left, you know, fur-lined jackets...not not mink but sheepskin uh and he he let them through. He let them through. He could have uh he could have killed them all. Now take away everything and that's it, but he didn't do it. So these boys left. My mother went back home. Uh they went out...they had a point in the forest where to meet and my mother went back, of course, and the next day they rounded them all up, shot them to ____ exploded _____. Uh my brothers left and went to the forest and went to terrorize some peasants, got some food and organized a partisan group to fight the Germans, with what, how I don't know. Uh a little bit later some escaped Soviet prisoners of war joined them and a lot of...all the people came. It was a civilian camp. And some of them uh craftsmen, you know, uh blacksmiths, uh uh they built, built stoves and uh stone masons, uh tailors...because there were a lot of Jews in the little towns did these things, you know, most of them. Some had a small trade see, and they they were needed, you know, because they built uh the stoves and the the uh _____ they called it, uh they dug a hole and lined it with wood and slept in it. And they accumulated some stores of food and they were ready to do some damage to the Germans. The uh this territory where we lived had some unexploded artillery shells from the 1st World War yet, and the young kids, twelve, fourteen years old...some of them survived _____...used to take out the explosives from there, put in a detonator and make a mine to put under the railroad lines where the Germans shipped, you know, war supplies and and troops to the front, but it was way back already behind the German lines, so they used to uh...they got in touch with Soviet, you know, Soviet army. They dropped by parachute more arms and they were uh really an effective fighting force. Uh my old...my younger brother...I was the oldest...one day they they had their own uh spy network among the peasants. They found out they're going to be attacked by the Germans. Uh sure enough within a short time they were attacked, but before before...but they really were attacked they decided to move the camp deeper into the forest. They had to forge a river and uh but they had some stores of food and didn't want to abandon it, so they left some guards to guard it and among them was my brother. Uh so when they came with this force attacked...the force consisted of Germans, lots of troops...Russian, _____ the Ukrainian police, my brother was standing guard and when he saw it was too late already _____. To do anything he shot in the air and the others that were were supposed to replace him...there were about five sets of them boys...one of them was my cousin...my brother was away already at the new camp, the other brother... _____. Some were wounded but the majority survived the attack. They moved further and got stronger, stronger, stronger. _____ German troop movements _____. That's a story though that not many people know about but this Ukrainian uh Ukrainian police _____ forest, very thick forest and the swamps. There were thousands and thousands of them. So uh I I thought you might be interested...(yes)...in this story because very little is taught uh uh is taught or talked or written about uh Jewish resistance. _____.

Q:

A: I received a letter...this was in the middle...we were, I was still in the camp under guard. I received a letter from my brother. Uh I am in ____. This is a city in the Ukraine and uh I find that he is OK, and so not to worry about fact. Later I received a letter from my friend, the one that intercepted my letter, his brother...I received a letter describing in detail what happened. So they were not far away. (Pause - crying) Funny thing...at that time I did not cry. Nothing. They uh...anyway uh this was...I I was in touch with my brother for a while. Later on I got a letter from...he left. He is somewhere. Couldn't tell me where. Left for Poland and later on for Italy and he says uh...(pause)...I didn't meet him until 1946 in Italy, so I didn't get any more from him. I didn't hear any more. He sent me some money. You know, he was in in Rome...he joined...he was guarding an MKBD village, a farm. They put him...as a former partisan he was still armed and they put him to guard this, and while guarding this this farm there was some _____ group in these former partisans who started dealing in the black market. They were going to arrest him, so he escaped. He didn't do it, but some of his uh friends did it, so he escaped and he went to _____ where again they put him in the army and a friend of his and then they sent him, they sent him to Poland escorting a group of Polish deserters from the Polish army, so he took a group to Warsaw, turned them over, came back, and then they sent him the next, second time. Second time we knew already the Brichah (ph) is working in Poland and he and his...there were two of them, two boys. One of them still lives in New York...they left...turned over...they did not leave these prisoners...(laughter)...you know, they turned them over to the proper authorities and then disappeared. From there they went to Romania and from Romania they went somehow to Italy. So he was in Italy.

Q:

A: I was in in still in the mine. In 1946 I got my permission to leave. I'll never forget that day. I was walking...you know uh everyone of us has a little bit of uh superstition, like cat crosses your way, a peasant with empty pails going to the for water...that's a very bad sign, but full pails is a very good sign. That's an old Ukrainian proverb, and living among them you acquire these uh traits, and when I was walking...I, they called me about five times during that year trying to dissuade me not to go. My uh...what was my argument I I lost my family. I don't know...uh maybe somebody survived. Maybe somebody is in Poland. I wanted...I want to try to find them. Nothing against the Soviet uh Union because Poland now is also a republic, you know, you are the same people, so finally I came in and I was walking through the mines of the district uh town...was about eight kilometers, and I come into the town. It was uh April already or March...things were melting _____. I came in and there is a woman with two empty pails crossing my (laughter) path. _____ that's it. I'll never get home. I come into there, come into the office and there's a city dressed woman sitting there with a stack of papers with pictures on it that I could read it, you know, in Russian and in Polish, and the uh captain or major ____ says well Slivka, what do you think? Still don't want to change your mind? Still want to go to Poland? _____ I don't know what to answer. I say if possible I would like to go.

OK. Pulls out my paper. I didn't know what to do. (Laughter) I I felt like I was in a...after all, where am I going? I am going to Poland with...nobody there. I didn't know where, what do to think, where to go, but get out of this this _____. So I went back to my _____ and I had to do all the formalities, get myself off the roster of the army, (laughter). I wasn't in the army for years. Uh I went to this uh director and asked him for at least a little clothes. He gave me a little jacket to put on and I uh went uh I have a pair of uh canvas boots. They have an army pants dyed blue and I had this uh shirt and I have a pair of underwear with long _____ and I had this hat and with that I went to Moscow. I come to Moscow and there was a union of Polish patriots. So now since I'm going to Poland, I'm a Polish patriot. All of a sudden I'm I'm a Pole. (laughter) I was...I was telling the story when I come to Israel because they call us Anglo-Saxons. (Laughter) When I lived in Poland I was a dirty Jew. In Russia I was a dirty Polish Jew. And then I come to America (laughter) I am Russian. When I go to Israel I am Anglo-Saxon. (Laughter) Anyway now I am a Pole, see, and I go into the _____ a union of Polish patriots. Was organized by a Polish writer by the name of _____. I knew her from...very liberal Polish writer. She was socialist. And they give me there a piece of Ivory soap and they give me a can of uh uh...what do you call that _____...not concentrated...the uh...anyway it's not the thick one, the other one, and they give me a piece of flannel cloth. What for I don't know, but it was worth something on the black market, you know. And they gave me a pair of ski pants. (Laughter) Ski pants. That's what they had. Ski pants. So everything was worth anything there in Poland or in Russia _____ you couldn't get any. So I thanked them and then I went to the Polish uh consulate and they ordered a railway ticket, railroad ticket for me in a sleeper, no less, to Warsaw, to Poland. So I went to the uh to pick up the tourist, in touriste (ph) to pick up my ticket and the...I paid them. They gave me the money to pay for it and I'm ready to go. I came to the train. There in Russia every every uh railroad car has a woman, a so-called leader, the the guide there, and she takes a look at me and says you doesn't belong here. (Laughter) I show her I have a ticket. She let me in and we were in a in a compartment of four of us. There was a Russian woman who worked with the occupation forces in Germany and there was a major, air force major who taught Polish pilots. There was a Polish-Russian Polish young lieutenant who spoke bad, very bad Polish. He was born in Russia and myself and uh we became very friendly. They participated...I got some bread which they didn't have. The fellow, the major, got his ration at the next station there. We played cards together and had the opportunity for the first time to speak Polish with this Polish officer you know in many years and we wound up, we went through brisk, fresh Polish _____ and uh we crossed over the border through the uh customs, _____ check my suitcase. It was a wooden suitcase I had a _____ and uh we were in Warsaw. ___ changed trains. At the gate we changed you know. _____ you had to go to town. _____ Uh I traveled all night and I know the which train to take and I came to Lodz and in Lodz there was ____Jewish life, Jewish committee. They gave me some clothes, and there was a place...they used to call it Misery Hotel. _____. It was a former ghetto. It used to be the the workshops where they had set up wooden beds, straw mattresses, DDT. They came in there and they sprayed you with DDT and you used to get a portion of bread and bean soup. It was delicious. White bread, ___ bread, you know.

Was excellent. But you couldn't stay there more than a week or two at the most because people were coming all the time from Russia, from concentration camps, all over. And I knew Lodz, Lodz the city, and I had many friends there before the war but who knows where or what. Lodz was more beautiful than ...Lodz was like a ____ city. Uh it was no industrial city and there was big buildings, not too clean, but they cleaned it up before the war. Poland had a...while while they were threatened by war they had to call an action urbaniza...urbanization (ph)...to make the cities and towns look great. They had to paint them. They had to clean them, so even the the the the streetcars in in Lodz had that drab green color on it before the war, were painted two colors and they looked pretty except the ____. ___ the ghetto because it was all destroyed _____. After the Jewish left, the Poles uh tore out all the good...the the doors and the windows for kindling wood and uh ninety percent of those were destroyed except _____ so it was a very the ___ depressing picture. The rest of the city was not touched, except _____. And this was in the ghetto where we stayed, so what do you do? Uh one day I was standing and a fellow comes over and we ____ an old friend of my, before the war, and he told me about a few more survivors that were in hiding or in camps. I met a former girlfriend of mine there. I knew _____. She was married already so... uh but it was.... I tried to meet people, but what to do you do, so I entered a kibbutz. There were several kibbutz even in Poland in Warsaw all set up. Uh Jewish life was restored, you know, to whatever could be done. There were schools already, but not too many kids, but there were schools. And kibbutz seemed the _____ so I _____ and I entered it and when I came there they asked do you speak Hebrew and I said yes. They start speaking to me. I understand every word...I couldn't say a word for so many years you know. So anyway I stayed and lived in this kibbutz for a couple of months. I was elected to the leadership of the kibbutz. I was the treasurer the uh....I _____. In all my work I'm always treasurer, never president. (laughter) So I uh...there was enough to eat _____ but enough bread. _____ was supplied by the Joint Distribution Committee. After a couple of months we were on our way. _____. We crossed the border from Poland to Czechoslovakia. Usually the the Czechs let us in, no problem, but before before _____ and uh but the Poles, we had to bribe the guards so it so happened that night we crossed there were new guards. ____ bribe before, bribe again, and we got through. We got to Czechoslovakia. We were in Prague. We were in Brataslavia (ph) and uh crossing...we had to cross through uh Soviet Soviet-occupied territory. There were the four zones in Austria. The French, uh British, American, Russian. We were forbidden to speak Yiddish or Russian. No Polish. _____ cross the Russian zone. So we...we were allowed to speak Hebrew, but if you did...I did and a few others did and I heard Czechs uh commenting ____ funny kind of people don't speak ____. Alright. They don't understand our language. In our language, usually you know naturally a person will speak in his own language, even if you don't understand it. But they don't speak at all. What kind...can't understand this kind of people. We already had documents of Greek Jews uh Greeks uh Turkish...all kinds of names and we came to Austria and the ___, to cover a beautiful villa in the French, French zone. One bad thing was there was no food. Very little food. We used to get ___ black bread for five people I think everyday. _____. I was in charge of food for...there was probably six to eight hundred people there and I would keep...our group was in charge of the _____. I

I...we had...I remember used to get a little meat and cook a soup for everybody, and some of the people that cooked, the cooks, _____. Everybody was hungry. I I just couldn't...I uh ate what everybody else ate. I could take some _____ bread ____ there was some milk for children, pregnant women. Pregnant women were transported through the uh Jewish Brigade of the British Army, dressed in British uniforms. (Laughter) They they did a marvelous job. Brichah was _____. A friend of mine worked in it. He's in Israel now. _____. And uh you found yourself there and while there I got...the Joint Distribution Committee gave...delivered to me a telegram from my brother that had been waiting there for months. He was in Italy. He knew I would (laughter) have to wind up somewhere there, so he he addressed it to me and through the _____ my name on the list, I got this telegram, with his address. Uh we...the the group...all of a sudden, all all the crossing points were closed from from Austria to Italy. They they...the police and the French authorities...I used to have a warm feeling for French...not since then. So they decided they'll try...they most obvious of the _____. Maybe ____ Hungarian guards. So they sent a group to try it, between twenty and thirty people...I was in this group...and sure enough we took them on a train uh on a truck uh with an Israeli British soldier. He had some money to transfer there...which he threw away when we we were caught. We were caught by the Austrian border guards under the British, you know, command and they arrested us and put us in jail there and beat us up...not too much...a little bit. Not so much _____ the Austrians. And the next morning they took us to Innsbruck. Beautiful city. And they...by rail, the railroad station, and they told us to go into a train. They'll send us to a camp, uh DP camp. We didn't know where. We didn't want to go. We wanted to go to our camp. So they trained a machine gun on us and says, if you don't go, I'll kill you. We didn't know whether he was bluffing or not, but _____. While standing there the the Austrians around us beat us up. ____ the ___ would come from the side and hit us from the side. _____ you know, people that were waiting for trains ____ after the war. Anyway we stood for about an hour. Finally they presented _____ don't worry. We'll get you out, so they us sent us to a camp with Ukrainians. Uh there was a little bit...there was no ____. He did not...they did not say anything. He did not say anything. We, you know...hello...goodby. We got our ____ the next day there. We could leave individually. We could get out. Was no...there was a guard at the the...but not...they didn't prevent us from leaving so I and another fellow went to our main camp which was about fifty kilometers away. We told them our situation. Here we are. Within a week or so a truck came with again another Israeli brigade soldier uh with orders to release us. How kosher these orders were I don't know, but he talked to the Austrian _____ an American. She says but your English is...she spoke English, he spoke English...your English sounds British. He says, well, he says...gave her a story and they took us and that same evening across the border again with a group of probably about six hundred Jews....women, men, some children ____. I was assigned the rear guard to make sure nobody was left. We went through the Alps, all night long and in the morning we found ourself in Italy and in Italy we had to be very careful because the Italians catch you, it's jail. The Italian jails are _____. Turkish jails are the worst in Europe. So they uh...we stayed in two hunting camps, small little enclosures, and all day long without food after crossing the Alps ____ and at at night the trucks came again from British army trucks

with officers in this ___ already uniforms and they have ID papers for all of us with new names. It was a group that's Italian, you know, DP camp, kibbutz. Uh two, three, you know, went to see the Alps _____. And everything was fine. The Italians at that time, if you showed them something in English you could go anywhere you wanted to. _____ And they took us to....in the middle of the kibbutz we were already was already in Italy, already in a camp, in a villa near _____. And they brought us to to Milan and there for the first time I saw grapes in ten years probably. They gave me some money. I went to buy _____ of grapes _____and they took us...there was a place in in Milan _____. There was a synagogue on the second floor and there was a kosher restaurant there and they took us in for a meal. We had apple butter served, meat and soup and bread, like like a normal resta...(laughter)...the first time in many years. Funny thing. I came to Portland. I met a fellow whose father owned that restaurant. So it was uh and we stayed there a couple of days. Then I met some friends who knew my brother through the partisans and but I went to my kibbutz and a few days uh a few weeks later uh a friend of my brother who used to uh travel between Milan and my brother was in near Bari (ph) ____ the south, so at least..they used to do business. They came and took me and brought me to my brother. We decided to not to part. I left my kibbutz. I got a few letters from them. I was deserting actually (laughter) but I I decided to go wherever, wherever we go together. So I registered. In this camp we were in the...in a place near _____ called _____. Oh, I'm sorry. And then we moved to Bari to a transient camp which was internment camp during the war for German, Austrian and and Yugoslavian Jews under Mussolini, and there we stayed for about two years. In 1948 I got I got my visa to go to the United State and uh on June 19th, _____ 1948, I arrived in the United States.

Q:

A: Came to Boston. My uh my cousin, my aunt lived in ____, Rhode Island and her son lived in Boston, Brighton (ph). So uh I came. It was a Saturday that day, and my cousin came to pick me up at the boat. I came by boat, ship...it was called _____...was two two ships I guess _____ anyway. He picked me up and took me into a friend of his in Brookline and the lady told me how to use the faucet with cold and hot water. She said this is hot water really (laughter) because we come from after all from Russia, and then she told me what a a telephone means. She says you can talk all over the United States on this thing here _____. And we stayed there until afternoon because my my uh my cousin had his father-in-law living with him...

Q: _____ . We're almost out of time. Can you just tell us when you moved from New York to Boston.

A: Well I came to Boston. I uh came to...then I...it was '48...it was very difficult trying to find a job. I found a job in ____, Rhode Island and I worked a few months then lost it. It was through kind of a ____ till degree was done. Then I got a job in Hyde Park near Boston and at that time I decided to get an education, so I went to Bentley (ph) College

for three years. Graduated and then got a job in Portland, Maine. In Portland I worked _____ for thirteen years and developed a practice of my own. Our second daughter was born. I got married in the meantime in Boston. Uh met my wife on a blind date and we uh came in 1953...our daughter was just born and a year later, a year and a half later my other daughter was born and we lived there till now.

Q:

A: Uh it's very difficult. It it affected everyone of us differently. I I I did not loose trust in people. I still believe...I still trust people and and it it developed me a sense of uh responsibility for other people. I I have to do something for...I have to help. If I find people that were in the same situation that I am and I am in a little better situation, I I feel it's my oppor....my my my uh my...I am obliged to help that. I I don't know how to describe it but it's it's a kind of obsession. I work now with, as I told you before, with....I had a hard time...you know...we suffered a lot from Poles, and when they called me to work with Polish refugees I had some mixed feelings, but I I had to prove to myself that here I am preaching tolerance, preaching uh you know, nondiscrim...preaching against prejudice. I cannot be prejudiced against them. These people who don't know anything about it and I had to force myself to work with them, and it's quite rewarding. You can't you can't imagine the rewarding feeling when you come in, they call you to the middle of the night to a hospital and there's a young couple with a little child who cannot breathe, and they cannot tell them what's wrong, and you come in and help them and the doctor gives them a needle and the kid smiles and the parents don't know how to thank you. That's great reward.

Q: _____ Thank you very much.

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

End of Tape #2
Conclusion of Interview