

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with David Wasserman  
December 15, 1993  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with David Wasserman, conducted by Radu Ioanid on December 15, 1993 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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**DAVID WASSERMAN**  
**December 15, 1993**

Q: Would you be so kind to tell us your name, please?

A: My name is David Wasserman.

Q: When and where you were born.

A: I was born in Romania in the City Focsani (ph) in March 14, 1925.

Q: Please tell us a few words about your family, what was the profession of your parents, and your years during your childhood.

A: Well, although I was born in Focsani, we moved to Dorohoi in 1937. My parents -- my father had a wine store, and my mom was a housewife. I had two little brothers, they were twins. And we lived in that town from 1937 until 1932, the day of my deportation. And I went to school in Dorohoi. I went to the Gymnasium Comanesti, which is a business school. And there was no visible anti-Semitism at that time. I'm talking about '37, '38. Of course, this changed later on in 1939, 1940 when the political situation in Romania changed to the extreme right. And then the anti-Semitism was more copious. The Jewish people were actually expelled from schools. We didn't have the right to study anymore, to go to school. I began to private school, it was a small town and we didn't have any private schools. In order to go to a private school, we had to go to the city of Botosani, which was 40 kilometers from Dorohoi. So when I was expelled from school, it was very tragic moment in my life because I thought I had good friends with which I had been studying. And at the time when we were told that the Jewish people had no more rights to go to school, I was chased out and beaten.

Q: When did this happen?

A: That happened in 1940. I was very depressed, and I was teenager at that time, and I was very depressed, as I said, by the fact that so quickly it can changed, the situation and the hate toward us for the only reason we were Jews. This is a sad memory in my life pertaining to my education, so I just couldn't finish all my education at that time. I finished about, at that time, there was the fourth grade of Gymnasium Comanesti, which is equivalent of eighth grade here or so.

Q: Can you be so kind to describe to us a little bit, elaborate a little bit on what happened to you during the days when you were expelled from school?

A: When I was expelled from school, my colleagues were going to school, and we were actually had to go to our own with tutoring. I mean we just hired a tutor and he in his spare hours brought us up and updated to the education which we didn't have a chance to follow. And I just didn't lose too much in education because I just did it on my own, but many of my

colleagues didn't have the kind of ambition which I had. And then we had to go and perform various sort of work in order to maintain the sustaining a living.

Q: Did you go every day 40 kilometers to Botosani?

A: No, I didn't go to Botosani. I did it in Dorohoi with a private tutor. That's what I just mentioned because it was too far away, and we didn't have the money to spend to go every day for 40 kilometers, or to stay there would have been an additional burden. There were three children in the house, and we just couldn't afford it. But I did it on my own, and I tried - - at that time we didn't know how long it would take this time. We hoped it was going to be a transitory period where Jewish people would be readmitted in school. But the truth was that the situation got worse and worse. The Iron Guard and \_\_\_\_\_ and all this political advance, the worse part in 1939 was Poland. I witnessed, actually, the first aspects of the war when the Polish people were coming to Modohn and passing through Dorohoi. So our condition and situation was very bad.

Q: Let me ask you another question before we move on. Do you have any recollections on the program of the local \_\_\_\_\_ the summer of 194 --

A: Sure.

Q: Can you give us a description of what happened in Dorohoi, what you had seen . . .

A: What happened is the Rumanian troops were on the retreat from Bucovina, and there was a little town, Brasov, it was the borderline, actually, where the Russians were supposed to occupy. And the Rumanian troops had to give to the Russians this territory based on understanding between Germany and Russia, but this is a different point of discussion. And they were very bitter about that in Romania, and on their way back they passed through the city of Dorohoi. And I was in our home at that time when I heard shooting on the street, and we didn't know. People were running and they were saying, "Hide. Go and hide because they are shooting the Jews." I just couldn't comprehend at that time what happened, why they are shooting the Jews. And so we were hiding, and through the window we peered and we saw the soldiers pointing and inquiring where the Jews lived. And we were very much afraid that they would come and shoot us right in the house. They were shooting through the windows, and that action actually, it happened when there was a funeral in the cemetery near to Dorohoi where a Jewish soldier actually was killed in the retreat. And they burying him with honors and while being the funeral -- in the process of the funeral, the soldier killed everybody who was at the cemetery. And after that they went through the town, killing the rest of -- as many people they could. There was not the regiment which was actually stationed in Dorohoi, it was just a passerby regiment, I don't remember what name it was.

Q: But belonging to which army?

A: The Rumanian Army. We didn't have the Germans at that time. So and after they passed, the

next day we just went out, and we found out about the atrocities which happened in the cemetery and in some houses. This I remember from my own, nobody has to tell me because I remember. I was at that time 16 years -- 15 years old.

Q: Could you tell us what happened to you and your family when the military operations against Soviet Union started in June 1941?

A: In June 1941, it started already to aggravate our situation. First of all, there were orders to take away the stores from the Jewish people and it was a process of nationalization or Rumanization where my father had to give away the store and many of the Jewish merchants. And we had to move out from that location and move to a different location.

Q: Can you elaborate a little bit on what happened to the business of your father . . .

A: It was taken away. My father had to train first a certain individual who eventually took over the business without any compensation. And because we lived with our apartment in the same address, we had to move out. And we moved to another street, a much smaller apartment, which we couldn't really afford anymore. We didn't have any income. There was no welfare or things like that there, and you had to live on your own or family or friends who wanted to help you. We didn't have too much help, just a little bit of saving that we had that we had to go through. And later on we heard that there's going to be a ghetto, but because of the situation and the position of Dorohoi, we didn't have enough apartments to accommodate the Jewish population. So we were locked in our houses, and we were permitted only one hour a day to go and shop to the bazaar, to the open bazaar, the market. From 8 to 9 in the morning, that was the hour when Jewish people in Dorohoi could actually go and shop. And at that particular time the prices were so high because nobody else went to buy from 8 to 9 from the Rumanian population. And the prices were high, were speculative. And not only that, I remember that walking in those streets, we were actually beaten and spit upon by our neighbors actually. That was the tragedy because we thought that we have good friends and good neighbors. But all of a sudden, this condition changed. So we had to run to the market and shop in one hour and run back. Go to the bakery, there was no supermarkets or grocery like now -- we had to go to the market to buy the food and vegetables and the meat and then the bakery and so forth and so on. So many times, like myself and my dad and mom, had to go in different places to shop so we can have our products. This I remember also. So it was very sad that we had to go through that. And in 1941 -- coming back to your question -- 1941 was the first deportation from Dorohoi where people were told that -- at that time Romania was occupying a part of Ukraine by pushing the Russians back. And the territory from the Dneestr to the Bug was given to the Rumanian administration. And the Rumanian government of \_\_\_\_\_ at that time said that all the Jews in Bucovina to be deported to these territories. Unfortunately, Dorohoi was attached geographically, either by mistake or intentionally or because Brasov was a part of the Dorohoi County, so they took the whole county of Dorohoi with the city and attached to Bucovina. If I remember it was Gogorno Alexandra (ph), and he gave the orders that all Bucovina including Dorohoi, and since the order was specifically to deport all the Jews from Bucovina, Dorohoi who was in the old

regard, \_\_\_\_\_ regard, was included in Bucovina. And, therefore, we had the unfortunate situation to be considered as Bucovina. Now, the hate against Bucovina Jews was so much because they thought and they said that the Jews were shooting at the Rumanian Army at the time when they had to retreat. In my opinion, that is a big lie because the Jewish people -- I know the Jewish people locally, they would never go and shoot -- they would never have arms to begin with. They would never shoot at the Rumanian soldiers. Rumanian -- I mean, Jewish people were in the Rumanian Army, and after that were expelled from the army. So that was just a motive to go and kill and deport the Jews.

Q: You mentioned the first deportation from Dorohoi.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Were you part of this first . . .

A: No.

Q: But did you witness it?

A: Well, we were in Dorohoi, and they took at random, actually -- they took at random people, and they brought them to the railroad station. And there was an action for I think a day or two when it stopped.

Q: When was this?

A: In November 1941. November or December, something like that. So it was in wintertime already, and after that we continued our traditional life there like before. The houses were actually violated by many local population, although there was order not to steal, but everybody went there and took their things, because every Jew who was deported could not take more than one bag. We didn't have suitcases in those days; it was a rucksack. Something in a bag, and whatever you could take in one bag, that's what you were allowed. So the rest of the houses were completely intact and would remain. So we realized what happened then, and we didn't know exactly where the people go and what they had when transmitted there. But we thought that we are better off than they are because we were still in our houses and our beds. And this was my first witness of the deportation of 1941. Of course, 1942 came when we were deported, so rumors were after that that the whole population of Dorohoi would be transported to Transnistria. We didn't have any kind of communication with those people, and we didn't know exactly what happened. But the rumors came through the Rumanian soldiers coming back from the front line that the Jews are actually killed, and, hopefully, nobody will be alive, that's what they said. And they considered the Jews as proselytes, and, therefore, have to be eliminated. In 1942 when the deportation came and we knew that we're going to have the same fate as the other ones, we tried to hide. But we were actually denounced by one of the neighbors, and we were taken out. The police very brutally beat my dad, and we were taking each one a bag. And my little brothers took some toys with

them, and we were placed in a synagogue until they collected more Jewish people. And after that, we were transported to the railroad station and placed in the cattle cars. And that was another disastrous event, this story.

Q: When did this happen?

A: This happened in June 1942.

Q: Can you describe how you were transported by railroad cars from where?

A: This is a really sad story because they locked us in in these freight cars. And we were pressed against each other there, and just locked in. Just locked in and left us there the whole night. We were there in the day, and we were staying there all night. And the people were screaming and knocking on the door to let us out for personal necessities. They didn't want to. There were Rumanian soldiers who were guarding us, and they threatened that if we really scream or so, they were going to shoot us all. So what I remember the stench, the urine all over, and all the bodily wastes in the car was absolutely disastrous. I believed that we were going to die that night without knowing where we were going. So in the morning the train moved and we stopped in an open field -- I don't know exactly where it was -- but they let us go out for necessities. And even then, we were told that we have to be in a perimeter close so that they can be watching us, the soldiers. And everybody, men and women, had to perform their bodily function in front of each other. That was one of the worst degradations which I saw at that time through the eyes of a teenager, which I couldn't comprehend really. Water -- at the same time, there was a well of water there, and we were running to the water to fill in some bottles that we had. And back to the car, beaten for no reason, and locked in again in those cars. And we were traveling for two nights, and when we arrived we saw that it was Czernowitz, which I knew that was 60 kilometers from Dorohoi. So what was the purpose of running with us for two nights, two days? Well, perhaps they wanted really to punish us in any way, possible way they could at a local level. I remember there was instruction from the Chief of Police was Mr. McCure (ph), which I remember his name. He was a very bad guy. Either he gave the instruction to do this for us or instruction above his head, I don't know exactly. But anyway, once we arrived in Czernowitz, we looked at each one, and we just couldn't believe what we see. Men unshaved and women with their hair and shaven and all these things, and it was really a tragedy. So we were placed on cattle cars, horse and carriage, and we were told that we are going to Sagaguda (ph) which was a suburban location near Czernowitz. We went through Czernowitz through the local streets -- Czernowitz is a big town. I don't know if you know. And we went through the local streets and we were brought to Sagaguda (ph) where we met other Jewish people there from Czernowitz who were also prepared to be deported. That was another question. Their authorization was not respected, I understand. We spoke to people there, the authorization you took them from their houses, there was not our case anymore. And in Sagaguda (ph), we were permitted for the first time to go to a toilet and to wash our faces, which we realized how little it takes to degrade a person and to lower the morale, and just be happy to have a toilet. So from Sagaguda together with the people from Czernowitz, the Jewish people, we

were transported to the Stadium of Maccabi. There . . .

Q: Wait, where are they sending you?

A: In Czernowitz. In Czernowitz. There we were actually going through a kind of customs regulation, so-called, where we were told to give all our money and to be exchanged for Deutsche marks, German marks which were the currency in effect in Transnistria. They were not Rumanian. And we were paid a certain amount of money, I don't remember. And the rest of them and all of us, we were told that from that point we will go over the Dnestr to Transnistria territory. There is another tragedy there because when we arrived at the Dnestr, they placed us in rowboats, no bridge to cross. We're just in boats. Each boat had two seats and they pushed -- I don't know -- 10, 12 people in each boat. And they were rowing the boat to the other side of the Dnestr. In the middle of the river, the soldiers said if we were not giving them any kind of valuables we had with us, they will by mistake overturn the boat. So people were panicking and whatever they had -- pens or fountain pens or watches or rings were given the soldiers. And, finally, they brought us over. When everybody came in boats - - when everybody was over the Dnestr already, we were left in an open field. And luckily for us there was no rain or any kind of weather, which would have really been to our disadvantage. So we slept on the field until the next day when they told us that trains will come and pick us up. Already we were afraid of all these things and the conditions, but we have no choice.

Q: Do you remember the name of the place (ph)?

A: No.

Q: So let's continue.

A: And the next day after we slept -- after we slept overnight outside, they packed us in the trains in exactly the same conditions which we were afraid of would happen. But the distance wasn't very great probably. We arrived, I think the next day. And we were brought to a place where they called Cayara di Piatra (ph) and Liège. It's a small place there. We understood at that time that this place was a former labor camp for the Soviet Union, a labor camp for their inmates.

Q: Can you tell us Cayara di Piatra (ph) means in English when translated?

A: Cayara di Piatra (ph) means stone caves where people used to break the stones and use them for construction, apparently.

Q: And this was in Transnistria?

A: We did perform any work there, no. This was in Transnistria, in Romania. There was a Rumanian officer, I don't know the name of this guy, there was a very discouraging speech.



They told us that he has orders or information or anything to do with us, and we would stay there indefinitely and probably were going to die. That was the welcome speech which he gave us, so they placed us in the long barracks there on the floor. And we were there for about four weeks, four, five weeks. And the only thing -- there was no food, and it was just by the River Bug. We could go and wash ourselves in the Bug.

Q: Do you remember the month?

A: The month? Yeah, it was July -- end of June or July because it happened really immediately after our deportation from Dorohoi. So the officer told us that he will make a favor and permit the local farmers to come on a specific day of the week to give us -- to sell us food. And we had to arrange with them whatever we can on a barter exchange or whatever. And for that accommodation he asked for some kind of compensation, which one of the people became a léguer (ph) and went to collect whatever we had to give it to him. So after about four, five weeks we were there, we just didn't have any more what to exchange. And we figured out that since there's no other food and no other provision, we are going to die, especially the farmers told us that in this place died many people before we arrive there. So there was no secret at all that our fate would have been just to die there. One day, it was in August, a small German car arrived with SS officers. They had a skull and the bones and that. And they ordered the Rumanian officer to summons us and bring us up for counting, so we were counted. The counting was just a regular routine, and they told us that they need workers for them to work. And they promised us good accommodations and good food in exchange for work, which it sounded very good at that time in our condition. And we just kind of accepted this offer, we had no choice. Either we die there or we go and work and getting something for it. Little as we knew at that time what the Germans were actually doing and what they did with the Jews in Ukraine. So the next day was a program to transport us to the Germans, which the Rumanian officer told us that the next day we're going to be ready to go. So they brought some carriage -- again, horse and carriage for the bags that we each one had, and the people had to walk. Where, we didn't know where. We were told that we were going to a point where the trucks will wait for us to bring us to the various locations. So the guards were Lithuanian, which were by themselves were very bad people, and they supervised us to walk. And we were walking and they ordered us to walk faster and faster and running. There were some people there, there were elderly people, there were women, there were children; they couldn't run. So some people fainted or were exhausted and they fell to the ground, which we witnessed and we were actually told to move. We heard some shots, we assumed they were warning shots for the people to run faster. But when we arrived at that place we realized that those people who fell didn't come. There were some questions, where were those people? They said they would bring them later with the carriages. They never did. And when we came there and we saw the trucks lined up, German trucks. And we were told to go and pick up our belongings which were in a big pile. And each one tried desperately to pick up their own bag. They gave us half-hour to identify our bag and take possession of them. And there was really -- terrible sad how people were actually jumping on each other to just pick up the bags and find them and go. We heard laughing, we saw people photographing us, and finally we were pushed in those trucks. We

tried to keep together, my parents and my brothers because they were taking just people and pushing them in the trucks without relation or family connection or something. So we tried to keep together and we were together. And we were pushed in those truck -- I don't remember how many territory people in one truck, the Lithuanian, the same guards. And we crossed the bridge. For the first time we saw a bridge, and we were told by them that we're going to a city named Giessen. It meant nothing to us. When we arrived there and we saw already the condition there. We saw the people that were in the same condition as we were when we got out of the cars at that time. And we realized that this is going to be our future, and forget about the good food and the -- guten essen, guten flagel (ph). We used to say good food and good accommodation. So two trucks came in, and we were waiting to be tried and brought over. After a wait for about 15, 20 minutes, they came and they told us that the camp was full and they had no room for us anymore and they have to bring us to a different location. So the truck turned around, and we moved back to the same road. And on the way back, I witnessed -- we witnessed a really big tragedy. Because there was a beautiful young girl about maybe 15 or so, and the Lithuanian were looking at her all the time. And finally the truck stopped in the middle of nowhere, and they pulled her out, both she and her mother. They both starting to scream, terrible, and they raped her, all four guards. So when she came back, she looked terrible, poor girl. She was one of our group which eventually -- I want to relate -- eventually she was killed later on. But this is later on. Sorry about that. So when we were brought back almost the same place as we start, and crossing back the Bug, little as we know -- little as knew at that time that that was our chance to survive the Holocaust is because we did not -- we were not admitted in Giessen Camp, where we found out that nobody survived in those camps. Everybody was shot and killed. So we were brought back over the Bug back, and we were told that the town where we are there, it's called Brasov, which, again, meant nothing to us at that time. In this little town with about 2,000 people that we lived, they had two German camps run by the Tort Organization. One camp was Dortmund Camp, we found out later. And the other one was Herzogenbusch. We were placed in Herzogenbusch Camp, all together were about 2,000 people, and ours was the bigger camp, which we realized later on. And when we were brought there, the same thing like in Giessen, the barbed wire with the same unfortunate people which we saw already there. And we realized that those were people from Brasov, Jewish people who lived in Brasov and in the surrounding areas. And they were the first to be locked in those camps. So when we came in, we saw all the Lithuanian guards there. A whole army, I mean just many, many of them. And they said that this is going to be our place of work. They put us in line, they counted us again, and then they told us that we are going to be separated men from women. They would be given separate dormitories. And the sanitary facilities was an open trench where men and women together had to use it. The degradation was getting from bad to worse. We were told by the German commander that this is the place where we're going to work. We are going to work six days a week. We are going to walk to work about five, six kilometers, I believe it was the distance. And they expect us to perform to their standards. And if not, then we're going to pay with our lives. The food rations was a half a bread per person per week distributed on a Sunday when we were not working. Every morning we used to get a cup of hot water called tea. I think they put some branches and leaves from the local trees, no sugar. And at work we used to get a soup a day at noontime, mostly peas. I ate

so much peas in those years and no meat. And when we came home, back walking home we got the same ration as in the morning, a cup of hot water.

Q: What kind of work did you perform there?

A: We broke stones. We went again to a Cayara di Piatra (ph), where we really had to work at the stones. Where -- the purpose of this work really, we realized after a year and a half of working there, we realized that those stones practically never used, but were only a reason for killing us. Because if you didn't perform -- the Germans used to measure the cubic feet of stones, how much each one is supposed to make. And if you didn't make it, they marked you down and the \_\_\_\_\_ which they had, the first of the people -- the first one was the one who did not perform the standard. The women had to break stones with a small hammer about half a kilogram. The men had to work with big hammers about 10 pounds, which I was considered a man, although I was not really a full power man. But I had to perform with a big hammer which I really didn't know how to do it. By chance, sheer luck, we were together with the Russian prisoners who worked in the same place with us. They were Russian prisoners who were captured by the Germans and placed in the camp, also in Brasov. They had much conditions than we had because they had visitors, the local farmers could bring them food. They were permitted to fish in the River Bug because it was just by the Bug. The Jewish people were not permitted. The most that we could do was just wash our feet, that's all. And, as I said, so they helped me by breaking some stones and putting into my place where it has to be measured until I learned how to do it. You had to take the stone and go like a piece of wood, and just knock the place where it broke -- the stone and then the stone broke. And sometimes we had to just take the stones and bring them to the women. Women has to perform their duties also. And that was a routine work for us for all the time. The half-hour of time for food was just mostly was for relaxation, just to breathe. And they were very bad because the extra food -- I remember, the extra food which remains in those big canisters, they were actually thrown into the water after they gave to each one, the one whatever. And when people asked for extra, they didn't really want to give us. They spilled it in the Bug River. And then we had to go back home. How we survived really, I have to say that we were just lucky that the local farmers, which we didn't know them really very much, they tried to help us as much as possible. And they had a sugar factory close to our place there, and they were transporting the sugar beets from the farm to the factory. And they were pushing the sugar beets on the road. And when we walked, each one like wild animals went there to collect a beet or something, and those beets were our supplement provision, which we survived. In addition to that, the local farmers used to throw potatoes in the camp. So we found them, we ate them. Many times we ate them raw. But this was a time that either you didn't -- you were not very choosy what you eat. And automatically people were killed in those places by not performing to their standards, and they used to come periodically in our place and select people. The commander used to have them already marked, people who did not perform because they didn't want to run with a half a truck probably. So they lined us up, they counted to 10, and the 10th person was taken out regardless, whether they are good worker or anything, and taken out and we never saw those people again. So they were actually killed at random. Some other times they used to pick out the fifth or the seventh so

you never knew that the 10th is always picked out. So you never knew when it was going to be your day to be killed.

Q: Do you remember the names of the people in charge in this camp?

A: Yeah, I remember. I remember.

Q: German officers or petty officers?

A: There a guy there -- you see, that the Tort Organization, which had this jurisdiction over our concentration camps, they were not SS people. They were just -- I don't know what kind of -- auxiliary army. They wore some brown khaki uniform, not \*\*marked, not a green one or SS. And the commander who was in charge of day-to-day activity and day-to-day killing was a guy named Karl Rheinger (ph). He, although he was not an SS, he enjoyed very much to have this kind of jobs and the opportunities to come and kill. He killed personally people which I'm going to tell you later on. And together with Mikel Cromer (ph), which was an SS policia, the auxiliary SS who actually was the commander, the field commander. I don't know exactly what grade the rank was. And he was responsible for the SS people, but Karl Rheinger was in charge of the day-to-day operation. Later one we had another German guy, SS policia, his name was Tomachek (ph). He was just a great guy. I have to say that he saved actually lives which I'm going to tell you. It's a lot of story which I can tell. In our place if anybody tried to escape and escaped, 10 people were shot. And this we knew and they told us that we have to watch each other should not escape because if this guy will escape then 10 of us will die. So in addition to the selection at random, in addition to not performing to the standards, we had to think of 10 people to die for one who escaped. Well, I remember a sad story about the six people who were actually killed in our place. They escaped and at the morning count when they saw that the six people are missing Karl Rheinger told us that when we come back, 60 would be shot and now go to work. So can you imagine how we did work on that day? How we did walk to the working place thinking that when we come back, 60 people would be dead, and so you couldn't help it really. So that day they came at lunch hour and they picked out 10 -- no, they picked out six men from our ranks from the work, and they were crying and begging for their life. They thought that, and we thought that they changed their minds and instead to kill 60, they would just kill the six. And they took them -- there was real tragedy the way they were screaming. And they took them to the camp and they told them to dig a grave outside the camp, just outside the barbed wire. And they did thinking that this is that way. I mean this is normal to think that if you don't see anybody and you know that six people were away and you know that you are selected, so you think that you will die. And those six people after they finished the grave, they saw the six people who ran away being brought in. Those people were disrobed, were naked. The original six people were caught on the road and brought back. This nobody knew at that time. And they made them run through the barbed wire where they escaped naked. There were four women and two men. And instinctively they covered their private parts and they didn't let them. They told them to run with their hands up. And they were brought and placed in the grave face down, and the Lithuanian had the opportunity to kill them one by one, which they did.

Q: Do you remember the names of these people?

A: The Lithuanian?

Q: No, no, no. I mean asking about the victims.

A: Yeah. I remember the name of the victims because we worked together with them. Well, let me tell it to finish that story is that one of the ladies who were shot and those people were throwing the soil on top of them, she realized apparently that she was not dead. And she got up and she begged the Commandant Karl Rheinger to spare her life, and he actually took his pistol and shot her personally and that was it. So the name of the people, yeah. There was a couple, their name was Mr. and Mrs. Ganzer (ph). Another lady was Mrs. Rosenbaum. The other lady was Mrs. Gotismann (ph). There was a guy, his name was Mr. Goldschmidt; he was a musician I remember in Czernowitz because I used to walk with him to work. And another young lady who her parents were killed. I don't remember the last name, I remember the first name. It was Gusta (ph). And unfortunately those people were killed. I did not relate this event to a previous event where the husband of Mrs. Gotismann was killed previously in the winter of 1942 when Karl Rheinger came into the camp in the middle of the night, and he told us to run around the building. Just to run, just to entertain him. And shots were heard, and we didn't know what happened. So when we were pushed back in the barracks and each one knew each other, Frau Gotismann realized that her husband is not there. By the way, he a dentist. It's not important really, but he was a dentist, a professional. And she knocked on the doors and asked for her husband. And she was told to keep quiet or she will be shot. So in the morning, she asked again, and he told her the same thing so she kept quiet. That was the same Frau -- I say Frau, Mrs. Gotismann who actually decided to run away and she was caught. The other lady, Mrs. Rosenbaum, had an unfortunate situation with her husband previously had a mental breakdown, and he started to scream day and night and he was shot. Again, she felt like doesn't have anything to live for, and she was one of the people who got together to escape. The couple of Mrs. and Mrs. Ganzer, I remember them very well because they two little girls, twins like my brothers. And their daughters together with my brothers were killed and they felt again that they have nothing to live probably. And they tried to take a chance. Now, Goldschmidt, he was a musician. He was very depressed because the Germans crushed his accordion, and for a musician it is terrible thing, apparently, to have this done to you. And again he was very weak. He was very weak. I used to walk with him, and he used to tell me story. I believe he told me that he came to look for some relatives, and he was caught in the avalanche and brought into the camp. And the other lady, the young lady Gusta, which I don't remember the last name. I am very good with names, but I don't remember her name. I was not very familiar with her. Her parents were also killed previously, and she was all alone and she also tried to escaped. I related the tragedy of the six people before the story which I have to tell, but that affect us personally when my little brothers were taken away.

Q: How old they were?

A: They were seven years old. They were twins, and they were seven years old. That happened September 23rd, 1942. It was two days after Yom Kippur, I remember that. It's a Jewish holiday, Day of Atonement. And from the time we arrived in August until September, they had time to analyze us and prepare listing so everybody who they intend to kill. Incidentally, when we arrived there one of the people who were inmates told my dad that the next day when they will ask you the name and how old you are, be sure that you say that you less than 40. Because they kill everybody who is older than 40. My father was 45 at that time, and my mom was 41. See, at this age you can you are 37 or 36, but people who are 50 or 60 it's very hard to cheat to say that you're 39, so they were doomed. So sure enough, when they asked the name, " \_\_\_\_\_," how old you are and what is your name, my parents told them 38, 35, something like that. My brothers couldn't say because they killed everybody who was, I believe, less than 14 -- 13 or 14. So when the first \_\_\_\_\_ in September 23rd, 1942, my brothers and Ganzers' children altogether I think there were about 60 children. 60 or 80 children, I don't remember exactly. Together with elderly people over 40 and the people who did not perform to their standards for that prior month, and they were taken up on the lines. We were told to go to work. My mom didn't want to leave the children, so she just ran because they actually threw the children under the truck. They practically threw them in. My mom, I remember, she just was desperate and tried to go after the children, and they beat her actually. So we walked and on the way to work, we saw the trucks with the kids and everybody. So it was very sad really. It's so many years since that time, but I still cannot forget. Of course, we never saw anybody of this group and not my brothers and nobody else. And for all those years while my parents were alive, my mother hoped that the children are still alive somewhere. Maybe they were adopted, maybe they were somehow saved by somebody. We made the request to the Red Cross after the war, but we didn't find -- but now I found out that they were killed on the same day. And so my parents didn't know when they died what happened to their children. I can tell stories and stories what happened on a daily basis.

Q: Yeah. We would like to know what was life on a daily basis in this camp.

A: Our life was very bad because we came to a point when we didn't have any more, any clothing. And it was very important to keep warm because if you get cold, you get a cold, a regular cold and you stayed for two days not working, you were marked down and you were taken to the first next exeoni (ph), which was about every month. So we had to keep warm, and we had to keep working. And I don't recall of any day we didn't -- we missed a day's work. Not my mom and dad, and not myself. That was probably one of the luckiest parts of not having to be taken out and sent to that place where they used to shoot them. But periodically they were bringing people in those places, and periodically they were killing them. They were bringing people who were already weak, and they could not really work to the standards. And they were eliminated in the first months. And we couldn't help anybody, anything to say. Go to work. If you cannot go, if you are sick and have high temperature, you just cannot go and walk five kilometers. So you just wait for them kill you and that's it. I mean that was a very desperate situation. The reason that we really supported that is I can

say that my mamma should have some peace. She was very optimistic and she used to say that we will come home. And people thought that mom was maybe out of her mind in thinking that we can ever, every going home. But I believed her and said that eventually we could go home. You know, when you're in a condition like that and you lose your courage, you've lost everything. You have to be courageous, but it's very hard in a sense. So that when I think back really, if I would have to go through this again, I probably wouldn't make it. So we were just practically naked, and my mom made for me a pair of socks from an empty bag of potatoes which used to be thrown away from the kitchen. Potatoes, peas. So I had a pair of pants made of a bag, and I didn't have any shoes, so I had rags wrapped around my feet. I had one day my nose and face frozen, and I could see my nose getting white and they told me that even my face. So I remember that I thought that I'm going to have a hole where my nose is, and I'm going to be disfigured. And my dad rubbed my face with snow. He said don't touch with your hands because you may damage your skin. And we were walking in any weather. Rain or snow or frost. I remember some days the Bug was frozen, and the Germans didn't feel like walking so they brought a truck. And they packed us in the trucks and they drove across the Bug just on the ice. And we were afraid that if something happened, we are going to be the first to die. But it was such a tremendous frost, the truck with all those people crossed over and it didn't break. So in this type of condition we had to come back and those days, we couldn't collect any beets from the road, of course. So we had to really be satisfied with what we had.

A: Really, you would be surprised how little you need to survive if your mind is there and hope for the best. This is -- the story is repeated every day, the same thing. And there was cases when they were beating their -- a guy who stole from somebody else something.

Q: So you stayed for the whole period of the war under German administration under the Tort Organization Administration?

A: Yeah. Until end of December 1943. At that time there was another important day in our life. We were told that the Rumanian Jews will go home. By the way, we didn't have any information about what happened at the front. We realized later that the Germans started to get beaten, and the Russians starting an advance toward their own, recapturing their own territory. And the order came that the Rumanian Jews will be readmitted to Romania. When we were told that, we just didn't believe it. We didn't believe it for the only reason that it was not believable that we should go back while the war is still on. And, by the way, we were only 27 survivors in Dorohoi, and the only survivors from any labor concentration camp was by the Bug. I know for a fact now; at that time we didn't. Nobody survived from the German concentration camps. Our lucky day was at that time was when we were not admitted in Giessen and we were brought back. Although we were under German jurisdiction for all this time, but we were on the Rumanian territory of Transnistria. And in Brasov, the Rumanian commander, receiving orders probably from the high command, was searching for as many Rumanian Jews as they possibly can find. And they requested the German commanders to look and find out if there is any Rumanian Jews there, and they were told there were 27. Apparently, the Germans could have very easily say that they don't have anybody from

Romania, but they didn't. So at that day when the truck came in, the same type of trucks, and they called out names. And they told us the Rumanian Jews should step out from the line. We thought that this is the end of us. We thought that this is the time when now the Rumanian Jews are specifically chosen to be killed. And there was really, I remember crying and all these things. But, at the same time, we were already hardened, and said, "Well, if we have to die, we have to die. What can we do?" So we were placed in this truck, the 27 people, and taken out and waving to the other people because I have to say that the Czernowitz Jews and Ukrainian Jews who were with us, they remained there. I believe that there were about a hundred or so people still there.

Q: If my understanding is correct, they tried to bring back only the Jews from Dorohoi . . .

A: Right, only from Dorohoi and from the \_\_\_\_\_ and the Oder and they tried to correct some kind of misunderstanding what happened for so many years. Anyway, so when we were placed in the truck and driven, I remember there was fork in the road to the right, used to go over the Bug to the German territory where everybody was executing in those places. We knew where the trucks were going when they used to take the people. But in the left side of the fork was the direction to Trencín, which was another city in that area which was completely administrated by the Rumanians. So I personally remember I closed my eyes and tried to figure out what I'm going to fork, to the right or to the left when I know where the truck is going. When I realized that the truck really go to the left, maybe -- we said maybe this is true, that we'll be going home. Who knows? And sure enough, we were transported to Trencín, I think 19 or 20 kilometers from Brasov.

Q: When did this happen?

A: That happened in the end of December 1943. And once we were there, we saw Rumanian soldiers and we didn't see Germans. So anything we thought is going to be better than with the Germans. But the Rumanians in Trencín, the officer took us out and made a speech for us. And he said, "Now you are here, and if anybody will say something what happened to you, will be shot on the spot." And so here we are, out of the German camp. Here we are, hopefully, going home, and we're going to be shot. I mean, speak to whom? To what? I mean, we didn't understand what was the purpose of this speech. So they told us you are going to be disinfected and shaved. So everybody was shaved up and down. Men and women naked went to the shower room, and the clothing was taken to a disinfection place there. So we went naked into that shower room. We didn't know what happened to the shower room, the gas chambers and all these things. We didn't know. We were so happy because that was actually the first time in almost those two years that we had a shower. So the men and women together were actually put in the same barracks with the showers, and the water was running. But after so many months and years of degradation, people didn't really mean anything to you. We didn't mean that women and men together, you know. We were happy that we were alive. So after that, they were really doing bad things to us. Because even going home, we were forced to go and collect the clothing from the disinfection and the condition where we were. So, but anyway we took it as it comes as long



as we are not killed. And from there they told us that we will go home, and we should forget everything what happened here. And they brought us to the Dneestr again with the carriages. And there they -- I don't know exactly the place where they brought us, and we were brought back to Dorohoi. The road and the cars, in the freight cars was almost the same thing as when we came back. We realized that -- we didn't realize what happened. Why are we brought home in the same condition as we were brought in? And, but we learned how to wait and have hope and see what happens. So when -- making a long story short, when we were brought back to Dorohoi and we saw the name of the railroad station, we were extremely happy. But the cars were still locked, and the same police officer, McCure, was there. And he didn't open the cars for us, and we were there I think the whole night again until the next morning when we were transported with some horse and carriages. And since nothing changed politically in Romania at that time, we were brought to the same condition as actually when we left. We could not really go to our homes because they were occupied by local population there. So we were accommodated to a synagogue where they transformed in a dormitory. And we slept in the synagogue for all those months until the Russians actually broke through. I don't remember what month it was. February or March 1944. And at that time many Rumanian families evacuated, being afraid of the Russians, apparently. So then we found our house, but it was empty because the people who lived there took everything out and moved before the Russians came in. So really our condition didn't change too much, but one of our friends told us to live in his house because he is leaving. So he gave us all his apartment and that's where we stayed until in August 1944 when we came back to Focsani, back to our town.

Q: Let me go back for one second, and ask you about Liège. You mentioned that during the summer of 1942 you were for a few weeks in Liège.

A: Yeah.

Q: Can you elaborate a little bit on the conditions in Liège and what kind of people were interned there? There were Jews from Dorohoi or also Jews from Czernowitz. Do you eventually remember a group of insane people from Czernowitz?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Can you tell us about their condition a little bit?

A: That was really very sad because we were there together with the transport from Czernowitz, but also people there from Czernowitz. And there were crazy people there who were running around, real crazy. Insane. And we were told that what they did is they brought all the Jewish people from mental institutions and they were brought to Liège to the Cayara di Piatra. And that was degrading to see how they behaved because they didn't have any food, and they couldn't go and exchange anything and they couldn't go and buy. So I personally saw one of those guys eating his own bodily waste. It's not a pleasure to recount this thing. And so when the Germans took us, they didn't take those crazy people, those insane. I don't know what

happened to them after that, after we left. But they didn't go with us, they remained there. I don't want to think of their fate, what happened. I can assume that they were not really cured of something like that. They killed healthy people, I don't think that they had any remorse in killing those people. They were really in terrible shape.

Q: Can you tell us, please, what happened to you after the war briefly?

A: Well, after the war, we came back to Dorohoi, and I hated this town. I saw the same former colleagues of mine who, when I came in, they were in the Iron Guard. And they were given the green shirt with a kind of leather. And I realized at that time what they are. But anyway, so there was not really open anti-Semitism in order to kill us or to be beat us. There was not those kind of things. Apparently, they realized when they brought us back maybe they don't want us there anymore or whatever it was. Anyway, so we stayed there because we had to stay because our family in Focsani was under the Rumanian and German occupation, while we were with the Russians until August of 1944. At that time we decided to leave and we went back to our town. There when I came, we lived together with one of my mom's sisters and then we had an apartment on our own. And I went back to school to catch up in my education, and while other people really laughed. "What are you trying to do?" you know. So I said, "Well, I lost so many years that I hope that I can catch up and eventually bring myself up to time." So I went to school, I went to \_\_\_\_\_ in Bucharest, and I finished part of my education. And life under the Russian Communist regime was not much, much better than under the Germans, with the exception that they didn't kill you, not shoot you. But I couldn't get a job because my father was a merchant once, and I had to tell the whole story of my parents. And wherever I went I was considered a son of a bourgeoisie. And I told my parents that I cannot live in this place anymore. So I decided to go, where to go. So in 1948 Israel was reformed again, and in December 1948 I left for Israel. And I arrived in Israel in January 1949. I was in the Israeli Army for a while, and I was liberated from there. And I got a job with a Zen Lines Shippers, and I started from scratch. Bag boy, steward, storekeeper and so forth and so on. I used my skill and knowledge from school and I produced profit and losses and balance sheets and those, which was something new. And I was sent to a school there, and I was made Chief Steward on a cargo ship and a Ship Steward on a passenger -- it was a \_\_\_\_\_ Israel, and I was purser on a cargo ship \_\_\_\_\_. And I used to travel. Ironically, many of our destinations were Germany where we arrived in Hamburg and Braman & Bramanhoffen (ph) where we used to bring merchandise from Germany to Israel under the pact of \_\_\_\_\_, which means let's make it good. And Israel received quite a lot of help from Germany and merchandise and so forth. So I worked for them until 1956, when I came to the United States, and I married one of my former inmates in concentration camp. She was a little girl at that time, and I was not very old. But that's another story. There was an unfortunate marriage, which I don't want to discuss; it has nothing to do with the Holocaust. But it's quite interesting, here I start working for Swiss bank which I start again from fresh as a clerk. And based on my education and my dedication, I finished up a college equivalency -- in America it is banking, and I was promoted to Assistant Vice-President, Vice-President. This Swiss bank is a foreign bank, I don't want to advertise for them. A foreign bank don't give ranks and definition unless you're really 100 percent, so thank God

that I succeeded and I went to school here. And I retired as Vice-President of the controller's area in the Swiss bank in 1990.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: You're very welcome.

Q: I would like to go back once more and to kindly ask you to tell us if you remember anything else about your guards, German guards in Brasov.

A: Yeah. Well, besides the Karl Rheinger and the Mikel Cromer (ph) and this time when we were in the camp at the end we had another commander, SS policia. His name was Tomachek. He was originally from the Sudeten territory of Czechoslovakia. It is interesting to mention that they told us their names. The never hoped that we will be alive or anybody will survive, and we knew their name very accurately. Now, Tomachek was the last commander in our camp, and he was just the opposite of Mikel Cromer, or Karl Rheinger who was a monster. But Tomachek, he did his job but he did not really overdo, and not only that he didn't kill us, but he even saved some lives, I might say. There was a time when three people escaped from our camp, and by the rule that for every person 10 people will be shot, so, therefore, we expected another kind of drama that 10 people will disappear in the same day. But Tomachek brought three people from the camp of Pöllküllä (ph), which was another Rumanian jurisdiction camp near Brasov where the people were left to starve and die. And they brought those three people in a very bad condition, I remember they were swollen. I didn't know at that time that people who don't eat, before they die their bodies swell up. They get so swollen. And he actually had them there for the count, and with the soup that we got which was much more than they got in Pöllküllä and they recovered somehow. And for a while they were kept in the camp, didn't work, and they were not shot really. Now, when we were in New York after the war and my parents and I were called to the German Consulate in Manhattan and we were asked if we knew anything about a German whose name was Tomachek. And we said yes, we knew about him, and we had wanted to say good things. And my parents and I signed a proxy, whatever you call it. A deposition on his behalf that he didn't kill anybody in our camp. We said that we don't know what he did in other places if he did. But as we know his character, I believe that he never killed anybody. So we just made a deposition on his behalf and I hope that he was acquitted if there was any trial.

Q: So if I understand you well, he replaced those people who escaped with other three inmates from Pöllküllä in order to not enforce the \_\_\_\_\_ crises.

A: Correct. Because occasionally he got his bosses used to come and count, but there were no names, and there were only numbers. And actually, in my opinion, he risked his life probably. And why he did it, I don't know, but he did it.

Q: Thank you.

Conclusion of Interview