

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with William Schneiderman  
September 21, 1994  
RG-50.030\*0288**

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with William Schneiderman, conducted by Randy Goldman on September 21, 1994 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The 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.

# WILLIAM SCHNEIDERMAN

## September 21, 1994

00:01:13

Q: I need you to begin by telling me your name, where you were born, and what year.

A: My name is William Schneiderman, and I was born in 1911 -- June the 15th, 1911.

Q: In what town?

A: The town is Stoczek, Poland.<sup>1</sup>

Q: Tell me a little bit about your family life before the war.

A: Family life: I was married; I had four children, four boys. And after that struggled to make a living. And after it started in 1939, the Germans came in. And I was in the Polish army. Took me there in fight against the Germans.

Q: Let me actually -- I just want to go back a little bit. I'm trying to get a sense of what your life was like. What kind of work you did. Were you very religious?

A: Parents were religious. I used to go to synagogue, but I really never was up-to-date with the religion. There were a lot of things I didn't understand. Why what happened a thousand years back, if you're Jewish you have miracles to survive and we don't have miracles now? People are struggling to make a living, they were working 12, 14 hours a day and making a living. In -- it was hard -- hard living.

Q: What was the town like? Was it -- it was a small town?

A: It was 300 Jewish families there. And with a synagogue, and a cemetery and so that everybody -- most of the people were shoemakers, carpenters, tailors. And our family was butchers. And we used to deal with farmers. Got along very fine with farmers, they didn't bother us. But after a while, started to get rougher. The younger generation grew up and became like here -- some of them, against the Jewry. They didn't want the Jews to come to their town to sell something. Just to go around in the town -- used to go around with needles, thread. Instead, they didn't want us to give a little kasha. Other things, like a trading. To make a living, they used to get me. Used to go almost everyday. Except Saturday. Saturday, nobody go. Struggle. Was very poor living. Most of them -- nobody had money in the bank. Was not even a bank in the city. It was a government, you know; we were -- was satisfied. They say, worm goes into horseradish, tends not to do so good. That is what happened to us. We wanted more but couldn't ask for more. Because that's what it was. A small town and too

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<sup>1</sup> The town of Stoczek is also referred to as Stok.

many of everything.

01:04:44

Too many of everything. Like too many tailors, too many shoemakers, too many carpenters, everything. We used to go and -- go on -- market, there used to be a market some days. Once a week, it was a market by us. Just bring it all -- the farmers, they come to bring potatoes. Other things, chickens, butters, cheeses. People used to go out to buy it. It was -- somebody used to have stands outside, like pushcarts, to sell something to them. That was the living. 'Til, 'til 1939.

Q: Ok, now if you -- [technical conversation].

A: That was started after the war -- before '39, they used to call them [inaudible]. People used to call them, some dishes to sell outside the market. Then the youngsters, the youngsters -- the Polish boys came up and used to throw them around and kick on them. And suddenly it was very hard to stay in business. It started -- this started -- it started this way and we survived. We survived 'til, 'til 1939.

Q: Now you said you -- were you -- were there any Zionists or political organizations in your town?

A: There were Zionists, yes. Very few. As a matter of fact, I was belonged to the Kibbutz [inaudible], to go to kibbutz and go to, after while go to Israel to work. Or else in by us, we had to respect for our parents, and my father said "No, No." He had made [inaudible]. After a while, I find out he made a lot of money. Because he was butcher, he want I should be a butcher. I could be something else. I'm going to be something else. I could make a better living. There's too many -- too many this. Another brother wanted to be a butcher, and have two younger brothers, they want -- they will wind up to own carpenters. I didn't --

Q: Then you were interested in the politics of the Zionist movement?

01:07:22

A: Yeah. I always talked about it with the "run away with," that term, because it was not pleasure there. Was nothing. I had four boys. What do you think was to grow up? Like same thing -- working. It was not -- even in schools, were afraid to go to school, because they used to get beaten up by Polish boys because they were more in -- they started to go to school. And if you didn't want to go to school, you weren't punished. You didn't have to go to school, because nobody was interested. The government wasn't interested in you didn't go to school.

Q: But they went -- did they go to the same school with the Polish boys?

A: Yes. They go to the same school. Of course, a couple classes -- it was about two or three classes in our town was for Jewish kids only. After a while, the higher classmate have to go together. What's troubling, you are afraid to go because no-- nobody was, nobody -- it was nobody was stopping them to do anything. There was no punishment.

Q: Let's -- now, at this point, had you -- [technical conversation]. Before 1939, had you heard a lot about Hitler and the Nazism? Did you know --

A: No, no. In 1939, 1940 -- '35 -- a lot of Germans on the way from their town came, it's Poland. When they used to tell us stories, nobody could believe them. Nobody wanted to believe them. Even, even in '38, even in '38, they came back and they came into our town and they told us a story. We didn't believe it. We didn't believe them when they said, even in 1939, they took over in Poland. The gentile people used to go, they used to deal with them, with us. They used to buy from the kosher butcher. The Jewish people eat only the front part of the meat and the back part used to sell it to them. They used to take it to different big cities and sell it there and make a living. They came back from Warsaw and they told us -- they said that they were going to kill Polish Jews. We didn't pay too much attention.

01:10:18

We were, at that time, tied in already, because when the Germans came into house they used to beat us up and then let us go. They caught somebody -- as a matter of fact a Jew that was on the market buy wood. They came in to buy the wood, he bought the wood, that wood was stolen. The police, the Germans, they didn't punish the guy who bought -- who stole -- the wood. They punished the Jew who bought the wood. He didn't know. He needed the wood, he bought it. So they took him and they send him away to Treblinka. It was Treblinka, not -- there was two of them. One of them was just for punishing gentile people. Jewish people, but they did something wrong from the beginning. They didn't take them to kill yet. So that was the start of it.

Q: Now you said you were in the Polish army?

A: I was the Polish Army, yeah.

Q: A lot of Jews in the Polish Army?

A: Was, there was, because a lot of -- they didn't take everybody to the army because some of the numbers like here, you know? So they didn't go. I went. A lot of people went, went to the army. I was in the army then, in the reserve. The war started, they took me into the reserve. I was in Warsaw, the capital. I was supposed to be -- whenever I had a gun in my hands, I never put a bullet in it. It was, it was taken over by them like, like nothing. They used to bomb that city and people were killed, the horses were killed. They used to go out, the people used to go out, take knives, cut off pieces of meat from the horses, from the dead horses outside. They used to take it home and cook it and eat these things.

Q: Now tell me a little bit about when the war started. Where were you, what was happening?

01:12:32

A: Well, after the war, after the war finished, the Germans took over. I came home. I came with the [inaudible]. We went to buy a piece -- steal by a farmer. We used to sell it to a make a living. I started to make a living. Worse and worse. We couldn't go out, they locked us in. They put us in a lot of punishments. And sometimes at night Germans came in. They didn't want to do it -- they would find something they wanted. They didn't want the stock. They want we should pay money. And have us put to jail. We have to pay them off not to touch us. And money wasn't around. Couldn't -- couldn't produce, we couldn't make it. We couldn't call into farmers, bring in some stuff. We couldn't go out. So it got tougher and tougher.

Q: What -- do you remember the date your town was occupied?

A: The Germans occupied this 1939 in -- I think it was before the Jewish holidays. In October, something like that.

Q: August, maybe?

A: Yeah.

Q: August of 1939? No.

A: It was in summertime, I know this.

Q: In September of 1939, the Germans came into Poland --

A: It was at that time it was occupied.

Q: Did they come to your town afterwards?

A: They came right away. All over. They came all over. I can remember because I know it was in the summer.

Q: But after you left Warsaw it was right away?

01:14:30

A: After I left Warsaw, as a matter of fact, I was a -- they had keep us about two weeks. The Germans kept us. And then they gave us the leaves and I started to want to go home. I had to walk about 70 miles home.

Q: So by the time you got home, were the Germans in your town also?

A: They were there. They were all over Poland right away. Because they came in, they came in there, and as a matter of fact, in our side of the town, the Germans -- it was Russia and Germany did business, in the beginning. They did business. They used to bring this -- they used to trade wood for coal, a lot of things, they did business in the beginning, yeah. So the Germans were there. And it used to make me almost -- took people to work everyday almost in our town.

Q: Ok. So after the Germans came in, they made life very difficult for you. Were you put into a ghetto?

A: It was a ghetto, yeah. The ghetto was -- we couldn't -- we weren't allowed to go out to do business anywhere else. Only sneaked in through the different roads because we were living there, but you know -- sneak in, sneak in. That's why we survived.

Q: Was there any semblance? Your town is now a ghetto. It's difficult to get in and out. Was there any normal life? Did people go to school? Did you still pray?

A: No schools for anybody. Not even -- not only for Jews, but for the non-Jews, too. No school at all. The occupation, the occupation of the Germans, there was no school, no.

Q: Were you able to go to synagogue?

A: There was no synagogue. It got burnt. The synagogue got burnt, half of the town got burnt.

Q: So the Poles were in bad shape, too?

A: Not the Poles. The Poles, most of them were lots of farmers. The others managed to do something. They could go around and they could maneuver around from one town to the other. But there was no punishment for them. They said that they didn't, they didn't suffer that much a loss.

Q: So there really was nothing you could do. Were people working?

A: Only worker, yeah. The people that were farmers, they used to bring in some stuff, a pair of shoes. Tailors, because they didn't have -- very few Gentile people were tailors. Most of the Jews were the tailors and they brought their stuff to them. They didn't go nowhere. They could -- they were allowed to come into church. They were allowed to come into the city. But they weren't allowed. The Nazis, they gave them money, they brought them in some food. Flour, potatoes, other things, too. Only for Jews, for a lot of Jews this was too many for us, especially for our profession, was very risky. You couldn't -- you weren't allowed to go to farmer to buy these cattle. It was very risky. If we killed the cattle, it was also very risky. You were not supposed to do it.

Q: So were you out of work then?

01:18:40

A: I was out of work, yeah. We lived whatever we could get. I used to buy the flour, we used to make our own bread. We used to do -- we had water. Salt. And that was good. We didn't ask any more. So long we had a piece of bread on the -- most of the -- feed the children. Milk was very hard to get, because they didn't have the money to buy the milk from the farmer.

Q: Did -- was there a lot of brutality towards you by the Germans? Did they beat people?

A: Oh, they beat people with when they find them. They didn't come into the houses looking for-- at that time it was not the order yet. They didn't start at that time the order to kill the people yet. The people -- about a year -- about two years -- a year and a half they were -- they didn't bother with everybody. They didn't bother them because they made ghettos. And they tried to depress the people. They should give up faster, they shouldn't fight back. They want to depress them. They have more strength than to lose because they didn't have enough food to eat -- the other couple kids was -- your family had seven kids, too. And you have to feed them, each one of them -- 10 pounds potatoes was not enough to feed 10 people, nine people.

Q: Were there work brigades?

A: Hmm?

Q: Were there work brigades? Did they send any of the Jews out to do work?

A: Yeah. They used to catch us. Do work, spent a lot of time to make water digs, to make for farmers, not for ours. And they used to take us, and a lot of people didn't know how to work. They got beaten up. Were not physically fit.

Q: Were there shootings?

A: Hmm?

Q: Anybody get shot?

A: No shooting. They beat them up. A bullet is too much. Save a bullet. Kill them with the sticks and anything.

Q: Did the local Polish people -- were they nice to you or were they beating you up, too?

A: Well, they were nice. They didn't bother us. They didn't help either. Many of the local



farmers -- we have a lot -- in our profession, we have a lot -- we deal with a lot of farmers. If they come, they try to do--. Really, they was staying away from the Jews. Most of the time, they didn't want -- they wouldn't get in trouble. So I didn't blame them because everybody works for themselves. So it wasn't good for anybody. It wasn't good for the Polish people, either. You gave them, told them to bring in stuff but they need it for themself. And like meat, and everything, they confiscated and everything you want, they did with that.

Q: Now, I know that . I know how you happened to leave your town. But were there, up until the time you left, round-ups of people?

A: Oh, you mean concentration camp. To Treblinka, you mean?

Q: To anywhere. Did they come to the town and gather people together and send them to work, to camps?

A: Yeah. They used to go. There was a Judenrat.<sup>2</sup> You know what a Judenrat is? They took the Judenrat and they were responsible -- they came in and they want a supply, some of them made the Jewish. They came in, the Judenrat, the police; got some -- like a list -- and used to come in and take me or take somebody else. They had to supply as many people they wanted.

Q: What did you think of the Judenrat?

A: Oh, yes. I don't know. I'm going to tell you this. The only way they did that, they had no choice. They had to do something because otherwise -- a lot of them did it, overdid it. Most of them had no choice. They had to supply the people.

01:23:22

Q: So the council was -- would gather people for work or for something.

A: Oh, the most important thing is that they came home that night. If they don't, they get weaker every day. They couldn't work, they couldn't do anything when -- because if you don't eat, you can't produce.

Q: How did you happen to leave?

A: I have had to eat. One bed for the other, that's all. Nothing -- a dollar left over for next week.

Q: I'm sorry. I was asking you how you happened to leave the city. For Treblinka. How -- what was happening?

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<sup>2</sup> Jewish Council (German).

A: Well, it was panic. Everybody else is panicking, everybody is afraid because we saw what's going on and started to -- they were taking up people from Warsaw already. They were taking up, bringing from the big cities. Scared. We heard about the Russians. From the beginning Russia lost the war. We hoped, but the hope never came. It came too late. So I came in that date when they, after do this.

01:25:00

They started to bring in the Jews from [indecipherable]. They needed some helpers. So they went into Warsaw and they told people in Warsaw -- they were starving there in the streets, and a lot of people had nothing to eat -- in the ghettos because the poor people didn't have no money to pay for anything. Everything was so expensive. The rich people didn't want to share with anybody. They thought maybe they want to live for themselves. Even they had enough, but they didn't -- even they went in to talk to them -- to the big people, the manufacturers there. "Give us money, we going to buy some ammunition with." "Don't bother me." They didn't want nothing to do with them. Because they -- maybe they will fight for themselves. Everybody was selfish. They always worried about for themselves. After a while, they came into Warsaw, they told the people if you to have a job, working, I'll give you room and board. So a lot of -- came out and said they want to go. They took them, they put them in -- was about 300 people there. At Treblinka, before I came there. And they started to building the dam. Only they were so poorly, the help was so poorly because it was starving before, they had nothing to eat. What are they going to do? Came there, in the start of they gave me shovels to dig. To make the grave for the -- prepare for the people -- for the gas chamber. To make -- they started to do that. They couldn't do the job. They took a couple days. They took them. They used to line them up in three, take them into a grave and shoot them. Then they came into our town. And they took us and they came in. It was a Thursday morning. I remember that day, that morning, and heard something was going on.

01:27:04

Q: What year? When was this? What year?

A: It was in '42.

Q: And do you remember the month?

A: It was summertime. I know it was about May or June. Because I know down the field, because I was hiding there in the field. And I jumped up to the window. Back, back in our room there was a field there. And people and I hid myself there. And one Ukrainian came there and find me there. And came with a gun, I thought they were going to kill them there. He took me -- he had surrounded the barn, that and 10 boys, young people. He put us in jail 'til they finish up the whole thing. They took us out; they came in with trucks. They put us on truck; they started to travel to Treblinka. And we were traveling, and there they picked up, picked up a couple bicycles there from somebody and put us on our heads. And then we

were traveling in a yellow truck. There were three [inaudible]. They used to take -- traveling there they took cigarettes. Some, they were boldy. They lighted up the cigarettes and put them in there and burn them. Finally we came in, took us to that concentration camp, Treblinka. And we came up in the truck. And they told -- finally, we finally came into that pensjonat.<sup>3</sup> You know what pensjonat means? Like a hotel. Finally we came into Hotel Treblinka.

Q: I'm going to stop you for one minute. I just wanted -- how long did it take you to get there, and how many people were in with this group on the trucks?

A: About 150 people. 150 people.

Q: 150?

A: Yeah.

Q: And it took how long?

A: Hmm?

Q: How long, how long was the distance to get there?

A: Oh, it was -- took a couple of hours. Couple of hours.

01:29:33

End of Tape #1

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<sup>3</sup> Hotel (Polish).

Tape #2

02:01:22

Q: Did you, did you know about Treblinka before?

A: I know the town was a railroad place. They had a small stop there. They used to -- trains stopped there. So in the way to that station they made an extension, they made an extension to that Treblinka, they called it Treblinka. That was a desert. A piece of land unworkable for farmers, just a piece of desert. But they came, when I came in there, when they took us from the truck -- in the truck everybody... Anybody wouldn't have no shovel is going to get killed. But everybody was grabbing -- the shovels, and was maybe 20 left over. And we started to work. Same day we work. And physically, I was built good, strong. People, other people in the town they never did a hard work in their life. The skin of their -- it was soft. If you started to use a shovel for a long time, you get blisters on the fingers. You can't work. They couldn't produce. So, they were working; they couldn't produce. And it was one German sitting on the top, watching. All were crying. Some people that wouldn't produce used to call him up -- come up -- and they took him, they tied in their legs to the -- like a bench. Tie the legs to a bench. He told him to bend down, and took off -- put down -- your pants down. He took two canes -- not -- canes and they beat him, one on this side and one on the other side. They beat him up so much, then they took him to the edge from the grave and they pushed him down. He fell over. He refused to stand up. Right away they get him to work. They took him off again and it was finished. He was finished, couldn't do nothing. I was trying not to get up there. They didn't hurt me.

Q: Now what -- where was the rest of your family at this time?

02:04:10

A: Weren't in my town yet. I was there about seven months before them. They took me away before. And they were -- it was hoped -- they used to come -- they allowed --they made a deal with the Germans, they let one girl come in every week and bring a -- some bread. Bring in and some notes that they gave. "We are working on it, you're going to be free. You're going free, you're going free." I had opportunity to run away that time, also. Because -- but I didn't want to run away because I was afraid for my family. Because if they know I run away, they know where I came. They going to punish my family. They were waiting and waiting. And when we got hope, 'til the time came, and they took, they took us out, all of them, about a couple hundred -- about a hundred people -- 120 people -- and they stood us in line and said, "Who wants to go home, and who wants to stay here?" Everyone wants to go home. So I went in the line -- "I want to go home." Right after, they didn't let us go. They let us go and I went in the -- back to sleep. And I was laying in the bed and something came into my mind. If they going to be free, I'm going to be free -- a week later, two weeks later. I went back to the line, I want to stay. So those people, they separated. They took them a different place. I never saw them again. They took them a different place and started to bring in the

cars with Jews to kill them off. Those people were with the dead ones. And I was working with the working people. They have to build beds for the -- and build barracks for them, I was working for them. That's why I was working. And they used to bring -- every day they started to bring in a hundred cars, and each car was that -- a hundred people in each car. In the beginning they didn't -- when they came off the car, I wasn't there. Only the workers, if they needed something to fix, I was -- I used to go up there. There was some soon as they got off the car, the people were glad they were coming off, because a hundred people in the car and the trip used to take four or five hours. They'd keep them for 24 hours. It made them so weak, they were -- they couldn't -- they didn't care anymore.

02:07:17

So they told them, the first thing, take off the jacket. After -- and the overcoat, then the jacket. And 'til they came to the end, they were naked. And they were in line to go, they were put in the concentration camp, in the chamber, the gas chamber. I saw the gas chamber before they started to build because I was there and was doing some work there. And I couldn't, because my destination, I couldn't even think about it. There was going to be something to kill people. I thought it was looked like a shower. Looked -- openings on the ceilings like water will come, you know. That's what I figured. I didn't figure they would do this thing, you know.

Q: Were you involved in building it or not?

A: Huh?

Q: Did you help build it?

A: I helped them build it, yeah. But all the work there was -- I used to go to the forest, I cut -- chopped young trees and bring it in. I used to go and a German used to take me and a few people together and we used to go bring in the -- those things to build there.

Q: So you built barracks?

A: Barracks, yeah.

Q: And the gas chamber?

A: The gas chamber I wasn't building because it was professional people was making bricks, you see. This was people, I don't know, I think was Germans allowed to build it -- build this thing. They built one, one small in -- on the first grave. They put in the people and they covered them with dirt and cloths there. And after a while, they stopped for a couple weeks and they came in, a lot of mechanics came in. They built another one. A big gas chamber. Bigger one. And they took in, they took in steam shovels to build, to dig. After a while, they didn't put them in the graves anymore. They made -- from the tracks from the railroad, they

made like a -- like a screen -- laid like this -- and they put them at the -- in the fire in the bottom that went in. And they used to, they used to dig up the people that were buried before: a year ago, six months ago, they used to dig them up and they with the steam shovels and I used to see from my inside where I was working -- I used to see a hand, a foot, there was bodies. It was such a smell that people got -- a lot of people got sick there. Died off in that thing. Well, I had mine -- what's the name -- typhus -- before I went in. I was lucky that time I didn't catch it because I was -- before I went in the concentration camp I was sick and nothing had survived.

Q: So you were working in a separate part. You were not working in the same place where they --

A: Was separated, yeah, yeah.

Q: You were in the lower camp.

A: Lower camp, yeah. Anything that had to be fixed, I had to go in. Was the -- call it -- the other place -- lazaret.<sup>4</sup> They call it lazaret. It means -- the German is a hospital, something like this. They took the people -- sick people. They came in, a lot of young people came in with carriages and babies. They took the carriages away with them and the sick people, they came up in the train -- they put them in that carriages and they brought them over. Was a fire, burning on inside there. And they told them, we come in, we going to take them to the doctor. We going to fix you. And at that time I was there fixing that thing, somebody got burned there. The -- a place where they were standing there with rails and hiding.

02:11:43

So caught on fire, got burnt. I had to fix it there. And I saw, they came in with a lot of these people. And they tell them, wait a minute, the doctor's coming. They took them off in a carriage where they let them stay. The doctors that came right away, they took the crying people, they took guns and they shoot them and they fell in, right on the fire.

Q: You saw this?

A: I saw this. Yeah. Only once over there.

Q: When you saw something like this what were you thinking in terms of your own security?

A: Own security was like a -- put you in with tigers. In a tiger cage. You stay, you couldn't do nothing. You couldn't do -- because the only hope was maybe, maybe even the people that go into the hospital you see is dying right away, you still hope something. "Maybe, maybe." That was our -- some people lost their will. Some people had, "Maybe, maybe, maybe." So

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<sup>4</sup> Field hospital (Polish, archaic).

long as we -- I could walk around, physically, good strength, I hoped maybe something would happen. The war -- some days they took, they took people. They started to get scared, thought maybe, everybody was disgusted. Maybe we will started to make an uprising. They started to -- they took the people, they took -- they put all of them on one lot in a circle, and they were in the middle and they told us. They took two people out of there and they said, "These two people want to run away." So they need somebody to make a hanging noose -- what do you call it? To hang them up. To make a pole like this and one stick like this and two like this, and picked people to make that thing. And they hung them by the legs. Not by the head. And they were hollering. There was -- "What are you waiting for? You think they going to do -- you going to go out?" And we were standing in line, standing there and helpless. Maybe we were -- all together, maybe, we could have done something. Maybe we could kill them all, because they -- my jobs are there. But everybody was so scared. So scared.

Q: Now I want to go back a little bit. When you arrived, you started working right away.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you said that the area was really a desert.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were there many buildings there already?

A: No buildings. Was only building was the building for the Germans to live in. Living quarter. For them.

Q: And what about the other camp? The other prison camp that was already there?

A: The prison camp was started to build, it was there some like a barns. Nothing there. Just four walls and a roof. That's all that was there. Nothing made for us to sleep. I used to -- I build the beds for them to make sleep. We took lumber and made it like this. Because -- long bunks. You made it like this. At top, higher. And below, lower. And that's where we slept. Out there on this thing. At night we were locked in. We couldn't go nowhere.

02:15:40

We were barred this side and barred that side. And on the back -- in the front was guards. And that's who was standing there.

Q: Did you get enough to eat? Were you able to take showers?

A: No, no showers, no. Well, no showers. You could never have to change our shirt. We couldn't change our shoes, couldn't change anything. Was nothing there to -- was not the

supplies for us. No supplies. Only food. Because they needed us to help them doing -- operate a factory.

Q: So what kind of food did they give you?

A: They gave anything nobody wanted to eat. They gave it to us. Horses. Dead horses.

Q: Meat?

A: Meat, yeah. Glad to get it. I was -- a lot of times I was -- I don't know if I was lucky to -- something -- I don't know. But we used to go up with the Germans in the woods to chop, to bring in the young trees because they needed the separation for the clothings. So farmers used to bring up some food there. So I had some money. I was lucky the Germans ate oranges. So he took the oranges from me and I got food. One day they took another fellow with us. And he brought the same thing. Him, he came back -- reported that him they killed. Because he did -- because I was sharing with him the oranges.

Q: The people outside of the camp must have had some idea of what was going on inside the camp.

A: Only farmers. Polish people. They did know what was going on there. They knew it.

02:17:40

They knew -- they couldn't miss it because the trains go through the city. Trains coming in. They know it but I don't think anything could be done. Anything that maybe they would all get together and do something. The outsiders and insiders. But it was never -- see, nobody, they didn't care for us. Because somebody took me out. They took my family out after I find out. They went through the windows that night and they took up all our furniture. And everything that they find there in the house. They took it away. Everything. They didn't really -- they waited for those things, some of them. Neighbors. Right, neighbors next to the house.

Q: Who were, were the guards at Treblinka? Were they German, were they Polish?

A: Not Polish. Ukrainian. The guards, most of them, most of the guards were Ukrainian. Not Germans. Germans were the leaders. They give the orders. They would do nothing.

Q: How were the Ukrainian guards? Did you have, did you --

A: Oh, they were -- some was very tough, very rough. They were drinking all the time. They helped, they helped all the production there. Everything there was going on. They gave them some liquor to drink before and they just were -- no.



Q: Were they -- did they beat people?

A: Some that got beaten up, yeah.

Q: Who were most of -- most of the prison population? There wasn't that large of a number there at one time, was there?

02:19:40

A: It was all the -- was started -- then they took up some people from the people that came in. Took in -- the people that died off, they took in stronger people to work because -- matter of fact, we had a doctor there. Also came in there. And a lot of educated people. There were couples, you know. They did the dirty work. The Germans just gave the orders. The rest of them did the dirty work for them.

Q: I'm trying to get a sense of how many people were generally in the camp at one time. And the--

A: Well, most of them, at that time that I was, was about a thousand people.

Q: And you were all working?

A: All working, yeah.

Q: And the other people who came in on these trains everyday?

A: The other people that came on the trains right away, they was executed. Right away they were killed.

Q: How many people do you think came in every day? Could you tell?

A: I could tell. I was watching. I was working on some -- on a roof and I was standing there and I counted the trains that came in. At that time was, even at the time was a Jewish holiday. Bigger the transport was. Put in thousand people. Sometime six hundred people. All depends on the day, whatever they get.

Q: I thought I read somewhere that there were transports of sometimes up to six thousand people but they had to bring them in some at a time.

02:21:30

A: Yeah. The trains, was not room all the cars could come in. Because was not big enough to fit in all the cars. The rest of the -- they separated the cars. They left others outside, some to finish up this thing. And a lot of cars came in again.

Q: Was this pretty continual, all the time these cars came in?

A: The most of them were every day. Most were every day.

Q: So you said you were working in a place where you could actually see what was happening?

A: I saw what was happening. I wasn't, wasn't involved with taking care of those people. But I was involved at sometimes seeing them, going into work there. And I used to see them. I saw when I was on the roof, I saw where the trains coming in. Because it was not a big place. Was not a --

Q: So what else could you see? Could you see their arrival when they came into the courtyard?

A: Arrival that came into the courtyard, how they get undressed. And walk to the bath. And the woman they used to bring her in, take her in to cut her hair off. And a matter of fact, once I was working there outside, and one child, young boy, was running away with his -- got separated from his mother. He was running away and I saw him come in and said -- he was talking to me, I should help him. So I look at him, and, what can I do? I was afraid to even to go near him. And a German came over, he took him away, "Come on, I'll take you to your mother."

02:23:32

Q: What else did you see?

A: I saw people -- they would put them up on trees and shoot them like they would shoot a bird. Saw people beaten up a for potato. I saw people beaten up for have -- for doing nothing. That's what they wanted. They had a dog. One German had a dog. A matter of fact, I was a witness -- consulate in Poland -- in New York. I was a witness for one German, they call him -- they ask me -- I ask them "What happen -- what took so long to catch him?" They said he came home, he change his name, he then move to a different small town and we couldn't find him. And finally we find him.

Q: Where were most of the prisoners coming from?

A: They came from Czechoslovakia. They came from Bulgaria. They came in -- Bulgarian people came in with passenger trains. Windows, everything. Matter of fact, they gave them barrels of water. They have food, the lamb, dried lamb. They didn't know where they were going. They absolutely didn't know. They came off the, the -- and they looked like, where are they? They must have -- didn't know, but, or something, not in some countries they didn't took up all of them. They left some people, they couldn't catch them, some of them.

Q: Why were they in passenger trains?

A: Huh?

Q: Why were they in passenger trains?

A: Because they probably didn't want the people -- the people in their country should know where they take them.

02:25:38

That was the reason. That's what I figure out. That that's supposed to be the reason. Because they -- Poland, they didn't care because Polish people they didn't, they agreed with them, because most -- a lot of concentration camps were all in Poland. Most concentration not in another country. They wouldn't allowed them to have this.

Q: Now these people who went for immediate execution. How many hours were they usually in the camp?

A: About two hours. That's all. They just -- it was organized. It was working sort of like a, like a, like a factory. Like -- take off the clothes: One here, one here. They took everything separately. Before they had everything together. Then they got smart and they got everything, and they took all the clothes. And they told some people that work there, "Look in the pockets, look all over." If they find some money, some diamonds and gold, glasses, anything you find -- they made up places where they separated everything. They put everything separate. The jackets separate. The clothes, the pants separate. The underwear separate. Everything separate. They put it separate. So that's, that's when I went to the woods to chop this young trees for the separation.

Q: When you say separation, are you talking about a building or a fence --

A: No. There was only building, only was separated with poles. Was not board up in boards, separately, but you could see through there, but there was no thing.

Q: But it was all within one building. Just --

02:27:37

A: All in building. Big building, yeah. They had people working. People work with the glasses, people working with the diamonds. Gold pieces. That's why I got some gold pieces from the people working there. Because I gave them some food and they gave me some gold pieces. And that was the only way when I work in the concentration I had something to buy my food with.

Q: So you really just worked in construction but you had reason to see all of these places.

- A: Oh, yeah. I was going around all over. I was going around just because the work wasn't -- not in one place. I was -- the carpenters was in one place. Where they make the beds, they make the tables. They were in one place all the time. I was working outside. It was by the building line, you understand, and I said I had to, I had to be in a lot of places.
- Q: So you really had an -- a chance to see what was going on all over the camp. You saw them taking the clothes. And pulling the teeth? You saw this?
- A: No, I didn't see this. This was inside. They took them inside already, cutting the hair, pulling the teeth. This I can't tell you, because I didn't see that thing. Only thing I saw this: I saw at that time, one night they took us to work there, and they had bundles of clothes to put in the same trains that took the people; they put in all the clothes there. And they shipped them to Germany. And a lot of people went in hiding between the clothes and they jumped off the train on the way out. But they, a few of them, came twice, three times they were there because nowhere where to go. Most important thing a human being over any other life thing: it needs to eat. And the worst part was eating. Hiding itself was bad in the wintertime. The winters were heavy. Not like here. The winter's light -- it was very heavy winters. A lot of snow. This was the problem, it lasted too long. See, after they took out the Jews left over took about two years. Two years is a long time. Some people -- those kids were -- their feet got frozen. They couldn't walk; they had to shovel on their behind because they couldn't walk on their feet any more. And nobody wanted -- would get involved. I didn't blame the people, the Polish people because they find out somebody helped a Jew, they came in, they took them out, they killed them, they burned the barns, they burned the house, they burned everything. So they were afraid. I don't blame them, those people. I blame the people went around to show where a, where a Jew lives. Where you could find a Jew, for a pound of sugar. Those people were -- those people didn't want to help. Everybody was looking for his own life.
- Q: We need to change tapes. Want your water? How are you doing?

02:30:54

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

03:00:53

Q: Now a little earlier I was asking you about who was coming in on these trains, and you said from Bulgaria. Were whole families coming in? Did children --

A: Everything. They took the whole families, yeah, the whole families. As a matter of fact, my own children came in there with parents, with my wife, first wife.

Q: Did you know they came in?

A: I didn't know. I had a feeling because they took us off from work and locked us in the barracks. And they put machine guns on the roofs. So I had some feelings they were going in there.

Q: That those people were from your town?

A: Huh?

Q: Why the machine guns?

A: Because they were afraid for us that maybe we know something about it. Maybe we make some riots or something. So they did it to protect themselves.

Q: Because that transport was from your town?

A: From my town, yeah. The whole town, my wife's town. All small towns put together. And took them out of the houses. I heard when I came back out. They took farmers, horse and wagons, they put kids with a woman on the horse and wagon. The people were lined up. And they walked to the railroad. Was nine miles from my town to the railroad. And they walked to the railroad. And the kids was --they had to be undressed, mother used to take them, took them into the gas chamber with them together.

Q: So the children died right away.

A: Right away.

Q: Were there any young kids working in the camp?

A: No. Only a few boys. Only about three of them, no kids, no kids.

Q: Teenage boys?

A: Not even teenagers. Just twelve, thirteen, fourteen, something like this.

Q: What were they doing?

A: They did what told them to do. They did take care -- clean up after the Germans. After they do, they take out the garbage. Just hang around and do a lot of things for them. Whatever they wanted. They had laundress. They had laundress, people work in the laundry, too. They had a couple woman, about three woman working the laundry and a couple men. Only for the Germans and Ukrainians, not for us. No laundry for us.

Q: Were there other women in the camp working?

A: There were about three or four woman, that's all.

Q: In the whole camp?

A: Whole camp.

Q: Who worked in the kitchen?

A: They worked in the laundries, the kitchen, the kitchens. The woman, some Ukrainians cooked for them, the Germans cooked for them. They didn't trust anybody.

Q: Who cooked for the prisoners?

A: We -- our people. Some people --

Q: Men or women?

A: No woman, no.

03:04:06

Q: Now one thing I read about Treblinka is that for a while the organization was very bad. And then there was a change in the German leadership there. Were you there then?

A: Yeah.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about that?

A: What it was -- the change was that they stopped a lot -- a few things. They send in different people -- different, more, more rougher characters. And they built another one, another gas chamber. There was Gestapo was there. Because they couldn't put it -- they couldn't operate. So many people they came in and kill them all. And if there no room to find to keep them

alive, maybe they going to operate. Understand? So they stopped bringing in the Jews for a few weeks and they build another -- this -- and the operation started again.

Q: What was the situation before the change in leadership? Were there extra bodies everywhere? What did --

A: No, there was no bodies there. There was -- we were restless. They say they finished everything, they were going to kill us. That's what our mind was into. Because there was nothing if you haven't got the strength and not work. So we got restless.

Q: Ok, so, I'm just trying to get a sense of what the camp was like before this new person, Stangl<sup>5</sup> -- is that his name -- came in.

03:05:38

A: The camp was there was a desert. It was built around a gate, all around with barbed wire. They had iron things standing up like this, and they put up barbed wire in case you went -- if you jump over, you get strangled up with the wire. You couldn't be able to get out. That's what they had done. In barracks we couldn't get -- move anywheres at night. At night we were locked in. It was, was like that chair. See, back and the side. The front was open. They had a gate. That gate was closed after we went in there. And the security was outside. So going out, outside at night was impossible. We couldn't done it. We couldn't -- anywheres.

Q: I want to ask you one other thing before we get to the uprising. I understand that when people came off the trains, they were very hysterical.

A: Very disturbed. Very, very weak. They couldn't stand up on their own feet. You see, they had families. Whole families, kids. And the kids were crying. "Water, water." They used to -- the mother used to urinate and give the water to, to drink for the kids. Such a bad situation. Nobody, nobody orders something like this. What did they -- things they didn't deserve. Just make a form and somebody put them on a tree and shoot them. Take the dog, grab a woman.

Q: Were they met by the Ukrainian guards or were there Germans also in--

A: They both together. They both together, working together.

03:07:45

They were always there with guns. Always there with guns. Matter of fact, one, one came off and he killed a German, some Jew stabbed him and killed him. And they, they said they even have a name on the -- Max Belicazan (ph.) That put it out that thing. Because he got killed on that, on the transport coming in. One Jew -- nothing to lose, see. I wish everybody would

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<sup>5</sup> Oberscharführer Franz Stangl

have did the same thing. Would be -- I don't know.

Q: Was there -- what happened after this German was killed?

A: Nothing. They couldn't -- it was done over there. They were more careful that time and after a while they started to -- they stood away to let the Ukrainian take over. They stood far away.

Q: Were a lot of Jews punished?

A: Huh?

Q: Were there--

A: No. These people were punished, anything, killed them. These people -- were not such a thing -- they didn't -- came into work there, they came into be killed. That's why --

Q: Now I, I was told that they had a little orchestra playing for the --

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me about that.

A: They used at night. Was a couple -- one actor from Warsaw, a singer and some musicians. And they make a circle, for the Germans, not for us. And we were standing outside and watching through the gate and see them singing for them.

Q: For their entertainment?

A: A matter of fact, even the doctor allowed to make -- married a woman there. Made a wedding. Was married.

Q: Jewish?

A: A Jewish doctor married a Jewish woman, was also -- he was a doctor and she was a nice looking woman and blonde.

Q: She was one of the few women there?

A: Yeah.

Q: But they didn't live together?

A: Hmm?



Q: They didn't live in the same place there?

A: I don't know that. I think they gave him one -- I'm not sure, but I think they gave him one place -- something, I don't know. Just I can't tell you exactly because I didn't know because I know that the, the woman was going on there.

Q: But didn't this little orchestra also play to drown out the screams of people arriving?

A: No, no. No, was at nighttime. No screams nighttime any more. After work, not in the day time.

Q: Oh, so there was no music in the daytime?

A: Oh, no. Oh, no. Was only in the nighttime. They'd put them on outside and they played for them.

Q: Ok, now before the uprising, were there efforts by Jews to fight back, to resist the Germans and Ukrainians?

03:11:17

A: Very little resist. No such thing. A matter of fact, when we started to organize ourself, the uprise, not everybody was allowed to know about it. We didn't want everybody to know. Until the last day, nobody know anything about it because we were frightened, because we had couples there. It was German couples, was other couples, German-Jews couples. And we didn't trust them.

Q: Were there -- so there were really no resistance efforts people, except for, you told me, some people would hide in the trains and try to go back.

A: No resistance. No resistance at all, no. One fellow, they -- was standing -- every morning they used to put us in lines and counted, see everybody's there, nobody went away. So the one fellow had something. They took him and they put him down, they told him to take off his -- put down his pants and started to beat him up. And beat him up. So then they killed him. Always they did something to scare us off. They do something like this.

Q: So tell me about the planning for this uprising. How did this come about? Who knew?

A: Maybe about 10, 12 people knew about it, that's all. We, we were in that place where the carpenters were -- worked. We were sitting there, they came in the house, We were talking. We had some -- we had somebody watching outside that nobody comes in. And we were talking about, we're talking about it. How should do it, when to do it. Because at night was no problem, no such a thing that we could do at night. Has to be done at daytime. Because

we didn't know -- they chasing people and we going to survive. After they finish up, they didn't want that everybody should know something. So we didn't want everybody should spoil it for us. They couldn't -- talk and talk -- and then made up the time for the day.

Q: Now why did it have to be in the daytime?

A: Because we couldn't move at nighttime. At nighttime we were locked in.

Q: And you were not in the daytime?

A: Hmm? The daytime we were moving around, we worked there.

03:14:30

But not at night. At night we couldn't do nothing. To make this -- we got the, the ammunition and the guns. Got it and they came in there. They built a place where they keep their -- the guns, the Germans. And they bought -- they took a door. They had no key to that door. And we had, what's the name -- locksmiths. Locksmith, and they told him to make a key.

Q: A Jewish locksmith?

A: A Jewish locksmith. They gave him to make a key. And when he was making the key, we told him make an extra key. So he make the extra key and we had that key.

Q: Do you remember the locksmith's name?

A: No, I don't know. There was so many, so many strange people there and everybody was occupied with his own tsores,<sup>6</sup> see. He was a goldsmith, a guy who was making rings, also. We told him, make a key. Extra key. And we took the key, and we were hiding that key. And we started to talk about the uprising. We gave the key to these kids, the same kids we were working by the Germans, the goyim,<sup>7</sup> to go into the [inaudible]. We told them, we warned, because when the Germans finished eating, everything was empty there. Nobody was there. So they had opportunity to get into the magazine. The same baby carriages for the garbage, they put in the guns on the bottom. It was the carpenter's place, them hiding there. It was -- dig the hole and put it in there.

Q: I just need to -- I need to ask you this because I want to make sure for the record this is very clear. So the baby carriages were from the trains, but they had to take them to the garbage and they hid the guns in them.

A: Yeah.

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<sup>6</sup> Hardship, misery (Yiddish).

<sup>7</sup> Gentiles (Yiddish).

Q: Ok.

A: And that's -- had watches. Had a watch, everybody put up the time. The time this should happen was supposed to be about five o'clock, before everybody comes in. So we get a few people -- not all the boys know about it, but a few went out to work with -- we could trust them. So after this somebody find out and everybody have a little money hidden away from the dead people. They put it in this -- the one boy came home and started to dig up the money. And a couple, a Jewish couple, saw him and called out a German. And the German started to run to grab that boy. He grab him, he going to beat him up and he was going to tell what's going on. Then we decided -- we made it before. We made it a half an hour before.

03:17:55

So a lot of people started to run. Everybody was running. Only they didn't know where to run. They didn't -- they were running front and back at the same place because the direction -- they were running, they didn't -- a lot of them strange people, not from even Poland, from different countries. When I was, my town was from the concentration camp was 15 miles only. I don't know the directions, I know where I walking. And I started to run. I didn't hear the gun that time. I had -- I took some big -- a handle from a chopper -- a big heavy -- and I came -- I was running back and I came to the people inside that was standing there and I say "Come, what are you staying here for? Come on, let's run." They weren't running. They weren't running. They staying there. They didn't want to run. I was running. I wanted there to find another person. And I came in -- came to the front of my town, it was daytime. I couldn't go into the town, because I was afraid to. I laid down there until it got dark. And I went back way, not in the front, through the whole town. To the side. And I went into farmer and I wanted some water. So he didn't want to give me no water. The farmer had no -- he's afraid, he expects somebody to come to him, he don't want to give him no water. I went away from him. I went to the different farmer. That farmer would give me water because he knows a lot of Jews, a couple Jews was hiding somewhere else, and he supplied them with food. So he would give me water. He would probably push me, put me back with the other ones. But I was running and then I laid down because I was tired, nighttime, in the field.

03:20:02

Laid for a while and after a while I got up and I look around and I didn't know where I am. My mind disappeared. Are they running?

Q: Were you alone?

A: No, another man. That one who lives, lives in Brooklyn -- in Miami, yeah. That's the guy. I was -- got up and I find out he didn't know where he was going because he's not from -- he's from different town. He was following me. He didn't -- yeah, he watched me like a hawk. He couldn't let me go because if I go, he is lost. I went into the woods, finally got into the

woods. And started to get daylight. And I see farmers coming into work, and I know them the farmers. And I was afraid to go up. I wouldn't go up. But it comes 12 o'clock and the farmers would go home. Lunch time. And I go out and can take a look around. I find another couple. A boy, a young boy with a sister-in-law. A sister, the husband got killed and he -- and they was scared for me and I was scared for them. Finally, we got together. Got together and they were -- the farmers didn't want to sell them anything, because they didn't have no money. They didn't want to give them anything. They didn't have no money. That boy used to go in at night, to the farmers, and what they put up for the dogs to eat, he used to take it away. The food, with a stick, for the dogs, and they lived on it. Then we came there and I had some gold pieces and I gave them this gold piece and they went to the farmer and they got everything. At night, not in daytime. We got everything. Finally, we came, we got food to eat. How we going to live? And after the -- we started steal a shovel from the farmer, came into the woods and I dig a hole. I dig the hole, made a place for four people. In the place -- and I covered it up. I chopped up some pieces wood to cover the top. And straw. And I put the dirt. The same dirt what was the other side, they shouldn't recognize that something new build there. The dirt was thrown away somewhere far away. There should be no dirt and we laid there. At night, I used to go for food. And sometimes I used to take -- was a lake there -- used to go into the lake and wash us off. Couldn't -- not to wipe us off, to washing off. And that's where we lived for a couple months. For 11 months we were living like this. After 11 months, they started to burn around there. They almost started -- the Russians coming to chase the Germans. And the Germans started to burn around all of there and I went away to different place. And I was laying in different place before -- the guns from both sides. And I see the Germans digging in. And I was separated from the group. I was by myself. And I was going to look for them. Finally, the German caught me. The German did. And this Germans didn't know I was Jewish because, I think they didn't know too much what's going on, either. The army people. So they caught me. And they said I was a spy. He was talking German but I'm Jewish, I understand a little bit.

03:24:29

He took me in on the wagon and, "Come with us." I went with him. And on the way going, was a telephone. The field telephones, you know. He takes up a shovel, told me to dig. And so he told me to dig a grave for me. He told me -- he showed me what he wants. To cover up the cables. And he took me into the -- with the leaders, standing in a room there in the farm. And he told -- just got somebody there. Told me to go lay down. I came there in there -- a lot of farmers laying in there. People were known. And I was afraid for them, too. It was nighttime. They told us to lay down. They were laying down. And I couldn't sleep. They was -- they fall asleep. And I was trying to go out. I went into the side and made believe I have to make -- and the Germans comes up, I went away. And I tried to go through the barns. Some of farmers had two doors. One that used to come in horse and wagon. They should be one way out and one way out. So I was trying to get in through the -- some of them had ceilings and I couldn't go through the ceilings. So finally I went into that barn, was two doors. I opened the back door. In that barn was horses. They started to run and they made noise. Was that time when they take off the grain from the fields. They have straw. They have to put

them up on the field to dry. I was hiding there. And I was hiding there 'til it got quiet. And I started to run. I was running, running, running. Finally, I came to -- it got daytime. And I was laying, all around, surrounded me Germans.

03:26:46

What could I do? I can't lay here. I picked myself up. I started to walk. And I walked and the one German comes over to me, told me, showed me to cut grass. I can't cut. I told him I am not a farmer. They let me go. I went -- I met one farmer, he said "Come with me." He was running away also from his home because of the shooting, and fire, burning. He took me with him. He said "Come with me. I got food and we're going to eat." He took me into the woods and I was laying in the woods and was organization -- they call it Akowcy.<sup>8</sup> They used to kill -- they didn't like Germans. They didn't like Jews. They didn't like the Russians, either. And I was laying there. They came around and looked at me. Somebody let them know -- they looked at me. Soon they walked away from me, I walked away to a different place. I was hiding somewhere else. I didn't trust them, either. I was laying for a day there, and finally the Russians came in. The Russians came in but -- the Russians came in and I went to my town. I came to the town --

Q: When was this?

A: This was -- got to be in -- July, August, something like this, because that time everything was on the field yet. About August, something.

Q: In '44.

A: '44. And I came into the town. I was the only one. The only Jew. Everybody's looking at me like I was a ghost -- came in. And there were a lot of them scared, because they were living in my house, my parent's house, and everything. And they were afraid I was going to start on them. So it was a foolish thing for me to do anything like this, because what I going to do all by myself? Start up with them now? So I disappeared, I went away. I didn't want to stay in there too long.

03:29:17

I went away to a farm. The farmer came into him he came in to eat. He gave me this, and he said, "At night, I want to sleep, go to sleep and don't tell me where you going to sleep." And he was afraid somebody come in -- "Don't tell me where you go." He was a real honest, good man, he saved about ten Jews. Not by him hiding, by him. They build themselves bunkers in these underground places. Two kids, two young kids was there for two years hiding themselves. Two young kids and they came up alive from there.

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<sup>8</sup> The members of the AK, or Armia Krajowa; Home [underground] Army (Polish).

Q: I need to change tapes. Can you go a little longer?

03:30:00

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

04:00:30

Q: So you were hiding with this farmer who had saved some Jewish people; this is when we stopped.

A: Huh?

Q: When you stopped talking, you were telling me about this farmer who saved some Jewish people and you hid there, and he said, "Don't tell me where you're going." What happened next?

A: Well, after a while I slept over there. I went up to -- well, I took chances. There was nobody there, nobody. No punishment. Everybody did something without firing up a lot of people. The Germans surrounded the Jews, and they were interested nobody should know about it. But a lot of people, a lot of Polacks told me who was there, and I was afraid for them, too, because there was a lot of people they -- one is to be a owned a lot of property there in all the good. He took me in, he gave me to eat. The other although I couldn't; I did not. One fellow, he did a lot of harm to Jews, found a lot of Jews. Once he came over to me, and he took me in and he took me in a corner and he said, "See, I got a gun. If I could kill you, nobody would do anything to me." So why did he want to do those things? "I'm not doing anything to anybody, and I'm not doing anything." He said, "Let me go in," and we were living, then, after a while, the other people came out, the Jews who survived the also from my town. And he took away their house, took away all two rooms on the farms, the Polacks that were living there.

Q: But you're back in your town now?

A: We're back in the town. We were living there for a couple weeks with a border guard, a Russian soldier. You know, we had put shutters on the windows and closed the shutters at night. And I had a gun at the time, under the pillow. After a while we went in other states and other cities. They came in at night and took all the Jews to kill more, whatever the survivors that was there after the war, after this.

Q: Who was killing, doing the killing now?

A: The Polack.

Q: After the Russians came in?

A: After the Russians came in. They took up and one town it was called Kossow. They came in at night. There was seven people living in one apartment. They came in and took them out, and I never saw them again. I never heard from them again. They killed them.

Q: So even after the Russians had liberated this area, the Poles were still killing Jews?

A: They couldn't live in our town. They have to move away from my town. I went to a town was about 80 miles away. You know, we stayed there in that town, and after another day or so, we went away to a big town, Łódź. I was there for a while. There was no future for the Jews. I didn't want to stay in that country anymore. From there, I went to Czechoslovakia. When I came to Czechoslovakia, there were standing, there, over there, so many people there, there was no room, no food or nothing. From there, I went through the border at night to Germans. The American people, American soldier didn't let us go through.

04:04:50

At night, we went through the gates because I was watching the spotlights. They weren't on at the border. We came to Germany to the first city that connected to Poland. And we were there--

Q: What was that city?

A: Terezpol (ph)

Q: Terezpol. Do you remember about the date we're talking about now?

A: I don't know, I can't tell -- it was summertime, I know for sure, because there was no way cold weather. Yeah, it was cold! It was winter, it was wintertime, because everything was frozen there. Even the bathrooms there, we couldn't use it.

Q: So was this maybe early 1945?

A: '44.

Q: '44?

A: Yeah.

Q: The end of '44?

A: End of '44, yeah. End of '44, because we got -- '44 it was, because when we got alone, I mean, '45, '44, because '45 was in Germany. We came to Germany and for a while we were there.

Q: But the war wasn't over yet.

A: The war was over in '44.



Q: '45. '45, I think. I think was -- I don't know, it was . . .

Q: Yeah, I think Łódź was liquidated in August of '44. I don't think the war was over until spring of '45. We'll worry about that later.

A: Yeah.

Q: I'll let you continue. So you went into Germany.

A: We were there, then when Germany came, we went to the DP camp. We were living there, also, three families in one room. Four, at that time it was, yeah.

Q: Four?

A: Four families in our room.

Q: Who were you with at this point?

A: Huh?

Q: Who were you with now?

A: I got married to Norma after the war.

Q: Oh, I missed that detail. Where did you meet your wife?

A: I met my wife in '44.

Q: What town?

A: Vengrov. When I went away from my town, I was there.

04:07:25

Q: Ok, right, ok. So you met your wife in 1944 in Vengrov and you were traveling with her?

A: Yeah, in Germany, she got sick on the way. We came to Germany, she went to the hospital.

Q: So what was the name of the DP camp you were in?

A: Föhrenwald. And the first couple of months I was Kirshenreid (ph), was probably, they took away a couple of houses from the Germans and they gave us their quarters there to sleep in for a while. After a while, they had nobody there, and I found out the same friend we were

with in one concentration camp, he lives in Föhrenwald, so I went there. There was a DP camp there, so I lived in there for a year or a little more.

Q: It was difficult there?

A: It was a lot of monkey business going on. It was plenty of food supply from -- the UNRRA<sup>9</sup> supplied a lot of food. A lot of food, a lot of people that took the food that sold it on black market. And they didn't -- they gave us anything that cooked that made out of -- like soup so they put in more water. Instead of putting in some more nourishment, they put in more water. They sold the stuff. Sold the stuff to somebody else. They made a lot of money. A lot of it going on, Jews alone. And I was surprised to hear about it, to see about it because the same people were almost dead already, they could take advantage on us. Yet, this -- you have to stay in line for everything, to come on in. They didn't let you do anything. You couldn't sell anything. You couldn't do it, because they, the UNRRA, even wouldn't allow a citizen to sell to any business. What was going on, business there, they were bringing bowls or steal them there and they were selling them. They got the money. We didn't have the money. I didn't work after they had the money, so I had to live from food that they gave me.

Q: So you were there about a year?

A: Huh?

Q: You were there about one year?

A: Yeah.

Q: In the camp in Föhrenwald.

A: More there -- I came in 1947, it was 1946, '47, we came in April of 1947 to the United States. I was there until that time.

Q: Was it difficult to get a visa to the United States?

A: Well, the visa, I didn't get the visa because she had a sister, my wife, and I found out -- we found out, the address. We had a soldier, an American soldier came in and we were talking to him. So he put it in the paper, and they were looking. She gave the name. My wife gave the name of the sister, the name, the family name. And they were looking up, and she looked -- the other sister had a friend. Francis' (ph) son was in the army in Germany. He was in the army in Germany, so she located him. She told him, so he came to us.

04:11:05

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

He looked us up, and he came to us. We started talks with him and finally he located us and the sister, sent us a letter and even sent us some money. So it was a little better at that time we had to buy some food, the money. And then we began to get registered to go to the United States. And her sister, she send me the papers, her sister she sent me the papers, and we came to the Unites States in 1947.

Q: Now, when you were in the DP camp, were you allowed to come and go as much as you wanted?

A: Yeah, well, a lot to go far back. We wasn't allowed to do any business.

Q: Why wouldn't they let you do business?

A: Because this was a law from UNRRA. We were not supposed to do it, because they give you to eat. It was, they used to take in, they used to send in a lot of cigarettes. They gave to the people. The cigarettes never they gave it to the people. They made a flyer, they said this, the cigarettes was sold already. They made a flyer, and they said it was burnt, it got burnt. They didn't have cartons left over. It was a lot of things going on. There's was a lot -- then the very rich came here; they bought property and hotels out of somebody else's tragedies.

Q: I want to just for a minute, ask you a few more questions about the Treblinka uprising, because this is very important to know about. Well, you told me that when you were organizing there, were maybe only a dozen people or so. But at the time of the uprising, were more people involved?

04:13:08

A: Well, everybody was involved at that time, really, because we started to shooting -- most of the war. They couldn't, they didn't know where, how to handle themselves, how to take advantage. Of course, the things that went out from there was not so hot, that went out of there. But to stay alive, that was the hardest thing to do, because that time was -- if they needed, they were afraid to trust anybody. They were afraid to knock on farmers' door, but you didn't know their priorities. Sometimes they could take, they took in a lot of people. They took then their money; they killed them. You see, that's what they did, a lot of them. They said, "Come in, come in, come in." And that night, they took them, they killed them. They took away their money, and they buried you somewhere, wherever they wanted to do, you see. There was a lot of people disappeared. We didn't know where they had disappeared, but there were several at that time.

Q: So there people from all the different parts of Treblinka who got involved at the end, during the uprising?

A: Not too many, as I tell you.

Q: A couple hundred people?

A: Oh, yeah. But at that time there was almost a thousand people in that camp yet.

Q: And they all got involved in the uprising?

A: I don't know, this I cannot tell if they were involved. I know where -- I saw a lot of people running. A lot of people -- but they, they weren't successful. They weren't successful.

Q: How were you able to communicate to prisoners in other parts of the camp, in the upper camp, for example?

A: The other camp didn't communicate, no communication at all with others except separately. They worked by the dead people. With that people there were no communications at all. They didn't have any communication.

Q: Did they know about the uprising?

A: I cannot say about it at all.

Q: You told me you set this time, 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, whenever, and you had to let everybody know that this was the time. Were you able to get word to different parts of the camp?

A: Well, we had to get word, the words was given before we went out to work. They give them the words. And before they went out to work, they gave them the -- told them at that time they wanted this. "Do it." That's the only communication they got. After they went out to work, each group went a different direction, you know. Then we couldn't communicate with them anymore. We couldn't even know -- like myself, when I was running, a lot of people were running in different directions over there. Some of them, most of them were going different directions.

Q: Right, but when people go out to work, they went to different places in the camp so they could then tell people in other places, yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: Even the people who worked in the upper camp, did they sleep in the same place as you?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you all slept in the same place.

A: We all slept in the same place, yeah.

Q: So you could communicate then?

A: Yeah.

Q: So, okay. I think I understand it.

04:16:25

A: Well, see, everybody -- somebody met somebody from each group for them to work, one person to two people, they know it. You see, they are supposed to let know the rest of the group, you see. They couldn't give everybody the time. They gave it to only a few people each whenever they -- the leader or something, them, this or that is the time. The rest of the people couldn't know because there's too much, too much of a risk.

Q: I guess this is what I didn't understand before. Even though you had no communication during the workday with people --

A: At night we all came to the same place. The same kitchen, and we ate together. They were at the table or underneath or something like this.

Q: Then that was also a way that you could learn what was happening in other parts of the camp, too?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you were one of the leaders?

A: I was trusted from them.

Q: And why at this point -- because at other times you said, "You know, there's no hope. They'll kill us." Why at this point did you decide to take the risk?

A: Well, there's no risk. Was no risk; I was dead anyway. What have I got to risk? I didn't risk nothing. There was no risk involved, see. I was running away, and I wouldn't want to survive, was a risk. But running away, at that time was no risk at all because I was a dead person anyway. This, dead sentence because I was a Jew. That's all that it is. I did at that time have no choice. There was no risk at all.

Q: Do you think that you got any implicit help from non-Jews at the camp, I mean, that maybe they looked the other way, or --

A: That's what we were waiting for. When we were waiting, sometimes maybe somebody, maybe somebody will come do some bomb, do something. Of course, they had opportunity. They were strong, they had the tools, they had ratchets, and they had everything. They could

have done, they didn't do. The Germans were so scared themselves, and one started to run and one was standing with a gun in his hand and he couldn't shoot. He was shaking like this [indicating no]. They were so scared like that. They couldn't, they couldn't --

Q: Well, the day -- I read that on the day of the uprising, it was a hot day, that it was a Sunday or Monday?

A: I can't remember the date when it come at that time.

Q: And that everybody, all the Ukrainian guards, were down at the river swimming and getting drunk?

A: No, there was no place there to swim. They're not near the water to swim there. They are nowhere near, this is nothing there. It is just unbelievable that -- I cannot say, because it was a desert. There was no water. Even the ditches are so deep there to get water. They gave us to eat potatoes not washed even, with the dirt. When I used to eat my potato when I came in the beginning and the lots of people were there, I still got the peels from the potato. And they picked it up in the dirt on the ground, and they ate it. That's a step that I didn't -- I couldn't believe it. I couldn't say it then, because I wasn't hungry at that time yet. Or what they did like this.

Q: Do you remember a Mr. Bloch? Do you remember an SS officer by the name of Kuttner?

04:20:27

A: SS officer?

Q: Kuttner?

A: What's the name? Kelo, Kelo (ph)? Another one was, what's the name, Lakla (ph)? We call him Lakla, a nice young fellow, big fellow. That was the court that I was a witness for at that time frame. This Kelo-- of course, nobody has the same name, real name. Didn't call them by the real name because we make the different name because they shouldn't know what we're talking about. You see, that's what I mean, change the name to another name. I know it and that second fellow know it over there, but the German didn't know then we call it when we mention his name.

Q: Did you know -- I can't pronounce this right, but was there a Dr. Chorazycki? You don't know that name? You don't know people's names, different. I understand. I understand.

A: No.

Q: When you were running out of the camp, did you see it burning yet, or was it not yet?

A: It was not burning yet. It was started to burn because when they started that thing was people, some people work there, disinfect us they used to call it. They disinfected the clothing, the places there, the clothes; the Germans did this. That day we found out that they have some gasoline. Instead of putting in disinfection, we told them to put in the gasoline inside in the tanks. They set it go around, spraying with that thing with the disinfection, they spray it with this. It wasn't so easy to catch on fire because we didn't have too many matches to spare. So we had it burning there. After -- I was running, I see it burning, in fact, one German got killed. I didn't look back, didn't want to look back because I was running.

Q: So they were going to use the gasoline or the kerosene to maybe be a distraction, or to start burning the camp?

A: Burning the camp. Started slowly, yeah. We were burning the camp.

Q: So the plan was just that at five o'clock everybody was going to run? That was the whole plan?

A: Yeah.

04:23:03

Q: That no one was going to shoot. They were just going to run out?

A: Well, say, in this cases, see, none of them took any risk of anything because you or your people were caged like a tiger or some sort of other animals. You don't -- any chance you have, you want to jump at another day because there's not another chance. You didn't, no risk involved.

Q: But what I'm trying to understand is the whole plan was that at a certain time everybody was just going to storm the gates, basically. You weren't going to meet; you were just all going to run out?

A: No, but we didn't storm the gates. Everybody was outside the gates. They were working outside the gates, not inside. Most of the people like me, I was inside the gate because our shops were inside the gate. The shoemaker was inside his gate. The locksmith was inside the gate. The rest of the people worked at different places outside the gates, under the supervision of Ukrainians or Germans. We were inside the gates, working.

Q: So the plan then only was that at a certain time wherever you were, you left?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was there anything else that you had planned on doing in order to make this successful?

A: Nothing, no other plan could we do. The best plan we had was to just run away from -- they were outside the gate and everyone could run. But the only way of this would be we were all together, and we couldn't stay all together. We couldn't -- even we could keep ourselves together, it was a very big risk to stay ourselves together, because we could be caught. As a matter of fact, a day after I was running away, I was afraid to stay somewhere, I was in the fields. Not even the farms, because I was afraid they going to come and look all over for us. So I was not able to live with this risk. So this was no -- any risk was nothing. Only we couldn't help each other. Everybody was solo there. Everybody was saying they couldn't. I couldn't have helped anybody if I had no way, I can't help myself. I can't help it, though.

Q: I'm just trying to visualize what the guards were doing, as everybody started running.

A: They was shaking. I saw -- like I told you before. One general was standing with a gun; he couldn't shoot. He was shaking. He was afraid. They only were not afraid when they had the gun above us. When they started to -- we could have -- didn't have to run nowhere and burn, they all think and kill them all of the Germans, but we had the courage, see. The resistance was so low, but this was a desperate people, they were afraid to do anything. And another thing, as a matter of fact, the Germans used go around, "When you going run? You going to run now? Where you going to run? Where will you go? You have nowhere left to go." This is a safe place, you stay there...that's what they tell me.

04:26:46

Q: When you think about this now, many years later, what comes to mind? What images are you stuck with?

A: The image I'm stuck with, the people around the whole world how did they let it happen like this? The United States knowing about it. The Arab countries know. England knowing about because they had spies all over. They told them everything. Why did they wait until they killed off six million? Why they didn't do this before? Why they didn't do -- they could have done something to spoil the whole thing. But then nobody did anything, nobody wanted to do anything. Because it was only Jews involved, not -- but they didn't know how many other nations got killed, also. The Czechoslovakian, Polish, all the country. Anybody said anything to them, they killed them. Even Gypsies, what did the Gypsies do, didn't set a, you know, set a trap for the German people. They didn't do that. They put them in a concentration camp. I saw them coming in. They came in with -- they were looking around. They didn't know what's happened to them, Gypsies.

Q: How do you think that you were able to get through all of this?

A: Huh?

Q: How do you think that you were personally were able to get through this?



04:28:28

A: Personally, I wanted to see what -- either it's going to happen, after everything is over, I want to see. Everything I was fighting for, I want to see what they were going to do to the German people, what they were doing to the other people. All the other people, like the -- what's the name, the Arabs. They helped the Germans. The other thing I wanted to see somebody that's a friend of theirs, everything was -- I was so much disappointed after everything was over. I looked and then what did it do to Germany? They got a few people, they gave them a trial, few people. The most of them, they knew all of this came in. Well, clothing came into Germany that didn't know, didn't ask no questions from where it comes? A lot of everything was getting, the gold, the Germans take a vacation. Sent satchels full of gold and diamonds to Germany every couple of months to get it away. The Germans didn't get nothing from anybody, from the Jews. Half a million Jews got killed in Treblinka. So everybody had something, a chain or earrings or anything. They know, but they didn't -- everybody kept quiet at the size clothes.

04:30:00

End of Tape #4

Conclusion of Interview