

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Enrique Don  
September 26, 1994  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Enrique Don, conducted by Randy Goldman on September 26, 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.

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**ENRIQUE DON**  
**September 26, 1994**

Q: I need for you to begin by telling me your name in Lithuania, where you were born, and the date of your birth.

A: I was born 27 of April, 1922, in Kovno, Lithuania. My name in Lithuanian is Birgius Bonna (ph). My name now, in Spanish, is Enrique Don.

Q: Tell me a little bit about growing up in Kovno. What was your family like/life, as a young child?

A: Our family was very small, me and a sister, [her name] -----, and I was six years old I had to go to the Hebrew -----, the kindergarten, and I went to the it for 12 years.

Q: You were talking about your family.

A: I had only one sister and a small family were in it. My father used to import from Holland all kind of pieces. He also imported from Switzerland cacao, chocolate, -----, and everything was fine until 1940 they arrested him.

Q: ----- was your life style comfortable?

A: No.

Q: No. In Kovno?

A: Oh yes. I was the only son, just a sister and me, was a beautiful life and a beautiful -----.

Q: Were you religious?

A: No. A little superstitious. That's the second side of religion.

Q: Did you live in the main part of Kovno?

A: Main, yes.

Q: Did the Jewish people mix with the Lithuanians, or did you have your own community?

A: Own community. -----Temple. They used to call it [Hebrew name]----- and they went to Hebrew -- the environment was completely Hebrew and Jewish.

Q: Tell me a little bit about how it was growing up. Was it a good place?

- A: Beautiful place. Lots of love, decency, a lot of decent people, smart people, and they cared for each other. And they teachers beautiful. They liked to teach not only for the salary, just the students to know.
- Q: Now, I know that Kovno was a very important Jewish center --
- A: That's right.
- Q: -- tell me a little bit about it.
- A: Now close by Kovno was a little town, Slobosky (ph), you must have heard about it. That was a little city ----- with lots of yeshivas and the best rabbis came out from Kovno, Lithuania. People from Poland, if they need a good rabbi, they went to Lithuania to find one.
- Q: This was a great center of learning and -- ?
- A: Was learning religious and then the gymnasium a little more, I mean not religious, no?
- Q: Were you involved in cultural activities, political activities?
- A: No. I belonged to -- years ago was famous Jewish big man, Ebenezer, and I belonged to a group that people -- it was a boy 14 or 15, just to kill the time, and entertaining.
- Q: And what about cultural opportunities?
- A: Everything was ----- . They keep you busy always, kept you busy. After 8:30 up to 2:30, then used to make the homework and next day they ask you what you know, the teacher -- cram, they used to call you in front of everybody to explain what you learned, what you understood.
- Q: How did all this begin to change when the Russians came?
- A: The first thing when the Russians came in, like in [name of city], they took away everything from everybody, I mean nationally, business, houses, everything. Then my father was very much affected and that I couldn't go more to daytime in gymnasium. Then daytime I used to work and night time I used to go to night school. And I finished a day before started the Second World War. I finished Friday, and Sunday in the morning started the War, five in the morning.
- Q: Do you want to tell me about that and what happened?
- A: What happened in Second World War or when the Russians came in?
- Q: Well, were there no noticeable changes when the Russians came in your city?

A: Sure. Everything, simply nationalized everything, took away everything.

Q: But visibly I mean: did they close the synagogues or anything like that?

A: No, they don't close exactly but everything's changed. No more Hebrew schools, and the economy's changed complete, everybody was hiding things; if things get lost, couldn't buy nothing.

Q: Now, before the War started, were you aware of what was happening in Germany?

A: Sure. Be next door to Germany, next door. I used to listen always to Hitler's speeches, Hitler and Goebbels, to their speeches. But we never the least understood it would go so far. It started, I don't know if you remember the krystalnacht in Berlin, then we started to know what's going on. But we never believed, after Hitler made the pact with Stalin, that is everything's peace.

Q: And what happened?

A: What happened, one Sunday morning we hear bombs and the Russian army starts to run away, and next morning the German army came into town. And then after two days they told everybody should go back to work except the Jews. Then two days later they issue all the Jews green and yellow ----- the front and the back. But they couldn't go buy food, you know. Police come and arrest you right away. Then my sister went down to buy some bread and it was amazing, they arrested her, you know, she was a young eight-years- old and they took her to the police station. And -----, you know. And I don't know how or why, my mother went to the police station and took her away. ----- no food for the -----. I'll never forget it. Our neighbor came and told my other that my sister is arrested. Then after a couple days came in a new decree all the Jews must to go in the ghetto, to Slobosk (ph). It was a lower-class neighborhood. The word is, oh, simple. They need to go to that part to the gentile people to change apartments. -----[complete sentence]

Q: Now, why don't we stop for a few minutes. The time when the Germans came into town, could you describe a little bit more what was happening in the town and give me kind of an outline.

A: I'll explain you something. I stayed home, I don't ----- . Because they used to..some men used to arrest right away and that's all.

Q: Were you aware of any of these beatings and shootings and all of this craziness that was going on in the very beginnng, before the ghetto?

A: Sure. Used to be arrest people, coming out speculating -----going away with a German soldier and that's with the radio, they give it away. They could whatever they wanted. The

Jews have been no law for them, beyond the law.

Q: So they came into your house.

A: Sure. ----- . I remember how the -----.

Q: Did they -----?

A: No. She went to the radio store. [?]

Q: Did you see German activity in the street?

A: I don't -- ah, in the ghetto yes. But before we went in the ghetto, everybody stayed home. Some gentiles men used to work for us, used to bring us food and used to tell us "be careful, don't go out."

Q: So you still had gentile friends that you --

A: Oh yes. Because was shocking, you know? What I told you, on the third day when the Germans came in, was on the radio, "Everybody except Jews should go work." And they knew exactly what's going on.

Q: How did you as a young boy feel about all of this?

A: Oh, [pause] looking back, I still don't believe what happened. I still don't believe. And I don't believe in my life

Q: Do you remember how you were ----ing? Were you frightened, were you angry?

A: [long pause] Sure frightened. Sure, sure frightened. They take you in -----, you not come back.

Q: You were worried that that would happen.

A: No. I was a young boy but I knew what's going on, I knew what could happen, I knew nothing good will come.

Q: Was there information about the fact that people were being taken up -----?

A: Oh sure, sure, they knew it right away. "Watch out, they took 20 people, 30 people, they arrested." They used to go to a synagog, arrest everybody.

Q: OK, so you had to move into the ghetto in Slovodko (ph). Was the process for getting over there --

A: Yes.

Q: -- organized, or was it chaotic?

A: Organized for the Germans, for us was chaotic. But, number one, part to the furniture they traded to the gentile people. And then, the minimum one used to take, you take desk, somebody take it over, somebody had a horse and buggy.

Q: So you ordered them to take some of your furniture --

A: Some, yes, but then my mother was by herself in Slovodka, find the gentile men in the house, more or less, no? And we switched.

Q: So you ----- individually to make these arrangements.

A: Sure.

Q: There wasn't a Jewish community that helped you with the change --

A: No, at that time was nothing. The ghetto wasn't established, was not a Jewish committee, and soon the ghetto was founded, no? The Germans told to make a Jewish committee and a rabbi should be also present in the committee.

Q: I want to ask you about the committee in the next ----- . Now, tell me a little bit about the conditions you were living in in the ghetto.

A: The ghetto was like a jail, a family jail. --- a families in the jail. You couldn't go out by yourself, surrounded by wire if you need to go to work to town. Then became a Jewish working agency, you know? The Germans used to come, they need 200 people for airport, -- --- no. Came another one, they need 1000 people to work on the unload potatoes. Then after a while, everybody has his place where to work.

Q: What was your house like? How many rooms did you have?

A: We had one big room at first, almost like that: four people. Everybody sleep in one room. Because when we moved, later on that became "the little ghetto," that was like a trap and was an action in the ----- maybe. Three or four thousand people and took them right away to the -----.

Q: When was this, do you remember?

A: Sure I remember, in 1941, August or September. I think it was a cry of others to work. They came out and making a little ----- . And before the action they came in the houses, used to

check on ----- as they would for shoes, suits they take away from the Germans.

Q: They came to your house?

A: Sure.

Q: So, these work groups: how ----- what you did?

A: At first everybody worked on the airport, to clean snow and make trenches. But was not used to work orders, could have nothing what to eat and he could not go out and buy . At first I was very strong, in the kitchen you stood by yourself, you arrested, that's it. And little by little the Germans got used to us because most of us knew us a little spoke German. Then they worked the out for a long time in ----- Truck Park. The army trucks that had also not much to eat, I couldn't take towards them. A lot of people used to barter, they shift for a loaf of bread, a watch for something else; that was the real way of life. Until "the little ghetto" was liquidated, complete, and they went over to the big ghetto. And had no place where to live. Then my father found a man, he knew him maybe from six years ago, I don't know, ----- . And met this man and he gave us a little room, maybe part of the kitchen, but --- intention, no? ----- cause any problem, we had nothing what to barter or to sell what. My father told us "We can't go on like that." My sister worked, and I worked, my father worked all that time, and the mother was home preparing the cooking. Horse meat! (he laughs) Then for some reason my father knew a man before the War he did him a big favor, he was one the head for the work agency, you know?

Q: In the ghetto.

A: Yes. And I don't know how he pushed me in to work like public. First for the light or potatoes, everything, and they used to manage to take home -- a loaf of bread, old bread, new --- something what's left over in the boxes, everything what's left over. And then sometimes some people used to get vodka, and vodka is a big item in wartime. A I used to get from gentiles used to bring us bread, potatoes, beets. For long time ----- the main dish was potatoes. And used to make from bread, soup, no? From the bread: used to cook it and cook it until become like a soup. Then later on they gave us the horsemeat. And later on my sister became a mate to a German family what came from Germany.

Q: Were they inside or outside the ghetto?

A: Outside the ghetto. They give her a sign that she can go by herself. This was a big deal that time. And she worked over there and the ghetto came in a man with a lot of leather, and they start to make ladies' pocketbooks. Then she used to go out every day with the pocketbooks which ----- and sell it, and my father told not to carry too much. And she used to bring bread, a little butter, and some money, because in the ghetto everything suddenly became some little source, (he laughs) even butter -- potatoes for beets, potatoes for butter, potatoes for meat. No pets.

Q: In Poland you were describing how you got food.

A: And then we used to go in the countryside to load potatoes for the ----- and the ghetto to enter the main involving the park, no? I used always to go the sack with me in case they had something, always. I used to go to a town about 50 miles from Kovno, on the farm, and then I used to get everything -- apples from them -- for nothing because I used to speak well Lithuanian and that and that. Then I used to put in, too, three or four people used to put in three or four sacks of potatoes, big ones, and I used to try to talk to the driver to bring it at night after nine o'clock to the other side. Then used to start the clock I used to bring in one sack of potatoes and on the ground they gave me another one. Then my father used to wait for me sometimes and used to take it when he go'd home. And that was a couple at least for - -----.

Q: Was there a risk in doing this --

A: Always, everything is a risk. As long as you step out from the ghetto is a risk; even ghetto a risk -- a policeman pass by, any time German pass by you must take a risk. And if you don't do it, they can shot you.

Q: Did you see them do that? (no reply but he laughs)

Q: How many people went out on these work groups with you?

A: Oh, thousands of those. At first, the ghetto starts at 20,000 people. Then after the big Aktion, no? maybe 5,000 or 6,000. It took up ----- 4,000.

Q: But when you went out to the fields and when you went out to the airport, you went out with thousands of people?

A: Sure. Was early in the morning, used to go out to the airport, publics, -----, everybody, and each group had a manager, like a the head, no? of the people is this responsible.

Q: Was he Jewish, was he Lithuanian German?

A: No no, a Jew from the ----- , the foreman, he was the foreman.

Q: Did you have guards?

A: Yes and no. They knew a Jew has no place to run. That's it. And if they that time they would find a Jew in somebody's house, they could shoot him and shoot the family, everybody. But after a while come down a little because they get used to the persons come to the Germans, they used to bring in schnaps or something (he laugh) something to bribe them.

Q: -----

A: -----, always, always.

Q: Now, you had started in a German Jewish community. Tell me who they were, how they were trained [?].

Q: I told you, no? just by appointment, a finger, was Rabbi Shapiro, very famous rabbi. There was in Kovno very famous doctor, ----- . He finished his schooling in Berlin. He spoke beautiful German. He ----- the Oberstundfuhrer, I don't know if you know what that means, used to call him Herr Doktor. And a couple more ----- and that's it. Used to call the Committee of the Elderly.

Q: What kind of responsibilities did they have?

A: No responsibility. They had, as I told you, (he laughs) duties. Used to tell them, "Look, for tomorrow you will meet 2,000 Jews to send out to Estonia. Tell the Jews" that and that, that's all.

Q: Then what did the council do?

A: They had no ---- but the ghetto in order to keep some order had the Jewish police force with a head and a band and ----- . And everybody who don't went to work that day at night become they arrested him. Was a cataster [catastrophe], I think I told you, a Greek word. ---- ---- to know who is not going to work. The foreman used to go to the -----, to the working figure --- "I have so many people" that and that, and everybody was numbered and ----- is not going -----.

Q: The Jewish with the Russians.

A: Sure.

Q: So the Jewish ----- and the council had to follow the orders of the Russians.

A: Sure, sure, sure.

Q: Were they conflicted about this?

A: No, no. You must to do it, that's all. No discussion.

Q: Did they feel that maybe they could do something to help the Jewish people too?

A: What could they do? Could do nothing. They knew exactly what's going on certainly.

Q: But they just followed the orders.

A: Sure.

Q: In this community the ----- was appointed by the Germans?

A: By themselves. More or less distinguished people with reputation, honesty, that's all.

Q: And they were honest.

A: (laughing) Was nothing what to steal. Sure, they --- some privileges, no? They could send their family a better place to work. But --

Q: Were they respected by -----?

A: Yes. Because they knew from before, you know, to be the Rabbi from Kovno was a big prestige, you know, like to be the mayor of New York; is a big job.

Q: Did you know any -- did you know Dr. ----- and these people personally?

A: I knew him but he don't know me. (he laughs)

Q: Did you know any of the other people on the committee personally?

A: Remember, I was a young boy.

Q: I thought maybe friends of your father's or --

A: No no. Was a rabbi, a doctor, a couple more. Knew them by name, how they look; that's all.

Q: So they had to organize for the work forces. Did they have other duties.?

A: That was the main thing, the work force. That's what the Germans interested.

Q: Now, I understand [tape blank for an interval, then resumes]

Q: Were there people also working in the ghetto?

A: Yes. Clandestinely. Was a, how shall I tell you, was a public bathroom, bathhouse, no? they go to take showers. Was people who was -----, who used to prepare the food near the -----, can get each month or each week so much and so much, was a lot, about four or five of them. Then people who used to bring you the messages. A lot of people worked in the working agencies -- police. And then later on they make, they made like shops, no? working shops in the ghetto to make uniforms for the German, especially uniforms some first for the Germans

for the bigger officials. But the idea was to go outward, ----- big deal, outward, to be in touch with the people. And after an authority get used to them, the people know you isn't gentile was different. And the same Germans with who you worked, -----.

Q: You could get more advantages by going outside --

A: Oh sure. Food. That was the main thing.

Q: But did you always work outside the ghetto?

A: Me? Yes, sure, I was too young to work in the ghetto. Always. And the main thing was to work where is food.

Q: Your sister, was she working?

A: Yes, I think I told you before, she became a maid to a German family, came from Germany. And she worked in the post office for the Germans, for the soldiers, these were come letters from Germany. She worked in a family house and she got to eat and an order she could go alone by the street, to the outside ---- she could go outside by herself, and also with the neighbors she could do business.

Q: And your father is still in the ghetto, he did not work?

A: No. He lost about maybe 50 pounds.

Q: Now, you mentioned earlier that the small ghetto was liquidated.

A: Yes.

Q: How did that happen?

A: Nothing. They out and you back like in again. (he laughs)  
Very easy. Go -----,

Q: The Germans --

A: Sure.

Q: Was that when the hospital was burned?

A: That time exactly.

Q: Can you tell me about that?

A: Oh there was a hospital not far from where I used to live was a market. There had been a lot of old sick people, like a home, and then they don't want to take -- well, they couldn't take them and they burned just everything. Because my mother when they came in the Little Ghetto she gave a gift, a hot pad for sick people with idea that maybe she will need it some time she will get it. Everybody was burned. ----- 1941, that's what I remember. Because my sister in ghetto was a bachelor want to marry her and he was going to the hospital and burned him also.

Q: Did you see this happen? When did this happen?

A: I was out of it, they burned after everybody was gone.

Q: Did you see the flames?

A: Where we go sleep? We had no place to go to sleep, no place where to go to sleep.

Q: So is there anything else you can tell me about how the small ghetto liquidated and --

A: Everybody out on the street. Was at the market place and they went out to check out that nobody's home, that time lots of people went in hiding and ----- right people went to the ----- - and they took off for the Big Ghetto.

Q: Where were you at the time this happened?

A: It was in he morning. Home. Everybody out. Soldiers came in, knock on the door and came a man, a German, a lieutenant, I don't know what he was-----, made a selection.

Q: So what happened to your family?

A: We went, family went to the Big Ghetto.

Q: You were part of the selection but you were on the good side.

A: Yes yes, call it the good side, OK.

Q: And how did you know where the other people went?

A: Oh they knew, they could see, could see ----- . That was not far at all from ----- was going on a hill. And then the family Lithuanians told you next day about the shooting and before they shot them, they told them to take off everything at least.

Q: Now, were the Lithuanians happy that the Germans were there?

A: In a way yes, because the Russians occupied and was no more Lithuania. Everything was ----  
-----, the money ----- ruble, was a big, how should I tell you, -----police, Russian schools,  
policemen, the army, the farmers they couldn't sell the way they want the produce.

Q: So the Lithuanians helped the Germans?

A: Yes, at first very much. They thought that the Germans would give them freedom and a  
statehood.

Q: Can you describe in what ways the Lithuanians worked with the Germans?

A: OK. A lots of Lithuanians worked for the police. A lots of Lithuanians would be in the army,  
the Lithuanians told them to kill. The dirty work they were doing was the Germans, because  
they give the orders. The Big Ghetto, the big ----- but only one general, maybe you heard  
about him, [a German proper name, Rauke (ph)] , they got him in Canada. You know about  
him, Rauke? But Rauke was the German and ----- . One day after work I come home  
in ghetto and I see a sign: "Tomorrow morning nobody's going to work and everybody must  
go in that-and-that place." Everybody came and after a while Lithuanian soldiers surrounded  
us and then came Rauke [ph] and two soldiers by his side and they used to separate, right and  
left, right and left. And the left one took some of them by the hundreds took them on the hill  
to the fort. And next day the Lithuanians told us was shooting all night, all night was  
shooting. To the end the Germans start to burn all the ---- but they told not to leave, how  
shall I tell you, evidence what they did. Was a group ----- commander, they worked  
on that. I wasn't in ghetto, I was in Estonia, one Christmas night everybody was drunk and  
they run away from the fort.

Q: Who was drunk?

A: Drunk from the fort, was a huge command that worked in the fort and they used to take out  
the bags and burn them so that -----.

Q: Then the Jewish soldiers were able to escape?

A: The soldiers --

Q: -- and ---had orders for the ----- lineup?

A: I told you, was Christmas, everybody was drunk but was winter, they took the white sheets,  
you know, and they, well, they master worked, they really did it, and they worked out --

Q: Do you know how they did it?

A: Well, there's a book about that.

Q: No, but I want you to tell me.

A: No, I don't know. I know somebody told me they worked on that for months, somebody was the intellectual architect of that but exactly I don't ----- . But I was in ghetto then.

Q: OK. Let's go back a little bit to the ghetto. Were there efforts to hide and to resist the ghetto when the ghetto was in occupation? Where there people in the ghetto who were trying to go underground and get out of there or --

A: A lot. Look: some had ghetto friends who told them they were hiding especially a lot of young good-looking ladies had no problem that were in hiding, a lot went in the woods, became partisans.

Q: I was asking if there was an underground movement of people trying to get away.

A: Was underground to go to the woods partisans, to make sabotage to the German army. That was done little by little. A lots of people have been caught when they used to go out from the ghetto, a lot went to the woods, a lots of people once went to a little town, [name of town], was 40 in one place, and they used to go at night time, no? by the peasants, knock on the door, had a gun also, told them, "Give us food, if not we'll burn your house next time." And -----had the straw and paper and -- then they made a big mistake. One day in the woods they found a Russian soldier was hiding out and they stabbed him. They needed food to cook. Then he told them you know the way how to go and he will go for the salt. And they cut him and he gave up everything. ----- there, how much there, and they came at night and they killed all of them.

Q: Were there people organized in the ghetto also to resist?

A: To go out, outside; in the ghetto you could do nothing. Outside. Sabotage, that was the main thing -- go to the woods. And the main thing was to survive, how you did.

Q: Now, were you involved in any of this activity?

A: That started after I was sent to Estonia, it was later on I became the underground. In the ghetto, I don't know how far you remember that, was the right wing from Jewish Zionist and the left wing in the ghetto all came together, they worked together.

Q: What sorts of things did they do in working together?

A: ----- good people, they don't trusted everybody, connections with the woods, with the people, how to go, where to go, where to pick them up. Was a big production.

Q: Was the Jewish committee and the Jewish police -----?

A: Some did, some no. After this I went to Estonia that I know, after the Gestapo told all the Jewish policemen, arrested them and took to the fort, and told every second one should step out in front, no? one they sent back to the ghetto, the other one they shot out. Because they been afraid, not to leave the witnesses. Some of them cooperated with the Germans. Some, in the last year what I know, they used to make hiding places in the houses, like next to walls. You couldn't, was a master job they had done, they had a steps, no? and in the steps are the hiding, and some policemen gave out. Maybe they arrested him and they told him, "Look: if you don't say they kill you." ----- policeman told, "Kill me, I don't know nothing." But one man whom I admired, and they call him "the prince in the ghetto," please remember that, he remembered. He was ----- Lieutenant, ----- like West Point but he became a private citizen, was a young guy, maybe 23 and 24, a prince. And they arrested him if he knows where people are hiding, and he knew and no told them. They killed him, they beat him ----- I know a lady, her son he goes out, he was four or five years, I don't know how, the kid start to took something, they arrested him. Then they came and arrest his mother. And that lady knows a year for me, I'm sure they ask her if she knows about more children, and she knew, don't give up nothing. But -----, you know, that most of them are dead-----.

A: Do you know of the different ways that the police helped the Underground or ----- maybe helped the Underground?

A: Oh yes. ----- . Sometimes they go out from the ghetto, they knew how to pull them out, no? Because they be in good condition, so the Germans were staying by the ghetto.

Q: I want to ask you to start that over -- instead of saying "they," say "the Jewish police" or --

A: OK. Some Jewish --- police help.----- They knew lots of policemen about the chief of police was the second in command ----- . I'm sure the ----- knew, lots of people knew but ---- was ----- in case they pick somebody, not to give out nobody, you know ----.

Q: In what other ways might they help the people?

A: Give messages. Communication. They tell them to get out from the ghetto. But the Germans ----- . Then you have to do it, they they shoot you right away or they arrest you ----- . Had a special system how to ---- the Gestapo. I used to work in the gymnasium, where I used to go to school, ----- . Then a lot of Jewish people used to work for the Gestapo. -----an informer for the Gestapo, his name was ---- He was a double agent in the ghetto, if someone was ---- the Gestapo, he would take him out. But----- used to give information also, double agent he was, Richter was his name. And something nice, when the ghetto was liquidated, he was in hiding and the head ----- . Then they read the paper that he died and they gave him a herren----, a funeral --- hero.

Q: What kind of work were you doing when you were working at Gestapo headquarters?

A: I never worked ----- . In 1942 or -3 they brought some Jews from Germany, they told me just to change -- they took them right away to the fort and they killed them and all the belongings they took, the Gestapo, they used to find watches, money, diamonds and I used to work in that.

Q: -----?

A: Working for ----- diamonds, watches, something ----- . That man, Richter, the informer from the Gestapo, the Jewish ----, he was a collaborator. -----  
-----.

Q: Were there ways that the Jewish Council was especially helpful to the people in the Underground?

A: They couldn't do nothing, all the people they couldn't do nothing. -----  
-----.

Q: But I have the feeling that they did things like they changed the statistics to say there were less people in the ghetto, so there would be fewer people to take out; that they put people in all these workshops so that they were most productive --

A: ----- . But let me tell you something: In 1939 -----send out ----- to Estonia why they need more people in Estonia? The War----- and they want to build trenches ----- more important than ----- airport.

Q: So, from your point of view, there really wasn't that much activity between the Council and the police --

A: ----- the Council or the people. And a boy from 20 years old can understand the ----- at that time want to be free, ----- to end, want to be free ---- bring to end.

Q: I just thought that maybe because they were in positions of power--

A: What sort of power? (he laughs) No.

Q: Do you remember other actions while you were in the ghetto?

A: ----- . That was after me. The old people. Also took children and old people. Special -----  
----- and they did it.

Q: What did they do?

A: Come in the house to the children, put in the closet, and that's it, forget it, pick them up, they

shut it. After '43, afterwards that they heard about it. A lot of people they want to send the children out of the ghetto. In some cases the children don't want to go back to the parents, get used to the new parents, the children when they find a home.

Q: -----?

A: Sure. -----

Q: Could your sister stay outside the ghetto?

A: Yes. I could stay outside the ghetto. With a lady, I knew her and she told me, "You can have the key to my house, any time you want you can go." I know where she live. And I went in the ghetto and I told my father "my papa can go in hiding." -----who is able should go in hiding and said -----and I don't know how and why, my sister came in, -----not ashamed, go where your father could go. But no, -----"I'm alive" she said. But my conscience is very clear, I ---- for my father, I went to the ----, went to Estonia, not too many people survive, maybe ten, 15, 20 -----and my father survived, he could shoot himself five days after the War, OK, like a candle, poof. And towards the end ----- , a week before, he would be alive, I mean a longer time.

Q: In the ghetto, was there any semblance of normal life -- were the kids still going to school --

A: Wasn't school, wasn't school. Was a ----- school. But some of them, later on in Estonia the children went to work. -----, you went to work. And the children -----  
 "Why you working the kids?" "They want to protect you." That was -----, they want to protect you. They should ----- all the things in German? (he laughs)

Q: ----- work hard.

A: Not hard but you know, they could keep in the ----- holding -----and not too much wood and not too much medicine. That-----.

Q: Can you describe what other aspects of life were going on in the ghetto?

Q: Morale was low. You must understand the mentality of hungry people. It's a different way of thinking. Because the Germans made us ----- . They never ----- simple in many ways to work, ----- . In Estonia, when they came, -----The first thing what they did to the women was they cut their hair.

Q: I'm just trying to get a sense of what was going on in the ghetto.

A: In what respect ma'am?

Q: Well, did people have [a garble, then blank tape, then resumption] I'm trying to get a sense of

what life was like in the ghetto.

A: Life: two things in mind. ---- a good place where to go to work where what to eat, and always look out for the action. That was the main thing. Always ----- -somebody follow the action, that was the main thing, how we can save ourselves, that was all. Food: it was very important. And then the -----.

Q: Did you have a -----in action?

A: No. I tell you how it used to happen. The head from the Germans come to the committee ---- ----Poland and then used to be weeks --

Q: Was there any semblance of normal life in the ghetto?

A: Depends. Some people were better than before the War. (laughs) Yes, yes ma'am. You with me? Why and how?

Q: Was there a -----section in the ghetto?

Q: Where was better food, -----, a better place to work. Not a lawyer, not a CPA, not a teacher, just come there every day, some food there, boil their potatoes.

Q: But how did people's life before the War prepare them for life in the ghetto? Make them stronger or weaker?

A: The weaker don't survive. No question about that. When I was in Estonia, with me worked a guy, from Vilno, no? and every day he cried and cried and cried, until one day I told him, "Why you crying? They want you to cry, why you doing them a favor? Don't cry, you'll survive." But he don't survive.

Q: OK but you were telling -- off-camera, I want you to tell me on camera -- about the fact that people in the lower classes who had work skills --

A: I'm not saying "lower classes," people have skills.

Q: Well, tell me the story like you never told me before.

A: They work right away for the Germans.

Q: Who?

A: OK. The people with trades, -----a tailor, for a shoemaker, for a man who knows to make ---- -, painters, they used to work in place and bring home more food, that's all; more food, that was the only thing. Food. And like I told you, the CPA and the accountant and the teacher,

nothing, couldn't do nothing. When I was in ----- they had a butcher shop and over us was a guy, he was a tailor, he was living like a king; used to make for the Polack, they used to go to the place, when you came in the encampment, they take with you everything, and used to go out and find -----

Q: Was there - I know I've asked you this before, let me ask you again -- was there any sense of normal life for young people in the ghetto?

A: No future. What can be a normal life with no future? The future is to be finished.

Q: Were there any cultural activities, any programs even?

A: No, I'm glad you ask. The Germans, in order to -----, used to make dances. How you like that? And used to the young people to play soccer. That was the whole entertainment, no culture. ----- . When I came from Danzig to -----, -----  
----- . They take you to a place, take off everything, they put you to the shower, -----  
.

Q: Were there other transports from other places who came to Kovno?

A: Once came a transport from people not far from Vilno, a----- I remember because my grandma used to go there. In 1943 came a transport of people used to work around Vilno and they brought them ----- . and what I was laughing, the people told me that in the camp, no? they had a Jewish wedding. (laughing) I remember the couple. And then later on, ----- no more.

Q: So the transport from Vilno, they all joined you in the ghetto?

A: Yes, yes.