United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with George Havas
August 26, 1996
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with George Havas, conducted by Neenah Ellis on August 26, 1996 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

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

GEORGE HAVAS
August 26, 1996

Q: Good afternoon.

A: Good afternoon.

Q: I'd like to start by having you tell us your name when you were born and the town you were born in.

A: My name is George Havas, I was born in 1929 and town's name was Mukachevo (aka Munkacz in Hungarian). At that time it was part of Czechoslovakia.

Q: Tell me something about the town and how many things you remember, earliest things you remember as a small child about your town and your neighborhood, what it looked like, what the environment was like there.

A: Town was, I should mention it's part of Carpathia, the population was about between 28 and 30,000 and kind of old fashioned by today's standards and about half of the population was Jewish, other parts were Hungarian and Ruthenian and at that time when I was born, there were also Czechs living there, the Czechs were the administrative people and the officers in the army. There were many schools in the town, at various levels, there were maybe four or five elementary schools. Some of them were let's say, Hungarian or Czech or I think there was only one all Czech school, I went to that school and there were also many Jewish schools and also a Hebrew elementary school and Hebrew High School and a secondary school. The streets were lined, many of the streets in the center of the town were

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lined with shops, all kinds of stores, they were selling everything possible, like textiles, fabrics, clothing, shoes, shirts and porcelain, anything you wanted you could buy there. There were also various factories in town, like there was a tobacco factory, there were, outside of town was a match factory and there was alcohol factory and people worked in the various places and there were also various classes of people, I mean lower class, middle class and the professionals, there were many, many doctors, many attorneys and poorer people and all kinds of people. The town was surrounded by many villages. The rural people brought in produce and vegetables, chickens and things of that sort and that was market days and they used to come in with their carts and sell things at a market or sometimes you could buy things from them on the street as they were going towards the market and everything was fresh and from producer to consumer.

Q: And your family, tell me about your parents.

A: My father was a doctor and he had a general practice.

Q: What was his name?

A: Leo Havas. And most of his patients were from the villages, sometimes somebody was seriously sick, they put him in the cart with either horses or oxen and just dragged him into town and brought him to the doctor and it was like a different century from the way things are today. There were, in the town there many have been four people who had cars, automobiles. The rest of the people just walked, the

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most common way of going anywhere was by walking, if you had to go to some distance, you hired a cab, a horse drawn cab. And there was a place in the center of the town where these were lined up and while they were waiting they were eating hay, the horses and the drivers were just lounging around or sitting around. If you wanted to go to the next town, which was 42 kilometers away, where my father's parents lived and we used to go on a Sunday to a section on Main Street where there were taxicabs, these were automobiles and sometimes we used to get together with some other people and hire one and go to the next town and just to wait for us and certain time we came back with them. So just 42 kilometers which is like, I don't know, maybe 35 miles, was an adventure, going somewhere that distance. Or let's say if you wanted to go to the train station, which was at the edge of the town at a certain place, sometimes people used to hire a horse drawn cab to go there [with the] to the station. Plus you had suitcases, so it was simpler to get a cab and go over there that way. I don't know if you want me to tell you about the Czechs, they were interesting, I mean it was, Czechoslovakia was at that time, perhaps the only democratic or the most democratic country in Central Europe, but again it was, the Czechs were running the country and they were, there were Czechs and there were other nationalities but the officers and the government were mainly in the hands of the Czechs. Once, supposedly when Carpathia joined the republic, which was in 1919, they were promised autonomy but the Czechs never gave it to them because the Czechs never considered anybody else capable of running his own affairs except themselves. And same within Slovakia too, the Slovaks were living in their own area, but

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many of the positions were held by Czechs and of course Slovaks resented it and to some extent I suppose the Ruthenians also resented it and the Carpathians.

Q: But as a child growing up in the thirties, how did this division manifest itself, how were you made aware of it? Or were you aware of it at all?

A: It was I could say a schizoid existence, I mean since the Czechs were the ruling caste, you might say, my father wanted me to become Czech, which, he didn't realize it and I

only found out let's say decades after the war that you cannot become Czech, I mean you can be a citizen of Czechoslovakia but you have to be born in the Czech lines and you have to be Czech several generations back to be a Czech. And at home we spoke Hungarian, in school I spoke Czech and I had Czech friends and with whom I spoke Czech, since I spoke both languages fluently, like kids do usually, without accents and it was kind of, I was trying to be a Czech with the Czechs and at the same time speaking Hungarian at home, which sort of was, as I said before, kind

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of a schizoid existence.

Q: Did the Czechs behave differently, did your Czech friends have different attitudes about things than your Hungarian friends? Did they do different things?

A: The Hungarian friends were not Hungarians, they were Jewish, see it goes way back to the place was originally part of Austria-Hungary and part of, within Austria Hungary, it was part of Hungary and anybody who wanted to exist at that time, or get ahead had to learn Hungarian and that's where the Jews became sort of broken up. The ones in the villages continued speaking Yiddish, the ones who wanted to get ahead learned Hungarian and just by that fact alone, they became separated from those who didn't and if let's say my father wanted to go to, first he had to go to a secondary school before he went to University and those schools were at that time Hungarian language, there was only Hungarian. And then came the war and the place became, Hungary was divided up and the part where we were became Czechoslovakia eventually, so there were these different nationalities. Some Jews consider themselves Hungarian because they spoke Hungarian and they just thought they were Hungarian and some just considered themselves Jewish and would say if there was a census, they said they are Jewish. Some Jews consider

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themselves Czechs, but as I told you they would have considered themselves Czechs but they were really not accepted by the Czechs. And on the same thing, my father was more or less encouraging me to be friendly with Czech boys and I felt comfortable with them but there was this conflict that you speak in different language at home and you speak a different language with us, so what are you really? And then he wanted me to join a Czech gymnastic society which was called Sokol, which was very nationalistic. It has a long tradition in Bohemia and Moravia, the Czech lands, and they admitted me for the exercises, but they kept forever postponing, giving me membership certificate or a membership booklet or something like that. And all kinds of excuses, but they wouldn't give it to me. And the other thing was lots of the Czechs did not like Jews, but the big difference was that the Czechs did not persecute us. That's one thing not to like Jews and that's the next step is to hate Jews, then the next step is to kill Jews and so there was a big

difference, but already by the age of maybe five or six, I knew that some people hated me just for being Jewish and that's the kind of world

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it was. Let's say I knew about Germany, I knew about Nazis before I was even six and possibly I knew more than kids in the villages because I was exposed to more things and we had a radio and we had newsreels, newsreels in the movies, and more contact with things.

Q: Were these things a topic of discussion in your family constantly, too, because . . .Did your parents?

A: Not constantly, but it was. Things were talked about and let's say maybe I had bigger ears than some other kids and I overheard many things and I listen in on things and the word Nazi was in the dictionary, I mean in our spoken dictionary and I knew that word, I did not know it's full meaning, but I knew that word you might say as early as six. When I went to elementary school, Czech elementary school, one of the courses which they were teaching us was Civil Air Defense and they showed us films of gas bombings, fire bombings and things of that sort and how to defend against those kinds of things, so let's say maybe at an age of eight or nine, I was already exposed to those kind of things. Children at that same age in America, they never heard of things like that. I remember film where they were showing us the effect of a certain poison gas and the person was vomiting like a white foam was coming out of his mouth, I mean I knew about the effects, I mean like simulating things and things of that sort so I couldn't understand how they made that person vomit or how they could make that white come out of his mouth but they were showing films of that sort and so it was war time even before there was a war.

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Q: You had a sense of being vulnerable because you were Jewish or just that there was something out there?

A: Getting back to the Sokols, the Sokols were not fond of Jews, but they let me exercise there, whereas once I was participating in something at school and part of it was putting up a dance, a group of us kids had to dress up in a certain way and we were doing some Czech national dance or Slovak national dance and I wanted to change clothes to get into that special outfit and some Czech boys were there in scout tents and my father was with me so one of them, with great reluctance, let me change in his tent and told us we don't want Jews in our scouts, and Czech scouts did not admit Jews, so I was aware of differences and I was aware that certain things were not accessible to me because of my religion. And in the same time I had to learn to read Hebrew for the services in Temple and how will you be ready for Bar Mitzvah if you don't learn it and this and that and my

grandmother was religious and all four of my grandparents were religious so I was brought up in that tradition, I had great difficulty in reading Hebrew, to read Hebrew and it was just, I mean as a kid, the letters are different, the words don't mean anything and it was not taught as a living language at that time and it just for me was very difficult but somehow the kids in the villages, they learned it and they could read it like fast and recite the prayers fast and

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I never managed to acquire that, so they were way ahead of us on that front. And then, I'd say our first contact, I mean first thing which affected us, which we noticed was when the Germans occupied Austria, there were some refugees came to live in our town and if you look on the map of Czechoslovakia, it changed suddenly, suddenly the whole Bohemia, Moravia was surrounded by Germany and it was just foreboding and we sort of knew, we had the idea that we would be next, but nobody wanted to believe and everybody was hoping that it wouldn't happen somehow. Plus Czechoslovakia had treaties, Czechoslovakia had a defense treaty with France and France had a defense treaty with England, so we thought we were safe, that the French would protect us and the British would protect the French and the Czechs also had some kind of treaties with the Soviet Union but there were catches in that like the Soviet Union would come to the help of Czechoslovakia if Czechoslovakia was attacked. I think, the catch was only if France first came to our assistance. The second problem was that Czechoslovakia had no direct border with the Soviet Union. The direct, closest country was Poland and Poland would not permit the passage of Russian units across it's territory to

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help Czechoslovakia, under no circumstances. So it was a weird situation. And backtracking a little bit, for some weird reason about two weeks ago or so, I had a nightmare which brought back that experience. It was just put away out of my mind. In '37 or '36, we were in Yugoslavia on the Adriatic in the summer for a short vacation and we met there some German people. It was a German couple and they had two sons and I was there with my mother and with my cousin, my father stayed home, he had to work and earn money. And somehow these people did not know that we were Jewish and they were using our, sharing our cabana at the beach and on one occasion the man took me to the water and washed off my feet and then he was going to bring me to the cabana so my feet wouldn't get sand on them and I don't know how, which supposedly was not my habit, but I let my pants down or something and he noticed that I was Jewish and that ended our relationship or our contact and the next day or maybe that same day, the two boys beat me up for no reason, they just slapped me and slugged me and my face was burning red from the beating and I'd say that was my first beating I got for being Jewish and I was at that time maybe seven or eight.

Q: Do you remember what your mother said, or what she did?

A: She wasn't with me, she was up in the room and they sort of caught me while I was near that pension or something on the pathway. There was nothing she could do, I think she

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complained to the man and the man just shrugged it, oh that's just kid stuff or just nothing and ____, don't worry about it, but after that we had no contact with them or they had no contact with us. They were willing to dry themselves and change clothes any odd way but they were no longer using our cabana. And I forgot this, I mean a person forgets things and I, as I said I don't know what brought it back to my mind now, but I could feel my face burning like it did at that time, like it was, what 1936 or '37, which is what, 60 years, 59, 60 years. Then everything changed in 1938. The Sudeten Germans started agitating, first they wanted concessions from the Czechs, they wanted to have their own language, they wanted to have more rights, more self-government and things of that sort and schools in which they, they had German schools, so it's hard to really point out what more they wanted, all kinds of things. They reached a point where it boiled down to what they really want is to detach that whole area where they lived and have that area joined to Germany, to the Third Reich, to Nazi Germany. There was no more negotiation after that and there were, the whole thing was orchestrated from Germany and managed from Germany and then eventually the French, in a cowardly way and dishonest way, they let Czechoslovakia down, they went to Munich, Daladier, the French Prime Minister and Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister and they sold us out and that treason, that betrayal, it's permanently in the Czech history, no matter what those would do, those two countries, the Czechs or Czechoslovakia, it could not be erased.

Q: Do you remember when that happened?

A: Yes, it was in the summer of '38 we were no longer, we would have liked to go again to Yugoslavia, to the seacoast, to the Adriatic, that was canceled. We went to Slovakia, to, I don't know what you want to call it, a spa, Trencin

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(Teplitsa). On the way in the train we could see from the window that fortifications were being built, which was the border facing Hungary and the Czechs were fortifying that border, the border in Bohemia, Moravia, which faced Germany, was already well fortified, but they continued building more and more and more fortifications and we knew about it. In early September, Czechoslovakia declared mobilization and my father was, same as all other men in town, were called into service. All of Czechoslovakia mobilized. According to the plan, my father had to report to some underground hospital in Brno, which is in the center of Moravia and there were just, the only men in the town were like, according to what the American called 4-F's, who were not fit for military service.

Q: Do you remember when he left?

A: No, I don't remember when he left, but I remember that he was gone and I remember when he came back home and I remember that our town had a garrison to start with, a large garrison, it was traditionally a garrison town and there were many military barracks there and going way back, probably to the day of the Austra-Hungarian times and the Czechs continued that tradition and there were many military units in our town all the time and our home happened to be on a main street of the town and we could always see the soldiers either marching or rolling on trucks, or the tanks moving and tanks and tanks and tanks and the whole building was shaking when those tanks were going by on the streets so and they were very proud of them, they were, we kids were proud of the Czech army and we had confidence in the Czech army, in the Czechoslovak army and our weapons, I mean we knew we were well equipped and the whole country was that way, we had what I suppose the Americans would call spunk, we had self confidence and we had determination and that's when, during the mobilization, the garrison was increased. There were many, many soldiers and what, the day a mobilization is carried out, let's say, people from Carpathia were assigned to units in Moravia, people from Bohemia were assigned to units in Slovakia and so forth, everything is mixed so it would, people from local areas would be in different areas and our town was full of let's say soldiers from let's say Slovakia, Bohemia and Moravia and training and going by on the trucks and the trucks were modern, some of them had 10 wheels on them, terrain vehicles, for all kinds of terrain and the trunks, the cabs had holes in them for emptying out the machine guns, so it

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was, equipment was contemporary, modern and the troops couldn't move and some, many of the troops were also Cavalry and the artillery were horse-drawn buggy. But much of it was mechanized, much of it was motorized, so it was a modern army. And that's when this Munich came, it was a horrible let down for the whole country, for us and in the school.

Q: What happened in the schools?

A: It was the sadness, a horrible sadness and people, some of them, people were from, the teachers were from Bohemia and Moravia and some of their towns were being taken over, after Munich, by the Germans and one blow followed another. This was, the Munich took place at September 30th. And then the Hungarians kept, started pressuring for the return of territory, what they call return, which were Hungarian population _____. And our town happened to have a sizable Hungarian population and there was, on November 2nd there was a conference at Vienna, because the Czechs and Hungarians couldn't agree among themselves, which territory should be given over to Hungary, so this was turned over to the Foreign Minister of Italy and Germany and they drew the

border line. And on the evening of November 2nd, a radio was in the living room, so we were having supper in the living room so we could be near the radio and hear the news and they started reading off the towns, going from west to east, which towns will be turned over to the Hungarians and he's reading Kosice, which is already eastern Slovakia and then Uzhgorod, which is in Carpathia, 43 kilometers to the west of us and Mukatchevo and then Baranog(ph) and when he said Mukatchevo), which is our town, my father virtually choked on his food, because he, let's say, put, in old expression, all his money on the Czechs. He was trying to bring us up as Czechs, we were trying to be Czech and he knew the Hungarians from experience he had before, after World War 1, during World War 1, and it was a total shock for him and he changed and our whole life changed as a result of that, let's say, the Hungarians called it they are liberating us. To us it was they are occupying us and that took place on November 10th, eight days after what was called the Vienna arbitrage. The last Czech units pulled out around two in the afternoon, it was a beautiful, sunny day, mild and the last to leave were the tanks and it was just, to me, to us, it was a heartbreaking scene.

Q: Did you go to watch them?

A: We were all at the windows. Everybody was at the windows, all along the street, on every street which faced the main roads, people were in the window watching the Czechs pull out and waiting to see the Hungarians pull in. And late afternoon, the Hungarians started pulling in and they were coming in on bicycle units and they were coming in with tanks, which were what the Czechs called tankettes, which are called, in World War 2, they were called by the British, Bren gun carriers. In other words, small caterpillar tracked vehicles, which were like nothing compared to the Czech tanks, I mean it was, it was just, I don't know what you want to call it, flabbergasting or a shock. Here a strong army is forced to withdraw without firing a shot, without defending, betrayed and in come these weird looking people with weird looking equipment and American trucks, Ford trucks, which America sold them for money, to the Hungarian army. All the Czech trucks were Czech made, all the Czech tanks were Czech made. And this was on a Thursday and the people were cheering them, whether they meant it or

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not, they knew that it would be advantageous or safe thing to look like they are welcoming the new, the new powers or the new regime or the new forces or whatever. And you might say history was taking place in front of our eyes on our own street and the next morning again, history takes place. Hungarian soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets are escorting local people, arrested local people and they are being taken away. And there goes a group, maybe four civilians, or five civilians or six and four soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets. And 10 minutes later another group and another group and all day people are being arrested and taken away and why, it was a chance for anybody to get even with other people or enemies and stuff like that and people were informing on each other and they had lists drawn up before they got there and they are going to arrest.

Q: Did you see people you knew being taken away?

A: No, but . . .

Q: At the time, could you figure out any pattern, at the time?

A: My father was shaking like, I supposed that they might taken him because he was friendly towards the Czechs and now the Czechs are gone and they're going to get even with anybody who was friendly towards the Czechs and who was not a loyal Hungarian. If you're a local person, you should be loyal to the Hungarians, you had no business kowtowing to the Czechs and they didn't take him, but we heard rumors and all kinds of things that the people were badly beaten, that they were tortured and there was one name whom I remember, who vanished. And he was later, some drunk Hungarian gendarme said, oh he had a tough skull, but we cracked it never the less. And nobody spoke about it and nobody knew about it and in some places later on, we heard that, behind what they called the gendarmerie(ph) barracks, there were people buried. There were no arrest warrants, there were no records or anything and so they could do most anything. That was a word which may be strange to you, gendarmerie, well in the town, there were police, in the rural areas they called them gendarmerie and they had different uniforms and different customs and that's what they were called and again, it was tradition in Europe, all the way maybe, entire

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central and eastern Europe and even western Europe and even in France there were rural police and there were in-town police and they were different. And it was just a completely new world, it was terror and fear and . . .

Q: Did your father continue to have his medical practice?

A: There was a man in our town who was the leading Hungarian during the Czech regime, while it was Czechoslovakia and he sort of kept, did the equivalent of what the Sudeten Germans did in the Sudeten area, in other words, the resistance to the Czechs and agitating towards the Czechs, Czechoslovakia and when the Hungarians came in he became, let's say king.

Q: What was his name, do you remember?

A: Oh, yeah, his name was Vazari, Vazari, Aladar and he and my father were enemies, so naturally as soon as the thing changed, it was extremely bad for my father. All the doctors had to report to king Vazari and explain their misdeeds during the Czech occupation and sort of show, I'm guessing, let's say what you might call show cause why you should be permitted to continue practice as a doctor, why you should be admitted to

be a Hungarian or something of that sort, why you should still have your license or something like that, and I don't know how many doctors from our town got called in, maybe 20 out of 50 or, I don't know, but my father was among them. Let's say 19 of the 20 were certified, the only one who wasn't was my father, out of the whole town and there was, as far as I can remember, there

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was no appeal or there, maybe he tried some appeal and tried to drag out something, but the final word came down, you are not permitted to practice, take off the signs from outside your house and my father continued practicing illegally, clandestinely or secretly, I don't know which way you want to phrase it or put it. And it was stress, it was stress on him and stress was passed on to us.

Q: Before you go on, do you have any idea what kinds of activities your father was engaged in that could have caused this?

A: Just being, trying to pass as a Czech, having sent his children to Czech schools, when there was a good Hungarian school available, I mean quote, unquote, good. The Czech school was the best school in the town. Why did you send your children to Czech schools and again, in the Czech schools, we had, at the end of the year we had what in America is called a report card, but over there it was a sheet of paper, on which was the name of the student and I believe that among other things which was written at the top was name, date of birth, was also the nationality and I think that I was entered there as Czech and the Czechs did not protest, you say you're a Czech, fine, put him down a Czech, but when the Hungarians came in and I had to transfer to Hungarian school, I had to show the certificate from the previous year, at which year I was, at which level I was, so I would be placed in the Hungarian school and the person who was in charge there was again, a very loyal Hungarian, loyal from the Hungarian point of view, who saw to it that the certificate is turned into the hands of Vazari(ph) and it's, clearly it says here that this child was declared as Czech and not only that, my younger brother, he had a middle name, a Czech middle name, in addition. His name was Robert, but to make it Czech-er, my father added Milan, which was not common over there, nobody had middle names, it was very uncommon. And so it wasn't enough for him to be listed as a Czech, he even gave him a Czech name.

Q: Was he, to your knowledge, involved in any kinds of political activities or outspoken in any way?

A: No, he wasn't outspoken.

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Q: He was not?

A: No, he was, to my great surprise, he told me once, years later, during the occupation, I got to talking to him about the Czech parties, political parties. In 1934 there were elections in Czechoslovakia and the strongest party was the Agrarian, the number one and I remember the name social democrats and the name of maybe one other party and there was even a Zionist party and they managed to get one man into the Czech parliament, so I said, did you vote for the Agrarian? He says, no, they were crooks. I said, did you vote for the social democrats, he said no. So I was at the end of my list, I said, well what did you vote for? The Communists, they were the only honest ones. And later on I found out that he cooperated with the Communists, when the Communists were beaten up by the Czech police in some kind of a demonstration or something, they used to take him clandestinely through back streets, to the hiding places, where he was treating them, giving them first aid or something like that. But far as I know, that was secret, nobody knew about that. You asked me about early memories and going back, backtracking, probably one of the earliest ones, again looking out from our windows, where the first of many demonstrations, thousands and thousands of people were marching every first of May. And just marching with banners and on both sides, Czech police with nightsticks, escort, but it was just amazing how many people were, I don't know how to phrase it, let's say loyal to that cause, how many people identified with that cause and every year people in clean clothes and spruced up and people on bicycles and all the bicycles had red paper ribbons in the wheels and the spokes and red banners and bands and marching bands. The bands from the tobacco factory workers and all those and it was just interesting, I don't know how else to put it and it was, it was accepted.

Q: It was tolerated by ...

A: No, it was not tolerated, it was part of the life of the town. The Communist Party was outlawed in Hungary. Soon as the Hungarians took over, they got hold of those people who were leaning Communist and they went after those and they beat them, they arrested them and then the first chance they had they tried them and they imprisoned them, when they already got to that stage. Hungary had, see I'm jumping back and forth, it's impossible to keep everything in chronological order and sequences. Hungary had an interesting way, it had a regular army and it also had an

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army like an SS army. It wasn't SS, it was like an army of volunteers which went on attacks against Czechoslovakia when it was still, originally Czech territory. They used to infiltrate across the border. They tried to kill Czech soldiers, they tried to blow up things and they tried to, various sabotage acts and things of that sort, but where as they had, the Germans did identical things in the Sudeten area, they blew up railroad tracks, they killed people who were, let's say German socialists or Czechs or stuff like that and they attacked Czech border posts, they attacked Czech customs posts, Czech gendarmerie stations. Well the Hungarians tried to do the same thing except they were not successful

and the Czechs intercepted them, captured them and imprisoned them and held them and tortured them and who knows what they did to them, but once the Vienna Arbitrage came and the Hungarians took over, they had to turn them loose, they had to release all these prisoners, but they continued their activities even during a time of war, there were organizations which let's say -- one day our town was, I don't know what to call it, raided or something. You look out from the windows as always, it was a custom then, always looking out from the windows to see what's going on and the street is blocked off. Hungarian soldiers with rifles and bayonets and some kind of people are going from house to house and searching. And they come to our house and they search like bandits, I mean like robbers or like police here, I mean police are same in every country. Pulling out all drawers, turning over the drawers and there were some, always used to go into all the closets in my home and always looking for things and pictures and this and that. My father or my mother had a stack of postcards, picture postcards and I always used to go through those, but there was some drawers which they wouldn't let me in and now everything was tossed open, everything was lying there. And it was like bandits coming into your house and tossing things about in front of your own eyes, with absolute authority and we had, you didn't know what was coming out of it and my younger brother had a small bed and he outgrew that too, so the bed was just put into an empty room, thinking of empty rooms again, sidetracking, the room became empty because we sold the furniture, hoping to come to America. So we sold the furniture from two rooms, one with a big dining room and fancy one which we only used on state occasions, when the American family came to visit us, we had dinner there and the other one was the living room and so the bed was in there and for some reason, my father kept that math book from the Czech school and he stuck it into that bed and when they came searching, they tossed everything apart and they came on the book. Says, what is this? And he says, it's a math book. Says, but it's not Hungarian, what is it and I says it's Czech. Are you hoping that the Czechs will be coming back here? So, I mean it was a hostile world, it was a, it just, very, very bad place and

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I don't know, they couldn't find anything else so they found we had too many bars of soap, toilet soap. Says, what is this? Toilet soap. And this? Says, what do you need so much toilet soap for? Says, pack up these two boxes and turn them in to us. And they went through other homes the same way, taking away this, taking away that and the next day, people from the town, who had bigger mouths than my father or who had better positions or more, let's say, just one comparison, saying Doctor ____ is still practicing, or was still permitted to practice, people in that class or in that category. They went to the mayor and they complained that this was taken away or that. We had nothing to do with this, we didn't even know about this, I mean this was, we had nothing to do with this. And then we will investigate this. Investigated, investigated, oh this was a completely illegal thing, we didn't know who did this, we don't know who did this. I mean they get, the soldiers get assigned to them to carry out the blocking off of the streets, the guarding of the houses and all that stuff, but nobody knows how it happened or who had the

authority or who pulled it or what. So it was a, as I said, it was a government in Hungary and there was a quasi-government or something, which could do all kinds of things and get away with it and be tolerated and be funded. I mean, they were drawing their pay and all that stuff from certain secret funds, let's say the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior.

Q: This searching of your home, did that happen fairly soon after the Hungarians came in? No? Not right away?

A: No, that happened, I can't place it exactly, it might have been, it might have been '40 or '41.

Q: Did the first, you father's revoked, his license was revoked fairly soon?

A: Immediately.

Q: Immediately?

A: Yeah. Oh, another thing, the Hungarians came in, as soon as they came in it was already, a law was debated in Parliament which was called the anti-Jewish law, I mean they didn't call it anti-Jewish, they called it the Jewish law, but it was an anti-Jewish law, which would deprive Jews from being, it was similar to the Nuremberg laws in Germany, Jews could not be in this aspect of public life, Jews could not be that, Jews could not be here, they could not be journalists, they could not be university professors, if they wanted to go to a university there would be a quota, like six percent, something like that. Jews could not have licenses to have stores, it's just, all kinds of restrictions and depriving people of a livelihood, expropriating stores, shops, property, means of trade and all kinds of stuff. And it was a different world.

01:58:00

Q: We have to take a break.

A: Okay.

Q: And change tape.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: At the end of the last tape, you were beginning to describe how the Hungarians laws, as they pertained to Jewish people, affected your family and would you please go into that in more detail?

A: Well, let's say for one thing the Hungarians had a similar thing to the Hitler Jugend_, which was called Leventer(Ph) and everybody was all, any kid over 12 year old had to be in it, it was like a pre-military training, but did not involve any weapons or anything at that point yet, it was mainly sort of to be in a group, be in an organization, be under command, be drilled, perform together, march together and things of that sort and again, let's say I should say that I went to Hungarian Gymnasium, which is secondary school, and I became, in 1939 I was 10 and it was, for me it was a big step in life, going from elementary school to this,big, middle school, which was an eight year school and I went there for the first two years and my father had the notion that I should do very well in school so I could get into a university and in that respect he was quite unrealistic and quite, just wouldn't accept the world as it was because no matter what kind of grades I would have gotten in that school, the chances of my getting into a university with my father being not on the top, on the accepted list or preferred list was virtually nil. Second, we should have,

02:04:

in '38 when the clouds were coming in over Czechoslovakia, we were thinking of coming to America where my mother had four brothers and they were willing to send us, they did send us what they were called, affidavits, which could, might get us visas to come here, immigration visas, but my father was reluctant to leave his home which meant so much to him and leave his practice, I'm still talking about 1938, he didn't see into the future, none of us did and he did not know that it would become Hungary and he thought it would stay Czechoslovakia forever. And his main argument was that he didn't want to work in a hospital as an orderly until he could get his board certification or whatever was needed in America to become a doctor. And so he was hard on me to excel in school and study hard and I mentioned that we had a class of about 35 or 40 students in that class which I entered and out of those there were five or six of us Jews. And four out of the five were leading students, I mean we were hustling and we were working hard and getting the grades. This was, I entered in '39 and in 1940 I entered the second class and before I finished the second class rumors started circulating that Jews will not be permitted to continue in this Hungarian state gymnasium. There was a Hebrew gymnasium in town and from now on, any Jewish boy who wanted to go to gymnasium, will go to Hebrew gymnasium. And came 1941 and my father came in to register and they said yes, well, but you knew that we were not admitting any more Jews to our school, so my father pretended he didn't know that, that's all? That's it. So during that time when I had this warning, I started learning Hebrew, the modern Hebrew, which was the official language of the Hebrew gymnasium. So he had another new language for me and I already had

Latin, was studying Latin and this and that and again Hebrew was again very hard for me, I don't know why, it just was hard and I had to learn it from beginning, we had to get hold of books which covered the elementary Hebrew and to get up to this level which was the gymnasium Hebrew. And not only was Hebrew being taught as a language, physics was taught in Hebrew, Algebra was taught in Hebrew, so it was a new ballgame as they say and it was not easy. And we had to join this Levnter_ and if you went to school, you participated in it at your school, so I was now in the third year of gymnasium and I was part of Leventer_ and the instructor came to the school and all over 12 were put into a separate classroom and were lecturing to us about, let's say about nothing and we were going down into the schoolyard and doing calisthenics there and stuff like that, but they didn't last long. After a while they decided that there will be no more Jews in the Hungarian army, they will all be in labor units and instead of having Hungarian military uniforms, they will be wearing their own civilian clothes and they will be wearing a 10 centimeter wide, yellow armband, to make sure that everybody knows that they are Jewish and maybe in the beginning they still had military caps, but that was the only thing on them, the cap and the yellow armband. Same way, no more Jews in the Leventer, from now on yellow armband on anybody from 12 years up and you will be in pre-labor units. So in all case it meant on a certain day of the week, the whole unit from the Hebrew gymnasium would march off to the agricultural, I don't know what you would want to call it, professional school or technical school and work there with manure and things like that, help the kids who went to school there and with the dirty work. And my father managed to get me out of that. He managed to switch my urine with a patients urine and, or give me the patients urine and I poured it into the test tube and submitted it as my own and they saw that I had kidney disease and so I managed to stay out of that paramilitary work unit. But that was how it affected me personally, so I got out of that and my classmates did not appreciate that, my Jewish classmates, it's a funny thing it was, let's say my, not my first experience, but one of my many experiences with Jews against Jews, the total, the animosity between, among Jews, the hostility for different things, one reason or another. I think the first hostility I ran into was when I went to, during that first school I went during the Hungarian occupation. Why the Hungarian school, not too far, couple of blocks from where I lived, it was a very old building and most of the students were poor

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Jewish kids and they hated me from the word go because I was middle class and they were lower class and as I found out later on in the camps there was no bigger hatred than a poor Jew had towards a Jew who was not poor. So these kids used to tell me things like, "geh in d'r'erd arine", which I couldn't quite understand and I did not have that good a communication with either my father or my mother, but I had excellent lines of communication with my grandmother and my grandmother knew Yiddish. So did my father, so did my mother. I took it to my grandmother, grandmother, what does this mean? She said, drop dead or you should be buried or something, well, literally. So she says, tell them this, next time they tell you that, tell them this, so I went back and I told

them that and they were surprised, where did you get that? So after that I was a little bit more accepted, since I could talk back to them, it lent a certain kind of a recognition or something, I don't know what you want to call it, I was on their level now. So I am, getting back now to the gymnasium, it was again a completely different ball game, for one thing, during the Hungarians, the word Jew was a derogatory word, I mean, I learned, that was a new thing to me, any one of my classmates, there was only one classmate who used to come by and he was the number one or the number two student in the class, real strong too. He never laid a hand on me, he never hit me or anything, but any time he went by me he said Zido(Ph), Jew and he could have said, what the Hungarians would say, like in America then in the south they never say Yankees, they always say damn Yankees, so in Hungarian it was never zido, it was always bido Zido, stinking Jew, stinking Jew and always when I heard that, it's, for a time, eleven, twelve year old, it's I don't know, you hear it all the time and still it irks and it's not something you get used to and it still, you don't build up a thick skin to it and it just, so that's how it affected me personally and when I went to the Hebrew high school there was no more of it, nobody could call me Zido because everybody was Zido

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there, everybody was Jewish, but again there was this, there were fellows from different socio-economic levels and there was friction, there was much friction, there was much hostility and there was no, no solidarity, no cohesion, no, there was never among Jews, it's really sad, it's really, they're always, two poor Jews have a stronger bond than just Jew and Jew. I mean it was always mattered to them, let's say you are from a village and this fellow is from a village so we have something in common and already we have more in common with, we have common with each other was we have nothing in common with that kid from Mukachevo, was called Munkacz_ during the Hungarian (occupation), so I lived in a weird world. I can't say at this point it was schizoid, it was schizoid before, it was just weird. And my father got drafted into the labor unit. First of all he was in the Austro-Hungarian army, he was a lieutenant in the medical service, as a kid fresh out of, after one year of med school that had rank of an officer. When the Czechs mobilized they made him a private because he was a lieutenant in the Austro-Hungarian army. So I thought now we are in Hungarian and he used to be a lieutenant, so he'll be a lieutenant again. No, (he was) not recognized, so eventually no Jew was any more recognized anyway, so he was drafted in the labor unit and somehow he managed to get into a labor unit which had a commander with whom he managed to get along all right, so he didn't have to work there. And the other ones who were there had to work and there was not a good unit, but somehow he managed to get along there and eventually he got discharged and then got back home, but during that time we were home without him and again jumping things, my father, after awhile, found it, no more practicing secretly, he was, he tried to get a front man to work with, another doctor with whom he could, to whom he could take the patients across the street and sort of share and split the fee or something like that. And through that doctor we met other people and we had, it improved our social life. So that's just an aside, as far as that goes, was a minor improvement in my existence,

because I was among more people now and again my father was a living terror with us and it was . . .

02:18:20

Q: How was your father a living terror? You started, you referred to that earlier, you said it was hard on you.

A: He was extremely hard, he was, for things which he considered, I don't know, too many things were punishable in his mind and other things for which I expected to be punished I was not punished. So if there was disorder in my room, which seems to be my nature, I got a horrible beating. If I was raising hell with my younger brother, we were arguing or fighting and screaming and yelling, that was enough reason for him to fly out of his office, which was inside the house with a belt, a heavy belt in his hand and just hit wherever, first, last, without looking, just as long as he hit body. And schoolwork. I was lazy, I could study, but I didn't like to study. Sometimes he used to say, are you prepared, are you prepared for the lesson, you have the lesson, you studied? Are you ready to recite it? Because in school it was always recitation, written exams were given like maybe just four times a year or something like that. All right, come into the office and give me the, recite this assignment and turned out I didn't know nothing, I didn't, I just wasn't prepared, I was hoping to bluff my way through it or something and so I got horrible beatings, but I got beatings already as a kid, on one occasion we carried on, we raised hell or something and it ended up both of us were in bed after we got such a beating and so as I said, when he was under more pressure himself, passed it on, we got more beatings.

Q: And your mother couldn't do anything?

A: No, no.

Q: That's why you felt close with your grandmother?

A: Mm-hm. And my mother, if she interfered, he just shoved her out of the way across the room, she went flying. And on that one occasion when it was a Latin lesson and I didn't learn it and I didn't know it and it had to be known, it had to be known, learned and exactly and he took me and he started beating me and study it and beat it and beating and studying and beating and, and so finally my mother got either the maid or somebody to run to my grandmother who lived a kilometer away, get her up in the night, this was already dragging into the night and get my grandmother to come and rescue me from him. He wouldn't lay a hand on my grandmother, he had more respect for her than for my mother. And, but I told her not to interfere and I learned a lesson and to him it justified it. I mean, I can recite it today, 56 years later or whatever. To him things like that meant much, that they were very important and once I was, I hit a small pebble somewhere on the street when I was still in Czech elementary school and I was just going along in the

sidewalk and kicking it and kicking it and every time it rolled off, I kicked it back and I was going with it all the way home from school, which was a good long, maybe a mile or I don't know how far away. And it rolled off a place and I kicked it back, it went through a store window, so I was horrified that I was going to get a horrible beating and I ran from the place, but they spotted me and I was a lone kid in town, I mean they knew me, I was Dr. Havas's son, so they

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went after him, the kid broke our store window. And he came looking for the kid and the kid was hidden behind a door and he went by and I figured if not now, I'll get it later, but that was a normal thing for a child, by him, so I didn't get a beating for that. There were inconsistencies like that, so it was a confusing, confusing world for this kid. And all right now, we go back to the gymnasium, the Hebrew gymnasium and by then the load was bad and eventually the Germans came in, which was March, 1944 and from then on, everything was already just going, not going downhill, it was just avalanching downhill, fast. And first thing, we had a shortwave radio which, somehow inconsistently, Jews were permitted to have radios and some Jews, to show that they are totally innocent had the shortwave band sealed on their radios, so nobody could ever accuse them of listening in to forbidden foreign broadcasts and so they could not be accused of that and they could not be punished for that, whereas we had shortwave and we were listening to it, regularly, every day, to London and on good days to Moscow. It meant a lot on some days, when there were good news, but on too many days, there were no good news. All you have to do is look at the history of World War 2 and see how it went for the Germans, how it went for the Japanese and took a long, long time before it started turning and the front was very, very far from us to do us any good when it started to turn in our favor. And in March, 1944, Russians were the

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closest and they were hundreds of miles away, far, too far. So the radio got taken away and it was just, you can't imagine the difference between having access to the world and suddenly having no access whatsoever.

Q: Did you .... This information was only available on the radio, there was nothing left that was printed?

A: What was printed was lies, what was printed was full of legal words, let's say, you had to read between the lines and even so, let's say, our heroic forces are conducting defensive battles in such and such area, so we already knew that if they were in that area, they were so many kilometers from the area where they were before, so obviously they are retreating and they have been, they have been retreating, lines were broken through and they are doing great wonders but they are 80 kilometers to the rear, or 40 kilometers. Sometimes advances were measured, let's say five kilometers, very small, but still. And

after that, the next step was, all Jews must wear a 10 centimeter diameter yellow star sewn on their clothes, not just attached and on the penalty of such and such not to remove that star, not to hide it and then Jews could not be out on the street after a certain hour in the evening and it was Passover and we went to grandmother's as always for the Passover seder, but this time it was very short and we had to get back home and it was like state of siege.

Q: Couldn't be out, you couldn't be out after dark?

A: Mm-hm. And look out on a Saturday in the town and everywhere you see is Hungarian soldiers again with rifles and fixed bayonets and it was just horrible being at home with all this external pressure, internal pressure and my father had the good fortune on January 6 of '44, he had a heart attack, so he was just recuperating when the Germans came in and he was not yet completely and he said let's get to Grandmother's, it was always get to Grandmother, I mean if there was a beating in store or some trap or something, always to Grandmother's, it was like asylum and everything else, it was just a place where I could get understanding, a

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place where I could have love and security and safety. So we sneaked out and somehow we got by the soldiers who were on the corner, my brother and I and we said we're just going to Grandmother's or something and they let us by and then we go down the next street and we go down half the street and we get intercepted by Hungarian soldiers again and these were draftees, they were older guys, well older, let's say they were like 32 or 33 or which, 35, compared to other soldiers they were older. And we tried to talk to them, he said look, I'll let you through, but suppose you get to the next corner, what's going to be there, I mean suppose the guy there stops you and what are you going to say? That I let you through and this and what, said, little kids, go back home, it will be simpler. So, all right, I could, I was then not quite 15, but I could tell a decent man when I saw one and I took his advice and we went back home.

Q: How old was your brother?

A: 13.

Q: Two years younger?

A: Yeah, not quite 13. And next thing we get the word that there will be a ghetto set up in our town and we had a rough outline which streets will be in it, which houses will be in it and it will be going into effect on April 19, exactly one month from the day the Germans took over and all Jews from all the rest of the towns, into the ghetto.

Q: How did you learn about this?

02:32:00

A: Word of mouth. It's just absurd, I mean everything is absurd, I mean, that's my favorite word, my whole life and everything and it's just, so we had one more conference with Grandmother, Grandmother is going to move in with some cousins, or with someone, a sister and we would be moving in with the people across the street and get our things together, a handful of clothing or something like that and next morning, banging on our doors, like at seven in the morning are Hungarian police. By this time the town was full of recruit police, in other words, police trainees, not the regular ones who were in the town and whom just about everybody knew, these were new police and different, in gray uniforms where the regular police had black ones, these were new ones and they were all rabid, they were all trained to hate and beat and kill Jews. I mean it was, you will now be hearing this until it's in your blood, so it got into their blood and so there was one of these and a detective, I mean what they call a plain clothes police. And he says, you're Havas? Your whole family come along. Says where, what? Don't ask questions, come along. Says, take a couple of things with you and come on along. Said well, my father tried to gain time, which was pointless. He says, well, they took the thing over to the ghetto or things. Who told you to go into the ghetto, to take your things to the ghetto? So we gained something like five minutes, he says we will be back in five minutes, you better be ready and ready or not your coming. And at that time, in one of these empty rooms, which we had a living room, we had an officer quartered, a Hungarian lieutenant colonel, who was a staff officer and my mother started banging on his door and sir, where are they taking us, what are they going to do to us, what? So the colonel comes out looking like he's all sleepy, which he wasn't, because he got up earlier than that usually. Says, oh I really don't know, I really don't know about anything. There was some talk about something at the headquarters yesterday, but I don't know really, anything. So we got out in the street already with the police with the rifle and the detective and other people are being lined up and they are marching us and more people from an other street, a side street, an villagesother. And they are marching us to the city hall, the courtyard inside the city hall and sit down on the ground or the grass or dirt and they're bringing in more people and nobody knows anything, nobody knows where they taking us or what and wait there and wait there and wait there and a locked in place, you couldn't get out of it, even if there were no guards and it was mid-afternoon or something like that, I'm not exactly sure of the time any more of that, it was a horrible day and there would be many more like that.

Q: And the four of you were together?

A: Mm-hm and all kinds of other families and again you couldn't figure out, you couldn't draw conclusions who was being taken or who, there was doctors, there were pharmacists from, who had another pharmacist, this kind of person, that kind of person and it's all being rounded up and sitting there.

Q: But all Jewish people?

A: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So then they line us up, when the time came, early afternoon or midafternoon, they start marching us, again nobody knows where and marching, marching, marching, heading out of town with police escort with rifles all around and we come to a brick factory and it turned out that the brick factory was turned into an assembly camp for people from all the neighboring villages, all the Jews from the villages, they were rounded up the same day when Jews from Munkacz had been taken to the ghetto. The people, the Jews from the villages were brought into the brick factories in the towns. There were two brick

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factories in our town, one at one outside, they were both way out in the suburbs, well not, there were no suburbs, but then, outside the city limit, outside the area. And people from all the villages, with car, by freight trains and on foot and all kinds of ways of being brought into the brick factory and us special cases are being brought there to and again you didn't know why you were being punished or what and they confiscated lumber from a Jewish lumber yard and they are building a three meter high fence all around the brick factory and the only one there who was, I don't know what, how to, what label to stick on him, anyway, he was an official of the brick factory, a clerk, a manager and he, the Germans came in on him and the Hungarian police on that same morning and told him, you, out of this office, take out all your file stuff, all your cabinets, out. You are out of here by this evening and he said, but, but, but, but, but, but, but, you know the file cabinet, 40 or 50 years of operation of the factory and where am I going to put it? He said, out. So we ran into him and he knew my father or he knew this and he knew that and he was nice to us and he put us up into a building in the brick factory which I don't know what used to be there before, but there are no rooms in a brick factory, it was a factory and bricks and clay and dust and he found us a room which was just off one of the kilns and he says, I'll get you some hay, which was better than straw and you can have this room as a separate and the villagers will be lying in the kilns, no windows, no nothing, just horrible and nothing and my father says, I'd like to get the kids out of here, I'd like to get the kids out. Suddenly you know, it's again these inconsistencies that he would give his life for the family, but while the family was still his family, he didn't know how to handle them, I mean, he was beating us but now suddenly he would give his life to save the kids. Couldn't save his wife because they knew about her, same way they knew about us, there was no way out. So we should be smuggled out of the brick factory and we should be smuggled to someone with patients in the village, somebody in the

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village, but this is where is comes in, which people always ask, why didn't you hide, why didn't you run away, why didn't you go into the hills, why didn't you go into the forest? There was no place to go. I had, I was a city boy, I would have been recognized as a city

boy, I looked different than the village boys, you could put me into their same clothes, what the village boys wore and I was still recognizable. There was just different and for another thing, we were known. I told you I was recognized when I broke the window, I was known and I would have been recognized and if somebody would have been willing to take us one month before, as soon as the Germans came in, somebody in the village had hidden us, it could have been done, but . . .

Q: The village where your grandmother lived, was that mostly?

A: They lived in the town.

Q: Oh, they lived in town.

A: At the, in the, away from the center and my mother and my Grandmother in the next town also lived at the edge of the town. But he had many patients in the villages and somebody, even our cleaning woman could have hidden us, but I don't know, I hate to lose time on somebody else's story, but the cleaning woman told me in '89, when I went back there, that there was a Jewish man in the village, a shopkeeper, who had a two year old daughter and he wanted to hide, let's say palm off that daughter to somebody's home, anybody's home in the village. He knew the villagers, the villagers shopped from him, the villagers knew him and he knew them and he went to them and begged them, because he knew the two year old would be a hindrance, no matter what happened, we did not know what would happen, but a two year old would be a problem and nobody wanted to take in the kid and my cleaning lady said, why should they, I mean the kid will stick out, the kid didn't speak Hungarian, the kid didn't speak Russian, the kid could only speak Yiddish and if one takes it in, somebody's going to inform on that person because everybody had enemies, that's the kind of world it was, everybody had enemies in the village, everybody had enemies in the town and at first opportunity they informed on other people like that and I said well they could have hid the child somewhere, so, no, nobody wanted the kid. So, naturally the kid got killed in Auschwitz and so did it's mother. I, coming back to my story, it was just, I was never a boy scout, I never lived in the country, I never did any hiking, I never did any camping, I couldn't live in the woods alone, where would I get food? The first peasant who bumped on me in the woods would turn me in. Even if they didn't hate Jews, they didn't like Jews and there was just, the only way would have been it, as I said, if I would have been taken out on March the 20th or 19th and given to some place in the village and if that person would have been 100 percent loyal and if that person could have gotten me into his house or into his cellar without my being seen, our being seen, my brother and I. In our whole town of 15,000 Jews, two families were hidden, two or three, by Christians.

02:45:

Q: In the villages?

A: In the villages, nobody, only in the town.

Q: They were hidden by Christians in town?

A: In town, mm-hm. And one hid by himself in a cellar which he had built and he was discovered, but he was discovered after they took away all the Jews already, so as far as I know they took him to an interment camp in Budapest, but I'm not sure about it. It doesn't matter, really. But anyway, then we were just horribly tired on that April 19th when we arrived at that brick factory, it was already dark, it was night and we haven't eaten all day, but that was a minor point, who cared for eating at a time like this, or who could eat anything at a time like that? At most you were just very thirsty. So we stretched out on the straw, I mean the hay and I finally got up in the morning, there were already guard towers are being built around the brick factory, the fence is already being completed, the three meter high fence. The one night during which we could have escaped, again, I don't know where to, but we could have escaped, was gone and there was no more after that.

Q: Did you talk about escaping that night?

A: Yeah. Tomorrow. Tomorrow we'll figure out something. It's something which haunts me to this day, it will haunt me to my dying day, but it could have been done, it wasn't done and then my father started working, he'll do everything to get us out one way or another and started making friends with an SS lieutenant who was in charge of the camp. Stumpfer(ph) or something like, either a captain or the next below the captain in the SS ranks. And he managed to be friends and then he kept us telling, I'll get you out, I'll get you out, so he going to get us out, I started nagging him, I said, you said yesterday you're going to get us out, he said I'm working on it. I says you going to get us out when, when are you going to get us out? And this point I hated him like I have never hated anybody probably and I was just nagging him and he was nagging us, he nagged, when he couldn't beat, when he decided that I was too old to be beaten, he used psychological terror on me and he continued to do that even in the camp, in the brick factory, he said, I don't know how you two kids will survive, I don't know how you two kids will survive, you are the most unsurviving kids, un, I don't know the English word, I never could figure out the equivalent word for it. Unviable or something like that, you just, you'll just never manage, you'll just never manage and who needs to hear that kind of stuff, I mean? And it certainly doesn't build up your morale, it doesn't strengthen, it doesn't add to your stamina, it doesn't anything and then one day he says run to the gate, there is a truck going back to the ghetto, jump on it as soon as you can and you are going out. And that was May 11th, after having me in the brick factory from April 19 until May 11, we jump on the truck, which used to carry either food or bread or something between the ghetto and the brick factory and we got to the entrance of the ghetto and the driver said, these three have permits, my mother and my brother and I and the police who was standing at the ghetto entrance says okay and through back yards and back ways we got to the house where Grandmother was and, which was across the street from our original home, but our original home was outside the ghetto and the road was the separate border. And this was

11th, which was Thursday, I think. Some days one remembers and it was a different world, people were still sleeping in beds, all the fences between the houses were torn down, had to be torn down so people could go from one house to another without going out in the street and in the yard there was a trench dug, like maybe two meters deep, anti-aircraft trench or shelter, or whatever it was. All kinds of things just to keep the Jews busy, just to harass them, just to be on their backs all the time and somebody found a sofa for me to sleep in, somebody found a place for my mother and somebody for my brother. And you wouldn't believe this but there was, in that same building there was

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a patisserie, a Jewish woman and she was making ice cream, she still was making ice cream and the ghetto in Munkacz had two sections which were divided by a street and people could run across that street from one section, ghetto one to ghetto two let's say, with the good will of the police guard and my classmates from gymnasium, the girls were running in on Sunday to this lady who was making the ice cream and Mrs. Such and such, Mrs. Such and such, are you going to make ice cream? I'll never make ice cream any more, and she had her face against the wall and she was crying and she had two daughters who were very attractive and both were being courted by detectives and the detective told her something and she was just standing in that passageway, horribly crying aloud and we just knew something was up and the girls were crying and the detectives were sitting by like, that was Sunday and on Monday, Monday

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before noon, messenger comes running for us inside the ghetto, through all these courtyards, where are you, where are you, get out right away. And the police comes in with the rifle, where are you hiding, what do you think you are hiding and turns out a new, the Hungarian captain who was in charge of the whole ghetto and the whole everything, now he was spitting blood that my father managed to get out his kids and his wife, with the help of an SS officer and not with his help and there was, that SS officer was ordered elsewhere and there was a new one in charge and there was a whole, again an American expression, a whole new ball game. And the whole world was being turned upside down and he hustled us out, the three of us, and this police officer from the ghetto, out to the street and on the street is this police captain's small Italian car, which is enough for three people maybe and inside the car is my father and he says, get in, so in gets my mother and the two of us, my brother and I sitting on their laps and he says to the police, the police sits in the front and he's at the driver side, the police captain, he says put your rifle on these, these are dangerous people, the least chance, shoot them. The least provocation or something. So he steps on the gas and he drives us to the second brick factory, not where we were originally and we get there and there is already a train of boxcars on the siding and so we had the idea we were being taken away, we will be taken away.

02:55

Q: Did, on this driveto the....., what is it?

A: Brick factory.

Q: Did you talk?

A: No, no we said, my father had this stupid thing to say, he says no, we are not dangerous, I mean when he says to the police, so I felt like telling, shut your mouth and the police, I mean the captain said, shut up, that's all.

Q: And nobody spoke?

A: No, there was no thing, nothing spoken. He said, I'm going to get you there in person.

Q: And what did you think was going to happen at that moment?

A: I'd no idea, no idea whatsoever, same thing when they took us on April 19th at seven A.M., we had no idea where we were going into the brick factory, for all we knew we were being taken across the border to Poland and being shot there, it just, no, no idea whatsoever.

Q: Before we start a new chapter . . .

A: Yeah.

Q: And I just want to ask, how long were you in the ghetto? Not very long?

A: In the ghetto I was from the 11th of May until the 15th.

Q: Oh, just a few days.

A: A few nights.

Q: Did you see what was happening, did you go around there to see your own place?

A: You couldn't go around, the idea was to keep as low as you can, I stayed in that, just the same thing. I stayed in the home where I was given that sofa, where I could be and it was across the street from my own home and I could look out, but I couldn't look out, because they told me, those people, don't go near the window, because they have orders that anybody who goes near the window will be shot, they will shoot through the window. So I didn't want to endanger their lives and they were very nice to me that they gave me a sofa on which to sleep. The only other thing I could mention that, during my stay there in

the ghetto, during those four nights, one of my classmates showed up. It turned out he became a messenger in the ghetto and it was good to have any position, I mean as long as you had a position, any position was better than no position at all, so he was important, they could send him here and there and he didn't have to dig those air raid ditches and he didn't have to be around on the street and being beaten and all kinds of things, so he came to me to get my Leventer cap,

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the army cap because they were collecting them, so Jews should not have military caps and there should be no way for them to melt into outside and pretend to be non-Jews and trying to get away. So I told him, the cap is at home, see? Across the street? I've no way of getting to it and he told me things. He told me what was going on in the ghetto. He told me the horrible things which I didn't know about, there was no communication between the ghetto and the brick factory and I've been trying to find him and to this day I haven't been able to find him. But he was a soccer player, muscular boy, a lively boy and a go-getter and what anybody would call a survivor. In other words, a hustler, the Hungarians have an expression, he could survive on an ice floe, but.

Q: We need to change tape, so we'll take a break.

A: Okay.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: At the end of the last tape, you started to describe to me the fact that you and your family were taken away from the ghetto and driven to the other, the second brick factory on the outside of the town where there was a train waiting, you could see that there was a train waiting, but before you tell me what happened with your father, mother and brother, tell me what you knew at that time about the fate of other Jews that had been either from your town or in the region, so what could you imagine might be awaiting you at this time?

03:02:

A: Hungarian troops were fighting on what was called the eastern front in Russia and so were Jewish labor units were assigned to that front and they were being used there to dig up mines planted by the Russians or dig trenches or any kind of work and sometimes the Hungarian troops used to come home on sick leave or something like that and they talked and they told us things which were going on in the Ukraine, mainly in the Ukraine because that's where these troops were. And there were people sometimes coming over from Poland into our area, civilians and they talked and they told us, again, they told somebody and word got around and these were people whom you could trust, in other words, these were, we knew that these were fact, that these things were true. They told us that in Poland the Jews were massacred in the forest, that they were dumped into mass graves and that the earth was moving on top of the grave for weeks after the shootings, after the killings, that not all of them were completely killed and the ones who came back from the Russian front, they apparently must have met Einsatztruppen or saw them in action, they said the Jews were taken out from the town to a field outside the town and they were rounded up and all of them were brought together and they were surrounded and then the Germans mounted the machine gun on a truck and they were circling around these surrounded people and they were machine-gunning them and as long as they kept on circling them and firing into them until they assumed that everybody was killed. So we knew about this. Then, one of the things which the Hungarians started early, was this stuff about citizenship. And that was, in all case, we had to get the papers so we could get passports, and we were trying to get passports so we could come, even still in 1940 we were trying to get somehow to America. It was war was in Europe, but United States was not yet at war. So we were rounding up our ancestors papers, birth certificates of great-grandparents and going back to the middle of the 19th century or early 19th century so we could prove that we lived,

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our ancestors lived in that area, that we did not infiltrate from Poland, that we were local Jews and we got Hungarian citizenship, we got passports, but they got us nowhere. But there were other Jews who did come in from Poland, probably, I'm not sure how it was, but I'll presume that during the Austro-Hungarian empire, at which time Galicia was part of the empire, there was no Poland, it was partitioned, people from there, probably for to improve their lot economically or somehow, moved from Galicia into Carpathia or maybe even into

Hungary proper and naturally these people could not prove their citizenship and the Hungarians knew who they were, they always knew who it was, who, I didn't mention to you that already at age 12, the same as I had to belong to the Leventers(ph), I had to have an ID card and since I was Jewish, on it was in red letter Z, for Zido, so they had track of everybody and they knew who these people were who didn't have citizenship and one day, again backtracking, the war broke out in 1941 with Russia, Germany attacked Russia and Soviet Union and the Hungarians, which were closely tied to Germany and the military especially, the officers and higher ranks, the staff, they were all completely pro-German. They found an excuse, they created an excuse, it was a phony bombing raid on Kosice, which was carried out by German planes and they said that it was bombed by Soviet planes and

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immediately Hungary declared war on the Soviet Union and attacked. And Hungarian army units, let's say an entire army was assigned to move in to the Soviet Union. So once Soviet Union was attacked, vast spaces became killing grounds, where nobody counted for anything, I mean they could murder Russian civilians, Ukranian civilians and was the start of the extermination of the Jews. It was, while they were reluctant to do something like that in Germany proper, didn't want to have the German people see things like that, once they were in the Soviet Union, there were no more holds, no holds barred and there were just, they had complete freedom to murder and do anything they wanted and in any way the wanted, and that's how these so-called Polish Jews who were in our area were loaded up onto freight trains and shipped into Poland and eventually word got back that they were all murdered. Years after the war, when I started doing research, I found where they were murdered and how and what and it was a place called Kamenetz Podolsk, the Kamenetz Podolsk massacre.

Q: Were these people all known to you?

A: To me and to my family, but there were thousands of other Jews who never knew about this, the Jews in the villages did not have access to all this kind of information. Some of the Jews in our town did not have access to it and you just, more or less you had to be in the know. There was a dentist in our building, he rented his offices and his home apartment from us and he got drafted. When he got drafted they were still taking Jews into the army, the Hungarians and again it was inconsistent, some Jews were taken into the Hungarian army and others were immediately put into the labor battalions and the labor, forced labor units and somehow he was in Poland and when his unit was rotated, he came home and he brought back

03:10:

some things, among them were miniature Torahs. In Europe there are such things and it's, I had one when I was a child, my Grandmother gave me one, it was a small one and he says, the Jews were being taken away in the town where he was in Poland and he says that streets

were just littered with all kinds of things which they couldn't carry any more and where they were being taken, we didn't find out the details until later. What happened to them, but they were just rounded up and chased, driven like stampede and taken away and then there were other inklings, like somebody had a relative in Slovakia and the Jews from Slovakia were taken away and for a while there were letters and then there were, in the letters there were words which we could understand, but the censors missed them. And from that, oh let's say, oh everything is fine, we're living fine, only the "moveth" [death] is with us, which meant that, things of that sort, or they threw in a Hungarian word which meant bad, very bad. And then there were no more letters. Same way I had, through marriage we knew some people, we were close with them, my mother's sister was married to a man whose relatives were in Poland, lived in Poland and somehow they used to get letters from there. I imagine the letters had to be smuggled out and mailed, remailed by some Christian, Polish friends, because there was no mail coming out of ghettos. And then the letters stopped. And then you had these rumors and words coming in from troops, who came on leave, as I said and things were sort of, one thing was corroborating another. And then in 1943, there was some Jewish holiday, maybe it was Rosh Hashanah or something like that and there was a train again, a long train at the railroad station, of freight cars and they were Jews from Italy and they were being shipped to Poland by the freight car, whole loads of them and you can look at the map, see where is Munkacevo and where is let's say Rome, from where these people were being taken away and how long they been on the train and it was warm, it was September and it was very warm and they were crying and screaming for water.

Q: You didn't see it?

A: No, but I know from people. I'm giving you second hand information, but it's reliable. I wouldn't repeat it if it wasn't. And girls from my town were, one ought to have his hat off to them, they were running all over town and trying to get food together and they cooked soups for these people, like from beans and whatever they could get together and people were torn because it was a holiday and it was not a day to cook food, but some nevertheless relented and these girls did everything possible and they took it out in cans and pitchers and whatever and the guards wouldn't let it on, the guards wouldn't let them give it to the people in the train, they wouldn't open the door, they wouldn't let them give water, they wouldn't anything. And there was, all you had to do was say Poland and we knew what it meant, I mean to us it meant extermination of Jews en masse. I mean, mass extermination and we knew that somewhere something was going on, I mean we knew about the shootings in the fields, we knew about the shootings in the forest and I should mention this one, in '43 a Slovak boy appeared in our town, a young boy about barely 12 at that time, I was 14 and rumor had it that he was rescued from Poland, that he was taken from Slovakia, with the whole town, with all the people, together with his family and everything and the way the story was that the Germans tied them together by fours and they fired one shot through the four bodies. And the kid was shorter than the ones in front of them and the bullet went over his head or grazed his head and they all keeled over and they brought in some burial units to bury them and the kid was the only one alive in that whole people, the whole group(?)_ were murdered. And somehow Hungarian soldiers or Jewish labor units hid him and somehow they found

out that he had a grandmother or a grand-aunt living in Munkacz_ and they smuggled him into town and the

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Hungarians found out about it and somehow they didn't extradite him and they didn't arrest him and they let him stay there and I heard this and I was a very nosy or curious kid and I used to walk all over town, one of the things my father insisted on, I should go on walks to get exercise, to be on fresh air, so I knew the whole town, every street, every house, every section and I knew where the kid was, so that day I went walking to the street where the kid was and I was trying to get a glimpse of him, even behind his fence, there was a fence which you couldn't see through it, somehow and I kept loitering there until I got a glimpse of him that I could say that I saw the kid. When were taken to the brick factory, the kid was arrested and taken to the brick factory, he didn't go to the ghetto with the grandmother, he was taken to the brick factory and just saying this doesn't illustrate anything, point, but I don't know what happened to him after that. So getting back to, the two brick factories were called, one was belonged to the Kaloush(ph), a person named Kaloush(ph) and the other one belonged to his father-in-law named Shyowitz(ph), so we were originally in the Kaloush(ph) factory, which was at one end of the town and we were taken to the Shyowitz(ph), from where there were, that Hungarian police captain handed us over to this police officer, the Hungarian told him to give us a going over, for which purpose he had a, favorite beating instrument in Hungary is a bull's penis, which is, which they dry out and it cannot be broken, in other words they can beat and beat and beat a person with it and it will not split like a piece of wood or a stick and that was their favorite, so this one had one of those and he started beating us, for any odd way and we were standing there and like 20 feet from us was the railroad siding and the freight train and we knew that we were going to be loaded on that freight train and probably to Poland and probably shot and massacred or something. But there were all these rumors, there were all these rumors circulating and spread deliberately that the Jews from Hungary would be taken to inside Hungary for labor. But nobody knew where, or what. So

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we were being beaten there and beaten and then SS, who were inside the camp, the whole brick factory was supervised by maybe four SS. They were able to handle 4,000 prisoners and one of them came by and gave my father a beating and he had a walking stick, which was diameter this thick and he just used that for beating. And we were already waiting to get away from all this beating and be put on the train. And finally the hour came and they put us on the train and then of course they locked the gate, it was one of these rolling gates and I don't know how much time went by there and they opened the gate and they shove in an old, white haired woman.

Q: They put you in the train car, were there other people?

A: Nobody. Was an empty, the whole train was empty and the car in which, I assume the whole train was empty and the car in which we were was empty and I was trying to count the number of boxcars in the train, but I couldn't because after awhile they all merge into each other and you wouldn't believe who this old woman was, she was Vazari's(ph) Jewish mother-in-law. I mean the fate, there is my father, persecuted and ruined and my whole life ruined, my life ruined, his life and everything by Vazari(ph) and who sits down next to us, his mother-in-law.

Q: You knew her?

A: My mother knew her, I did not know her and she said, Wazari(ph) is my son-in-law, he will get me out. So we sit there and we sit there in the dark and warmth and it was a sunny day and the sun burning on this locked up boxcar and then late afternoon, noise outside, screaming, yelling, shouting and you could hear beating and they open the gates to our boxcar and they put a ramp through it and people are running in, mobs and running and pushed in, I mean they are beating the ones behind who are pushing the ones in front and the man is yelling, but there are people here already, we're supposed to be 80 in the boxcar and three others came in addition, because they wanted to be with us because of families and there are already five people here, we are 88. Shut up. And they told him, you are in charge and you make sure that nobody escapes and everybody gets to their destination all right. So he said, I'm in charge and he accepted that and he thought he was in charge. So when it started getting dark somebody came to the car, to the freight car and we are just sitting there all crowded up, 88 of us in this small boxcar, I mean it was not meant to hold 88 people or 80 or 8, it was, during World War 1, they used those boxcars to carry 40 soldiers. At that time it was 40 soldiers or eight horses. Now it was like the Germans could shove in like anything from 80 to 100 Jews into one of those, half suffocated them or what, didn't matter. So, and there was one

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other clue. My father was frisked before he was taken from the Kaloush to the Shyowitz and they gave him a beating there and they took away his watch and he was protesting that he has need the watch to take pulse of, he's a doctor and he need it for that. He says to him, where you going, you won't be needing that watch. So again, indecipherable clues and then somebody came by after it got dark and got to the, where there was a little gap in the door that's gaped and he said, are the Havas's in this car? He says, yes. Says I saw you when you were brought in, do you need anything? Because we were just like they grabbed us off the street or out of anywhere, nothing. So we whispered to him, can you get us a coat or two, extra coats or something and most important for my father, toothbrushes, toothbrushes and toothpaste and there was one other thing. My father had one sensible idea when we were still at home and they were going to kill all of us, the morphine. He got together what he considered would be a lethal dose for the four of us and injections and he kept it in a steel case in which doctors usually keep instruments and stuff like that, but he kept postponing it, kept postponing it.

Q: You knew this?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Did he tell you?

A: Yeah, we were all in on it and we all had to agree to it and when they were taking us away, when we didn't know where on April 19th, when we were being taken to the brick factory but we didn't know where, I said make sure you get the morphine, make sure you take it with us. So he grabbed that box with all the stuff in it and then of course we got separated from it, because they grabbed him from the Kaloush factory and they frisked him and beat him up and they put him in that car with the police captain, that was the end of the morphine, so I said, we said to him, get them from the medic station to get your morphine. So they did not know what it was for, they figure it was for pain killing and they brought a cassette for injections, I mean syringes and morphine ampules and said how much did you get, he said, not enough even for one person, to kill one person. So, that was that. And so and this guy did bring us and when we asked for something else he said, wait until it gets darker because I'm afraid to come by and I'll get caught, I'll be badly, I'll get it badly. So then he brought one thing at one time and another thing at another time, I mean that's what we had and it was all and two of the things he brought us from somebody, he got two raincoats, which were light, lightweight, what we used to call balloon coats and that's how I recognized myself on that picture in Auschwitz, in that raincoat and it's light, it's like off-white, or beige color and it sticks out among all those other people who are in black or dark clothes. And so we are all in this thing, in this shut-up wagon and now we are waiting, when is the train going to be starting to pull out and sometime during the night, it started to pull out and then watch which way is it going. We knew all the names of the villages in the area and we watched and the train was going from Munkacz to a railroad junction. I think it was Chop. So we knew that we couldn't go, we could be heading anywhere from Chopt because it was a junction point, but we knew by then that we were not going north, directly to Poland where the killings took place, so next thing we see was somebody, a crack in the door where it's not closed completely, you could see that name, I think it may have been Kosice which is_ to the west. The next thing we know, we're in Slovakia, which is odd, because all the Slovakian Jews were taken away already, why would they take the Hungarian Jews to Slovakia? And then people in the train, putting their heads together, or quote unquote heads, nobody had a head and at this point in Slovakia, the train stopped and the SS came in and the SS took over the guarding of the train, so I presume that, although we didn't see them, the train up to that point was guarded either by Hungarian armed gendarmes or Hungarian soldiers. And at that point, this is unbelievable, the SS permitted, opened all the gates on all the boxcars and it said, from each car one person out with a bucket for water. And then they did it again, it was a line-up, it was a railroad station with a pump and they could pump just so much and maybe four or five cars got water, all right, that's it, everybody back in, up, up, get into your cars and gates being shut and locked up and off we go. And then we were watching, which way now, which way now and this was already foreign territory, we did not know the names of

the

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Slovak villages. And then we keep on watching and the we're in Poland, crossing from Slovakia into Poland, we recognized some Polish names, Polish village, but now knowing whereabouts it is and then we started saying, now are we going to go east to the killing grounds or west? So we keep on watching, and these are foreign towns, but we later, one way or another, by the lay of the sun or what, we figured out we are going west. The relief, I mean they are not taking us to the fields where they are shooting them and burying them in mass graves. And we left on Monday the 15th and during the night on the 15th and it had to be on the 17th, we arrive at a station in the middle of the night and from the cracks we could see out, Krakow, which was in western Poland. So it was, why Krakow? We did not know anything, we had no idea what was going on or where or why and the train stands there and then it's being shuttled from one track to another track, to another track, to another track and shuttled back and what was front is now moving back. In the morning we end up someplace and the train stops and there's no more movement and I should add this, that the ride and the thirst, without water, the crowding, the people crowded together, squeezed together, you couldn't lie down, you could only sit on your haunches and people more or less urinating in front of each other, defecating in front of each other, the smell, horrible feeling, it just, kids crying and little ones and I was in the middle of the train with a woman, I don't know maybe in the forties and she didn't have a nose, just horrible looking. I asked my father what it was, he said she had TB of the nose. A horrible sight. So we are at the place, at an unknown place and the train is stopped there and there's no more movement and we don't know where we are and then the sun is coming up and daylight and the train gates are being opened.

Q: Did you have any conversations with your parents durig this ?

A: About what? Nothing, I mean there was nothing to talk about. It was just, everybody was just like, either a quandary or whatever, hard to explain it, it was just, nobody knew where we were going, nobody knew what's going to happen to us.

Q: Were there people that were hysterical or crying?

A: No, well people were crying from time to time. It was a horrible situation, the total unknown, the total uncertainty. It's going to a place from where nobody came back, so we never knew about this place. We knew about the other places because there were people there who did not belong there, who had no business being there or had no business seeing those things and who had a big mouth and who saw things which they just couldn't keep to themselves, because things like that are just hair-raising things and they had to tell somebody, but from where we were going there was nobody ever came back to tell anything. So we did not know where we were and finally when they open the door and people come, people who were opening the doors were in prison uniforms, the striped uniforms which was immediately a bad, call it an omen or a bad sign or a bad foreboding or whatever and he says, everybody

get out and unlike in Munkacz where they had a plank for the people to be driven up into the boxcars, here was like in a civilian station, the platform was on the level of the floor of the boxcar, so that could just step out of it, you didn't have to jump down, you didn't have to climb down, just get out of it and he says, leave everything behind and get out and this guy in the prison uniform comes into the train and starts talking, does anybody have any money, anybody have any jewelry? Money, jewelry, they took it away from us long ago. Says, you have any medicine? Give him the morphine, he grabs it, shoves it under his jacket, it's gone, instantly. So I said to myself, at least we did some good and then he starts, he says, you, points at me, says how old are you? So I said 15. Mm-mm, you're 19. He looks at my brother, how old is he? He's not quite 13, he's 12. Oh-oh, he's 18. Said 18, we can't say 18. And then I say(s), why? " Freg nish kein Shayles", which means in Yiddish, don't ask any (difficult) questions. And then he says, we start talking to him and all this goes on in seconds, in seconds. Where are you from he said, we ask him. He's from Poland. A Polish Jew I said to myself. All we heard is that they killed them all and here is one alive, so I felt like saying it to him, but I had enough sense not to say such a stupid thing, say we heard that all the Polish Jews were killed, I didn't say it but anyway he already got us wise to this, that something is going to happen to the younger ones, that it's, we have to lie about our age and where are we? He says, Auschwitz. Auschwitz, where is Auschwitz, nobody knew Auschwitz. We says, what is this? It's a concentration camp. That we knew, that we knew from way, way back, I mean from when the Germans had their first concentration camp 1934 we knew about them already. It was a dreaded word, it was a word not spoken anywhere in Europe, not even in Germany. In Germany the civilians dreaded that word, the Germans themselves, as I found out after the war, they called in "Katset", which was the letters KZ, as the Germans pronounced it and it was just, and what here? He says, you'll find out.

Q: Your father was having this conversation ?

A: Mm-hm, yeah and he says, you'll find out. And so we got out and everybody out and he says leave everything behind, leave everything behind. Says those are our things. Leave everything behind, get out, get out, get out. And from every one of these boxcars there may have been, as I said I couldn't count them, there may have been 12 maybe, 15 maybe. 1000 people in the train, everybody out. And then within seconds somebody passes the word, women on this side, men on that side. So instantly we were separated from our mother and everybody was separated, his wife, his mother and sisters and all that and busy here, busy there and next thing I know, I

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don't see here any more. And eventually we get up, the group of men and there's an SS officer in front and starts looking over everybody and says how old are you and so we said 18 and I didn't feel like going as far as 19, I just didn't have the nerve and how old is he and so we said 17 and then again sorting, old people here, all people with children there and old men here and old men there and next thing you know we are separate and then the other

thing was that as soon as I stepped out I looked around, I saw that place is ominous, whereas in Munkacz, the brick factory they had a three foot high wooden plank fence and wooden towers, here they had buildings as towers, permanents, there was no temporariness about this place and the fence posts were solid concrete and all identical and you could look down along them and they ran like into infinity and into infinity there. And from this platform I could see buildings and they run all like lines and lines and lines and lines and there were, all of them were black and huge and as far as the eye could see, there was no end to them and then I could see there's more of these guard buildings, I would say guard towers but they were regular buildings made from like cinder blocks with windows and solid. And then we were being marched and standing on the road. To the left of the road is this barbed wire fence with the concrete poles and signs that it's electrified and on every pole there were insulators, electric insulators, which I knew what they were, I wasn't that simple and I knew that wire passing through an insulator had high voltage in it and there were signs in addition if you didn't know it, there were signs saying that high voltage and Lebensgefahr, dangerous to life. And across the barbed wire was a grassy, wooded knoll and there were the older people and there were the, some Rabbi's and they had on their praying shawls and they were praying and they had an idea what's going to happen to them.

Q: Were they people that had been on the train, were you with your father at this point and your brother?

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A: Yes. And as we are standing there along this, on this road, what was left of us after the sorting and the selection, as I said, there may have been, can't possibly tell the right figure, I mean it may have been 60, it may have been 80, it may have been 100 that was left all the work, all the men capable of work and many of us were kids like my age and my brother's and suddenly, out of nowhere, SS appeared in helmets and with submachine guns on both side of our column and one of them goes towards my brother, how old are you? So my father panics and I panic, so I told him 17 or whatever we said, maybe we said 14, 15, anything, just more than what he was, he wasn't even 13. And he says, you're sure? And he told me, oh yeah, my father said, he spoke French, the SS officer let him pass through. So the SS reluctantly gave up on it, then my father says, would you mind switching with him, to another person in our line, there were like five of us in line, says, no way, I don't want to be at the edge.

Q: I don't understand this_?

A: It was another, what it was, another Jew from the same train was, my father tried to get the kid, my kid brother to get inside the column so he wouldn't be sticking out at the edge, so he wouldn't be so noticeable, but everybody was looking out for his own life and his own skin. And then they marched us in, we were standing there in the field, within the camp and take off everything and we're just standing there and this was just separated from the ____ by a fence, barbed wire fence, over which they threw blankets to block out the view.

Q: But _____?

A: Mm-hm, we didn't know it was a crematorium_ but somehow, at some point, somebody said to us what's happened. The ones at the arrival place were risking their life for every word they told us and for me this was not completely new. On one of those broadcasts from London, they were talking about civilian laborers who went to work in Germany from Belgium and from other countries and the Germans used them until they were

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completely used up, totally worn out from the hard work and they told them that they are going to send them to a place for recreation and they took them to a place which was, looked like a shower and once they were in the shower, they dropped the gas bomb in and they killed them all and then they burnt them. So, in other words, this was not completely new. On one of those broadcasts from London, they were talking about civilian laborers who went to work in Germany from Belgium and from other countries and the Germans used them until they were completely used up, totally worn out from the hard work and they told them that they are going to send them to a place for recreation and they took them to a place which was, looked like a shower and once they were in the shower, they dropped the gas bomb in and they killed them all and then they burnt them. So, in other words, I heard this from London, but the scenario was different, the place was different and as I found out, as we knew, London was lying on many occasions and they were trying to discourage Hungarian Christians from going to work as volunteers in Germany, for labor. And so, once somebody mentioned gas chamber, I knew the whole story, I mean I knew where, what it's about and then we were standing in this courtyard and just standing there naked and standing and standing and waiting and then come in two prisoners with numbers tattoos on their forearms.

Q: Some prisoners came in?

A: Mm-hm. And they set up a portable table and they have cards and they start taking our names and filling out the name, date of birth and by then we already were programmed that, I was born in '28, not '29 and Robbie was born in '30 and not '31. I just didn't have the nerve to lie more than one year. And so we start asking them questions, we were bombarding them, they were the first humans inside, I said, so what happened to the whole people, what happened to the family?

Q: _____?

A: Yeah. See those flames there? Flames going up there now? That's where they are, they're going up. And people from let's say my outfit or my trainload, they just wouldn't, couldn't believe it. So, and I says to them, what about these numbers, everybody gets numbers, when are we going to get numbers? I don't know. And these were the clerks. And most of their answers were like either I don't know or an equivalent I don't care. Then, where are you

from? They said they were from Slovakia. How long you been here? I don't know, a year or two years, whatever they say, but we got very little intelligence from them and what we did get, they wouldn't believe, they didn't want to believe. So, eventually they let us keep our shoes and they let us keep belts, belts or suspenders and they eventually sent us to a shower, which was a real shower and gave us prison clothes, rags for shorts and rags for shirts and marched us into one of those storage buildings, couldn't call them barracks, they didn't have any windows, no nothing, they were like storage and in it there were no bunks, but storage bins. So there were three stories, into each bin, 10 people, 10 prisoners. Oh and they cut us, our hair, the grownups they were shaved the chest, they shaved the back, they shaved the pubic areas or clipped them. So there we were and put up or go to sleep there and every bunk got thrown or bin got thrown a blanket. The next morning the head counts and formation and all day and standing there all day, and first contact with other prisoners, come in a bunch of young, well dressed, Polish prisoners, with the armband, black armband with the white letters or white armband with black letters saying Kapo and weird people and to me at 15, the whole thing looked absurd, I mean here was a man who, in a concentration camp, who I got frisked of everything, I could keep my suspenders and my shoes and here he had quite a large, a chronometer, which I only saw in a jewelers shop window in Munkacz. I've never seen a watch like that on a person in civilian ever in all my days. And here he was sporting one of those things. And his prison uniform, I could tell, I mean to me I could tell, was custom made. A lousy, God damn striped uniform, but tailored to his shape, to his body. And since he couldn't have a white shirt, nobody could have a white shirt in the camp, he had a white bib under the striped jacket so it looked like he had a white shirt on. I mean, the mentality of these people and there were like three or four of these and they were Polish, we asked them what they were and they were Poles and they were Christians and they were coming with shoes and a loaf of bread because they were looking at our shoes, if they were any good, says, I trade you these and a loaf of bread. In other words they were looting us while we were still alive and our, maybe 10 years ago I got hold of a book called Fighting Auschwitz, which was written by, I think Arlinski(ph), a Polish man, maybe he was there himself and he was just going on and on and on about resistance in Auschwitz and underground and resistance and how they were connected and how everything was and how they were involved in everything. So when I saw this I says to myself, oh we were not visited by Kapo, we were contacted by the resistance, by the camp resistance, these were not Polish robbers, they were Polish resistance people. So I just, there was a scene which I won't forget ever and which I'll hold against the good old Polacks forever and they managed to get some shoes, so again, being a wise guy I asked the guy, young fellow, why did you give him your shoes, were you that hungry, were you that much in need of that loaf of bread? Is that going to make a difference to you? Says, well they told us that they was going to take it away anyway, they're going to take away our shoes anyway. So most of us told him then, gave him the answer, he says, will they take it away? Until they take it away, I'll have it. I'm not trading with you. And they were asking us for news from the outside world and we told them they took away our radios a month and a half ago and we didn't know anything what's going on and until then what we knew, the news was not that great. The Soviets, the Red Army is just barely touching Romania, they're nowhere anywhere near. And that was it. So and we were in formation there all day, just standing there and standing there and standing

there. There were space between the, these buildings or sheds or storage buildings and in the morning they counted us, an SS counted us and in the evening they counted us. Now it was very important how many there are. By the way, it didn't matter to anybody if there were 88 of us in that boxcar when we arrived and I just couldn't understand them because it was so important that 88 people should be in it, that nobody should escape and here it didn't matter any more, no not at all. It was just one absurd thing after another, it was like a world completely topsy-turvy, it was just. And when we were standing there naked, waiting to be processed or whatever, the women run by naked, screaming. The same, our women who got separated from us and who didn't have children and who were selected for labor, but my mother told me many a year later, she says, I saw you, but I was naked and you were naked so I wouldn't say anything, ____?_ or anything. And then eventually an SS who was processing them and who was chasing them to the shower, he pulled down the curtains for them so they wouldn't have to be there, exposed, naked. Which again, so unlike an SS, that he had some consideration.

Q: So for the record how long were you in Auschwitz_?

03:56

A: Well, let me get to this, we were standing in the formation all day, or in ____, we were just standing in the courtyard and talking and circling, but for the head count we had to stay in formation and then one day, maybe by Saturday, we had got there on Thursday the 18th and suddenly they said, everybody under 18 on this side, everybody over 18 on that side. So, no mixing, don't you try to cross lines, don't you try to cross over. So, got separated from my father. Next morning, they take the ones over 18, we didn't know where, what. In the evening they bring them back. So they took them away for some work for somewhere. There was no way we could get to them, ask them where they were, what they did or anything, because by then already, even in the barracks it was divided, you on this side, you one that side and don't you dare cross over. And then on Sunday the 21st, they count off again, the over 18's and they march them off and I don't know, some hours later, another batch moved in in their place and that was the last time I saw my father, just like that. And while we were there, transports keep coming every single day. Let's say, people from our unit, our barracks or building had to go to the kitchen to pick up food for us and barrels and that was always a way of communicating. If they ran into somebody from another barracks, where are you from? We are from Ungvar [now called Uzgorod], so we knew already that Ungvar is being shipped out to Auschwitz.

Q: _____ camp?

A: And that's my father says, my poor mother, that she lived in Ungvar and that she might be in there, into the Krema, I mean the gas chamber and the _____.

Q: _____ break.

A: Okay, this time, I'll get the _____.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

Q: Remind us again, how long you were at Auschwitz.

A: We arrived there on Thursday, the 18th and we stayed there until Friday, which was the 26th, I believe and during that time we were like, my brother and me among total strangers or since, I didn't mention before that by being rushed to this Shyowitz(ph) brick factory, I got into a train which was like 99 percent people from the villages were brought in, so I did not know anybody there and they didn't know me. There were very few people actually from Munkacz itself on that transport. So, as my father's group got moved out, others moved in, then somebody else got again moved out, so it was rotation and mixing and all that and then on Friday they emptied our entire building or barracks and they marched us to the same railroad platform or station where we were unloaded except now we were on the other side of it, there were three tracks there and we came in on the, facing outward on this side and now we were lining up on this side and in front of us was a train of boxcars and again we were just standing in front of them and this time they were counting 50 of us in prison uniforms into each boxcar and they gave us bread and water for the trip and the guards this time were soldiers like I've never seen before either in life or in pictures. They were what the Germans call Marine Soldaten, in other words like marine soldiers, but they were older and we were very glad that they were not SS because we just feared the SS very much, we knew them from reputation, what they were. And we saw them, what they did in the brick factory too, it was real bad. So anyway, you think that getting into these boxcars only 50 of us would be a little more spacious, whereas compared to 88, but it wasn't, because the guards decided to divide, well they didn't decide it, but it worked out that that was the arrangement, the guards were in the middle, they had one-third of the car to the two guards and one third to 25 prisoners and the other third to 25 prisoners, so you can figure out the, and we were sitting again, all pulled up on our haunches and as it was getting dark at night, we started finally inching out our legs to see if the guards will react or if they're going to let us stretch out a little bit and they did let us stretch out and as soon as it was daylight, started yelling and, get back, get back and so we had to pull back and again crowd into each other's stomachs and against each other and just sit there and sit and sit and on late Saturday night, somewhere on Saturday, we arrived again

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someplace and train stopped and next morning they opened the gates and now SS men, wild looking SS get into the boxcars, the Marine Soldaten are going away and these are young, vicious looking ones, with submachine guns on the shoulder, not rifles like the Marine Soldaten had, these are armed for close shooting and making a massacre of anything if there's any trouble and I knew what those kind of weapons were, that's all, maybe somebody else didn't, but I knew what they could do. And eventually they unload us, everybody out of the box cars and then I see on the stationhouse there's Mauthausen. Again I use some mnemonic device to memorize that name. It was seed distributor in Hungary and it was called Mautner and everybody knew the Mautner seeds and they were in existence for

generations, so Maut and hausen like in Muenchhausen or something, so could remember that name. And then they started marching us and it's a long march on pebbly roads and secondary roads and first through a village and then through a countryside and roads and turned out that, I found this out already in Auschwitz, that my brother had a hole in the sole of his shoe and while we were waiting to be loaded onto the train in Auschwitz, I saw piles of empty cartons or cases from lamps, light bulbs, which, they were always changing the light bulbs in the electric fence, the lighting so nothing would ever burn out or get disconnected or something, but and there were piles of these so I put some of those in my pocket for future use and to put my margarine into it and so I stuffed several of those into my brother's shoe so there would be something between the pebbles of the road and the sharp stones and his feet, but it didn't help much and he was just in pain and crying and he was hot, it was warm, very bright sun and we were thirsty and it was a long march and hard and SS on both sides and yelling. So finally we got to the camp Mauthausen, which was a very, I don't know, forbidding looking place, the whole, the walls again, they're not temporary, they were made, built from granite stone and they were like maybe two and a half meters high or three meters high and on the top of the stone fence there were strips of barb wire again, like maybe five strips and again with the insulators to let you know that they were electrified and it took the better part of a day to get processed there and again somebody came, a German prisoner and picked out the younger ones and you go, you stay over here and among those was my brother and I tried to yank him back to the group where I was and the guy spotted it and he pulled him out again. And then I tried to go, I tried to sneak into that group and he spotted me and pulled me back and I tried one more time and he said, you try it one more time and you'll get it. So that was the last time I saw my brother. And the other thing I was curious about, they were doing showers, we were taking into the shower, which was underground at Mauthausen, into a building, a stone building. I was very curious to see if anybody's coming out of those showers or if those are the Auschwitz type showers. And I didn't want to go in, I was waiting, again it was odd that they should have taken us that far by train just to kill us now, but at this point there were so many inconsistencies and so many irrational, one thing after another, that I wasn't sure any more about anything and when I saw them coming out I went in and then the shower could hold, I guess maybe 25-30 people, it was not a big room like some places, like Auschwitz had for example, or some others. And they were yelling and somehow I managed to stay through two or three showerings, you know, was new groups came in and others went out and I was mixed in with the rest and I enjoyed the hot water and when I came out, our shoes were gone. They were good shoes, so a fellow, brother Jew stole them and left in their place their worn out, horrible pair. Made a good deal. And then some of us were taken together and marched into a separate barracks, which was separated from the camp, again by this very high stone wall and the barbed wire on top of it and we had one room in that barracks and we were sleeping on maybe straw sacks on the floor and they were lining us up like sardines, head to foot,

04:11:30

head to foot and squeezing, there were 500 of us. And we were in that barracks a whole week, or let's say from Sunday until Friday afternoon. On Friday afternoon, they marched us

to the railroad station and loaded us, not into boxcars, but into a regular civilian train, which again, I never met anybody who was taken anywhere in Germany, I mean a prisoner, on civilian train. And this was one of those where every compartment had a door opening to the outside, where the trains which we are used to in Czechoslovakia, and in Hungary, had a corridor from which the compartments opened in to and one SS gets into each train, each car and he says, nobody move because I'm going to shoot without warning. And we're sitting like five across the wooden benches, like normal civilians, unbelievable, no crowding, nobody sitting on top of anybody else and you can sit and he said sit at attention and don't try to move, don't talk and the train went through one town and stayed there in the railroad station for a long time and then got going again and we arrived at a place and there on the station it said Ebensee(ph), again I never heard of Ebensee(ph) today before, never heard of Mauthausen before. And they unload us, again, new SS get on, pick us up, take over and march us a good distance into, up hill into another place, a camp. We get into this camp and it's like virtually hidden in a forest. The barracks are surrounded by trees and there are cut down trees tossed on the tops of the barracks, on the roofs, to conceal them further. And just enough space 4:14 cut down for the barrack and trees on either side, trees all around and again processing and sorting and you go here and the two men with whom I became friendly or one man with whom I became friendly a Mauthausen, we stayed together somehow. And he was an attorney in Munkacz and was a very nice person. And again that was fortunate for me that I met him and that he was that nice. And after sorting and being checked by an SS doctor, again undressed naked and a floodlight on you to see what shape you are in and he picked out I don't know how many of us and we got assigned to one barracks. We find out when we are there that we are working in tunnels on a rotating shift and eight hour shift and our shift happened to start on Sunday night at 11. So it would be from 11 until 7 in the morning working in the tunnel. And tunnel work was, we had no idea what it's for or what weird looking thing, a mountain and into it are cut tunnels, one after another, like maybe seven or eight tunnels and they told us, you are working in tunnel seven, remember that and the outfit for which you are working is Holtzmann-Polanski(ph) and those same firms are still existing in Austria.

Q: _____, these were tall tunnels?

A: Tall tunnels.

Q: Large enough to . . .

A: Hold a train, yeah. And we go in there and there are scaffoldings inside the tunnel and on the scaffoldings are drills, pneumatic drills with the hammers and power drills, I mean with the brrrrr and compressed air is blowing through the pipes, there is pipes like this in the tunnel, along the wall, pumping in air, pumping power for the drills and then the drill holes for the dynamite, for blasting and the German civilian sends everybody out from the tunnel and sets up the dynamite and blasts it and then after everything is clear, then he checks the blast and we go back in and pick out the, load all the broken rock onto narrow gauge cars, lorries and push them out and pick up the rails and extend them further into the tunnel, deeper and

deeper and there's one section of

04:17

the rail which is a switching point where there are two tracks and you can switch from one track to another and that weighed a ton, it was steel and it was grabbing all around it and lifting it up and as always in the camps, nobody was, somebody was always getting out from carrying his load, so the next one carried twice as much. That was the hardest part in it and the tunnel was cold and damp and the water was coming in between the rocks at some places and it was night and noise and everything. I worked there for a week and a new transport of Jews came to Ebensee(ph) and they got picked through and I got out of that barracks and I got to a day time job and others got assigned to the night time shift. So another 500 transported, 500. And so I did all kinds of work in Ebensee(ph) and when we come back in the evening from the work, there's a command yelling out, all Jews out, in other words in the evening they used to have head counts and in the morning the head counts and the formations standing and standing until everybody got counted and after everybody was counted then we could go to the barracks and get supper, or a loaf of bread, I mean a section of bread and some margarine or something, whatever came with it, you know, sometimes. And then this time, all Jews out, stay on the place and you're not going back to the barracks and suddenly we are surrounded by what I call the beaters, these were the way some people earn their living by being barbers in the camp or being block chiefs, these are, earn their living by beating other prisoners and turned out that there was a huge pile or several huge piles of pre-fabricated barracks sections and we were supposed to take those sections and carry them on our shoulders to the back of the camp where a new barracks would be built. And these sections weighed a ton and they were beating us with heavy hoses and sticks until we picked it up, like they used to beat horses in Munkacz until they started pulling their load, they beat them. And again the same thing, the little guy up front made like he's carrying, but he was walking under it, fellow Jew. And then when we got near his barracks, he just bolted and dashed away and the rest of us got for sure stuck with a whole section of that thing. And then some of these sections had holes in them for windows, so again it was impossible to carry the even load, one section was heavy as a ton and the other ones was just a frame of the window and as it turned out, the building was supposed, turned out to be later on, the Jewish hospital barracks. So just again coincidence and irony or whatever you want to call it.

Q: In the camp, was it majority Jews?

04:20:30

A: No, that was another thing, let me get to that, we were the first Jews in Mauthausen who were kept for labor, who were not killed within three days. Up to that point, all Jews who reached Mauthausen were murdered within three days. If they were not dead by the third day, the SS started to make jokes at them, he says, you like it here, how come you're still alive, this place agrees with you? This I only find out later, but anyway, the camp was full of all kinds of nationalities, there were at that time when we arrived there, maybe 5500, there

were Russian POW's, Soviet Red Army POW's, there were Polish civilians, Russian civilians, there were Frenchmen. There was a handful of Spaniards from the civil war, who the Germans captured somehow, one way or another from France, France turned them over to the Germans and there were Italians and there were a handful of Czechs and maybe one or two Greeks and that was it, so we were the first Jews in Mauthausen [not correct] and the first Jews in Ebensee(ph) and getting back to these building sections, when we finally reached the bottom one, under it was snow, in the middle of June. In other words, these shipments arrived in the winter, Ebensee(ph) was being, they started building it in November '43, we got there on the second of June and these piles of sections, of pre-fabricated sections were there since November or December and the winters were such that there was still snow on the mountain across from Ebensee(ph) when we got there and it was not until July or August when it finally melted, so it was a cool place. And one thing I definitely want to mention is the stealing in the camp, stealing of the food by the ones who distributed it and the stealing of the food by fellow prisoners. And I would say the Jews were probably, if not the worst, very close to it as far as stealing. My bread got stolen many times until (finally ?) and I cried and some of the other fellows told me, he said look, it's not such a big piece of bread that you couldn't eat it in one sitting, so why don't you eat it in the evening as soon as you get it and that way it will be in your stomach and not in somebody else's. So I finally learned my lesson, from then on I did it that way, but there again was one so called good advice from my father, always save some for the next day, which in this case, like so many other of his advices turned out to be not quite suitable for the place and the time. It just was not that type of a world and as far as stealing by the chiefs, it was like this, the barracks, in the kitchen they knew for each barracks, how many prisoners were in each barracks and they filled the, I don't know what you want to call it, the containers that, some of them could hold 25 liters, some of them could hold 50 liters and they filled them accordingly so everybody would get one liter of soup and the soup was mostly vegetables, but were vegetables, it's not like green beans and stuff like that, there was turnips beets and related things. Occasionally you were lucky if you find a small, found a small piece of potato and sometimes, very rarely, you found some piece of meat in there, but very rarely. And anyway, there was, in addition to the number of liters, they always gave some extra for the chiefs in the barracks, so they would have more food than the peons or ordinary prisoners, but it was not enough for them, the extra what was being shipped to them, they used to, first of all, as soon as the containers arrived, the block chief went in with the ladle and got from the bottom of it, where the good stuff settled and gave one for myself, one for you, one for the clerk and one for the Kapo and one for this and take them inside. And then he says, oh here's one more for this one and one more for that one and then he started ladling out and then he stirred it up a little bit, what was left. So what we were getting was already thinner, because he picked out the best from the bottom and then again, he watched your face and if he liked you, he dipped into the bottom and he gave you that way, if he didn't like you, he just put in from top and you got broth or you got very few floating vegetables or something like that and it was just, every bite meant a lot and you were being robbed by this one,

you were being robbed by that one and it was just a very, very bad world and a very bad situation. And one of the things with the shoe, when I got the bad shoe, when we got to Ebensee(ph), we got assigned to a barracks right away, happened to be a friendly Polish guy there, a young one, who did not have a prison uniform tailored to his body and was just a regular prison jacket, but he had a black cap, which was another sign of rank, which they all loved to wear. I don't know how they managed to get them, or where they got them, but anybody with any rank has to have a black cap, a black hat with a visor. So he said, you need shoe, I'll get you a shoe. So he gave me a wooden shoe, I mean a shoe with a wooden sole and kind of strong, I don't know what you want to call it, plastic material or something on the top and I don't know at which point I got them, either in Auschwitz or at Ebensee(ph) or Mauthausen where I got a pair of foot rags to wear inside the shoes and we all had those in place of socks, nobody had socks, we had rags, you wrapped your feet in rags. And these shoes which he gave me were lined with felt and I thought the felt would be good enough, I wouldn't have to need the rags and I wore them that way and they started rubbing against my skin and they abraded the skin and it wouldn't heal and it just kept opened and opened and wound and finally found out that there was a hospital or infirmary and I went there and I got it bandaged, the bandage was crepe paper and the cleaning was with peroxide, they just sloshed it with peroxide and I don't know if they put any ointment on it at all but they wrapped it up in the white crepe and that was it, off you go. And then I found out that if the wound is bad enough that you might get a day off from work, barracks rest, they let you stay inside and I learned all tricks as much as I could, I mean I kept my eyes opened and my ears opened because otherwise my father said I was not survival material and I was trying to, I wasn't trying to prove him wrong, I was just trying to get by. And find out as many tricks as I could use to get by. So one day I did get a barracks rest and one day while I was in the hospital, I see somebody with diarrhea and they shove him a pan and tell him prove it, so he goes in to the pan and fine, you go into the infirmary, stay here. So again, it was chance, in some cases, people who had diarrhea were killed, were beaten to death, in some cases they got admitted to the hospital, so it was all kinds of inconsistencies. Who are you running to, when, what time of the day? Going on a sick leave, it was a murder, I mean there was a guard there who was beating the sick ones and there was, you had maybe five minutes to get in there or something like that and then before you had to get back into formation. And anyway, I did get diarrhea and I did get into the hospital and surprisingly they had good food for the ones with the diarrhea, I couldn't believe it. And I managed to stay in there, like one way or another I managed to stay in there like eight or nine days, which was a fantastic break. I didn't

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have to work, the wound healed by itself from not being abraded all day and from getting a slightly different food and from being at rest. And then I got back to the same barracks where I was before and we were all working in all kinds of different units and one unit and this and that and the next day in a different unit and some, what we considered best was working inside the camp because then we didn't have to march a long march out to the worksite and a long march back to the worksite and we could go to the barracks and get our food, and the

the soup at noon in the barracks, which again was folly, because the ones who worked out there were distributed by different people who were not as greedy as the block chief and was more equitably distributed. So I'm working out in the big worksite where the tunnels were, but outside the tunnels and we were shoveling gravel from where the gravel crusher is tossing it and from there it's being loaded, spread out all over the place, so the whole worksite will be covered with it and dust, stone dust all over and this was in maybe August. I have it written down, but I didn't memorize the date and the white dust is falling all over and the boys are in a good mood, because the job is easy and there were no close supervision. The Kapo was not nearby, the SS wasn't nearby and they are all talking and by that time I had a very bad reputation that I'll eat anything, that I'll eat breadcrumbs from the floor, that I'll eat potato peelings which others throw away and only that I'm just a pig and I went to the latrine and when I come back, we all had our soup bowls with us, we always carried the soup bowl and the spoon which was assigned to us, which we kept and they tell me that a civilian was there and gave them a milk soup and would I like it? I said, why didn't you eat it, they said, well we ate already and we left some for you, so I was kind of leery about it, but I start eating, being like I said a pig and greedy and all out for any bite of food and it doesn't taste right to me. And I had put away maybe four or five tablespoons of it and it just doesn't taste right and finally one of them opened his mouth, pitch it, throw it out. It turned out they got the white dust from the rocks and they poured water into it and they told me it's a milk soup for ____, well it's Germany, so it doesn't taste like the home milk soup we had at home, we used to make it from sour cream. Sure enough I got the diarrhea again. They said, you're not going to be a sissy and go in the hospital again, are you? I said, yes I am and I went into the hospital and I told them I got the diarrhea, said prove it, I had no trouble proving it and in you go. And I'm back again and says, you back again? I said, yeah I'm back again, I got sick. So, and this time the food was not quite as good as before but it was still good. Still better than outside, I still had rest, I was still lying in the bed and the only time I had to sit up was for the head count and again, like eight or nine days, I say it was like an extension on my life. And when I came back they all were deriding me, I wouldn't call teasing, it was much worse than teasing and heckling me and stuff like that, that you are a sissy and this and that and solidarity is what I call it, right?

04:35:30

Q: What ever happened to the lawyer from the town?

A: He was in, he stayed in that barracks with the night tunnel, with the rotating shifts and I was able to see him on, sometimes when he was off work and on weekends, I mean weekends. We worked 13 days out of 14 and we had one rest Sunday, every two weeks. So sometimes I just didn't get to his barracks, I couldn't go it because we were not permitted to go into foreign barracks which were not Jewish. I could send in word by somebody, please ask Kish(ph) Montsy(ph) or Doctor Kish(ph) to come out, I would like to see him and then we could, we had contact that way.

Q: And he was nice to you?

A: One of those times when my bread got stolen, he gave me some of his, which was a rare thing in camp, I mean there were times, not many times I mean, I used to think to myself, I wish I had a father like him, I wish I had a father like him, that's how he was to me, he was kind and he was, he always had the news. Somehow where he worked, there were civilians and somehow those civilians were not unfriendly and somehow they all read the Nazi paper, which was Voelkischer Beobachter, but even the Voekischer Beobachter, like I told you, you could read between the lines, I mean there are, we knew within a day from when the allies landed in Normandy. I knew where the front was when I'm working the SS barracks and the windows were opened and one of the SS had a map on his wall, which he took from the newspaper on which was the front line. So I knew that the promised always we shall push them back into the ocean, they did not push them back in the ocean because the red line was in northern France and I knew that maps. So one way or another, Montsy(ph)Basci, I called him Uncle Montsy(ph) was always a source of news and we knew when, how far they were from Paris, how far this or that, it was very slow going, for us it was a hundred times too slow, but it was hope, somehow and the news meant an awful lot. And in the hospital I met a Czech medic who was also very nice and I would say that guy too, had an influence on me for the rest of my days, I mean that guy could laugh and joke in the camp in the middle of death, like and again that meant something which I didn't grow up with that, there was no joking in my home, in my father's home, there was nothing to be happy about or stuff like and this guy like, I would say, had that influence on me, but I can laugh at things and I can make jokes out of things and comes in a kid and he had dog bites, somebody sent a dog on him and come to the hospital and just happens at that time, I come into the hospital with a swollen eye, because we took shelter in a dugout for an SS guard, from the rain, I mean shelter from the rain in an SS guard's dugout and the chief, the Lager Fuehrer came by in his rain poncho, what are you doing down there and the whole work unit was down there. Get out of there this second and he had always with him a whip and he was hitting as we were coming out and I happened to catch it across the eye, so happened to be in the hospital at there, in the evening after work and they said, oh you must have done something bad that you got that whip across your eye and that wasn't too funny, but still, I mean he was trying to do whatever to cheer you up somehow and take your mind off the things and so every one of those little things meant, it was out of proportion to what it was in value. I mean it's value was out of proportion to the one single word which was uttered it meant, just morale, for the morale and for, in a sense you could feel, you could lean on that word or something, it's hard to put it into words, hard to really describe it, but I think I'm coming close,.....

Q: He would sustain you ?

A: You needed every drop, every, every, like in civilian life here you say a petting or love stroke or whatever you want to call it and over there it mean tremendous much. And I mentioned the dog, dog bites. The Germans had dogs for guard duty and sometimes if somebody wasn't moving fast enough on the work site or if the German was in the right mood, he just gave the command to the dog and the dog flew like a missile and with one blow, the dog hit a prisoner, the prisoner was already on the ground. Once, I saw this and

then the dog went at him and just from side to side like a rag, was pulling him, yanking him, biting him, chewing, tearing him, it was like a kid would pick a rag and just play with it and yank it and toss it and, but the malice and everything, there were Dobermans and Wolfhounds, I mean German Shepherds and . . .

Q: Did the dogs kill people?

A: They could. I haven't seen it happen, but it could be done.

Q: I have read that the treatment at Ebensee was especially sadistic.

A: This was him, the one who hit me with the whip.

Q: He killed some prisoners one night . . .

A: No, that was another one, the one before him, the previous one.

Q: But you heard about that?

A: No, not until I was, years after the war I heard about it. They got drunk and he and another SS or two other SS men and a work detail was returning from work and they just pulled out their pistols and started shooting into them and they were all written up as having died in the hospital. But this one was a, concentration camp work was in his blood, I mean he was a concentration camp guard from the year maybe and, this too I only found out when I read his write up or biography, which I obtained from, of all places, from Berlin, from that archives which they have there and that was maybe in '37 already was a concentration camp guard. And then he was at one place and another place and as he moved, each time he got higher and he knew the ways how to handle the stuff and he was tough on the guards and 10 times as tough on the prisoners. So by the time he got to Ebensee(ph) he was the Lager commandant or Lager Fuehrer as they called him and he was maybe a captain, Haupt Sturm Fuehrer, I think. And as far as brutality, the brutality was the beaters, the prisoners themselves, who were there to do the beating and again there was one incident which, once I was in a fairly decent work detail, I mean, everything was chance and luck and if you tried to get into that again, sometimes you get pulled out of it and what --?, so this work detail was working near the camp, near the Krema [crematorium] on the other side of the wire fence and Ebensee had it's own Krema after a while and we were digging huge pits

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for storing potatoes and beets for the winter and the SS who was in charge was probably a farmer in civilian and he was not so young, he may have been, I don't know, in the 40's and he was not particularly mean. And the couple who was in charge of the work detail was a German, a redhead, freckled, with a horribly low number. You knew that he was there an extremely long time, like I had a number 68,308 and the next 500 Jews came into Ebensee,

they were already 70 thousanders. Two weeks later there was another transport, they were already 72,000. In October came the Poles from Warsaw, who were captured during the Polish uprising, or crushed out, when it was crushed, they already had number 93,000 or 98,000. So when somebody has a number with four digits, he was there a long time. Then they started bringing the potatoes for those pits and we were pouring them in and as we put, we store one here or one there and there all potatoes, they bring them in to the barracks in the evening after work and sort of snuggle to the stove, everybody was crowding around the stove and put them on the top and bake them or burn them or whatever, so they wouldn't be raw. And one evening, this must have been in late November, it was dark already and we are coming back from work and at the gates we are counted and the SS is relieved and the gate is being opened and the SS around are watching that everybody goes in and ahead of us is standing another work detail and they are being frisked one by one by one, by a row of maybe four or five SS men. They are just going through everybody for anything, I mean bringing in an empty paper bag was sabotage and punishable be a good beating, plenty beating and when we saw what's coming, we started reaching in for our potatoes, into the pockets and hiding them and where will we put them, but we were in the flood lens and the SS who were searching the ones in front of us said, oh, they are tossing away the potatoes already, don't even bother searching them, in they go as soon as they cross the gate, 10 for everybody, 10 whips or 10 lashes, including the Kapo. So as soon as we get in, the beaters grab us and they have there these huge barrels, just for that reason. They grab you, toss you onto the barrel with the face down and beat on the rear with sticks and rubber hoses. And I was screaming because he wasn't hitting my rear, he was hitting my coccyx and when we all got our beatings, the couple was still standing by and he says, if you want to come by to my barracks after supper, we'll just have a little get together. So, and this other guy who was in my work unit, from my own barracks, a Jewish guy, a tall one, says to me, why were you yelling? Said because he was hitting in my bone instead of my tail. Well did it do you any good to yell, said why yell? So about five of us Jewish kids or 10 from that unit, after supper, we went to his barracks and it was Kapos only in that barracks. And he told them to let us in and that was a completely different class, I mean the walls were painted, I mean, many barracks had whitewashed walls, but this one was homey looking. And they had all kinds of things and we were standing around the fireplace, I mean the stove, it was just the camaraderie on part of this Kapo, what I would call the fellowship of the beaten ones. Again he was unique, he was remarkable. And he had a, it was a pink triangle, which was, the Germans trusted criminals and German criminals and even pink triangles over any other foreigners and if you were German, you were 10 foot higher than a Polish prisoner or a French prisoner and you could be trusted to be assigned as a Kapo or a block chief or anything. And on one of those mornings when we were marching out, we were going by the perimeter fence and on it was a person hanging, dead. Either tossed on it, or jumped on it. We never knew, when somebody was dead, if somebody killed him, or if he committed suicide. There was a man in my transport of 500 in Mauthausen, from Hungary proper. In other words, some of us were from Carpathia, some were from hungary, some were from Transylvania and as things got, they got mixed, sort of and this guy, I don't know what he was, he may have been an attorney and he was very intellectual and he looked down on everybody. I mean a prisoner, but everybody to him was dirt compared to him and then he

was king, King Shit, in plain English. And when we got to Ebensee, within one day we have, one evening we come back from work and there is the head count, Appell as they called it and one is missing and whenever one was missing, there was circus, everybody had to stand, remain standing, all formation and it was, it should have been so easy to find who was missing because every barracks had a book on which the clerk wrote how many hour in the barracks, you know, and the SS counted them already, how many were and checked off that yeah, there were so many, so one of them didn't count properly and he should have known which was. So anyway, a recounting again, this time for sure and checking the numbers and they found which barracks is one shy, so beaters, Kapos, everybody, go into the forest, into the camp area, this was a, the head count was in a square, like a plaza, which was open and the camp was, I mean it was to one side of the camp, so into the camp, find them. And they go through the barracks, first of all go to the barracks where he is supposed to be and he's not there, so go all over the place, maybe he's hiding in the woods, hiding here, hiding there, we'll beat all over with the sticks, look for, so finally they come back laughing. The Jew was hanging on the tree. So he says, next time one of you Jews decides to kill himself, let us know in advance so we won't have to do all this searching and all that. So for long months after that, I always said to myself, that man was a smart man, he was the only one with brains among us that he killed himself on the first week, before he went through so much suffering. But, and that's how it entered in the book, in the register that he was, he committed suicide or something like that, they had funny words for everything, but then I started thinking about it and it occurred to me that this guy

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was arrogant and it's not impossible that he might have incited a block chief or a Kapo or somebody who just strangled him on the spot and hanged him. So you never know, I mean the dead ones don't talk and the ones who killed them wouldn't' talk, so, and with this guy I'll get to, I'll tell you my philosophy and the suffering which got me through it, because when we carried those pre-fab sections, it was horrible, real back-breaking work, I thought, it'll kill me and I couldn't believe that I survived it and I didn't want to die the next day, because I said if I survived that, I don't want to die now and then it was again some very hard work and somehow managed to survive and then just didn't want to kill myself, but it would have been a way out, so it just, one hardship after another hardship, sort of just kept me going. If you survived that, you're not going to kill yourself now, I mean this is very bad, but not quite as bad as that was.

Q: How do you want to wrap up, do you want to tell us about the end?

A: The end was . . .

Q: . . . kind of an interesting story.

A: I had an accident on the work site on February 28. It was one of those days when I felt very depressed and disgusted and I was pushing one of these lorries on the work site and the

locomotive came up behind, pushing another lorry and the fellows were yelling at me to jump, get out from there and I didn't realize they were yelling at me and they were not, apparently make too much effort to yell at me or get me out of there, I got caught between the two lorries and broke my wrist. And immediately I was taken off the work site, taken into the camp, report to SS, count one off from this work detail, they'll be coming in one short because he's coming in now and went to the, my clerk, block clerk, barracks clerk, who was a Pole who hated my guts because I always went to hospital and he hated that. He hated me for trying to get out of bad work details, so anyway, he walks me to the hospital and he says, oh now you have it made, he says, the was will be over pretty soon and you can stay there until the end and this and that. So I thought I had it made and even after war I thought I had it made, but what was the thing was I was in the Jewish barracks, the only place which was segregated inside the camp was the hospital, they had one barracks for Aryan prisoners and one for Jewish and the ones in the Jewish got virtually nothing to eat. And I showed you the ID badge, which I had here when I went into the hospital, by end of April I could pull it up here without, I mean if I didn't adjust it. And I was just losing weight something awful. You could see it that my bones were sticking out, my ribs were sticking out and I saw people around me who looked like, I've never seen humans look that way. I mean their chests look like they are sticking out like this, but it wasn't their chests were sticking out, it was their abdomens were completely sunk in and the pelvic bones were sticking out and the pelvic bones were sticking out in the front, on the side and the back and it was just frightful sight, I mean, I could figure that you could almost time yourself how soon you will be in that stage and they just used to grab them and toss them to the corner where there were the dead bodies and every day there was pile there, in every room. And it was just, the soup was just a broth and so much of it, maybe half liter, which is nothing and the bread was inside the camp they used to get one-third of a bread and eventually they got cut down to one-quarter. In the hospital they used to give us like less than one-eighth and after awhile it wasn't bread any more. Instead of flour, they put into it sawdust, instead of flour there was like a potato and it taste like a _____ and it was nothing.

Q: _____.

A: Okay.

Q: _____ now.

A: I don't know what to say, when finally I saw the first American soldier, when . .

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

A: I was telling about the first American soldier whom we saw, it was on May eighth[1], somewhere early afternoon and he was walking toward the Krema, in front of the hospital and as many of us as we could, we jumped to the window to get a glimpse of him and he was just surrounded be prisoners who I suppose were, I don't know what you want to call them, ranking guys or guys from the resistance, or within the organization within or something like that and like three or four of them are talking to him at the same time, everybody was trying to talk to him, tell him how horrible the place was and everything and he was just going silently and walking towards and you asked me about foreign news, we had access to a Swiss magazine[2] and in that Swiss magazine we could see things and if it was blacked out, we were able to wipe the black off and that was where I first saw American soldiers, what they looked like, I never seen one before, pictures of them or, saw pictures of them there. And this guy looked just like any one of those from the pictures, he had a helmet on and the short field jacket and he was alive and we just stared and nobody said a word, nobody screamed, nobody shouted, nobody cheered or waved, anything, we just were, by that time we were just numb, emotionally worn out and physically just like also very close to the end, also just

05:03

about worn out. And I mean I can see him right in front of my eyes, the guy just walking in. I don't remember if he was an enlisted man or an officer, but I mean, just walked calmly and all, only one, one that managed to get from, there were more of them probably, at the upper part and where they came in, they might have to get one to come to look at the Krema and the dead bodies. And it took two days before the Americans got organized enough to feed us. So slow we thought it's forever. And then, we were begging them for food and of course they didn't, were not carrying food with them when they came into the camp to look at the thing, to see the sights. And it was like almost you might say a horrible anti-climax, a horrible let down, I mean we expected that as soon as the gates opened, we would all be free and we would be getting food and it would be just wonderful and it was nothing of the sort. And one thing I wanted was to get out of the hospital as soon as I could because even after the Americans came in, I just hated those people with whom I was locked up there, it was like a, I was imprisoned with them, I was a captive audience to their stupid, endless bullshit, their endless yakking about empty things, about nothing and I just, on and on and on and on and I wanted to be away from them.

Q: You mean the people who ran the hospital?

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[1] The interviewee later wished to clarified that the first American soldiers arrived in Ebensee on May 6, 1945.

[2] The interviewee later wished to clarified that he had seen these magazines *before* the Holocaust and not in the concentration camps.

A: No.

Q: Or the other people that were . . .

A: The sick ones with whom I was in the same bed. I was, we had four prisoners in one bunk, lying head to foot and there was nothing to do all day, so nothing else, talk about food and talking about stupid things at home and I wanted out of there and Americans finally processed us, the hospital unit on eighth of May, two days after the liberation, that's when they came in, that's when they swarmed into the hospital compound, in came the photographers and in came the hospital units, which later I found out was called a _____ field hospital and they had pictures take, they were taking pictures of themselves with us and any way, they set up showers, portable showers and they showered us, they got us out of the bed and set up fires. I had only, in the hospitals we only had shirts and I happened to have the worst knit shirt which was a haven for lice and it was just swarming with lice and as soon as I saw that fire, I just was the happiest person to toss those living lice into that and listen to how they crackle in the flames. And they sprayed us with DDT and they gave us bits of German uniforms, which they got from some storage depot and we were free to go into the main camp to look for nationality barracks. And there was, by then, the prisoners were broken up according to nationalities, whereas previously everything was mixed. So I looked for the Czechoslovak barracks and I got the bunk there, it was, place happened to be the same barracks where I was when I worked in the night shift and instead of number seven on the board on top of it, now there was painted a Czech flag. And again, the Americans fed us with food which they captured from some depots. Every single day, a yellow pea soup and good bread, but I couldn't eat that bread any more, not in that stage, I mean I was, I hadn't had bread or decent food for, since I would say February 28th and this was May eighth and I was starving and I couldn't eat the food which they were giving us. It was a very bad scenario, as you would call it. And day by day I got closer to dying. And then, the Americans kept those who wanted to stay in the hospital, in the hospital, plus they set up a tent, a hospital tent, where they also kept prisoners. And they shipped out many prisoners from the hospital to a hospital in Bad Ischl, which was a nearby town and they took over an SS hospital there already, a military hospital. So they spread out and the overcrowded camp was decrowded and the prisoners, the Polish and the Russians were separated out right away from the camp and sent into a different camp in town, which used to be before, a civilian camp and so on and so forth and the ones who were in the hospital, got hospital food, which was to me, was better than the yellow pea soup and on one occasion, I was always roaming around looking or scrounging or something and I saw a cart on which was used to haul the containers, the food containers and it was, the people were pulling it to the hospital and it had on it the hospital food. And everything was already, the German discipline was gone, the German

05:09:30

organization was gone. The containers no longer had the lids on them, the rubber gaskets were gone from the lids, nobody cared about anything, it was a big deal to be able to, the

Americans or the prisoner committee managed to talk the cooks into staying on and cooking food for the rest of the camp. They felt the war is over and they don't have to work any more and there is no reason why, everybody's free and why they shouldn't be free. So anyway, the food was sloshing from these containers and I got my bowl under it and I was collecting it and then I ate that soup and it was, to me it was at least something I could eat. There was only one catch, the same cart on which they were hauling the food was used the day before for hauling the dead bodies and some of the dead bodies were, maybe had, feces were coming out of them, nobody washed the cart. In other words, what I was getting was maybe excrement from dead bodies and I got the shits and it wouldn't stop. I was free and I was closer to death than ever before. And I got as far as Prague and I still had the diarrhea and even the Czechs couldn't cure it, nobody could cure it, it took a long time, until a friend of the family got me some cocoa and that stopped it. So, there's another one to whom I owe quite a bit. He's still alive today, he's in Canada.

Q: Could we look at the photos now?

A: Okay.

Q: Off the top.

A: That's one of the photos, which the American Signal Corp. photographers took in Ebensee when they came into the Jewish Hospital barracks and I happen to be on this one, the second one from the right. As you can see, some of us had, were skinnier than I and my knees were sticking out, my ribs are visible and both my legs and my arms are rather skinny. And I turned to the side, facing to the right, for what I would call positive identification, because I have a scar from an operation over the left ear and I always wanted to show that and for let's say someday it will be seen somewhere and I could definitely be sure that it's, prove it that that's me, that is I.

Q: Physically you were.

A: And my memory is not infallible, I can't tell you exactly when this picture was taken, it may have been taken in 1941 or '42. On the left side is my brother, the middle is my mother and the right side am I, I am and I can tell you for sure that at this point I was already in the Hebrew Gymnasium because each school had a cap, sort of like a uniform cap and my brother is wearing the one from the secondary school and I already am not wearing the one from the Hungarian Gymnasium and there was not yet Hebrew Gymnasium cap so it's somewhere in between, it's definitely 1941 or later. This is after I recovered, after the war, I believe in, late in '46. It took me awhile before my hair started to grow again, it was probably one of the reasons, I mean vitamin deficiency, it took my body a good number of months to get back to, let's say, in condition or anything, or normal and to put on some weight. On the Ebensee photo, I weigh about 30 kilograms, on this one I suppose it's around 60, 65 kilograms. Many, many decades after Ebensee, like around 1978, when I lived in the Washington area, I found out that the Ebensee, the Mauthausen register of prisoners is in the

national archives and I went to look at it and it's in numerical order, so I'd no problem finding my entry on it, we all know our prisoner numbers, mine happened to be 68,308 and when I came upon it, it was just kind of earth shaking or whatever, I don't know, very upsetting and it was like, later on I got a copy of a page for a friend on which his name was and he says to me that it was like a page out of hell and I think those words are about as apt as you can find and the ones who perished or were killed are crossed out with a line, with red ink and those who died after a certain date are no longer crossed out because the book was kept only up to perhaps the last week in April, 1945, so anybody died the last week of April or the beginning of May, it seems that he's still alive, but he isn't. Because they didn't get the chance to cross out his name and this one is my brother. As I found out, the day after the liberation, from another prisoner who happened to be in the camp where he was, he was sent to a sub camp called Gusen, which was near Mauthausen and as you see, most of these are youngsters. You can see there his date of birth is entered as 1930 or actually it was 1931. You can see there are dates are also young ones there, like 1929, 1930 and they probably were also lying about their ages so they might have been even younger than that. And again, these names of camps, same way we didn't know about Auschwitz, we never heard about Mauthausen, we never heard about Ebensee, I never knew about Gusen and the way this guy pronounced it, I thought it was Kuszen or something like that and many years later I saw it in print and it's Gusen and there is the date on which he died and, but I managed to obtain that date about a year, or two years after the war when I came to this country, somebody told me about an international refugee organization and they gave me the date then, which again, I did not know until then. I had no idea if he's still alive somewhere or not. These are my maternal grandparents, who were so dear to me and who were so nice to me and who's home was like a refuge to me, many a times. And with whom I could talk even more at ease or more closely that with my own parents. Fannie Moskowitz and Samuel Moskowitz, David Samuel Moskowitz. This is the prison bracelet which I have from Mauthausen and Ebensee and bears my number, 68,308 and as I explained, when I went into the hospital, I could wear it on my wrist and then as I lost weight, I could bring it up all the way to my, virtually upper arm, I mean to the top of my forearm. And the wire on it is from a blasting wire from the tunnels, the tunnels project.

Conclusion of interview.