

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Philip Vock
May 26, 1994
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PREFACE

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PHILIP VOCK

May 26, 1994

Question: Now why don't you tell me your full name?

Answer: Okay, my full name is Philip David Vock, V-o-c-k. Originally my name was V-o-v-k, when I lived in France and I changed my name to V-o-c-k when I became an American citizen.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born in Paris, June 29, 1929.

Q: 1929, okay, why don't you tell me, just so we can, to start this, a little about your life in France before the war and what your life was like there with your family?

A: Okay, I came from a family of storekeepers. My father was from Russian origin, but he was born in France, Ashkenarz(ph) and my mother was from Yugoslavian origin, that is the _____. Spoke Spanish at home and therefore I was, I was the, she was born in France too, I was the second generation French boy. My parents started, they were very poor and they started to work very young. _____ just after school, 10,12 years old and when war came in, they had a middle class position and I was born in '29, then I had a brother, a sister born in '31 and a brother born in '33. I lost my father in 1933, very young, he was 33 years old and my mother raised me and my uncle raised me until the war. I was a good student, I'm told and interested and so forth.

Q: Your uncle was your mother's brother?

A: Yes.

Q: And he lived also in Paris?

A: He lived also in Paris, I have two uncles, they were deported with me too, we were five people, my mother, my aunt and the two uncles with myself.

Q: Okay, tell me about your brother and sister.

A: Okay, my brother, my brother and sister, when the Gestapo and the French police came to pick us up, we actually, my uncle actually made a deal with the Gestapos. We had some gold, gold coins buried in different part of the garden and they, they negotiated with the Frenchman that turned us in and it was on the 23rd of December, 1943, just before _____ and we were, quite a few

number of people, they, they were, we were actually, you had many children, you had, there were three, three, there were six children, six children.

Q: Let me ask you...

A: Yeah?

Q: I'm sorry to interrupt you, but let's go back a bit because I want to start in the beginning. When, so before you tell me about this, tell me about your, your brother and your sister and your life before the Nazis came in and your relationship with them, were you a close family?

A: Oh yes, yes, we were a close family, yes.

Q: And you were the oldest?

A: I was the oldest, yes.

Q: When the, when the war started, what, how did that affect you? What happened in your, in Paris?

A: Well actually what I recall from the war was an event that took place in May 1940, when the German broke the front and invaded Belgium. And I remember I was sleeping in my bed and I was hearing what was said, just across the _____, that the Germans were coming very fast and we had to leave Paris because they could be here very soon. Which we did, we left for _____ on the Atlantic Ocean.

Q: How did you go, what happened?

A: Well we, we, we, I don't recall how we went, we went with, took the train, most likely, the train.

Q: What did you bring with you, do you remember?

A: Oh, just what we had, just what we had.

Q: And who went?

A: The whole family went.

Q: Everyone, including your aunts and uncles?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: And cousins?

A: Yeah, because actually we all lived together, more or less.

Q: I see.

A: Since my mother was a widow, my uncle took care of her and so we, my two uncles were in the French army, of course and so we went to that place, _____ and the German caught up with us once they invaded all France.

Q: I see.

A: Then we came back to Paris. Must have been in the fall of 1940 and I went back to school and then start, the trouble started, registration and so forth, anti-Semitism in school and...

Q: What happened, tell me.

A: We had a business, they took over the, our business.

Q: What was your business?

A: Stores, retail stores.

Q: Different kinds of stores? Like what?

A: Like clothing stores. We had five stores. So there was an Aryan, an Aryan administrator that was named to, to manage the business, he came in and then that's it, we had to give him the business and walk out. So...

Q: So that was the end of the business?

A: That was the end of the business, yes.

Q: Was this Aryan who took over, was he a person that you knew from before?

A: No, no.

Q: A stranger.

A: No, we didn't know him, no, no, no. I don't know why he was selected, but just upon, you know, just upon selection, he became the boss of a business.

Q: And what kind of anti-Semitism did you feel in Paris at the time?

A: I felt it in the newspaper, when I read it and in school too, you know, remarks from children. My name of course, was a rather, very peculiar name for the French ears. My name also is David and so I felt in the school too.

Q: Like what, what happened, do you remember anything particular that happened?

A: Like dirty Jew, Jew do this and the Jews are, are stingy, the usual kinds of and I still remember when they took over the business, no they passed a law that was I think the end of 1940, where we had to put a yellow, a yellow sticker on the, on the, on the store windows, that it was a Jewish business and identified as a Jewish business and then I remember seeing it on the, in the stores.

Q: How did you, were you angry about that, do you remember?

A: Yes, I was, I was very disturbed, yes.

Q: How old were you?

A: Well, I was 11 then.

Q: So you were young.

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me about your friends, what happened? Did you have Jewish friends and non-Jewish friends?

A: Yes. I don't recall much from that time. I don't recall much from that time. I mean the Jewish friend I had, I met them later on, on the road to, to survival, you know, going from one place to the other, to keep ahead of the Germans. So in 1941, we decided to leave the occupied zone of France and we crossed the demarcation line, we paid somebody to take us over, we crossed the river, _____ river.

Q: Who did you, who, who took you over?

A: Well, they used to be called passer, you know, people passing people through the border, but you have to pay.

Q: It was underground, it was secretive?

A: No it wasn't underground, it was a business. At that time it was not underground.

Q: I see.

A: Because it was mostly Jews that were running away and it was, I consider it was a business. So we pay and then we, we went over and then we went to a town in the south of France on the Spanish border called _____, where we stayed there until the German invaded the, the free zone, when the Americans landed in North Africa. And...

Q: What was, what was, for you as a child at the time, all of this moving around, what was that like for you? I mean, how did that...

A: The life was, was, I was _____ in the back of my mind that maybe I was not going to stay there a very long time, then we move again. Of course when we were in free zone, it was better off because actually we were French and the Vichy(ph) government was arresting the foreigners to, to, they give them to the Germans, which I learned after the war. And in Lucien(ph), I had some teachers who tried to teach _____ mostly socialist people, socialist member or, but there were also anti-Semitism, you know, whatever the kids heard at home, bringing back to school and saying stories about Jews and so forth. For awhile we live in a hotel and after that we rented a place. I had my Bar Mitzvah there and I was introduced to Jewish history by a woman named Mila(ph) Raseen(ph) who became a very well known Jewish resistance member. She died under torture in _____ and _____, passing children to Switzerland she was caught. Mila(ph) Raseen(ph). And...

Q: Do you remember feeling a lot of fear and anger or, how would you describe and what did you talk about with your family, about what was happening?

A: Well, during that year, until the German came in the free zone, I wouldn't say we felt completely safe, but the Germans were not there, so we, we thought, _____ we could survive the war there. But the Vichy(ph) government was anti-Semitic because you know they, they put, in effect, regulation that the German did ask them for. We try, for awhile we wanted to go to Spain. Since we were _____ we heard that the Spanish, the Jews from Spanish origin, if they cross over to Spain they would not be taken back to the French, but we didn't pursue that because there were too many children, we had to go over the mountains, so we didn't.

Q: How many were you altogether in your family at this time?

A: Well, that time there when we left, when we left _____ there, when the German arrived, we were, we were nine children, yeah, nine children.

Q: And your mother?

A: Each of, each of my uncles my uncles had, let's see, two, eight children, eight children, yeah.

Q: So eight children and then your mother and your two uncles and their wives?

A: My mother, my two uncles and my and my aunt, yeah and my grandfather. My grandfather, yeah. Later on I'll give you, I'll give you an event that took place when the Gestapo arrested us and there was a deal. Part of the deal was that either myself or my grandfather would have to go with them. Where to be, go, go back with the Germans, to be shipped to Dollsee(ph). But that was the choice that was given and from what I'm told, they thought that since I was younger than my grandfather, I had a better chance to survive and I've been a little upset by this during my life because I think it was unjust. But that's history, you can't tell. I came back alive, but he would not have come back alive. But I came back alive, deeply marked. If I would not have been deported, I would have been a different man. I think I've marked, I have been marked much more because I went there very young. Some adults, maybe had their character formed already and it was not as, as strong effect on them as it was on me. Then when the German came, in November 1942, _____ week later, the whole zone along the Spanish border was declared a forbidden zone, especially for the Jews and we left.

Q: So you left Lucien(ph) at that point?

A: Yeah and we heard about the Italians protecting the Jews and so we went, we crossed France all over and we went to Nice. We went to Nice and there were the Italians and it was another atmosphere. We stayed in a hotel there for awhile and then we move in _____, which was also in Italian zone, up in the mountains. The northern Alps, northern Alps. Oh, it was also _____, so we found an hotel to stay at and we went in a house.

Q: Let me ask you, this may seem a strange question, but do you remember any happy times with your family during all of this travel, with all of these children and...

A: Well, the happy times were the time I was in Lucien and I had my Bar Mitzvah and I had that women Raseen(ph), Mila(ph) Raseen(ph) and teaching us Zionism and Jewish history and putting actually strength in our young minds. And I had friends, I had many, I had many Jewish friends, because we were many Jews that were there, running away and Lucien was also a nice place, it was the mountain we went. We went on hikes, there was snow in the winter, we... But I remember an

event that never left me, it must have been the summer 1942 when we went out of sports, playing soccer and when we finished and it was outside town a little bit, was a, a _____, a few guys, a few children that wanted to see how I was circumcised, had heard that in church or whatever it is. And _____ and they wanted to see, how does it look to have your male part circumcised and they took me by the arm, _____ on the ground and so forth, took off my pants. And this I will never forget and never forgive them. It was part of the anti-Semite atmosphere. I wouldn't say that everybody was antagonistic toward the Jews, but many were and there was also the religious influence and the religious schools, Catholic schools and so forth, it was really a hotbed of anti-Semitism. On the other hand you have the, the secular school and the teachers, which other time, mostly came from the Socialism, Socialist background. I wish they were more sympathetic to the Jews, but not as bad as people reared in the religion, religious, in the Catholic religion and so forth. A lot of people say that the French, you had the big round up in Paris on the 16th of July, where there was a change of mind _____ for. Well, maybe, but as far as I'm concerned, that, the change of sentiment didn't come from the, from the, that _____. It really switched around six months later, first when the German lost the battle of _____ and went into retreat in Africa and then, couple months later, Stalingrad, that was the turn and in many people's mind, there was this possibility that Germany will lose the war. So that's what I feel.

Q: So tell me you're, you're in the Italian zone.

A: Yes.

Q: At this point, in _____?

A: First we arrive in Nice, we stayed about a month in Nice and then we went to _____. I went back to school, in the school there. In _____ the atmosphere was different because the people over there hated the Italians very much, you know, despised the Italians. Actually, I'd become friendly with the Italian soldiers, I remember they used to have a picnic on the, on the grass in a little meadow when I was coming back from school and time they called me up and they were listening to the radio, English radio, BBC and they would give it to me and talk to me and friendly attitude. And we knew that _____ the French to arrest anybody and... But the atmosphere was

different that the people of Savoie(ph) were more, I would call today rightist or, and they hated the Italians. So much that I'm sure that when the German came, they were glad that the German took over from the Italian.

Q: What was, before we get to this, to the part when the Gestapo came...

A: Yeah.

Q: What was every day life like for you, where were you in school, in a public school?

A: Yes, public school, of course, yes, yes.

Q: And were there a lot, were there many restrictions imposed on you and your family?

A: No, not restriction, no, no, not at that time. Of course in that zone we didn't have to wear the stars. We didn't have to wear the stars but our name was following us of course. And, and you know, we were coming in the middle of the school year and you know, all that was noticed and so forth. I don't have any good memories there from my teachers or school. No, no I don't recall any people that left a print on my remembrance of this time in _____. Now, later on we knew that we were turned in by the, by the French people, Frenchmen.

Q: So tell me what happened after ____.

A: Well, after _____, that's where I was picked up and sent to Drancy and eventually to Auschwitz.

Q: So tell me about what happened.

A: Well it was one of my uncle, my uncles had decided that it was time to move out of Savoie(ph), because in Savoie(ph) you had a lot of, the resistance was starting, there were attacks on Germans and the militia, the French militia. There was important resistance activity, it was starting. And a lot of German troops, also, a lot of German troops and police and so forth. And one of them went to _____ and _____, the center of France and he found a place where, it seemed to be quiet and so forth, so we were supposed to move there. So he came back to, he left his children over there with his wife and he came back to fetch us to bring to _____. And then he went to see a garage and that garage happened to be the landlord that we were staying and he said that we have to, we need a car to take us, take us to the station with the luggages and so forth and that guy

turn us in. And then when the Gestapo came, he was with them. And it was the 23rd of December, 1943, just a couple of days before ____, Christmas, a holiday, a very important holiday for the Germans, you know. I imagine maybe they were lenient because it was _____. They didn't want to take the children and have that party, you know, I guess they had the French girls in the, in the hotel with them, I mean that's where, they were stationed in the hotel. Anyway, they took only four of us.

Q: So who did they take?

A: They take myself, my mother, my aunt and my two uncles. And...

Q: I'm sorry, I'm confused, when you told, you said before that there was a deal that was made about your grandfather, that was a different time?

A: Yeah. No, no, that was at that time.

Q: I see. So it could have been your grandfather, but they decided you, I see.

A: Yeah, yeah. The Germans probably told them, well we have to bring five people, so you four and four others and either one of these two, you choose.

Q: Who made the decision?

A: Well actually it was, I think it was a decision between a member of the family, or... I'm told there wasn't, there was some discussion and so forth. The real truth is only, is only known to God. But after the war I remember that my mother was upset about it. But that's it.

Q: Did you know, did you have any idea where you were going?

A: Yes. I'll tell you why, it's because in the fall of 1943, ____, September, October. We were listening to the BBC every day. I remember clearly, as if it was yesterday, _____ report on the BBC describing exactly what _____ name of Auschwitz, describing what was going on, people arriving by the train, getting off the train, getting separated, getting the gas chamber and so forth. This, so in my mind, stuck with me and you know, I was not affected by, whatever I heard as a kid, I believe I took for, as the truth. And I carry that with me _____. I talked to the people that were there already. So I had a good hunch, a good feeling that what, what was going on. And, and later on, after the war I ask, I said, "Okay, I was not the only one to hear that report on

the BBC, so everybody was knowing it, was, was aware what was going on," and so forth. And the adults, ____, okay, yeah we heard it too, but we didn't believe it. If we would have believed it, we would have acted in revolt, they didn't believe. But I believed. I believed it. So...

Q: When you left to go to Drancy with, with the Gestapo, who stayed behind with the children?

A: One aunt, she was ____, they didn't take her because she was pregnant and she stayed with the children. And then the German Gestapo man says, "You stay here, we come back to pick you up." But of course as soon as they left, she left and my brother, sister and my, my grandfather was taken by one of the employee that we had in Paris before, that came from Paris, _____ and pick her up, pick them up and took them back to their, to her home and hide them over there. And the others, they went to _____. So I don't know if the Germans came back to pick them up, but anyway they were away. Very lucky, very lucky, I don't know why. Maybe if it not had been around Christmas, everybody would have gone. Can't tell, can't tell.

Q: So you went to Drancy. By train?

A: By train, yes.

Q: What was the train ride like?

A: First we went to Chanberre(ph), we spent the night in _____. Next morning they put us on a truck, we went to Chanberre(lh) and there, that was a real jail in Chanberre(ph), we were put in a cell and there they took everything from us, watches and everything. And there, there were people and there was torture, a room, we heard people yelling and so forth. Must have stayed two days there, two days or three days.

Q: Were you together with your family there?

A: Yes, yes, in a cell. Then one evening they took us to the railroad station where we went into a train, separate compartments. We were about maybe 30, between 30, 30 and 40 people. Get into the train in the evening and we road the train all night, arrive in Paris the next morning, Gare de Lyon. And then Gare de Lyon, the French gendarme took over.

Q: Were there, I have to ask you, were there other people in Gare de Lyon, just regular people traveling?

A: Oh yes, it was a normal train.

Q: Did they have any idea where you, anything about you all, or did it just appear as if you were regular travelers, do you think?

A: Oh no, we were with the Germans you know, it was a reserve compartment, I don't know, maybe at the end of the train or the beginning of the train and we were ordered on the train, you know and lock the doors and that's it and I imagine it was a regular journey on every trains, people getting moved. And we are in Gare de Lyon, Gare de Lyon ____ gendarmes, ____ gendarmes_____and they went on a bus and then first we went to _____, which is also in the eastern part of Paris, where Drancy was, in the eastern part of Paris. So we _____, in_____we, all the non-Jews disembarked _____, which was a substation to _____ deportation to, to camp other than Auschwitz, to camps like Dachau, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, which I find out later on. And then the bus, after dropping the non-Jews in _____, they took us to Drancy and there in Drancy we all disembarked, all the Jews. We were _____ and I stayed three weeks there. Three weeks, hearing stories from people that, that have been in Drancy for awhile. We found a cousin over there that was protected by his Spanish wife and since he was also of Turkish origin, so he told us what was going on in the camp. For three weeks. I didn't see one German, only French gendarmes were around. And_____were already at us. Very sentimental, was a sentimental place for me because my grandfather, my grandmother on my father's side lived there and they lived only a few blocks from the camp and so I knew Drancy. And I stayed three weeks there and then on the 20th January, 1944, five, six o'clock in the morning, everybody in the courtyard and a bus arriving and there was a German yelling, which I found out later on, no I was told because everybody was talking about Bruner(ph), Bruner(ph) the commandant. The camp_____there, the camp ____.

Q: Bruner(ph) was the camp commandant for Drancy?

A: Yeah.

Q: For Drancy?

A: For Drancy, yes.

Q: Before you tell me about leaving Drancy, I just want to ask you what the conditions were like there and what you did during the day and how you lived?

A: Nothing much. Went digging dead branches and all that, cleaning up. There was not much to be done.

Q: Was there food?

A: I mean, _____ there was food, very, very little food. Very little food.

Q: Were you given a uniform?

A: No. We were, we kept our clothes. We kept whatever we bought. I should add, before being deported, we went to an office where we had to exchange our money for zloties(ph), the Polish currency. And was just a waiting period.

Q: So it was known, was it known that this was simply a waiting period before you went away?

A: Oh yes, definitely.

Q: And the gendarme didn't try to hide that from you?

A: Well the gendarme actually were outside, right? Inside the camp, it was a Jewish, what you call a Jewish police, a Jewish, Jewish cadre(ph), selected by Bruner(ph), you know, but when the buses came to pick us up, there was, there were the gendarmes. It was buses with a platform an outside platform on the back and there was a gendarme on each platform. And now through, I think, you know, later on, I think there were a possibility to escape, when the bus was taking us from Drancy to, to the railway station in _____ to get load up on the train, but...

Q: Why do you think that there was an opportunity...

A: Well because there was only one gendarme on the platform, the men could have attacked and get _____, but of course you had to leave the women and the children, but there could have been a mass escape. A lot of thing could have happen. Now they, there was, you know, the determined people, there were some determined people, for instance, in November, 1943, or October 1943, two months before I arrived, some people tried to escape, they built a tunnel. And the tunnel was discovered only a couple of yards before it was finished. And so the Germans arrested these people and they

were shipped on a convoy and they escaped. They were determined and they escaped. They, they, they jumped through the window and they survived the war. There were a few escapes. I mean you have it in the Klassfeld(ph) book. So people that were determined, they, they had a better chance, but you have to leave the women and the children behind and the old people. That was a choice. That was a choice. Now when the, the bus took me to a railroad station in _____ on the main street of Drancy and there was my, on the right side was a street where my grandfather, my grandmother lived. I don't know if they were there then, but I remember the good times I had there and when I saw it, passing by and I was very sad thinking maybe I'll never see them again. Thanks God they survived the war and I saw them again. And it was straight to _____ station and there was, and there there was some Germans, but right away the bus came along, the railroad cars and in we went, fast.

Q: Into the train?

A: Into the train.

Q: A regular passenger train?

A: No, no, no, no, cattle cars.

Q: A cattle car.

A: Cattle car, yeah. We were about 90 in the train. Children.

Q: 90 in the car?

A: Yeah, in the car, I think 90, yeah. Was very hard to sit down, I mean half of the car could sit down. Everybody could not sit down in the same time. In the middle of the car there was a bucket where we could urinate and so forth. We had some food, they gave us some food before _____.

Q: What did they give you, do you remember?

A: It was bread, piece of, I remember the bread, that's all I remember. And as soon as the train was locked, the door was locked and the train left right away.

Q: Were you with still, in the same cattle car, were you with your mother and your aunts and uncle, your aunt and uncles?

A: Yeah I was. In that car, in that railroad car there was also a champion, a swimming champion of France, a champion _____. He was there with his wife and his little girl, three years old, a very cute baby. And I remember her from the three days and four nights trip to Auschwitz.

Q: How old were you?

A: I was, I was 14. I was 14.

Q: Do you, do you have any recollection of what you were thinking about during that train ride? Did you, did people talk to each other?

A: Yeah, they talked. They talked, they were anxious, of course. In the back of my mind I still heard that report on the BBC was ticking in my mind. That I recall. Because when you, when we arrive in Auschwitz and the door opened and so forth, we're done. That was it. So we arrived in the middle of the night in Auschwitz.

Q: Had you eaten anything on the train?

A: Oh yeah, we had that food and I remember I looked at, it was a window, an old window on the side and we took turn to go out the window, to look out, to get some fresh air and the first city I saw was Kaiserslaven(ph), just across the French border. Then another one _____ and then Glaivitz(ph). It just happened before being deported, I had studied the German geography in school, I knew the map of Germany, Glaivitz(ph) was the name and, that I recall, that's why I, I knew in what direction we were going, straight to Poland. And then we were in Auschwitz and we stayed a few hours there, the train waiting and then they opened the train and everybody out.

Q: You waited for a few hours, just at the train station, inside the train car?

A: While the train was stopped, you know?

Q: Yes.

A: There probably was a convoy in front of us and it was taking, you know, everyone was taking his turn and...

Q: Had the train stopped at all on the trip from Drancy to Auschwitz or did it go straight?

A: Oh, yes, yes, yes...

Q: It stopped?

A: Sometimes we waited. Yeah, yeah, yeah it stopped.

Q: They never opened the doors though?

A: No. I remember we passed through Frankfurt and the station I remember that it must have been bombed and there was broken glasses all over. That I remember, Frankfurt _____. And then, as we went into, into the east, there were more snow, you know, it was colder, more snow. And wood. A lot of forest, lot, lot, _____ forest, barren forest and it was very different from the French forests. Something, it was something new to me, something new to me. So we got off on the Auschwitz, separated the men and women. We had to drop everything we had. Right away separate the men from the women. My uncle was carrying the little girl and my mother had an argument with him, keep the girl back to her mother, which she did, otherwise she would have gone to the gas chamber with the kid. Then men and women separated, passing in that, in front of that SS officer and as we progressed in the line, I heard H, H, they were, he was asking for H. And I was passing by through the queue, through the line and we were arriving from the _____, "How old are you?" And I said 18. So he says, "Go." And I went on the right.

Q: What made you say 18?

A: I don't know, maybe, I wanted to be with the men, I don't want to be with the kids, I wanted to stay with the men.

Q: Did you not want to be with the kids because you didn't want to be a kid, or because you thought something bad was going to happen to the kids?

A: Something bad was going to happen to the kids, definitely _____. So I went to the right, with the right group, so first the trucks came, they pick up the children and the old women...

[End of Side 1 to Tape 1]

Q: Your aunt and your mother and a baby cousin?

A: No, no, not the baby cousin, that was the daughter of the _____, who was an Olympic champion that we met on the train, on the wagon.

Q: Oh, oh, oh I see, I see.

A: No, my mother and my aunt were selected also.

Q: I see, so they went on to the camp.

A: To go into the camp. To go into the camps. But they went into the camps, okay, but when the trucks came, they pick up the women, the women going to the camp, the one going to the gas chamber and so forth and then the trucks came back and then we went onto the truck and the truck took us to Monowitz, Monowitz was Auschwitz III, was a few kilometers, a few miles from Auschwitz. A sub-camp, smaller than Auschwitz, but part of Auschwitz.

Q: I want to clarify.

A: Yeah.

Q: When you're, when you're talking about when you came in and you were separated, was this in Auschwitz-Birkenau? In, in this, in Birkenau?

A: Yes, yes, on the ramp, yeah.

Q: And did you have a chance to say anything to your mother or your aunt before they were separated?

A: Just goodbye, very fast. I don't even recall it. As soon as you step off the railroad car, men on the left, women on the right. And fast, you have to move fast, because there were the dogs and there were, there was no time to _____ around or to start a conversation.

Q: So you went to Auschwitz III?

A: Auschwitz III, yeah. So we arrived in night.

Q: What month was this, do you remember?

A: It was, yeah it was January, very cold.

Q: January 44?

A: Yeah, 24th of January actually, 24th of January. And they took us to that Monowitz, Auschwitz III, middle of the night and then as I disembarked from the, unload from the truck, they took us to the, to the shower room, some kind of a shower room and so forth and there I received my first, my first knock from an SS because I was talking and he was behind and he gave me a punch in the face and, I never had one like that before. So we entered, there was a guy there, a prisoner, speaking French and translating, well, telling us what to do. Undress, everybody undressed, so forth. Once

we were naked, there was an intimidation beating of a prisoner. An SS was there and the two, two Poles came and they took somebody in the group and they, they beat him, you know _____, to show what it was, what we had to expect if we... And I don't know if they kill him but the guy was on the floor and we were already, the message passed through. And then the French guy give us a little, a little detail on what was going to happen to us. You're going to be assigned to a barracks and my recommendation I have to give you is watch out for your shoes, keep your shoes, because your shoes are survival, are your mean of survival, so watch out for your shoes. And then they cut our hair, they cut everything, we went to a shower and then in the morning, we went out one by one through the door, they gave us some clothes and there was a welcome committee there looking at shoes and they saw good shoes, they take the shoes and they give you a pair of sandals.

Q: Did they take your shoes?

A: I was in, my mother had bought me a pair of shoes in _____, a nice pair of shoes, I remember, the best high shoes and very comfortable and so forth. Oh, as soon as they saw my shoes they _____. And my uncle was behind me, he came and he tried to fight with them, they beat him up. And they beat him up and they got my shoes and they got his shoes. Then we went into a barracks and then the, the tattoo processing started and where the Frenchman _____ to be tattoo ____.

Q: Where were you tattooed?

A: On the left arm. My number was _____ 172825 and I remember that, that number through _____ life and remember it in German. Because when they were calling your number you better, you better, have to be in position to understand German, your number in German, otherwise you can be in trouble.

Q: Did you know any German before you got there?

A: No. I didn't know German and I didn't know Yiddish, but I learned it over there, the hard way.

Q: Must have been, was it very, it must have been disorienting to have all of these commands in a language that you didn't understand.

A: Sure. Sure it was, but you pick up. You pick up and the first thing to pick up, you had to pick up was your number. Actually when I left camp, liberation, I understood the, not all German, but I would say I, I could manage. But still, I mean, I didn't speak German. If you spoke Yiddish or German, there was not a better chance to survive, but _____. Then after that we were assigned to different commandos, for different barracks and I wasn't lucky, I was put in the commando, cable lane commando, the toughest one because it was outside, we were working outside, pulling cables and trenches and people were dropping like flies and it was cold.

Q: What were you wearing?

A: Well, I had the stripes jacket, striped pants and we had a coat also with a stripe, and...

Q: And what were your shoes, what were the shoes like, the ones that they gave you?

A: Wooden shoes, wooden shoes. That were to clean, _____, in the morning we had to, before we went to work we had to, to clean them with some kind of oily liquid.

Q: How many people do you think there were in Auschwitz III?

A: I would say about, between three and four thousand, I would imagine. There were about, about 70 blocks, 70 barracks, about.

Q: Were you with your uncle in the barracks?

A: No, no, never. They stick together, but I, I was not. So...

Q: The two of them stuck together, but you were separated?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because it worked well ____, you know, when you get tattooed, you were in _____, they were K's, I was V, so they had a different number. And they, they got assigned to a barracks and I got assigned to another one. And then that was already March, April, very tough commandos and I got sick and went to the hospital, I had a pleurisia(ph).

Q: Pleurisia(ph).

A: Yeah. A doctor from Strasbourg(ph) saved me, Professor Weiss(ph), he pumped the water out with a syringe.

Q: Was there a _____?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: For the whole camp?

A: Twice a day. The whole camp, that was a miserable time, outside, waiting and waiting in the cold, before going to work and then there were the selections. Now the selection, that was the worst. The worst event in camp life, when the, everybody was consigned into the barracks in the evening and everybody had to go in front of an SS, naked and then he decided if we were too weak and so forth. That was the end, you didn't go to work the next day, but you would go in a truck and the truck would take you to Birkenau, to Auschwitz. That was, I saw some act of heroism, also some people going instead of another, to pass in front of the SS and giving a phony number, they risk their lives to save other people.

Q: When did the selections happen, were they on a regular basis?

A: No. I can say they happened when they were French defeats, when there were defeats, for instance, when they won the landing in Normandy and no, there was no pattern, it could be every two weeks, every three weeks.

Q: But sometimes it was a punishment?

A: Well, yeah. And increase also when the Hungarian start to come in, because they came in very _____ the Hungarians starting in March, March, April, '44 and they had to make room in the camp. They even put up two tents, two big tent in the camp to put in the Hungarians.

Q: In Auschwitz III?

A: Auschwitz III, yeah. And when the Hungarians came, they became the big majority in the camp and Hungarian replaced Yiddish as the tongue of the prisoners. So I got sick, my uncle helped me and passed me some food because they started, let's say what we could call a business. They were, they would come _____ working inside with Poles people, Polish and, and they were gold trading taking place in the camp, you know, where you would buy the gold teeth from the bridges and so forth, the gold teeth for bread and cigarettes and you take it to the, to the factory we were working in Igafarben(ph) factory in Buna. And you would sell it to the Poles, they would give you some, some bread or some stuff like that.

Q: How did they get the gold teeth?

A: Pull it.

Q: But how did they get it, they, were they, they weren't pulling the teeth, your uncles?

A: Yes, with a, with a, with a, with a piece of metal you could...

Q: I see.

A: ...lift the gold, pull the teeth.

Q: That must have been ____.

A: So it was, it was a trade you know, you get the food, you keep part of the food for you, there was a profit, you, and cigarettes, cigarettes also were, cigarette was a currency, people would sell a piece of bread for a cigarette. I saw it many times, _____. That was the way to death.

Q: You mean if you got caught?

A: No, because you didn't eat.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: You didn't eat and you smoke and down you went, you would be picked up by the selection, selection and, and in order to survive, you have to eat, if you don't eat. Then, yes?

Q: Did you have extra food because of your uncle's business?

A: Yes.

Q: I mean, business, because they were on the black market?

A: Yes, yes, yes. And they met somebody they knew, a boxing champion, _____Perez(ph), he was boxing champion of the world, featherweight and he was working in the kitchen and he was boxing for the SS, you know, boxer and they gave him food and they brought me food and I was helped that way. And then I got out of the hospital and I was assigned to a commando ____, where I worked inside.

Q: So that was in April?

A: Must have been April, June, yeah. And the summer, the summer was coming and I was assigned to that commando working inside, so I'm out of the cold, out of the rain and in that place where I was a small, small shop. I remember we worked on the mechanical parts and in that shop there was also two British prisoner of war, were, there was a big British prisoner of war camp next to

Auschwitz III and I knew a little bit English, or start to talk to them and so forth. And one day I got caught by an SS, they saw me talking to them. The next day, I mean when I came back to the camp at night, the _____ call me, he says, you're not going out any more, you are forbidden to leave the camp, you stay in the camp and I wear a badge with an _____ the means I have to stay in the camp. So I stayed in the camp during the summer of '44 and I saw what was going on in the camp, why all, all the prisoners were...(pause) Then we're _____ one, once, one another and so forth.

Q: Who was in the bordello?

A: There was a bordello, yeah.

Q: But where did the women come from?

A: It was, oh the women, well they, Poles and I don't know, maybe some, no, no, no Jewish girl, I don't think so, because they, it was a bordello for the SS and for the Pollacks, for the Germans prisoner and, no Jews of course.

Q: They were prisoners, though?

A: Prisoner, yeah. And the SS were going there too. So _____, you could hear them singing and drinking and so forth. But that was the _____ during the day.

Q: So you, you weren't working, you were confined to the camp, so what did you do all day?

A: I was working, yes I was you know, some small details and, and I was hiding, you know, hiding in a camp, but you couldn't hide very well. Walking around, looking busy, doing something.

Q: Did you have, did you become close to any of the men in the camp?

A: Oh yes, I had some friends, yeah, that helped me and...

Q: Were they also confined to the camp or were these people who...

A: No, no, this _____ was working. Yeah, one was confined to the camp, yes. Another guy who was a little older than I was, couple years more. _____, you know and yeah, I remember him. I had some other friends also, some people who helped me when I was _____, give me courage to pick up and keep going. _____, a very, very nice friend. And then in the fall of '44, there was a rumor that all the _____ I am, are going to go to the coal mine in

Yavidavitch(ph) and my uncle went to see the doctor and he begged him for me to stay and so forth. Anyway, I didn't go and then there were rumors that the gas chamber wasn't working any more, on November, so forth. So life drifted in the camp. I forgot to say that in August we had a big bombardment for, by the U.S. Air Force on the Auschwitz camp, on the Igerfarben(ph). And later on I found out that during this bombardment or reconnaissance flight, the Americans took the pictures of the Auschwitz and they had, they had the picture exactly, with the gas chamber and the people lining up, just like in the BBC report. This was one more proof that _____ was going on. So they bombed the camp, they bombed, they bombed the factory, there were some _____ among the, the _____. And they came a few times, you know.

Q: Do you remember, did you hear about what happened when the crematoria was blown up by the prisoners?

A: No, there, there was just a rumor. There were no more selection. Must have been November. I think the last selection was at the end of October, October. I couldn't tell for sure.

Q: That sounds about right.

A: But you know in the camps there were plenty of rumors. You have the true rumors and the untrue rumors. You know, there's always rumors, rumors.

Q: How did you deal, how did you and your friends deal with the rumors, I mean how did you, did you try to sort it out?

A: Yes, we tried to sort it out and to reason, to reason these rumors, what, what could they, could it be real, how could it be real, because of this, because of that. Of course we, we had the rumors of the Russian, they were coming, they were progressing, progressing, progressing, they were 200 miles from here, then they were 250 miles, 150 miles, then 100 miles. And then we had a strong feeling that they were very close, toward the end of December. Because you know, things were relaxed, there were no more selection, the SS were, were not as aggressive as they used to and then came January 1945, when really the rumor mill started to run. We were going to be surrounded, we were going to be, they're going to have Russian paratroopers come in over. And then one day nobody went to work, _____ and then we went to work again and then after that nobody went

to work again and then panic started in the camp. When I say panic, that is the kitchen was, there were, there were, all the _____ were running to the kitchen, trying to empty the kitchen, take all the food there. All of a sudden lack, lack of control, lack of discipline, you know, people running around, that was new to us.

Q: At this point, after you'd been confined to the camp, were you then going out again for work in the farm?

A: No, I never went back.

Q: You never went out again?

A: No, no.

Q: So you were in the camp the whole time and you saw what was happening?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: I see. And so the people who were panicking was the SS? Or is was everyone?

A: No, they, they, you see, discipline dropped and then, and actually the, you had to run, you had to run and the kitchen food, to get food supplies and so forth and the _____, they were selling out, selling out, you know, whatever they had and so forth. This lasted about a week or so, a week, 10 days, maybe less. And then, yes?

Q: Did you have any contact at all with the people in Birkenau or did anyone you know have contact with people?

A: Oh yes, well I had contact, yes, I had contact up til the month of June, July, when I work in the factory, I had contact with French so-called free workers, a discussion with them, they were, they never help me, had a discussion with them, they said yes, you deserve to be there because of Bloom(ph), that was the Socialist that put in the Socialist measure in France, 40 week, vacation and so forth, so Bloom(ph), you have to pay for what Bloom(ph) did to France and so forth. The British, British prisoner of war, yes, I met a New Zealander and was friendly to me, was a very religious man, reading, I know he was a Bible reader and tell me. He was friendly to me. A couple of Australians, too, but Australians were more cold. And _____ out after the war when I went to Australian New Zealand, I would like to get in touch with some of these guys that were in

Monowitz in the camp, but I didn't succeed. I would like to do it one day, to really find out all these British or what they saw in us and what they, what they knew and so forth, but from what I read and from what I gathered, nobody has, has tried to investigate that.

Q: Did you have any idea about your mother?

A: Met some Poles too, but the Poles is... My mother? No.

Q: And your aunt? Nothing?

A: No, I don't know what happened to them. Was figuring she, she probably died. Maybe she was thinking the same thing of me. She was thinking the same thing of me. And then one day, it was afternoon, everybody outside and the rumors started, we are going on the road, we are evacuating the camp. We are evacuating the camp. And then we started, you know, to walk out in columns. So we walk out in columns and out on the road, was very cold, snow, ice and a big anxiety and the big anxiety was to, to know where we were going, because we thought they were going to take us to Auschwitz or to someplace and kill us all. So as we walked, we saw a sign on the road, you know, road signs, Iselau(ph), Blivitz(ph), Auschwitz and then, at a time when we took a corner and it was not, it was the road to Blivitz(ph) instead of Auschwitz and we felt a little relieved but then we entered the, the Polish country, I mean flat. Very few trees to stop the wind and the wind was blowing and then we heard the Russian planes over and some bombing by the Russian planes and I said, well maybe they, they going to catch up with us, but, they didn't. They didn't.

Q: How long did you walk?

A: We walked all night, all night and about six o'clock we reached into a place, into a barn, they put us in a barn.

Q: How many of you were there on this march?

A: I understand on that march we were about 40,000, between 40 and 50,000 all together but we went by groups you see.

Q: So this was that, when they evacuated the whole camp, it wasn't just, it wasn't just Auschwitz III, it was everyone?

A: No, but I think maybe some, some people left before, I think we left on the 16th of January. The 16th of January. One thing I forgot to tell you is in the camp it was, the hanging, there were some hangings, you know, people trying to escape and so forth and when they got caught, _____, they hanged them in front of us and we have to march in front of them. The _____ and I remember once I was on a, on a hanging details and you know, getting off the guy from the rope and taking him to the crematorium to be burned and I remember SS taking picture, one of them, later on I, I met in Buchenwald, three months later, after they all had lost weight, they were really skinny, I mean, they were, they had lost weight in three months, in their retreat.

Q: You took this person off of the gallows?

A: Yeah, _____, the gallows, yeah.

Q: By yourself?

A: Well, we were a few you know, put him in the, we had to take him to the crematorium to be burned.

Q: How did you take, you walked, did you walk with him over, I mean you took him over _____?

A: Well, we had a little carriage.

Q: And you walked to Auschwitz II? To Birkenau?

A: No, there was a, a small crematorium in...

Q: I see.

A: ...in, that I recall, yeah. Very few, you know, a few corpse at a time.

Q: In Auschwitz III?

A: Yes, there was, I don't think they, actually I took the corpse and I dump it in the place and I know there was a chimney there and I think it was done there, yeah. Cannot be for sure if they took the corpse back to Auschwitz, but I doubt it.

Q: But you took it somewhere in, so you didn't, people didn't go, or I shouldn't say that, did people go from Auschwitz III to Auschwitz II or were you almost confined to Auschwitz III?

A: Well sometimes there were some people transferred you know. On an individual basis or small groups, or small groups. Depending sometimes, maybe the factory needs some specialists or so forth, so they would go from one camp to the other.

Q: Mm-hm, but for the most part were you confined to Auschwitz III?

A: Yeah. I was in Auschwitz III all the time I was in the Auschwitz _____.

Q: I see. So you walked all night?

A: Yeah. And we stayed in that barn, in a place called Nicholai(ph), which was just over the ex-German border, _____ German border and I remember there was some straw, there was a barn and we slept there and in the morning went back on road and one thing I have to tell you that during all the night that we walk and the next morning and so forth, there were convoys of trucks and horse driven cars going westward with people running away from the, running away from the Russians and we saw that the, they were really in bad shape. Loaded with furniture and all that. Later on I heard that some guys had hidden under the straw and they waited for the Russian and they didn't take the trip to Germany, to Buchenwald _____. Then walked again, all day.

Q: Did you have any food?

A: Well just the food they gave us when we left Auschwitz III, Monowitz, Buna. We walked another day and we arriving in a camp, Blivitz(ph). And there, we entered in that camp, it was overcrowded, people coming from all over, you know, from all the Auschwitz area and it was so crowded that there was no room in the barracks, some people have to stay outside, stay, sleep outside instead of trying to go into the barrack to get a little warmer. And there I saw some women too, some women prisoner.

Q: Were there any women on the march, before that?

A: Not with us, no, but I saw some women in that camp, in Blivitz(ph).

Q: Where had they come from, do you think?

A: _____ Auschwitz place, I don't know where from. I don't know where from and, but it was so crowded and, I heard some shooting too, shooting, shooting. I'll have to tell you also that old people that didn't walk on the march, they fell behind on the column and got shot and pushed

over in, in the ditch. And if they were only wounded, you know, the cold would kill them in a few hours, because once you don't move and you stay there wounded, you had no chance to survive and there wouldn't be any Poles to come to help you, that I know of. So _____ and the next day, they took us on another ramp, along the railroad track. We waited there awhile, a few hours, then a train came, roofless, you know, _____ type of railroad cars, open. They loaded us on there. We were so many there that you couldn't sit down, you had to stay stand up, so tight. Because if you, if you didn't stay stand up, you would be walked over.

Q: Did you have any idea where your uncles were at this point?

A: No.

Q: No. And were you with any of your friends who you _____ in the camp?

A: Yes, I stick with a friend, yeah, yeah. But I was on my own, practically, I was on my own. And then they gave us a piece of bread and piece of, of _____ salami, _____ salami, _____ on the train. And the train took off and the snow starting to come down and the cold and, and then people start to be weak enough and come down and, and some other would lay down on them and was miserable time. That ride took about eight days, I believe.

Q: Eight days?

A: Yeah, I think so. Eight days. We went through Czechoslovakia and for the first time I had, I saw some help from the outside. The Czech peoples, they were on the bridges, going over the railroad track. Standing on the bridges and they were throwing us food from the bridge. I remember I grabbed a piece, a piece of bread there, helped me to survive until our arrival in Buchenwald. And the train finally arrived in Buchenwald, I mean probably the Vimar(ph) station. Was frozen. I remember we're covered of snow, ice and we were eating snow at the end, there was nothing more to eat. There were not many people alive still in the wagon when we arrived. And we got off the wagon and it was a certain height from the floor of the wagon to the ground and some people were too weak and when they get off the wagon, they would come hit the floor and they couldn't get up any more, they broke their foot or their legs or, but they didn't get up. Then we had

to walk up a slope to get into the camp of Buchenwald, it was located on a hill in that forest, the _____ forest. And we walk up there and we get into the camp, also very crowded, many people. There were no room for us in the barracks, so I fell on the ground, I remember it was snowing and I fell asleep there and I woke up in the morning and I was so cold, so frozen and I couldn't get up. I thought it was the end there. I started to cry and a friend helped me get back on my feet. That's how I survived this time. And that Buchenwald was a different atmosphere _____. It was not 98 percent or 99 percent Jewish, I mean in Buchenwald you had many non-Jews, mostly non-Jews originally and the camps and the groups were divided by nationality. You had the very important Russian groups, prisoner of war. Ukrainian Germans, Communists.

Q: Political prisoners?

A: Political prisoners, yeah. So I stayed there a month and then I went, I was sent on an outside commando in Olsen(ph), near Hanover(ph), so back on the train, to a little camp up on a hill, to work on a forest, in very bad condition. Nothing to eat, lice, hard work in the forest, no food. People dying from hunger, from disease. And then one day we heard the guns. Gunshells, coming closer and the rumor was that was the British army coming, not far away. And then, hearing that, we knew that we had to go on the road again, pretty soon. Which happened, of course. They took us out of _____, we were alive still, back to where I was stationed. A German civilian, seeing us going through the village and so forth, yelling names at us and so forth and back to Buchenwald. Probably, middle of March or so. March 1945, middle of March.

Q: Can you say generally how the conditions in Buchenwald compared to those in Auschwitz?

A: Yes, well, more _____ was in the sense that there were no selections. I don't know. There were no mass gas, gas chamber over there. People would die of sickness and bad treatments and so forth. There were crematoriums, crematoriums working close to around the clock, burning their regular, the dead, the corpse that, but when I was there it was not the camp for the Jews, it was not for extermination like it was in Auschwitz.

Q: Did you see your uncles there?

A: No.

Q: What happened to them?

A: Well they went a different way, they went to Flossenbürg, found out after the war, Flossenbürg and the one who survived ended up in Dachau. So...

Q: So you went back to Buchenwald?

A: Yeah. There I met many Communists, French Communists and the Communists were separated from the others and the, it was a very tight group. And in Buchenwald, overcrowded, nothing to eat, people fighting between each other to steal what, a piece of bread that one could have and so forth. Ukrainians were especially cruel and I remember the Ukrainian. And then we heard gunshells again.

Q: What, do you remember about what month this was, when do you think this was?

A: What?

Q: When do you think this was, about what month?

A: March, middle of March, middle of March, yeah. There was, it was getting it a little warmer, spring was coming and then, as usual, an evacuation of the prisoners started again, so people were put in the _____ and pushed outside to start walking again on the road and fortunately I, I didn't make that one. And, I think a day or two before the Americans came in, we, the SS abandoned the camp or left only a few people and that's when the Russians attacked the camp, the main entrance and a few SS were captured and that's what, that was when I, I saw all these _____ that were _____ and scream at me and we caught a few of them and the Russian killed one of them that I knew particular. That's where I found all these pictures that I gave you today. I was at the next morning, I think I saw the, the first American soldier, there were two of them walking down the alley. And then, the next day we went up in the _____ and there was _____ nationality, we were singing the Internationale, Communist song. We were told that we were free men again, that we were going to go back home pretty soon. And then the next day, German civilians came to the camp to see the corpse. I remember them coming up with the American soldiers and none of them smiled, but I don't think they had any, still had any pity for us. That was it.

Q: What did you, what do, what do you remember feeling or thinking when you saw that American, that first American soldier?

A: It was the end. That was the end of the, I wouldn't call it adventure, but...

End of Tape 1.

Tape 2

A: ..._____can call up Rudolf(ph) you know, it's a _____.

Q: So we were going to, you were telling me what you, that it was over when you saw that first American you knew.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you, were there any people who you knew from Auschwitz, who made it with you to the liberation in Buchenwald, your friends?

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: And you were together at that time?

A: Yeah, we stick together. There was myself, Anatole _____ and Maurice Goldberg(ph) and we stick together all the way back to France, yeah.

Q: Were they French too?

A: Yes, yes, yes. Anatole was 24 and Maurice was 16 or 17 and we were from the same convoy, convoy number 66. Auschwitz number starting 172,000.

Q: So they were with you all the way from Drancy, through the whole, they were on same convoy from Drancy to Auschwitz?

A: Same convoy from Drancy to Auschwitz and then we were together also, also the time in the camp and then in Buchenwald, yeah.

Q: So, when you were liberated and you were then free, what, where did you go, what did you do?

A: Well after we killed that SS, I took a walk outside and it was the first time in many months. Then we went, we went outside, some Russians and into a farm, trying to get some food and we got some food, some salami and so forth, some people start eating. I didn't eat too much,_____cause after that they got diarrhea, they got sick and so forth. And then after that we got transferred, the week after that, we got transferred to Airfert(ph). We pass through Vimarg(ph) and then to Airfert(ph). We went to sleep into a house I remember, there was no furniture, we slept on the floor, but it was okay.

Q: Can I, do you mind if I ask you about this SS guard that you killed?

A: Yeah. Well, I didn't kill him, the Russians killed him.

Q: You were there when the Russians killed him?

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

Q: This was the one who had the photographs that you found?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: How did that happen, what were the circumstances of that?

A: It was during the attack of the front door I believe. The Russians, they had a few, a few weapons I believe and they, they got some, some SS. I can't keep, describe exactly how. The Russian were the most organized and the most military trained.

Q: Okay, I got you off track, you were saying you went to, you went to Airfert(ph).

A: Airfert(ph) yeah. In Airfert(ph) we, we switched clothes, we took off our stripes and striped jacket and so forth, we got into military clothes. There was a French commission there, they give us some French soldiers clothes. So returned to France dressed as a French soldier. And a pretty skinny one.

Q: How much weight did you lose?

A: Oh, must have been 35, between 35 and 40, maybe. But still, I was better off than when I, I was in Auschwitz. Then we went by truck, westward, going through German towns completely destroyed, I remember mines, mines, _____ in French, completely destroyed them. That, that gave us great pleasure. Then we passed over to France, in a place called Longrient(ph), it was a military camp, so we went in front of French officers that ask us questions and so forth.

Q: Were you escorted on this trip back or were you just going by yourselves, the three of you?

A: Well there were some, some French Red Cross people and so forth, yeah.

Q: So where did you arrive in France, you got this military place?

A: Yeah, Nobrient(ph)

Q: Nobrient(ph).

A: We pass in front of some French officer, asked us some questions in French, where we came from, what we did and so forth. Then they gave us a card. The next day we went on a, on the train

again, but this time it was a regular passenger train, for the first time in many, many month, I went into a passenger train and that train continued westward, toward Paris, where arrive on the 29th of April, 1945, in the _____. Not knowing where to go because by the time people were arriving, you know, we were separated, each one had his own thoughts of joining his family, of going to the place where he came from. But me, I just have a few addresses in the back of my memory and that's it and I was a kid, I was a, a nobody.

Q: What did it feel like to be in Paris again?

A: What?

Q: What did it feel like to be in Paris again? Were you happy at all?

A: Very confused, very confused, when you, when you arrive at that _____, the place was full of women running around and confusion and so forth. They were looking at us and we were not pretty sights. And I got off and I told them where I lived and so forth and they got a telephone number and they called and they reached one of my aunt, _____ my aunt, who had receive a letter that I wrote from Buchenwald that I was alive, the letter got through and she got it. So when she got the phone call, she knew already I was alive, see she got the letter from Buchenwald and these people came and pick me up. They came and pick me up and asking questions, thousands of questions.

Q: They had, where had they been, they'd...

A: Well, they...

Q: Had they been themselves ____?

A: Yes, well they escaped the, the Holocaust, they were not caught and they were not caught and they survived and liberated.

Q: So you stayed with them in Paris?

A: Yeah, no it was in a suburb of Paris, in _____.

Q: How did you find your mother?

A: My mother came a month later?

Q: She came back to the Paris house?

A: First my uncle came from Dachau, he was liberated in Dachau at the end of, the end of April, the 29th of April, yeah _____. My mother was liberated eighth of May, Mauthausen, one of the last ones. She was liberated Mauthausen, she survived until the eighth of May. So my uncle came back in May and my mother and my aunt came the end of May also.

Q: Where did you see your mother again for the first time?

A: Well, one day she, she walked, she walked through they, we were living in a house and there was an alley and I saw her coming. That was the end of the nightmare or the end of the real nightmare and then there were some, many nightmares afterwards, but they were nightmares when we were asleep. Many more nightmares. Still have some. Still have some. Last one I had was when I was in a wagon arriving at Auschwitz and we got off the, the wagon and some people that had left two babies in the wagon and when I was down on the ground, I turned around and I saw some inmates taking the babies out and walking away with the babies. That's the last dream I had, the last nightmare. Other nightmares, you go in the selection and you are picked up to go to the gas chamber. Yeah, it's still around. Still be around. Impossible to forget it all. If I'm here today is to pass on all these stories, I hope that whoever listens to these stories believe them. It's all truth. It's all truth. Unfortunately I can give, I can't give you the real, all the details because whatever we, I went through and saw and do and, this cannot _____ how to transmit. I think the best one of the best, the most. A deportee _____ transmit the message, from what I read, all the books, it's Primo Lahty(ph). That book, If It Was a Man, is really the description of the life at Auschwitz. That's the best I, I read. And there were others also. _____ of course and but myself I was just a kid, I put my thought on paper when I came back. In June and July 1945, I wrote this essay and journal of captivity and testimony, whatever you want to call it. I had to start it three times, first a draft, that I'm leaving here, the U.S. Holocaust Museum and then a second draft, then a third draft, which I brought with my children to Yad Vashem(ph) in Israel and Jerusalem, I gave to Yad Vashem(ph) the final draft, it is stored over there and my children were with me when I give it to them, so I'm leaving a little bit of my testimony behind and I hope it will transmit la memoire, a memory. I did the best I can and I just wish that many of the survivors are still alive, make the

effort to come here and to spend a few hours before they disappear, into record, what we went through.

Q: Okay.

A: Okay.

Q: Thank you very much.

Conclusion of interview.