

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back, and I am the director of the Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo. This evening we have with us Nathan Kornmehl, who's going to tell us his story.

Nathan, will you tell us where you were born and about your childhood?

Yeah, I was born in Cologne. This is in Germany. And about my childhood, I was born in 1923. And like I say, when I was about 10 years old, Hitler came. So we still were in school. And by 1937, we couldn't go to school anymore.

Who is "we"? Who is your family? Tell us about your family.

My family, I had four sisters. And my older sister were already working by Hitler, so we just had no income for nobody.

What was your father doing?

My father was dead. He died in 1930.

So your mother was a young widow left with four children.

Yes. Five children.

Five children.

Four sisters--

Four sisters and one-- sorry.

And one son, yes.

And were your parents natives of Germany?

No, my parents came from Poland. And they had in mind to go to the United States. That's what they told me. And my mother always told me people came back from the United States. So they went and stayed in Germany.

What did your father do in Germany?

My father, when he came, he learned the children Hebrew.

He was a Hebrew teacher.

Yes. I don't think if he was a real Hebrew teacher, but he studied with the children.

That was his main job.

This was his job. And later on, he was more like-- he sold in the homes. He went to homes and sold--

Household articles?

Not household. Like for bedspreads and all this.

Linens.

Linens and everything. Then he passed away. He was young.

And my sister were already little older, so they could--

They could manage to work.

--manage, you know, to work. And that's what we had. Was enough.

And you went to a regular public school?

We went-- yeah, yeah. We went to a public school. And in this time there was a special Jewish school just for Jewish children.

After Hitler.

No.

Before Hitler.

Before, and by Hitler too. Like I say, in '37.

And is that the school that you went to?

And I went to this school. And afterwards, in 1938, on the 28th of October, we had, from the police, somebody came from the police and says we should be 12 o'clock in the police station. And we could just take 10 Mark, like here \$10, and just what we need, to have clothes, what we can carry, and one or two of the-- wie heiss this?

Comforters?

Not comforters. It was-- yeah, we can--

[NON-ENGLISH]

Yeah.

Bedclothing?

Bedclothes, yes.

But what-- didn't you question why would you have to move?

We were not citizens. For example, even if I was born, and my younger sister was born in Germany, it isn't like in the United States. In the United States, if a child is born, this child becomes a citizen. In Germany, it wasn't like this.

Because your parents weren't citizens?

The parents weren't citizen. They were Polish. And even if I was born in Germany, and my younger sister, they were--

So you were considered stateless, or your countryless.

Countryless, that's right.

So they sent you out. And this was before Kristallnacht too.

This, yeah, this was on the 28th of October. However, we did not know there will be a Crystal Night. Later on we found out. We see the Crystal Night.

So for example, with the German Jews, we could maybe do what we want. But with the Jews what had no-- they call this in German staatenlos. They had no country.

No country status.

Yes. So they couldn't do nothing. So they shipped us to the Polish border.

Before you get to Polish border, do you remember-- let's see. You were 15 years old. Do you remember the kind of feelings that you had when that happened?

Oh, yeah, when I went to school, and I always read from the Middle Ages, but it was in Cologne, we have a divine. The water was red from Jewish blood. But it, we could not understand while we were children, and we had it good.

But in moment, there was in Germany, one was-- he plays-- wie heist Schach?

Chess.

Chess. Was the best chess player. I can say he was one of the best in Germany. And his name was Heinrich Silbermann.

And he was Jewish.

He was Jewish. They took him to the Gestapo. And after a few days they brought him back in a casket. And the blood was still running.

So when we saw this, this gave us right away a shock. This was the first thing what I see--

Of violence.

--violence, what the Gestapo did. And this what bothers me very much. I was still-- you keep on going.

And in '38, when this came, I was a little bit satisfied, even we had to leave everything in the house.

You mean you were glad to go already.

Yeah, yeah. I just, if I couldn't see this anymore what I saw, I was glad we went out from Germany.

So we came to the Polish border. But we could not go right away insides to Poland. We were in Zbaszyn. Zbaszyn Is the border--

Is that on the German side, Zbaszyn?

This is the no man's land, they call this.

No man's land.

And their people were always in the-- where the horses was.

Cavalry.

The cavalry was there. But the cavalry wasn't there, and the horses weren't there.

Oh, the stables. In the stables.

They put the people in the stables. And I see a lot of troubles there. So I was a little kid. I was still-- I had a

mind to find out how I get out of there.

So I went. We were near--

When you see you saw troubles, you mean people couldn't take it?

No, if you come from cities like Cologne or from Berlin--

From civilized areas.

--and you come right, they put you there where the horses are, and you have to sleep there and to live there, I mean this gives you-- there are a lot of people they got real sick, and nervous breakdowns and everything.

Well, how long were you there?

A few hours.

But it was enough for some people who--

I saw the people who came before me. And I seen this. So I was-- I don't know if I was smart enough. I don't know. Something came on mine mind to talk to somebody, to-- here they call this an engineer who is on the train. But this wasn't a train like here. This was a train they were going with coal.

And I told them, I will give him anything he wants, but I didn't had too much. I had a ring and watch I had for my bar mitzvah. So you know, I gave him this, and he put us there where the coal is.

To take you out of--

To take us out from Zbaszyn. I say, take us any place where there is no horses, and all this around. He says he take us to Posen. Posen, this is both-- before the First World War, this was Germany. After the First World War, this became Poland. So they took us to Posen.

How far away was that?

This was, I figure, maybe about 50 miles, 60 miles.

So this is you and your mother and your sister.

And my sister, yes. And I helped with to put the coal in the--

You worked.

Yeah, I worked. Well, I was glad. And we made ourself a little black. If somebody should come--

Would be suspicious.

--suspicious. And they were hidden there with the coal, is mine mother and my sister. And I was shoveling the coal.

So we came to Posen and became, in the Gemeinde. What you call this?

Oh, the Judenrat, or the Jewish community.

Jewish community, yes.

Council.

And they called up people. And there were people. They talked German, Jewish people.

Did you speak Polish?

No, no, no.

Only German.

No. All in German. I couldn't speak Polish. See, my parents just speak Polish when they--

Between themselves.

Between themselves, yes. I couldn't, so just German.

So the council took care of you, gave you room, food.

Not a room. Gave us to people. They took us home. My mother was in a place with my sister, and I was in another place. I was there for a few days.

And then they gave us tickets to go to Kraków.

Who gave you the tickets? The community council?

The community, yes. They gave us the tickets. So we went there. And in Kraków, original, my mother comes from Tarnów. So she don't had too much relatives. Maybe five relatives.

Oh, and Tarnów is near Kraków.

And Tarnów is near Kraków. So we went there.

Were the relatives greeting you?

They were nice. But in Poland people weren't too rich either. They were nice the best with their ability.

So mine sister, she wasn't feeling so good. We couldn't talk.

Oh, you just didn't feel comfortable.

Yes. And they gave me a job. I worked. I didn't make too much. It was all right. So we lived there.

How long did you live there?

There was, I think, not even a year.

So we're up to about 1939 now.

1939. The war started again. And we were again the same way where we was before.

Then, in this time, young boys and men was taken off the street to work. And I saw this. And I always was hiding. And I couldn't go out. And I was afraid.

And once my-- there was some people. The Germany and Poland and Russian, they divided Poland, half for the Germans--

And half for the Poles.

And half for the Russians.

Russians, sorry.

Russians.

So there were a lot of people going on the other side. They were afraid to stay mit. And I knew the Hitlers. I knew very well. So I was one of the goers, too. And I told my mother--

That you wanted to go to Russia.

--we should go. I was a reader. See, I know what the Germans were. But the Russians, I have to see.

So did your mother and your sister want to go?

And my mother and sister, she couldn't go.

So they stayed in Tarnów.

Yes. You had to know one thing. You had to walk-- a lot of walking. There was no train going, and most you have to go to walk. And to walk so many miles. I know my mother. I don't think she could do it.

And my mother told my sister to go with me. And my sister, she wouldn't let my mother alone. I was really, had a mind to stay with my mother too. But she really--

She pushed you to go.

She pushed me to go. I don't know if she had ideas like this, but she pushed me. Maybe she thought it would be better for you.

Yeah. So I went. I went. And I had a few belongings I took with.

So then we came. We walked. There was the water. You had to go through the water. And maybe till here.

And I took all my belongings. And on the other side, this was already in Ukraine. In Ukraine, there was people. They told us we should take our belongings and put it on the wagon. And this was middle in the night. And we should walk behind it.

And there was-- [GERMAN]. There was a lot of mud. A lot of mud. I know if I could carry this, I would carry it myself, but I know I couldn't. I even couldn't carry myself through the mud. But it was mud like this.

And we went there. And in the morning, when we came, it was real light already. There was no wagon.

So they ran away with all your belongings?

The Ukraine. They won't help.

So you were without anything-- just the clothes on your back.

Clothes on my back. That's all I had.

And then we-- the Russian was there. And they let us in. This was one good thing. When I was already there, I felt already--

This is Russian territory out of the Ukraine.

In Lemberg. In Lemberg, near-- Lwów.

Yeah. I felt already--

More comfortable.

--more comfortable. I didn't had nothing anyway. And so I could-- really, I wasn't the type of making business. See, people went on the market, and they bought. I couldn't do it.

Then they said there is a place near Lemberg where you dig-- I don't know what you call this in English. [NON-ENGLISH]. You dry it, and then you burn it.

It's like grass, a turf.

Turf, yeah. Turf. I was working there. And I was working there a few months.

Was it hard work?

Well, I was young then.

You were 17 then?

Yeah, I was-- work doesn't matter. So I worked there.

And one night, in the evening, after work, they called us in. We should take Russian passports to be--

Russian citizens.

--citizen. I say, I am born--

German.

--in Germany. And after the war, the war, I hope wouldn't stay all the time. And in this time it was not war. Was no war.

But it was after September 1, wasn't it?

Yeah, but there was already-- Poland was taken in. And the Russian took half Poland and the Germans. There was no war yet.

Not with the Germans.

That was no war. I still say, I always want to go and to see my family, sometimes, if everything get normal. So I wouldn't take a Russian passport. So they say, OK if you don't want to take. And there was a lot of people they took the Russian passports.

And it was after a month or so, they took all the people who took the passports--

The Russian passports.

--the Russian passport, they could stay near Lemberg in Ukraine.

Oh, but that part was taken--

And people who did not took the Russian passports they send to Siberia.

And you were among those going to Siberia.

I was among those to Siberia. We went. We was maybe--

Wait, before you get to Siberia, what happened to these people left in the Lemberg area?

They were OK.

But they were killed later on, weren't they?

This, see, when I went to Siberia, we didn't know nothing. And then-- when was it? In June, I think, when the Germans took over, the-- I think it was in June.

June. They started in the summertime.

They started-- and the Germans--

They thought they'd finish in three months.

That's right. And the Germans took over where the other half, the Russian side. And then the war starts with Russian.

So we were in Siberia. And we were working. I was still--

When you say "we," how many people?

There was a lot of people.

Hundreds? Thousands?

Thousands.

Were you all young people?

Were families?

Young. Families too. Sure. Sure.

Was it cold there? Tell us what it's like in Siberia.

In Siberia, it's like this summertime. Summertime, there is black ground. And they put, I think, before the winter, they put in everything in the ground.

Then comes the snow, and lays till May.

When does it start snowing?

It starts snowing in November.

Oh, just like Buffalo, almost.

Yeah, yeah. But there is-- see, sometimes you have very bad winds. But most of the time it's below zero, and were very quiet. Very quiet.

And you can wear shoes wintertime.

You cannot?

You cannot wear shoes?

Well, what do you wear?

They call this [NON-ENGLISH].

[NON-ENGLISH].

This is made from camel hair.

Is it like a boot?

This is a boot. It goes from the bottom right till here.

Your thigh?

To the thigh. And every night you have to put it like in a bake oven to dry.

Does it get wet during the day?

Oh, yeah, through the snow. It gets wet like ice.

So your feet are cold when you take them out.

Yeah. Then you are already in the barrack when you take them out. And then they have special where they dry it. Then you wear, from a bear--

Bear pelt? Bear hide?

Bear hide, and the gloves of bear hides, and the hat. Siberia, they are born there. They go without mask.

They're used to that.

Get used to it, yeah. I personally--

Well, how cold does it get?

40 below zero.

Did anybody suffer from frostbite?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. A lot of people. Sure.

See, in the barracks was warm. They took wood. Wood in Siberia, you have a lot of wood.

But you have to go pick it. You have to go chop it.

Not to just chop it. You have to cut it too. And if you have a tree, you can see the top of the tree. A lot of people got killed too. See, when they were cutting the trees with no experience.

What did you do in Siberia?

In Siberia, they said they need somebody to take care of a horse. And with this horse, they could give the people water and wood.

You took provisions to the workers. Is that it?

Yeah. I liked to work. And if I am already a guest someplace, I got to do something.

Well, everybody had to work, I presume.

Everybody had to work. Later on, I found out this was a good work.

Why, what kind of jobs did other people have?

The other people went to the-- what do you call this? About--

The woods?

In the woods, and they cut the trees.

So that's what you-- so it was dangerous, and some people got killed.

Dangerous, and I was already OK. Soon I carried the water. Summertime I carried the water and some of the wood to all the people. And there were nice people. Very nice people.

These are the Russian--

The women, the Russian women. Yeah.

Is this Russian Army?

No, this was-- they took care all the--

Like civil servants?

No. There is no civil servants there. That's like in the Army. And they are sent over there to watch the people. And they go there with the whole family. And you get rooms and barracks. They lived there. It's like a small city.

And I had to give them always the water and the wood. And somebody gave me a piece of bread. Somebody gave me cigarettes. I don't smoke, and I changed it. They were very, I can say--

So you had enough to eat and warm clothing.

Yeah, yeah. Yes. See, the clothing you get where you work.

And I tell you, sometimes I had stove. The horse was really my life. So I really divided my food with the horse. And they called me, I still remember, they called the horse Jaska.

Jaska.

Yeah. And they called me too Jaska, you know? They know I had the horse.

So you learned Russian, I suppose.

Yeah, I learned Russian. I was still, I wasn't one of the-- when you talk Polish and Russian, it fits together. When I came in this country, I learned faster English than I learned Russian in-- but German and Russian is too different kinds.

It's far away from you?

And German and English is already a little more familiar.

Related.

Yes. So therefore I say I couldn't talk very well Russian.

Did you have friends in the barracks?

Oh, yeah, yeah. See, when people are in trouble, they always stick together, most of the time. See, when people have it very good, then one always wants to be bigger than the other one. But when people are in trouble--

They stay together.

--they all stick together.

Were you only Jews or were you Poles as well?

Yeah, there were most Jews. Some Polish people too. Yes. Yes. They wouldn't take passports. They were sent there too.

How many years were you in Siberia, Nathan?

In Siberia I was about two years, two and a half years.

So that's from 1940 to 1942.

'42. Yeah. Then they need young people, and they send them to [NON-ENGLISH]. This is the middle Asian.

Middle Asia.

Middle Asia. In Middle Asian, there was already-- summertime was very good, warm, about-- there wasn't too much to eat, either.

One thing I like to say, we had the same privilege to get what anybody else had. This was one good thing. Somebody didn't had more than the other one.

For example, if somebody was working, he gets 600 gram bread. And if you be a Russian or anybody, it's the same thing. This is a good feeling.

Everybody's equal.

It's equal.

Do you get wages, or?

You get what you need. You get what you need. And like I say, they call this a [NON-ENGLISH]. You get every month a card. And you can get off the card sugar. And once in a while, you get some clothes.

And how I see how people were in the concentration camps, like my wife, I had it very good.

Comparatively speaking.

We never was-- I mean, somebody should say we kill you or something. God forbid. This never was.

Did you experience any antisemitism?

In this time, no, no.

In the meantime, your mother and your sister are in-- I didn't hear nothing.

You don't know? You can't write a letter?

No, no, no. I-- I didn't hear nothing. And we don't even know from the gas chambers. We did not know.

You didn't know what's happening in the rest of the world.

Nothing, nothing, nothing.

You'd never have a radio? You never hear news?

The news we hear, but not from the-- just when the Russian took over Poland. When the Russian took over Poland, then we saw, in the paper, what happened. And we couldn't imagine. A lot of people. You see, the Russian soldiers came back from the war, and they went for [NON-ENGLISH]. And they told us. So we had a idea.

But you didn't know what was happening to the rest of--

No.

--of the world.

No, no. We did not know.

And then there was the Volga Germans. They came there.

The what Germans?

From the Volga, the Germans, and they came over there. And so I could talk a little more German with them.

And there was one. I think he was a general. And he was Jewish. And he talked to me--

In the German Army.

No, no. He was from the NKVD. He watched the Germans.

Oh, from the Russian Army.

The Germans were watched.

I see.

They were watched.

So they were prisoners.

No, no prisoners. There is no prisoners. They work just like the other people. But they were always-- they don't trust there. So they took them away from the Volga and sent them to over there.

And this-- called this [NON-ENGLISH], a general. And he was Jewish. He was from Kharkov.

And he talked to me. And he asked me, and I told him what's what. He talked Jewish to me. So he says, I will see what I can do.

So he took me in the bakery, and he learned me to make [NON-ENGLISH]. [NON-ENGLISH] means to bake bread. See, it's like you make beer. This is from the--

Hops.

--the leaves, hops. And you cook it. And then it--

Rises.

--grows. It rises. And then you bake bread. So I learned this, how to make.

He taught it to you, the general?

Not he taught me.

He had somebody teach you.

He had the people, yeah, from the bakery. They were Germans. And they explained me so I could understand them. So I learned this.

So you were in the bakery then. That was even better.

It was better, sure. Then I was already better, so I worked in the bakery a little bit. And then brought there the brigades. We went to work. So I was in the bakery. And I was already making [NON-ENGLISH]. And I was good up. I mean, I had to eat.

But one thing. I never steal something. What I was insides, I had inside. And mine bread card, the bread ration what I had, I gave away to a family with children.

And then, when it was already little later, the director told me, if I can have people to help me in the bakery, I can bring them in. And I did. I took a whole brigade. And they were working daytime.

But in the nighttime, for three or four hours, they came in the bakery, and they helped to work. And--

And they got extra bread.

--they could eat something. They ate in there. And it was very well.

You had enough ingredients? There were enough?

Flour, yeah.

Flour, and--

Yeah. But there was, everything was on the--

Rationed.

On ration, yeah. But like I say, there was one good thing. Everybody was equal. If you was a Russian, or a Jew, or a Polish, or Tajik, or Uzbek-- there were all kind of races there. So everybody was equal.

So how long were you there working?

I were there about two years.

So that brings you--

And then later on, I went, and they took me, and I went in the where they cook. You know? What do you cook for the prisoners?

In the kitchen?

In the kitchen. I worked in the kitchen.

So that was good too. So you never starved.

Yeah, never, no. Never. And I did the best with mine ability. Why? Like I say, I was a guest, and I did the best I could do. I don't care what country I come, so long they treat me like a human being. So I got to give them the best with mine ability.

I was never looking for hours. I always worked.

You did your work.

Yeah, always.

Were you lonely? Or were you too busy and tired?

No, I can say there was always people with families. And Saturday night we went here or there. We could go. You could go to a family in the barrack. Yes, yes. Sometimes Saturday night you had a dance. Yes, yes. And we came together. And the people, through the time, you know the people.

So like I say, when I heard what happened later on in the concentration camps, I could say I really-- one thing I can say. And I'd like to tell this, all the young people. Without faith there is no life. How I was, and where I was, I always had God in mine heart.

I don't think there was even a day I say, why this happened? I always believed in God, and I always, till today, if it was in good times or bad times, if a person lives with a hope, and with a belief, this what keeps a person going.

And I saw a lot of people. When they forgot about anything, they were just like animals. They ate. They could ate up for a whole month a ration in three, four days, and later on they starved to death. See?

And therefore if you have a belief, if you have everything rationed, you live with your life, in your belief, and you believe in God, this keeps you going. How it is, and how I was in troubles, I never-- always had faith. And so later on--

You're talking about faith, I should ask you a question. Did the Russians permit you to observe anything-- holidays?

For example, in this time, every seven days was a day of rest. For example, if this came Saturday, you had Saturday a rest. And then the other seven days it came Sunday the rest.

So I know one thing. If it happened already like this, you can take chances. You say you don't want to work on Saturday, this is impossible.

Therefore, I say we worked. When it came to a holiday, we worked too. But still, we felt the holiday. You wasn't there. But somebody should come to you and say something. You can't believe what they did. That's on your own will.

Every person who wants to believe--

So you believed. You observed it in your heart.

In my heart. And every morning, every morning when I went up, I said Shema. I did not had tallis and tefillin. I did not. Did it. But anyway, anything I knew--

You remembered.

And matter of fact, even when I was riding, if this was the wagon, or it was the slide, I always was praying, always had. And this gave me a good feeling. If it was cold, it kept me a little warm. It was real hot--

So it was your faith that kept you warm and going.

Yes, yes, yes. I can say. And I see, therefore, I always tell everybody, if there comes trouble, there is the best thing in life if you have faith in God. You should never-- I mean, through my lifetime, what I see, don't depend on people. You try the best with your ability to do what you can do.

And like it says in Hallel, you shouldn't trust just in God. This is one thing in life.

So this helped sustain you. And now we're still in Russia, and it's about 1944.

'44, '45. The war was on end.

Did you know the war was ending?

Oh, yes. So they told us to go maybe about 10 miles for our release to go back home. And I know I went the first time-- excuse me-- the first time I went there. Till I went there it was already close.

Because it was 10 miles, and you could make it.

10 mile, yeah.

And everything is by foot.

Everything by foot. So no, if I found somebody who was going there by wagon, he took them. Like I said, they are nice. The Russian people are good people. I mean, the plain-- just like the Americans. American, they are nice people. The Russians are nice people. And I think nobody wants war, to my knowledge.

So anyway, you got your-- you finally got your release, I presume.

Not yet. Then I had to come back home. And I lived with somebody. He just got married. And I told him, 4 o'clock in the morning, we should go there.

He wouldn't go. So I don't know what happened to him. Like I say, I went there a second time, and I had the release. I was still-- it took time till they shipped us back.

And where did they ship you?

To Poland.

To what part of Poland? We was in-- Wroclaw. I don't know what the--

Wroclaw. Yeah, Wroclaw.

Yeah, is it? Yeah? See there. Over there was already the Polish people. From there, we had to go to Berlin. But this was hard.

How did you do that?

We had to give something, something to ship us, the--

The Polish railway?

No, no, no. By truck. So you gave them something what you had. And this was like smuggle. They smuggled you out from there--

Black market.

--to the--

--to the German border.

Yeah, to the German border.

But didn't you want to go to Tarnów to see if your mother and sister were there?

Yeah, I went to Wroclaw. I went to Tarnów before I was going there to Germany. And--

There was nobody there.

Nobody.

And did you hear then what happened to everybody?

Sure, sure, sure.

The Polish people told you.

They told us, yeah, there. They took all the people, and they took them right to Auschwitz.

Yes. So that you found out.

Yeah, that's what I found out, what I had to do there. So I like to go back where I came from. So I went to Berlin, Tempelhof.

How long did that take for you to go from Wroclaw to Berlin?

To Berlin, it was a whole night. They took about 50 people in a truck. They took down everything. And they were smuggled down to the border, to Berlin, Tempelhof.

They weren't supposed to do that?

No, no.

That was illegal?

Yeah, this was illegal. And when we came to Berlin, Tempelhof, there was the UNRRA. There was already the--

United Nations.

Yeah, the DP. The DP camp.

DP camps, Displaced Person.

Yeah, DP camp. We were there.

In Berlin. Outside--

In Berlin, yeah, Berlin, Tempelhof. And then sailed off. In Berlin, I was already like home.

Well, you knew the language.

Yeah, it was easier. So later on, from Berlin, I went to see Ziegenhain. They shipped us to Ziegenhain in the other DP camp. And over there, I worked in a post office.

Oh, I think we have a picture of-- we have a picture of you in the post office? No, we have a picture--

No, we have a picture from the court.

Oh, well, we'll get to that in just a minute.

See, over there, I met--

Oh, here we have the picture of you. Do you want to tell us about this, and we'll get back to the post office.

Yeah. There was the DP camp. And I saw a lot of things going on in the DP camp I did not like.

You mean illegal.

Illegal, yeah. So I did not like it, and I was talking to the people. And there was a vote. And they vote me in to be a judge on the court. And this was the court.

And these are all--

Yeah, judges.

--refugees. Are these--

All, all DP. All DP.

DP-- Displaced Persons.

Yes. Over there, you see--

Which one are you?

Over there. One to the third.

The third from the left.

That's right. Yes.

Is that you?

Yeah, that's me. Yes. See?

And I was there. I was there in court maybe about a half a year.

And what kind of cases did you resolve?

Like I say, I resolve people they don't do the right things. You know what I mean?

You mean if they smuggle and steal?

In the magazine. Not they smuggle, they steal. Yeah, they were-- it wasn't what I-- but I liked it.

You mean, if rations were given for, let's say children, they would take it.

Yeah, yeah, they will take it away.

So what kind of judgment would they get?

They wouldn't put in jail. Just it was take off from work, from this job. They would took off from job, and that's the way it is.

They would take wages or rations away from them.

Yeah, sure. The rations they always had. The DP camp would give everybody rations. But some people had a good position, and they don't like to do--

They probably got warnings, too, I--

Oh, sure, sure. And then it was taken off.

All right. So let's go to the post office. You got a job in the post office.

So then I went to Ziegenhain, and we worked. I worked in a post office. And there I saw a nice girl.

In the post office?

In the post office.

Working in the post office?

Working in the post office. And I introduced myself. And I saw she was a nice girl. So I had to make a date. But it's very hard. She never liked to date me.

Did she know German?

Yeah, she knew a little German. And that's my wife today.

Oh, that's your wife. She had come through concentration camp--

Yeah, she worked in the post office too.

So that was just a fluke that she worked there.

And I liked her. She always write letter for people, and she does everything for people. And this was a good- - so all right. And then--

How long were you in the displaced persons camp?

We was there about-- we came here in 1947, and we went out--

So you must have been there two years.

It took us about one and 3/4 year in DP camps.

Did you find out about your mother and your sister at that time?

Yes, I found out about. They were killed.

And how did you find that out?

I had a sister, but I didn't know, original. Somebody else told me. She saw mine sister in Belgium. And mine sister told her the last letter what my mother sent them to Belgium was, I think, tomorrow or a other two days they will ship us out to work-- not to--

To work. She didn't know where--

She did not know. And this was the last letter.

And did you ever see a record that--

No. No. No. I don't see a record.

So I came. Later on, I came back to Cologne I was at the place where my father is buried in Cologne. Everything was just as we left it in Cologne.

In your own apartment?

Not apartment. On the cemetery.

On the cemetery. But all your things were--

They didn't took the deads. But all the things was no, there was nothing.

They had taken it.

Matter of fact, Cologne was all--

Destroyed.

Yeah, but I was very happy when I saw it. I don't care. I was very happy.

And people told me to stay here. I am born here. I should--

To stay in Germany, and you didn't want to.

If you would give me anything in this world, I would never stay in Germany. Matter of fact, I'm here from 1947.

Oh, you're going to celebrate a 40th anniversary.

Yeah, I came in 1947, Yes. So I never had a mind to go back. Even they say when you are born there, if you write to the city hall, you can go for free.

Oh, they invite you back as their guest.

Yeah, but I--

You're not interested.

Not my cup of tea.

No.

And they say I don't have to work so hard. And here I came to United States. I worked very hard.

Did you come directly to Buffalo?

I came first to New York. I was in New York a few days, I can say. And I had a sister here in Buffalo.

Now how did your sister get here?

She went away from Germany in 1936.

And she came to Buffalo?

She came to New York and then to Buffalo.

And why did she come to Buffalo? We had a uncle here.

Ah, I see. So from your family of five children--

Yeah.

--how many actually survived?

So four survived Hitler.

You, the sister in Buffalo--

In Belgium.

In Belgium and Buffalo.

Yeah.

And we're missing one. And a other sister in Buffalo, too. One is in Redding, now, and one passed away

And you still have a sister in Belgium?

No, no. She came here and she passed away.

She passed away.

Yeah, she was in Israel, and she passed away. And so we came here in this country, and we married here.

And I was in German-- anyway I was on the German quota. And the German quota was not used by Hitler. So it was very easy to come to United States.

Certainly easier than the Polish quota.

Yes, oh, yes.

Were you married before you came?

I had to be married in court to bring my wife mit here.

On your German--

That's right. But in this time, when you was married in court, it wasn't like it is here now. She was still a girl, and I was still a young man, you know what I mean? So we married Jewish here, and then that's what it is.

We have to wind down now. Do you have anything that you want to say in summary?

I want say in summary one thing-- people should be good one to a other. You never know in life what can happen. And always, if you are good to parents, and if you have a good nature of life, and you have faith in God, I think you never can go wrong. If you do good, to my knowledge, and what I saw, it always comes back to you in life-- always. And that's all I can say.

Thank you very much, Nathan.

You're welcome.

Thank you.

My pleasure.