

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back.

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back, and I'm the director of the Holocaust Resource Center in Buffalo, New York. This evening we have with us in the station Morris Lipson, who was born in 1920 in Lodz, Poland. Morris, will you tell us about your childhood growing up in Lodz?

Yes. I was born in Lodz. And we had a family of-- how old, I was the youngest. I had a brother, an older brother and a older sister, she was the oldest and, of course, my father and mother.

If you had a business people, you had a business from wholesaling shoes.

Did you go to school in Lodz?

Yes, I went to-- it's combination of religious and public school, where you learn religious--

Subject--

--subjects and part public mandatory school, what is required, current. I finished public school.

You must have finished around 1938, I presume.

Correct.

And what did you do after that?

After that, I decided not to get involved in my family's business. Lodz was a textile center. And I started to work in a wholesale from textile as salesperson.

I think before we go ahead with what happened after that, we have two pictures of your brother. These are the only two pictures that survived from all of the pictures of your family. So we'll project on the screen now the picture of your brother. And what was his name?

Lajb, this mean Leo.

Leo? And did he survive the Holocaust?

No. He died in the concentration camp, in the same camp that I was.

In the same camp? What camp was that where he died?

That was in Ahlem by Hanover.

And were you together?

Yes.

And we have another picture. And that's your brother Lajb with his friends--

Before the war.

--before the war. And it's a picture in the country. And did any of the boys, the young men in that picture, survive?

Just one, second from the left side.

And the others were all killed?

That's right.

It's so sad to think that you had such a vibrant family and nobody survived except for that friend and that you don't have any remembrances.

All right. Let's go back to your town, Lodz. And it's 1939 and Hitler, the Germans have invaded Poland. So what happens to you then?

At that time, it was announced that they ask all the young people to run away, leave the cities, and run towards Warsaw to help the army defend Poland. And being young and didn't know what to do, we get it all together. Part of those people what you saw in the picture, too, and we took off in the direction of Warsaw.

But of course, as we started to march, we didn't realize that the planes and the bombardments are going to chase us all the way. We marched in slow motion, nights only, to avoid being shot through low-flying planes. And we rest in the daytime. It took us almost a week to get to Warsaw.

It's about 50 miles, isn't it?

More than--

It's more than 50 miles?

Over 100 miles.

Over 100 miles? It took you a whole week and you walked that? How many were you?

The roads were full.

These were young--

We stayed together. And then we broke up. We lost each other. I tried to stay together with my brother, and I lost him, too. But we met then in Warsaw, again.

These are all Polish citizens, young men?

Young men.

Jewish and not Jewish?

Yeah, that's right. But we kept together the people from-- friends, live in the same backyard.

Right.

And there we were surrounded for four weeks with the bombardments.

In Warsaw?

In Warsaw. And of course, we went through hell from the bombs.

Where did you stay in Warsaw?

We stayed with the cousins in the house where-- address on [NON-ENGLISH] 13. That is, we had a address from a cousin who lived in Warsaw. And that's the way we met again, because I lost my brother on the way. He went to the same address.

Oh, so that's how you--

I went to the same address.

--got reunited?

That's the way we got reunited, again. And it didn't matter where. Because you couldn't stay in the house. You stayed only in the halls.

Because the bombing was so severe?

Because of the bombing was so day and night. So we hardly went to the house. And when a store or a food market was bombed, if you had a chance to grab some food, you did. And that's the only food we had.

So after about four weeks, Poland fell?

Warsaw surrounded. And we decided to march back, or try to get back home to our parents.

And this is by foot, again?

By foot, again, right. Coming out from the city, right there, Germans, soldiers. I didn't know at that time the difference from the uniforms and so on. Standing there with some civilians, assume they were Poles. And they would point out who is Jewish and who is not.

Oh, so these were informers, pointing to the Germans, to the Nazis?

Informers, right. Playing, and they would point at this because the German themselves didn't identify, didn't recognize who was who, and to separate the Jews from the non-Jews, from the Gentiles. And they herded us away on a big field and kept us there for, I think, three nights.

Was already at that time, in October, cold. So everybody was trying to push together, being in the middle to stay warm. And all day we're staying in lines to get a piece of bread.

Did they have you work?

No.

Just roll call?

Didn't do anything. Just the roll call, stay in line, line up till you get that, get this piece of bread. And the time go through.

It was night. And, again, you squeeze. They want to be in the middle so you don't freeze. And then they let us go.

That's it? They let you go?

That's it. Let go. What they did with other side, it was thousands of people. I only know what happened to me.

Were they cruel?

No, it didn't run to any. Just kept us there in the--

That was cruel enough.

Cruel enough. But you really didn't know what's going to happen, what the end going to be. And all of a sudden, they said go. We went. And then start--

So you went back home. You went to Lodz.

That's right. On the way home, and the first encounter what I had SS. I knew now they were SS because the black uniforms and the death--

Oh, the skull and bones?

Skull and bones, that's right, on their hats with the high boots and leather jackets, with whips in their hand. And they grabbed the group. And I was between them with my brother because we tried to stick together, hold on to each other.

And they put us around on a-- it was like a railroad, the end of a railroad. It was a one wagon, one passenger train was standing there. I saw by itself. They put us in a circle around the train and ordered push. Push it.

So one was pushing in different directions. Of course it didn't move. And they kept whipping with whips.

Just to make fun?

That's right, to break down you, to make sure they dehumanize you right away. And that was the first encounter. And you realize, or you start picturing what, who knows what they will do to us. And after a while, torturing and beating, whipping, they let us go. And from that on, we decided, me and my brother, to walk slowly through fields to get home because we were afraid to run into more this type.

Whatever you could catch a farmer, give him some money, or give him a watch, whatever we had, take us five miles. They took us on their wagon. Some didn't. And slowly, I think it took us, again, I would say close to a week in slow motion. And we got home.

Your parents must have been very relieved.

That's right. They were relieved. And they were happy that we came home. And then when we got home, we saw what's going on.

First, all the stores were closed. Everything was ordered to where a yellow band. It was no stars at that time.

Oh, a band?

A yellow band on your left arm, if I remember right. That was to identify that you're Jewish. And of course, you were afraid to go on the streets because they were grabbing people, all kind of labor work, and then beating up, and so on. So you try to, as little as possible, get exposed to the streets. Stay mostly inside.

What did you do for food, though?

That was problems. You tried to help. As a matter of fact, it's a story. I think it's worth mentioning.

My aunt lived in a small town. They lived in the same building. She had three children, younger than. And this little town, Konstantin, was quite German-populated. Because in Poland lived a large--

Volksdeutsche.

That's right, Volksdeutsche. You're right. And having small children, the whole-- the house, we was kind of starving, scraping the last leftovers.

Sure.

She knew that he is married, lived outside the city, and had a big bakery.

She knew-- your relative knew that there was another relative?

No, the German. So she went to school as a child--

Oh.

--in this little town. He was a friend of hers from before. She never met him to that time.

She took a chance. Took off her--

Her band.

--her band. And in Poland, they was wearing-- call it?

Capes?

Capes, right. Wrapped it around and looked up the address. He lived outside the city. Went over there.

When she came there, she encountered big lines, people, Poles or Germans, standing in line to get bread. She was afraid to stay in line. So she went to the back door. She wanted to get a hold of him, the friend that she went to school.

And soon she spotted him. She took off her cape on her face. And he recognized her right away.

He said Rachel, what are you doing here? He came out. And she told him. You know, I risked my life to come here. I have children. I need bread. I need food.

He said OK. He took a sack. He filled it up with several loaves of bread. And he said whenever you can make it here, I will give you bread. But make sure one thing, that my children don't spot you.

That my children spot you.

My children don't spot you, don't see you.

Oh, that the children don't spot you?

The children, that's right. Because he's afraid they will turn you in,

Oh, my gosh. Did she make it back to?

He was German. So she made it back. And she went several times.

And when she came home, she would divide the bread to neighbors and us, and so on.

What a nice story that is.

That's right. And then came the time the order came to go to the ghetto.

And your family was intact, your sister and your brother and yourself?

That's right, except my father was separate. We were planning to move to Warsaw.

Why?

Why? Because it came out that the Poland will be divided. Our city will be incorporated to Germany. And it will be occupied part a protectorate, they used to call it, under German occupation.

That Lodz would be?

Not Lodz. Lodz will be incorporated to Germany.

Yes. But is better to stay outside Germany so to avoid all the harassment and so on. So we decided, as my parents-- my grandparents originally come from Warsaw, that and having relatives there, that we will move to Warsaw.

So me and my father went first. And I went back to help.

Pack up your--

Pack the rest and go there. So having certain things, but it was difficult to transfer. And at that time, at the few days I was away, it changed that it was possible to get rid of it, sell it, so it'd be easier to transport to go to Warsaw. So we decided to stay longer.

You mean your business, to transport your shoes?

For business merchandise, shoes, and so on, sell as much we can. And then move just with money and it's easier to transfer.

Right.

So we decide to stay on longer to liquidate whatever we can.

Your assets?

Assets, whatever we can. In the meantime, they made a border. And it was very difficult--

Oh, so you were stuck in the ghetto and your father was in Warsaw.

My father tried several times to come home. He couldn't. He almost got caught. He run away.

Then he decided, went back to Warsaw. And that's the way it lined up. We stayed in the ghetto.

Then came the order to move to the ghetto. But we moved in. And he stayed in Warsaw. Only through certain people, we received letters from time to time, and we will send a letter to him. So we knew that he's alive, and so on.

So there you were. So now you're in Lodz. And it's a ghetto now.

It's a ghetto.

1940?

That's right. And I have to say this. Before we went to the ghetto, the same friend for my aunt, she lived in the same

building on the same floor that we lived. It's a big apartment building.

He came up there. Because the order was in the papers that the Jews have to move in by such and such date.

You mean that baker?

Yeah, that baker.

The German baker.

He came to her house because she was a seamstress. And she had a small little--

Shop?

[NON-ENGLISH] shop making shirts. So he said Rachel, what can I do for you? She said I know you cannot take the stuff, the furniture with you. He came with a truck.

He said OK. I'll give whatever you want. I will help you put on my attic. He owned the building, the bakery.

But don't-- she was never crying. It was right in the room that my aunt-- we were all crying. And he was with his brother.

He said I will give whatever you want. I will hide it in my attic. And don't cry. And you will survive. And you come back, you will go in your attic, you'll have all your things there. And alongside, you will see myself hanging there. That was his words.

Mm. See myself hanging?

Hanging there, he will hang himself. He felt it did harm. So he felt so bad he said, I will hang myself. I will be hanging there alongside. That was his words.

Hmm.

And she gave him all the machines, furniture. Whatever she couldn't take, he loaded on the truck and took it away.

Where was her husband?

Oh, he's there, too.

Oh, the husband was there.

Oh, with the children, everybody. They went to the ghetto.

So in the ghetto, does that mean that you had to leave your own house and go to another house?

Leave your house. Whoever lived outside the ghetto had to leave. And it was assigned to certain places.

We were assigned to one room. We're lucky that we got--

One room for the four of you?

Three, me, my brother, my sister, and my mother, because my father was absent. He stayed in Warsaw. We stayed in one room.

And there started the starvation. Food was a problem. It didn't come. And you had to stay in long lines. There was no work at that time. It was very demoralized, everything.

And being disgusted, as a young fellow, I went myself and signed up voluntarily to go to labor camp. Because they had big lines, whoever wants to go away because it was really bad.

Were they really labor camps, or was it--

Who knows?

--concentration camp?

Then my mother and my brother and my sister, when they found out, they kept me. They kept crying and insisting that I don't separate and don't go. Because nobody knows where they're going to send us.

And I listened. And just my name was there, but I never went to whatever date that was assigned to appear. I never went there.

And then started the ghetto. You could see people falling like flies.

From malnutrition and starvation?

From starvation, malnutrition. It was a terrible, terrible, terrible view. And little by little, it became-- I don't know if you know Rumkowski. It became like a little government in the ghetto.

Oh, Chaim Rumkowski--

Chaim Rumkowski.

--who became the head of the Judenrat.

Head of the Judenrat, that's right. And they start organizing factories. The reason--

Did he organize the Jewish Council? Or did the Germans organize it?

Yes, of course. It was-- that certain council was liquidated. It didn't maybe cooperate. It was a whole-- but he became-- he took over. And he started to cooperate with the Germans, I would say.

He did a lot of things what some didn't want to do. I really don't know. I wasn't involved in the--

There's a book about him. And they call him the King of the Jews. Was he so arrogant?

He was so-- yes, it became-- in the government, and they let him do it. Because he did execute exactly the orders what he was supposed to do.

Exactly what were those?

What he was told to do, just to go through one what he-- personal to my family, he did help. It was an order. That was after several years. The Germans put an order to him to mobilize, I think, if I remember right, the amount, 10,000 young people give to work.

And my brother was on the list of one of them. He didn't want to go out. So he didn't report to the station where he was supposed to report. As a penalty, we had, at that time, was coupons. Each family had a ration of food. They stopped the ration of food for the whole family.



Oh, my.

So here, whatever you had left, dried coffee or a little bit sugar, we kept dividing for each a spoon each day. He was hiding the moment the policeman would come-- the Jewish police, not the German-- would come on the steps. We lived on the second floor in this building. At the moment he heard steps, he would hide on the attic or whatever. At certain place, he was hide.

One day, a good friend who was in the police, the Jewish police, came to pick him up. He came in. He saw us. This was maybe already the sixth or seventh day. We were all laying on the beds, like, half-- not very-- without food.

Weak.

Weak, laying, just laying, and didn't know what to do. Because we couldn't tell him go. Because we know they'll send him away. We're never going to see him.

So when he came in, he said, oh, my God. To whom I came? Where is Leibel? They called him Leibel at that time. Where's Leo?

I know he's hiding. Tell Leo I see what's going on in this house. He's doing wrong. He said tell Leo I will come back in several hours. I want to talk to him.

If he doesn't want to go with me, I will not take him in. Because he has-- I have to talk to him. Tell him who I am. Because he was a friend from school, we were playing together before.

So he left. And the brother came down. I told him. He said yes, I want to talk to him.

So he came back in several hours. He explained that you cannot let it go like this. Because you're all going to collapse. You cannot live. They're not going to open the food for you.

So my brother decided to report. And he helped, this fellow. And he gave us names to other people to go.

He said once before they send the transport is an inspection. And stand up and go over there. Tell them that you're the leader of the family and you're supporting the whole family. And you would appreciate if they will let you go home.

That he told your brother?

That's right. To say-- and we will announce. They put the name there. We will put in a good word for you and maybe they will cooperate. Take the chance.

And the moment you will go there, they will release all the food for the whole week. And at least your family will be able to get nourishment, and so on. And my brother did so.

He went over there. They must have mentioned his name. And when the inspection was, he stepped forward and said I have a sick mother. And I am the head of the family. And I would appreciate to let me go back so I can help support the family. And they let him go. He came back home

Oh, so that was a miracle. Now what did you all do in the ghetto? What kind of jobs?

I was working in a factory. They made straw shoes and rag shoes.

For the population in the ghetto?

No, everything was for the outside. The population in the ghetto, you got nothing. You had to live on your own rags and

your own whatever.

But they actually sold or used straw shoes and rag shoes?

Yeah, the straw shoes, the big ones, went for the army on the posts. And the state guards, they put them in top of their boots.

Oh, I see.

Not to be cold, was big straw shoes. Then the rag shoes really was not for the ghetto. Whatever they did outside was--

And your sister and brother and mother did that, too?

No, my mother, her health wasn't too good. So she would job out. Because you had to work, was working. She would make, from old rags, braided pieces what they were then sent to the factory. And they made throw rugs from the braidings. She had to produce so many yards or feet of braided--

Ribbon or whatever.

--ribbon. And we all helped in the evenings after work, whatever we could.

So that she could be productive.

Produce the quota of braiding to the level that she is listed as a productive person. And then later on-- I have to mention this because I think it's very important, too-- was once they shut off the ghetto again, and they demanded that all the children and sick people be delivered to them.

They were saying they will send them to special place. They'll be taken care of better. But we all knew that it's not true. But we didn't see it. You know it's a rumor. It's false. But you didn't try to elaborate on it. You just let the rumor fly the way they said. But you knew how can children survive, small babies, one month old?

Without their families.

Without their families, and so on. And this took almost, I think, 10 days if I remember, too.

Because none of the parents wanted to give their children.

They went from backyard to backyard. It was no food, nothing. Whatever you had, you picked up a ration of food before. And that's it to the gathering or the collecting of those people is finished.

I happened to live in a backyard where one of the tenants who lived there, he was in charge of a little milk store. It was divided into, like, corporations, milk, cheese, delicatessen, and then vegetable market. He had to go in each place separate.

Like, whoever had children would get a piece of cheese or a cup of milk, and so on. He said-- and they were all running low. We have no food. We divide it little by-- for several days. Then everybody started running low on food.

He said, you know what? His store-- the ghetto was divided. And they had the overpasses you had to go over. To get to one part of the ghetto to the other, you had to cross over a main road through a bridge. So you're not permitted to go, because streetcars and cars or army would go through those main roads.

He said if you can cross to the store, I know I left some cheese and some milk. It's probably sour milk now. We can use it if you can bring it home.

But you have to have some authority. Because the Jewish police and the post office people did help my cousin who died on starvation in the ghetto was one of the postman's before he died. So his band and hat was left in our house.

I said wait a second. I have a band. I never had. I take a chance. Because when you're hungry, you do it.

You'd do anything.

He gave me the keys. And I went out. In the street, you saw only policemen or those post office working today, whatever assignments there were. And I pretend that I'm one of them.

Walked to the bridge and crossed over. And as I crossed over, I saw a line of trucks, like army trucks. And on the cabin where the driver sits in top was sitting a soldier with the boots down. It was packed with mothers and small children, like--

Oh, they took the mothers with the children?

Whoever didn't want to give up the child, they would took the mothers. So was several mothers there and small children, like thrown in one on top of the other. And the soldier was sitting on top of the cabin, of the driver's cabin, with his feet down on them with the rifle.

And when I saw this, I came home. I told them all. They're not--

They're not taking the children to summer camp.

--to summer camps or to some better places there are exter-- and the transport--

Did you know about extermination then?

No, we didn't know. We know that when you have rough, even the ghetto, why should they-- would we expect them to do any better in the other place.

Right.

So you didn't dwell on it. You just take it a little--

Tried to get through one day to the next?

Or one day at a time, right. And that's when I came back. I told them what I saw. And it was a terrible scene to see several trucks with small children and several mothers laying piled up in the trucks with the soldier with his boots down. So I knew right away that it's terrible.

And in the ghetto, it was quite difficult to get by. But somehow, with starvation and--

So you were in the ghetto four years?

Four years. It came 1944. It came to order they're going to liquidate the ghetto. And everybody should--

Get ready for--

Right. So what they did, they shifted. The ghetto was divided in three sections, two overpasses, three sections connecting. And they liquidate one part, and they put all the people on the other side.

So they let you report yourself to a certain stations from certain hours that you could take to the railroads to ship your way. And if you didn't report, like, from 8:00 to 9:00 in the morning, they would--

Thank you.

--that means the people who didn't want to themselves, on their own free will, report to those collection places, we were hiding ourselves, they went around and tried to find them. And it was very terrifying.

Who was doing the looking, the German soldiers, not the Jewish policemen?

Police were helping with the trucks. But there we are already dealing with German soldiers, and police, too.

Why do you think they wanted to liquidate that ghetto when you were so productive? According to all hearsay, you were producing.

In '44, they were already losing the war. And they know. And they probably, the way I heard that, that was the final--

Final solution, the final extermination?

That's right, to get all the effects and so on liquidate. And in a matter of fact, after hiding, I think we went over to another family that we knew from before who lived on the other side of the other part of the ghetto, what was permitted still to stay. And there we were hiding.

And hiding several days, we decided to report ourselves. And one morning, 8 o'clock in the morning, we went out in the street. There were trucks going by. And people could board those trucks or wagons.

And they took us to this centers where they get it. This was the railroad center.

The Umschlagplatz.

Right. And there on the center sets-- everybody would take a little bundle with them, a little extra shoes, or a pillow over the clothing. In five minutes when you came there, everybody put down their bundles.

That was the last time you saw it, I bet.

That's right. And after a while, they gave us a loaf of bread. Because like a good welcome. And put us in the cattle trains.

Were you still together with your family?

Yes, we stayed together, Mother, sister, and my brother, still together.

That was rather rare, wasn't it, for families to be intact?

In the ghetto, some died. Like my aunt all died in the ghetto, like I was telling earlier.

Right, the ones who went to the bakery.

Some were deported or died.

Were her children taken away on that children's command?

Some were taken away. They lived in a different part. And they were taken away much before even she was taken away. She went to the children, because were younger. Because if I remember right, after the children were gone, they were gone. When they took the children, she went for the children.

But anyway, we went on this train. And the train, I think, was dragging for two or three days. And it was terrible. They did everything in the same train, and so many people stuffed in--

In other words, there was no bathroom?

No bathroom, nothing.

Everything was there? Sleeping, the bathroom?

People screaming, and older people were crying, and sick people, who knows, and--

Did you get food and water?

Only what we had. We received some bread.

Oh, just initially.

And some water on the way, they gave some. When they stopped for half an hour or so, they would come up with a pail of water. Whoever could get to it got a drink of water. But finally, we got to Auschwitz.

I'm sure there were some dead people in your car then.

Possible. We tried to keep together as much as possible. And we only talked about--

Your own group.

--not to lose each other. Right. And it was the smell and the conditions were terrible. So there wasn't much to-- no place to go. Let's put it that way.

When we arrived there right away. And as the train moved into Auschwitz, I will never forget the scene. You saw the wire, barbed wires from Birkenau and Auschwitz.

And all the way, you saw ditches and people with dead faces, half-naked over those striped-- because you were-- you had normal clothing still. But stripes, laying, and some, on certain points, you came very close to the ditches. The train was going very, very slow.

And they were begging to throw them down something, bread or whatever. And they said they will take it away. If you give it, give it.

But we didn't believe it. Whoever had still a piece, because you would divide the bread, you didn't know how many days you're going to drag. So every day we'd eat small--

You'd ration it out.

That's right, a little piece, and so on. And finally, the train stopped. And a lot of the German soldiers, SS with whips, raus, raus, raus.

Get out.

And you went very fast. And they kept dividing right, left, right, left. And in five minutes--

Was Dr. Mengele there? Do you know?

I have no idea. I didn't--

This was at night?

No, that was in the day time. Like, I would say, the afternoon. Faces, it went so fast, I was in a shock.

Sure, the whole thing was shocking.

The whole thing. And in several minutes, my mother and sister was on one side and me and my brother on the other side. And from that time on, I did never see my--

So you think your mother and your sister went to the crematorium?

Nobody saw them. So I would assume they must have went to the--

To crematorium.

--too the gas-- that's right. Gassed or whatever, burned in the ovens. And me and my brother stayed together. We went through showers which they called cleaning. And they really was shaving you and looking for you didn't hide anything. And the stripped you completely naked.

Did they tattoo you?

No. At that time, was no tattooing anymore. Because this was just as a transfer camp to send you to farther out to work. Whoever stayed there probably was--

Then they were tattooed.

--tattoo. So by the evening, already they hoarded us into a barrack. And we stayed in the barrack together. And we stayed there, I would say, close to a week or so.

Did you have to work there?

No, nothing. We're just terrified, beatings, chasing back and forth in the barracks, just to keep you--

Terrified all the time.

Right, all the time. And finally came in and picked a group to send away. Was a thousand to send to Hanover. And I was separated from my brother at that time when they picked the group.

But for some, I sneaked in to the same group that he was so at least we shouldn't be separated, sent away, and probably eliminated from the count. They needed a thousand, but they'll eliminate it somebody else. And I was sent together with my brother to Hanover.

What was in Hanover?

Hanover, it was attached-- the whole group worked in a-- it's called Continental Rubber Factory. It was an English company, but taken over by the Germans, of course. He took away everything with it.

But the name of the factory was Continental. They produced rubber tires, big for airplanes, big for trucks, whatever. Anything with rubber was produced over there.

And we were put to the ovens, to the coke ovens, where the heat is, and not having no strength, and people falling like flies.

And did they feed you?

We received every day a chunk of bread and a coffee. It wasn't coffee. They call it coffee.

Ersatz coffee.

That's right. And when you came home, a bowl of soup, very thin, not much in it.

And at work, I did not go. See, that was my luck, too. I did not go, walk to this factory. My brother did.

I did not go. I was selected, stayed behind. And they used me to clean the back, sweep. Because I looked very young. My brother was much built stronger and huskier. So they picked about 20 people stayed behind.

To clean the barracks?

Cleaned the barracks, do everything, bring the food, whatever was necessary.

So that wasn't so terribly taxing?

For me, it was easier. Because I didn't have to go to those coke ovens. And people were falling. And we arrived, I would say, July, beginning of July. Through November, from the thousand, I don't know if the original 100 was left.

Did your brother survive that?

Yes. They kept filling in with people, constant bringing in new people to this group, not only Jews, other nationalities, too. Then for some reason, they switched us.

And they took us over to Ahlem. The whole group, or the infected didn't like us, or too many people dying and falling. Maybe they weren't productive enough. Whatever the reason, I didn't know. They took the whole group, whoever was left, Ahlem by Hanover.

It was a mine. We worked in a mine. The idea was to build an ammunition factory underground.

And this was '44, in the summer of 1944?

Yes. They put us in a field with no barracks. We had to build our own barracks. That was in December, the beginning of December, snow, cold, rain, whatever. And we started from scratch, building our own barracks.

Wait, but you arrived there in the summer? No?

Yeah, from Hanover to Ahlem is only 10, 20, 50 miles away.

So you were building your barracks in the summer?

No.

Oh.

They took us out from Hanover, transferred to the other camp. It was called Ahlem by Hanover.

Oh, so it was already wintertime then?

Right. And we had to build our own barracks from scratch.

And you worked in the mines as well?

Then when we had readied the barracks, then they sort us to the mines. We worked in the mines to the end. In the mine, I worked. I was selected to the mine, too, at that time. So me and my brother all went working to the mine.

I had a little accident on my finger in the mine where the drills that were drilling holes, the dynamite, the rocks, being weak, three or four people had to hold those big drills. We couldn't hold down. It fell. And we tried not to let it fall because we're afraid you're going to get beaten up to death. So we tried to prevent from falling.

My finger got pinched between the drill and the forms, what was set already for pouring the concrete, foundation. And it was a small injury. And they gave me a bandage. And that's it. That was the finish of it.

And not being clean, and so it got infected, and little by little, my hand was completely--

Swollen I bet.

--swollen.

Puss?

Puss. And it's terrible. Too, I got temperature. And I was admitted to-- they call it--

A clinic?

--clinic for the camp, concentration camp clinic.

That was death most of the time, wasn't it, if you got into a clinic?

Right. And the clinic over there was no windows. It was in January, cold.

And you had a high fever?

A high fever, and I knew if I fall asleep, I would probably never wake up. So I tried with all my strength to stay awake. To stay awake, to get over the night, what I did.

And then when they took me to the operating table, that was not a real-- it was a doctor, actually, from the campus, from the concentration camp itself, one with the stripes.

A real doctor?

Well, he maybe had part--

Part medical school?

--medical school, but he wasn't a finished doctor. And he was from the same city. I started to cry very much. He broke down.

He said what's the matter? Why are you crying? I said I know because you're going to put me to sleep, I know they're probably going to put me to sleep for the-- they didn't operate. And you're only going to put me in this room, I will never wake up. I will freeze to death.

He said never mind. I promise you that. They had a little room. It was a little stove for themselves, in case they get sick, to stay there. He said I promise you, you will be over there.



Did he keep his word?

He kept his word. When I woke up after the surgery-- what he made a mess of my hand-- I woke up in this little room. And that helped me to survive. And I stayed in this room maybe five, six weeks.

Oh, so you recuperated there.

Recuperated over there.

You got your strength back.

Got my strength back a little bit.

Five or six weeks there was a big thing.

And before that, what I skipped, my brother died in the same camp. And he died the beginning of January.

From?

Starvation.

Oh.

He got beaten several times. I had--

Were you there when your brother died?

Yes.

Oh. I mean, went to work. That was before this had happened. I went to work. And every night when I came home, I used to go and see how he's doing, if they let me. Sometimes they did.

And one night, maybe it was the third night I came home, they said he's dead. It was a cement box, five, six corpse was laying in a sack. He said one of them was his. That's all. That's all.

After being through so much, he almost made it.

That's right. It was in January he died.

January 19--

1945.

So close to the end.

And from there came the end. It was, I would say, in the beginning of April 1945.

Did you know that the war was going badly for the Germans at that time?

Not exactly, but we knew it's bad. Because they forced us in the beginning to go to the bunkers, when sirens was--

Sounding off?

--raids, air raids. Then, by the last few months, they didn't bother.

They just left you alone?

Let you stay.

Did you get more food? Did you get better treatment?

Not at all, not at all. Thank you.

From there, they liquidated. They said whoever wants to stay can stay.

Who said that, the Nazis?

Yeah, the SS. And we had kapos, too. Germans with stripes who were Germans, but they ruled inside. The SS and the Wehrmacht on the outside.

And they came in. They roll call. That's what's going always, every day, twice a day, stay half nights in roll call.

In the cold--

In the cold.

--without sufficient clothing.

That's right. And they said OK. We have orders to leave.

They themselves have orders to leave?

Yes, we have orders to leave. But whoever feels sick or doesn't want to leave can stay. They didn't-- and we knew it's not good to be sick. At that time, it was better for those who stayed because they were freed before. They didn't have to go through.

Oh, but you didn't know this?

Didn't know it. So we decided not to go over there.

So you went with them?

They marched people. We went from there. We marched several days. We marched into Bergen-Belsen.

Had that been liberated yet, Bergen-Belsen?

No.

No?

That was still-- they were marching from all over. They came from all the camps. They concentrated people over there.

And that was in the winter, in cold?

It was in beginning of April, I would say.

So it was still cold.

Oh, yeah. It was still cold.

We stopped several-- laying on fields. We were guarded. Whoever tried to run away was shot, and so on.

And actually, I didn't think too few would try to run. Because you're weak. And where are you going to run in the middle of nowhere? Whoever did was liquidated.

And finally, I got to Bergen-Belsen. They dumped us in in a barrack. There was no bunks, nothing, just plain--

Floor.

--floor. And thousands of people were laying, like, crawling.

Just weak.

And just laying there. And the first morning, you stand up. There's, like, a roll call. We figure they're going to give us some food.

Stayed up in line. And touched the door. And when they came to the door, they gave us a little-- they called it soup. It was plain water.

That was all the food, no bread whatsoever. And they happened to pick me. They picked a group to work. And we didn't know what kind of work it's going to be.

And they marched to divide it in smaller groups. And was some with SS soldiers and kapos. And they took us to a pile of corpse, big piles, laying piles after piles of hundreds of thousands of corpse. Who knows how long they've been laying there?

They made take off the belt. Two people to corpse. Hook it on to the feet and drag him. It was mass graves with chlorine spread-- big grave, like, the size of this room, or larger.

That was maybe a mile away. And I know we went very slow. I think during the whole day maybe I drag two corpse. Because Shlomo, he didn't have no strength. And I knew, eventually, it looked like I was afraid I'm going to fall in myself.

And when I got back in the evening, very--

Exhausted.

--exhausted, I said that cannot go on. And I tried to plan, to figure how to get away. I afraid the next day they're going to take me again.

We slept on the floor. I looked around. And I saw, in the back of the barracks, is all the bunks and those cabinets were-- once in those barracks were broken and thrown out, laying in the back like a pile of garbage. I looked up and I saw a little spot. And I went there to sleep.

So every night in the middle of the night I would go out there. Because it was too cold to lay all night. So I slept, like, through 3:00 in the morning in the barrack. Then slowly I walked out and hide myself.

So you hid yourself there from the guard?

See, they pick only in the morning. Then whoever stayed behind, stayed. They didn't do anything. They just let you-- there was rumors, then, later.

They said they found-- I don't know. I didn't see it. They said they found poisoned bread was supposed to be dealt out to liquidate.

Even at the end?

That was the end, right. And I stayed, I would say, almost a week or 10 days, to-- by the end, we were freed already.

By the British?

By the British.

Do you remember the date?

No. I was told after that that Bergen-Belsen was freed April 15th.

That's what I heard. So what kind of impression, what remembrance--

But I want to say how in a way. And when the British freed us, I was laying there. Whole floor was full of people. You don't know who is dead, who is alive.

I couldn't walk anymore. I know it's coming to an end for myself. They came from both sides. The doors were open, because they didn't want to go in if it was for the smell or whatever. I don't know.

And they put kettles of soup. And the smell would come in. They were calling out in German, all kind of languages. Whoever, please walk up. We will give you a food.

They want to see who is alive, who's dead, who can walk. And some people did walk up. I tried, but I couldn't raise myself. I couldn't walk.

That was going on two days or three. I don't recall. They came with the soup.

The third day, the ambulances arrived. And I was even weak. I didn't eat the last-- at all, just water for almost a week. And my mind was still clear. I raised my head. And I could see people in white--

Uniforms.

--uniforms, like Red Cross, with stretchers, walking in, running fast. And one, assuming he was a doctor, would look, search between those piles and make a cross. And then they would disrobe this person, put them on the stretcher, and take him out.

And my mind was still clear. So I didn't wait till it got to me. By the time they got to me, I was disrobed.

Oh, boy. The will to survive.

That's right. I teared everything off for myself so they didn't look. He went by and made a cross on my forehead and before I knew, I was on the stretchers.

And they took me to Belsen. They used to be military barracks, brick buildings. And they made a hospital from it.

A British hospital?

Right. And doctors came in. Yeah, I went through first a cleaning. Right away they put you from the stretcher. You went through called delousing system. They put you with powder, all kind of chlorines, and then to beds and shaving.

It's the first time you were in a bed with sheets in--

First time, that's right.

--a long time.

As I got in bed, my temperature, I must have got very, very sick. Because for a week or 10 days--

You don't remember?

--I don't know what was happening.

Did you have typhus?

I don't know. I know I was burning up, spitting with blood, all kind of whatever was.

Must have been very thin, too.

Thin and weak, and just I didn't even eat, just medications they gave me. And I came back to myself. And I think I stayed there almost six weeks or two months.

Then the Red Cross come in. And we were, I think, four beds in this room. And they said whoever wants to go to Sweden to recuperate will be not-- free, everything is paid.

And you trusted them? You felt OK.

Yes. OK. I knew my brother died. Whoever I saw, I asked if they ever saw my sister. Nobody saw her. So I--

You assumed that she died.

--had a feeling that I have nobody left. So where do I have to go? What do I have to lose?

So I volunteer right away. And from there, they took us to [NON-ENGLISH], Hafen, I remember, in Germany.

By plane?

No, by buses, truck, and from there, again, you went through cleaning. And they gave me just a khaki uniform, just a shirt and pants.

It must have felt so good.

And on the boat, when we came, we arrived to Sweden. And Sweden was the first time I saw the real world of real human beings. And they did very, very good to me. They brought me back--

To health.

--to health. And as a human being, start thinking as a human being.

You were rehabilitated.

Rehabilitated very good. I was very thankful and they showed the-- at most. It was the first warm welcome, the first human welcome I received was in Sweden.

You didn't feel that from the British? Or were you too sick?

I was sick and still in barracks, still--

It wasn't a free world.

I was still not myself.

Right.

When I got there, my sense and my mind start to come back little by little, such feeling as a human being.

I understand you met Lola, you met your wife in Sweden.

Being there in the recuperating camps for almost six months, I myself walked up. I could stay as long as I want. I said I want to go to work. And they said where?

We had rumors that a little town has some already people from concentration camp, have homes there. And they work in some boys and girls homes for boys and girls.

So I just mentioned this town. He said fine. You sure you want to go to work?

I said yes. I got to get out and back to normal life. And after a while, I don't know if it took a month or so, they called me up. And they arranged where to go to this town. And I start working there in a factory named ASEA.

And what did you do?

I was started as a sweeper, because I didn't know the language. And when they offered me, I didn't even know what it is. See, they said, [NON-ENGLISH]. [NON-ENGLISH] means sweeping.

And I didn't-- I figure I accept anything, just work. I said yes, shook my head yeah. I didn't know what it meant. And when I came in, they gave me a broom.

And at that time, I was 26 years.

But you had lived through a lifetime already.

26 years old. So after several days, I walked up to the engineers. And already knew of several words. And I said listen, that does not work for me. They said I know. And they took care.

And in the meantime, I learned the language. And little by little, I went to mechanical assembling and some. And I finished up as [NON-ENGLISH], like a foreman of an assembly.

Quartermaster. And did you meet--

Called material master.

Material master. Is that where your--

Over there I met my present wife. Because she was from the same town. And when I saw, I recognized right away. I said you must be from such and such family. She said yes. And so it started.

So what's the name of the family?

The family was Rosenwalds.

And you remembered?

I didn't remember her father's name. It was Goldberg. He was married to the daughter of Rosenwald.

But you remembered?

I remembered the looks, her face. It was just like the Rosenwalds. So it was a very known family.

It must have been a happy reunion then.

Like a-- yes. And she was happy finding somebody who knew the family, grandfather, father, and so on, the whole family. So we started talking to each other and going out together.

And it didn't take long. In July 7, 1947, we got married in Stockholm in the big temple.

And your daughter was born in Sweden, too, your first daughter?

My daughter was born right in Sweden. Cecilia was born in Sweden. And we came to the States, she was born in '47, July 6, '47. She was the age of 7 when we arrived to the States in 1954.

Morris, you have a document that we want to put on the screen. And maybe you'll tell us something about that piece of paper. It says your name. It says Lipschitz there. But that's not your name. It's Morris--

Right. That is my real name from Poland. And as I came to the United States, and when I was up to become a citizen after five years, if I remember right, they told me that when you become a citizen you have the right of no difficulty to change your name.

And because Sweden, I have very good feelings and memories from Sweden and not so good memories from Poland. And as you see the name was spelled S-Z. And it remind me from Poland.

Oh, a Polish spelling.

Polish spelling, so I decided--

This is your birth certificate.

Birth certificate from Poland. This is given by me, I think, in 1984 through the council. Because this city was not bombed in all the files were in order. So they could get the original document.

Oh, and that enabled you to get Social Security?

That's right, for the Social Security office. I decided at that time, even the judge asked me, what is your name going to be? And I said Lipson. And he said why.

I said Lip half of my name. And S-O-N is more Scandinavian.

Oh, like Jenson and Svensson.

Andersson comes-- is a Scandinavian name. And that will be, if the children ever ask me, I will tell them the same thing.

Oh, so it's sentimental?

I give half my name for sentimental reasons to Scandinavia.

The son of Lipa. I think we have to--

He's the son of Lipson.

Lipson. So we have to conclude. Do you want to say anything in conclusion, any message to your family, to your children, people who will be seeing this tape?

To my children, I feel sorry that they live a life without uncles, cousins, grandfathers. And I never, when they were young, I avoided talking about it. I would say the last few years I started a little bit to open up. And if they ask questions, I'd talk about it.

It's easier for you now?

I think it's important.

It's important.

It's important. I came to realize it's not good. I know we're all going to eventually go. Sooner or later, this generation will disappear. And I think to leave the truth for the future, for the next and next and next generation.

A testimony.

It has to be documented. It has to be told. And talk about it and tell the truth. And who else could tell if not the people who lived through, who went through this hell and this dehumanization and this unbelievable thing? Because I myself, even now--

Can't believe it.

--can't believe it. And it really happened to me. Did I go through this hell? Did I get those beatings? For what? Why did I get treated like this?

Because the Nazis wanted to be the master race. And of course, that never, never happened. That's the message, right there, that--

That's right, it is.

--we can only live together.

I would say that it shows, if you let a devil get to power--

Then he can overcome.

And that is the devil did it. By that, I meant Hitler.

Yes.

He came. And once he got to power and got the bayonet touched others, that's what happened.

Thank you very much. I know it was very difficult for you to relive these memories, to tell the stories. We thank you very much. And we can only hope and pray for peace for your children and grandchildren and for the whole world. Thank you very much.

Thank you.



Mr. Morris Lipson.

Thank you.