

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back and I'm the director of the Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo. It is May 23, 1989. And our visitor tonight-- our guest tonight is Sol Sloan. Mr. Sloan, but I'm going to be informal, I'll call you Sol if that's all right.

Yeah, Sol, yeah.

Sol, will you tell us about your childhood?

Where should I start?

Start with your mother, your father, your family, where you were born.

I was born in a small town they call Ruscova. It was 600 Jewish family, very religious. And we were poor. We were very poor. We had one pair of shoes. We had nothing to eat. When I was 13, I have to leave home. And I went to Arad in Hungary. That was Romanian.

Did you go with your family?

I didn't. I wasn't married yet.

No, I meant with your mother and father?

No, my mother and father were home. They never-- no.

So I was there about a year or two. And then I met a man, Henigsberg was his name. And I bought 10 lemons. I started out with 10 lemons. I take home some baskets for the ladies from the market. And then I bought 10 lemons. And I started selling it. And then I worked myself up.

And then he take me in-- that Henigsberg, he take me in. And he says, he make me a stand in the market. And then he take me in the store. And he give me-- he paid me monthly. And then after that, he says, you're pretty good at it. He says, I'm going to take you. I'm going to make you a store. That was in another city, in Brasov. They call it Brasov.

And I was young at the time, 16-17 years old. And I didn't take care. And I gave out on credit. And I lost about \$20,000. And then he called me in, he says, I thought you're going to be somebody. I'm sorry, you're nobody, no, he says. So I started working by myself. And then later on, I get together again. And I get married to this-- my first wife.

Before you get to your later life, did you go home? Did you ever visit?

I never went home.

After you left at age 13, you never went home?

No. The only time when I went home when they called me into the army. In 1939, you know, when it started, they calling me back to the Romanian. And then I come back. I was by the Romanian for a few months. And then I come back. And then I didn't do anything, knowing that I met my wife.

But before, again, I went to find out, did you have sisters? Did you go to school? What did you do as a young child?

Oh, what I do home? I went cheder. I went in the Jewish. And I went in the morning on school, in the school, Romanian school.

A school.

And I couldn't learn anything because the teacher was pulling me by my payos all the time. And the kids was calling me Zhyd. They are Ukrainian-- Zhyd, Jew, Jew. So I couldn't learn too much. I hardly made a sixth grade.

But you studied in the cheder in the afternoons?

Yeah, I was going to cheder, yeah.

And you told me before, you had two sisters?

I had two sisters, yeah. One was Fremet, and the other one was Pearl. And I had a brother, Dovid. And he got killed in the Ukraine on the forced labor. And then I had another brother. He survived. He was in Israel. He died a couple of years ago.

So we'll get back to the stories of your brothers and sisters. So at age 19 to 20, you met a young woman?

I met a young girl, yeah. She was a year younger. Her name was Mariam. And I got married.

Well, we have some pictures so you can describe your family. You could look over there and tell us about your family. Why is there a picture of you? And why aren't you there?

I was forced labor in the Ukrainian.

What year is this?

1943.

So you were forced out of your work, and you went to Ukraine?

To Ukraine, they take me. I didn't have no work buddy. Every Jew have to go. They call it munkaszolgalat, to work for the Hungarian. We supposed to put one more line in that the Hungarian train can go through.

So how many months did you work in Ukraine?

Oh, I was over a year.

Did you leave children at home? Were you children born already?

Yeah, yeah, I leave. Yeah, I leave the two children-- my daughter and my son. Yeah.

And how did your family manage without you?

Oh, my father-in-law was fed them.

And he took care of all them?

He took care of the family, yeah.

And who is in this picture, Sol?

Who?

Yeah, tell us about this picture.

Which picture, this? This is my little daughter, Judith. She was two and a half years old.

And who is she with?

But who is she with were?

Who is the other young girl?

That's my sister-in-law. That's Rose, Reise, [NON-ENGLISH]

That's your wife's sister?

That my wife's sisters, right.

Now, why was this picture taken without you? Oh, because you were in Ukraine. And who is this child, beautiful child?

This child? This is a friend of mine. His name was Weiss. And he had a brother here. And he gave me the picture to take along.

Here in the United States?

Here in the United States-- to take it along and see if I tell them. She was three years in the time. And I lost his address. And I couldn't find it. But I had a picture.

And this was after the war that he gave you the picture?

This is after the war, in 1945, yeah.

And who are these people?

Who's that?

This is a woman and a little boy.

Oh, this is my wife's friend. I don't know how she get a hold of that picture. But this, she had it. This is my wife's friend. And they die too.

They were both gassed?

They died in Auschwitz, yeah. We were going on the same car load to Auschwitz.

So this is the friends. And you have a picture?

Yeah. Yeah.

Let's go back to your story. You're in forced labor in Ukraine.

Yeah.

And how long did you stay there?

For over a year.

And what year did you come back to?

1943.

In '43, 1943?

And was it '43-- yeah, '43. Oh, that was before Rosh Hashanah-- after Rosh Hashanah, after Yom Kippur, where was it?

In 1943--

October.

--in October.

Yeah.

And you came back to your family?

I come back. I find my family. And then they show me this picture. They shown. They had made this picture because I wasn't there. So they hold my picture, the kids hold my picture. And then when I come back in 1945, so I went back where they made that pictures.

Oh, you went to the photographer, and you got the negatives, and you had the pictures.

Yeah, I find it and I take it along.

Now, how long did you stay with your family in?

At home when I come back from Ukraine? I stayed with my family from October, let's say, to all the way, all the way till we take us down in Auschwitz.

And when is that?

When they take us to Auschwitz?

When they take you to.

Was June the 4th, 1944.

So in other words, you're home for about nine months?

For nine, yeah.

And what do you do? What kind of work?

What I was doing? I was peddling too.

And were you able to make it?

Yeah, because I went in, I had a friend. I know a guy. There was a man. His name was Hartman. And he used to own that junk shop. Junk, he used to buy junk. And I used to know him. When the Hungarian come in, they take it away from him. But they kept him there. And I went in there. And I says, I want to peddle. But I needed a license.

So I went to the Hungarian. His name was Uros. And then he looked at me. And he says, you want a license? I says, yeah. I says, but I want a horse too and a wagon. He says, you want everything? Yeah, I says, I want everything. So he looked at me. And he left. And then he gave me a permit with a picture. And I went in the towns, in the villages.

What did you peddle?

What I peddle? I peddle dishes, traded for rags, for iron. But I didn't trade it for that. I gave him a dish. And they had to fill it up with wheat, or flour, or whatever it is.

They had something else too.

Yeah, well, I supposed to peddle for rags. So I had it. And I put it in the bottom, on the bottom of the rags. And one day, I was-- me and my father, we were traveling down there with the horse and wagon. And one of them policeman, you call them a policeman, but it was a gendarmerie, he come over.

And he says, you cholent, a Jew, he says, what are you doing here? I says, I'm peddling. Let me see your license. So I take out and I show him my license. And then he says, what do you have in the bags? Rags. So OK. Empty your bags. I said, I won't tear bags, I said, I got lice. And they go a mile a minute. I says, you're going to feel. And they got some typhus too.

Oh, my goodness. You thought quickly.

What?

You thought very quickly.

Yeah. He says, you son of a gun. He hollered at me. He says, pack up and go.

Oh, so you got away from him then.

Yeah, I got to go. And I had-- if they catch me, they hang me for that, I black market. And you know.

Oh, oh, that's what.

We didn't have nothing what to eat. People didn't have what to eat.

Were the Hungarians who weren't Jewish, were they helping the Jewish community?

Hungarian Jews?

No, Hungarian non-Jews.

No, they were mean.

They weren't helping you?

Oh, were they mean. They were so mean.

Did you have to live in a ghetto, a ghetto?

Yeah, we were for-- and I told you, in that factory, where they had the-- they made bricks. And they push in 60,000 people in one acre of land.

And that's where you lived?

For a month.

For a month, 60,000? From April-- no, from May till June, a month, a month and a half.

Before you were taken away.

Yeah. And they took us away from there on the carloads. We had to wait 24 hours till we can go in the toilet, so many people.

Because they only had one toilet?

Was one big toilet, one toilet, and one side was woman. And one side was man. We have to stand in a line.

Who supervises? Was this the Hungarians or the Nazis?

The Hungarian. The Hungarian. And they had the Germans coming in. But the Hungarian were most. They were in there. And then a little German come in with a Luger gun. And the Hungarians show him, this is a wealthy Jew. And this is a wealthy Jew. And they take him in in the office. And they beat them so much. And beat them so much that they take him back--

On a stretcher?

--on a wheelchair-- not in a wheelchair. And so the Hungarian were miserable. They were terrible. They're the one who hand us over to the Germans. The reason I went in the gun business, I see that one little German that's 17 or 19 with a pistol in there. And he can drive 5,000 people with that gun. And I start being the gun business. That's what I start working.

That's why you went into the gun business?

I went in the gun business. And I had the most guns. I still am. I still got a permit. I still am in the gun business.

Sol, when you were in Hungary, did you hear from your parents, and your sisters, and your brothers? Did you know anything about them, what was happening to them?

When, after the--

Well, before you were taken away to Auschwitz.

Yeah, they were living there.

Did you get letters? Did you hear from them?

Yeah, I hear from them. Yeah, sure. I heard from them. They were living. They gathered them. They take my grandfather. He was 70 years old. They take him in too. They take him to Viseu and they gather him there together. There's a little city. They gather him. And from there, they take him to Auschwitz. That was not far from Sighet. This where they--

So is that where your parents, and your sisters, and brothers went? They also went to Auschwitz?

Auschwitz, yeah, all of it, yeah.

Were you at Auschwitz at the same time?

No, not at same time, no. No, not at same time. Because I was in Cluj-- Klausenburg. And they were in Ruscova. That's Maramures.

So it's April 1944, April 1944, and you're in this big brick factory. And then you say the Germans and the Hungarians round you up.

Round us up from the house. They come in. And they take us out from the house. And we left everything, just was much we can take with us. And we were walking. And we were walking to the cars.

Cattle cars?

The cattle cars, right. And when we were walking on the street, on both sides were lined up Hungarian. And they were all laughing.

Nobody offered to help you?

Nothing, nothing, nothing. They were laughing all. Once in a while, whoever that policeman or that soldier went over there and they cut up the back sack and throw it to them, to the Hungarian. And when we come to the cattle crane, and they put us 80-90 in the cattle crane.

In one car?

In one car, yeah.

Were you with your family?

I was with my family and a lot of other families-- small kids, old people, young people, everybody. You you couldn't. Oh, before we come across, before we go to across the border from Hungary to Vienna, Germany, one Hungarian had enough nerve come in with a plate. And we should give him the gold and whatever we had, valuables. We should give it to him.

So did people, where they frightened? Did they give him the gold? I didn't give him. Nobody gave him. I take out mine. I take it out and then I throw it out through the window from the train. I throw it out. We had some rings. I throw it through the window.

How many days were you in the cattle car?

Four days.

And did they give you food?

Nothing, nothing, no food, no nothing, no water, no nothing.

So people got sick and died in the cattle car?

They died. And they were sick. They were laying. It was hot. It was terrible. I don't know how they in the world some time. Sometimes, I think, I'm not alive.

Because you can't believe it happened?

I can't believe it myself. I can't believe it I went through all of that. He broke my nose. He hit my lip. He broke on the head, I can't see so good on my eyes. He broke my eardrum.

This was when you were in the camp?

Yeah.

Not in the cattle car when you were in?

In the concentration camp, concentration camp, yeah. And when we come into Auschwitz, they say, they start hollering raus, raus.

Get out.

Yeah, get out. So my wife, I take down. My wife come out. I help her out. And I had a little boy, was five or six years. Then I take my little girl. And I take her there. And she see there where it is. And she says, Daddy, take me home. I don't want to go, Daddy. And she grabbed me by my-- I couldn't do anything. What can I do? They take it away from me. And they went to the left. And that's the last place I saw them.

Of your wife and your children.

My wife and the children, yeah.

They went to one side and you went to the other.

I went to the right, they went to the left, my wife and children.

Did you know to go to the right, or they pushed you that way? Why did you go to?

We were coming there. And there was standing that doctor there. And he says.

Doctor Mengele?

Yeah. He says, left, right, left, right. And they took us. And they put me to the right. And they put there. I never going to forget it. When they put her there, like I would know, I looked as far I could see with my eyes after, like I would know something happened to them.

And so you went to one side. And you went with the able-bodied men.

Yeah.

And where did they take you? Where did they take you?

They take me in another place. I don't know. They take us there. And when we come-- when they take us there, we saw some people, woman, we saw with them, with no hair on it, with the clothes. She says, why the hell did you come here? Couldn't you die home? We didn't know where in the world we go.

You didn't know what it was.

He says, couldn't you die home? Why did you come? We didn't know nothing. We didn't. They took us in. And they took us in in a place. And they undressed us. And I was worrying about my clothes, my papers. They come and beat us, leave everything there. You will leaved everything there. And then we take a shower. We didn't know where the hell were going. I didn't know what it was. We take a shower. And first, they cut off our hair from all over.

They shaved you.

They cut off the hair all over. And then we take the shower. Then we had to walk through a door. And then they smeared us in with something here.

What was that? What did they do?

Infection, disinfection something, I don't know, for lice or whatever it was. I don't know. So after that, they take us in a room. After we get through, we all dressed up, we get through, and they put us in the room. And that comes that Jewish boy. He must be 17, 18 year old. And he beat us. He beat us so much with them walking sticks that the walking sticks was going like straw from the beating from the people. And then about 12 o'clock, we got through. And they put us like sardines. We put head--

In a room, in a barracks?

--between the legs. Yeah, in a room there. And we were sleeping like that. About 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, raus. We got to go on the--

Roll call.

--on the Zahle, they count us. And there was a German SS man, black hat, black clothes. He says, everybody who has a trade, go on this site. Who hasn't a trade, stay in this side. So I says, I have a trade. What is your trade? Mechanic, fine mechanic, fine mechanic.

Did you know anything about mechanics?

No.

Nothing?

Nothing, nothing at all.

How did you know how to say that?

I don't know.

It was something that pushed you.

Do you know how I know? When I was in Ukraine working there, so I was hardened up. I know what to do. I know--

How to save yourself.

I says, I'm a-- in there, I was a mechanic. They put me put in a nail or something like that, that's a mechanic. So I says, I'm a mechanic. And I says to my father-in-law in the--

Your father-in-law was with you?

Yeah, my father-in-law with you and his son was with you, 17, 18-year-old, nice, big, strong boy. And there was a lot of my friends where we come in the one car and everything together from the same city. I says, everybody, come over. Everybody is a mechanic. Come over, come over.

And they all joined you?

No.

No?

No. No, they didn't come over. I says, come on over. They didn't want to come. They were afraid. They were. I said, come on, come on. They were afraid. But I had few friends what they come over. Few friends, they come. And their name, one was Mittelman, and one was Davidovich, something like that. They come over. And we were in the mechanic side. And one was Adler. They come over. And then I was there.

And they separate us. We were staying in the same-- in one barrack. And they take us in the next door, was another barrack. And I was sleeping there. And I find myself-- I was there in that beaten up. And we went in. In the barrack, there was a Ukraine, or some Polack, or whatever, he beat us all the time, beat us when we go in, beat us when we go out, beat all the time, just beating, plain, with them walking sticks. So I find myself so alone. I says, I'm going to go over. I says, whatever happen, I'm going to stay with them.

With the father-in-law, and the brother-in-law, and the others?

Yeah, and all of the-- I went over. I walked over on the other side. I couldn't recognize them. So I says, what did-- it's nobody there. What happened? Nobody. That's the last I see of them people.

So they were taken to the crematoriums?

That's the last I saw them people. I didn't see nobody ever since. I didn't see nobody ever since. Then we were three weeks in Auschwitz. And after three weeks, they start taking alphabetic-- A, B, C D. And they take half of it, half of. We were about-- I don't know how many we were be there. They take half of it. And the other half, it was left. My name is with the S, so I was the last. And another day, they come in.

Where did they take them? Where did they?

The other one, the first half? I don't know.

The first group.

I don't know where they took. They took them somewhere. And they got bombed away, they tell you. So they take the other half. And we are supposed to go with the air force to French, it called Landry.

To France?

To France in Landry.

They were going to fly you?

No, they took us to France to work there, mechanic work.

Right, mechanics.

Yeah. And we come in France. And we had to go. There was underground a mine, iron ore mine that was there. And they had all the machines there. And they gave me, they show me that I shouldn't light a cigarette or light a match. That stuff is burning. And they come over to me. And they gave me a blueprint. And they give me small pieces like that. And I should set up the machine and grind them down that much. They call it [NON-ENGLISH] machine, you know. I don't know in English. So they gave me that blueprint.

And I starts looking at the blueprint, left, right, and this way, and that way. I didn't know what that is. So there is that SS man. And he is going with the stick and looking, everybody works. So I says to myself, I'm going over there to him. And I saw the talon. And I speak German, speak fairly good German. I says, us Hungarian there, we are not educated like the German. I says, we don't know how to read this. We don't have that kind of machine. We do everything by hand.

That was very chutzpadik of you, very gutsy.

We do everything by hand, I figured that.

Oh, by hand.

I figured that I have nothing to lose no more. I have nothing to lose no more. I'm not going to come out in life anyway. So we come over. And his eyebrows like a little smile. And he went away. And he fixed the machine for me. And it was perfect. And I have to go. They had to analyze it if it's good. I got about five bread. They gave me five bread. I was so good. And when I come in there in the camp, I had 100 prisoners on top of me.

So you were in charge of those prisoners? You were in charge of it?

No, no, no, no. I went in there. We work in the mine. And then at night, we worked eight hours. And it was two shifts. If I had to go, I had to go back in the camp. In the morning, I go. And at night, I come back. And at night, another.

And this was the camp in France, right?

That's the camp in France, Landry.

Landry. Is that where you had your badge?

No, no, I got this in Dachau. This here?

Right. So let's get to that. Well, you'll tell us a little time, then.

Yeah. So I was in there-- in France, I was there, let's see, oh, till June, July, August, the end of August.

You were there for several months, from May until July, August.

Yeah, August, yeah. They ended a month there. Oh, no, that was Yom Kippur. I still was Yom Kippur in there. Yom Kippur, I was there. That's what I remember. We were working at night on Yom Kippur there. And there was one from KisvÃ¼rda. Ungar was his name. And he sabotaged the electricity that we shouldn't work.

Was he caught?

Huh?

Was he caught?

Was caught and he was hanged. He was caught. And they hang him.

Now, was it made worse for you because he sabotaged the Germans? Were your conditions made any worse?

No, there was nothing worse. They caught him. I don't know how they caught him. And they kept him there and then kept them there for a week or two. And then they take him somewhere. And they hung him.

Sol, did that the Germans were losing the war at this point? This was September 1944. Did you know that the Germans were losing the war?

They were losing the war, we didn't know nothing. We didn't know nothing. We see them going back from French. They are all packing up and going. And we didn't know. We didn't know nothing. The only thing what we were interested-- how much bread we get and how much potatoes we get, how much food we get.

So you were starving.

That's all what we were interested. We didn't know nothing else.

Were you very weak?

In France, I wasn't weak yet, no. I start to be weak when I come to Kochendorf, in the salt mine. I left it three weeks in there. And then I went down to 70 pounds.

Well, let's get a sequence. From France, where did you go? You're talking about--

Kochendorf, back to Germany.

You went back to back to Germany. And that's when you worked in the salt mines.

Back to Germany. They put us in-- he was such a mean guy that he stopped the train. There was a little station. He stopped the train with coal. And they put us in top of the coal train. And they take us back to Germany.

Why did they take you away from France? Weren't they satisfied with your work?

There, they were-- because the Allies were coming.

Oh, so they wanted to-- I see.

Yeah, they had to move from there. They were running. And they were running back to Germany. That's why they take. And they take the prisoners with us. If they would have left us there, we would have be liberated five, six months ago.

Liberated. Now, what did you do in the salt mines? What was that?

Working, working with the salt. And no food, no nothing. And I went down to 70 pounds. And then they selected. And then they come out, they saw who is muselmann. I had bones in here.

Who was almost dying.

And bones in here, nothing. So I remember, that Solomon says--

Solomon's your friend?

Yeah, my friend. When they picked us out, and they go, we go, then he show us, he says, you go, and you get it over with. He says, look at me. Look at my leg. He says, it's all swollen. His leg was swollen up like that. And they kept him there. I didn't see him.

Where did they keep him?

In there, in Kochendorf.

In the Kochendorf salt mines.

In that mine, yeah.

So you don't know if he survived.

He didn't survive. No, he didn't survive.

So why did they let you leave the salt mine?

I told you, well, I was selected. He selected 100 people to take him to Dachau for the transport what was going to Auschwitz. 5,000 people were going to Auschwitz, the last transport to be gassed.

And you were.

I was selected to be go gassed. And when we come to Frankfurt, they bombed the train. And we were a day late. They didn't wait for us. The transport went away.

Fortunately.

It went away. And then they picked us up. And they we walked to Allach. That's seven kilometers.

You walked. And this is in the wintertime? This is in the wintertime?

No, was not. No, was fall. Was not. It was fall, yeah. We walked. And we were-- they picked us by 99. And when we arrived over there, about six or seven.

Only six or seven arrived out of that many?

Right. The rest of them died. On the way, there was a Jew, one with two donkeys with a cart, and picked them up, and take them back, pick them up, and take them back. And when we come over there--

This is to Dachau now, when you're coming to Dachau?

Yeah they went down. We were going to Allach. You didn't hear about Allach? There was a big.

Yes.

Yeah. So they take us to Allach there. And one side was Russian, and Polish, and everybody. We the Jews were on this side. We were working. And they take us over there. And the next day, they send us out to work by group.

Oh, the munitions plant.

Iron, yeah, iron factory. But we couldn't.

Were too weak, weren't you?

We couldn't do anything. So they brought us back with a push car. And our luck, that Oberscharführer, his name was Busch-- Busch, yeah. And he come over. And we were laying there. And he had to count us. And then he said to the doctor, examine them people from French. We were four or five. Examine them, people from French, if they are able to work. There was a professor from Grosswardein, Hungary, a big doctor. And he examined. And he says, them people can't work.

So this was a good Oberscharführer?

Yeah, he says, them people--

He was a good German?

A good German, yeah. I can't say nothing bad about him. And then he says, put them people in barrack number 4, baff. They called it baff And they put us over there. And we were laying there and taking rest. And we get the same food as the healthy people get.

So you recouped your strength a little bit.

Yeah. And I was there, oh, for about two, three weeks. And after three weeks, they say, volunteer. That was November,

December. Volunteer to shovel the snow. See? And I volunteered to shovel the snow, me and Weiss. So after we shoveled the snow, my hand got cold. And there was a little chimney coming out. They were feeding with coal. They had a little chimney, maybe four inches apart.

So I put my hand down. It was hot. I says, here, Weiss. You want to eat some potatoes, this is where you get the potatoes are there. And here, we're going to broil it-- we're going to fry them. He says, OK. I says, give me your coat. And we had the long coats. And I gave him my coat. And we tie them together. I leave them down. And I says, make sure to get a wire there too. And he get a wire.

And he-- the potatoes were outside, just covered up. That's what they do it in Germany. They was out. So he went in and he filled up his shirt full with potatoes. And I put it in the wire. And every once in a while, somebody come up. There was the smoke. It was clean in the chimney with the smoke. And I grab the-- when I see him coming, I grab that wire. And I put it behind my coat. And it was burning like hell. And I had to work know.

Oh, my goodness.

It was burning.

Did the Germans miss the potatoes? Didn't they count the potatoes?

What?

Did the Germans miss the potatoes?

No, that was for in our camp potato. They were using it for us. They cook it for us.

I see. But you got extra there.

Yeah. So I done that about two days. And the third day, third day, it's still smoking. So the guard up high, he was watching us with the binoculars.

So he caught you?

They caught us, yeah. And they take us out one day at night when they had Zahlappell. And they started giving us 25 in the back.

25 lashes?

Yeah. So the first four or five, I felt. The other one, I didn't feel. So they took me-- they picked me up. And they put me in the washroom. They throw me in the water. I get through. Next day, they find me. Out to work, arbeiten.

Even though you were all beat up?

Yeah, that's all right. They put me out to work. And I was working by the [GERMAN], they call it. And there was the Hitler Young.

The youth?

17-18 Hitler Youth. Hitler Youth, they're the best thing what happen to me.

Really?

The best thing what happened to me. I was taken out. I was working there. And they said, [GERMAN]? He says, come over 12 o'clock in the barrack and have food. They give me so much stuff. They give me so much soup. When I bend

down, it come out my nose. That's the honest to god truth. I'm not lying to you.

And then I was working there. I was digging for an outside john, an outside toilet. And it was when there was cold. He says-- he put down the gun. His name was Aberle. And when I liberated, I come back from Romania, take my wife to him. I take my wife to his house. He put down the gun to me. And he says, you watch if somebody coming. He was digging.

Oh, he took your turn?

He was digging.

Oh, my goodness.

He was digging for me. And let me while I had the gun in my hand.

So many miracles happen to you to save your life.

Yeah. I was digging. And then he says, if you see anybody come, come over there, help.

Weren't his buddies angry with him that he was so good to you? His friends?

No, wait. So he was good to everybody. They were good. All the Hitler Jugends were good. They didn't know. One day, in the winter, he took us. We were going dirty to work. He took us out.

And in the winter, and he stayed by the gate there, and then he had to load the gun with the gloves. And he had the gloves on. And when he cocked the gun, he says-- and the bullets fell down. And the guy where he-- but the guard, that SS man, he says, [GERMAN]. You understand what I mean?

Not everything. I think you'd better translated.

He says, you dirty dog. If somebody want to run away, you can't even shoot at him. And that kid answered him, [GERMAN].

Unfortunate.

Why should I shoot people what they didn't do anything? So they put him in the bunker for a day, the kid.

They gave him a punishment then?

Yeah, they gave him some.

They gave the young boy a punishment.

Yeah, a punishment. That was not all. And then the next day, they take us out. And in front of us was going a wagon with bread going for them, bread. And we were walking behind. He take out his knife. And he cut the string. And he take the bread. And he says, everybody takes bread.

Was he punished for that?

No.

No, nobody caught him?

No, nobody caught him. And then after that, I was, oh, about a month, month and a half I was there in the wintertime.

And then I find another good German. I was working there. And then one German walked by from-- he must have been-- have some ring, I don't know what he was. And my feet were so naked. And it was cold in the winter.

And he looked. And he looked at me. Then I started working faster. I was afraid. And he saw, I'm afraid. He walked away. He walked away. And then he looked back. Later on, about a half an hour later, he come. He come with some package in there.

And he walked to me. He looked at me. And he walked through me. And then he put it down. He put it down. And he walked away. And I'm watching him. So I go over there. I pick up the package. And then I see he had a smile. And he walked away. I had a sweater, a woolen cap, and woolen socks.

For you, that he brought for you?

He brought it in for me. Yeah. Then I was there-- oh, I was there for about five, six weeks. They were shooting the airplanes, the American airplane. One day, I saw when they shot down about two airplanes. And one plane, I saw jumping out about six soldiers.

American soldiers, parachuting?

Yeah. They were parachuting. And then he jumped to the edge of the wood. And then some SS man jumped in their car, in their truck. And they went over there. And what I heard, I didn't see nobody coming. But I heard shooting.

So they shot all the Americans.

I didn't see nobody coming. But I heard shooting. In the meantime, I worked with that Aberle. His name was Aberle. I was handling the shells, big shells, like this. And he says, he give me a German helmet. Just in case they shoot, he says, they don't shoot my head off.

So he took care of you.

Yeah, he took care. And then I was there about, oh, five, six weeks. And then they give us another job. They gave me another job then. I had to-- six of us had to take food to another camp, to other working people. We pushed the wagon in the morning.

How far away was it?

That was about five, six miles. That was a [GERMAN] lager, they call it. And I was there, oh, for about-- I was pushing the wagon for about two, three, four weeks. And then I went work in the [GERMAN] lager over there. Again, they needed a mechanic. I'm again to a mechanic. They had them steam engines, with big wheels what they press down the stones. And I volunteered. I know how to operate it.

Man, you were really gutsy.

I know operate it. And that was [NON-ENGLISH]. I says, you put the wood in. And I'm going to figure out how to get that thing started to go. I figured.

It's a wonder you didn't get hurt.

Huh?

It's a wonder you didn't get hurt.

No, it's nothing to get hurt in there. There was a big thing, big two-- a big wheel in the front and two big wheels in the back. And it was steam, with steam engine. And he was feeding the steam engine. And I was the mechanic. I knew a

little bit home from-- we had a little train. And I liked to hang around. And I see how they get this steam. And I knew a little bit.

So I was going around there. What we were doing there, we were cooking there. They brought from Russia some cows, steers. And they feed them with sugar beets. And they give them wheat or something. And we were cooking that. We were eating that.

So that saved you too, gave you more strength.

Oh, yeah. We were saved. So one day, I go over that thing. And I was looking where we cook. And they had a sewer over there. And I went in with the wheels there in the sewer.

Oh, so you got stuck?

I didn't get stuck. I just one side, I went over it. And I just cracked it in two. We just put it together. And we kept on working.

What month are we at? We're in 1945 now.

That was in 1945, in, I would say, March. March. 1945 March. And we were working there. I was working there, [GERMAN] lager. One day, they come with the car, with the trucks, and they tell us to load everything. There was a warehouse. They had whiskey. They had all kind of stuff. And we load the stuff. We start loading.

And then there was whiskey. Then I broke a case. And I take out two bottles. My pants were always tied down in the bottom. And I put two bottles in here. And I had a string. And I went in the toilet. And I left them down in the toilet. See? And then all of a sudden, we have to move in. So I went in the toilet. And I take them two bottles out. And I traded it, traded for bread.

For food.

For food. And shortly, they put us in the train. They put us on the train. And we were traveling with Marta. Oh, I think two weeks. She says, seven days. I can't remember.

And no food in the train?

We didn't have anything, no, there.

And where are you traveling? What direction? Do you know where you're going?

We didn't know. We were going around and round, round and round. We didn't know where the heck we are going. We didn't know where we were.

So a lot of people died in that train?

A lot of them, yeah. A lot of them died right after we liberated. A day before we liberate--

Who liberated you?

American.

They came to the cattle car, and opened up the doors, and found you?

Yeah, we were open. We were already about-- in the morning, we had the doors opened. We don't know. I don't know, a day before, they come to give us. I think, Martha says, the day before we liberated, and I think, the same day, before the

army come, the Red Cross come. And they give us packages, Red Cross packages. And the people ate it. And they just die.

Because they just couldn't absorb it?

They just die.

And you didn't eat it?

I ate, yeah. I ate too. But I come out so healthy from over there-- I was with them with them young, I come out so healthy, I was-- I put on 70 pounds. From number four, I went to number one barrack. I was healthy.

That saved you.

I was so healthy that when I come out, they thought I'm some kind of kapo. They didn't know what the hell I was.

Sol, we have to conclude soon. Would you tell us about the badge? We only have a little bit more time.

Yeah. This one, I get in Dachau. And from Dachau, they send me to Allach. That was my number. That was my number, 18,008, that was my original number. And when I had it up till a couple of years, the original, and that disappeared.

And what's the red for? What does that mean?

The red is a communist. The yellow is the Jew.

So you were supposed to be a Jewish communist?

Jewish communist, Yeah.

I see. That's very unusual, a Jewish communist.

And you wore that all the time until liberation?

I had one in here. I had one in the side on my pants.

Was that sewed on? I see there are little holes in there. How did you?

Yeah, I put it on in this side. It was here like that.

But most Jews in the camps didn't have badges like that, did they?

All in my camp, when I was in Allach, everybody had badge.

Everybody had that.

That, yeah.

And it was made out of metal like this?

In that metal, aluminum, yeah. Everybody had that, yeah. Everybody had that. And before I had a rag and here in the side. And I had one in here and one in here.

By rag, you mean a star, a Jewish star?

Not Jewish star, just the number. 19,000, there was a small number I had.

So you were liberated on May? What was the date you were liberated?

I was liberated on April the 30th, 1945, 12 o'clock, in Staltach.

And you remember that very distinctly?

Very, very. And I remember my number. And I was liberated there. When I was liberated, I was hungry. And then I ran away for a half a day. There were some chickens. And they all fly in the trees. And I chased them for a half a day. Finally, I got a chicken.

You tired them out.

Finally, I got the chicken. And I kill it. And I was going with it. And she was bleeding. And there comes that lady, says, [GERMAN], you want me to make you a soup? I says, yeah, she cleaned the chicken. I says, clean, make a soup.

Was this a German lady?

Jewish.

Jewish lady?

Yeah, she-- Malka-- Marta was with her from the same--

Oh, from another contingent of women.

--from the same thing, yeah. She says, she going to make me a soup. So when the chicken is almost cooked, she says, maybe we need some potatoes. I says, OK, fine. I go get some potatoes. So I didn't go get a dish full, I take a bag full. You see, when I come back, No, no, no, no nobody there. I couldn't find the lady. I went in the cars, they all look alike. They all was no hair with a stripe. They all looked alike.

So one of these ladies took your chicken away.

Yeah. So I went over there. So I was hungry. So I start. I take a machine gun. And I was now get me some Germans. Take a machine gun. And I'm going to kill somebody. So I'm going to go-- I'm going house to house. So I couldn't find the Germans, run all away. So I come down in a cellar. And I had them gun on the side of me, nothing to eat.

So as I walk out, the gun hit. And I feel so empty in there. It's empty. So I broke. I broke the partition there. There was a German woman, two or three kids crying. And I says, what's the matter with me? Am I going to shoot them? Am I going to kill? I says, I'm no killer. I went upstairs. And I throw the gun away, break it up. And I left them go.

Sol, we have to end soon. Do you want to say anything in conclusion before we end this tape? Is there some message or something that you want to say on tape?

I want to say that much. I want to say that much-- when they take away my little girl from me, and she says, Daddy, take me home, this what I see all in front of me. That's what I see, that little girl always crying. And when I look at her, I can't stand it. I am very emotionally. That's all what I have to say.

What you've been through.

People don't know. People can't imagine what we went through. They just can't imagine. I start telling. And nobody was listening to me. And I stopped telling anybody anything.

Now, they believe.

I not going to talk to nobody. That's it.

God was watching over you. He gave you life so that you could tell the story. I'm sorry that we had to have you tell the story. But thank you very much.

That's all what I have to say. I tell that much, that people should be careful what they doing. It can happen again. It can happen again. When they take people like this, what they don't do anything, and they burn them. They burn them for what? OK. I'm a communist. So I'm a Jew. So what about the kids doing?

I know.

So that's all that I have to say.

Thank you very much.

OK.