

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back, and I am the director of the Holocaust Resource Center in Buffalo. It is Monday, March 23, 1992. And we are in Channel 4. Our guest this evening is Mr. Wolf Tombak. We're going to be informal, and I'm going to call you Wolf.

Wolf, right.

Right. Wolf, will you tell us your story? Tell us where you were born and what it was like growing up where you were born.

I was born in Poland, in Sosnowiec, in Poland. And when I was a little boy, I used to go to school. I got beat up a lot of times.

Why did you get beat up?

Because I was a Jew.

I see.

That's the only reason I got--

You went to a public school?

Public school, yeah. And wasn't too many Jewish boys. But a lot of times I got beat up for no reason. And first of all, I used to go to school. I didn't have the even shoes.

You were very poor?

We were very poor and were nine kids. Used to make caps-- capmakers. And you couldn't make-- I had four Singer machines. Everybody worked together since we were little kids. I was seven years old.

In your house?

In the house, everything in the house, yeah. Made our own house our own factory. Wasn't enough to make a living, feed everybody, and nobody had nothing.

And what position were you among those nine brothers and sisters?

I was number four, the fourth. Then I had youngest one. There are two younger sisters and then twin brothers, younger one. But they were taken away to the ghetto. And they take him away to Auschwitz.

Wait, before we get to that, let's have a picture. You have a picture you gave us of your grandparents. Maybe you could tell us about your grandparents. Did they live with you?

No, my grandparents were living a few miles away, about three miles away. I used to go by streetcar to my grandparents' and saw each other twice a week, three times a week.

Is this a picture of your mother's parents or your father's parents?

My mother's parents.

And where were your father's parents?

My father's parents were in Manchester, England.

So your father was from England?

England, yeah.

And how did he get to Poland?

He came to Poland in 1920s. Like people used to go in the '20s to Israel, he came to Poland.

Oh, for a visit?

For a visit, and he fell in love with my mother. Used to go out and fall in love with my mother. He came with another friend to Poland, two guys. And he fall in love with my mother. And they got married.

And he stayed in--

And he stayed there, yeah.

We have a picture of your parents.

My parents, yeah.

When is this taken?

They got married about six months later. That must have been 1916 or 1917.

And then there were lots of children. And they made the hats. And you were poor. And was it a traditional Jewish home?

A traditional Jewish home, and Shabbos, Shabbat. We used to go to the temple, used to bake everything, used to go on walk about three, miles to the baker and take out a cholent. Used to be two boys. And we used to drag it home. And everything was traditional home, traditional Jewish people. Every Shabbat used to go to the temple.

Would you say your childhood was a happy one?

My childhood was a happy one, the first about eight, nine years when I was old. Later on it was miserable because--

You mean until you were about eight years old?

Eight years old, yes.

And then why did it change?

Later on was bad because we were very poor and didn't had enough to eat even. Used to walk around hungry.

Did you continue with school after eight years? Or did you stop school?

We used to go to school a week go, a week not going to school because a lot of trouble in school. It was a neighborhood there was a lot of Gentiles. And there was a lot of fights. So a lot of kids didn't go to school-- Jewish kids.

So you stayed home and worked?

I stayed home and work. And they need me home to help to work. So I was nine years old. I used to help make caps. I used to press by hand and a steam kettle.

And that's the way I grew up until 1939. The Germans came in, and they drag us to the ghetto. Take everybody away, and I was in the ghetto.

Now, was the ghetto in your city?

The ghetto was in my city, right.

What were the living conditions?

The living condition was bad. Of course, it was living. Was no beds, no nothing. Was living on the ground. And they gave us a small piece of bread, about three ounces of bread a day and a little bit soup. The soup was squash.

And down from there, they started to take us, sorting out left to right to the left. They sorting out who going to Auschwitz, who going to the gas chamber, and who going to work.

Well, wait a moment. In the ghetto, did you know where you were going when they separated you?

No.

No?

No.

So how many years did you live in the ghetto?

A year and a half.

A year and a half. And the conditions were not good in the ghetto.

Not good at all.

But were you all together as a family?

No, no, they separate. I was only with one brother in the ghetto. And they take away the younger brothers and sisters. My father and mother take away.

So when was the last time you saw your parents?

My parents, the last time I saw them was 1940, '41.

Now, we have a picture of your father from 1941.

No.

This picture is not--

That picture was 1940. 1940 or 1941-- was made before they take him away.

How did you get that picture?

That picture was hidden. I hide it before they take me to the ghetto. And I was hiding it in the basement under a board. I ripped up a board, and I nailed it down with a nail. And there I hide my picture from the grandparents too.

And the wedding pictures?

And the wedding picture. And when I came back, I had to buy them pictures for money.

Oh, in 1945, when you--

'45, yeah. 1945.

Who did you buy them back from?

The people where they take the house. And they had everything. I couldn't get nothing back.

They wouldn't give it to you? You had to buy it?

No, I had to buy the pictures.

Oh, my goodness. And how much did you have to pay for your own--

\$50.

And you had \$50 right out of the concentration camp?

I had a lot of money right out of concentration camp, German money. But with the German money, I used to pay. And I used to cash it in for dollars. And that's how I bought my pictures. And that's how I had my pictures. That's how I saved them till today.

All right, so let's go back to the ghetto. So you and your brother are separated from your family.

Right.

Where are you living in the ghetto?

I was living in the ghetto and was living right on the ground. There was a football--

Field?

--field. I was laying on the ground, living there. In wintertime they put blankets. They give us blanket and wooden shoes with soles. And that's how I was sleeping.

So it was cold. So I had cement bags. And I wrapped around my-- for socks on my legs two cement bags. And that's how I made it. I was strong. I say, I never go give up. I go make it.

Did you and your brother work in the ghetto?

Yeah. And then they take away my brother about three months before they take me away. They took him to [NON-ENGLISH], in a concentration camp. And then they shot him dead. 1942 I find out.

And what happened to your mother and father and the other brothers and sisters?

Who know?

You never-- well, were they taken out of the ghetto?

Out of the ghetto to Auschwitz by train, with the kids.

And you know that?

With sisters, brothers, yeah.

How did you find that out?

I find out from friends where they were in Auschwitz. Even Glina was in Auschwitz too.

Your friend, Mr. Glina?

Yeah, Mr. Glina. He was together with me in Jerusalem and the survivors from the Holocaust.

Well, wait. Let's not jump ahead. So we're in the ghetto, and it's 1941, 1942. And the Germans come. And they take you away from the ghetto?

Yeah.

And where do you go from the ghetto?

They take me to Sosnowiec. From there, he came-- one SS man and the Gestapo. And they were sorting out who going to work and who-- first of all, they ask the age. So I told them I'm 18 because I was built healthy, strong.

How old were you?

16.

I see.

Almost 16.

So you made yourself older.

Older-- so they put me to the right side. To the right side, that mean go to labor camp, go to work.

Did you know that? Did you figure that out, that if you go to the right, that means you live?

Yeah, right, whoever go to the left would go in the trains to the gas station.

To the crematory.

To the crematorium, yeah. And whoever was going to the right was going to labor camps. They say, you're going to labor camps. They told everybody, you go to work. You get good food. You go be taken care of with everything. Like they put them in the crematorium, they told them they're going for a shower. Take a shower. In the meantime, they gassed them up. They put gas in it.

They were nothing but so secret that nobody knew. Only the German people all around where they're living there, close to it, they knew what's going on. But they couldn't do nothing.

All right, so let's hear your story. So you were taken to the labor camp?

Yes.

And what did you do in the labor camp?

We used to build highways, throughways. Some used to have lorries. We used to dig with shovels and wagons like this. And then we're pushing it, lane and stones, everything pushing it. And down there, we used to build throughways-- highways, throughways.

What were the working and living conditions like?

Sun up to sun down.

Every day? Did you have a day off?

Every day, seven days a week, sun up to sun down. And to eat, a small piece of bread. You had to eat it right away. If no, somebody else was stealing it. And soup. And most of them people got swollen from the soup.

From malnutrition.

Yeah. And nothing else. That was the only thing may survive. And whoever survived was a miracle.

So you lost a lot of weight?

Yeah, I lost a lot of weight. When I got into concentration camp, I was weighing 146 pounds. When I got out, I weigh 94 pounds. In 1945, May 8, I was liberated. And I celebrate every year May 8. That's my big celebration.

I can imagine.

I never celebrate my birthday, just May 8.

How many years were you in the labor camp?

Three and a half years.

And all the time building highways?

Yeah, building highways.

And were you with any relatives or friends from--

No, no friends. I had a few friends from my own city. A few of them survive from my own city, from my friends. We used to go to school together. But no relatives because my uncle, my aunts, everybody they took away because they gassed them up.

And your grandparents?

Grandparents-- they were the first one.

They were the first to go?

Older the people were, and the first one they take away. And they were looking for people who was healthy, strong to work.

Were you there when they took your grandparents away?

No, no, no. They take the grandparents away 1940. They came into Poland 1939.

So you were in the labor camp from 1941 until 1944?

'45. May 8, '45, I was liberated.

No, but you said that-- before that, you told me that you were in Buchenwald too.

Yeah, in Buchenwald.

So you went from labor camp to Buchenwald?

Buchenwald, '44. And then I was in Reichenbach Sportschule. I was liberated May 8.

Now, what did you do-- when you went from the labor camp to the concentration camp, what did you do in the concentration camp?

Concentration camp-- that's what I'm going to do. In concentration camp we done the same thing.

You built highways?

Building throughways-- highways, throughways. They called them Autobahns. In Germany, they call them Autobahns.

Right.

We were building. And there were stones. We were building everything by hand. There was no machines. Cement we were mixing by hand everything. Like in Israel the first few years, there was no machines. They built everything by hand.

Now, what were the living and working conditions like in the concentration camp?

The living was very bad. It shouldn't happen in a million years to nobody.

How did you live? Where did you live?

Where I live, I was laying four high. We was laying on--

Bunks?

On bunks. And the bunks was a straw. We had straw laid out. And I was laying on the straw. That how we were living. That's how I was sleeping.

And every morning, like sundown, there was like you say in American, they say the army, reveille. They used to wake up everybody. Go outside. And they used to count. Everybody's in. Everybody's here. Nobody escaped.

You had roll call.

Everybody got dressed and go to work. We used to go four or five miles walk, go to work.

You walked?

Yeah, walked. Go to work.

And what time of the day was that? Sunset, 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock?

5:00, 6 o'clock. And then we came home about 5:00, 6 o'clock-- at least 12, 13 hours a day.

Did you have off for lunch?

Lunch?

No.

No lunch.

No lunch.

They have nothing to lunch. When we come back to the camp, they give us a bowl of soup. And there was some squash. So most of the people were swollen from the-- or they were sick on typhus.

So a lot of people didn't say they were sick. They pretend they wasn't sick. Whoever was going in the hospital, so they gave him a shot.

And they killed him, right?

They killed him. Whoever hold on, whoever didn't give up, didn't say he was sick, was going to work. And they were working on their feet, hardly can work.

What kind of clothing did you have?

Clothing-- I had wooden shoes. And papers from cement bags was my socks put on-- was my socks. And clothes, I had a blanket with a pair of pants and a shirt. And there was the whole three and a half years the same clothes. Had to wash it ourselves once a week.

So you washed it, and you had nothing else to put on then?

No, I had to let it dry, keep the blanket, a day later wash the blanket.

And there was enough water for washing these-- or soap?

There was nothing. It wasn't enough. But I don't know how I made it. It was a miracle I made it.

It was a miracle. It was really a miracle.

Me and another friend was going to the SS kitchen. We were stealing the peels from the potatoes. We were stealing. They catch us one time. They hit us in the head. So I have a headache since 1942.

I have headaches. So Dr. Jacobs-- Dr. Jacobs is a big doctor. He prescribed me. I take three a day, sometimes two a day, for my headaches-- 5 milligram.

Of what? What is it?

That's pills, 5 milligram Valium. And that's the only thing help me for the headaches. Every day and every night I walk around with headaches. But I'm used to it. I'm strong. I don't give up.

Yeah, it seems like you don't give up.

I no give up for nothing.

You didn't go into the hospital when you got hit then in the camp?

No, no, I pretend nothing happened because I would go to the hospital, I wouldn't be around.

Wolf, were there any Germans that were kind or tried to help?

A lot of Germans, they were kind. They would try to help. But some Germans, they catch them. They put them in the camps.

So they punished them that way?

They punished them because they liked to help Jewish people or Gentiles or Polish people or Hungarian people, not only Jewish people. You had people from all over Europe you had in the camps. They start with the Jewish people, but they took other people, even prisoners of war, American prisoners of war.

Did you ever see the prisoners?

I saw a lot of them. And I saw where they took 300, 400, and they shot them with machine guns. They open a big truck. And they put them in one grave.

And two of them escaped. One was a lieutenant and one was a staff sergeant. And they escaped. And the staff sergeant I met right after the war in 1945 where I used to work for the United States Army. He was the only one made it.

And they never tracked him down?

No.

And the other one escaped safely?

Yeah.

So these were terrible, terrible, terrible years.

They were terrible times, terrible years. I don't know how I made it. It was a miracle I made it, whoever made it.

Did you ever think that you would give up?

No, I never give up. I say I going to make it. I was hoping another day, another day.

That it would end.

And every day was like a year.

Did you know the progress of the Allies?

No.

Did you hear any news at all?

Nobody know. The last three days you know that something going to happen because they start to run away. The SS, the Gestapo, the guards start to run away. And we know that something is going to happen, that we're going to be liberated. That's how I was liberated, May 8, 1945.

Why don't you tell us about that day, May 8?

That day, May 8, 1945, we were liberated. Came in with tanks everybody.

Who came in? What country? The British?

The British came in. They liberated. And when they were liberating, they carry everybody. They start to feed us. They picked us up. Most of them were laying, collapsing. People couldn't stay on their feet. I don't know how I could walk out to the tank. And they gave us food. And most of them they transferred right to German hospitals.

Did you go to a hospital?

Yeah, a hospital-- I was six weeks in a hospital. To get used to it, I had a half a egg a day, two slices of toast. First of all, I had half and half. They called it half and half. That was a cream to seed my stomach to get used to eat.

Good food again.

The food-- because I had diarrhea. The first few weeks I had diarrhea every day.

And that weakened you.

Yeah. So a few weeks, I couldn't eat nothing. Or they gave me half and a half and tea, and later on a slice of toast. And the fourth, fifth week, I start to recuperate. And I start to eat a little more, a apple a day. And I used to eat two slices toast and an egg. And later on, six weeks later, they told me I can go out. They let me go.

And where did you go then? Is that when you went home?

I was going with three, four friends. Go to Poland.

And how did you do that? You didn't have money.

We would go by train.

And you just hopped trains?

We just hopped trains. We were hopping trains without money, laying in the locomotive where the coal was. We were hiding there. Go to Poland and looking. Maybe I'm going to find somebody. We were looking, looking all over. We couldn't find nobody.

Did anybody find any friends or any relatives, any of your friends?

A few of them find their cousins. And nobody find any brothers or any sisters. So they were looking. In Jewish, they used to say in the gmina, the gmina. They used to look there.

There was a Jewish organization like the UNRRA over here. And right after the war it was UNRRA in Germany too. And that's how I look around. We were there six, seven weeks. Then we left, back to Germany.

And what happened when you went back to Sosnowiec and you went to your house? Were the people friendly?

The people-- what I do here, who I am. I say, I'm the owner. I'm the son from the house. And we were living here. That's our house. No, nothing is ours. It's theirs. The Germans given them.

So I say, I want my pictures. I know where I hide the pictures. They say, you want the pictures? Where are they? So I show them where they are. They took them out. Says I have to pay them.

Oh, that's when you had to pay for your own pictures?

I had to pay for their own pictures, to get the pictures from my father and mother and from my grandfather and grandmother.

So you were anxious to leave, I'm certain.

To leave, yeah. Then I disappear back to Germany.

Wait. Before we get to Germany, we have a picture of you right after the war. Tell us about that. When was that taken?

That picture was after I got out from the hospital.

That's six weeks after--

Six weeks after, yeah.

--you were liberated?

Yeah, a friend of mine were taken. They were taking pictures.

And you were still wearing the clothing from the--

No, I just was wear them to make the picture.

Oh, for the picture, because the British gave you new clothing.

Yeah, they gave us clothes. Yeah, they gave us clothes.

And you have a number. Is that the--

That's the number I had. That's my number from the concentration camp.

You do or you do not have a tattoo?

No tattoo, no.

Now, why is it that you--

Certain time, they used to give tattoo. And certain time, they didn't give tattoos. In our camp when I was there, they didn't give the tattoos. Sometimes they gave tattoos before you got to the camp.

So you were fortunate that way.

Yeah, I didn't have the tattoo.

So you came back to Germany. And what did you do in Germany?

I came back to Germany. And most of them, they used to call us DPs.

Displaced persons.

Yeah, displaced persons. So Jewish people, Polish people, used to work for the United States Army. So I went in the United States Army. And I asked for a job. So they gave me a job. They put me in the kitchen, in the mess hall, in the kitchen to clean up tables in the kitchen. Work over there. Clean up tables and work in the kitchen.

I worked there six weeks. Then I say, how about they give me a job? I can keep an eye. Was a lot of German prisoners there. And I can keep an eye. They shouldn't sabotage. They shouldn't steal. And the monopoles-- they shouldn't take a Jeep or a truck and drive out. So they give me a job because they saw--

So you were security then?

Yeah, I was security-- military police.

Just you? Or did you have other people working with you doing security?

I worked with the Americans, with the GIs together. I was the only displaced person.

Oh, you were the only one?

The only one.

Did you do any translating or interpretation?

Yeah, I was translating.

German, Poland--

German, Polish, Russian, and English. I caught up-- just got in my head. Didn't go to school for that at all.

Well, you have a good ear.

Yeah.

Do you have any interesting stories, unusual stories from that time that you might want to tell us?

I have good stories. From that time, I start to live. Every minute was like a year. I start to live. I was born again. It was a miracle. And I was very happy. Whatever I done, I didn't care how many hours whatever I do. I'm here.

You're alive.

It's a new world. I'm alive. I was born again. I was a new person.

Did you know at that time already that your whole family, all your brothers and sisters--

Yeah, that I have nobody alive.

Did you find all that out?

I find that out when I was in Poland, from the beginning, right after I got out from the concentration camp.

Do you think that maybe one of your brothers or sisters might have gone to Russia?

No, I looked. I checked all over the whole world.

You found their names listed?

Names, everything listed-- everything listed [CROSS TALK] in the kibbutz.

No aunt and uncles?

No, nobody.

No cousins?

No, no.

Nobody survived?

I had an uncle. An uncle was living, survived. He was in Montreal.

Oh, he's still in Montreal?

No, he passed away about 12 years ago on heart trouble. But that's the only one. I met an uncle in Montreal.

So you lost hundreds of relatives there?

Relatives-- there were 42.

42 relatives.

Relatives

Wolf, we have a document from the United States Army. Maybe you can tell us what that document is all about.

The document is all about I used to work for the military police. And my job was to check that nobody sabotaged, nobody steal. And I was in charge on 300 DPs-- displaced person. And I was in charge. They were working over there in the front gate, in the guard house. And I was staying with a GI, MP. They gave me a uniform.

Is that what this document says?

Yeah, worked for the military police.

That you work for the military police?

Military police-- that was my job. And I had a big job over there. Then a few months later, they gave me a PX card. And I used to be treated like a GI. They gave me a uniform.

You had a regular military uniform?

Military uniform-- they gave me a PX card. Used to go shopping in PX.

It must have been a good life.

Yeah, a terrific life. Used to get paid with scripts, like any other GI. And I was very happy. I had everything. I never dreamed I could have something like this.

How long did you stay in the military?

Four years.

So we're talking about until 1949, right?

1949, right.

And what happened then?

1949, Ben-Gurion came to Germany, to Frankfurt. Zeilsheim, that was the camp. And he was making big speeches. Oh, young guys should go to Israel. May have to fight with the Arabs so Israel can survive for a country because they declare Israel as a country. And a lot of guys-- I have one here in Buffalo. He was together in Israel with me.

Oh, who is that?

Swartzberg-- Jack Swartzberg. He was in Israel with me. And we were living together in one room. Six boys were living in one room. We were laying on the floor because only had two beds. The rest would lay on the floor sleeping.

Oh, you took turns. [LAUGHS]

Yeah, it was no problem.

So you went to Israel. And what did you do in Israel?

In Israel, I worked for [NON-ENGLISH], for a big construction company in Tel Aviv. [NON-ENGLISH], they used to call him. [NON-ENGLISH] is ranches.

Apartments?

Ranches. Ranch. Flat ranch. I used to work in Holon. From Tel Aviv to Holon is about five miles, four and a half miles.

And how long did you work in construction?

Two and a half years.

So we're talking about 1951, 1952?

Yeah. And I work over there. But to get a job, I had to go [NON-ENGLISH] Tel Aviv and buy a salami from France on the black market and give them in [NON-ENGLISH]. In [NON-ENGLISH] was a foreman. I should get a few days a job, a few days work, because it was so many people without jobs, employment was bad. Couldn't get a job.

It was also austerity. There wasn't much food.

Yeah. There wasn't enough. It was the bad time because they always had trouble with the Arabs, always were fighting. Always were fighting, fighting, fighting.

So to survive, I saved money. I came with a lot of money to Israel, but everything was gone. And I start to save money. And I smuggled myself. I was going to a travel agent that I go to Paris.

Oh, you didn't have any papers, I presume?

No. So I bought a passport. Then I go to Paris, to Marseilles. And from Marseilles, I smuggled myself in to Germany, back to Frankfurt am Main for the United States, the same--

Oh, so you came back to the same military--

The same place I used to work-- military. Major Benny, the same man, used to be a lieutenant. When I came back, he was a major.

I see. And he took you back?

Yeah, he signed on the recommendation there. And he took me back. And he gave me the job. And I stayed there six months in the supply room. I used to sleep there because I couldn't go out in the street. German police catch anybody, arrest. They send them away to camps.

Yes, but you were in a American military uniform.

Not yet.

Oh, not yet?

Not yet.

I see.

I was till 1949. But when I left Israel and when I came back, I had to wait six months to get a German passport.

I see.

And then I had the same job. I had it from 1945 to 1949, for the military police. I had the same job. And I worked for them again.

So you came back in '50--

Three.

'53. And how long did--

In August, in '53.

And how long did you work for the military?

Till '56.

I see. And what happened in 1956?

I registered myself to go to the United States. In '56, I left the United States from Bremerhaven with a ship. Seven days to--

To New York?

To New York City-- me came to New York City. And I brought a lot of crystal, all that kind stuff. So they opened up the box, everything. They told me I have to pay duty for it.

I said, why should I pay duty for it? I brought the crystal, china. Someday I get married. I'm going to have my wife. I not go pay duty. I not go sell it. If I'd sell it, it's different.

So I show them the recommendation. I work for the United States Army, everything. So they let me go. I didn't have to pay a penny. A lot of people had to pay.

Oh, so you had a good recommendation.

Yeah, and that helped a lot. And the language-- I talked with him. He understand everything what I said. Because a lot

of people came, they didn't know English at all.

And you already knew English.

I knew the language. And I was lucky.

So where did you go from New York City?

From New York City, I came to Buffalo.

Why?

Because I had friends in Buffalo. They were in the camps with me. In France I met them right after the war-- and Max Paul. And I came to Buffalo. And I stay here in Buffalo in Max Paul's house for three months. And then I work for Pfeiffer Salad Dressing and Cold Salad, Main and Amherst.

What did you work?

Pfeiffer's Salad Dressing, Cold Salad.

What kind of business is that?

There used to be Main and Amherst.

And what did they make?

Cold salad, tartar sauce, loganberry.

I see.

They moved out to Batavia, so I couldn't get a job. I didn't have a job no more in Batavia. Why I go to Batavia? I didn't know nobody.

So I bought an ice pick with a shovel. And I was praying to the Lord he should a snowstorm. Bought a pair of boots. 5 o'clock in the morning, I got up. I was sure it would snow. Made \$50, \$60 a day. \$50, \$60.

What neighborhood was that?

On Carmel Road on Hertel.

Oh, in the North Park section?

Yeah, Parkside, park. And I made a lot of money. I keep saving. 95% I saved. Then I took my own apartment on Traymore and Hertel with the [INAUDIBLE] next door.

What year are we talking about now?

That's 1958. I bought my own apartment.

You bought your own apartment already?

I didn't bought it. I just rent it. I bought furniture, everything. And I cooked in the house. And I had a bunch of boys that come to eat. And I charge them, like Blitzer's and Sam Friedman had a restaurant.

Yes, on Hertel Avenue.

On Hertel Avenue. I made better food, and cheaper. And they used to play cards. We used to get together. Then I met some guys with me, were on the same camps. And we got together.

And then I came to Sam Friedman. And Nate [PERSONAL NAME] came over there. And I looked for a job. So Sam Friedman helped me to get a job in Lippes Bakery.

Oh, in the bakery?

Yeah.

In the bakery.

In Lippes Bakery.

And that's when you first began to learn to bake?

To bake-- and I didn't know nothing. So I made the whipped cream pies-- \$0.99 whipped cream pies. Made thousands of whipped cream pies every weekend. And I worked 10, 12 hours, 15 hours. The guys don't want to work overtime. Well, I took all the overtime I could get because I saved the money. I kept saving and saving.

Were you married yet?

No, I got married August 25, 1963. I saved money.

So you were a bachelor for a while?

Right. And my wife-- she'll rest in peace-- I lost her last year. She come from a poor family, from the Cohen girls. Their father used to work as a janitor in Bennett High School.

So I had everything. Had money for a down payment for our home, had money for furniture. When we got married, I even paid for the wedding. And then we got married.

In 1963?

'63. In '64, the twins were born, Alan and Brian, the twins-- identical twins.

You come from a family where there are twins.

Twins, yeah. And from her side were twins too. Some had twins. Then I will then have a girl. So come another boy. That's it. That was time to stop. That's it. Three kids is enough.

You have a nice family. Before we see the picture of your family, we have a picture in a book from 1981. So tell us what's happening here.

In 1981, they were in Jerusalem, the Holocaust survivors. Everybody come from the whole world.

It was a conference in 1981.

Yeah, a conference-- '81. That was in June. And everybody was there. They had people from the whole world, from Russia, from all over, looking for somebody in computers and every place. Maybe, maybe somebody find somebody. Couldn't find nobody.

Did you find anybody?

I just find friends from my own city.

Oh, you did find--

But I knew guys, from the same street even, we used to live. But no, no family. Nobody else.

Did you know anybody who found anybody miraculously?

Yeah, I knew a few friends--

Relatives I mean.

--in my city. Yeah, find cousins, but no parents. One guy find a brother.

Oh, that must have wonderful.

They fell apart. They were crying-- find a brother.

Now, what are you doing in this picture?

Lighting candles for the 6 million survivors.

And where are you?

6 million Jewish people survived.

Which one is you?

In the hat-- Marty Glina is the first one. I'm the second one in the hat there, lighting the candles.

And this is in Jerusalem?

In Jerusalem, yeah.

And that was a very wonderful conference.

Yeah, a big conference-- and my wife was there and Moishe Glina, and Marty Glina and his wife was there. And we were there, and the Teitelbaums. A lot of people were there from Buffalo, a whole group. Their own Buffalo Courier, make pictures.

Now we have a picture of your family.

That's my wife, my sons, Alan and Brian.

The twins on either side.

The twins on either side. They're 27 years old now. They're both in business, bakery business, one on French Road, one on Broadway Market.

And the youngest one is 23 years old-- Howard. He go to school, to college. He got to finish college. First they finish college. You got to finish college.

They went to college. You made sure they went to college.

Oh, yeah. I done everything. I worked 16 hours a day for 10 years to make sure they go to college. The education I couldn't get--

You made sure they [CROSS TALK].

--they get it.

What year is this picture taken?

That picture was taken in 1979, when--

At your youngest son's bar mitzvah?

Yeah, my youngest son bar mitzvah. He was 13 years old, right. He's 23 now. That was 1989-- no, '79. 1979.

1979.

Right. That was taken the picture in Temple--

Sinai.

In Temple Sinai. And over there, they were taking the picture and had a good time-- the bar mitzvah, a lot of people. Everybody were there.

And after that, in 1979, I was in business. And one son finished college. He finished high school, and he only go two years to college. Then he go into business. First of all, I brought both boys to the business.

Well, wait a minute. The last we heard, you're working at Lippes Bakery.

Lippes Bakery.

So tell us what happened.

I used to work in Lippes Bakery on Thruway Plaza.

Until when?

Till 1970. 1970. And then, 1970, I know Lippes Bakery is going under, that Tops go buy it. And Tops bought the bakery. Six months later they closed up. The reason they closed up-- the quality down, the price up.

So I bought the business on Broadway Market. All I bought is a counter with a slicer. And I start to buy wholesale from [PERSONAL NAME] Bakery, from Lippes Bakery, and from Burczynski's Bakery, and Luigi's Bakery.

And you brought all of these to your own concession?

Yeah, to the market, and I start to sell that. And I work 15, 16 hours a day. Then I used to sell bagels. I used to go to Northland over there and buy bagels and take them to the market and sell them over there.

And slowly, when the kids were eight, nine years old, I brought them to the market when didn't go to school. 10 weeks no school. I waked them up 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock in the morning.

Oh, so you trained them from early--

I trained them from an early age on. So one time they not will get up. So I took the bed, the spring and the mattress upside down. Are you going? I took off the strap. OK, Pa, I go.

Since then, they go to work. They work every year 10 weeks on the market. And I kept an eye on them. And they used to shoot rubber bands everything. So I told the men, you no worry about it. Shoot the rubber bands. Later on they'll pick up everything.

And slowly I break them in. They made boxes. They were slicing bread, packing rolls. And slowly they used to sell stuff. And that's how they became businessmen.

And now they have the bakery? Is that right?

Now they are the bakeries. That's their own. They in business.

And you're retired?

I retired, but I still work four days a week. I not going to stay home.

No. We have a picture of you in the bakery. So tell us who's who here. You're in the middle.

I'm in the middle. And my college boy is right there without a hat. Alan you have to the left and Brian on the right side in the glasses. And that's my boys. That's my billions. I wouldn't give them away for billions. They're not for sale.

Now, when you think of your days in the labor camp and the concentration camp and you think of this picture, can you believe it?

I never dream. I never believe it, that something like this could happen to me. First of all, I came to the United States, the best country in the whole wide world, for people where they will hustle, they will work, not for lazy people. Lazy people don't get nowhere.

Over here you got all opportunities, but you got to work for it. And for nothing you become somebody. And I worked myself out in my best life since I came to the United States. And I start to live.

Well, you got married, and you had a family.

I got married, and I have a nice family. And I have good boys. And they watch me. They my bodyguards. They watch me, and I love them very much. They love me. And they not for sale. I would never sell them. And I put them both in business.

Do they know what you went through?

Yeah.

And do they ask questions why they don't have any relatives?

They ask more than one time. And I make sure anything from the Holocaust they should watch because I no can watch. I watch a few minutes because I break down. But I make sure they should watch anything. Simon [PERSONAL NAME], when the Nazis and Eichmann, the trial, everything-- I make sure.

Like the trial now in Jerusalem-- let's hope he is innocent. But it's not 100%. Got to be 100%. If they have 100%, then they know what to do.

You mean Mr. Demjanjuk?

Demjanjuk, yeah. But they watch everything. I make sure they watch everything. And I have books from Israel from the camps. And I bought books. And I make sure they read the books.

The generations, they should remember. They shouldn't happen to nobody-- not only the Jewish people, Gentiles should never happen camps like this. Never happen what happened to 6 million innocent people-- was gassed up, killed for no reason because they were Jews. And you got a lot of Gentiles were killed too because they didn't go with the Germans. They didn't like the way what he done-- a lot of their own German people too, the Polish people.

A lot of Polish people-- I have to say that-- hide Jewish kids. And they saved a lot of Jewish kids. A lot of Jewish people they saved. And they survived. And they risked their lives.

And I have people here in Buffalo where they saved Jewish kids, Jewish people. And they came here. And the Jewish people came to the United States. They brought them from Poland over here. They bought them homes. They done everything for them because they saved their lives.

And a lot of people say that the Polish people were bad. Polish people weren't bad. They saved Jewish people. They risked their lives. The Ukrainian people, they were worse than the SS and the Gestapo. They were bad. They were the only ones that were bad.

But the Polish people, they suffered the same. They were on the underground with Jewish people in Warsaw ghetto. They were fighting with underground. You only have a few people survive in Warsaw ghetto. They were fighting with Jewish people. They were fighting in the underground in Poland. A lot of Polish people with Jewish people were fighting in the wilderness-- how you call it-- in the wilderness?

In the forest.

In the forest, yeah, fighting to get close--

With the partisans, with the resistance.

With the Partisans, yeah-- get close to the Russian border and to fight with the Russians against the Germans. And that's how they made it. A lot of them survived this way. But not too many.

No, not too many, unfortunately. We have to end this tape soon. Is there something more that you want to say in conclusion?

I want to say, I appreciate to be American citizen-- the best country in the whole wide world. People live here like human beings. And people work hard here and all opportunities. That's how I built up my business.

And everybody know me and they call me from all over. I have people from Chicago. I have people from New Jersey. I have people from all over. They come to me. I even send by mail airmail overnight baked goods. They send me a check and I send them the baked goods.

And everybody know me because I'm honest. Honest is the best policy. Honesty is the best policy. I sell fresh for fresh. Anything left over, day later half price. Nobody gets cheated in my bakery. And everything is fresh. Most of them baked goods is no preservatives. And I appreciate [INAUDIBLE] for doing that for me, and Jewish center. I appreciate--

And the Holocaust research?

The Holocaust Jewish Center I appreciate. I'm very happy to be here and to tell my story, my life story.

Thank you very much.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.