

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Harry Alexander  
February 11, 1992  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Harry Alexander, conducted on February 11, 1992 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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## **HARRY ALEXANDER**

### **February 11, 1992**

beep

Let's start with your telling me how everyday life changed as of 1938 in Germany.

As of 1938, well life had changed before 1938, but we didn't really acknowledge it--we didn't want to know, we looked the other way. We always said that it will pass, but it didn't, and life really, really changed. We were no longer allowed, uh, to go to parks to go to movies, have businesses, and to uh, go to school, uh, no kind of education, um, we uh, uh could not buy uh, uh food or, or anything in stores, we had to wait till the last one was served before if ever we did get it that we could ask for something. And, uh, the big change really came uh, uh what you call Kristallnacht, the 8th to the 9th of November, 1938. That was when the storm troopers uh stormed your house, destroyed your furniture, uh threw everything out the window, crushed your dishes, whatever you had, beat everybody up, arrested everybody uh, that they lay their hands on. Take them to Buchenwald--concentration camp, and uh, drive people through the streets, beat them, rape them, burn their synagogues uh, uh down, and uh it was truly horrible at 4 o'clock in the morning. It was a horrible uh situation. Uh, uh Jewish people were running uh, uh from one house to another, didn't know where to go what to do, whom to ask for help, there was no help, there was no place to go, and there was no place to run. My brother, Paul, that time, he was taken to Buchenwald. Uh, my brother, Bernie, the oldest one, he was hiding in a neighbor's house, uh, uh, my 3 little sisters were hiding under the beds, and I was hiding under the kitchen table, uh, and uh, uh, uh, we were so scared half to death. We didn't know what was happening. We didn't understand it. As it passed, my uh, I saw my, my mother and uh, uh my father, they would go, they would be scared every day. They would be afraid to go outside, wouldn't let us go outside to play or whatever. And, my father no don't go work at that time--he was taken to Sachsenhausen, was picked up, taken to Sachsenhausen. And uh, my other cousin was taken to Buchenwald. It was just my 3 sisters and myself. Somehow they didn't take me, but uh, that was the -----, because uh, in about February, of 1939, my mother told me to go out and buy a loaf of bread and come right back. I went out, I bought a loaf of bread, and a kapo was out, uh, "You a Jew? Jew boy! Get in the car!" I didn't know any better, I was 16 years old, I went into the car, and they threw me in jail, in my hometown of Leipzig. Uh, about in April, must have been about 6 to 8 weeks I was in prison, no eh, uh, uh explanation was given, none was asked. This was the way it was. Suddenly I heard them call my name, and I, I remember the cell, cell #10, and I was taken downstairs, and I was told to sign a paper, that I will leave Germany within 24 hours. I was told to sign, I signed. I went home. And

that is when I really understood the whole situation. It really hit me then. I went home and my mother stood at the door of our house, and she said to me, "Here is 10 marks and here is a change of clothes. Go to the railroad station, and take a train, and go to Italy, Milan." And she had my little sister, the little, the littlest one, in her arm. I said, "Where are the other two?" She says, "I sent them away with some people, to Poland. Maybe they'll be safe there for a while. And as soon as you leave, I will take Tony with me, and we will also go." I said, "What am I going to do in Italy?" She says, "Go. Here's 10 marks and go. You'll find something to do there, just get out of Germany. You have to leave!" Well, we said goodbye, and that was the end of that. I went to the railroad station, and I took a train to Milan, and that's where I went. She said to me, the last words, I remember her last words, my mother's last words, she said to me, "Look forward, don't ever look back...Run boy run, don't ever look back and may God be with you." And that was the time when I really understood the significance of the situation. I never seen my sisters my brothers my mother, my father, never see anybody anymore. You mean, I'm all alone now? Going someplace, I don't know where? Being somewhere I don't want to be? Oh it was, got into Italy, to Milan, and I found I wasn't alone. They got hundreds and hundreds--you see, Italy was the only country where you could go to because Mussolini was Hitler's friend, that opened borders. I might add that there were no open borders anyplace else. Which gave me to understand that nobody wanted me. That I couldn't go anyplace else. That I was, I had the feeling of being trapped. But at least I was out of Germany. That was...a step in the right direction. I did what the others did, I slept on park benches, I slept in doorways, I slept underneath bridges, and we stole the food that we needed, we didn't know where we're going, or, or what we're going to do, or where, or where the next piece of bread was going to come from. So the Jews in Milan saw the plight of all these--these are people that are mothers with children--little babies, little children. And fathers and sick people, and old people. They had to give these people something to eat, they opened up soup kitchens, so one, one time a day we had a meal, so they saw to it that we had a meal. So, uh, the Nazis of course found out about that, that the Jews were treated humanely, in Milan and some other cities, and they said, uh, this cannot be, that cannot, we cannot allow this to happen. So then the Italian authorities came out and said, uh, "You claim you are tourists." That was the only way we could get in, was to say we are tourists. "You can't be a tourist. If you're a tourist, you gotta have money. And if you have money, you have no food, then you're not tourist, and we have to send you back...where you came from. And we have to close the soup kitchens up. And that was that, they closed up the soup kitchens, and we were right back where we started from. Suddenly they worked it out, after all, about 2 or 3 weeks, they worked it out that the French embassy is giving out visas. They're good for one day. All the men have to join the French army because war was imminent. You join the French army, and all the woman and girls have to join the French Red Cross. Uh, we figured that's the way out. To get out of Italy now. So we did. We all piled into the French Embassy, we all go

that one, they called it a one day fly, was called a one day fly because everybody, had just asked to this embassy that we are flying, we are flying there, and we all got the stamp, all got the piece of paper. And now was the uh, uh, thing to get into France. Here we are, we are in Milan, we have to take a train to get into France. There was only one last train going because since war was imminent, there was only one last train going to Saint Vemo. Saint Vemo -----, this is the French Border, the next one is Montor Nice. It's right on the French/Italian-----. So we had to get on that train. There were hundreds of us. It was pathetic. It was a pathetic view. Woman, children, people were fainting, people were, were getting sick. They were lying all over, uh, people got had strokes, it was just terrible. The excitement and the and the running and squeezing into these trains, these trains, and, and the pushing and the shoving and, and the fighting to get a space on that train. It was the last one out. I managed to get on.

We have to stop. We have to reload.

Yeah.

beep.

Let's back up to getting a one-day visa and leaving on the train.

All right. Yeah? Uh, you have to understand that here is a train. We are talking about a train, that is maybe made for 200 people, maybe. Here must have been 8, 900 people. Now I don't have to tell you what that train looked like. They're hanging out windows, on top of the roof, on the sides, on the exits, the entrances, the doorways, the doorknobs, they were, they were hanging by their fingernails. And here we're talking about little children. The father and the mother maybe took the children, or three. It wa, it was a sad sight, but yet, we got on it. The train started moving. the train conductor couldn't go very fast. He was going slow because he was afraid that the condition of the train, and the people, they were falling off, they can get killed. Was dangerous. When we got to Saint Vemo, train, we got there too late. We went up to the French border. They had closed, already closed the border. Now the French, you have to understand this, the French wouldn't let us in, the Italians wouldn't let us back. On one side we had the mountains, which most of the people never saw a mountain in their life, like me. And on the other side, to the front, you had the ocean, with those big breakers, and in order to get into France, only two ways to do it in this kind of situation. You had to either go climb the mountain, which had was snow covered mountain, which we could never make, or you had to go, to go around the bend of the mountain into the beaches of France. We were now on the beach of St. Vemo, -----, but we had to go to the beach of France.

There was a big mountain there. We had to go around that mountain, swim or boat whatever, and go around to the beaches of France. Now, this is now what they call the St. Vemo incident. In this situation I'm now to talk about, became later known as the uh, uh, uh, as the St. Vemo incident. Now, here's the incident. There were, there were, St. Vemo at that time was a small fishing village. Old fishermen with old boats, rotten old boats, people, impoverished people, never saw a dollar in their life. These people saw a chance now, to make money. They knew that we couldn't get back into Italy, they had their guns pointed at us. The French had their guns pointed at us the other way, the mountains we couldn't make, the ocean was the only answer. And we couldn't stay because we would starve to death. We, we laid on a piece of land called the no man's land. It didn't belong to Italy, didn't belong to France, it was just a little tiny stretch of land that belonged to no one. Little tiny stretch of beach. We laid there for 4 days. In those four days, the fishermen saw the plight of the people. And they said, "I tell you what, If you give us all you have, we take you around with our boats. Around the bend onto the beaches of France. And from there you have to make your own way. Now a lot of people didn't have much of a choice. We couldn't stay, we couldn't go the other way, What choice did we have? There were children with us. I'm hungry! I'm thirsty! I need this, I need that! People needed medication. So, they said, "Let's take a chance. At least we have friends. At least, maybe they will give us some help. Give us something to eat." You have to understand also there were two gunboats there--one Italian gunboat on one side, and a French gun boat on the other side--looking at each other. And there were people there, it's not like it was isolated. The fishermen said give us all you have, your money your jewelry whatever, and we'll take you on to the beaches of France. And it was fine, the people gave whatever little they have, an earring, a ring, a wedding band, whatever little they had. They put them on the boat, there were about 8, 10 boats, they go out, they overloaded the boats, they had to go out about a half a mile or so to get around that bend. The boats cracked in two. People fell into the ocean, the breakers are very high there, and all you could hear was screams, "Help me! I'm drowning! Help me! Help my wife! Help my Children! Save my children! Save us!" And there were, it was a bad situation, they lifted their hands, I, I saw from shore, they were lifting their hands up to the gunboats, like this, to the gunboats, "Please save us! Save my children!" Who do you save when you wife drowns and your son drowns and your daughter drowns? Who do you save? They say, "Papa help me." And you can't swim. Who do you help?...The, uh, navy people on those ships, they looked down, they saw everything, there were dozens and dozens of people trying to paddle their way through the waves, going down never coming up, children.

Let's stop and wait .....

30 seconds of room tone with the heat on.

End room tone.

I want to redo that story.

Where do you want me to start from?

I want you to start from being on no man's land...

and the fish, and hiring the fishermen to take you around the bend.

Well, there, there were people, I had nothing to give to these fishermen, so I was out. But, there were people that had their wedding band, earrings, uh little things, a few lire, a few marks, a few whatever they had, they gave it to them. They took them out their rotten boats there, overloaded, they were greedy, now, not just taking, they were greedy! They want too many people on that boat! As much as they could get on it. And, went out to the ocean, boats cracked, I saw it from shore, and the people fell into the water into the ocean. Was a heartbreaking sight...because you had families that were drowning, you had brothers and sisters, you had parents, you had wives and husbands, young and old, and they were all screaming for someone to save them. The breakers were hard, the waves were very high, the ocean was very hard, very tough. And, uh, these two gunboats there, the Italian and the French, their navy personnel were looking out, they were looking down, and I saw they had grins, they were grinning. And they were pointing fingers at the drowning people. I saw that. The screams from these people, from the children and from the husbands and the wives, the people there, to this day, I have those screams in my ears, "Papa save me!" The wife would yell, "Save our daughter, save our son!" And then they would disappear beneath the waves--wouldn't come up anymore. It was all over. The fishermen, of course, they know how to swim uh these uh, uh waves, and they been swimming since they're maybe 2 or 3 years old--they made it back to shore. Walked away. The next day, the bodies came washing ashore. Children, small, bigger ones, man, woman, nobody cared. So we pulled them out of the water, we put them down on the-----. We didn't know what to do with them. And that is when I really realized, I know there's going to be a problem here. There's gonna be, we're going to have problems. We're going to have big problems. Was a little boy that hung on to me, must have been about 12 yrs old, 11 or 12, Heinz was his name, I remember his name. He lost his family running for Europe, somehow he got lost. He hung on to me. So I took him aside, I said, "Look, we're here 4 days, going 5 days, there's no food, there's no water. We're going to die here. Unless we're going to do something very drastic, we're going to die. There's nobody coming to help." The only

people that came to help us, monks, and few nuns, that would bring some, little bit, something for the children, but not for the adults, you know, they couldn't do a great deal, because there were too many people. How much could 3 or 4 nuns do? Or 3 or 4 monks or brothers, whatever you call them. So I took him aside, I said, "I'll tell you what. If you want to chance it, we can't go back to Italy, we look at guns, we can't go into France, we look at guns, we can't go over mountains, we, we'll die, we'll freeze to death up there, we'll never make it. We can't swim because we'll drown, and nobody is helping us. Italy knew about it. France, France, French authorities knew about it, that we were there, that we are coming, and the Italian authorities know that we just left the train. So everybody knew about it. But, we're going to die right here. Nobody's going to lend us a hand. So, I tell you what we're going to do. We're going right up to that barbed wire there on the French border, they had some barbed wire there, and walk right up to it, and crawl through it. We'll do the impossible thing, we'll do the stupid thing, that nobody expects us to do, walk right into it. Just walk. He says, "Well, you know better. I was the leader now. All of 17, 16, I was the leader. Nightfall came, so, I said, "Tell you what, we go in the early, early morning hour. Sure enough, dawn, we went to the barbed wire, I said, "Let's crawl through it."

Okay, we have to reload.

Beep.

Beep.

4 second sticks

-----establish that you were with Heinz and...

Yeah, uh, I decided to do the thing that people would not think of doing--was go back to the barbed wire. I told Heinz that, I said, "Do you realize we're going to get shot, we can get killed, uh, we'll never make it, but that's the only chance we have. Well, maybe in 100, maybe the...God will look over here, maybe there is no God, maybe we'll make it, maybe do it. He says, "Fine." So we did it. Crawling half way through the barbed wire, I heard a noise, I looked up and I saw, I looked into the barrel of shot of a gun, and this border guard is looking down at me. Well, Heinz being a young boy started to cry. And I looked at him, I said, "This is the end of the line. At least we tried." I said, "Look," and he spoke, he spoke in broken German--he must have been from Alsace Lorraine--or something, he must have spoke some German, he says, "So, what you think you're doing there?" I said, "I'm trying to get into your country." Uh, I tell you what, "If you have to



shoot, let him go, he's only 12 years old. He's only a kid." So he says, "Get through." And there was a voice from another guard, and he says, "C'est ne rien---." That means, "There is nothing here, no, no, no nothing, no noise." I remember those words, although I could not speak French, but I remember those words because they saved my life. And some things just stick into your head. He said, "Is your train over there? There was one train standing in Monton, on the, on the border." He said, "Yeah, get in it. It's going to take you into France, into Nice." So we run for it. Totally empty train. This must have been the train they had ready for us when we arrived to take us into France, but I didn't realize it at that time. When they did, suddenly the train started moving, we ended up in Nice. Now you have to understand something, here we have no papers, no money, we have no knowledge of French, we have no place to go, we were hungry, we were dirty, we were bloody, cold and tired. So we ran into a doorway, we said, you know, "Let's go to sleep." And we slept, and we were arrested, of course, the concierge came out and uh, saw us sleeping in the door, we arrested and uh, and I never knew anything about the French or about France, but I now felt a brunt of, of the French cruelty and, and, and barbaric behavior. Believe me, the cruelty of the French police, and the garde-----, and authorities, was next to nobody. I mean, they were brutal. The brutality and cruelty of these people. And, and, and the, and the meanness of these people was next to nobody. We thought we had escaped the cruelty of the Nazis. Ha, ha, ha, we got into the cruelty of the French. They grabbed us, they put chains on us, and they throw us in prison. No food, no water, no nothing. Well, we later found out that everybody who crosses the border illegally and has no papers has to spend one month in Prison before they even talk to you. Now spending, in, in the French jails, you have to understand you have company. You know you have rats the size of cats. You have bugs and roaches on the walls. Ants. The filth is un, is indescribable, that is in the French prisons. Well, we, we found that out very soon. They took him out, and I never, I never saw Heinz again. Now I was alone. Now, once a day, they would throw a piece of hard bread in there which was full of ants--I felt it crawling when I touched the bread. Of course, the rats came, so we, I had to break off a piece of the bread, throw it in the corner of the cell so the rats would fight over it and let me eat the other piece. Before I ate, I had to knock it out, I had to knock the ants out, the hard, the bread was hard as nails. But if you have nothing else, you chew on it. After a month, they took me out, I was never allowed to leave the cell. No walking, no exercise, no nothing. They took me out and no explanation was given. They put chains on my legs, and chains on my hand, on my arms, and they had a car, an open car waiting for me with 8 guard mobile. The guard mobile, the gendarmes, are the worst kind of police, the, the most brutal, the most uh, uh, the meanest people that they had, they put into the guard mobile. They threw me in there, chains on my arms and legs, and took me to a camp call Antibe. That was what they called an internment camp, but don't believe it, that was a concentration camp. There were hundreds of people there. They took the chains off, and they took

me out, and they threw me into the camp, I fell right flat on my face into the camp, I'll never forget it. And that was that, I was in that camp. Nothing to do there. Just stay there. Barbed wire. Not much food, not much water. It ----- it was used to be an old stadium, a football stadium, so we slept on the cement. There were all kinds of people there. One didn't know the other. All kind of people that they picked up here and there. After 2 months, we were put on trucks, we were taken to Le Mille ---- Provence. Pres to Marseilles, next to Marseilles, to a brick factory. They put us to the catacombs, and lock the door, the iron door. The catacombs used to be little hallways, little tun, tunnels, how they say, tunnels, where they used to dry the bricks with heat. There was straw on the floor, no light, and no sound and no nothing like you're buried alive. We had a few candles flickered in the dark and that was it. After some months, they took us out, and they made a transport into a place called Manosk. That used to be an old movie house. They put barbed wire around it. Put us there. I wasn't supposed to be there, but I met a boy, a guy named Willie, and uh, he came from my hometown, and so we got friendly in Antibes, and we stuck together. He used to keep an eye out for me because uh he was 10 years older. And we had uh, uh a lot of homosexuality in the camp, and I was all of 17 and a half, and I fell prey to a, they tried a lot of things and he sort of, uh chased them, and I didn't understand what it was all about, I never knew about homosexuality, I never heard this word, I never knew what it was. But he was the smart one, and he never would really answer my questions, just said, "Just stay away from this one, stay away from that one," that's what I did, and I went with really this transport. That night, he came to Manosk, they called out the list of prisoners, and I wasn't on the list. They found out that I wasn't supposed to have been on the transport, so he says, "You got to get back--you can't--". I said, "I want to stay with my friend," they say, "You can't. We have to take you back on the truck." So they put me through that truck, I remember it was cold. It was so cold. And uh, I went back, I said goodbye to Willie. And I went back on the truck. And there was about a 3-4 hour drive to go back to where we came from. And it was an open truck. The back was open, but there was no guard in the back, they just throw us in the back because the guy that was supposed to guard us, he was too cold, he stuck with the driver up front. We drove through the night, and the truck wasn't going very fast, and, when they're on a bend, they slowed down quite a bit. And I saw a, a, like a ravine down, going down like. So I said, there ever is a time to get the hell out of here, this is it. I had no idea where I was, I had no idea where I was going, I had no idea in the dark of the night where that truck was. I got out. And I jumped. Was pitch dark, the------. And I fell down that, that ravine, and I laid there still. I was afraid, I was scared. My heart was pounding and I was so scared. Nothing. Still. Quiet. And I thought I heard the backlights of the truck disappear on the horizon. I said, uh, they'll never know. And I start walking. I got up, I was hurting, but I start walking. And I stayed there a few days and a few nights in the woods there. I was afraid to talk to anyone--if a farmer would pass, I was afraid to talk to him. -----that October I

couldn't speak French. What am I going to tell them I'm German, they, they, they take a pitchfork and kill me because they hated the Bosch, they hated the, the Germans. They'd think I'm from the 5th Column or something. So, I hid up on a group of people, I heard voices, and I sneaked up.

Wait, we've got to reload.

Oh.

Beep.

Beep.

Why don't you just back up

I'm sorry that was take 4, -----

I saw the opportunity to jump off the truck. The truck had slowed down, and here was my chance to get away. I didn't know whether it was smart or dumb, but I did it. And I jumped. Of course I fell down the ravine there, and, and uh, I saw the truck disappear, there, the backlights uh over the horizon, I knew I was safe now, at least from them, they wouldn't notice whether I was missing. Not now. By the time they will know this, I'll be gone. After a few days in the woods, and a few nights, I, I hid up on a group of people, on the run just like me. Young ones, old ones. Children from 12 years, 10 years on up to old men. They asked me if I was hungry. By that time, I could have eaten a cow, I was so hungry. They gave me food. And we stayed in the woods for a little while longer, a few more days, and then we got a, uh, message to join a group of assistant fighters, more south, in a place called Langlad. Langlad is next to Nime, that is in the South of France about 40 miles from Nice. We made our, our way, they were walking at night, and hiding during the day, eating whatever we could find, or we stole bread in the little villages that we passed through, in front of the baker, uh bakeries, and we stole fruit, and we went into backyards and stole figs, and, and, and grapes in the fields--whatever we could lay our hands on it. We made it to Nime. To Langlad. Now you have to understand, Langlad is a small village which was uh, at that time, evacuated, totally deserted. So we had our camp there. After a week or two, seems that somebody gave us away. The guard mobile got wind of it. They surrounded the camp and asked us to give up. And, and, so and, we knew what it meant. To surrender, then we're going to be shot, or we're going to be handed over to the Gestapo, or they're going to throw us in their filthy jails--we knew what that was, this was not good news. This was bad news. So they got together, and they said,

"Look, we were quite a few of us, 18, 20 uh boys that were under 21. 14 year olds, 15 year olds, 16, 20, 18--so you kids, get out, we're going to engage them with a little bit of shooting, and uh, you, while when we do it, we'll cover you. You run over the field and make your way to Nice. So we said, what's going to happen to you, they said, "Look we're in our 40s, 50s, 60s, maybe we'll get away too, maybe not, maybe it's the end of the line for us, but you're too young to die here. We did. We heard shooting from far on. They covered us, we made our way to Nice. Everyone for himself. There was no time to, to help anybody else, or to do it, or to go back and carry anybody. We were so hungry and, and thin and skinny and tired, that we, there was just no way that we could have helped anybody. I mean, we had enough of a job to help ourselves. So we got into Nice. Now, you have to understand something that the French did at that time. The French would go and they would come with a few trucks, and they corded off a part of the town, and go into that part of town, nobody could get out, like, like a trap, like, like a rat in a trap. They go in now by uh maybe two, three dozen automobile, and ask everybody for papers. Now if you had no money you were a vagrant. You go to jail. If you had no papers, you were a spy. If you couldn't prove that you lived there, in that area, you were also a spy. No matter which way you would turn, you lose. No matter which way, you lose. Naturally, we didn't know all these things that they had in store for us. We had no place to go, we had no place to hide, we had no money, we couldn't speak French, and we had no passport. Of course, we got caught. And, back to jail we went. Now they put me, luckily, into the -----, that was an, a barracks, called the Barracks, -----, an army barrack. And they had a jail in front, right where the street is, they had a jail where they would put the soldiers that go AWOL, or the, that had been in ----- with the rules they would put 'em there for a day or two or a week. And there were 5 cells there, and they threw me in one of the cells. And here I was. I didn't know what's happened to me. After about a week, the guard came to me and he says, "You know, all your people, in the other cells too, you're all going to be handed over in 2 days to the Gestapo. And you know what they're going to do with you." Seemed that he enjoyed that. And I look around. I was lucky. You see, where they had little trap door on the cell, I noticed it. I learned by now to notice things. To see things to look around, wherever I go I look around. I start to notice. They had a little trap door where they put that little pail in there, where you urinated, in and out. And that little pail, that little door, trap door was only hold together with a wire. The cell door had a bolt. this only had that little wire. I said, "Well, in the morning I'm going to get out." Sure enough, I worked all night, taking the wire back and forth, back and forth till it broke. And, oh you put wire back and forth, eventually it will crack. In the morning I, and I counted the uh minutes when the guard used to come around and check. I knew I had about 8 minutes between checking. I went out the moment the guard left I went out, I got out, over the trap door and out. Opened up all the bolts, and I looked, I saw, a half a dozen people in each one of the cells supposed to hold one person. They were all Jews like me, on the run, that they caught. I said to them, "Look

fellas, you have 8 minutes. The wall is over there, -----, go for it." You know what they said to me? "Where are we going to go? We have no papers, we have no money, we have no place to stay, we have no food, we have nothing. We have no coats, no wear no clothes. Where are we going to go? We are hunted by everyone. We're like, we are less than animals." I said, "Look, I haven't got time for debate here. You want to go, go." Of course, I was the youngest of the bunch there. They were all older people. And I went over the wall. They had a little piece of glass on the wall, I remember, I cut myself. There was a lamppost. I looked down, I saw the guard with a gun going back and forth. When he turned around, went the other way, I jumped on to the lamppost, down I went, and I walked immediately, I didn't stand there. Guy comes back, he looked me, he seems says, "Oh, just 2 minutes ago there was nobody here, now I see somebody walking," but he didn't say anything. I smiled. Hi. And I walked, and I went into Nice. There 2 guys stopped me. I was going rather fast, I was running. They said, "Hey, if you're on the run, there's a place that's cool down there, there are 3 basements. You can get a night's sleep and a piece of bread. Go down there. I said here is a good idea. I went down there. I stayed 2 nights. They gave me something to eat. They gave me a place to sl--You see, just to get a place to sleep, to lay your head down, a piece of bread to eat was something that was so big to us because we were always so hungry, so cold, so tired. Just to be able to sleep without having to worry that someone puts a gun into your head or somebody puts the chains on your, on your arms and, and feet and, uh, uh, somebody beats you up with a, with a stick. To us, that was heaven. After 2 days, I left. Well. We were running here, we were running there, hiding here hiding there. There was no place to go. There was no place to go. By now, I was suppose, I was considered dangerous subject, because of the prison break, they had my dossier, and there I was already you know, hunted. Now I was really hunted. Now, between the Gestapo and between the Guard mobile, and between really having had no chance. I mean, I didn't even have a fighting chance. I knew it. I had no fighting chance. That was it. Today I slept on this doorway. Tomorrow I slept underneath the bridge, and the next day I, I hid in a, in a backyard someplace like a rat. I got caught, and by the way, this time, it was late. They put chains on my legs, and chains on my arms, and I was transported into a concentration camp called -----, they were right next to the ocean. There I say about 30,000, 40,000 men, woman and children behind barbed wire. When the let me in in chains, and a few others.

Let's reload.

Yeah.

beep.

We left off at the camp of 30,000.

I see, Camp Di Agilis (ph).

Yeah.

Yeah.

So why don't you describe to me that camp.

Well, it was a rather large camp, and uh, it's called, was called an internment camp, but it was a concentration camp, that's just a fancy name for a concentration camp. Really, especially by the French. They put into that camp anyone they could scoop up that was hiding, that was running, that had no place to go, that was called a vagrant, that was uh, uh had no papers, no money whatever, and they scooped them up and that's where they throw, that was one of the camps. Camp di Vernay (ph) was another camp. Uh, that was not far from their county called Condivernay, it was, is a terrible, that that was a nasty place, Condivernay. Uh, Agilis wasn't much better, but was a little, little better. In Camp di Vernay they had no children. Here they put the people with children. It was...they didn't really know what to do with these people. It was, there were so many that were running away uh, uh, uh from Germany and from other places that they just had no place to put them anymore. They were thousands. So they put us in there, and they, inside the camp, they had one tent that they put barbed wire around, that's where they put the most dangerous people. In other words, people that they would shoot the next day. They, into that little tent. And that's where they put all the kids. They put us all, kids, no, none older than 20, 21, no they were 14 year olds, 12 year olds, 13, children. And as we were marched in chains into that little tent, everybody was clapping their hands, all the people in the camp. We stayed in there, and they told us that in a few days they will dispose of us. We didn't know how. And after about 3, 4 days, and it was dark in there, they gave us a few candles that flickered in the dark there, and we were singing uh little Jewish songs in the dark. He'd give us, to give us courage. Even though we were singing to give us something you know, so we wouldn't cry. And the minute the kids cried, you know, you have to understand that, and next morning they took us out, and they said, "Now you go, all going to be shot." We didn't really comprehend being shot, what it mean, we didn't understand really, you know, the the significance of uh being shot, you know. They had a few people lined up with their rifles, and the said "Les guns, aim, fire!" But, uh, they were firing over our heads, they weren't going to shoot us." And the little kids were crying, they were hysterical, they were holding on to each other, you know. Just get back into the tent. A few hours later, we are taken out, and

taken down to the, it was a boat. And, we had to go into the boat. So the Guard mobile had another job to do. They had whips. And chains. And they stood a line on one side, a line on the other side, going on to the, well we had to go between the lines to go onto the boat, and we all chained together, you know, we were all chained one to another. And we had to drag ourselves, on the legs and on the arms, on the wrists, we had to go on that boat, and they were beating us as we walked through the line, they were beating us with chains and whips. Some fell down. We had to drag them with us because we are chained together. And finally the captain came out of the, the ship, it was a freighter. And he said, "This has to stop. They are under my jurisdiction now, and you better stop this beating. You don't, nobody gets beaten when under my command." And he was, he was a good man. We got onto the boat, and we realized the hopelessness and the desperation of the situation. We are now on a boat. We don't know where we're going, we're all chained together, we don't know what's going to happen to us. We run away from the, the Germans wanted to gas us in the gas chambers, and hang us. The French wanted to beat us to death. So we don't know what's going to be with us now. Who are we going to see now that wants to exterminate us? So people said they're going to put us out into the ocean and use us as target practice. The Germans with their planes, they're going to blow up the ship as target practice. They have done it. So we said, "Well, this is the end of the line now. There's no place we're going to go." But somehow I felt that this captain, the way he saved us from the beating would not do this to us, would not allow that to be done to people. So, I had a little flicker of hope there. The ship took off, we were all in the belly of the boat. The only opening was on top on deck, there was a big machine gun mounted, looked down, so there was no way you could ever get out of there. And, we passed the coast of Spain. We could look through the openings on the belly of the boat, there was some little openings there that we could look through, and one guy said, that's the coast of Spain. And, as long as we were moving, we wouldn't be target practice because you don't take a moving ship as target so we reasoned looking for a way to assure ourselves that this is not going to happen to us. And, uh, guy said, he's go, we are going to go to Africa, North Africa. That's where we went, to Algiers. We docked in Algiers, and they took us out and put us into the prison in Algiers. Later we found out that they had to wait for a big transport to come to get us, so they can make one big freight train and take us out to the camp, to wherever we were going to go. Sure enough, it took about, quite a long time, about 2 months, and they put us in solitary confinement. Now, you have to understand, a prison in Algiers in Solitary confinement, uh, is a little cell, no light, no blanket, uh, nothing, just plain cement, and that is solitary confinement. The only way we kept our sanity in the cell, and we didn't know how long we were going to be there. The only way we kept our sanity, we knocked on the wall, and the other guy knocked back. Just to hear the knocking and the sound of somebody else to give us, kept me, that's how we kept our sanity. Once a day they put some water and the food, whatever the garbage that they put in there, and we lose complete track of

time. We didn't know what day of the week, what month, what year, what time it was, winter, summer, we lost total track of time, we just stayed in the dark trying to not to go crazy in that cell. Was a, was a very long time that we were in there. They took us out, then finally we got the rumor, there's always rumors, when you have people, always rumors going around, one, one, one always knows more than the other guy. And he says, "We are going to a camp in the middle of the desert." Nobody can escape from there. There is no escape. Now you have to understand something, that in North Africa, they had about a hundred different concentration camps, they had Colubushe, Breeda, City Belepest, they had uh, uh Joffa, had uh, Whatchamaka, Whatchamake, something like that. And these were all slave labor camps, these were bad, these were bad places. And that's where your ----- go to die. They put us into a cattle, to a train, a freight train, where they transport camels. About 50-60 people in one, in one of these wagons there. We couldn't sit down, we had to stand up, people died standing up! Uh, no facilities to go to a bathroom or anything like this. And we travelled for about 3-4 days, and you had to also know that the, the heat that goes over 100 degrees, 110, 120, during the day, at night it's very, very cold. Because we were to at the Atlas Mountain, the foot of the Atlas Mountain in the, in the Sahara Desert. Once a day they would open the door, throw a bread in, and throw a couple of bottles of water in, and close the doors again. People died standing up. You couldn't fall. We finally got there, and the railroad station is about 2-3 miles from the camp, and we had to walk through the sand through the desert to, toward the camp. And these Bahis, now we have someone new to deal with. We had to deal with this Bahis. But you have to understand that this Bahis is an elite Arab troop, they're on horses. They're very cruel people. We were horse whipped all the way to the camp, walking 3 or 4, 2 or 3 miles to the camp through the sand, through the hot sand, we were beaten all the way down there, and people that fell down we had to drag them along because with the chains. Then we saw the camp. We saw tents in the middle of the desert, surrounded by barbed wire, machine guns on the end, on the corners. That was Jaffa. Jaffa was known as having been the worst concentration camp in all of North Africa. The cruelest and worst.

Let's wait and reload.

Yeah.

Beep.

Okay.

Uh, the trip, as I said, took about 3 or 4 days on the freight train, and the water that they threw in



was 1 or 2 bottles of water for about 50 60 people, was quite inadequate, especially when the heat outside was 110, and who knows what the heat was inside that, that uh, uh wagon there. I can't say this, what people did there was. The first was so bad, the hunger, see hunger pang goes away after a while, but thirst makes your tongue swell up, and eventually you choke to death on your own tongue. The thirst was so bad. People would try to drink their urine. As we went along, all kinds of strange things happened there, and, and, and people went crazy. Inside that wagon there, start screaming and hollering and fighting about the room. We were so crammed in that you could hardly breathe during the day. At night it was better because was cold, was cold. During the day you could hardly breathe. And I tell you it was like a, the rite of torture, believe me. That's what it was, and how, people, many people died in that train, and, and, and, that not more died was a miracle. It's amazing what a human being can endure...without losing their lives. When we got out of the train, they gave us some water. And then we walked up to the camp. Now we knew the situation was now hopeless. There was no escape, there was no getting away, there was, this, this was the kind of situation that was really, really bad. We never knew really what hell was but when we got into that camp, and saw the camp and stayed there awhile, we really found out what hell was. If this wasn't hell, it sure came close to it. Believe me. We stood on attention for the camp commander. And he came, and he says, and I've never forgotten what he said to me, to us, he says, "You all came here to die. You are the scum of Europe. You are the garbage of the world. My job is to see to it that you all die here. It's just a matter of time. If you behave yourselves, and do as you're told, you may live a little longer. If not, you're going to die sooner. This is my job. And I'm good at what I'm doing." That was his speech. "Now get into the tents." Now you have to understand something--these, the camp consisted of tents, a row, a few rows of tents. The tents called Maribou. It had a post in the middle and on the sides was tied down with, with a piece of rope and some pieces of wood. And, there were 40 persons to a tent. 40 to 50 persons to a tent made for 8. The day consisted of working ten hours a day, one day you didn't have to work, that was Sunday. Six days you worked. The French tried to build a transaharan through the desert. That means that they tried to build a railroad through the desert. And in order to do that, they had to remove the dunes, because there are dunes in the desert, and the mister comes, the mister is a sandstorm, and, and, comes there for about 15 or 20 minutes, what you just cleaned out, the dune is back again, so you have to remove the dune again to, the tracks are covered now with sand again. They'd never do it, they never did do it, but that, that's what they tried to do because they are cheap labor. So they said "What the hell, we'll try to do it." That is what we had to do, work on the Transaharian on the railroads. To work on the railroads, they gave you a sack made out of desert grass, that, it had 2 sacks that you put over your shoulder, you had one in the front and one in the back. One wasn't heavy enough, you had to have one in the front too. And we had to clear the sand from 3 or 4 miles down the road, and put it in there and then bring it back, and then go back

again for some more sand. Sand is heavy, and the desert is sand, and when you have a heavy load of sand, you sink into the sand, it's hard to walk. You go to your knees, you sink into your knees. During the day, I might add, they had about, must have been 110 or more. At night it would be so cold that your teeth would chatter because the cold icy wind from the uh, mountain would come down on you. And it was bitter, bitter cold--the Atlas mountain. Now this wasn't the only thing we had to contend with. The food consisted of uh, one cup of water a day, uh one cup of coffee, that they called coffee, it was black water, in the morning, and uh, half a liter of soup at lunchtime, and a half a liter of soup at night. A liter of soup, well, used to be hot water. But if you lucky you found a rotten potato, or rotten but uh, uh whatever piece of meat, there was uh rotten stuff, if you're lucky, you found a rotten onion in it. The work was ten hours a day. If you could not work, they would open up, if you could not get up anymore, they would open up your veins in your arms and bleed you to death. And get the blood out of there. Whatever little blood you had left. The punishment, let me talk about some of the punishment. For the slightest infraction of the rules, they would bury you in the sand up to your neck. And the Arabs would urinate on your head. And if you moved your head, they would take a big stone and smash your head. You weren't supposed to move. If a scorpion or a viper (little poisonous snakes), or ants or whatever there was bugs would bite you, you could not move. You didn't get any kind of rationed?? foods. That was one of the punishments. The other one, the camp commander would come in every morning. He would take 8 to 10, 8 to 10 inmates out, strip them naked, tie them to a post and beat them. And where would they beat them mostly? On their sex organs, where it hurts the most. And they would stand there and laugh. They would just pick anyone at random. That was fun for them. If you didn't look right to the camp commander when he passed by or you didn't work hard enough, or this bahis didn't beat you hard enough while you were drag in the sand through the desert, he would take you at the end of the day, and he would say, "Quinze jours-----." That means fifteen days in the, at the fort. They would tie your arm in the back and hang you on your arms naked for about 2, 3 days you would hang on your arms, and every night they would come in, when it's the coldest, and hose you down with ice cold water, and beat you about, and that was fun for them, they would laugh when they did it. When you got through hanging there, and when they cut you down, you were not able to walk, in fact you were lucky to be alive. I went there twice. And I was lucky they didn't beat me that hard anymore. But after a while you don't feel the beatings anymore.

How did all of you decide to resist that?

There was one day we had to decide, we, we, we knew we were going to die there because there was really no hope, really, we didn't fool ourselves. All along you fooled yourself, take a beating, not eating, not drinking, no sleep, worrying for your life. We fooled ourselves there is uh maybe,

maybe a little light at the end of the tunnel, maybe somebody will, we'll -----somebody that will help us, maybe is a place that we can hide, maybe there is something that we, that they won't catch us or find us or, or beat us or.....in this camp we realized, we really, this is really the end of the line, I mean, how much can you absorb, how much beatings, how much hunger, how much thirst, how much lice, we used to kill the lice every morning on the rags we wore, how we walked around naked, we had no...

Let's stop.

Beep.

Let's go back and talk about the punishments and how you decided to resist, like, by, by not screaming, by not giving them the satisfaction of killing you.

Yes, uh, screaming and crying, while you absorb punishment, was a no-no, by all of us. The only way we could fight back, the only way we could protest this, this cruel treatment, was by not giving in to their punishment. There can, there could beat us all they want, they could inflict any punishment they wanted to us, we would quietly and silently absorb it without a peep. We would not even make a, a sound, a noise. It would hurt. It would bleed. You would be in, in excruciating pain. And as more we defied them in our own way as what they would beat us. They said, "We are going to make them scream in pain, and they couldn't do that. And that got them very angry. And that made them figure out more punishments, and bigger punishments, and longer punishments, and more beatings, and no water for the day, and no food for 2 days, and, and, and standing naked being tied to a post in the sun all day, in the hot African sun, and, and putting a bucket of ants over your head, and burying you in the sand to your neck and urinating on your head, and beating your head open, and nothing they did could make us make a sound. Oh, we wanted to, but that was the only way would, we could get back at them. If you going to kill us, then you can beat us to death--go ahead and do it, that's the way it's got to be. We expect it. We have no hope anyhow. This is a living hell anyway.

Talk about how the younger men helped the older men. They younger men took some of the load off the older ones, but the older ones died very quickly. They couldn't take it. That, you see, there was many ways you could die in that camp. You could die, you had dysentery, you had malaria, a lack of food, a lack of water, uh, bitten, bitten by scorpions, bitten by vipers, the poisonous snake, you're dead in an hour. Uh, uh, died by beating, actually beaten to death. You died of, of, of sunstroke by, by being buried in the sand. Uh, there were many pla, uh people really run to the

barbed wire to be shot by the guard. You had to stay away 10 feet from the barbed wire. If you run too close to the 10 feet, they have the right to shoot you dead, and that's what they did, the people just did that. They did just that. Every other night we heard the shots going.

Was that resisting, do you think?

You know, under tho--under the conditions that we lived under, it was hard to co, to, to, to live, you know, how, how much can you take? I mean, really, how much can you take? How much is much? How much is enough, that you say this is it, I'm giving up. But there were many that didn't give up, and, although there 4000 of, approximately 4000 people in that camp. And on, only about 300 came out at the end. And the rest perished. They did a pretty good job. And if anybody tells you now today, "There was no Holocaust, believe me, I was there, I was there, there was a Holocaust, don't let anybody tell you different. It was a living hell. We spent 2 years there. The Red Cross would sometimes send us a little food. Well, of course, they sent us the kind of food you had to cook. So cooking was a no-no in the camp. You weren't allowed to make a fire. Where would we get the water from? So we did a little bit at a time--our ration of water we put into an old pot there, we had, we cooked a little, we gave it to the sick ones that couldn't work and couldn't get up anymore. We gave a piece of our bread to the wor, because, once you don't work, you're sick, you can't get up, and you can't move, they would give you no food, no water, you just have to die, that's it. So we would share our rations with them, our water ration, our food. We would carry their load. In other words instead of making uh ten uh walks a day, we did uh 12 or 14, we walked faster, and so we had a right quantity of sand, and they didn't know, they didn't come out. As far as medication or, or, or doctors or anything, there was nil, there was nonexistent. You got sick, you died, that was the end of it. Uh, yet we stuck together. We got organized. One day I was the one to make the fire. We used alpha grass. Alpha, that was desert grass, to make a little fire. Because we have no wood there. There were supposed to be guys looking out for the camp commander. Somehow they didn't look. He stood in front of me. He says, "What are you doing?" I said, "Nothing." He says, "I see your fire there." I said, "I don't see a fire." He said, "You're cooking food." I said, "I'm not cooking food." "Then what are you doing?" "I'm just standing here." "Why aren't you working?" "I'm on my break." I took out a few minutes. I said, "Do you think I'm stupid?" He said, "Well, you said it, I didn't." Because we didn't care anymore, uh, uh, nothing good anymore so what the hell, might as well tell him. -----

-----: Get your garbage together. That means, on the hook again, you know that. Then suddenly I found the whole camp, and all the workers, everybody went in front of the gate, and said, "This man isn't going anyplace. He's going to stay right here. You want him, you got to get him." This was the first defiance, open defiance, the first outrage of the camp. After about a

year and a half of absorbing all that punishment. Well, he, an hour later he called his bahis in on horseback, and there must have been a whole, like the cavalry they're coming, riding into the camp with their sabers drawn, and all we had we had was stones, stones and sand to throw at them. And it was a bloody fight. Somehow was a bloody fight. And there was, the reason was twofold. They didn't. They knew I was going to die if I go in the rack once again. That was it. We were skin and bones as it was. And the second thing they wanted to go out in the world somebody should, the message should go out, maybe somebody will help us. Because we're in the middle of a desert, nobody knows we're there. That's why they put us there. They don't want the world to know. And maybe the message will go out because they had these wandering Bedouins, these wandering Arabs, they go to another town, they say, "Hey, there was some bloody fight up there, way in Jaffa." The word gets out somehow. There was a bloody fight, and we lost quite a few people, and they lost quite a few people. We used to knock 'em down off the horses, and with the stones, we used to beat them to death. It was a desperate fight for your, it was just desperate, last ditch stand, whatever you may call it. After it was all over, they took off with their horses. It was all over, there was no food no water, beatings every day, that we were used to, we endured it, and 2 years passed. The Allied, the Allied army landed in Algiers in September of 1944, 43, in 1942. When they were dancing in Algiers and having a good time, they still didn't know there was a camp in Jaffa in the middle of the desert, and we are still dying, still suffering at the hands of these barbarians. Finally, I know somebody comes. A few trucks came down the dunes--British army trucks with machine guns. There was a plane coming overhead somehow, and the plane must have noticed some tents, a camp, and they didn't know what it was. Could have been German army or something. So they gave the message up to headquarters, and these tanks, these, uh, armored cars, uh trucks, half trucks came down, and they surrounded the camp. There was, suddenly there was no guard, no commander, nobody and the gate was open. So we thought that that gate open for us to escape, so they can shoot us in the back trying to escape. That would be an excuse before the world uh community to say they tried to escape and we had to shoot them. So we said, nobody moves, nobody gets up. We didn't know what was going to happen. Nobody runs. This was from 1941 to 1943, 2 years in that camp. And we waited for them, they surrounded the camp, they said, "Who are you people?" You have to understand we were only about 300 and some left out of 4000. Naked. No haircuts for 2 years. No bath for 2 years. Non-stop. Emac, emaciated.

Let's stop. We have to reload.

beep.

Why don't you start by describing what you looked like.

Yes. What did we look like? And how did we feel...when we saw freedom so close? Well, you looked awful. After 2 yrs of that kind of treatment, of this kind of cruelty, this kind of beatings, starvation, thirst, cold, heat, rat bites--when we are heavy we have rat bites because there were rats around, and around--we used to eat rats to keep our, to keep alive, we used to eat dogs, rats and snakes. That was how we supplemented our, our food ration. Desert rats. Without that we wouldn't have survived, without uh, eating these things. We looked just about...(phone rings).

Let's stop.

Beep.

By now we looked really bad. Skin and bones. Our skin used to be like leather because of lack of food and, and the, and the heat beating out. It got hard like leather. Uh. Because we had no clothes, uh, sick, we were dragging ourselves by now--we could hardly walk anymore. We didn't bother even fighting off the bugs anymore or the, or the lice that we had on the rags that we wore. And we couldn't believe that we were going to be free. We just couldn't believe it. The day has finally come when we saw light at the end of the tunnel. They pointed the guns at us, then they looked at us, says, "Do we look like fighters? Like fighting people? Look at us. We are the remnants of a persecuted, beaten, starved people. Have you no pity? You too, have you no compassion?" He said, "Take away the guns," uh, Captain said, "and get these people on to trucks, and take them down to Algiers to the hospital." And that's what they did. We got out of the camp, we looked around just once more, on to the camp, and the bodies that we left there, that died there, and we just said goodbye to the camp, got on to the trucks, and they took us into the hospital, to the 96th General Hospital in Maison Carre. I never forgot it. We got there, the order came out, these people are not to get any food or any big amount of water, and these army nurses came and they apologized for not giving us food, they said, "You're going to die if you eat food now. You can't eat anything. Very little." They are people. Some of these soldiers had pity and they gave us, "Here take a loaf of bread and you take a loaf of bread." They ate it, their stomach busted and died. Even afterwards. And after about 4 or 5 weeks in the hospital--they were good to us, uh, they said, "Now what are we going to do with you people? You can go anywhere in the free world. You're free now." It's over. I was very angry. And that was the time when I said, "I don't want to be free. Now I don't want to be free." When I wanted to be free, the world wouldn't let me. When I wanted to live in peace, I was hunted. I was beaten, I was persecuted. Now I don't want to be free." So these Italians always looked at me. He says, "You're 21 years old, you've had enough." "No," I says, "I didn't have enough. Now I'm angry. And I don't want to be free. I don't want to

continue this, this game. You give me a gun. Now I want to get back at them." He said, "Why, why, would you, you had enough fight now?" I said, "I want a gun." That's what they did. They said "Train this man." Give me uniform, give him a machine gun, and train--couldn't speak a word of English--train him. That's what I did. We went back -----  
----- We did some fighting there, then they sent me to England to London to the wars. And they gave me a course in army intelligence, they transferred me to army intelligence, and then they transferred me to Germany, to army of occupation, and my job was to look for war criminals. People that they wanted for war crimes. He says, "We need (phone rings), He says, "We need you more to hunt these people than we need you fighting with your gun (background noise) in, in, in Africa. So, I says, "Fine." Then I spent 18 months uh, I spent another year or 2 in Africa, then I said, "Okay, fine."

Cut. Have to wait for...

Yeah....

Ten is up. Sync take 10 is up.

Beep.

I want you to talk to me a little bit about choices. The choices that Jews had, and also, I want you to compare it to the choices that you feel various guards had. I mean, were they just following orders?

No, no, no! The the, the, the cruelty, and the, and the, and the barbaric manners of the guards uh, uh, uh, that came out by themselves, nobody told them to beat us all the time, nobody told them to chain us together, nobody told them to beat us up in chains, and whips, and whip us and, and, and, that camp commander in Jaffa in Africa, nobody told him to deny us water or deny us a piece of bread, or, or not to give us uh, not to have us work uh, uh so much in the hot sun. Nobody told them, not, nobody told them to tie us naked to a post and beat us, and to hang us by our arms and hose us down, to bury us in the, in the sand so our heads should look up and, and, and, and bash their brains in and urinate on their heads, nobody told them to do that. They told us to keep us there until, until uh, we, we're supposed to be confined and work on the Transaharian. But nobody told them how much or how hard or how, or what time of day. They could have given us off the hottest part of the day, say for 2 hrs and, and let us go into the tent uh, and then give, take us out to work again. No, the, they took this into their own hands, and they enjoyed what they did. You

could see it on their faces, they enjoyed it. As more they would beat you as more they were laughing. As more they hosed you out, as more they were laughing, as more they beat you with the back of a rifle into the small of your back, the more they were laughing. As more they saw you writhing in pain, as more they laughed. Nobody told them to do that. They enjoyed it. Take the guard mobile. In France. Well, they could have showed more pity, more compassion, more understanding. The way they treated the people that came there is un, unbelievable. I mean the cruelty and the, and the, and the meanness, uh, that they, that they, that they displayed by beating woman and children, throwing them on trucks that they rounded up, and throw them into camps and starving them to death. Nobody told them to do that. The high command couldn't care less. They have other problems. They couldn't care less how they treated us, it was the little guy, the little guard that, that we, the, the perverts, the scum, the garbage of humanity! Those were the ones that did--the ex-convicts, the murderers, the killers, that's what they let on us, like vicious dogs, and they enjoyed what they did. And that is something I can't understand to this day. If a man is helpless, if a person is helpless, and, and, and cannot fight back and is suffering, you don't have to add to it. They tell, "Put him in jail," put him in jail, you don't have to beat him with chains. They said, "You have to put him on the boat," put him on the boat, get the ---- on the boat. You don't have to beat them with whips or spit at them. Or urinate on them. That isn't necessary. Nobody told them to do that. Because, uh, you have to understand that even in the high command, there were people that were civilized. I mean, there people with uh, with uh, addicts, and people with uh, you know, that would not do these things. You know, it's, it's, it's the underlings, you know, the, the, the little guys that "Ah, let's have some fun." They're the ones that did it. And they did a good job, believe me.

Let's cut for a minute. All right.

beep.

Well, what was the other question?

Okay, how do you feel that you were able to survive, what you think worked?

I don't know, the will to live. The hope of seeing my family again, that they would be still alive, somehow they would have escaped. Uh, determination. Stubbornness. Call it what you may. There's one thing I didn't want to do. I didn't want to die. Not at age 18.

Talk about why you chose to fight.



I had no choice. I wasn't taught to fight, I wasn't born to fight. But, I knew I had a fight on my hands, a fight of survival against all odds. I knew I had to fight or go under. Fight or die. Swim or sink. I knew that. I realized that when I left home. And I just, and I wouldn't give them the satisfaction of having taken my life, if I could possibly help it.

Could you talk a little about your mother, and the choices you feel that she faced, and how she maybe rescued you in a sense.

My mother rescued me, I know that. You see when I was in prison, in -----, my hometown, there, had a, they had a transport that they put together to go to Buchenwald, and they put us in prison to wait till they had enough people together to make a transport to Buchenwald concentration camp. My mother got me out in time. How she did it, I will never know. How I got out, I will never know to this day. I know she must have bribed a lot of people. She must have paid off a lot of people with a lot of uh, diamonds, we, we were upper middle class people, we were well-to-do people back at home. My father was a chemical engineer, and uh, we had 3 factories, and we had uh, 9 stores, 9 businesses, we were very, quite well-to-do people and she had quite a lot of things. As you can see on her picture, she has 4 or 5 fur coats, and that was a, a sign of uh, you know, you have it. We had a live-in maid, we had a beautiful home, and she must have, she got me out, I know that. And I only feel very, very bad. She was there when I needed her. I wasn't there when she needed me. And you have to live with this for the rest of your life. So how can you live with? I live with this for so many years. It's hard...It was a nightmare...the cruelty and brutality of so many people to so few...and I wonder many times, wouldn't it be better if I would have uh, died with them...they just got killed...(cries)...killed...(crying)...they didn't make it. I wished I had been able to help them, but I wasn't there. I guess...I guess we all got damaged by this. We didn't really come out alive, because, uh, we weren't really spared. We are marked. Like the one guard said, when we said, "Why don't you kill us, you dog?" He said, "No, we want you to live with it." And we are living with it, he's right, we are living with it.

Let's go back and talk about how when you had a chance to take a little revenge.

This is, was it really revenge? So what. So we caught a few, uh war criminals. So what. What did it help us. So we shot a few Nazis. So what. While I was in Africa, so we laid the ditches, and they came at us and we shot them down like dogs. So what. Did not help me. Did not take away my pain, my suffering. Did not bring back the people back to life. Did it bring my 3 little sisters? How about my, uh, my brother's wife, and, and the baby, they hang them with piano wire on a tree. It took them a half an hour to die. Does this make it all good. So what. Your rage, you have rage in you. You have hate and rage. Believe me, it hurts you more that it hurts them. It's still there. You're living with it all the time, day and night. There wasn't one day in the last 40 something years that I don't think of it, that I don't think of my family, or what they have done to me, what we had to endure, the guys that had to die, the people that died. So. We are living with it, every one of us, all these years. And the only way that's

going to stop, only way that pain is going to stop, when we die. That's the only time. What else can I say. I couldn't even begin to tell you the cruelties that they did on us. It would take me all day. I can't even begin to tell you the things they have done, the things I have seen, and the pain and the suffering that we had to endure, and the hopelessness, and the despair. I can't even begin to tell you that. You have to feel it. That can't be told, has to be felt. And then you ask yourself, "Why? Why did it happen? Why was it allowed to happen? Why did nobody help us? Why was it just such an unjust world?" We harmed no one. We did nothing to anybody. Why? Here is a people of 60 million, the German people of 60million, consists of 60 million, 60 million people, tried to wipe out a people, a whole people, and nobody helped. Why is that? And you ask yourself same question over and over again. The rabbi came to my house. He says to me why, why I don't come to the shul. You donate money, you light candles, but you don't come. I said to him, "When you can tell me where God was when I suffered, where God was when they killed my 3 little sisters and my mother, and my brothers, and where was God when they threw 200 thousand on open fire and burned them alive? Where was God when they killed 6 million people, like, like savages? Where was God?! You tell me where God was and why he didn't help us and I will go to shul, I promise you. He says nobody has the answer. I know, I've been looking for the answer for many, many years. And somehow I didn't come to terms with my life. It's a very difficult thing to come to terms with your life after you have gone through the kind of, of, of brutality that I have gone through, and I cannot come to terms.

I want to reroll.

Change film. CR-10, Sync take 12 is up.

Beep.

Now I want you to talk to me about any of the times that in all those horrible experiences, all of you supported each other by making jokes, however, strange they seemed to be. I want you to talk about how you guys stayed together and kept your spirits up.

It was very difficult. First of all, not everybody knew everybody. But there was always a joker here and there. In all that misery he cracks a joke, and you can't help but smile. You know, like I said before, we were hanging on our arms in ----- and they were hosing us down with cold water and beating our, the small of our backs with the back of their rifles, and laughing, and it was dark in there, and we were freezing, we were hungry, we were thirsty, hanging by our arms. We felt the blood going

down our faces and our bodies. After the beating was over and everything, suddenly you hear that little voice, over to the right there, which says, "I don't know, I'm trying very hard, I just can't get used to this kind of treatment. I wish they would stop." He know, they, this wouldn't stop. He says, "I just can't get used, I'm trying!" he says, "I'm trying, but I can't get used to it." The next morning he was dead. He had internal injuries. They beat him so bad that he had internal injuries, he was hanging there by his arms dead, and the night before he made a joke. Yes, we got together, there was always someone that could sing, that had a voice, and he would sing. Somebody else would tell a joke. There was somebody that would, you know, in cases like this when you got thrown together with so many people in a small area, and you locked in and you can't get out, there was someone that says, "I just got the news." What's the news? "We're all going to get free tomorrow morning. We're going to join the French Foreign Legion." Everybody was laughing. You know, there's always, there was always a joker, always one that tried to lift your spirit a little bit. A, a guy was laying next to me. I said to him, "You know, how long do you think we, they're going to keep us here?" And he would say, "-----  
-----," that means, "Everything passes even life." That doesn't tell me anything. He said, "Well, you asked me a question, that's the only answer I have. Who knows? Who knows what's going to happen to us." You see, the, we never knew what was going to happen to us, where it's going to happen, or how it's going to happen. And that was so bad. You see, we never knew from one day into another (phone rings) that our life would be ending, whether they're going to take us out to be shot, whether they going to use for target practice, whether they going to somebody over one, and, they take us into an army, or they want to uh, want us to join the French Foreign Legion, which we didn't want, they tried, we didn't want it. Uh, we never knew. And we never knew how long anything is going to take. I was young and never needed a doctor--thank God I was healthy, and but there were people that needed uh, illnesses, sicknesses. They had to live with it. And we found them dead the next day, or the day after, or the day after that. And that was it. But there was always somebody, we supported ourselves uh, uh, we used to sing songs to keep our spirit up. One started a song and everybody got in with it. The song was over, we did something else. Uh, some, we exercised. How did we exercise? We just uh, uh did uh little things on the, on the spot, you know, uh, uh, we lay on our backs and jumped up or whatever we did and there was always something doing. There wasn't really much, we were so restricted in our activities. Restricted in our thinking, our thoughts, how much can you think you're going to get out?-----And then what? Then you went out of it. And you had to get something else to hang onto. "Heinz, sing a song!" or "Marx, tell us a story." And that would end, and then what? Confinement is day and night and day and night, and there was nothing to distract us from anything. We had no quality of life of any kind. Nothing. Nothing to do, nothing to say, nothing to read, nothing to listen to. Back in Jaffa, we had no music for 2yrs. We didn't know what music was.

We knew it was nighttime because the sun went down. It was daytime because the sun came up. That was all we knew. We lost track of everything. We were totally lost in space, and that's what they wanted us to be. See, see he's dead, that's what's going to happen you tomorrow. And there was just nothing, this feeling of helplessness, despair, no hope, this is a very depressing feeling, and that is what we had, that's what we had to live with. And then once in a while, you would think of your family. I wonder. I wonder what's happened to them. You see, I wonder how they died, if they died, I wonder how they died, I wonder where they're buried. I wish I could lay a flower on their grave. I wished I could do something for them. Whatever little I could do, I would do. I wish that I could kneel on their grave and tell them that I'm so sorry, that I'm alive, and they're not. I wish I could tell them that.

People cling to the idea that surviving is heroic. What is your opinion about that?

Yes, uh, surviving is something that you have in you. Nobody wants to die. Everybody wants to survive. Whether heroic or not, everybody has that will, the will to survive. No one wants to die, and if anybody tells you different, they're liars. You can do it any which way, you can do it in a heroic way, or you can do it in any other way, any way you can do, you survive any which way, but you survive, that was our motto, to survive, any which, any way we can. Absorb beatings, starvation, thirst, bugs, scorpion, anything that you can surv, any way you can, you survive. No matter how difficult, no matter how complicated, no matter how hopeless things look, no matter how bad things look, you want to live. That's all there is to it. And that's in every human being, the will to live. Every human being has that. You don't give, you don't lay down and die. Nobody does that. You want to go on. And that's what it's all about. Go ahead, hit me some more. Go ahead, don't give me any food, I don't care. You, you come to a point in your life with all this cruelty and uh, and uh viciousness that you say some, you say "I don't feel that anymore. Let them not give me food, I don't care." You, you don't care anymore, but you still want to live. You don't worry about the beatings anymore. One more, one less, what's the difference. So they bury me in the sand, so what. So, so they spit in my face, so what. I'm still going to come out of in a, in spite. Can you understand that...philosophy? That's what we had to adopt, that kind of philosophy. No matter what they do to us, I'm not going to allow them the ultimate as to kill me, I'm not going to allow them to do that to me, if I can help it. If my body and my spirit, uh, will keep me going. Don't allow them to break your spirit, that's what they try to do. That's the reason I'm sitting here now. Many times I stood at the barbed wire, close to the barbed wire and I said to my friend, Max, "Max, do you think we'll ever get out of here, ever? It is so long. You think we'll make it?" His answer would always be "Tomorrow...tomorrow we'll be free." And after we got free after 2 yrs

we couldn't believe it. I said, "Max, are we really free? Is it really happening? We walk and no guard in the back of us? We're not going get beaten today? We're going to get some, what, is it, is it really true? We couldn't believe it. We cried. We couldn't believe that we are actually, got something that it was rightfully ours in the first place--that nobody had a right to take away from us in the first place. Can you understand that? This is, this is the feeling you have. You start a whole new life. You're born again. But then you get a setback: but my family hasn't made it. I made it now, but they haven't. And then you wish that...tell them you're sorry, tell them anything, talk to them, talk to a piece of ground, talk to anything, we don't even have that, we can't even do that.

We need to reload.

Beep.

------(Sandy's question--couldn't hear)

In 1947, no 1937, in 1937 Hitler had a speech, for the world, for the whole world. I heard the speech, and he said, "We don't want the Jews." He said to the world, "Either you take them out, or we will kill them. We don't want them." Simple as that. Send ships and planes, do whatever you want, take them out, and uh, distribute them wherever you want to do, but we don't want them here in Germany, although Jews have lived in Germany for generations. There was no answer. The only answer was from the outside was from the outside world like France, Belgium, Holland, whatever countries, Switzerland, they're all, not only did they not take Jews in, they closed the borders. Now, the Jews were really trapped. They couldn't even get out. On top of that, the Germans, the Nazis, had confiscated everything the German Jews had, all their money, all their bank accounts, they have closed their homes, they left them nothing. If you wanted to buy a pair of shoes, you had to make an application. So they would give you your own money, uh, uh x amount of dollars so you can buy a pair of shoes and that was at the beginning, later on they wouldn't even do that anymore. So everything was confiscated. Not only did the Jews have no place to go in the world where nobody would take them in, but now they took away the means for them to leave. If you have no money, you can't buy a train ticket. If you have no money you can't buy a bus ticket. They took the cars away--if you had a car, what way you going to, supposing you have 4 children, and there's a mother and a father, and the children are little. Where you going to walk the, uh, walk on the, on the, on the highways? Could they walk to Belgium? Whose got point, who has guns pointed at you? You going to walk to France? Who's going to beat you to death? You going to

walk into Italy that's going to throw you back into Germany? Where were you going to go? There was no place to go and no means to do it with. It just was no, they just took every means of transportation away from them, and countries didn't help. Where was the vatican? There wasn't anybody. They couldn't go anyplace. Where were you going to go? You have a household, you maybe have a baby, where you going to run? Children saying, "I'm hungry Ma. I'm thirsty Ma. I'm tired Ma." Where you going to go? Lay on the highway? And if you had a ----- they would beat you to death. Don't make no, make no mistake about this, they said 60 million Germans, there were only 1 million Nazis. Make no mistake. There were 60 million Germans, there were 60 million Nazis. Make no mistake about that. Because you can't tell me that 1 million Nazis could have done all that harm and hurt, and 59 million righteous Germans would not interfere, could not, could not have interfered. Could not have stopped it. Nobody can tell me that. Oh, they try to, but they can't because I don't believe it. You go on the street, people, civilians, they would beat you to death, they would beat you up, they would break your windows, they, they would rob you and steal from you, and rape your daughters. That was hard. They were Germans, after all. And as far as, uh, the Jew went to the slaughterhouse like sheep, well, I don't know what you could have done when you suddenly got torn out of your household, put into a concentration camp, guarded with heavy machine guns, and, and, and, and, under the most brutal and barbaric circumstances, you tell me what you could have done. Against the well-armed and well-prepared German Nazi Party. You tell me what you could have done. How you could have fought back. You have a baby in one hand, and you take a spoon and hit them over the head with a spoon. What, what could you have done? What could you have, your husband do? He just looks at them crooked and they shoot him down like a dog. Mothers who had little babies in their arms, the guards went up to them and blew the kid's brain out. They would play with them. The little baby play with it, and then they would pull the trigger on it. Why the mother hold the baby in the arm, and tell the mother, "We want you to live with it. We're not going to kill you, we want you to live with that. We want you to have nightmares for the rest of your days." How would you fight back? How could you fight back? My mother had 7 children. She was a housewife. Not knew nothing about politics. She knew how to cook dinner, and clean a house, but she knew nothing about politics. What would my mother have done? My father was a chemist. What could he have done? They put you into a place, they put barbed wire around it. All it takes is 2 Nazis with machine guns, that's all. How you fight these people? You ----- them? You want your little son to be fatherless? Or you want your little daughter to have no mother? Can you take that chance. Maybe, there's always that maybe they won't kill you. Maybe they won't put your children in the gas chambers. Maybe they won't hang your wife. Maybe, just maybe. But you hang on to that

maybe. You clutch to it. Maybe they won't see me. Maybe they have a change of heart. But there was no maybe there. But you hung on to it. How're you going to fight back? Got to have these, these barbarians with heavy guns. How do you fight them? Here, you see, you have 2 opposing armies, they're both armed, they're both trained to fight. Okay, let them fight. What army did you have here. You had a Jewish people, working people, that raised families, they were housewives, the husbands went to work in the morning, the children went to, to the, to the, school if there was a school. What army? What prepared them? They prepared from 1933 to 1936-37, they prepared, they were marching with their boats and with their guns and with their knives, and prepared, they, they were prepared to slaughter a people. And the Jewish people be-, refused to believe it. They said, "Nobody would do such a, such a outrageous thing! After all, we've been living here for generation, nobody would do that to another people." Can you understand that? Nobody believed it, nobody, nobody would think that such a thing would possibly happen. What kind of opponent was the Jewish man or the Jewish child or the Jewish mother? What kind of opponent. Well, they prepared for 6 years to make war to slaughter people. They were marching with their boots since 1933. And now they're big men. They're big strong men, they're going to take care of everything. And take a little -----, and throw it in the door, and fire, burn it alive. They're going to, they're going to show you what heroes they are. They are mighty, mighty men! No, I don't think they went to the slaughter like sheep. I think they showed a lot of heroics. They showed a lot of, of courage. They didn't beg for their lives. They didn't ask for pity. They went like a proud people. They saw they had no choice, they kept their dignity and their pride, and that's how they died, with dignity and pride, and that is how we tried to endure our punishment, with dignity and pride, as best as we could. They used to take a little girl, to put, to hang her with piano wire and the mother says goodbye to her little daughter, 10 years old or 9 years old, may God be with you darling. Knowing very well I'll never see you again. Or the little girl that, the little boy that got lost who was 5 years old, never see Mommy again, and the Mommy gets taken into the gas chambers, and he's walking around, doesn't know what's happening. I was 16, 17, I didn't know what was happening, I couldn't understand what was happening. You want them to fight? No, all they could do was show dignity and pride. That's all they could do. They could, the died at least with, with that much. And the little kids that died, they didn't know why, they said, "Mama, why? Why are we here?" They couldn't understand. What are you going to tell them? What would I tell my little grandson who's six years old? What could I tell them. What could I tell my little granddaughter who is 3 years old, why she has to die. Why she has to burn alive in a, in a, in a, in a big flame, in a big pot full of wood, with flaming wood, why? To this day, we are asking why. Why became a very famous word. To this day, why? Nobody has the answer. Do you have the answer? I wish



you'd tell me. I don't have the answer. I think of it day and night, but I don't can't find an answer. I can find only pain inside me and hurt and, and, and, the burning, the burning desire to be able to, to uh, to accept this. To accept, you have to accept these things, it's so difficult, it's so hard to accept. Some things are just, very hard to accept. This is one of them. Right?

Thank you.

What else can I tell you?

Nothing else.

End of Sound Roll. Short roll.