

Change film, camera four is up. Sync tape four is up.

In other camps when people arrived, like an Auschwitz, there was a selection made, and mothers and children and people 50 and over were often killed. But people were able to work were chosen for work and for life. Describe to me how arrival at Treblinka was different.

Each camp probably has a different system. What did they-- I never heard

They had selections. Were there selections at Treblinka?

No. Treblinka, no selection whatsoever. They didn't took out any people.

At Sobibor, they made a pretense. They gave people a receipt for their belongings.

No, not in Treblinka.

Everyone knew what was happening in Treblinka as soon as they got there.

The minute they opened up the door, we saw what was going on.

Talk to me a little bit about choices. The choices the people who arrived there had and the choices that the guards had, the Ukrainians or the Germans. Were they just following orders?

They round up the whole thing. The Ukrainians, they were following the orders from Germany, for the Germans. But they can do anything they want anyways. They could have done it.

Ukraine, they killed a lot of people. They watched it and everything. Actually, it mostly was run by the Ukrainian people.

What kind of choices did the prisoners have?

There was no choice. They were standing on both sides and making-- out, out from the wagons. Tells you right away, go there. Take off your clothes, and join this and that's it.

In all your years there, tell me about any people who helped you at any time. Like the guy whose horse you watched. Did you--

Yeah. My co-worker there, he helped me. He told me, don't do that. Don't do that. On account of him-- I was young at the time, you know.

So he was much older than I am. Do that and do that. And that was the help that I had.

Describe to me how-- I don't remember exactly what guard it was that you had, but you were worried that in the uprising you might have to kill him. Describe to me that whole relationship, as though you had--

There was a Ukrainian guard. He wasn't there. This particular hour.

But tell me that whole story. Tell me who he was, and--

He was a Ukrainian and he took care-- his job was to take care of that stable there. To bring all this supply of food, he was the one to go to bring. And he watched the horses and all that stuff. He was the commander for the stable. That's all. The Germans used to come and they told him, fix me up this horse for riding. So he came, he just stepped up right away.

When you were working in Treblinka, tell me what a typical day was like. When you had to get up and how long you stood on the hill and when you went to work and when you quit.

Oh, we get up in the morning probably was about-- I don't remember exactly, between seven, eight o'clock. Then they counted out the people, and everybody went to his own-- the Ukrainian was standing, waiting, and went to his own group, back to the same job.

And then how long did you work?

Oh, there was no time. But it was not late at night. Until the transport came in, and it's all finished up. And they went to the gas chambers. And they put them into the grave, and then it was over.

They count again, how many people was in the morning, in the evening, and that's all. And then we went into the barracks to sleep. That's it.

Was there any religious resistance? Did people pray, prisoners?

Oh, yeah. When they arrived, the orthodox people. They took out the shawl, wrapped around them, and fall to the ground and talk to God. Many people like that, sure.

The minute when they arrive, they had to go out from the train, the cattle train. And they fall to the ground, and the pray was so loud. Sure, there was a lot of religious people came along.

And nothing happened. They had to go. If he doesn't want to go, they just kicked him, beat him.

And make sure he goes in there, takes off his clothes, and goes right there. Yeah, it was horrible. [INAUDIBLE].

Could any of you who were working with them help them at all?

No. No, no, he cannot go and do anything. Just everybody-- because we knew if we go over and try to help him or something, there they shoot right away. Many times through the day, they didn't like the guy who walks, he shoot them right on the spot. Don't care what it is.

Did any of you pray or support each other in friendship?

Yeah. We didn't pray. We didn't pray, but I got up in the morning in the barracks, and right in front of me, I see four or five people took the belt and hanged themselves. Then we ran over. Don't do it. Then the third guy says, don't disturb him. He wants to because he knew he wouldn't make it, you know. He got a little sick and that and that, so he hanged himself. Instead of being tortured and killed. This I saw quite a few. Right in my section. It was all over because of so many people there.

What other kinds of resistance was there among you people who worked there? Any other kind of resistance?

What do you mean by resistance?

Any kind of resistance. Mental resistance. Did you joke with each other?

No, no, no. There was no jokes. Later in the evening, they organized, they got injured in the barracks, you know. There was like a court.

The guy was singing. They let him do that. And Sunday, nothing, was free. Nobody worked Sunday. No transport came in.

And that guy was singing certain Jewish songs, you know. And everybody was crying. So that's what it was. So many

things I cannot remember now.

Tell me about the sports that were arranged there. Some of the soccer and--

Yeah, I just wanted to say that. Sunday, we played soccer. And the Germans were standing around and watching us.

[? I remember ?] if a guy played soccer, this finger is from Treblinka. I got up, and my finger was like this. I pulled it, and pulled it back. And I still have a little mark here, small mark. Yeah, I played soccer there.

Was there an orchestra there?

Yes.

Tell me about that.

Yeah, this was late, late in the game. And the transport that arrive, and people recognized one or the other, and went, oh, he's a violin player. So they took him out and he joined the orchestra.

They didn't play the orchestra while the people went to the dead, to the gas chambers. At different times, you know, they played the orchestra. There was an orchestra.

And what about the boxing matches?

One was a famous boxer in Europe, and another guy, on Sunday, and they had a boxing, you know, just like roosters-- falls away killed, dead. That's it. That's the way the boxing was going. Wasn't going to the regular time, you know.

This was-- well, it was not too many of boxing. There wasn't too many. Well, one or two fights.

How does everything you saw make you feel about humanity?

That time when I arrived there, I became like a-- I don't know how to explain it. Just didn't care. Like a vile person.

Just didn't bother me because I know I'm going to be dead now or in five minutes, 10 minutes. And I just became like a-- just like a person-- I don't know. That's been doing this for years.

Tell me more about how the uprising got thought up and organized.

There was one, he was from Warsaw, a fellow, very intelligent. He was an officer in the Polish army. From profession, he was an engineer. And he was the camp leader. He--

We're just running out. We don't have anyone from the--

So I want you to back up and tell me as though you didn't tell me before. Tell me how it got organized and who was the leader of the uprising.

The leader, I forgot his name. He carried a Polish name, which was his name. He was the commander at Treblinka at the camp, you know, with the Kapos and stuff like that. So he got the orders, and he told the Kapos what to do.

And actually, we didn't have bad Kapos in Treblinka. It was one, two Kapos. The main Kapo was what I said, young fellow. We called him Monek. Whoever was in Treblinka knows him.

Tell me how the uprising-- did everyone know about the uprising?

No, no, no.

All right. So tell me how the whole thing worked and what the plans were.

About the uprising, they was afraid to publish to everybody, otherwise they would get suspicious. And so they will just kill off all of us right in the same spot. So they told just certain people like a tailor shop, who was the foreman in a tailor shop and for the blacksmith and all that story, shoemakers, carpenters.

How did they decide who to tell and who not to tell? And then did everyone try to go?

The uprising came along and everybody screamed to run and run out. And that's it. And who has ammunition used it and that's it. So there was a little bit of ammunition. But the shoeshine boy brought it out a couple days ago.

The Sobibor uprising was triggered by notes that the people in the clothes found that were from people from Treblinka, and the notes in the pockets--

Yeah.

Said take revenge. Tell me, do you know about that?

No.

Did you ever hear about that?

About the take your revenge? No, no. There's no revenge. What are we going to take revenge with empty arms against the people who were sitting on that little thing, you know, upstairs with the machine gun and stuff like-- what kind of revenge can we take?

We knew we were going to be dead any time, so might as well do that, kill whoever we can, and run out. Whoever got safe, got safe. In this aspect I was lucky. I didn't get killed.

I was not a hero to escape. What just happened-- all the bullets was falling right in front of me and didn't hit me. People got hit in the legs-- I saw it-- and fell down, couldn't go any further.

Tell me what happened to your family. And also, did you think about them when you were there?

Sure. I knew that they were right around there someplace. But think they're on the fire burning that's all. But you got so much with yourself that you would not even think of anything.

You became yourself an animal while you were there, you know. Didn't bother [INAUDIBLE]. We knew that tomorrow will never come.

But you broke into Treblinka in a sense so that you could go rescue your family.

No, they came before I got there, one day before. Remember I said I walked out from the Appell. Go out-- they choose me to go out and keep me there because they left in the ghetto 300 people to do work to remain in the city.

Every city, I guess, got the same thing and they remain a little portion to make a little ghetto for those people. And they work tailoring or just sewing. So they took me out to remain so then my family and the parents, they just went straight to Treblinka.

How do you feel about the whole thing?

I still have nightmares. Still nightmares. It was just horrible, sure.

Tell me about before being transported there. Tell me about when the war first started and how life changed and what people thought was happening.

We didn't know that they're going to kill us out, but we know we're going to have a bad time. You mean when the war broke out?

Yeah.

Sure. It's just like any place else. It was the same system.

The Germans took over the country, then rationing. And it was a hard time to survive, but somehow we survived. But we didn't know this is going to happen.

And then they put us together and the ghetto was terrible. And the ghetto was terrible. So like you heard about the Warsaw ghetto? The same thing was in our hometown, identical, same thing.

People starving and dying, laying on the sidewalks. Sure. And that's what it was in the ghetto.

Did you want to take revenge after you escaped?

After I escaped? No, I was hiding myself for survival. How can I take a revenge? We just were fighting, hiding out in foxholes for survival.

When I went to that farm, the farmers stayed there. Then came a group of boys, Jewish boys. They had ammunition.

And when I told him my story, and they want me, I should go with him, stay with him. But I went there to make sure where they are, but I went back to this guy. But he was treating-- food wasn't much to eat, but he was hiding us out. So we got used to that, so we didn't want to go with him.

But lately we went and we heard at the front the Russians is coming closer. We made a foxhole in the woods, and then we all joined each other. And we stayed in the foxhole, and a Russian came along.

That's where I got liberated, from the Russian. It was a bunch of people, about eight, nine people at that time.

What would you like to say to future generations?

The future generations, one word, well, I don't know how to describe it. Never again or something like that. This is the future generation, I guess they know that. Anything gets suspicious, they are ready to go right to the fire.

Is your survival an achievement?

Sure. There's a lot of people survived in different forms. People survive, people got killed after the liberation, people got [INAUDIBLE], sure. Was a lot of different things.

Survival myself and take a gun and kill a German, no I didn't. After the liberation? No. It was not in my thought, but I just hate them. What they did. I can sit there for hours if I get [INAUDIBLE] sometimes I skip it. Can't get this together.

Did you think of something you want to say?

There is certain things, but I don't-- you need the whole story, a big story out of it?

Whatever you can do.

You ask me something. Maybe I remind myself.

Describe the camp for me again. Describe how it was set up and laid out. Paint a picture for me in words of the camp.

It just put together just barracks, just a roof and wood. That was one of the people-- one for the gas chambers and the other side was where we were at night to go to sleep. So they organized.

There was a kitchen. They cooked in the kitchen. They brought the horses to kill them for food and cooked-- they have some meat or something.

Describe to me where the trains came in and how long each transport took.

There was a transport coming in between 8,000 and 10,000 people, long, long train of people packed up. It took maybe an hour, an hour and a half, two hours. I mean, people standing right-- waiting till the train gets in the right spot, and you just slide up the two doors, and out, out, out. People who have to run, not just walk.

So 8,000 people would be gone in two hours?

Yeah. Yeah. [INAUDIBLE] people was, quite a bit. That people right there. They pulled them into piles there.

All right. We could put on another roll if you want to tell me some more, but--

Yeah.

Change film.

Yeah.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

What's happening?

Yeah. Tell me what an Appell is and then tell me--

The people came out in this particular time, and the Appell means they're counting how many people here and going to work. Then after the work, it's all done, we back again and count if nobody is missing. They want to know if anybody has disappeared or something, you know, got away.

Then you want me [INAUDIBLE] about knifing the guy or something? I just very simple. Went out in the Appell, and he was standing there. Count, count. He came from the other side. I stabbed him [INAUDIBLE].

You've got to tell me that it was your friend and that he stabbed a soldier, a German.

Yeah.

You've got to tell me that so I understand who it is.

The guy was one of our workers there, what came out for the Appell. So he just didn't ask nobody, ran over, and stabbed him. That's how. It was easy there to find a knife or something because people were bringing them every day.

That's what happened. Then they start shooting at the people, everybody. A lot of people got killed. I mean, from the Appell people, because bullets were coming from all over on this guy because the Ukrainian was sitting on that-- what do you call this?

Guard post.

Guard post, that's right. And there was all over guard posts. He was--

So a prisoner killed a Gestapo?

Gestapo, yeah. Sure.

Just tell me that. Tell me that a prisoner killed the Gestapo, and then tell me the story. And use the word prisoner and use the word Gestapo.

So one of our prisoners came out in the morning, and when we made an Appell, they decide to put him to work. So he got out and killed that Gestapo.

Why?

Just like-- take your revenge, you know. He knew he's not going to live. Everybody knew we're not going to live.

You know, they think, what's the sense? Get up, and work, and go to sleep, and come in the morning, and do the same thing. But in the end, they're going to kill us.

And who paid for that?

Who paid for that? Nobody. But the people got-- this guy got killed in pieces. They just turned in pieces. [? And that's it ?]. Then they start shooting right into the people.

Tell me about close calls when you were hiding after you escaped from Treblinka.

I was hiding in a barn on a place. This was up, you know, it was above the cows and horses. I put this-- and it had straw underneath.

And then the other people were never in Treblinka, but they ran away from the towns and hide themselves around in the neighborhoods. And they organized themselves ammunition. So they found out that I am there with another guy at this farm hiding out.

So they came in. They got into the house, and one of the children told him, oh, those guys is in a barn upstairs. So they went up and started talking Jewish. So we came down, so we got together.

So we know each other, and they were hiding also in a foxhole at another farm. And so we got together in the evening. Only in the evening when it was dark, not when the moon was bright. What do you call it?

Full moon.

Full moon, yeah. We didn't see each other because you could have pointed-- when you go they see you walking at night. We only saw each other when it was-- not the moon is there, just dark. So they somehow want me to-- I should join with him to be together. They get to like me or something like that.

I told him where I was. So I went with him sometimes then I came back. And then by the very, very end, I remained there with him and we had a foxhole right in the middle of the field. And we were sitting there and waiting.

Then one time, we heard speaking Russian, Russian, Russian. So we got out and we saw Russian people right there.

Did you do any fighting with them?

No, no, no, no, no. This was the front line. This was the front line. We didn't fight [INAUDIBLE] Russian that time.

Tell me once more how the buildings at Treblinka were laid out, where the train came in, where the gas chambers were, how much--

The train came in-- let's see, this way. Then I said a little distance there. I don't know how many feet, 200 feet or 100 feet. Was an arch, and it was like with wires around.

And it says, go straight here. They're going to take a shower. Whatever it is. Men right, women left. And they told them get undressed, just nude.

And then they were going in. [INAUDIBLE] barrack and the woman goes there. And then they joined together. And then they went into the gas chambers. At the gas chambers was very rough people standing there pushing the people, hitting, hitting, hitting children and anybody, whole families.

And then they got into that gas chamber, and it's all packed up, everybody standing just like-- they close it and then they put the gas in there. [INAUDIBLE] and that's what is. On the other side, a few minutes, slide open the doors and pushed it.

This was a hard job because everybody was stick to each other, you know. We have to-- break them apart, you know. And put them [INAUDIBLE] holes where the fire was.

So in the beginning, they piled up the dead people in a big grave, filled it up, throw little dirt on top. Then they dig another big hole there. While I was there in the same time came along, it's just like you seen the big cranes dig into the dirt, that's the way they picked up the people from the grave, and turn around and throw right in the fire.

[? That's not was ?] far way. I didn't work by that, but I saw it. I was passing back and forth. So they burned the bodies. They burned.

They didn't want to have a grave for the bodies. Just to burn them. And that's what was going on in the rest of the time, burning. [INAUDIBLE] I can draw with a pencil and tell you exactly how it was.

OK. Let's cut.

That's it?

Take seven is up.

Yeah. This is the main entrance, and the train came right at the side. And this is the railing for the train when they arrived.

And this is a cattle train coming along here. That's the cattle trains here. And here was the Ukrainian, Gestapos.

And the laborers, the workers open up the door, slide off the doors. And they were coming on here. So the people, they make them walk in here to the-- [INAUDIBLE].

Here was an arch here. And it said, men right and woman left. [INAUDIBLE]. And so the people came out from the train.

And told them to go right in here to that. And they're going to have a shower, so the people went walking from both sides into that place, the shower. [INAUDIBLE] they walked inside there.

And so the people here inside, they had to get undressed. You got to get undressed in there, but they were walking right into the-- those two gates here where the people come in right from--



Let's put another roll on now.