

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Abe Malnik
February 27, 1992
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Abe Malnik, conducted on February 27, 1992 in Highland Beach, Florida 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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ABE MALNIK

February 27, 1992

Beep.

Okay, describe for me what it was like when the war began and the setting up of the ghetto, and what things you saw then.

When the war begun, I was only 13-1/2 years old, and uh, we lived very comfortable life. Parents were working people, but they gave, they gave me a good life, and I didn't, didn't know about poverty or problems, and uh, then all of the sudden, the planes come over our town, Kovna, Lithuania, dropping bombs, and our whole lives were shattered, especially my life, being at that time the on-one and only child, I had problems to adjust myself from a good life to, to complete a turn around 180 degrees, and here we, we start running, we start running from the, to join the Russian army, to run away, and the Germany, the Blitzkrieg, cut us off, turned us back, in uh homes, we came back home. The Lith-Lithuanian population, when people have killed, a lot of our Jewish friends, they were unable, they never realized that they will have, they can make a massacre on us, and the um, they butchered us, really butchered us and killed us, and um, raped the woman. Fortunately, we were not hurt. Our family in that particular section, and then the Germans came in, and after being 2, 3 weeks with our parents trying to survive without food, we couldn't go and buy anything because nobody would sold us. The Germans gave a order to go in um, little town called Slobatkia. There were, they told us that all the Jews of certain date, has to come back, surrender self, make your own fence, and then we should uh stay there until further orders. We uh, packed up everything we could, take on our bags, and uh, in a week we moved all our household, we find a little place in the ghetto. There was a very unruly people you know never knew what was going to happen, never knew the future, and we uh, and we made our own fence. The Germans created the um, a Jewish committee, they were in charge, and we had orders to, they gave us barbed wire, and we had order certain blocks, so many blocks to surround uh the ghetto, and there we start a new life, a new life under the Germans. You know, at that particular point or time, what await us, what the future will be. Hopefully, we didn't know, we, about killings, we didn't know, we didn't have nothing in touch with other outside world. We didn't realize or believe that the Germans will come and kill us, and uh, we hoped that uh, that's going to be our destiny until the uh, all the things, until everything can be over. Hopefully, we hoped that the Germans will lose the war, and they thought they were telling us going to be a Blitzkrieg in 2 weeks, the whole uh war will be over, and uh, everything will be okay, everything be nice and fine, but they were mistaken, the war dr-the war

dragged and dragged, and uh, they start slowly annihilating us. And the, at that time in ghetto, we were approximately thirty-five thousand Jews in the Kovna ghetto, and this was uh too many for them. They had some plans, they had set up their way of doing things, and uh, they decided that one day, was the 28th of November in 1941, that there are too many people in the ghetto, old ones and children, crippled one, and they can't feed that many. We didn't know what the man that, at that particular day, 6 o'clock in the morning, that we all have to congregate in that place, it's a, called the Independent Place, and uh, like all, like nice people they gave a, a ----- announcement in front of the committee, the Jewish committee that uh anybody would go and stay home, won't fill out the order to come in the morning, will be shot. Well, you know what it was, and uh, we all 6 o'clock in the morning with our grandchildren, with our children, with our grandmothers and aunts, we all congregated. At that time, at our little room in the ghetto we had had my mother father and my grandmother and a aunt, she was a cripple. We all went down and on the place, in the uh, the 6 o'clock in the morning, we're columns and columns of people without knowing what's going to happen, and all exactly 7 o'clock when the sun starts coming out, that uh big German SS man with a black coat starts assaulting us. We are now -----, but the feeling was, was getting too early in the war, we didn't what they going to do with us, but we, we, we were stuck we seeing, we start seeing that the older people are going to one side and the cripples ones and the healthy ones he's putting other side. When he's come to our uh row, and he saw I was staying there, myself, my mother and father, and my aunt, my aunt and grandmother, he didn't like the look, uh the looks of my uh grandmother, being an old lady, and put us all in the bad side. My mother, at that time, she knew, she had a feeling that something is wrong; she pushed my father out, my father worked for the fire dept, there was the police dept, fire dept, and he was part of the, part of the fire dept, he wore a, a uh, band on his arm, and he mingled in with the police dept, it was a huge police dept, and they took us in the bad side, they had a small ghetto over there, and they accumulated by nightfall, 10,000 people. I, uh, for some reason, I was only 14 years old at that time, and, for some reason, I did not felt I should move uh move to the back of the crowd, keep on going backwards, and hopefully because uh my father promised us he's going to rescue us from the ghetto and he's going to bring us back. What they have done with us....

We just ran out.

Beep Beep.

In the Kovna ghetto, there were 35000 people that came from all walks of life, and the German, the general -----, the German -----, decided there were too many, there are too many people because they uh, some were sick, some were old, some were young, young children, they couldn't

not productive people. They needed, they need labor force. And, uh, so they, they established -----that they were, but how, how they going to take out 10,000 people, how they going to eliminate them. All with trickery. All, all action, what they have done the 21st of November in forty um, in forty one, was called the biggest action from the Kovna ghetto, when they told all the people, they announced it, the next day in the morning, -----in the morning, all the people have to congregate on the liberty place, and sure enough, anybody who, who won't come will get shot, they'll check every house. 6 in the morning, we were we were all staying there, 35000 on a big huge place, crippled with uh, with uh people with crutches, but everybody was there, everybody. 7 o'clock, by sunrise, there were the, the whole place, whole compound was surrounded by Lithuanian guards, and the German SS came out and starts, the one with the black big coat and laughing in his face, starts sorting us. The uh Jewish police was privileged not to stay there with their families. If they come start sorting us, and they come to our row where I was staying with my mother father grandmother and my aunt which was crippled, the German did not like his, your looks, they told us to go in the left side. Now, uh, my father belonged at that time to the uh fire dept, and he also wore a band, looks like on his arm, like the Jewish police. So, my mother pushed him our and, and said, Conova his name, "Go out and you'll try to rescue us later." She had a feeling, we all had a feeling that something is wrong. In the, by, by the evening they sent us all over in the small place called the small ghetto, which was previously also kept some Jews and they burned everybody, burned all the houses down. But some houses were still staying there and we were, we supposed to stay in those houses, 10,000 Jews, all the crippled, and the picture was not good. Being only 14 years old, and I looked who the people are there around me, I knew we, we are in big trouble. In the middle of the night, the Germans start hose??? people out. Slowly, I told my mother, "Let's not be the herd, let's not go," they told us they go and give us the jobs, I said, "Please, let's go back. Maybe my father will still come." Those 10000 people were taken to the called the Ninth fort in ghetto, and uh, previously Russian prisoners had dug trenches, and they all, everything was prepared, was done a master plan, how to exterminate the 10,000 Jews. At that time, there were no crematoriums yet. So um, as I was going back, and, and it was, my mother next day came around, by 12 o'clock we were the last hundred people. Fortunately, my father came in. The way my father happened to come in, there was a lady staying with us and the last hundred people. The German recognized that lady, and they grabbed get a hold of her, and grabbed, they say, "Come, come with me." And, he took her out from the fenced small ghetto, and she, when she came out she realized that she left her baby staying in, in that particular place, and she fainted. It's a uh, actually it's a piece that what happened. My father happened to be there, and he tried to revive her. When he revived her, he ask, "Is my wife and my child still there?" She said, "Yes, she's still the last hundred." So, he start, he, he went on his knees and he start begging the German officer to help to, to go and maybe he can pull out. He look at him, he say, "Come,"

and uh, my, my father didn't know what happened with him, and he came in, he was running ----- in front of the German. When I saw him running there, it was like Messiah came, like angel from heaven came, and I jumped at him, and the German, I looked very like, like my father, his face. The German looked at him, at me, he says, "Is that, is this, that your son?" He said, "Yes." And uh, "whom else do you got here?" He said, "My wife." "Take her." "Whe, uh, uh you have somebody else?" Because, they had, he had his sisters over there, and he had my grandmother, he couldn't take nobody out. He took out me and my mother, and we, we came out, and he rescued us, the last hundred people. Those 10,000 people had a terrible fate. They took them all to Nine Fort, put them in the fort in 100 at a time, made them undress in the underground, and they machine gunned them. And uh, the Lithuanian guards, the Lithuanian part--the Lithuanian partisans, Lithuanian soldiers, machine gunned them and then covered them up with tractors with earth, and earth had moved for three days, with the tractors and run over them to squeeze out the last breath, and when uh the front came closer, and start undigging them, and the same prisoner, pl-uh Russian and Jewish prisoners were still there, they found laying there, mothers with children wrapped around together, and they died together in the common grave. The, you can imagine our, our, our hurt, our sorrow what happened in the ghetto after 10,000 people were taken out. Each one, everyone, everyone of the people have lost somebody in the ghetto, and uh, the Germans, they knew will have a hard time to get used to it, they try to pacify us, tell us lies, -----, uh the people who were separated from you, we, we take them in different ghetto, different place, and don't worry. For a long, we had heard nothing about it, and we got used to a new life, quote unquote, which we, we would start facing us, life of hunger, misery, the si-the sickness, and just torture, and um, as we were staying in ghetto, the life, we were very accepted, we were get, got involved in a life of the ghetto, the ration of bread, we go to work every morning, and uh, we established ourselves as part of that particular time and place.

What is a kinder action? And tell me about the hiding place that you found.

As time kept coming on, I had to find a job, I find a job uh as a young child at -----, and went to work on fields to uh, to plant and taking out for the, for the uh for the gardens to the Germans outside the ghetto in order to bring in. We worked also in the airport. Then also they started a uh, a workshop, a big workshop, ----- in ghetto itself. My father, uh, luckily, because of him we, I survived, uh worked in uh as a fire, fire dept, he got me a job to work in the ghetto rather than go outside, outside the ghetto, where the suffering was more, the hunger was more. So, uh, I worked that time in the ghetto, and I had a, a day off, and as, as I was sleeping in the morning, I remember it was a Monday morning, and all of the sudden I heard a -----, driving through the ghetto and announcing that everybody get to got to come on that particular

place, which I uh, where the big ----- was. I was very skeptical, I, I learned the way the, the tricks of survival. It's uh, like a dog, you show him a, you beat him with a stick. You can't show him a stick anymore, he'll run away. The same was with me, once we knew that how the Germans deceived us, we tried self-preservation, and uh, I ran out for the, for my uh, I was by myself in the room, I ran out from the room, got dressed fast, and tried to find myself a hiding place because I don't know, what's, what's they having in there, the whole ghet-ghetto was surrounded again, and they're walking and they're driving around and trying everybody should go back on the place, and they want uh have a count on everybody, so as I was running around from street to street trying to hide myself, I didn't have where to hide. There wasn't attics, there wasn't basements. All of the sudden, the ghetto was g-was a place in uh where farmers used to have little sheds of...

We've got to reload.

Right.

Beep.

Why don't you back up to finding a place to hide.

As I was running from street to street, and trying to find a place to hide, I, we had a lot of outhouses in that, in the ghetto. All of the sudden, I saw a little shed. Not know what's inside, I opened the door, and there was a place that, place where the farmers used to keep their hay. So, I came inside and I wanted to hide myself in the hay, and I saw all of the sudden, a cellar. There were a cellar where the farmers apparently kept the potatoes, and as I was trying to walk down the ladder, I heard screams, uh, two mothers was running with me with their little babies in their hands, young, young mothers, and uh, I helped them to hide the babies, I helped them to hide themselves, I said, "Please, I don't know what I'm doing myself, but if you want to, you can come down in the hole, in the cellar together with me, I mean, and which, which they did, they came down, and I took some hay, and covered up the, the deck on top, and we are praying, we didn't know still what's happening, we didn't know what's, what's going on, on outside, so as we were staying there, all of the sudden lay, staying in the cellar the children with the 2 mothers, all of the sudden, I heard a German, their cars back and forth, and yelling in German, in, in, in German, that they're, they should uh, put a guard here and a guard there, and all of the sudden I see that German guard keeps walking back and forth, I could see from the crack from the cellar out, and here he comes in with his bayonet, and start digging in the um, in the hay, and as I was, I was, he was digging, he was standing on top that uh, that cover, which covered us, and I could feel the covers going give in, so I

kept holding and sweat was pouring from me, and I was uh, I didn't know what's going to happen, I said, God help me, and all of the sudden, as he start walking out, he couldn't find nothing, was digging with his bayonet, one baby start crying. He actually apparently didn't hear too well, and uh, he just turned around and kept walking and I say, Please God pleas, and the, and all of the sudden the baby quiet down. A little later in the day, and the guard was going all day long back and forth, and I had to look outside to see what happen, and then the other baby start crying, and being hungry, not having no food or water, the mother urinate in the hand, and let the baby drink, and the baby quieted down, -----at 4 o'clock, the German punctuality, I heard the whistle blow, and this car, the truck passed by again, and got all the guards together, and I wait other 5 or 10 minutes, and I opened the, the shed, opened the cover, and came out and didn't see nobody there, I told the mothers, everything is clear to come out, and one baby still crying, and the other baby didn't say nothing, and when the mother had put her hand to the baby's, baby's mouth, she choked the baby to death, and when she realized that, she went completely hysterical. I start crying. I didn't know what, what happened to me, I start crying, I start running, and I came to my father's place where, where he was at the fire dept, and he was telling me, I said, "What happened here?" He said there was a kinder action. The Germans came and liquidate all the children. They had buses, they are very trained are very smart, very, was, was very well thought out, that was that. The buses came in with German shepherd dogs, and they went away, went from house to house picking up, trying to find children, and the mothers would not voluntarily give up the children when they brought them to the bus, the German dog is a jump on mother, and in order to protect herself, she would drop the baby and the German dog picked up the baby and brought in the bus. And, they cleared hundreds and hundreds, buses of children. And this was done while the parents while the parents were working, they were away, when they work in the morning, and the children were left there with the grandmothers or with other, were, ended with all the children, when they came back, it was, it was unbelievable what happened in that ghetto. The cries, the screams to God, the um, the mothers walked around with the pillows, with the blankets of the children, in a daze, with toys, and the screams, only God can hear the screams, they're pulling their hair. I saw the woman came over to a German guard by the, by the fence, and she started screaming at him, "You schwein! Duetsche shwein!" "You pig." He just took a gun out, a, a revolver and he killed her. On top of everything else, it was, I still can hear in my, in my ears, the cries from that day, it was a day experience, only uh, the, the skies opened up, only God could hear it. Imagine going away and coming home and after, and not finding your children. The children, they took all the children, and the same day they killed them all. They told us that they, "Don't worry, we take the children away, nothing going to happen." And again, we got used to our problems, again life had to go on. And again, the mother had to go to work, otherwise, they would be deported, taken someplace else, and this was the famous Kovna Kinder Action, where the children were taken

away from the mothers, just, just taken away, this was, this was the uhhh Kinder Action.

Tell me about the ghetto liquidation and transport.

They, the front, as came, start coming closer, the Russians, they took over, they won the battle at Stalingrad. This is also fiasco. For 48 hours, they allowed the Germans to get their hatred out so the Russians, all their misery, for 48 hours, had a shooting game with the Jews, they walked around in ghetto and killed anybody in sight, anybody, they can be, they can get their anger out because they lost Stalingrad, and the front start moving closer and closer to us, they dug up that time the all the people that they killed Nine Fort, and burned them, you could see the fires, the flames, because it wasn't far from the ghetto, and uh, they decide to liquidate the ghetto. They took out people one day, and we had made bunkers to hide, we start hiding in uh we made double walls in the houses, but there was a, actually the way to hide, then, all of the sudden, my uh, my father saw a outhouse, and people going in there, so he said, he ask them if he can join them, and sure enough they allow that, there was about ten or twenty people inside. It was, it was made a bunker, a big room, dug out in a outhouse on top of that, but the people who used outhouse they never knew there was a bunker inside, so we were lay underneath, and uh, people that, that doing the business on top, and the Germans came and start looking from house to house, and all of the sudden he reached over the uh, the bunker, that's the toilet in the bunker, and I saw the German, that young German with a um, with a luger, and start screaming, "-----!" And uh, if you don't come out, we're going to shoot you. We all came out, we all naturally didn't smell the best, and they start beating us with the uh butts of their gu--of their guns or the butts of their rifles, and they congregated us all, we were actually the last, the last of the ghetto, because after us, the ghetto was, the ghetto was completely liqu--burned down, ever--and everybody who was hiding in the walls or in the attics was completely burned. They put us in a, on a, in front of a uh, magistrate, Jewish magistrate, they uh, until they accumulate enough people to make a transport. And, there, I saw a, a phenomena really which I uh, with a parallel to our life, there was a, in the evening, was drowsy, was raining, was miserable, we felt miserable. The Germans were staying all their stuff with a uh, bayonets, with uh uniforms, with German Shepherd dogs, and here a cat ran across, and uh, the German wanted to play with her, and he told the dog to attack the cat, and the poor cat kept on going backwards with tail up, until she came, she couldn't go further, she was, she was up to the fence, the German told the dog, attack her.

We've got to do this again on the next roll.

(Sandy & Abe talking--can't hear).

Beep.

Okay, now you have to back up to the beginning of that story.

Okay. As they got us congregated, they took us all out from the bunkers, all the people they could find, and they tried to accumulate a transport of uh, the last transport from the ghetto because afterwards everything was burned down, I saw, and I was, I felt miserable, I felt miserable, de-depressed. I didn't know at all what's going to happen next. I felt like the--I saw a cat all of the sudden, I felt like the cat. The Germans also saw the cat, and they sicked the German dog to get the cat. The poor cat couldn't move. They were, and the cat was in, in the hand in the throat of that German shepherd, and she start backing up, and when she backed up she was against the fence, was all buckled up, all, she, she didn't know what to do, and all of the sudden, the German told the dog to attack. He attacked and he killed the cat. I felt the same way like I was in the hand of the Germans, and any moment they can kill me, they can do anything with my life, like the dog had done to the cat. Uh, we were nothing. We were we were we were worse than a, a cat, we were worse than anything else. We had no future, we had no life, we were -----, we were next to nothing. A Jew was next to nothing. Then, next day, they put us in a transport, put us in cattle cars, and they shipped us to, on the way to Germany. We still did not know where we are, we are going to. I tried to escape with a few more young guys from the cattle, from that cattle car, and I succeeded in uh, cutting a hole, and, and cutting the seal off up and uh opened slightly the door, but I couldn't jump out because there were other trucks, on the parallels with the train, so it was suicide either way, if you're jumping you can kill yourself, or whatever you were going, so on the way to Germany, we uh, we stopped for some water, and the German, from the German -----, soldier, showed us, and our guards, a article with a big headlines that Hitler's SS Nation had not succeeded. He said, you're very unfortunate because you could have been liberated right now. As uh this kind of thing, this, this kind of phrases still sticks to my head. If he'd be assassinated, thousands maybe millions of people would, would uh have survived the war and other things, but this, this was not to happen to happen. As we came further in Germany, we landed in uh, a place, a concentration camp called Stutthof. I was still at that time with my parents. They took us in trucks, and drove us in, in that concentration camp. When I, I looked out, I thought I was dreaming. I saw a swan lake with swans swimming in that, but little did I know that behind that, my dream, there are crematoriums over there. With smoke and fire. They have, this is the last time I have uh, saw my mother. They have separated us, and uh, and my father always kept me under his guard, under his wing. A whole night we were ----- us or shaving us. They were checking us to see if we were hiding gold in all the places they gave us uh, other prisoner clothes,

and uh, and uh the whole life in ghetto to the concentration camp was like, again like day and night. We were going, go--real, real in hell, in ghetto we still, we were with our families, and we can still survive day by day. Here we survived hour by hour. We had no food. And, if you said something wrong, they beat you, they, they kill you, they didn't care. You, you were a real nothing in the ghetto in the concentration camp. But, I was uh slim and tall, and when they s-sort me out with my father, they let me stay with my father. After being in Stutthof, and being separated from my mother, they moved us to also with cattle cars to Dachau. In Dachau, I uh, I worked very hard. I worked extremely hard, and my father being a barber, got a job in the ghetto, in the uh concentration camp itself without going outside in the concentration camp, and he ask one of the Germans if they can give me a job to work also in the compound itself. After a few months, and after he was cutting German's uh hair, he made so that I should work in compound, and this was my lucky break because I could never survive the working outside. My job in the compound was a privileged job. Was what I do, me and other boy, would take a wagon, like a ----- wagon, and go from barrack to barrack, and pick, pull up all the dead people, who died, who starved, who were beaten to death, who were full of lice, and put them in, stacked them up, and take them out and dump them in the ravine. We're, we're doing it every morning about twice a day. Then, in the evening, I was uh help in the work in the kitchen. And this made my life easier. I used to stay next to my father. He kind of protected me, and this is one of the parts, one of the reasons, I uh, I did not waste too much energy, I did not waste too much uh of my youth in that particular concentration camp until my luck ran out. I uh, they liquidated that concentration, that particular concentration camp, in Dachau, that part of it. And, they did not want to se-uh they want to separate my father and me. They want to send my father in a better place, and me send someplace, I didn't know where. My father said, no, he won't leave me alone. He, he, wherever I go, that's going to be his destination. Fortunately for me, he was with me and they sent us to Flossenburg, a concentration camp, and from there to Leichmerz. Leichmerz was a real hell. I heard from other people, my wife, about Auschwitz, Dachau, Birkenau, but nobody heard that much from uh Leichmerz. We were, when we came in there, we were around 500 people. When the war finished, were 10 left. We uh, we were, this was a old camp already, and we were just new ----- . They have uh put us in uh -----where nobody want to go over there. The worst, we got the worst jobs, the worst work, and uh, we worked in mines, not coal mines, but cement mines, but they were the same as coal mines. Was miserable, was foggy, was wet, was very little food, a slice of food, and every morning, they grabbed us in different brigades where to go. I, when I came first, with my father, my father also, also kept me next to him. I still looked pretty good because uh of my job in Dachau concentration camp. And, as we stayed and we working in the coal mine, in the cement mines, and we're drilling, and we're loading everything on wagons, to, to get a a piece of stone out, I see a German in civilian clothes, he's walking past one time by us, a second time, I didn't notice him. In that particular

concentration camp, there were all kind of people, the Polocks, the Germans, there were Russian prisoners, and some Jews. Not that many Jews, maybe we were the, maybe a thousand, five hundred plus, maybe a thousand Jews and we were the la, we were the last transport, and there were these for us insignias. We wore a, a yellow uh star of Dav--star of David plus a number. Mine was 84,532. Had to remember, had to remember it, for the appel, for the counting every morning, had in German and in Polish, had to learn that. And some had red insignias, criminals, green, homosexual, well they were, I didn't know about that because in Dachau, where we were, they didn't have all that particular insignias, so as I was working with my father, that uh German keeps on looking at me, go back and forth, then he comes to me, he says, "Yunger," mean young boys or something, "Come here," I should follow him. I look at my father, but uh, after all he's a German, and uh, he tells me

You know, we're going to run out during this story. We should wait and reload.

Beep.

When, when we came, when we came uh with a transport, we were 500 people, five hu-or more people, they uh assign us different places, they, they grabbed us and we wind up, my father worked in the cement mines, and as I, as I was working there I uh, we noticed a German in civilian clothes walking and looking at us, and when, when passed by one time, where I was, then a second time, I was uh, very naive I didn't understand what happening. I was only at that time 15 and a half years old, and uh, I did not uh, knew what he meant when he said to me, "Yunger, come here," I thought I should follow only the German guards, but my father said, "He's a German. You better do what he says." So, I uh, I followed him and he, he, deeper and deeper in the mines, and it was very hazy there, small little lights burning, and he was telling me he's a officer for the uh, uh German air force -----, and uh, I still did not uh have an inclination of what his mind is. All of the sudden he comes close to me, and he uh, start hugging me, and uh, I felt, I felt very, very awkward, and I start push him away, and he start pulling his pants down, and he want to kiss me, so I start screaming, and in the, in the mines, usually the, the echo is so tremendous, and uh people start running, Germans with the guns, and uh, the Polish Kapos,-----, and I start telling him, complaining that what he was trying to do, and they arrested, they arrested us both. The German with the, with the guns, with the um, with the rifles, and they pass by, took me down past my father, my father looked at me, I looked at him, I couldn't answer him nothing, and uh, they took us down in the general staff for the concentration camp, and there hell broke out. They put me down in a chair, and I said, I said, tell him the story, and I told him. I told him he tried to hug me and kiss me, and they were out of their mind. How a German officer try to kiss a, a Juda--I mean, a Jew,

and this is beyond their belief, I mean, they, they they'll die if they'll kiss a Jew. And they, they sent telegrams to Berlin, and they took my deposition maybe 50 times, and asked me questions, day and night. And uh, then they said, tell me, you know aside, he tells me that the German, I shouldn't say nothing, but I, I want to say the whole thing what happened because otherwise I be in trouble. So, in middle of the night, 12 o'clock in the middle of the night, they dragged me out of my bunk. They kept me separated, didn't let me go no more to my father. I thought they're going to kill me, they're going to shoot me, whatever it was. And here they bring me in, in Anklausen?? Here the, the German complete undressed staying under the shower, the shower coming down on him, cold, ice cold water, was winter, and they uh, Kapo, a Polish kapo with a hose, put, tried to put water in his mouth, and tried to put water in it, and with the other hose he's beating him. And I had to, they made me watch it, to see what how they punished him. He was yelling, "Muchy?? Mother, help me, help me!" And looked at me and looked at them, and they were beating him, and I had to look. And this is, -----a child, I was only 15 and a half, 16 years old, and uh, with all my experience in concentration camp and ghetto, I still didn't have no experience, still everything new to me. And his head swell up twice the size. They uh, told me to go back to my father in the barracks, and I understand, I heard that in uh, 2 days later, he died. And that's all, they didn't do any-anything to me, and uh, I was, I joined back my father, and we went back to uh, to work in the uh, in the concentration camp, in the mines that were there. Now, one uh, and we got weaker and weaker because the portions, the lead Polish kapos, Polish uh, the leaders, you see, and the portions, we used to go a column of 20, with a bumpy loaf of bread, he's cut it for 30 pieces and the rest of it take it, take it for himself. So the portions and the soup, everything get less and less. And my father, being a barber, after a hard day's work, he's a still help shave the prisoners, and told me "My son, you're young. Go on the bunk. Go ahead, and don't work now, but don't use up the energy," and he said, "Bring me a bowl of soup, a little bit of water soup, soup more than water, and, and share with me." I said, "You eat, Pop." He said, "No, I've eaten already." And, I knew, later I found out that that he, whatever he ga-he had, he gave it to me because he said "You've got to still grow. Maybe you'll survive." And one time we, we were laying on the bunk. We had lot of love for each other, my father and I, and we kind of protect each other, and we were good for, for each other, that's the reason for we survived. We kind of complement each other. In, in misery you still need company, they say misery needs company, believe me we need com--we need each other. And many times we used to lay in the bunk, we used to remin-reminisce...(Starts crying, long pause) Sorry, the holidays...we used to have with the mother, family, family...and he used to tell me, "My son, please don't remind, please don't talk. Let's continue our life together the way it is." And as we were laying one time, uh, people couldn't hold their bladders, and couldn't hold, we were four, four uh stairs of bed, beds for uh, for bunks, one on top each other. People ab-above us urinate on top of us. Germans thought, German kapo, or the Polish kapo thought my father

urinated, so he jumped on him and with a stick start beating him, so I thought he's going to kill him, so I jumped on my father, protected him, and he almost killed me, and when he broke the stick on me, he start beating us. So, as I say, he, we needed each other. I protect his health, he brought some food for me, and we were clinging to each other until one time, we were working both in the mines, and we were unloading the cement, and I got weaker and weaker and I just ----- 50 pound bag cement, maybe I weigh at that time maybe 75 pounds, and I couldn't carry it, I fell down, and that uh, German came, he said, "I'm going to kill you." You broke the bag cement and you sabotage, so he jumped on top of me, and with his heel he was trying to kill me, knocked me down and uh and hit me and made me a mess, I was laying there, my whole bloody, bloody mess, my face, my body, and he walked away, my father was standing next to me, he couldn't help me, he couldn't help with nothing. In the evening, he picked me up, he and somebody else, other prisoner, and took me down in the so called hospital. At that time I had typhus fe-typhoid fever, I was so weak, that I had typhoid fever. And, uh, they took me to hospital, was hospital was no Jews over there, and they want to -----the hospital, I was delirious, and they gave me a handful of aspirin, they told me to swallow that, which I, which I did. Without, without water, there were plenty of water, but still they, they tried to torture me, and I had to swallow the aspirin. I became complete delirious, and I, I almost went out of mind, I remember that, I tried to hang myself, and uh, I find I thinking that I have exploded the mines, the Germans are after me, and I found a, a piece of wire, like a hanger, and I went in the toilet, and the toilets have the sinks in Europe on top, you've got to pull down, and I uh, hooked up the wire, on my uh, uh, on top on my neck, and jumped down, and I start making noises, it wouldn't, was not rope, it was a piece of wire, and some prisoner came, saw that, and pulled the wire off, and I ran away, jumped in my bed under the cot, and uh, I was laying there hoping something will happen to me, and they find me and put me a cot with 3 more prisoners, we were 4 together, they were Russian prisoners. They wouldn't give me, give me the food, so each time somebody died, I ate his food until the fourth and the third one died, I kept a few more days, and uh, I ate his food, then he then he start smelling and I told them, I told them he's dead, and these, the thing is the way we find ways to preserve ourselves, ways to, to, to survive. Here I was an innocent boy 13 and half years old, going in ghetto, from a good life, and here I'm laying with dead people, which doesn't bother me, I'm laying there eating their food in order for me to survive. My father uh was out of his mind, he couldn't find me, he didn't know where I was.

We have to reload.

I'm sorry.

Change film; Camera Roll 6 is up; Sync take 6 is up.

Beep.

I learned to try to survive, like a wild, wild animal, wild animal in the jungle, the in-instinct was to do, what not to do, what's, if I do this way, might be wrong, if I do that, might, might survive, and it was a, a day, in fact became hour and hour preservation yourself, preserving your life. If they throw out garbage from the kitchen, the garbage, was real garbage, it wasn't rotten, and if you ran to the to the kitchen and to the, to the garbage can and grab the, the garbage, they beat you to death. So, I prevent from doing that, though I was hungry, so while being in that hospital, and being with dead people and death completely around me, I didn't pay attention. A dead one, a live one, you were, you were there by yourself, and the funny part was, I never thought about death, I never thought I'm going to die, I don't know why, I had thinking back, I had thoughts in my mind about laying there in that lousy concentration camp with diseases, with, with lice, if I not, if I, when I will survive, when I, when I'll be, be liberated, what am I going to do? A trade I haven't got, the schooling is disrupted, how I'm going to survive in this world. I was worried with myself, this is this is unbelievable thinking now that a child thinks how you're going to survive when you are liberated. Not how, not right now but later on. One, all of the sudden, I'm laying on my cot in the hospital, I look, I looks out my window, I see my father. He looks at me, and both eyes met. We both start crying through the window. Because he is going every day in the hospital asking about my his son. And they told him, your son is long time dead, but he never gave up, he came every day looking, and everybody in the hospital had typhoid fever, and all of the sudden they had a, they had to liquidate the whole hospital, they took them all and burned them. And believe it or not, they forgot me. They killed, the whole, they took out the whole hospital and they foot me. People say, how do you survive? I don't know. There's no answer to how I survive. Maybe that I had a halo over my head. It's, it's a miracle. And next time, next day, they brought in new sick people, but I knew, if they discovered me with the, how would I get out from there? So, how, how do I go out. There is a place called shonen, it's a place where they put also sick people the way they should die, so at least, I went out from the hospital, I went to the shonen, and I knew looking the people, I say, if I stay there much longer, I'll die, and this, this is also it's a inner building feeling, a survival feeling, nobody talk with that, nobody had nobody to talk to, I couldn't get close to my father, but so, you have self preservation, so I had some wooden shoes, and I ga-they gave me a kind of pajama just um from the hospital, uniform, which is also striped uniform, and it was only 30 degrees below zero, over there in Czechoslovakia, but I decide I got to go to work. I didn't know where to go, I went out in the morning, the appel, the counting time. I didn't have a brigade, I didn't see my father, and they grabbed me. They need a body, the Germans they didn't care, fifteen

people, red, sick, tall, they didn't care who they are, they need 15 bodies, so they grabbed me, and it was a ----- brigade. First, when I walked, I could hardly walk, I was very weak. And when you walk with wood, in, in snow, they become like ice cakes, so I walked and fell, walked and fell. Then, they dragged me to a big mountain, and they told me there were also wires, they're building guardhouses at the mountain. I should carry the mo--the--I could hardly could walk myself. I should carry the pieces of wire, put on top me, and carry most on top. So, I, I, I tried, I couldn't do it, they started beating me, so I said, "Well, I'll do it, I've got to do it." A whole day, that day, and, as long as I live, I'll never forget. If I survived that day, I thought to myself, I'll survive the world. It remind me, as I was carrying the, the wires on top that a snow mountain with my shoes, I, I remind me I saw movies before with a child, like a German, the, the, the Russian Wolger soldiers used to carry the boats on their soldiers, that's the way I ca--and get beaten up--that's the way I carried like a slave. I carried the pieces of iron uh pipe or the iron or the or the measuring wire on my back, and as I fell down, the German beat me. I -----the whole day. I came and I got my father connected, and the next day, thank God, my father got me back where he works in same in same brigade. We were together until uh they told us to march. And they're walking closer and closer. It was uh, already uh, April in 45. And the Germans got very jittery. And, uh, I could hardly walk. I weighed at a maybe 75 pounds. And uh, they got us all together, they told us to walk, we walked till uh Theresienstadt. In Theresienstadt, I uh, I came with my father together, and they told us, they put us in uh big barracks, big houses where soldiers used to live years before, prior to that. And they had nothing to do, just sit over there and die. And no food, and no nothing. And just uh, look at each other. Look at the four walls. All of the sudden, I hear, there was one morning, like a rattle, like a, like noise outside, and I look outside, and I saw a tank, but, and I recognized the Russian insignia. I didn't know, I didn't know, you don't know how you're going react when you're going to be liberated. One, if-----, you were a free man. After 4 years, you don't know what a free man means. You had, you had memories, you were sitting with, with your parents, and you're eating uh, in Jewish the gefilte fish of Passover, the knedlock, and the soup, and the, and all the good things. You dream, you're ----- . If I got any taste, I forgot even how to sit like a human being by at a table with a white napkin or a tablecloth or using, using a fork. You, you don't think you can, you can come back to it. And when I looked down, and I saw the Russian tank and the two Russian soldiers with the red star on it, I knew, I knew a miracle had happened in my life, I knew a messiah came. I couldn't walk down, but I slide, three steps, I slide down on my behind, and I, and I crawled out on my knees, and I, through the gate, I don't know whether Germans, nobody was there, and as I, I reached the tank, I think it was the first one, I didn't see nobody around me, I grabbed these, these legs, these boots, and I was kissing his boots, and uh, and I was crying, and he threw me down a piece of bread, which I haven't seen for a while, and uh, the whole, the whole world opened up, like German, the whole world collapsed for me, the

whole world opened up for me. And I um, I didn't know what it is, I came, I came crawling to my father, he couldn't move, he was laying like you see on the, in the movies, the dead, dead people laying there, a bunch of skeletons, and I, I told him I 'm going to get some food. He said, "My kind, my child," he said, "Whatever you get, don't eat too much." He was worrying me because, luckily I took his advice because people did died after eating a lot, by after they saw food, and not seeing for a long time, and all kind of food, and I went over there, and I got some food together, and uh both I and my father, and was feeding him really crumb by crumb, and we were laying there for 2 weeks, we start slowly, slowly recuperating, and coming to our senses, and start taking stock of ourselves. Where we are, what we have lost. Now we had to go find our mother. And uh, for, for next month, we were sitting there in Theresienstadt, and uh, though the Germans or the Russians have isolated Theresienstadt, our camp because of typhoid epidemic, uh, they took out the ones who were not sick and they unclote us and gave us some clothes. We have also accumulated some clothes from the uh German prisoners, from around there, a little uh, something to wear, to look more decent, look more like a human being. My father got a job as a barber by the Russians, because he was a good barber. We had in Lithuania a barber shop, a beauty shop, so he was very known as a good barber, and he start getting food, and he start naturally me and him were, were very close and he start feeding me, start getting back to our energy, but our mind was to find my mother. And uh, the transportation was very bad. We could not uh, there was not trains, the trains were all packed up because all the Russians, and the prisoners were going back, back to Russia, all the German prisoners were going back to Russia too. So, for 2 weeks, we were travelling on tanks, tank cars on top. Over there. The Russians didn't feed us so whatever we found on the way, like sauerkraut or sauerkraut or potatoes whatever it is, we made somehow do. The Russians also did not feed us too well. They were also, they came very antisemites, and in fact, one night, we fell asleep, outside there are trains on the on the field. A bunch of uh Jewish people. In the morning we woke up, all our suitcases, all our clothes, whatever we had was stolen from us again. So again we had to start from ground zero. And uh, when we came, we came, we were going to Lithuania, to Kovno. On the way we stopped by in Poland, in Lodz, and there where we found that my mother has uh, right before the liberation she died in concentration camp. And uh, we had no reasons to go anymore to back to Lithuania.

We have to reload.

Beep.

The misery, there has to be some fortune to it, I was very fortunate. I had a good father. He was a very good family man. He was good to my mother, he was good to me. Tw--I had also a little

brother too, he was killed before the war. And this kind of shattered our life too. So whole energy my parents put in me, and uh, he never pampered me per se, he al-he always made me, I should be my own man, but he always watched over me. He always uh, made sure that we have enough food in, in ghetto or in concentration camp, I uh, I never seen, but a good person, besides being a good father, he was a good person. People, I meet people right now, I was a young child, and Joe Malnik, Joseph Malnik, in Ko-in Lithuania, Kovna everybody knew him. I, my wife is many times surprised people much older than I, ten or fifteen years older, know my father, knew him ghetto, knew him in concentration camp, he always tried to help somebody. And, I always admired him. I always he always was my sample. He always was my, I tea-I teach my children to be a sample of my of their grandfather. And, he was so, I, I owe my life to him. I, I owe my life to him in the big action, was in October in 40 or 41, the 28th of October, where he gave actually his life, he could be killed shot to rescue us from the last hundred people. I mean it's, it's a phenomenon. There are 10000 people survived, I mean, was kil-was killed machine gun, and only 3 of us survived, maybe 2 more someplace. He rescued us of last 10, 10, hundred people. And, he sent, he gave a sample to my life, he was not only one act in his life, in concentration camp, in ghetto, he was a good provider. He uh, even in ghetto he made a little garden with tomatoes and cucumbers, and he, he raised food for us. In uh, especially in concentration camps, especially the fact was there was ver, ver, uh many, many parents that see uh conc-concentration camp Hitler develop uh ,uh enough bodies in our souls, a hate to each other, is self preservation. We became like animals. And many times in the jungle the uh, there are cases where the father will, will, will, kill the child for, for food or for something, didn't care. He was very protective. When, when it came the point when they liquidated the portion of Dachau ghetto, and he had to go, he could have gone, as a barber in a good place, knew that he would have good, and just my child, that's your luck, go wherever you can. He sacrificed himself, and believe me, one more day after liberation or 2 or 3 days, he'd be completely dead because he was he was half dead already. He was laying in bed like a skeleton. When I was feeding him, drop by drop sugar water, or a little candy, a little chocolate, just, right at the liberation, and I I put it back, I nourished him, the same way he nourished me as a child as a baby. We were inseparable, one with each other. It was no question in my mind if I have something, and I would share with my father. After liberation. Or, visa versa. I mean, -----father, I know many cases. I was laying there in in on the ground in the at night sleeping or being in the, being in the uh mines with other my friends, my age, their fathers left, one was a tailor, had a better job with a tailor. He didn't care for his son. He cared for his self survival. I don't know. I can't make my mind clear yet, or, is this for self preservation, or maybe Hitler made us like animals. But, in this kind of situation, the good and the bad comes out. There are, people will, will just be self, self preserving all for himself, don't care for the family, he said, in my case was different. In my case, I uh, he installed a love, and good for people in me. When I was liberated, and the Russians gave me

a gun, a uh, a machine gun in my hand. "Go ahead," he said in Czechoslovakian, the same camp where I was in, in uh Theresen--in Theresienstadt in Leichmerz, "Go ahead and surround, catch as many Germans, and put them in same concentration camp, and kill as many you want." I couldn't do it. I couldn't, I couldn't think revenge. Okay, you, you, you going and surround this and get, get Germans or whatever, but killing people? How do you kill people? Just in cold blood? I didn't have the heart. I didn't have the heart of revenge in me or the lust of the blood, and this is probably a um, a gene from my father, or something my father installed in me, he, he gave it to me that. I'm the happiest guy in the world and, and right now, my children follow our footsteps too, and I have a good family, I have good children, I have a, a which also, it's not directly, directly from my wife too, because uh we all created, created a very close family, a very close family tie, because that's all we have. My wife, my three sons, and now, my grandchildren. And, I was very fortunate to come to this country and create a new family. Thank god I had 3 sons to carry on my uh name, and my last grandson was born, and my son came out from delivery room, he said, "Daddy, we have other Malnik, I'm going to give him the name, Josef Malnik, for your father's name." He said, "J-o-s-e-f, no ph, uh f, exactly like your father's was, was spelled," he said. Well, what kind happiness, I mean Hitler would turn over in his grave, saying I survived that, and I, we create a new family, and a new generation with love and affection and good people, and we came here with nothing. I actually came with absolutely nothing here, and I'm sure a lot of my people came with nothing, and we created businesses, we created jobs, and we became a decent, good citizen because, I think we are decent good decent in Europe too. You can't just change. You've got to have the implant in you. The foundation got to be there, and my father gave me foundation, my mother and father gave me my foundation to, to carry on, and the, all the concentration camps, and all the murders and everything else, I, I wasn't deviated, thank God, because a lot of them do, it was going both ways. After liberation, you could go one way, go both ways, go both ways, be a murderer or a decent citizen, and thank God for my life in America, and the people in America. What can I say? God bless America really. I mean it sincerely.

Thank you.

My pleasure.

(Talking in background).

The following will be 30 seconds of room tone with squeaky camera.

Can you just slate now Merce because I want to ask one question.

(Talking).

No, you have enough, you have about a minute.

You want to continue with the squeak?

Yeah.

Beep.

Do you think that survival is

Eight.

an achievement?

Survival was a uh, well, our task was uh, the reason I feel I survived because I've never thought from dying. I thought for creating, for, for creating a new family, new life for ourselves, for the goal, for, for me to survive, but in the circumstances, in the time, I could have laid down and, and died, it was very easy to lay down and die, but the that's the easiest thing, a challenge, that's the reason we hold life -----a challenge. You come in America, they, I work for the uh, like a ----- after liberation to bring people from Russia to uh Israel, it was also a challenge. Over mountains, to bring all the way to Italy. Snow and mountains and, and guards and Russians and Germans, -----with English, I had plenty, but it's for that challenge. The who, your, without a challenge, you can't progress, there's no progress on life. It's interesting to have a challenge. And this was, Hitler gave us a challenge to overcome. We, we were the few survival of a camp. We, we were 5000, uh we were 5000 children in Kovna. Only 5 or 6 in my age survived. We just had a reunion last year, for the 5 or 6 of them. We all met together and we reminisced our problems, our, our, our success and our failures, our failures we lost the families, our success in America, we have new families created, and uh, this is something we, we strived, it was not in our mind to uh, to challenge anything, we, we had to do it, it was a goal for us to survive.

Thank you.

Your welcome.

30 seconds more room tone without the squeaky camera for the interview with Abe Malnik.

Thank you.

End room tone. End of sound roll.