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Mr. Haller, when and where were you born?

I was born in Berlin, Germany in 1924.

Where did your parents come from?

My parents-- my mother was born in Berlin. My father was born in Poland. My grandparents came from Poland. They settled in Berlin before World War I. They left Poland to try to get a better life in Germany, I suppose. And my grandparents opened a furniture business in Berlin.

They had six children, three boys and three girls. And my mother was one of them. So when she got married, they also opened a furniture business. All the relatives were all in the furniture business. So you could say that we were, what they would call here, in a middle-class income family. We were quite comfortable.

And until 1933-- I was a little boy by then. I was about nine years old, going to school. But I vividly remember the Nazi boycott of the Jewish shops. That was one of the first aktions that they did against the Jews in Berlin.

Where was your father's shop?

It was right in Berlin.

Do you remember the street and the name?

Pardon me.

Do you remember the address?

It was near the Alexanderplatz. That was one of the main thoroughfares of Berlin. It's now East Berlin.

What was the store called? What was the name?

[GERMAN], something like that. I really don't quite recall that. [GERMAN] haus, I guess, something of that order. Well, as I said, the boycott was one of the things that I really vividly remembered, that the Nazis with their brown uniforms were marching in front of our shop and all the other shops and telling people not to buy by Jews. I believe it was an April, in April of 1933.

But soon after that, It seems to have quiet down a little bit. At least in Berlin it did. I found out that in other smaller areas of Germany, the pressure was on all the time. But Berlin, being a big city, after that boycott it calmed down, and people went on their normal business.

Did you live in a Jewish area? What street did you live on?

Well, at that time, I lived in what they call now East Berlin. It was called [GERMAN, street name]]. And we live right near the shop. It was a Jewish area. We had many shops in our streets were owned by Jews.

There was a synagogue. About three houses away was a synagogue, a smaller synagogue. It was on the first floor, which we frequently-- we went to that, to the services.

Do you know the name of the synagogue?

The name of synagogue I don't remember. But I do remember the name of the rabbi. It was a Rabbi Singer. I don't know what became of him.

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Well, as we went along, we noticed that some of the shops packed the goods up in big lifts and left, and left Germany. They went to Palestine then. Israel was called Palestine. And they packed up everything they had in huge containers and left. And I suppose that they had relatives there, so they went there and tried to do their business in Palestine.

Some went to South America. And we, ourselves, my mother and my father got divorced around that time, so we stayed with our mother. And my father, as a matter of fact, had a relative in Palestine, and he left for Palestine. Then my mother ran the business with us.

I had a younger brother. We were two boys. And we stayed in Berlin. And slowly our relatives, who had also stores, also furniture stores in other parts of town, slowly left Germany.

Where'd they go?

Well, one went to Palestine. They left-- by the time that they left, they could not pack up their goods in lifts and leave. They did, they left the whole store, furniture, their apartments, even their cars, left it in just the way it was and went overnight, went away. And most of them, what they did, they went to Czechoslovakia, which was close. And from there, they continued on and to Israel, one of them.

Another one came-- two of them, as a matter of fact, two brothers came to the United States. Both of them also left their shops and left in the middle of the night, and left Germany. That was in 1937 already though.

But my mother and my brother and myself, we had no opportunity to leave, so we stayed on.

Were you in school still at this time?

Yes. We went to school, but we could not-- we could not go to the public school anymore. We had to go to a Jewish school. Jewish children were not allowed to go to the public school. So we went to a Jewish school until November 9, 1938.

Where was the Jewish school?

The Jewish school was not too far away. We were able to walk there. It was, I would say, about a good 10-minute walk. There was a synagogue in back of it. There was a school. It was a large synagogue there. It had its own school. The school was enlarged. It was a necessity because the Jewish children could not go to the public school, and they wanted us to have an education. So we went to this Jewish school.

Remember the name of that synagogue?

That was in the Kaiserstrasse. I don't remember the name. No. It was on the Kaiserstrasse. It was about a 10-minute's walk from our house.

Who were your teachers? I don't mean by name, but by, you know, where did they come from? Were they just--

Well, they were Jewish teachers. There is no Gentile teachers, all Jewish teachers. Gentile teachers were not allowed to teach. I mean, Jewish teachers were not allowed to teach in the public school. So there was an abundance of teachers available because the teachers from the public schools all came to the Jewish schools.

They were [INAUDIBLE] then maybe-- Mr. Altman I remember. I remember Mr. Viktor. He was the principal of the school, I believe. And, as I said, we went there till 1938, when the Kristallnacht.

On that night we were home. And we saw our shop was broken into. The glass, the showcases, show windows was all broken. And all the other shops that were still there, the Jewish shops, they were all broken into. The synagogue that was a few houses away from where we lived was broken. But that synagogue was on the first floor, so they did not burn that synagogue because there were other people living in the building. Downstairs were stores, and there were other--

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there was a factory in the back, in back of the building there.

So what they did, they just thrown all the benches down in the street, the Torah scrolls, all the prayer books, and vandalized it completely. My mother, She was very concerned about her sister that night. I remember that.

My aunt, her sister, lived-- she lived in the Brenstrasse, Brenstrasse 33. I'll never forget it because there was the store was in front of the building. And in the rear there was a courtyard, and then there was another building in the rear. And that was a synagogue.

And my mother was very concerned because she had two little children-- her husband, of course, and two little children. And the children were about three years old and five years old. And we could not get in touch with her any way. We rang the telephone. It wouldn't work. We were even afraid to use the telephone. But we tried it and couldn't get an answer.

So finally, the next morning, my mother said I should take my bike and take a ride down there and try to find out what happened. When I arrived at that scene, there was a large crowd in front of the building. The store was completely vandalized. Glass was all broken. Furniture-- people carried furniture out, some they broke and throw it out in the street.

And as I get closer to the crowd, I saw the fire department was there. The police department were there. The fire department was pouring water on the adjacent building but not on the synagogue. The synagogue in the rear of the building was in flames. It was all charred up already. The fire must have been burning several hours already. But they were pouring water onto the adjacent building so that the building would not catch fire.

And then I inquired-- so from the crowd, I gathered that the people-- I couldn't ask them where are the people that were living there because, you know, I didn't want to tell him that I was Jewish, that I was concerned about it. They would have probably beat me up. But I gathered that my aunt and the children and my uncle, that they went-- and all the other people that lived in the building-- they evacuated the building, and they went somewhere else and that they were safe.

And then, of course, I went home and told my mother. On the way going there to my aunt's store, I saw all the shops there. I passed the-- closer to the-- like I said, we were located near the Alexanderplatz there. It's a main business-- the main business area of Berlin at the time. There were many Jewish shops, all of them were totally destroyed.

Of course, my mother was happy to hear that her sister was all right. And later on we did get news from her because she went back to her apartment. And we got-- we found out that she was all right.

Now, of course, after that November 9, there was no way to open the store and to earn a living in Germany. It was impossible. So we wanted to get out. But by that time, it was difficult. See, before that, as I said, in 1933, 1934, '35, people could pack up their things and-- like, if you had a store, you could even pack up all your goods, pack it up in a large container and leave and go wherever you wanted to, if you had a visa from another country. That was another problem. But by 1938, there was nowhere to get out.

So as I said, one uncle had left for the United States already. And another one was on his way. And he was in Antwerp, in Belgium, waiting for his ship. He was waiting for the boat to come in to take him to New York. And we got in touch with this uncle. And he said, look, there are many people coming to Antwerp. And the Belgian government is lenient. They will not throw you out.

If you can get into the country, you can stay there. But now you couldn't get a visa to get legally into it. That was impossible. So we arranged a scheme that my brother and myself, we would go on a train from Berlin, from the Anhalter Bahnhof, in the middle of the night-- it was 12 o'clock midnight, the train was leaving-- on a train that was going to Paris.

Now, visualize how bad the situation must have been that a mother would take her two children and send them on a train by themselves out to Paris.

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How old were you at this point?

Well, I was 15. My brother was-- my brother was 12. He's three years younger than I am. So the plan was that we bough a ticket-- my mother bought a ticket to Paris. And that particular train made a stop over in Brussels, in Belgium. See? And there in Brussels, my uncle that was there would pick us up and take us to this place where he was staying in Antwerp.

And they told us that-- we had no papers. We only had our identification papers that the Nazis gave us. That was a kennkarte, they called it. It had a big stamp on it with a big J, which means Jew. And that was the only papers that we had-- and that train ticket that went to Paris.

So we got to the border, and the border police asked us for our papers, for our passports. So we showed them our ticket to Paris. And they said, well, they are two kids. Let the French worry about them. See? And we got by with it. They let us through the border.

And we got into Brussels. And in Brussels, my uncle was there at the train station, my uncle and my aunt. They picked us up, and they took us to Antwerp. And in Antwerp, they stayed in a rooming house.

You were aware of --

Yes. It was in the [? Herentale ?] Strasse in Antwerp. Yeah. Yeah. Near the Kievet Strasse in-- Kievetstraat and [NON-ENGLISH]. It was a rooming house.

That lady that had the rooming house had an empty room upstairs under the roof. They call it an attic, like. She had an empty room there. And she gave us that room. I suppose my uncle paid for it. But we stayed there. And now the problem was, though, my mother-- she was still in Berlin-- how to get her out of Berlin.

So they arranged with a guide to take her from Aachen. That's the border of Belgium and Germany. And Aachen is the German city near the border. She was to go to Aachen and meet this guide there. They paid this guide to guide her over the border, through the forest at night. But what happened, they got caught. And she had to be sent back to Berlin. She had to go back to Berlin.

So now, we had to make a big decision. What should we do? She was in Berlin now, and we were in Antwerp. My uncle wasn't going to stay there very long because his ship was going to come in within maybe two weeks or three weeks, something like that. So should we go back to Berlin or stay in Antwerp? So we decided that, since we're out of Germany already, let's stay out and wait. Maybe my mother will be able to get another guide and make another trip, and then we'll be together in Antwerp.

Well, as it turned out, she couldn't get another guide because they tightened up the border because many people tried the same scheme. And the little scheme that we did with the train, with the buying a ticket to Paris, it worked for us, but it probably worked for others. But then after that, it was impossible to do.

So we were stuck now. My uncle had to go to New York. His ship came in. So what we did, we had a relative, a distant relative in Paris. As a matter of fact, that was a brother of an aunt of mine that had left earlier to New York. That was a sister-in-law of my mother. She was-- they got to New York. And her brother lived at Paris. He was a Frenchman. So she wrote to him and told him that maybe he could take us to Paris.

So we took the train from Antwerp. He met us at the border. And he took us on the train, and we went over the border regular, with the train, over the border into France.

What date was this?

This was in-- it was in January of 1939. See, we arrived in Antwerp in December, right between Christmas and New Year's. We arrived in Antwerp from Berlin after the Crystal Night. And then in January, we went to Paris because my

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uncle had to leave. See? And he didn't want to leave us all by ourselves in Antwerp. We didn't have anybody there, so he sent us to Paris, on to this other relative.

And he came to the border. And when the border patrol asked who were the two children-- see, he was all right because he was a French citizen. As a French citizen, you're allowed to cross the border between Belgium and France. There's no problem. But we were not allowed to go. But he just said, well these are my two children. It was all right. They didn't bother us. And we got into France.

And he had a house. He had a little house outside Paris, in Brunoy. And we stayed with him over there. But after a while, he was scared because we didn't speak French, and the neighbor started to talk. Well anyway, after about three months he got very worried. And he didn't want to have the responsibility of keeping us there. And the French police-- because the French police, see, was not as lenient as the Belgium police were. See, they were known to take people that they caught illegally in France and send them back to Germany.

So the Belgian police didn't do that. See, the Belgian police let you stay there. You were not allowed to work in Belgium, but they gave you a permit to stay there for three months. And after three months, they gave you a white card. And it allowed you to stay for three months. And after three months, they would renew that card.

So he knew that. So he said, you know, it would be better if you would go back to Belgium because over there, at least you would be protected. The authorities wouldn't bother you. And over here, where we were staying in Brunoy, we couldn't go out in the street. We could play in the garden. He had a little garden there. But we weren't able to get out. And we were too young boys. You know. we, I guess, were kind of wild. And he was scared.

Well anyway, we went back to Belgium the same way. He took us to the border, put us on a train, and went with us over the border. And then we went back to Belgium. We got back to Antwerp. And in Antwerp, we went to the Jewish refugee organization. They had an organization that took care of refugees. There were many, many refugees there. And they had a place where they would feed you. They had soup kitchens, like, that would feed you a regular meal there. And they would give us a place where to stay.

So we went back to this organization, and they took care of us. But the problem was that we were two young boys. So they wouldn't let us stay by ourselves. They would send us to another family, to stay with another family.

Now, there were many families that were well-off, and they would take in children and would take care of them, and some other families that would make a business out of that. And we were unfortunate enough to come to a family that would do it for money. And of course, there we didn't have it that good. It was not easy there.

Was this a Jewish family?

Was a Jewish family, yes. But they were not well-off. They were poor themselves. And they were taking the two children. The Joint Distribution Committee, that was the organization that took care of these things, would pay these people so much per week or per month. I don't know how much they paid them. I don't remember anymore, but I guess not too much.

It wasn't very-- we did not have our room. We had to sleep in the living room on a couch. And I mean, the situation was very desperate at the time. There were hundreds of refugees in Antwerp. And you were glad that had a place where to stay.

Where was this house? What street?

It was in Antwerp on the [NON-ENGLISH], right nearby where we were staying once before. And we stayed with those people until the war broke out, until May 10, 1940. And the German armies ran over Holland, Belgium, and France, and invaded the--

All right then, fade.

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What was happening to your mother in the interim?

Well, my mother, she tried to get out of Germany. And as I said, it was very difficult to get another guide and bring her to the border that way. So finally, what she did manage to do, she had-- her sister, in the meantime, had gone to London, to England. And through her sister's husband, they had some relatives in London, and they got to know some people.

Well, they got her to get a permit to come to England to work as a domestic because it was the policy at the time that the English government would not give any visas to immigrate to England. But if someone would come to England as a worker that performed work that they could not get help for in England, then they would issue a permit. And domestic help at the time was scarce, so they found a family that would hire her as a domestic and work in the house. And so she got a permit.

It was in 1939. And she was able to get out and go to England. She worked in a household there. It was in Croydon, Croydon in England. It's not far from London, I understand. And we were in correspondence with her up to the time-- up to May 10, 1940.

But it was difficult for us. And it was difficult for her because she wanted-- of course, she wanted the children, and we wanted to be with our mother. We tried, through the Joint Distribution Committee, to get in touch with the committee in England because there were children that were in England and their parents were in Belgium. So the Joint Distribution Committee suggested to the English authorities to make an exchange, to take two children from England and bring them to Belgium or take two children from Belgium and bring them to England, either way, so that we would be together.

But it was impossible. They wouldn't. The English government would not buy it. They would not allow it. And so we were separated, and we could only write to each other up to May 10, 1940. Then when the war broke out, of course, then all correspondence stopped, and we didn't know what was happening.

Now, life became very hard in Belgium. The Germans had occupied all of Belgium within-- I guess within 10 days they had occupied the whole area there, from Holland all the way down to Paris. They were marching to Paris. Many Belgians had gone and tried to go to France. They walked to the-- they walked to the coast.

They walked to-- on the coast, in Ostend, on the coast in Belgium, the British were there because they had come to help the Belgians in the war. But the British were retreating. And they were clobbered over there. The German Air Force came and bombed the ships and the-- what's that name? In Dunkirk. In Dunkirk, yes. I mean, it was a disaster.

So the people that were underway-- there were thousands upon thousands of people moving around and trying to get to the coast or get into France. But the Germans overtook everybody. It was a complete-- they called it a blitzen. And it was a blitz. It was like lightning.

Well, everybody returned, tried to return to their homes. Now the people where we stayed at, those people had made an effort to go to France, and they hadn't come back yet. So we broke into a place up in the same building. They had a room upstairs. They called it a mansard then. That was a-- under the roof. It's a small room under the room, which they had rented. And the young man that was also a refugee that lived there also had gone to France and had not returned. So we broke into that room, and we took the room over, and we stayed there.

What did you do for food?

Yeah. Food was a big problem because everything became rationing. They issued ration cards. And we could not get any ration cards because the authorities would not believe us, that we were two young boys living on our own. See? They thought that we were trying to finagle something, that there was a fraud involved, that we're trying to treat the system because we were two young boys, and we were coming there and applying for ration cards. So we couldn't even get the meager ration cards that they were issuing.

So we had really a rough time. We had to actually beg for food. It was a very, very difficult. And then after a while, they

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started-- they even started to round up people. They started to arrest people.

First they advertised and said that they need young people to go to Germany, young men to go to Germany to work. They would give them-- they would pay them well, and they would provide them with lodging and food. But not many people wanted to go because they didn't believe them. And soon we found out that that was not true at all, that they would send them away to some camps in Poland. They would never go to Germany.

You knew about camps?

Well, we didn't know about the extermination camps. We knew about ghettos. That we knew, but not about camps. We didn't know about Auschwitz, for instance. We had no idea of that. Ghettos we knew, and what they called arbeitslager, work camps.

Now, then slowly, by that time, through other people that tried to help us, we were able to get ration cards. After a while we got our ration cards. And then at least we could get a little food. Money we didn't-- see, the Joint, the Joint Distribution Committee, wasn't there anymore, see, because the war was on. That money came from America. So we had to depend on local people that helped us, that gave us odd jobs. We worked a little bit, a little bit here and a little bit there.

I got a job in a bakery, which was very good. But the bakery was not allowed to bake any cake or any rolls or anything. They were only allowed to bake bread because it was wartime. But at least I had bread to eat. And it was so cold in the place where we stayed that in the wintertime, I slept in the bakery, right on the bench where they used to kneel the dough, where they made the bread. I used to lie down there and sleep there. It was nice and warm.

My brother, who was a little bit younger, got lucky. And a family took him in, and he stayed with that family. And I slept in the bakery many times until, in 1942, the roundups became so numerous that they would block off whole areas of streets. They would surround them, a whole several-block areas. They would surround them, the police or soldiers. And they would go from house to house and search out people. And wherever they found a Jewish person, they would grab him.

So on one of those roundups, they caught me, in Antwerp. And they took us right to the railroad station there in Antwerp. And they had, oh, I would say, about 1,000 people there. And they shipped us to France.

Where were you taken to in France, and how did you get there?

We went on regular railroad cars, no boxcars, regular passenger cars. We were crowded into the cars. Many people had to stand, but they were not boxcars. And we went to France, to Boulogne, Boulogne-sur-Mer. That's in France on the coast.

And the Germans, they were building the Atlantic wall over there. They built-- they expected the invasion to come from that side because, from that point, we were 30 kilometers away from Dover. Because matter of fact, on a clear day we could see the cliffs of Dover. They built a wall that went from Holland, all along the coast, through all of Holland, through all of Belgium, and through all of France, all along the coast.

If there was a building in the way, they just knocked that building down. They built that wall right through there. It was a tremendous defense position.

And we had to work on that project. They employed thousands upon thousands of slave laborers to work there, to mix cement, to carry the water, to carry the sand, and under horrible conditions. There were no barracks or anything. They just dropped us off in a place, dropped off some tents, and said, here, put up those tents and built a camp and go to work.

The sanitary conditions were very, very bad. There were no sanitary conditions there at all. We dug a big pit, and chopped a tree down, and cut the tree and made a place to sit on-- very primitive. It was so bad that typhoid broke out in the camp because we had no water. The only water we had, we had to carry in pails. We had to carry the water from a

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distance and bring the water into the camp, even for cooking or washing, for anything, for drinking.

So I contracted typhoid fever in that camp, together with-- we were about four or five young fellas. And when we got sick, the guards-- incidentally, the guards was the organization Todt that was in charge of this camp. They were brutal, those guys. But they, themselves, got scared because if the typhoid fever would be in the camp, then it would spread. And they would be afraid that they would catch it too.

So they took us out of that camp, five young men. And they took us into Boulogne, into the city of Boulogne, into a hospital. And in that hospital, they put us up in the basement. And they made a little area for us, as prisoners. And the French doctors from the hospital treated us.

And I mean, we were delirious with fever for days. And we don't know how long we were there even. I mean, in the beginning. When we woke up, we were there in the basement in that hospital.

How long were you in the camp before you contracted the fever?

Not very long-- we were not long in that camp all together. I would say we arrived in the camp in June. And we left in October. We left in October. So--

It was 1942.

1942, yeah. Well, the French doctors nursed us back. And one day, after several days, weeks-- it must have been maybe two weeks easy-- they came back. The guards came back and fetched us. They said, get ready. You're going back to Belgium. We don't need you here anymore.

So we couldn't believe them. But they took us back to the camp, put us on a truck, and they drove us back to the camp. And as we got back to the camp, we saw that all the other fellows in the camp, they were all ready to march. And sure enough, we all went to the railroad station. They put us again on trains, on regular trains, not boxcars, regular French railroad. And they said that we were going back to Belgium.

And sure enough, we did go to Belgium. But when the train arrived in Brussels, it went into Malines. Malines is a armory, a huge armory from World War I, which the Germans used as an assembly point for all the Jews that they rounded up in Belgium and sent-- they were sent to Auschwitz from there. We didn't know about this, of course, because when we were rounded up, they didn't have that yet, in June. But later on I guess, soon after we had left Belgium, they must have started this procedure.

Well, when we arrived in Malines, they would not let us off the train. They put special guards all around the train. They surrounded it. And they connected another train, with boxcars, on to our train. And the whole train then went to Auschwitz.

What were conditions like on that train?

The condition on the train were not pleasant. It was not a boxcar, like I said, like the other trains. But it was heavily overcrowded. We had no food. They had only given us our daily ration that we had when we left in France, in Boulogne. So we had no food left.

And there were no bathrooms. I mean, the train had a bathroom. But that little bathroom there for so many people was-- sanitary conditions were unbelievable. Some people passed out.

So the journey lasted about three days. And because we came from Boulogne to Brussels, that didn't last that long. That's about a, normally, a five, six-hour train trip. But then from Brussels to Auschwitz, that lasted two, three days. I don't know why, but they stopped the train on the road. And then they waited a while. And then they continued again. I suppose normally that train ride should last maybe, I would say, maybe 10 hours, 12 hours. I don't think it would last much longer than that.

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But being under the conditions, it was horrible. We had no food, like I said. Sanitary conditions were not available. And by the time we got to Auschwitz, people were really awful. But one thing what I like to point out is that, see, on our train, there were all young men on that train. We had no women and children. The other section of the train, the train that we picked up in Malines, they were women and children and older people and younger people. Everybody on our train, we only had young men there because we were the workforce that worked in Boulogne, there at the work camp.

So when the train finally arrived in Auschwitz, we-- we didn't expect anything like that. I mean, we had no idea of Auschwitz. We never heard of such a place. So everybody had to get out of the train.

And I remember that we have seen-- in the distance, we saw people working there. They had their heads shaved, no hair. And they were wearing these funny uniforms, like pajama-like striped uniforms. And they were whispering over to us and telling us, "Walk. Walk." That's all they said, this "walk."

We couldn't figure out what they were trying to tell us. But after a while, we did figure out what they were trying to tell us because, when we got off the train there, the SS that was there, they assembled us. They had us line up. And they separated the women and the children and the men.

They were all standing on one side. And they were telling us that we were going to a camp where we're going to work. And they're going to give us food. They're going to give us lodging. And if we're going to work, they're going to treat us well there.

And the ones that can walk, they should go to one side. And the ones that are tired, that can't walk, they should go to another side. And that's when it dawned on us what these people were telling us. They were telling us to walk. And this is what we did. [COUGHS] Excuse me.

We walked. We marched into this camp. People that could not walk, they had said that they would pick them up with trucks, and they would bring them, drive them into the camp. We actually later found out, those people that could not walk, they were brought to the gas chambers.

We, of course, didn't know that at the time. We had no idea. But fortunate enough, we listened to those people, and we walked. And as we got into the camp, we saw the gate. It had a large sign over the gate what it says, "Arbeit macht frei," work gives freedom.

And they assembled us in this block, they called it. It's a quarantine block, they call it. There were new arrivals had to go to this quarantine block. And there, all our clothing were taken off. We had a shower in a multiple shower where maybe 100 people go in at one time. They had showerheads. And then they shaved our hair off. And they tattooed a number on our arm.

And we were completely shocked. I mean, we were all in shock because we couldn't comprehend what was happening to us. And then there they gave us these uniforms, these same type of pajamas that we saw before. Everyone got a pair of underpants, a jacket, and a pair of pants. And that was it-- and a pair of shoes. If you were lucky, you got socks.

And they gave us these wooden shoes. They were very difficult to walk in. But, as I said, we were completely in shock. I remember yet that one said, what do I look like with the hair shaved off. I said, well, there were no mirrors. Well, all you have to do is look at me and see what you look like.

And then the kapo, the leader there, he came in, and he gave us this big speech. And he said that we have to work here. And we're going to get our rations, get our food here. But if we don't work, we won't eat. And nobody gets out of here, he told us. The only way you get out of here is through the chimney.

And we didn't know what to think, what to say because we couldn't-- but soon we adjusted. They took us out to work. First place they took us was in the-- they took us out to a area. We had to dig ditches for water lines, sewer lines and water lines to dig.

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And I arrived in Auschwitz in October, and it was just about the beginning of winter. It was getting very cold. Auschwitz is very cold. Poland is very cold, very nasty weather there. So after a little while, somebody told me that, you know, they have a school here where they teach you how to lay bricks. And [GERMAN], they call it, a place they teach young boys how to lay bricks.

And they said-- this fella told me, he said, you-- he was an older prisoner there. He was there a long time already. A "long" time-- if you were there a few months, you're a survivor. You knew the ropes already, if you could last that long under these conditions.

So he said to me, if you go into that school, at least you'll be protected. You'll be out of the environment. And you won't be in the cold. You'll get the same food. And you stay in the school, and you learn how to lay bricks. And that's what I did. I went to that school, and they taught me how to lay bricks, different ways on how to lay bricks.

What was the food like?

Food? Well, they gave us this bread. This was a square, like a long rectangle or square bread that they cut in four pieces-- in four pieces that was one-- I think it was 900 grams was the weight of the total bread. So this is about 225 grams of bread.

Now, this bread was very heavy. It was dark. It was-- the flour was ground with the hulls of the straw, very heavy bread. So 225 grams was only a little piece of bread. And that's what you got as a main ration. If the kapo, the guards, they were in a bad mood, and they wanted to tease you yet, what they used to do, they used to throw one loaf of bread like that to four people. And so you cut that out.

We had no knives. We were not allowed to have any knives. If they caught you with a knife, punishment is almost death. It's that severe. So we had to have some makeshift thing. What they used to do, they used to take a spoon and hammer it with a stone and so it would cut. But now, you take one loaf of bread with four hungry people that haven't eaten and try to divide that, well, there was many, many a death from that, from those fights to divide this, a loaf of bread.

And then they gave you a tea, that they called tea, which was made from some kind of leaf that they had because they had no tea really, no real tea. But it was warm. They gave you a half a liter of that with the bread. And then in the evening, they give you a liter soup, that they call soup. The soup, sometimes it was very watery. Sometimes it was a little bit heavier, more nourishing. And that was about it.

Oh, yeah. They gave us also, with the bread, they gave us a small piece of margarine every other day, a very small piece. It was like a little square about the size of those little squares of butter that you get today in a restaurant, about the size of that. That was your ration for the day.

How long did you work with bricks?

Bricks-- I would say about two months. After that, they sent us out to work. They said, you are now bricklayers. You have to go out and work.

Did you work in Auschwitz itself [INAUDIBLE]?

Yeah. So after we finished school, they sent us out and told us that we are now bricklayers. So they sent us to a place where they were building a factory, a huge factory. And the bricklayers that they had there, they were Poles, Polish civilian workers that worked there. And they got paid, and at night they went home to the town where they lived.

And we were supposed to be the bricklayers. But they did not let us lay the bricks. What we did, we had to supply them with the mortar and schlep the sand and bring them the bricks. And the civilians there did, actually, the bricklaying.

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Now, on that ration that they gave us, that little piece of bread and that soup, we could not work outside and survive. That was impossible. And people were just dying like flies. They were dragging in at night. When they came back from work, they were dragging back the people that passed out over the day, during the day. And they buried them.

They had to bring them back to the camp because the count had to be always complete. There had to be accurate count every night. That was one of the worst things, to stay there and wait till everybody was counted. I was in the main camp of Auschwitz, which held about 25,000 people. Now, to count 25,000 people, when they're marching from all different work areas, is quite a job.

Now, as I said, you could not survive on that ration, so you had to scheme up something to get extra food. Those civilians that were working there, they had money. But they got paid very well from the Germans there. But they couldn't do anything with that money. That money was worthless. It was just printed paper. That's all.

It wasn't even a regular currency. It was like a special currency that they printed for occupation purposes. So they couldn't buy anything for that. But they had more food than we had. Now, they wanted-- they needed clothing, for instance. Clothing-- and they could use goods, like a watch or something, like a ring, something like that.

Now, we in the camp, of course, we had none of these things because that was all confiscated. But all these people that came, that arrived from those transports, they had all their clothing. That was all taken off from them and taken away and packed up. There was a special kommando that they called it that was people that worked in that area, where they took all the clothing, the civilian clothing, and sorted it out, cleaned it, and pressed it, and put it together, and sent it back to Germany as a gift of the liberated people.

Now, I had a friend that worked in that particular kommando. We called it Kanada because Canada had everything. Canada was a big region for us that-- of freedom, of everything. And so they called this kommando that took care of that Kanada. Now, he was able to smuggle out some clothing, a sweater or a jacket or a pair of pants, and get it to me.

Now, if you were caught with that, that meant certain death because that would mean that, if you had civilian clothes on you, that means that you were planning to escape. And that was certain death. But you had to live. And that rations that they gave you there, that piece of bread and that little bit, what they call soup, you could not survive and work outside-- impossible.

So we traded with those civilians. We gave them clothing, and they gave us food. Sometimes they were bad. And they would report you. They would take the stuff from you and then report you. That meant certain death. And others were OK. They would trade with you and tell you what they wanted and give you food.

I'm sure that they were not too generous, but it was good for us. Whoever had connections like that, like myself, that was in contact with them-- many, many of the other people had no opportunity to be in contact with civilians. So that's how we were able to get extra food.

As a matter of fact, I remember one time I had three loaves of bread. Three loaves of bread, you know, that was-- I don't think $1 million would make up that three loaves of bread. Now, there was a question, how did you bring it back into the camp, three loaves of bread? Now, you had to march back into the camp in rows of fives with a space in between so that somebody could walk between each line. And so they were counting each row as you marched into the camp.

And how did you-- how could you carry three loaves of bread? You couldn't conceal them. So I got-- sometimes part of my job was to go back to the camp during the day, while the others were working. I had to go back to the camp and bring back the roster of the-- attendance roster, how many people were on the job, because the factory that we were building, the company that was building that particular factory, that [GERMAN]. I don't know the name of that company that did it-- paid for each worker that was on the job, paid to the Germans, per man, so much money.

So every day somebody had to bring this roster back to the camp. And since I spoke German, and I was young yet, so they picked me for that job. So I got a special pass to walk back to the camp and bring that back. And so I took my three loaves of bread under the arm, open, not concealed in any way, and marched them back into the camp. That's what I

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intended to do. I did it before, and I always got away with it because I knew that, if I would conceal it, then I'd be in trouble. If it's open, well, they would say, well, if it's open, they wouldn't stop me. And they would say, well, he probably is supposed to do that.

Well, as I was walking back to the camp, a new troop of guards came up with the dogs, and they saw me. And they said right away, hey you, come here. What you got there? And I told them I had three loaves of bread. I said there was a truck that was loaded with bread that came out of the camp from the bakery there. And he hit a bump, and this bread was falling down, and I was going back to the camp. I was going to bring back this bread to the guard and return the bread.

OK. So they said, well, come with us. And they took me back to the camp. And they put me in between the wires. Now, they camp had three wires, three rows of wires. First there was a low wire that said that you're not supposed to go past this wire. Then there was the other wire that was the electric fence. And then in between, there was a space about almost four feet in between. And then there was another fence, huge fence with wire coming out like that.

They put me there, right between those two fences. And I was standing there. And that was a bad spot because every time when somebody did something bad, somebody was trying to escape, so they put him there for everybody to see. When the people came back from their work details, everybody had to pass through there. And they would see these people standing there.

So he put me there. And I said, oh, that's the end of it. Well, this guard, he took my bread, and he brought it inside to the Kommandant of the camp, Hoess. And he must have told him that he found me with this bread. And then the kommandant calls me into the camp, and he asked me what happened with that bread.

So I told him. I said the truck dropped the bread. Well, I don't know if he believed me or not. But he says, get out of here. And I run. I never run that fast. I thought for sure that was the end. But he got-- I got out.

The food experiences I had-- later on, when the factory was finished and we were working in a factory already, I got a job. Incidentally, I got a job inside the factory. Everybody wanted to work inside the factory because when you're inside, again, you're protected from the elements. Not only that, but the people that were working inside the factory did not have to stand outside for the counting of the prisoners because we worked inside the camp. And we worked 12 hours.

We started at 7:00 in the morning, and we worked till 7:00 at night. So as one group, as one whole group, we came in and went out. As we went out, the new group that worked at night, from 7 o'clock at night till 7 o'clock in the morning, went in. So we did not have to stand outside to be counted. So that was a very big plus.

What did you do at the factory? Well, the factory-- at first they built a factory for Krupp. They had the-- the German Army had gone deep inside, into Russia. And they had built factories right behind the front lines to make their supply line shorter. As the Russians advanced again, the factories, they packed up those factories on railroad cars and brought them back closer to Germany. So this particular factory that came from Russia came into Auschwitz, where we had our-- where the factory that we built, they called it the [GERMAN].

And they were going to set up that factory there. But on the way, the Russians bombed the train. And all that machinery that was on the train was all burned up and damaged. So they were looking for mechanics, for [GERMAN], tool makers, machinists to repair that machinery. And I was able to get into that factory as a apprentice because somebody, another fellow, told me. He says, they give you a test when you get in there.

The test consisted of a file. They would give you a file. They would take a piece of iron, put it inside a vise, and they gave you the file and tell you to file this piece of iron. And the way you filed it, that German master that was there, he was a German craftsman, he gave you the test. And he would be able to judge if you were really a mechanic or if you were faking it, because everybody wanted to get inside. So I passed my little test, and I got inside.

But the machinery was so badly damaged that we could not-- they couldn't do anything with it. So finally, they junked the whole thing. They scrapped it. And they bought another factory. And that was called [NON-ENGLISH], which was,

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in peace time-- that factory is still in existence in Germany. In peacetime, that factory manufactured bicycles. And during the war, they manufactured a spark plug for a bazooka, for an anti-tank missile. And that was manufactured in that factory.

Now, going back to the food again-- once we were inside the factory, again, we had to get more food. So there was a group of people that were working there. They worked very hard. They had to work in those furnaces, where they used to heat the metal, stampings. They worked half naked. And it was very hard work, extremely hard work.

So the Germans decided that these people should get a special ration. What does the special ration consist of? Well, the SS guards had their own kitchen. And they had cooks there, butchers. They made bolognas and sausages and all this. They were all prisoners. But this kitchen, they could take-- they could eat inside. While they were working, they could eat all they want. But they couldn't bring nothing out.

And the way they did this, they had to go into this kitchen. They had to undress completely, go into another room, put on special clothing, and then go to work. When they were finished working, they had again undress, go into the other room, put their other clothing on-- prisoners' clothing-- and then go home.

So how could we get some of those sausages out of that kitchen? So again, they wanted to give these special prisoners that worked so hard, they wanted to give them a special ration. Special ration consisted of the water that they cooked these sausages [INAUDIBLE]. That was a greasy water, like which normally you would throw away. But it had a lot of grease in there, and that, they call that a soup, the special soup.

So it was my job to go with a wagon and two horses and drive that wagon to that kitchen once a week and bring two kettles, those army kettles, [INAUDIBLE], [INAUDIBLE] kettles that seal up, and bring that soup, so-called soup, bring that back to the factory for those hard-working people as a special ration. So the people in that shop, in that factory, we had our own machine shop. We had a tin shop, tinsmiths there.

So the tinsmith devised a false bottom to put into those kettles. They were always the same kettles that we took. And they put a false bottom in there. And when we went back to the kitchen to pick up the so-called soup, the butchers in there would put in sausages into that false bottom. And we would bring it back to this factory. And then we would split up.

They would get-- some would get bread. Some would get sausages. We would sell it for whatever we could-- not sell it for money, but bartering, you know, for bread, butter or-- butter-- no butter. There was no butter-- margarine. And sausages-- some would take the sausage. Some would take bread. Some would take margarine, whatever the case must be.

So this one day, this fellow comes over to me. And this fellow, we knew, and we didn't trust this fellow. He comes over, and he says he would like to go with me to this place to pick up the soap. So I said, you know, you cannot go there because you need a special pass. If you get caught on the way, you know, understand. I have a pass.

So because we were going to go to this kitchen, and we were also going to go to the camp. We had to drop off something there. So we get to the kitchen. And the way it was, we were not allowed to go inside the kitchen. We had to knock on the door. The guard would come out and see who was there. And he saw us. He knew we had the kettle. He would call out those butchers. They were prisoners.

They had to help us take the kettles off from this wagon, take it inside. And then we had to wait outside till he was finished filling up the kettles. And then he would help us lift them up on the wagon, and we'd bring it back.

So this day when this fellow was with me-- Max was his name. We knock on the door, takes the kettles. And we waited a little while, five minutes, 10 minutes, till he comes back. Then he comes back with the kettles. He opens up the door. The guard opens up the door.

He says wait a minute. Open up the kettle. He goes and he takes a broomstick, and he starts to swish around in the

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kettle. Didn't see nothing. Then he takes the broomstick, and he measures the depth of the kettle from inside and outside. Max, all of a sudden, disappeared. And I'm standing there with my heart in my pants. And nothing happens.

And the guard says, OK. Raus. We closed up the kettle and went back. I rushed back to the place. I tell the fellows what happened. Everybody was surprised. There was nothing in there, no bottom, no false bottom, nothing. And at night when we got back to the camp, I ran over to the block where the butchers were, and I asked him what happened. He says somebody squealed on us. Somebody told him.

We found out that somebody told about this incident, what we were doing. And we were able to hide this false bottom, and he didn't catch us.

Did you ever find out who squealed?

Yeah. We knew it was Max. And Max did not come back from the camp. We took care of Max.

What other incidents of note do you remember?

Well, another incident was I was working nights. You had to change. We worked, like I said, we went from 7:00 in the morning till 7:00 at night. And then from 7:00 at night till 7:00 in the morning. That time I was working nights. And of course, we were sleeping during the day.

And I got up early. It was about early in the afternoon, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We had to get ready to march out at 6 o'clock to go to work. But like I said, I got up at about 3 o'clock. I got up and I went-- I wanted to get down and what we called organize some food. That was always the big thing.

And as I was-- I was on that-- in that block, there were two floors, a bottom floor and a top floor. I was on the top floor.

Did that block have a number?

Yes. It was Block 13. Yeah. I was on several. But I believe that at that time-- I think at that particular time, I think I was in 13. I was coming down the stairs. As I was coming down the stairs, this SS UntersturmbannfÃ¼hewe comes into the building. And as is required, when you see an SS, you have to take your cap off, and you have to stand at attention. And you have to yell out, "Achtung," like in the military, in a military fashion.

So I saw him coming in, and I stand at attention. And I yell out, "Achtung" and stand still. And I must have yelled so loud that he was impressed. He kept on walking up the stairs, and I thought I was rid of him. When he's halfway up the stairs, he turns around, and he said, "what's your name?" And I said, "Herman Haller." He said, "What's your name?" And then it dawned on me what he wanted from me. So I says, "Jude Herman Haller--" Jew Herman Haller.

And he says again, "What's your name?" And then it came back to me what he really wanted. So I was supposed to say Jew 72,554. I wasn't supposed to say my name. I was supposed to give him my number. So then he says, "All right, I'm going to teach you to remember. You come with me." So I went up the stairs with him, and he got the-- most of the people were still sleeping.

He got the guy in charge of the building there, the barracks. And he got the orderly. And he was sitting down on a bench. He put his boots out, and he had his boots cleaned, cleaned the boot. And he had me standing there. And he says, "All right, you give me 100 knee bends." I started counting, giving him 100 knee bends. So he says, "I can't hear you." After about 20 he says, "I can't hear you. Count louder. Start again from the beginning, and louder."

So I started counting. I gave him 100 knee bends, counting 1, 2, 3. Then when I gave him 100, he says, "OK. Now count backwards. Give me another 100. Count backwards." I gave him another 100, counting backwards. Then he said, "OK. Now lay down on the floor and give me 10 pushups." so by that time I was so weak and so exhausted, I couldn't. I couldn't lift myself up and give him the pushups. I just collapsed. I couldn't.

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So he took out this gun. He cocked it. And he pointed it at me. He says, "Give me 10 pushups, and I want to hear you count. Otherwise, I shoot you." So somehow I managed it. I gave him 10 pushups. And then I was totally exhausted. And he said-- by that time, a lot of the other people that were my friends, they had gathered outside. They were watching from the rear. They didn't want to show their faces.

But as soon as it was finished, he said, "Get out of here." And I went out, and they grabbed me. I said, look, I got to go to the hospital. I said, yeah, I can't go out to work. I have to book in sick. So they said, look, you can't go into the hospital because once you go into the hospital, you're finished. You know that because when you're in the hospital they take you, and you're finished.

So I says, well, I can't. I can't go to work. I can't even march. I can't go out the door. I can't go out the gates. I won't be able to pass the inspection on the gate. They said, don't worry. We'll help you and support you. Well, somehow we managed, hid in the row, as we go. From both sides they supported me. And we went back-- they got back to the factory.

And at night, there was a certain area that was not used during the night. In the machine shop, there was a room they used it-- there were furnaces in there for hardening metals. That was not used during the night. So they brought me into that home. And there were cabinets with sliding doors.

They pushed tools-- there were tools stored in there. They pushed the tools aside, and they pushed me inside this cabinet there. It was very warm in there because the furnaces-- the hardening furnaces, they were in there. So that was a warm room. There was warm oil in there and the heat from the furnaces, even though they were not being used. That was very comfortable in there.

So they pushed me into that cabinet. And I laid in there. And I said, look, if any-- if anybody asks for you, anybody looking for you, we're going to come and get you. But you rest in here. And that became my hospital for about two weeks. Every night I went in there.

And one night, as I was laying in there, I heard the doors opening. There were huge sliding doors that went into that room. And I heard the doors opening. And two German meisters-- that was engineers, German engineers that were from the original factory. They were sent there from Germany. They worked in there on the factory.

And these two guys were members of the Nazi Party. They were wearing a big emblem from the Nazi Party. They came in there, and I heard them from the cabinet. I said, gee, if they find me in there, that's going to be the end of me. But what they really wanted, they wanted to take a smoke.

They had a break. They wanted to take a break. So the windows of that factory were all painted black because of the air raids there. They didn't want no light to escape. But it was dark in there anyway because that section was not used. So what they did, they opened up the windows to get some air in. And from that window, they could see the crematoriums burning, the flames shooting up into the skies.

And I could overhear, where one said to the other, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. "Can you see how the Jews burn?" I was laying in there. And I tell you that I was scared that they would discover me in there. But they closed the window, they had their smoke, and they left again. And that was the end of that.

I recovered with the help of my friends. I recovered in there because I was able to rest. Every night I went into my little hospital there. And--

Were there any other incidents that come to mind?

Well, as I said, I was able to move around. So that was a great advantage. We had women working in the factory. But they were, of course, separated from the men. And many of the women wanted to hear about their families, husband, their children. And again, the men wanted to know about their wives. So it was an opportunity for me to pass word around, sometimes carry a message.

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But you know, you couldn't write a letter. That was impossible. If you were caught with a letter, that was the end of you. So they would write a few notes, and they would fold it up in a little piece of paper. And you have to hide it on your body and then carry it on.

There was, nearby the factory, about-- I would say about 100 yards away from the factory, was an administration building. They called it the [GERMAN]. That's the administration building of the factory. They had the engineering department in there.

The military, the Wehrmacht had an office in there because the spark plugs that were manufactured in the factory were for the army, for the Wehrmacht. And they had an office there with several offices that were receiving the goods that were finished.

And then there was a group of women. I believe there were four women that were working in that administration building for cleaning. They used to clean the building for them. And one of them was Mrs. Haymond, Claire Haymond. She worked in that building, and I got to know her very well.

As a matter of fact, we met again after the war, here in New York. She lives here nearby. And we're still friends. We meet regularly. But through her we were able to get messages to-- she would write messages, take messages from her friends to bring over to the men, and I would take messages from the men to bring to her. And she would, again, distribute it to the women.

The only other incident that is really important that I would like to mention was that, since we manufactured these spark plugs, there was a little bit of dynamite that was used in the spark plugs to ignite the plug. And then that, again, would ignite that missile.

Now, this dynamite was stored in a room that was outside the factory, also about maybe 25 yards away. And there were four women that were working in that powder room that they called it. And the men, there were men that were working in the crematoria burning the bodies.

They want-- they had a plan, devised a plan to blow up the crematorias.

When was this?

In 1944.

[INAUDIBLE] to what date?

It was in the fall. I don't the date exactly. I'm sure that Claire would remember it if I ask her. Well, these women that worked in that powder room, they could not take the dynamite out of there. I mean it was practically impossible. What they did, they took little bit of powder and put it into the seams of their clothing. And every day, they would carry out a little bit of dynamite and bring it into the camp. And that, again, was handed over to the fellows that were working in the crematoria. Until one day-- they had enough dynamite that they were actually able to blow up the crematoria and the gas chamber.

But the fellows were all caught. They were all killed. And the four women that worked in that powder room, now, they were hanged because the-- the guards figured out that the only place they could have gotten this dynamite from was from that powder room. There was no other way. This dynamite could have been brought in to the-- to Auschwitz, to the crematorium.

But these girls, they would not reveal whom they gave it to. So the four girls were hanged. The whole camp had to watch the hanging of those four girls.

When did you leave Auschwitz?

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Well, I was in Auschwitz almost to the end. January-- January 18, 1945. By that time, the Russian Army has moved up so close to Auschwitz that we could hear already the artillery shells burst. So they decided to evacuate Auschwitz.

And they marched us all the way, what we call a death march. Deeper into Germany, over the Carpathian Mountains, deeper into Germany-- that march was one of the most horrifying experiences of my whole life in Auschwitz, I think because we left Auschwitz on January 18. Like I said, they gave us a ration. They gave us a two-day ration of food.

That's a half a loaf of bread, and some extra margarine. And that was all. And we marched and marched for days and days. We marched. Everybody-- anybody that-- that was in January. January, so it was very cold. Anybody that fell on the side that was slow, they just shot that left them there, laying there [INAUDIBLE].

We finally got to a railroad station. They packed into railroad cars.

Remember where that was?

It was a town called Reichenau. And they loaded us on those railroad cars, cattle cars. And after-- I don't know anymore how long it took-- several days, we finally arrived in a camp called Gross-Rosen, which is near Breslau, in Germany. We arrived in that camp, and the conditions in that camp were just horrifying. People were just-- bodies were just laying all over the place. So as we arrived there, all of a sudden they said that they needed-- they needed experienced machinists, 300 of them, to work in a camp nearby. They're looking for volunteers. So right away I went there because I just wanted to-- I couldn't stand it at that point, to look at this camp. It was just-- the conditions were just horrifying.

So 300 of us from this factory, we were also called machinists. We volunteered for this job. And they took us to a place. They marched us. No, it's not right. They marched us to the camp. I don't know the name of this camp. I have it written down somewhere, but I really don't know.

Well, when we arrived at this camp, there were-- the people that were in that camp, if you could call them that, they were live skeletons there. We asked them what happened to the place where you worked? He says, oh, we haven't worked for days or for weeks we haven't worked yet. We're just staying here in the camp. They don't let us out. And they did not want to-- they didn't let us-- they don't give us any food.

So soon we found out what they wanted us to do in that camp. They took these people that were in that camp. They locked them up. They had barracks there. They locked them up in their barracks. And they took us out in a nearby woods, and they had us dig trenches.

They told us that these trenches were [GERMAN]. You know, for-- translate that-- for protection when the shooting and when the aircraft or when they started to shoot, you go down in there and dig a trench. But they were actually graves. So they had us dig those trenches. And then they marched us back to this camp.

In the meantime, they had injected all these poor people that were in the camp, in the barracks. They had killed them all. They had injected them with something. They were all dead.

We had to take them out in blankets. They wrapped the body in a blanket. And four guys, four people, us, to carry one body out to the woods. And we had to bury them in those graves. That was evening then by that time. It was nightfall.

And the next morning, they evacuated this camp. They wanted all the guards. They wanted us, the healthy ones, to take all their belongings from the guards, the kommandant from that camp and the guards with all their belongings, all their goods that they had. They packed it up on wagons. They had no trucks because they had no-- the war was so-- the troops had advanced, so any vehicle that was able to drive was sent up to the front lines. So all they had was wagons, like farmers' wagons.

And we had to push these wagons along the way to get to the-- to take-- to evacuate this camp. And we marched along and marched along till we got to a place-- we got-- I believe we got to Hirschberg, another town in the-- and there was

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another camp over there. So they put us into that camp with the other people that were there. And we stayed there only a few days, till one day we saw-- they told us there were some parachutes coming down.

They were Russian parachutes. They were dropping down nearby the camp. So they decided to evacuate that camp quick. They rushed us out of there. And we went on railroad cars again. And on that railroad car, these were open wagons where they put us. I remember where it said 40 horses on there. So they put about 120 people onto those cars.

And we went-- we were laying there. We had no food, no sanitary facilities. They had a bucket in the middle. That was all. People were just dying like flies. When somebody died, we used to take their clothes off, take their clothes and put it on us to keep warm.

That train moved in deeper into Germany. And it stopped on the way. It stopped many times. It used to stop-- they used to take off the locomotive. They took off the locomotive from that train and put it onto another train to move troops. Then they moved that locomotive back, or a different locomotive, and they would move our train. Now these were open cars. You could not lift your head above the rails around the cars. They would shoot.

They had guards. On those trains they had a caboose on the brakeman. You know, they had guards in there. And they would be there with guns. And anybody lifting their head above the rail, they would shoot them.

Well, after about five days on that train without any food-- it would only snow every once in a while, so we'd get a little water from the snow. That train arrived in Auschwitz. No, excuse me. Not in Auschwitz, in Buchenwald, Buchenwald, in Buchenwald. It arrived in Buchenwald.

How many people survived that journey?

On my particular car there was seven people alive out of about 120. We were all frozen. Myself, my feet were frozen. So I lost one of my toes from that trip. When we arrived in Buchenwald, the prisoners that were in Buchenwald, they were the ones that helped us to get off the train. By that time, it was-- see, Buchenwald was a camp that was not like Auschwitz. It was an entirely different organization there.

In Buchenwald they had political prisoners. See? Whereas in Auschwitz, they took criminal prisoners that were actual criminals in German jails. They had served their sentences and were not allowed to go back home. They put them in charge of the camp.

Whereas in Buchenwald, they had political prisoners. These were people that were democrats, communists, socialists, people that did not agree with the Nazi system. So these were really nice people, intelligent people. And they did all they could to help us. They really had our interests at heart. So they were in charge of the camp itself.

So they tried to help us with what little that they had. But they had no medical facilities of any kind there. They had paper bandages they used to help us to clean-- clean us up. They couldn't even take the shoes off my feet. They had to cut them, cut them with a knife to take the shoes off because my feet were frozen because I-- and they put us up in a what they call the [GERMAN] block, Block 61 in Buchenwald, which there was all sick people in there.

We were laying on these bunks, four-- four high, five or six people laying across. And the ration that we got in there was less than the ration that they got in the rest of the camp because we were not productive. We were sick. But other than that, they did not bother us.

The prisoners that we're there, there were doctors there. And they did what they could for us. I have to say that it was not very much, but whatever they could, they did.

Until we --

I arrived in Buchenwald-- I believe that was in March. And on April 11, we were liberated already. So I remember the day. I was laying there in my bunk there. And I seen these soldiers walking around with guns. And I said-- and we were

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talking. We were saying, what kind of soldiers did they send here now? Did they sent new guards over to take over the camp?

Because in Buchenwald, they let the prisoners more or less run the camp. Inside the camp, there were no guards-- on the outside. So we thought they sent new guards in to run the camp because they were American soldiers. But he did know this. And then, of course, we found out. And we saw prisoners carrying guns. And we knew that we were liberated.

Now, the American soldiers, the first thing they did, of course, is evacuate the sick people out of the camp. They took us out and brought us into Weimar, which is the town right next to Buchenwald. They put us up in a hospital, in a real hospital. It was a school that was converted into hospital. And they gave us all the medical attention that we needed.

And then the Allied commission had agreed. They sent delegations from all the different countries, from Belgium, from France, from Holland, from wherever people were there, to look up the people that wanted to go back home. And I, even though I was born in Germany, I did not want to return to Germany. I wanted to go back to Belgium because I was counting that my brother would be there. I thought I would find my brother in Belgium.

And I had nobody in Berlin anyway. I knew my mother was in England. And my uncle was in America. So I told him that I was Belgian. I lied a little, and I told him I was a Belgian citizen. Since I spoke already a little French, I spoke Flemish, which I was in Antwerp. They speak Flemish. And they took they believed me. And the Belgian delegation registered my name. And on May 5th, very shortly after that, they put us on a plane, on a military plane, and took us back to Belgium.

And I got back into Brussels, a big reception there. And they put us up in hospitals in Brussels. And they took care of us. And of course, when we arrived in Brussels, they asked us about our families and everything. And I told them about my brother, and I told them about my mother and everything. Once I was there in Brussels, they were not going to send me back. So I was OK.

As a matter of fact, I had a friend there, Johnny Heller, who fought in the resistance, in the Belgian resistance, in the Ardennes. And he volunteered to receive work for the people that came back from the camps. When he saw my name on the list, he came right away to the hospital and looked me up and assisted me in anything I needed. So I told him I was looking for my brother.

And they found my brother. My brother managed to hide out all throughout the war. And he was also partially with the resistance, partially he was hiding out with farmers. And he was also in a cloister with the nuns in the Ardennes, in the mountain areas of Belgium. And we met. We got back together again.

And then of course, since we were able to write again to England, I got in touch with the Joint Distribution Committee. And they got in touch with the Jewish Welfare Board in London, and they found my mother.

Where were you reunited with your mother, and how did you eventually come to this country?

Well, my mother I found through the Joint. And they go to the Jewish Welfare Board in London. And they located my mother. And that's how we found each other again. My uncles, my two uncles that ended up in the United States again, they also were looking, making inquiries to find out about family left in Belgium. And I inquired about the family in New York.

I didn't have their address because we had no papers or anything. But I knew that they were in New York. So I told them that they were in New York. And finally they located them here in New York. And then my uncle, the one that he didn't live in New York anymore, he had moved to New Jersey. He had a farm there. And he sent papers for me to come to the United States.

He sent-- he wanted to send papers for myself and for my brother. But my brother decided that he didn't want to come to the United States. He wanted to go to Israel. He was a Zionist. And that was before. The State of Israel was in 1945, 1946. As a matter of fact, he went to Israel in 1946 with one of those illegal boats.

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But I wanted to come to the United States. And he sent papers for me. And I came to the United States in 1947. In September of 1947, I arrived here.

I made a stop in London. I visited my mother. She didn't want to come to the United States either. So I got here myself. I visited her many times. We were in touch, of course, all the time. My brother went to Israel.

Thank you very much.

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