

To this laboratorium and work with him, and I must be good with him, because he keeps me all this time. He keeps me there around almost two years. Then I notice, we have a hard time to keep up in barracks. They, for instance, they put you in barrack, about 102 people. They put in charge, they make a kapo, for instance, the man who was in charge to us was a murderer.

We have politic signs, the red ones. He has a green one, which means he was a gangster, murderer, who knows, whatever, whatever?

A murderer?

Murderer, yeah. And he was in charge. In the barrack where I was, they were bringing two people each day more, and adding two people. But when they brought these two, he couldn't have more than he has before, 98 or 100, which mean he has a chance to kill two. They just told him to kill two, whatever he wants-- any way he wants.

You remember-- you can imagine what a hard time I had being a Jew to survive this each day so many years? In the beginning I used to sneak out of it, then they used to take us out to making segregation, left and right. Left was to crematorium, right to work. And I went through one, two, three times. And when I was going like this after almost a year working with this doctor, I started thinking I have to make it easy on me. Just how long can you survive? There is going to come a day that I have to go.

I notice that they're bringing some animals, killed animals, to the garage from laboratory. Then I start talking to the doctor about it. And he explained to me that when they kill an animal, they're afraid that somebody is going to go put poison in it, because there were a lot of people against the regime. That before they start using the meat, they checking it in laboratory or the meat is good.

I have an idea would be good if I would be working in garage. Now being working on bicycles when I was a kid, I told him, I know about cars too. But I didn't. They put me in garage. There was one from Czechoslovakia come in, and one was I don't know from Yugoslavia, Slavic people. I started working with him, working on bicycle, and they were car mechanic.

It's just I picked up the German language first. And after working there three months, I became the chief over them. It didn't took me a long time. I just became the chief over them. And then each time meat came in, I have idea. And then I made the idea work. Each time they brought meat, when it comes to the garage, I cut off about around 2 kilo. 2 kilo was about around about 4 or 5 pounds, and put it away.

Then when they check the meat, and told me it's good, I have to find a way to smuggle it in, in the barrack. Now, should I tell you how I did it? Well, I hope you don't mind. You're a woman. I went to the barrack, told the man who was in charge, the kapo man, the murderer, you know, he was in charge. He was the boss that I have idea. I could bring him meat.

I can't promise him for sure, but he has to help me with it, to show me off some sex. He showed me off where I got to stand up to show you what I did.

That's fine.

Just take little pens, all around here, with a little sack here, this was my idea. And I put here in between the meat, always about 2 or 3 pounds. And each day, I used to do it almost two years. They touched me when they-- but I don't know how to explain you. Did you understood exactly what I said?

Yes, I understand.

I understood too.

So you used to carry--

I did-- [CROSS TALK].

You used to carry in the meat in a sack, yeah but it's just flesh together. When they touch me, they touch the meat, but I didn't know what they touch. Because they used to touch us from top to bottom.

Yes.

They touched it but--

But they didn't recognize that it was smuggled in meat.

Meat, yeah. And then when I started bringing him meat, I became his boy. You wouldn't believe how these people lived. He used to have his own tailor. They used to make him tailor-made suits. Now, I became his right hand. You know, he has meat each day.

Yes.

And that's the way I survived 3 years, 3 and 1/2 years almost. I tell you exactly how it was. I was sitting with him. I was his Jewish word I hear. This is my Jew. Well, he said it, I saw how he liked me. But well, I was surviving. I didn't face any more this segregation. He didn't send me out. Each time then in the beginning, you saw this killing. You couldn't take it. But then what can you do about it? You just get used to it.

You see, people are just like animals. You get used to it, and nothing you can do about it. And that's the way I survived till January 1945.

What happened in January 1945?

Russia started pouring in. They started bombarded. There was ordered to kill off all barracks, and all Jews, and not just all Jews, everybody, all prisoners. They were most of them Jews. But they started evacuating us. They took us, put us in wagon, open wagon, halfway open.

In the wagon I was, and it was around 120, 130, there was snow, cold. In January, it's very cold in East Europe. It was freezing. We didn't have clothes. They give us one blanket. But I don't know which way I snatched another blanket, how I did it. I don't even remember. I know I have two blankets when they put me in it. And they put us in this wagons.

From Auschwitz to Gross-Rosen is maybe 100 miles, 150 miles. But they were barely moving, because all the time the aliens were bombarding. They couldn't go through. But the wagon was open. There were two watchmen from both sides. They were eating, but we didn't even have food. It was freezing. Everybody was freezing to death.

Well, I feel that I am getting frozen. I took my shoes off, and cover myself in this blanket both of them, the one night pass, another night pass, third night pass. And in morning, they start taking it out. I think they took us out, from 120 maybe four or five alive. Most of them was frozen to death. But I remember a few times during the night when I opened the eyes, I saw they're taking out somebody, just throw them out away. Just throwing--

Were they alive? Were they dead?

Dead. Now--

So you were in a wagon on the road--

To Gross-Rosen.

On the outside.

Outside.

On the road.

And the wagon was not the closed big wagon, halfway, half wagon.

So it was exposed to the weather.

Exposed to weather. I was about three nights in it. We were 120 people. I remember they took us alive four, three, or four, or five. I don't know. I know when they took us, two of us has frozen--

Feet?

Feet, they couldn't take their shoes off. And I was lucky, you see. How I did it, I don't know. I just took the shoes, or this was my luck. I would still say I was a hero, I wasn't? It just why I did it, I don't even know today. I just took it out. I felt it was warmer.

And did you manage to keep your feet from freezing?

Yeah. See, I took the shoes off. You see, shoes is tight, it's even worse, because this gets frozen outside, and freezes inside. But when I took the shoes off, and covered myself in both blankets, I was keeping my own heat, and this saved me. Why I did it, who knows?

And they put us to work. I remember they took us four or five, I saw it. But I saw a lot of were dead. They start taking out the dead people. And they put us in barracks.

In Gross-Rosen?

In Gross-Rosen. Well, I was there three weeks. Everything was just upside down. Everybody for every little thing, they just shoot, shoot. Shooting was nothing. I was not a person. I was just a thing, in a way. We didn't work anymore. They just used to take us out each day on Appells. And we were standing eight hours, and they put us back, just to keep us occupied, and we don't have time to think.

What did you do for eight hours?

Just standing straight outside. Sometimes they put in work. First first, we stayed. Then two days they start putting us to work, and I couldn't work.

Why couldn't you work?

Because it was cold. It was hard work. I didn't have the power. I didn't eat, no food, no nothing, nothing to do. You couldn't organize anything. And one time they took me to work, I escaped, and they caught me. I tried to escape twice. I was alone. I didn't care. Where could you escape? All around was just concentration camps.

One time I got away and walked in, in a home. It was German. They said they go help me, then same evening police pick me up. They called the German, let them pick me up. They said they didn't know nothing about it, but they helped him.

Were these people German?

German, yeah. It was in Germany, middle of Germany. Gross-Rosen is in the middle of Germany. Yeah. And from there, after three weeks, one day when I escaped, they called police, caught me. They beat me then. You know how they

beat me? I wouldn't believe it. They took my clothes off, and put me on the wall, and with two [INAUDIBLE]. After this, they put me in a hospital.

How long were you in the hospital?

Oh, about a week. From hospital, they took me out, made a little hole in ground, just like you bury a man, put me there for 24 hours covered with boards in the cold weather.

Covered with what?

With boards.

Boards.

Boards.

Just like a grave. Just ground, they put me there and covered with boards, keep me there 24 hours.

After you tried to escape the second time?

No, first time.

First time?

This was not the first time. This the first time when they caught me, when I tried to escape, yes. They put me in hospital. They beat me, put me in a hospital. Then when I got well, they put me down there. They just-- I don't know the idea. You see, let me say again. German were very intelligent people. What I figure out now, when the intelligent man finds a way to torture you, are much worse than a simple man. Because they know how to really hurt you. Make sense?

Yes, I understand.

That's my opinion now about it. Then I didn't know it. And after they took me out, they said, you will not escape anymore. They put me in barrack. I couldn't move. I don't know how long, two or three days. I didn't have what to eat to put myself on my feet. Did you understood exactly what they did with me? They buried me.

Yes. They put you in a grave.

In a grave, yeah, covered with boards, and then they took me out. First day, I stopped on my feet. Would you believe or not, I escaped again? And locked myself in-- and as far I went, it was to a train, and locked myself in this train, stayed there several hours. After several hours, they start putting all prisoners in there to removing them. That was my luck.

So you were in a boxcar.

Boxcar, yeah. Well, I escaped. As far I went to a boxcar, so they start hunting me. I just walked into this boxcar, stayed there. But a few hours later, they started filling up the boxcar to evacuate Gross-Rosen.

So you escaped to another part of Gross-Rosen?

I tried to escape. I really got away from the barracks to a boxcar. And I tried to get away farther, but they were catching up with me. And I was scared. I walked into a boxcar.

Yes, I see.

And stayed there.

I understand.

It makes it clear now?

Yes. And then I stayed there several hours. I hear more and more noise. I wouldn't go out. Then the noise started bigger and bigger, they start. Then start pushing people. Then nobody looked in, I just opened the door, and started putting prisoners in.

And where did it go?

After they filled us up, they sent us to Buchenwald. Where in this train, but this was a closed up train, and we were not long in it. I would say about several hours. We reached Buchenwald. And then they put us in this concentration camp in Buchenwald.

And how long were you in Buchenwald?

Let me figure out. I left in January I left Auschwitz.

'45?

'45. That took me about three days. I went to Gross-Rosen. In Gross-Rosen, I know exactly I was there three weeks. After three weeks, I went to Buchenwald. And in Buchenwald I was freed by American army in April. I was there till April. Now how I was freed, that's a story too.

I was there a few months. And they didn't-- I didn't have food enough. And one day, I was so hungry I throw myself on food, on potatoes, and eat the peels. And they were not clean. And I became diarrhea. And I started losing weight. Slow by slow, I feel that I'm dying. This was shortly before the Americans came in.

Where did you get the potato peels?

They brought potatoes. Some they brought you a day two potatoes. I just eat them with the peels. It's but they must not be clean, I don't know. And I became diarrhea. And I start losing weight. I reached a point that I couldn't move. I couldn't go. I became so weak and skinny that I couldn't stand on my feet.

How much did you weigh?

Well after they got me out, I weighed around 70 pounds, when they took me in the hospital after war. But let me explain to you what's happened. They started evacuating, because now the American-- there was an invasion, and Americans start coming in from all sides, America and English. The part where I was, they're saying that the Americans are coming in, in Buchenwald.

They start evacuating our barrack. They took one part, the other part. And then I feel that I know that I can't walk anymore. And if they take me, they will kill me, or they kill me right away when they see me this. Some ways, on all fours, I moved myself under this barrack. Now I don't know how long I stay there. I know they light turned twice or three times. And then I felt that I'm dying. I just didn't care that they will kill me, I'm dying. What's the difference? I start asking for help. An American soldier took me out.

I mean I didn't even see them coming in. And then they put me in a hospital. When they put us in a hospital, in the room I was, there was several people. They start feeding us really good, any kind of food. And this was a problem too. See, stomach wasn't used to this food. And people throw themselves on food like animals.

My luck, I couldn't eat. I hated food. Or you will tell me that I'm was a hero too? It just happened. I hated food. They feed me through my veins, and that's what saved me. After they put me on a scale, I weighed less than 70, pounds 69

pounds. I couldn't even walk, just a skeleton. They took me in a hospital. It took me about six or seven weeks before I start walking.

Now, you want to see one more unusual story? When I was working in this laboratory in Plaszow, I have forgotten to tell you about it, this was a really good friend. This is the really one friend I have in my life who, well, you could say a friend. You see, it's easy to give when you have everything. But when you give away the last piece of bread what your life depends on it, this is a really good-natured friend. And I have a friend like this.

It was a German, David was his name, if I remember. And he was a scientist too. He was working in the same laboratory. And we became friends. And this time I was in my 20s, and he was in his 30s. He was about 11, 12 years older than me. He was just like, I was his little brother then.

He was kind of a heavy, fat fellow. And I remember when we used to sit down in barrack, he used to call me German Willy. Willy, Willy. Is German W, is V, Willy. He used to talk about food. It can make you sick all the time talking about food what he used to eat, when he was just dreaming to go out and eat food. And I remember at this time, they used to give us one piece of black bread, a half pound. Now how much was it a half pound? Half pound or even a quarter of a pound. And black bread is heavy.

He used to divide this piece for three pieces. And he said, I'm going to keep myself alive this way. And he ate one piece for breakfast, for lunch, and for dinner. We used to call it dinner then, today supper. And I just couldn't do it. I got my bread. I was young. I just throw myself, right to my head, I eat it.

And I remember one day we got both this bread, and I watched him how he cut it in three pieces. I couldn't take it. I tried to take a little piece. But I couldn't. I divided it same way but I eat it. I just couldn't take it. And when lunch came I saw him to take out the other piece and eating. And I was sitting and watching him. I can imagine how my eyes were popped up when I was watching him then. And he watched sideways on me, sideways on me, and he just he couldn't take it. He took that third piece of bread and give me.

Did you understand what I say?

Yes, I understand.

What I'm talking about?

Yes. I'm very sensitive about things like this. And I wouldn't take it. I never took it. I just couldn't.

But he would give you his last piece.

Last piece bread. Not just last piece, I eat my portion. And his life depended on it. And I don't know how or where when they moved us from Auschwitz, I don't know where he went. And it was so that I don't even-- you couldn't even think about anything, just to survive.

Did you ever find him?

No. I have never found him. After the war, I was freed in Buchenwald with this Dr. Maisel together. And he wanted me for his son-in-law. He said that he has his daughter somewhere, on Irish papers. And if she's alive, he would like to me be his son, to go with him. I was then about the middle 20s. And I tried to explain him, I have a wife. He said, how you know she's alive? I said, I don't. But I got to go find her.

I don't believe she is alive but I'm going to look for her. Then I met some girls. I don't know.

So when you got on that transport, thinking that you were following her and you ended up in Auschwitz.

Auschwitz.

You never found her in Auschwitz?

No. She was in-- they sent her to Gross-Rosen, to another concentration camp. I found her after the war. Now I'm coming to it now. Then when, after war, after I stand on my feet I found Dr. Maisel. And he tries to talk me in to go with him. And I said no. He was from Lemberg, LwÃ³w. And I said, no, I'm going first to Krakow to find my family. Maybe somebody is alive, especially maybe my wife is alive, because she was the last one I was with.

Well, you see when I married her, she was a teenager. Now she was barely in her 20s. You can imagine. But this was my wife. See, my wife is four years younger than I am. And he decided he goes with me to Krakow. Well, there were a group of girls then. They all went with me. I don't know. I must be a good looking boy when I was young, taking this way. And we all came to Krakow, and I found my wife.

How I found my wife, where are you going? First, you can imagine how I feel when I stepped on this ground. Well, there's one. There's another story. When I was coming to Krakow, I met a girl in a way which, I don't know. Really, she looked me up. I didn't look her up. And we start talking. Then she met a Russian officer.

And she talked me in that she's going to introduce me to him that I'm her brother, to move us together into this somewhere.

What he did, when we came to Breslau, you hear about this already? He took us to downtown Breslau, went down. Well, there's more stories to it. Should I tell you all about it how it happened? I'll tell you about later. Let me go this story. When they took us to Breslau with her, she introduced me that I am her brother. He went to downtown Breslau, threw all German out.

In the beginning, it hurt me. But then I was dreaming about it. When I get out and in Germany, I can put my hands on it, I kill him. Because how could I? I never killed anybody. I couldn't. I just couldn't do it. I just don't have it.

So there were German prisoners there?

No. Germans living after war.

Yes.

See, we passed first, they put us on train on American side. And we drove through on Russian side. When you came on Russian side, I met this girl. Now, when I came there--

OK, now I understand.

--she introduced me to this officer that I'm her brother. She talked me into it. She's going to tell him I'm her brother, and he moved us in to this house. Was the doctor still with you? Yeah, the doctor was with me. There were another guy, I don't remember his name. There were about six or seven girls with us. And they all went with me. And then he moved us into this house. And we just took over the house.

And this girl tries to talk me in not to go back to Krakow that I shouldn't go, because who knows. Maybe my wife has somebody else if she is alive, or who knows what she did there. And she kept me there three weeks. And somebody saw me there. They went back to Krakow and told my wife about it that I'm alive. She was somebody already before, three months before this, somebody told her they saw me dead.

And now somebody came and told her that I'm alive. But I was in Breslau still, not in Krakow. But then I decided, no, I'm going to Krakow. And they picked all together with me, went with me, Dr. Maisel too.

When we came to Krakow, where are you going? To Jewish community center. I went to Jewish community center, looking for Schiffs. They found one, Schiff, William Schiff, which was freed in Buchenwald. They have already my

name. That's the only Schiff they have. See, they didn't have my wife, nothing. I don't know how it happened.

I went downstairs, then some girl looked at me, and said, William, gosh. Your wife is going to faint when she finds you. And she took me and brought me to my wife's home. She was living in the same house where her parents used to live, with about three or four girlfriends. Some old men used to rent this apartment. There were three rooms, and rented them one room. And she lived with three girls.

When I came there, she fainted. We took her to hospital.

She actually fainted and fell down.

She almost fell down from steps. I grabbed her. She fainted. That's the story.

What did you do after that?

Well, when I was in Germany, before we got back, I remember we went on streets in Germany. People used to rob everybody. I remember one day I saw a Russian boy coming to a German. He saw a ring on her finger. And he told her, give me the ring. She start pulling, pulling, pulling. She couldn't get it off. Then he said to another guy in German, give me a knife. We'll cut it off with the finger in a minute. She took it off, gave him. But I couldn't do it.

You know, it's a funny thing, I have a satisfaction when I saw it. But I couldn't do it. I remember before we reached Breslau, the trains were not going anymore. And we needed a wagon. And we went to a-- well, I have another story before I went out on the train. We were sitting on this train. And there came two women in. They looked to me both young, but I think it was a German. One was a mother and one was a daughter the woman was not more somewhere in her 40s, and the girl maybe still a teenager.

And they tried to get them, and throw them. You see, when German used to pick us up, they used to make signs, Jews and dogs out. And Jews, dogs, and Russians. Russian were same way. They just treated Russian same way, just like Jews. Then when we went this train they made signs. German and dogs out. And two women walked in. They were German women. And they tried to throw him out from the train.

And in this minute, I don't know what got over me, how could I do it. You see I was dreaming when something like this happened I will help it. I'll be the first one to raise my hands to do things like this, because that's what they did to us. Eye for eye. I still believe in eye for eye.

But when they grabbed him, I just I have a thought that this is my mother and sister. And I start fighting them against it. I wouldn't let them do it. I fight him so long until the train stopped. I was in charge through the train. But they all got against me. They throw them out. They throw me out. They throw Doctor Maisel out. They throw us all out.

When they throw us out, then I sit down and start thinking. Why did I do it? I ask myself, why did I do it? They were Germans. They were people they killed everybody in my path. I just have forgotten this minute that there were German, they were women in trouble. And I just couldn't see anybody suffer. And that's why I think I did it.

And I remember we went to a German governor in the city. This was a small town, and we asked him for a wagon. And well I got kind of rough with him, because he started explaining I used to speak a little German. When I lived in Germany, I used to speak fluently. But now I have forgotten a lot about it. And we ask him for a wagon. He doesn't have.

And I say you, got to find one. And he told me, if he gives us the wagon, he will not have nothing to move his kids. I said, well you're lucky you have kids. We don't have kids to move anymore. He gave us the wagon. And then I was sorry I did it. It's a funny thing about it. Why? I don't know why. I just cannot answer it today why I did it. I took the wagon, but then I was sorry I did it.

Because he mentioned to me kids. From one side, I feel satisfied that I did it. And then I just couldn't take it, that was

inhuman why I did it. That's my feelings. Why, I don't know.

It's hard for you to be mean, isn't it?

Well, it's just I don't have it. I never shot anybody. I remember I was in battle, which is after war, how many people I could take revenge, what I could do everything on the Russian side. But I just couldn't.

Now you came to America in 1949. So you spent four years from 1945 to 1949. What were those years like?

Well, when I came to Poland, I stayed there three weeks. You asked me a question which one I didn't answer. How did I make a living? I brought a sack with some junk with me, old rags. Well, I didn't have values, because I didn't have it. I couldn't go to somebody, take a ring off, or go to a house, rob. I just couldn't have it. They did it, most of them Russian people, without excuses. I don't blame them. I don't blame them at all because that's what they did with us. But I just couldn't do it. I just couldn't live with it.

And when I came, I used to go on old market, when I met my wife on old market, selling the junk, what I brought with me, and live on it. Then I met a uncle, my mother's brother, which one was on Russian front. He was on Siberia and made this whole, when they pushed Germany from Siberia till Krakow, he came on this whole front. How he lived it too, he's just a simple-- but he lived it through.

And I met him. And he used to bring a little food from army. And that's what we lived on. And that's the way we stayed there about three weeks. After three weeks, I just took a train and left the country. I met a friend, which talked me in, go to Austria. And I moved to Austria, Linz.

And your uncle stayed in Poland?

In Poland, yeah. In Linz, after we met--

That was you and your wife?

I took my wife with me, yeah, I met her.

You would never located anybody else in your family?

I was there three weeks looking for them. But they told me that I can always leave it, and still look for him in Austria, there was just a few hundred miles difference. I was looking. Well, for me it was, I just couldn't get over it, not to see my mother anymore.

Your mother didn't survive?

Nobody survived.

You were the only one from your family that survived?

Yeah. That's what I said. The funny thing, I was feeding them all these years. I was putting my life on the line to save them. Where's the principle?

It turned out-- it turned out you were taking the most risks and you survived.

So I fed them. I used to go out each day, each day.

Yes.

So many years, I did it in concentration camp when I was in Auschwitz, three years with this meat. I came once, they

caught me on sabotage, and they let me go.

How long did you stay in Linz?

Till 1949. Well, after we met, after we came to Linz, my wife tried to talk me into that we should have a child, after we met, after this war. I didn't want it until we have a room for ourself. Then I made a little deal. I travel. I made money. I always made money.

What were you doing? How were you making money?

Buying and selling, there was everything upside down. Well, there were a lot of help from UNRRA and HIAS, you see, they were sending packages.

Yes.

But well, I never got anything. You know, the people they work with it before, came to these people, they need it. There was nothing left. And I just didn't ever depend on it. I was not a guy I could stay in line to be taken, because I just don't feel like to take anything. I have to work for it. So it's my pride. That's the way I am.

And if they would bring me something easy, you know, I maybe would take it. I wouldn't say I wouldn't. I was in need. But to stay in line, to beg, this looked to me like begging.

Yes.

I just couldn't do it. I always managed to make my own living. I used to live in this DP camp, going out, buying and selling. Don't even ask me.

OK, well you were in a DP camp in Linz?

In Linz, yes.

What was the name of the camp?

At first, I was in Hart, then I was in Bindermichl. Then before I got my papers, I moved to Wegscheid. And I stayed there, waited for the papers, and then I moved from there.

How long were you in DP camps?

I was there from 1945 till 1949.

Four years.

Four years.

What happened in 1949?

I got my papers. See, I have a chance to go to three countries. It was United States, Australia, Canada. Well, I really wanted United States. But I said, which one comes first, I just want to get out of it.

You had no friends or relatives in the United States?

I remember I have some. I have, my mother used to write, but as I didn't know, I don't remember. I never have connection with them. And after the ways the war came out, how could you make any connections?

I just registered myself being a DP. And I received my papers in 1948. But then I couldn't make it. I have some things I have to take care of. In 1949, the papers came and I left. They brought me to Bremerhaven. In Bremerhaven, most people who went-- when I got my papers they asked me what part United States I'm interested. And I said I don't care if it's United States. They send me to a place nobody wants to go, Texas. What are you going to do here? Raise horses?

Who would know what Texas? Now, most people they brought to the United States, they used to bring them to New York. They wouldn't move south anymore from New York. And in this country, they don't force anybody. Now, me they brought to New Orleans, preventing for me to stop in New York, they brought me to Orleans. I was on a ship three weeks.

I even remember the name of the ship, General Eltinge. Because I have a child they put my wife in a cabin where the officers used to be. They put in, this cabin she was, there was about six, five officers, or six. They put three married women with children, and the men sleep together with men on the barracks, just like the soldiers.

OK, In 1949, was your wife pregnant, or did she already have a child?

My wife got pregnant in Germany in 1946 about around-- no, my wife got pregnant in '45 still.

And she gave birth in '46.

In '46, she gave birth, yeah.

So in 1949, you had a three-year-old child. He wasn't even three years old. He finished three years on ship.

On the ship?

Yeah.

And did he survive? You have a son? This is your first born son?

First born son, he's 39 years old.

He's 39 years old now.

Yeah.

And he finished three years old on the ship. They brought us to Bremerhaven. From Bremerhaven, they put us on the ship. And I was starting explaining to you how we sleep there. And we have to work on ship for bringing us, see for instance like cleaning.

To pay your passage.

Passage. UNRRA was supposed to pay, UNRRA or HIAS, but ship we worked for it.

Well, I noticed that they have a kitchen. I sneak myself in kitchen. I don't know how it was. Would you believe at that day, I was the chief of the kitchen? No?

You get to be chief of wherever you go.

Kitchen, well I don't know. I could never reach the top in my life. I have a son like this. He is always whatever we're doing, he is better than I am, because he's the top guy. But I was the next to the top guy.

OK. So you got into the kitchen.

The kitchen, and then I became in charge of the kitchen. You see, I picked up a little English. I still have a harsh accent. My grammar is awful, but I used to speak a little. In this time, I used to speak perfect German, which means I was communicating. I was speaking German better than the other one.

How many languages did you end up speaking?

Polish?

Well, Polish, I speak Yiddish, German, and now English.

And did the family speak Yiddish at home?

Very little. Well, we are a very modern family. I have very modern-- my mother.

No, I mean in the old country.

In the old country.

When you were growing up, did your parents speak Polish?

Polish, just Polish, yes. I hear the Yiddish a lot, because I was living in this Jewish ghetto you call it. There were a lot of Yiddish. They were coming friends to my parents speaking Yiddish. But they were speaking Polish.

And then on the boat you picked up English?

Well, I used to work with the American soldier in Germany before I left it. I met an officer.

I see. So you learned English that way? There's another story there. I'll bet.

Well, it's a little story yes, behind it. Well, it's not important. He was officer.

So you were on the boat, and you became-- you were in charge of the kitchen?

Well I became the chief of the kitchen, and then that's the way we came to the United States. We came to New Orleans. They kept us. And my wife was sick all the time. You know, from the sea.

Seasick.

She's a very-- every little thing, she's sick. Now she's sick too when we came here. She has a problem. She gains weight easy. That's my wife. That's my life.

So how did you get to Dallas? And then we're going to have to stop.

When I told him, I don't care if it's United States, my papers were to Dallas, Texas.

Specifically to Dallas?

To Dallas, Texas. They brought me to New Orleans. From New Orleans, they took me to Jewish community center. They put me on a train, and brought me next day to Dallas.

And what was your first job here?

Well, they didn't have a job for me. I found the job by myself. How I found a job, I have only one job. This was the only job I have in my entire life. I used to go in a machinist school too, partly. I used to go to two schools, to a night school

and to machining school, where I was studying to be-- I was a very busy from the time I was a kid.

What were you studying?

Being a machinist.

A machinist?

A machinist, yeah. And I was going to this school twice a week before war, two hours. And they started asking me in English. You see, a lot I understand, a lot I didn't. And I used to work on bicycles, on sewing machines a little bit, really not on sewing machine, on bicycles. And they ask me the sewing machine. Well, I really didn't know what the meaning of the sewing machine, sewing was. But I understood machine.

When he said sewing machine, I thought he means machinist. And I said, yes. He found me a job. The job was here in Dallas. I think still the company exists. It's a sewing machine company. Do you know the company in Dallas?

He brought me down there? This was on about 1000 block Elm Street. The building is down now. And when he brought me there, the guy looked at me and said, well, I don't need him. I can have a black man for \$25 a week. He said, pay him \$25. And that's the way he started me.

The first thing he gave me a broom, and a pot, and took me to a toilet. Clean there. Well, I started it. I was practically 30 years old when I came here. And then he put-- I was cleaning and he was training me to being a sewing machine mechanic. Well, I was there six months. I was just doing the same job, the men, was doing there was working 15 years.

He tries to put me on his place, because the other man was getting old. Then I noticed that they start selling, people selling people to city, delivering machines, and selling sewing machines. The men was making three, four calls a day. I asked him to try me out. And he said, you don't speak enough English to talk to people. You can communicate with us, but with them, you can't.

Well he has an old man. One day this boy didn't show up who was supposed to go on this call. He sent me on his place with this other man. Well I made him 15 calls. He couldn't believe it. How did you do it? I said, no, I was running like crazy, working. When I work, I work. Well, he decided he rather sends me with the other man then the other men, two men for one, because the other man was making three phone calls a day. I was making 15.

And the other man was cheap and I was cheap. I mean he didn't pay us maybe both what he paid this one man. And that's the way I started. Then I start speaking language. Well, I started for \$25 a week. Then he started giving me raises. Then one day, I came in, I said I don't make enough. He raised it for \$70. Well after two weeks, I came back and said, look here. You're not paying me enough. Why?

Look at what you're making everybody. Works for \$40 or \$50. You just stay here here. You don't even speak English. You make \$70. I said I want \$100. He's not going to pay me \$100. So I took my tools, and when I quit, he wouldn't let me quit. I was just bluffing. I don't know what I would do if I would quit. But I did it. He gives me \$100.

When I was going out, well, repairing machine, I start selling. There were most of them you see when you're selling sewing machine, dealing with women. I start talking them into buy machine, that I give them free service. And they went for it. I mean each second machine I went repair it, I sold one. When I start selling, I told him look here, I want commission.

He said, OK, I give you 5% commission. Then I figure out, I can make bigger prices. I can sell for more, for instance, the machine was \$50. I sold it for, I mean for \$70. I sold it for \$90. I made a deal with him. If you want me to sell it, whatever I take more than the price, we'd be 50-50 partners, and he agreed to it. He didn't want it. But he agreed to it.

And I started making pretty-- everybody was making \$50 a week. I was already making \$200. But I worked day and night, day and night. And then what's happened on this job after several years, I start saving money. See, I lived very

tight, and most money putting in bank. He needed money for the business, expanding. And I took out-- I was working for him several years. I took out \$7,000 in lending, and after he saw me having the \$7,000, he got scared of me that I take over his business.

He started pushing me back. But I was scared to quit. And I stayed with him 18 years, saving money, hard way. Well, if this was in 1967, my son from the time he was a little boy, he's a very smart boy. Oh, in this case, he's just like me. He's just smarter than me, because when he keeps money, he knows how to keep the biggest part for himself. I didn't. I divided always with everybody. Who was my friend, I used to divide it. But I learned in business you can't be like this anymore, and I learned that the hard way. This was my nature.

He talked me in to go in real estate. I have saved up \$50,000 or \$60,000 and I bought a building in Oakland. Which one was the Travis Lodge. I don't know, you know the building. You know the building?

Yes.

This was my building many years. And this is the building I started with. My son worked in it. He was dating a girl then. And we bought this building, and he moved in there. Then when I bought this building, I went to a bank. We start thinking about expanding.

This was after being in this country almost 20 years, 18 years. It was in '68. He started expanding. Well, I decided, went to a bank, and borrowed money against this building for a down payment. And then went to another bank, and borrowed a loan until about three years, I have about seven or eight buildings, small ones. Don't ask me how we keep them up.

OK, we're going to need a stop soon, because our time is running out. But what happened was is that you went into real estate.

Right away. Yeah.

And you accumulated buildings.

Yeah.

And you had--

Now, I am kind of, well, there's a lot of stories in it. And now I am kind of semi-retired. I still own one, a big one.

OK.

And I don't operate. I have a crew of people which will operate this building. I just supervise. I pay them good, and they take care of it. And I supervise it, and then I have a lot of investments.

And today, you're doing fine?

Oh, very good, yes.

Then maybe this is a good place for us to stop with this interview.

And I want to thank you for sharing this with us and for being here.

You're welcome. You're very welcome.

We'll stop our interview now.

See, I am not a man you have to ask too many questions, because I am a big talker. I don't know if I speak well English.

But I--

I understood.

--talk a lot.

You speak well enough for me to understand.

But forgive me one thing. I get very emotional, when I talk about--

You don't need to be forgiven.

--when I talk about my past, because it just hurts to think about it.

You don't need to be forgiven. Thank you for coming here.

It's my pleasure.