

Diane, is this where all the survivors give their stories?

[INAUDIBLE]

This is Dr. Diane Plotkin interviewing William Schiff, SMU, October 22, 1991.

OK. My name is William Paul Schiff. I was born and raised in Kraków, Poland. I was once interviewed, but I'd like to be interviewed again to let the world know what's happened and the future generation know what's happened. Because what's happened to Jewish people can happen to any people in any time in any century. And preventing of it, I am making my statement again. I'm telling my life again, how this happened in my case.

I was born and raised in Kraków, Poland. I have a brother and sister. The war broke out in Poland in 1939. I was turning 20 then. I have a sister, 21 then. My brother was 18. And my both parents were young too. My father was 46, and my mother was 44.

Sixth day, I think, of October, or seven-- right now, from beginning of the war, was just took a few days, the Germans were in Kraków. Kraków was located not far from Czechoslovak border, close to the biggest mountains in Europe, Carpaths. And after when the German declared the war, Poland has just few planes. They barely have an army. And German cover that with planes.

And about fourth day or fifth day, they were already in Kraków. Right now, when they came to Kraków, they right now started with Jews. First thing they did, they took away everything Jews own. You couldn't own your own store. You couldn't own a factory. You couldn't employ people.

A few days later, they start taking us to work just to humiliating us. For instance, like cleaning streets, working breaking rocks, or any kind of common labor, they used to use Jews for it. For instance, in my home were three people, me, my dad, and my brother were all young. Each one of us has to go out two times a week to do the work. We are not paid for it. You call it German *zwangsarbeit*, which means you have to work.

I was going four times a week, replacing my father twice. My dad was a barber/beautician. He has his own store. Has about three or four employees. We lived very close, about a couple blocks from the store where my daddy has it.

And each time he went to work, took about several months. He went to work. Then we have an order that Jews cannot own property anymore. He didn't have choices. He signed over his store to an employee, which one worked for him almost 10 years. He was a Gentile. Well, German systematically start tightening out our life.

Each night, from different families, people used to-- German police used to come in and take people out, taking them to prison. The people, whoever they took disappeared. And we were living in fear. Not counting the size of this, we have to go to this work.

Took like the several months. Then they found another way to torture us. They took me-- how would you call? I was working in mountains-- hard labor, to hit rocks and put in wagons and moving them. This was the work I was assigned to it. This took several months too.

After about almost-- after almost a year, they start talking about putting us in ghetto. Oh, I have forgotten say another story. In beginning, I made a mistake. In beginning, when the German came, we have an order to leave the city. I just have forgotten to tell it in the beginning.

And my uncle, and fifth day when the German came in-- before the German came in, they will have order to leave the city. And I took-- this is the most important part I have forgotten to say it in the beginning. We have order to leave. My uncle came in. He was about 15 years older than me. And my daddy believed in him. And my mother ordered me. I looked at my mother dirty.

And whatever she told me I did for her, just because I believed in her. Everything she said, I believed in it. And she ordered me to take my dad and my brother, which one was then-- I was then already 20. My brother was about 18 still. My dad was, like I said before, 46. And with my uncle-- and then I have another uncle, which was a little older than me. He is now in States. I brought him here.

We left city because it was ordered that if men don't leave the city, they will kill off all young men. We walked like this almost three weeks. And German were bombarding us awful. Wherever you turned you saw this, just dead body. Was not opposition at all. Before I came to Lemberg, which is a large city by the road, maybe 200 miles from Kraków, officer stopped me, give me a gun, which one I never have. I never, never used a gun in my life. Gave me a soldier's jacket, and go ahead, fight.

We'll go give you bullets later, but wasn't time. This way we came to Lvov, which one is Lemberg. When we came to Lvov, this was almost two weeks later, Russia declared war against Poland too. And together with Germany, they made a pact and hit us from all the sides. When we came on the Russian side, they just are-- a man who was in charge, he was just a lieutenant, gave us order to give up.

We just pick up the arms, Russian came in, took their guns from us, and told us go back home. I took my dad and my brother, and we both moved back home. And then when we came back home, this thing started where I just saw the beginning.

Now, I said before in beginning that I was working in this mountains, hitting rocks and putting in special wagons and moving them. This took about maybe till about 1940, '41. We lived this way in fear. People were disappearing. They used to come to the city each day. Well, every-- any soldier has a right to come in and kill. If he didn't like somebody, just pulled a gun and kill whatever he could.

Wherever you turn, wherever you went and stood, you saw just dead bodies. This was before ghetto. In 1940-- in this time, I met my wife, Rosalie. This was about two months later, after war, I met her. She came-- I have a young cousin, which used to come and visit us. She was her friend.

And she brought another friend. The other plane brought her. And through her I met Rosalie, and we started dating then. We used to spend almost each day together, each day running around. But I was tied up with my family. My whole life was just the family home. I was the only one who was taking care of it because my dad, he became like a child.

He couldn't operate his store. He was scared. And then life was to get worser and worser and worser. And my parents depended more and more on me. I was the only one. I don't know how they could. I was just a boy, like I said, 20. And I used to make all decisions about food, about everything in the house. And we lived like this almost time when the ghetto started, when they start telling us about going to ghettos.

This was, I think, somewhere around '41. They started moving us to ghetto. But not everybody has a right to go into it. You have to have a pass or work on certain jobs that they let you in there. Rosalie was just with her mother, which will be my wife now. A little sister, but she was then about around, I would say, 17 years old because she was about two years afterward, or 18-- has a sister about 14 and a little brother 10 years old, and a mother, which one was a woman not capable to do anything because she was depending on her father, which one was a good situated person.

They lived fully well on this time. Not enough I have to take care of my family, I used to go take care of them too, helping it out, whatever I could. And this way our life passed, till they start talking about going to ghetto. Well, my family has a permission go to ghetto. But Rosalie's not. Where she was-- I'm just talking about the close family because I don't mean she had about-- we have both the big families. For instance, I have family almost about 30, 40 people. There were little kids.

I was the oldest boy from the second generation. I have older sister one year, but I was the older boy in the second generation. And they were kids till about three or four years old. But what I was in, most of them, everybody used to take care of himself. A lot of my family left the city. But my family was there, and Rosalie's mother with the kids was there. They have family too, but everybody has to take care of themselves. And they start moving to ghetto.

We got the pas move into ghetto. Rosalie's family didn't. I moved her to a small town outside ghetto, rented her a room and moved her with her mother and the three kids-- and the two. They were, all together, three kids. And I, with my parents, we moved into ghetto. We have two rooms, two very, very small rooms. But we have two small rooms.

In ghetto, life was awful. Awful. They were giving us very little food. Most of the people couldn't live on the ration they give us. From Jewish community used to take care of us, but they didn't have anything. The Germans were asking more and more from the Jews, to give him money, and give him jewels, give him whatever we could to keep us in ghetto.

We have a really tough, awful, awful, awful hard life. German used to come in for any reason and just when they got mad, they used to kill people on the street without a reason. They used to tight up of us. Everywhere you move, you saw dead people. Each day, each day you were not sure, or you be not next day, the next one.

And I used to-- we used to wear the Star of David, a band with the Star of David. On doors in ghetto, they used to stay. Polish police watching us, under supervision of German. But the German was just coming and going, but the Polacks were watching us. And I used to go out almost each week to visit Rosalie at the small town. And one day when I visit her, I notice that they have a market where they're selling any kind of different thing, including chicken.

And I came home and told my mother about it. Now, let me make the remark-- to going out from ghetto, I have to buy myself off from the Polish policeman. I was taking a chance. Then I took the band off, claiming that I am not Jew. And this way I went and visit Rosalie with her mother, to help them.

And that's the way I used to do it almost each week. Then one day I came home and told my mother about this market I saw that day selling product. And I mentioned her chicken. I didn't know much about chicken, but when I came home, I decided-- I took my mother with me. I smuggled her through this to this little town. And she showed me how to buy chicken.

Here, if you're buying any chicken you want them lean, not fat on it. But there was opposite. If it was lean, people wouldn't take it. You have to buy expensive chicken. I mean, fat chicken to make it expensive. And my mother used to show me how to touch him to figure out of the-- if the chicken are fat.

We both went on this market. We bought chicken. I left my mother in one of the building, indoor. Then came came back to the border of the policeman. And then I smuggled my mother with the chicken together in. Now, how I was smuggling the chicken, I will explain to you.

I used to put on very country clothes, junky clothes, very junky, put overcoat. I didn't put on my arms, just over me. My mother sew me off about five, six, sack-- sack, you know? From how you call it? Any cloth. And I used to put two in back, two on my side, and two on front. And I used to cover them with the jacket I wear. This way I could choke him because-- I closed him. It's just I made holes in the sacks to keep him alive. Because if you wouldn't bring him alive, they wouldn't buy him. It has to be kosher. And if it dies, it's not kosher.

I did it for almost, gosh, almost all the time we were in ghetto. I remember several, several times I went out. You see, I always needed help because I have to leave somebody with the chicken somewhere outside before I am buying off somebody on door. Each time I was buying him off, I took a chance. Maybe they turn me in.

And this is the way I was visiting Rosalie, too, with her mother. Then several months later they decide they're going to move all Jews back in ghetto from everywhere. Then I went out, took her, Rosalie, with her mother, brother, sister. I moved them in, in ghetto. I have then, I think, that's what I remember. I have a pass to go after them. I don't remember exactly how it was. And they-- and found them one little room without windows.

And that's what they moved in. It's just about a block away where I was living with my family. And then I have two families to take care of. And that's the way I was going out almost a year. In between they were killing us. Just things were going on worse and worse. Each day people disappeared, like I said before. Each day you were afraid they may come to your house.

They didn't care if they were women or children. For instance, any soldier could come in just for kicks, come in and just pick you up. If you say something, just shoot you for kicks. This way we lived all these years. Then I remember one time I went out on this market. Rosalie was still my girlfriend then. She was, most of them, in my home with my mother when I went out. They both were sitting waiting for me.

And I went on market. And market didn't open. I waited about four hours there before they open it. And this was-- over the hours, my mother expected me to come back home. And I bought some chickens, brought them home, but I came late at night and it was dark. I found my mother on the door. She was with Rosalie together. She turned gray in one day.

Just I can't talk. Excuse me a minute. And I remember next day, I just packed and go. My mother wouldn't want me to go, but she didn't said anything because somebody has to do it. You know what's the funny thing I don't understand. I did it over two years to save them. They all of them are gone and I am alive. It just doesn't make sense. Does it?

Then I remember one day, one day-- I'm sorry, the way that I act. They decided they're going to make the ghetto smaller. Who has a job, who has a job, they let him stay. Who didn't, they has to take him in transport.

Now, before this happened, I was sent to work with a group of people. I was-- this was over, oh, about few months before they closed the ghetto. I couldn't go each day anymore for the chickens because they found work for me. I used to go out to a factory, working, how you would say, a nail factory. You know, nails which you put-- which you put things together-- nails, yeah. And they start sending me there each morning.

Then I couldn't go out so often anymore. I used to cut down once a week, sometime on Sunday when I didn't work. And one day they decide they're going to transport people out from ghetto. They said they're going to move them to a different part of town, that they have more comfortable life. And we didn't know. Who could believe it?

Now, let me get back to another thing. I remember when we used to sit and talk about it, my dad used to warn me and beg me to leave before they put us in ghetto, to escape to Russia, to pay and leave everything, go to Russia. But I just-- first thing, I hated communism. I never believed. I was young, just a kid then. But I never believed in communism because I know human nature. It will never work. You can't make people equal. It's impossible.

And I would never believe that Germany would do what he did. They were the door to culture. The German language was all over the world. They were the smartest people, the cleanest people in the whole world. Who could believe that they will do something like this? And I didn't believe. My dad warned me. And I wouldn't believe in it.

I remember a lot of people used to escape to Russia, leave this country go to Russia. Some they caught, some didn't. But if you made it, you have a chance. Here we know that we didn't have a chance. But I wouldn't go. And I didn't believe that they will kill. Because of me, nobody went. I just-- wonder is me, how could they depend on me? But they did. And because of me, they didn't.

I feel kind of bad conscience because of it, because I didn't listen. And because of me, nobody went. They stayed and depended on me. It's just-- then I-- where I was on it?

You were in the ghetto [INAUDIBLE].

Remember when we were in ghetto, they start sending-- they start talking about sending people out. And my mother came to me and ordered me to stay here. I have a job because I was going to this nail factory each

day. I have a job. My brother was doing something inside, has a job. My sister has a job. But my parents didn't. And they told that whoever doesn't have paper to stay, they're going to shoot him. And I try tell him that I-- cover him-- put him somewhere, that I hide him somewhere. But they wouldn't listen.

They said, no. I have a very, very Orthodox religion-- my daddy wasn't, but Mother was awful religion, very modern but religious. And I used to respect it.

And they ordered them to join the transport. I want to hide him, but my mother ordered me no. She said, you stay here. Take care of whatever is left. She even told me, I left my daughter and my son with you. You stay and take care of them.

Well, I have saved-- from time I was a young boy, I always make more money than anybody else. I always have a-- how do you say, click to it, that I know how to get around to make money some ways. But I know how to save it too. I never spend it, like some other people, for anything. I used to have it-- I always had my family in mind because when I was a boy-- I didn't mention to you about it-- I was the only boy who didn't work.

My sister went to college before war. My brother went to college. And it was kind of hard. High school used to be like college. And I used to always go to work, helping out home. Now, I didn't have to bring money home. They never asked me. But I just feel always that somebody has to do it. And I did it.

Same way, now in war, she ordered me to stay with the kids. I have saved up money, which she didn't expect it. She's wondering where I got the money, how I saved it up because most boys, they blowed it, went and spend it like-- I was grown up, very young. From the time I was a boy, 16, 17, I never loved sports or games. I never smoke, I never drink, but I love night lives.

And this was not cheap either. But besides all these things, I used to know how to save money. And whatever we have, whatever I have saved up, I give my parents. And they took it and went with it. And I was left.

You know, they torture us all during all this time. They took a week, that we didn't even have time to think about it. A week later, they took Rosalie's mother, with her sister and brother. They want to take her, but she want to stay with me. And mother told her that she can't leave her. You see, we are dating almost two years, but who was thinking about marriage, about anything. It was so everything upside down.

You know, we just were thinking about surviving. And she told me she cannot leave. She cannot leave. She was going to leave in no condition. I said, I know I have to marry her. And that's what I'm thinking about it. And I will.

And when they took her mother, with her sister, the little brother I remember, same time they took my brother, which was a year younger than me, one and a half year younger, and my cousin. And when they took them, we start kind of not be sure if this is the right things we're doing. But everybody was doing.

You couldn't make a decision what to do. How could you make this? Whatever you do, it's wrong. And if you hide him, they used to go around and check. Whomever they caught hiding, they killed him right away. How could you make a decision?

I remember they-- her parents-- her mother with the brother, sister, they took. They took, and I have a note from my cousin-- they brought it from the wagons-- that all young men they put outside. But my brother was so smart, he saved his life. He ran away and got himself to transport. Three days later I found out that really these boys what they took out, they brought them back to ghetto because they were young boys for work.

She couldn't be smart. You can you imagine how this affect me, living with it. And then-- but after we got settled down, it wasn't time to settle down. I moved to Rosalie to our apartment. We liquidate her apartment. It wasn't too much to liquidate. We left everything. Whatever furniture was in her house, I moved into our.

And she moved in. I was left with her and my sister, already about a year older than me. She moved in with her sister. But two days later we married. Married-- this was a marriage, but we have obtained witness, and we have a Jewish wedding then. We brought somebody in from the city that will be-- not actually in city that we're married.

And after we're married, I moved in with my wife in the second room. And my sister was living in her room by herself. This took but around, I would say, several weeks. One day I went out to work and came back from work. I noticed that they're again transporting people from ghetto.

But they didn't took Rosalie. I don't know. Some little German told her to be [GERMAN]. You know what this means? You're a good looking girl. Left her-- just luck. Everything was just depending on luck. He left her. And I came back, and I have her back. And I found my sister too. Where my sister was, I don't know even.

Then they were they were tightening up on us. You see, they didn't give you time even to think about other things, just about survival. I was talked in many times to join the underground. But how could I? All these years because I took care of my mother, my parents and her mother. Now I have just two left. How can I leave him? And then I was afraid.

I was afraid, if I go and they find out, they were shooting the rest of the family. How could I take a chance like this?

Then they made the ghetto smaller. They moved us in together in one room with about eight people, one small room. And I remember, for my family it was just me, my sister, Rosalie. We were then married. And then were a mother with a son and a daughter, two or three other people, all together. Just can't even explain to you how we lived. This wasn't living.

Rosalie's grandmother was still alive. I remember, she used to go visit her. How she survived, I don't even know. But I remember she used to go visit her. And they start tightening up on us all the time, more and more killing, robbing. People were still-- anytime you turn, people were disappeared, or somebody was killed, or somebody was tortured.

We lived like this, I think again, several-- two, three, or four months. Then they moved us to Plaszow concentration camp. This was around, oh, I would say, three miles maybe this time, about 5 or 6 kilometers from where the ghetto was. And you just could take with you whatever you could.

I know I took my wife with me. And my sister stayed there. She send all pick us up. And then, you know, I was waiting until they get her up there. And beginning when they took us in ghetto, I could become a policeman. You know, the Jewish policeman to watch young people. But you have to be nasty, you know, to beat your own people, robbing people. And I just couldn't do it.

I went out first day. And it just didn't work for me. I just-- they throw me out right away, just boot me out of it. I just couldn't do things like this. How can you just [INAUDIBLE]. But a lot of people did it, just to save themselves. It's just hard to explain what hunger, poverty, and will to live can do to people. It's awful.

Everybody turned against you. If it comes to life, mother used to-- I remember when they moved us to ghetto, mothers used to leave kids to save themselves because they didn't have choices. And in ghetto, they close us in in barracks, men separate, women separate.

They were just like shelves. It wasn't so bad in Plaszow as it was in Auschwitz, when I was later. But the women were separate, and the men were separate. And you have to just sneak in to see-- I have to sneak into see Rosalie or to see my sister.

But when I was then in ghetto, I still have-- I know they brought from somewhere my aunt with my sister, with small, three little kids. The kids were about around-- I was there early in 20s, 23 or 24. No, I was about 23-- 22, 23. And she has still small, little kids. But the youngest was about three, five, and maybe eight.

Then I have one of my mother's brother. He was, too, my uncle, but he was older than me. He was in Polish

Army. They took him in prison, and then they moved him there. Now, this, my other sister with the three kids, she has a husband, too, with her. Then Rosalie has an aunt with a small cousin, which one was about seven years old. And they know about everything about families.

I remember one day I came home, and they drag Rosalie out to work. Well, I never have a position there. But I always could get myself out from work because people-- see, Jews were doing what they were ordered. But if a Jew have any power, they always could get away with everything because they never bothered me.

And I remember, they took her to work. I just came out. They took her out. They didn't say the work. And where I was working-- see, we used to systematically starve there because you couldn't live on the food they give you. They used to make Appells. For instance, somebody escaped. They took his family, made on front-- they put all the people outside. And they hang on front of everybody, kids.

I remember one time, they hang a little boy. The boy wasn't more than 15 years old. And the rope broke. See, it's an international law, when the rope breaks, you should let him go. He picked him up again and hanged him. And when the rope was breaking, he just shoot him in the head. And we stayed and watched this. We were watching it. And this happened almost-- this was just a daily routine each day.

When I was going out to work, I was going out to work. They were picking us up, German soldier. Really was a German soldier. It was the Ukrainian, which would work with the German. And they were worser than the German soldiers. They hated us just because we were Jews. Even Polacks hated me.

I remember that one time they were carrying me, and a boy just came with a knife and hit me. I still have a place here where he cut me with a knife, put a knife in my hand and just told me that the time has come Jews. It's for you this way. And the Ukrainians just laughed and took us to work.

And another-- next day happened to another boy this way. I was going out like this several-- oh, many times, several weeks, or even months. And I decided that it's hard to make a living. I noticed that they have aluminum. How you call it? Blocks, aluminum, small aluminum blocks. I just plain stole them and smuggled them in in ghetto and sold them. And this way we made a living. Was another way out.

I remember one time, somebody told the watchman, something fishy about him and check him. And I have it here in back pocket. And he took me outside. And that's just plain luck. Took me from top to bottom and checked me, but I didn't touch my pocket in back. And he let me through. That's just plain luck. People will tell you there were heroes-- just plain luck, couldn't be a hero.

Then in this work, there was in charge one Polish engineer. I don't know. I would say-- I would say all Polacks hate Jews, but just 90%. There were few of them maybe helped, but 90%. And he just used to torture us there in work.

I worked there but I-- well, let me put it this way. I never have a grade up, but I was always having a job that I was telling other people what to do. I couldn't get on top because if you get on top, you got to be mean and beat. And I just couldn't do things like this. It just wasn't-- I just-- I just didn't have it-- to save yourself.

And I remember one day it happened, one of our boys did something. And this Polish engineer came and hit him. Well, I ignored it. And I ignored it the second day. Then third day, I just couldn't stand it. And I came nice to him-- why did you do it? And he said, you dirty Jew, shut up, and hit me too. I said, why did you hit me? He hit me again.

And I said, you better stop it because it's a limit what a person can take. He hit me again. When he hit me again, I just hit him back. And we start fighting. What's happened, the whole group start fighting. And they took us over-- we were about 11 boys. It was my fault because I created the whole problem. But I didn't mean wrong. You know, just a limit-- you can take what you can take.

They accuse us of sabotage. And then came a group from concentration camp to bring us up. We were about, I think, about 11 boys there. When we were marching, one of these watchmen said, oh, don't be a

stupid Jew. Give me whatever you have and run back or they will kill you. You know they will kill you. But then how could I go?

He said, I'm going to close my eyes. Run. How could I go? If I would run, I have upstairs, like I told you, there was my wife, my sister. There was an aunt with three small kids, her husband, and another uncle. And besides this was a law. For one man who escaped, they killed 50-- first, the man's family, closest and closest friend. Now, how could I escape? How could I?

I remember there was one boy, he has a wife and children. He wanted-- and I kepted him with power not to let him do because first they would kill the whole group. They would kill us anyway. Sabotage, we know we're going for that.

And he talked me into it. I wouldn't do it. And we came up. I remember, I came upstairs. Rosalie was standing crying, watching me. She asked me what's happened. What could I tell her what's happened? My luck again, which was plain luck. Before they brought me up, they caught 50 people smuggling food.

Before they caught him with smuggling food in ghetto, they took a group of prisoners, made him make a big hole, put all 50 in a hole, put around all these Ukrainian what worked for them, and shoot them, and buried them. And they brought me a half hour later. When they brought me, he was so eaten up with these dead people and saw young boys coming in. He just said, well just beat him up and let him go to work, hard work.

You see, a lot of people will tell you what heroes they were. It's just plain luck. What could you be a hero? And then I could escape, but how could I? And I know what I'm facing when I went up. But how could I? He even told me, what's the difference? They're going to kill them anyway. But I said, at least not on my account. I couldn't live with it. How could you live with it?

I remember they brought me up, put me in hard work. They beat up everybody. But it just happened, they were all boys from my town. They know me. They didn't even beat me up. They just let me go through. They didn't-- a few they hit, but me they didn't even hit, and put me in work.

And I remember, Goeth was his name, the man in charge to it. He used to go out. You have to salute and answer him a question very straight when he asked you. And if not, he shoot you. My luck again, he approached me. And I just lost my tongue. I didn't know what to say. He just pushed me and went away from me. Plain luck, I'm telling you. I'm just wondering about the whole world, how it is.

And then I couldn't get out anymore. See, I was-- they wouldn't let us-- they wouldn't-- they stopped the whole group. They wouldn't let us out. We're working in ghetto. This happened about a week or two. Then they decided, after two or three weeks, they're going to send me out again and let me go to work. I went to work. This man never bothered me anymore, never hit anybody.

I was kind of scared to smuggle anymore because he was especially watching me and especially checking me. And one day I came up, and Rosalie was gone. I turned white. Then, how they didn't kill me, I don't know. I used to jump on everybody, beat everybody, hit everybody.

[CRYING]

Excuse me. I'm sorry. They tried to keep me. They called police. They beat me. I just didn't care. Put me down to hard work-- I couldn't help myself. One day, second day, and then I notice a transport. People were going-- sending people to transport. My sister, I just have my sister and this uncle. He was my cousin. I don't-- they begged me to settle down. But I just couldn't get myself together anymore.

And next transport they have, I run into it. Because I told you, it's going to same direction they sent her. But they sent us to Auschwitz. You know, when they put us in a wagon we're about 12 people. When we hear Auschwitz, you're already dead because it's a death camp.

They kept us in a way like this, three or four days. Then we came to Auschwitz. They took us clothes off. I remember there was this thing. I have little snapshots with me of my family, and they took it away from me.



They shaved a person from top to bottom, your head, everywhere, put me in clothes, put me in a barrack.

First thing, they put us, and they segregate, left, right. I was very skinny, but I have big bones. It was my luck, what saved me. They always put me right because left was straight to the oven. And I went segregation like this, through about three days.

We didn't work. They just-- they just beat us, hit us. You see, in the beginning I used to jump and hit. But then you reached a point that you were scared. You don't want to be tortured. You don't want to be beat. And then I was by myself. I didn't care anymore. Just I plain didn't care. Because when I would escape, there was no way to escape. They were watching you from all sides.

Then one day they told me you were assigned to Raisko. You know, they tattoo us. They put the numbers. When you lived there, in Auschwitz, you were not-- you didn't have a name. You just have a number. You were just a plain number. They never called you with a name, just a number.

And the barrack where they put me, we were about around 119 or 120 people. In charge, we have red signs, what mean political. We didn't have-- we didn't wear, in Auschwitz, the Star of David, just a red sign-- political prisoner. And then were the green prisoner, which one were gangsters, murderers. One of them, a German, was in charge.

Now in particular barrack where I was, shouldn't be more than 118 or 1120 people. And each day they added two, three, four. This means they let him know that they shouldn't have more. Whom he didn't like, he just beat him to death or kill him to death. No, not regular death, just torture him, beat him, then throw him out. I mean, each day two people disappeared. Some I saw what he did to them, but what could you do about it?

And then one day-- I was there about a few days. I was assigned they said Kommando Raisko. Raisko were the place where the crematoriums are. I just realized this was my end. I was scared. If I do anything, that man is going to shoot me. I told, I'm going to wait for occasion then I can escape. I remember in between-- when I can escape. But wasn't a way to do it because the concentration camp was about around-- 50 miles all over was just concentration, both sides. Everywhere was just concentration camp, different side of camp.

They send me to Raisko. Well, I thought it's the end. When they send me there, they send me to a laboratory. I remember, they sent me to a part where Dr. Miesel, I remember his name. He was a professor. He was finding medicine to cure diseases. It was a Jewish fellow, and they forced him to do it.

When they tried it on me, I didn't see him. Then after they tried, they-- he was making medicine to cure diseases. And they were trying it on human. And I was brought. I was the Guinea pig. And they tried it first. They tried it when they brought me. And it just happened, it was good. See, whatever happened, it's just I don't know how to call it because a lot have called themselves heroes. But it just was good.

And when I got eye-to-eye with him, he liked me. Right now, he got kind of-- kind of he liked me. We start talking to each other. He told me about his life, about his daughter, which one she has on Irish papers in town. And my luck again, his assistant got sick-- same day. He came to me and offered me that he wants me to work with him. And I said, well, I was never assigned here. What do I know about medical things?

Don't worry about it. I'll help you with it. We'll try you. And he start showing me little things. The next day, they try-- he made another medicine. They tried it. They tried it on me. He said you can't because I need him. My assistant got sick.

And he prepared me for it, showed me a few things when they come, that I can show him that I know. Now, what you call luck again-- he made some medicine, which they forced him to it. They took a Russian young boy and tried it. Next day he was dead. Serious?

But I was working with him. And what I saw, well, I don't know. One time I saw they brung a young girl. I don't know that people have ideas like this. They put her to sleep and cut off the arm from inside here till here. And you can imagine how I'll be. I was standing outside to watch it. And took this arm, add it here,

how it's going to cure. It was a Jewish girl too.

Then most of them, they were bringing. You know, they were showing the world that they are killing Jews. But most of them they were bringing Russians and Gypsies-- kill them same way. Well, it's hard to explain to you what I saw there during all this year, what I got used to, what experiments they did on people. I just had any kind-- any kind, just like they make on rats here, everything was experimented on people.

And I noticed one day that they have a garage. And they're bringing meat in for the soldiers in this garage. When they brought-- For instance, they brought a half cow. Before the meat came in in kitchen for the soldiers, the meat came in laboratory, and they tested it wasn't poisoned or was not sabotage on it. And I watched it.

Before war, I used to work in day. In nights I used to go to school because in day I used to work to help up home. I used to work on bicycles. And I told the professor that I would like to work in garage, to help out. What do I know? I know about bicycles, and I thought I can help out.

And what's happened, they have a couple men, they didn't speak German. And I spoke-- I understood pretty well German and could explain to them. They decide [INAUDIBLE] when they put me in garage.

When they put me in garage-- and by the way, I got in charge to the garage. I was the-- I wouldn't say the-- how you say it? The foreman. You know, whoever came to the garage, brought anything, they came to me and I told them what to do because I didn't know much about it, but I was helping. I was trying. Working on the bicycles, I was pushing myself to everything.

Then when I came back to the concentration camp, I have idea. I came to the man who was in charge, the kapo man, you know? I used to go each day to these Appells. And I was scared one day, you know, how long can you get away with it? I give him an offer, that I know a way how to get meat for him, that he can have each day a good meal.

You see, each barrack was built for [PERSONAL NAME], the kapo man. I mean, the man in charge, he lived like a king. See, everybody's life depended in his hands. Then he has his own tailor. He has his own cook. He has his own table. He has his three or four boys who are sitting around him and helped him with everything.

And you know, I was trying to get around him too, to just to save my life because it was hard for me. And I told him I have an idea how I can bring meat for him. He can eat meat each day. I was this, about around about then, about, I would say, 24 years old, not exactly. And he asked me, what you want to do? Well, I said, but you have to-- I need-- and doing it before with the chickens, I have an idea how to do it.

See, you didn't wear anything on you, just the clothes. You see the clothes what we have in-- just a jacket and pants, not underwear. And just sandals, no socks. How can you smuggle in meat? You know, when you were coming in each time, they check you from top to bottom, see everywhere, touch you everywhere. I told him, well I hope you don't mind. It looks nasty, but it isn't. I told him, you sew me off a sack that I can put it between my legs. And so we go from back here and around. You see the idea?

And he did it. And each day, when the meat came in, I cut off a big piece of meat. I don't know how-- and put it in sack. Nobody saw it. The boys working with me, they didn't see it. They were-- I say "boys." They were men in 20s just like I was, young men. And when they checked it, and Dr. Miesel told me that the meat is good, I bend it between my legs all around and tied it here to my belt.

Did you understand exactly what I did? And they touched me, but he didn't know what they were touching. It's kind of funny. And this way I survived. See, when I came back to concentration camp, I brought him this thing. I became his "my Jew," you know. I was sitting with him on table. He right now put me outside. My life-- you know, I didn't have a bad life there, bad.

He right now sew me off tailor-made clothes. I was sitting with him on table. Everybody told you a story like this? [LAUGHS] Very unusual story. And this was in a camp where they were killing people. And I survived like this with him. You see, I wasn't anymore worried about my life because I gained weight then. I have

good food.

Well, maybe it was a selfish attitude. But you know, everybody has to live some ways. In a few days, I found out that they brought a group from Kraków, people I was raised with them. And I found there a second cousin. They brought her. She was the next-- behind the-- how you call it? In another barrack. And I used to take out food, just helping them out because I have enough.

This continued like this-- now, what I'm going to tell you what's happened there, how they used to beat people and kill people. I didn't went any more on Appells. He kept me in barrack. And he came out, that he has his four or five people which will work for him. He knows they're there. And he was responsible for them, which means I didn't have to go out anymore on these Appells. I lived like this almost a year.

He has to change the tapes.

Isn't this a funny story.

Yeah. It's amazing. Bobby, you want to take the-- we got a--

You know, I'm just telling you shortage. It's hard to tell you everything, each thing what's happened.

I know.