

Yeah. OK. We're fine. We can go ahead and go.

Oh, good.

Please state your name, birth date, and place of birth.

My name is Henry Sarna. The Jewish name is Chaim. Born 7-7-1922 in Bialystok, Poland.

What memories do you have of your family before the war?

Well, members of my family-- I come of a family of four brothers, no sisters, and Mother and Father. My father worked as a bookkeeper. My mother took care of the house.

And we went to school, didn't go to college, or high school. Was like a middle class family. We enjoyed life.

We felt anti-Semitism in the city where I was born, but not really too hard because it was a 50/50 population. There was 120,000 people, which 60,000 was Jewish and 60,000 non-Jews. It was a Jewish life in Bialystok, two yeshivas.

What anti-Semitism did you encounter as a youth before the war?

Well, I was young then. But to encounter anti-Semitism, I was beaten up once as a Jew from a couple of Polish boys, which I gave a little bit in them, too. I were not the type to give in so easy.

Then when I was a little older I remember that I had to go to a school, to learn a trade school, to learn a trade. And we had to get up in the morning, stand up in the morning to get up with the rest of the students, and sing a song, a religious song, a Christian religious song. And being Jewish, you had no choice but you had to do it.

And the teacher, the way he spoke about Poland, most of the time when we had a political hour, he spoke about Palestine and we have problems with the Jewish people because their birth rate is high. In a nice way, he didn't come out so straight. So the anti-Semitism was blooming even in a cultural and educational people, which knew a little bit more about Jewishness than a plain person.

Were you or members of your family involved in Zionist Organizations.

Yes, me myself, I was involved, the Zionist organization from Hashomer Hatzair, which is a little left-oriented. And I grew up in this organization, with this organization. Which I started to be a little guy, they called it [NON-ENGLISH], went all the way up until the war.

And my father was a member of Poale Zion. He was an active member because he believed in Zionism. I followed his footsteps. Our family did believe in Zionism, let's say it this way.

Given the amount of anti-Semitism and the fear of Hitler, did you ever entertain the thoughts of going to settle in Palestine?

The thoughts were in the family. But going was a different story. It wasn't so easy to pick yourself up and go.

What were the difficulties?

The difficulties was family ties, very much so. Because I guess I can remember, my family amounted to about maybe 70 or 75 people, which I had three uncles and two aunts and my mother. And they all were married and had families.

And they spoke about migrating. But when you have a family, you're settled for so many hundreds of years, you really didn't think about it, that you should get up and go. Me myself, because I belonged to Hashomer Hatzair, I had different

ideas about going to Israel. But circumstances didn't come up that I should get up and migrate to Israel.

What were your thoughts or the thoughts of your family as Hitler was getting stronger in Germany, in the early '30s before the war broke out?

The thought was that another anti-Semite came up to power. And we thought of this, first as he came up, this first is going to fall down. But it didn't happen.

What memories do you have when the Germans first entered your town? How old were you?

When the Germans entered my town, I was-- it was September 1939. I was 17 years old, a little over 17. They marched in very much power with machine guns, which we never see machine guns, brand new motorcycles.

They bombed the railway, a few more places with planes. It was a chaos. And as soon as they marched in, they took over the middle of the town.

And in our house, I remember, we had a lot of cigarettes. And I'll tell you a tiny little story. When I went to the middle of the town to ask a German soldier he should give me bread because we were short on bread, short on food in 1939 for the cigarettes, he says get away, you Jew, and took this the bag net and put in my rear end.

And when I had to go to the hospital they called the hospital *Świętego Rocha*, it's a Polish name, the Holy Roch, the Dr. Fedorowicz which was the then doctor on duty said, I'm the first casualty from the German army in Bialystok. They fixed me up.

And it hurted for a while. That was it. But I was surprised that the German army was so powerful when they marched in 1939.

I understand that the Russians also invaded Bialystok.

After a week, but the German army was a week in Bialystok. They hung, I think 7 or 10 people, which they wanted to go and get some sugar or something. And they wanted to show an example for the people, which was some of them were Jewish and some Polish. And everybody was scared to death right away. Because we knew that they meant business.

So we stayed at home and waited for the Germans to go. Because we heard through the news that the Russian army eventually, any day, will march in. So the Russian army marched in November the 17th, 1939.

It happened-- the war started-- when did the war start, in September? So a month later, they marched in.

And the Germans came back.

The Germans, no. When the Russians marched in and the Germans marched out, this I'll never forget. At the middle of the town, they saluted each other. The Germans gave their salute, the military, the fascistic salute. And the Russians gave their Bolshevik salute. And it was funny to see that the fascism and communism on one street salute each other. Was in 1939.

This was part of an agreement between the Nazis and the Russians.

Nazis and the Russians, right.

But in 1941, the Germans returned.

In 1941, the Germans attacked Russia, 22 of June. And as soon as they attacked Russia, everything was destroyed around Bialystok. Because they attacked very fast.

So me and two brothers of mine said to the family, the younger brother stayed home, that we have to run away. The father didn't want to go. Mother didn't want to go. So we picked ourselves up and we marched by foot.

I understand that you thought of joining the resistance. What happened?

This was later. When we couldn't go any farther, we went to a town, they call it Volkovysk, which is about, I would say, maybe 50 or 60 miles from Bialystok. And when the German army-- they used to call it the [NON-ENGLISH], a ring fight, which they took over Minsk before they took over Bialystok. They captured hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers.

So we turned around. We saw we can't go any further. We came back home.

When we came back home, all the trouble started. There was talk about a ghetto, no food. And we were ready to move.

We moved. We lived out of the-- well, it was a mixed population, a mixed neighborhood. And when they told us we have to move into the ghetto, we had to find a place.

Where we found a place, we had to carry everything on our shoulders, because there was no horse and buggy and no trucks. It took a couple of days. And they made the ghetto. And we stayed in the ghetto.

Describe life in that ghetto.

Life in that ghetto was miserable because they took you out to work, especially the young. They didn't pay you any at all, no money. They only gave you some food. Sometimes they gave you a little bit of soup. Sometimes they gave you a loaf of bread.

And the places where you worked, they used to beat you up. You had to wear the Star of David. And you couldn't walk on the sidewalk. You had to walk on the street. If you would have been killed or a dog would have been killed, they paid the same penalty for killing a dog by truck or by car or a Jew.

And they had another deal. If they catch you, they put you by the wall, and they take a little hammer, and hit you, not hard, hit you right in the center of your head. They used to call it the Judische Schande, the Jewish shame.

What did you do in the ghetto?

In the ghetto, the first job what I had is I worked because I was a auto mechanic. First job I had, I worked for the SS, not far from the railroad station. We'd start at 7 o'clock. We worked till we finished 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock night. No payment for it, except food.

And we came late from work. When we came to the ghetto, my wife was very kosher. And my wife-- my mother, excuse me.

My mother was very kosher. She didn't want to eat her food. She suffered a lot because she knew it wasn't kosher food.

Did you see any executions by the SS firsthand?

No. What I saw is, where I worked as a mechanic, when they send out trucks to check to get the cattle onto trucks and bring them to Bialystok and make salami and bologna and all kinds of stuff, sent it to the front line. Some of the trucks came back. They were all beaten up and shot up. Because they already mentioned that there was guerrillas, partisans in the forests. That was in 1941, fighting the Germans.

In 1943, your family was removed from the ghetto. Do you remember the circumstances?

Yeah, I remember it very well. My father was a volunteer fireman. So because he was a volunteer fireman, they let him for the last ones to be in the ghetto. And when everybody was gone, they told us we have to move, too.

So they took us to a place which there was a Jewish high school, put us in a big place. And they told us we have to wait for transportation to send us to a labor camp. We stayed there, I think, two days and two nights without food. They didn't give us no food.

It was raining. It was terrible. Shooting was going on. But we didn't know what was happening. There was shooting going on between the Jewish underground with the Germans, we don't know.

The day came when they told us we have to go to the railroad station. When we came to the railroad station, they took the women and put them in different cars. And the men in the front of the train.

At that time, when we started rolling, when we came to Treblinka, which was not far from Bialystok, they unhooked the cars from the women and pushed them back in Treblinka camp. And we kept on going, me and my father and three brothers. We went--

Where was everyone taken?

My mother was left in Treblinka. And we were taken to Majdanek Lublin. In Lublin, they gave us entlausung. And they gave us some clothes, there, clothes. And they told us they're going to send us to different camps.

I was together with my father and the three brothers. And I said now is the time that each person from our family, each member of our family should go separate ways. Because who knows whether we're going to survive it. And my father said, may he rest in peace, he said, we're going to stick together. The family is going to stay together.

And I picked myself up and asked for a mechanic. I said, I'm a mechanic. And they took me out from Lublin. And they sent me to Blizyn.

What happened to my family is, as you know, it's written in my testament. You want me to say it, what was happening?

When I was in Blizyn in 1944, there was rumors that the camp in Majdanek, in Lublin was destroyed. But we only heard rumors because we couldn't listen to the news. We didn't get no newspapers.

So one day, because the camp in Blizyn was making boxes, wooden boxes for the military to carry ammunition. So they used to come from Lublin. Because they had a lot of forests in Lublin, logs for the boxes, large logs.

In one log was written in Yiddish, burned out with a rod, hot rod, that this and this day the Germans came into the camp, closed the camp. Didn't let nobody out from the barracks. It was written on the log. And whoever wanted to get out was shot and whoever stayed in the barracks was put up gasoline around the barracks and burned to death. This I know, because I ask a lot of questions about my family after the war, if anybody heard that my father and the three brothers maybe went to another camp or something.

And this what happen. They said they never heard. That means that my father and my three brothers died in Lublin in the camp.

You were then taken to Auschwitz. Describe your first day there.

Well, when we came to Auschwitz by train, and there was shooting going on, too when we were going with the train. They said that Polish guerrillas wanted to take over the train, but they couldn't do it because there were so many Germans with machine guns.

When we came to Auschwitz, they entlassen us and they told us to go into the barrack. I was not long in Auschwitz. I was only 48 hours.

And the next day, they told us to go out on appell. And we stayed in line. And we got a number tattooed on our arm.

And when they asked me if I'm a mechanic, I'm a mechanic again. And they told me that not far from Auschwitz there is a labor camp by the name of [NON-ENGLISH], in which they are constructing a refinery of synthetic coal, gasoline from coal. And they need mechanics.

So as soon as I put up my hand, they took me. Of course, I went to Auschwitz. I went to the crematorium, which was visible. You could see that they used to put dead trees, not dead, they just put branches around the fence.

Did you know what was happening at Auschwitz when you arrived?

I know that we're going to be goners. We could smell the corpses burned, too. But the only chance which you had is to get away from Auschwitz.

And I said I'm a mechanic. And they needed a mechanic in [NON-ENGLISH], and I went. Even being in [NON-ENGLISH], which is, I don't know, maybe 20 miles from Auschwitz or 30 miles, some days when the wind was blowing to the right direction, you could smell the smell of burning flesh and bones.

And in this camp in [NON-ENGLISH], which I worked as a mechanic, God forbid if you get sick. You shouldn't get sick. If you get sick, there used to come a special ambulance, take you away to Auschwitz. And you came in the crematorium and out through the chimney. And this is the way. We lived with that for almost a year.

I worked with Russian POWs where to build the chutes. When the coal went in, from chutes used to go and crush it and then put it another process, another process. And then the synthetic gasoline supposed to come out.

So Italian prisoners worked in the mines, which were the coal mines, which was almost at the same place. And Russian soldiers and us used to put the mechanical work together, the chutes, and all kind of stuff.

As the Red Army approached camps such as Auschwitz, the Germans started marching off inmates of such camps toward the West, to camps in Germany. These, of course, were called death marches. You survived one of these infamous death marches. Please describe what the death march was like.

Well, what happened is one day when we were in [NON-ENGLISH], we saw three planes parked not far from camp. And a rumor was going on that the front is very close. And that was night.

All of a sudden, next morning they woke us up very early. Appell, everybody should be on the place to check us, how many we are. And we have to evacuate the camp, they said.

So I was lucky enough. I went into the kitchen and got some sugar, which helped me out to stay alive. And they started us to take us by foot. We walked by foot from the camp to Gleiwitz. And we had no food, just walk.

These weak ones which couldn't walk, after all, no food, you didn't have enough strength, even if you're young. When they stepped off the march, they were shot right in front of us, on both sides of the highway. So we had no choice to keep on going.

We went into a barn once at night to sleep over. They kept us under guard. We found some potatoes. We were lucky to find some potatoes. They helped out.

And next morning when we got up, they told us we have to march again. So we started marching. A motorcycle came back and said the Russians are only 3 or 4 kilometers from us.

So they told us turn around. Go that a-way. So we went that a-way, until we found a railroad station. They told us to get on the trains, open cattle trains. And they started us carrying, Austria, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia.

And this train, I'll tell you one episode which is important to know, that the way the Germans were so sadistic, the soldiers. And going by train, they stopped once in a while the train. So some of our people, the Jewish people, the young guys figured they have a choice now to disappear, escape. The Germans didn't pay attention to them.

So they jumped off the open car, went down, especially places when the train was on the lower part and it was like a little hill on top, a wild place, you know. And the person started walking up the hill, weak, with this uniform from the concentration camp.

And the Germans stayed and waited until they let him come up all the way up to the top. Then they shot him and they rolled down. And this was going on steady, like a play. And we were scared to death to do anything.

But I found once a way to escape. When we were in Czechoslovakia, and my friends from Bialystok, we were all together. And we said that we're going to jump tonight, jump the train. Because the train was going empty open, winter time 1944. Was very cold, no food.

So the only way was to jump and maybe we can join the partisans, Czech underground. I spoke to a few guys from my home town. And they said we'll do it.

I found myself-- I pushed myself back to the wall of the car, the railroad car. And I fell asleep. When I got up and I started calling names, where is Josef, where is Moshe, where is Chaim, they had jumped. And I was all by myself. All my friends jumped.

So I said who wants to jump? Who wants to run away? I had a Hungarian fellow, very tall guy. It's in the testament, very tall guy.

He said I'll jump with you. So we had to watch the way you have to jump. Because you can't jump straight into the telephone pole because you're dead. And the train was going 40, 45 miles an hour.

But we knew what we supposed to do. Between two cars was machine guns, one against each other. And then in the middle of the two cars, you could go off, stay on the little platform steel platform, and just watch that the Germans shouldn't see you and jump. And not to jump at the telephone pole.

Anyways, this guy is a Hungarian Jew, must have weighed about 250 pounds, very strong fellow. He said I'll jump first because I'm older than you. He was in the 30s.

But I told him I'm going to jump first. No, he says. I'm like your father. I'm going to jump first.

And he said the Jewish saying [HEBREW]. We both jumped over. They didn't see us. And we stayed on the platform. He jumped first and they opened up machine gun on him. Then I jumped.

And I jumped and I fell down. And I thought I'm dead because I was shot in the nose, shot in the head.

When I came to my senses and washed myself off with the snow, I started looking for my buddy, the one that jumped. So I had to walk, maybe, I don't know, a couple hundred feet. I went over to him. He was still alive.

But his guts was all out because they shot him right in the stomach. And he was a strong man. He says help me, help me.

I said I can't help you. I'm a little guy. I'm hungry. I'll try to get some help if I can.

So I helped him out. I lifted up his head. And I gave him some snow in his mouth, washed his face off, covered his guts.

And I started walking back. Where the train was going this way, I was walking the opposite way.

But I came close to a bridge. I saw a German soldier on the bridge. I said to myself, uh oh. I can't go.

So what did I do? I went over the railroad tracks on the other side and started going straight ahead, at the fields. Maybe I'll find somebody who's going to help my friend that is wounded and help me out, at least give me a little bit of food because we hadn't been eating for days. Water we could have, from the snow.

So I walked and I walked and I walked. And then I walked in-- in Europe, they have these crows which are gray and black and white. They're big. They're not in the States. A crow in Europe is maybe, I would say, about two feet long.

I stepped on one because they were sleeping already. It was started getting night. And when they came up and started screaming, wah, wah, wah, I thought I stepped on a hand grenade. I thought I'm dead again. My heart fell out.

I walked another couple-- maybe a kilometer or two, went into a little village. And it started getting light. So I went into-- they have the straw in Europe up on the attic, they put it away in the barn, out of the house.

And it was a ladder. And I walked up and covered myself to sleep over at night. Because what am I going to go, it's night. I don't know where I am.

But maybe 6 o'clock in the morning, I heard talks in Czech. The lady said you swept up the floor. And look at it, it's full of straw. Because when I walked up, some straw fell down. He said it might be a animal. I'm going to go up and check it.

So he went up. And he pulled the straw away. And he saw a face, blood, you know, wounded to my head, my nose and hungry and cold.

So he starts speaking in Czech [CZECH]. And I understand Czech, because Polish is-- Polish, Russian, Czech is-- you can communicate. So I told him I ran away from the Germans and please give me some food.

And I won't stay here. I'll go away. I'm going to try to hide.

So he goes over to the door. And said the same thing I said to him, he said to his wife. And his wife said no. Get him out.

Because if the Germans will find him-- excuse me-- they'll burn down the house with the barn, with us. So they pushed me out from the barn. It was already daylight. And I couldn't go nowhere.

So I walked a little farther. And in Europe, they have-- it looks like little homes. They put a straw and they put a big post in the middle. And they put a straw around it. And they keep it for winter time to take it for the horses.

So I went in one of them. And I stayed there. And I wanted to get concentrated what I'm going to do. I stayed. And I watched. It was very quiet.

And maybe a few feet away was another home, a bigger home. I figured maybe I'll go in there and I can steal some food or maybe somebody can help me with some food. Because I was almost starving, cold.

When I went into that house in the kitchen, started looking into the cabinets if I can find some food, there was a Czech lady with a child on her hand. As soon as she saw me, she started screaming a murderer is in my house! A bandit is in my house! Help! Help!

Because I looked like one because I was full of blood. She opened up the window. And Sturmabteilung from the brown uniforms came in, brown uniform with a black tie.

And he said-- when she started screaming, I ran out through the door. And I started running. Because I didn't want to get

caught from the [NON-ENGLISH], SA.

I ran, I don't know, maybe 100 feet. Deep snow, because it was a cold winter. So I didn't see his face. I just ran. All of a sudden, I hear [NON-ENGLISH]. Stop because I'm going to shoot.

So he shot a few times with his revolver. [NON-ENGLISH], hand up. So I figured maybe I still have maybe a chance, maybe I'll be alive. I'll run. He'll shoot me.

So he told me to turn back. And I came over to him. And he said where are you from. I told him I'm a Russian, I'm not a Jew, because I spoke Russian.

And the train where I was on, I went down to make a little-- what do you call it in English-- a little doody. And the train went. And that was my excuse.

So he says to me you come with me. And I said to him I'm not going anywhere. This is the end.

I've been in camps and in ghettos. And I have enough of my life. You've got to finish it now. I'm not going with you. Shoot me right here.

So when he heard my [? idea, ?] he says, I have no rights to shoot you. He was the officer. He said you'll come with me. We'll take you in the school, this little village school. And I have some guy which will take care of your wounds, give you some warm food, or hard drinks.

I thought he was lying, because I could never believe a German. But I had no choice. He doesn't want to shoot me.

So I went with him. He took me into the school. And they gave me some food. I'll never forget they gave me some bonbon candy, a piece of cheese, a piece of bread.

And the guy went in to each military bag, you know, and looked in from the soldiers and found something, some food and gave me. I ate it up right away. I was in heaven.

I was in [NON-ENGLISH], still alive. And the other guy came over. And he fixed me up with some anesthetic and put bandages on my head. And he told me to wait, sit down and wait. It was nice and warm.

And all of a sudden it was noon hour. Do you want to hear this story or not? It was noon hour.

Noon hour, all the soldiers came in. The Sturmabteilung soldiers with a brown uniform. Watch the deserters, they shouldn't run away from the front line. But when they came in into the main place where there was the stage from the school, they stood up in line. They took off their uniform because it's lunch hour.

And they brought the food from Prague, from the capital of Czechoslovakia, in a large container. So they stood up in line to get the food. And I was sitting and waiting. I don't know what's going to happen to me.

In the meantime, I'm a little filled up. It's warm. I'm happy.

After they were done over the food, when they served them, the guy that served, he asked me if I would like to have some food. I said yes. Jawohl.

So he gave me the food. It was potatoes and meat and all kind of ingredients, vegetables. And he gave me a little top of this [NON-ENGLISH], they call it. I put it in.

And it didn't take long. I finished it up. They didn't even give me a spoon. I finished it up like a dog.

So after I was done-- it was very spicy. After I was done with my food and the soldiers, the guy that gave the food to the

soldiers, the cook, he asked the soldiers if they would like to have some more, seconds. One came over and he said he'd like to have seconds. Then it must have been left over, maybe a gallon, or a gallon and a half of food inside this container.

So this cook was a funny guy. He wanted to see a little show. He says to me, you can have the food. But you'll have to put your head in inside the container with the spoon and eat it up.

So the container must have been two feet high, but a foot wide, or maybe a foot and a half wide. Being skinny the way I was, I put my head in inside the container, tilted the container a little bit, and started eating the food. And believe it or not, I finished up maybe a gallon or a gallon and a half of food. They laughed like crazy.

But you were still not a free man? You were imprisoned again.

Imprisoned, caught and imprisoned, and they told me that someone is going to come and take me from here. So after they were done eating, they told me that there was a truck waiting for me. They put me on the truck with two machine gun soldiers, with a driver.

I don't know how many miles I was from Prague because I can't tell, maybe 10 miles, 15 miles from the capital of Czechoslovakia. And they told me they're going to take me to Prague. So it took maybe an hour. I don't remember how long it took, winter time.

And when I came into Prague, in the outskirts of Prague was already in the outskirts of the Sturmabteilung was already an officer waiting there for me. And he was a Vlasov, that was an army which sold us all to the Germans with the generals, the officers, a Russian army. And he was a lieutenant of the Russian army. He wore a SS uniform.

Where were you imprisoned?

There where I come to it. I'm going to come to it. When he took me in, took me out from the truck and asked me a few questions, he said to me, I'm going to take you to the Gestapo headquarters in Prague. When he took me to Gestapo headquarters in Prague, he made a show of me, too. He opened up the doors in every office.

And they said, look at the Jude. He still wants to conquer the world. And I looked like a nobody, because I was full of blood and everything. Anyways, he took me into an officer from the Gestapo which was a civilian.

And he knocked on the door and told him that this is the guy who says he's a Russian. But he said I pulled already his pants down. And I beat him up plenty good. He beat me up. I thought I'm going to die there in Gestapo, on the steps. But here he is.

So the Gestapo man took me in and told me to sit down. He went out behind his desk. And it was a glass in front of it, took out a revolver from the drawer and put it next to me. And he asked me what would I like to have. I figured I'm the Gestapo headquarters. I'll be dead anyways. And I ate so much food, the German food was so spicy.

So I said, I'd like to have a drink of water. So he came over to get me a drink of water. And I guess he thought if I'm a military man, I'll take the revolver and try to defend myself, run away.

When he came back with the water, the revolver was laying there just the way it was. I drank the water. And he pushed a button. And another soldier came in.

And he said take this Jude to the down below. So he knew right away I'm a Jew, because I didn't grab the revolver to defend myself. I wasn't trained for it. I didn't go to the army.

So they took me down. It was way down. And I thought, especially going down in the basement of the Gestapo, they killed a lot of people. I thought this was the end. But it wasn't.

When they brought me down below, the officer which was in charge, that soldier opened up the door. They opened up the door and they pushed me in. And he gave me a push with his foot on my rear end and I fell. I fell on people. And I heard the people hollering, oy vey oy.

So I asked them. It was all completely dark. There was no windows then in this room.

I asked them who are they. They said Jews. I said wonderful. At least I'll die between Jewish people.

So next morning, they took us out. They put us on trucks. And they send us to [NON-ENGLISH]. Mala pevnost they call it in Czech. And when they took us into the mala pevnost, there where we went into prison.

Now you can ask me a question.

You were imprisoned at the small fortress of Terezin.

Right.

What was it like?

It was hell. It was worse than a camp. At least in a camp when you finish your work, in a camp or a concentration camp or a labor camp, before you go to work used to get a little piece of bread and a little bit of coffee, ersatz coffee. And then when you came home, you had a little-- some soup.

But as soon as they took us in this camp, we were, I think, about 12 or 14 people. They took us in in one room, big room. Which I remember it was two big rings on one wall and a little window on top, which you had to climb up. One had to climb up on the top of the other in order to get some snow from the window.

And we were in prison. Didn't know what they were going to do with us. It was the end of 1944 or the beginning of '45. I don't even know. We waited.

And we waited like this for five days. They didn't give us no food and no water. The only thing what kept us alive, one of the people which were in this room had a spoon. So one was standing up on the other's shoulders. And every day they scraped a little bit of snow to keep us going.

On the sixth day, they brought in a big barrel, a wooden barrel of water, ice cold water. And they said, you can drink. Now you can drink. Tomorrow you're going to get food.

So I don't know. Like I said before when I spoke to you that either it was fate or it was mazel, but the people that did drink the water, their guts turned over. And they died in front of me.

Because the cold water without food, I guess, had to do something. I'm not a doctor. I don't know about medicine. But about three or four of them died. In Polish, they say [POLISH] that means the guts is turned over upside down. I didn't drink the water.

Very few people survive that small fortress.

They took us out from this cell and they put us in another cell which was already a lot of Jewish people. There must have been over 300 in a large cell. And they didn't give us no food, no mattresses, no blankets.

We had to lay on the cement. And in order to keep us warm, because it was a very cold winter-- I mentioned already, in 1944, it was very cold-- We were laying like herrings one to each other, next to each other, sideways, to lay to keep us warm, one body with the other body.

And they used to give us a day, one day they used to give us a little bit of soup, maybe, like, a cup of soup, which was

most of it water. Next day, they gave us a slice of bread. And this was a starvation diet.

You lay until you die. And every day they used to take out corpses. The younger people had a little more in them. They could stay, maybe, a few days longer. The elderly died like flies. And water, you could have gotten as much as you wanted, just cold water.

We stayed in this cell, I don't know, maybe a couple of weeks, until it got less and less and less and less. And they told us we'll have to go now to other cells. They took us from this cell to a bunkhouse, which was completely separated from the main body of the camp. Because in this camp was POWs from France, England. I think was some American, too.

And they kept us. And they put us in in the bunkers. There was, I think, if I'm not mistaken, was 6 or 7 bunkers. You walked in, and each side was a bunker, separated.

Was a little room. I would say, let's see, maybe 8 feet by 12, or 8 by 10, very tiny little room. The center in the room is a toilet. From this toilet, you had to wash yourself, you had to drink the water from the toilet. Because there was no spoon, no fork, no nothing. And you had to lay on the cement.

And they kept us in this bunker day after day with the diet, which was a starvation diet, every day a little bit of soup and next day a little bit of bread. Until some of us really died off, quite a few. And one day they said they're going to make a selection. And the one that's going to be strong enough will go to work.

They took us out in the appell place, a big giant place. And they told us to run. How could we run? We've been sitting dead almost for maybe two months already.

And the SS man, was a lieutenant from the SS, said you have to run this way around. And the one that couldn't make it, which stopped or fell, told him to go to the left. And the one that did make it, he told them to go to the right.

I was lucky enough that in the same place was a guy that I worked before at Langen, at the construction where they wanted to make the refinery from the coal, from the synthetic gasoline. And when I saw him, I already almost fell because I didn't have no strength. And I came over to him and I mentioned his name. I forgot already. He was a political prisoner, a German.

And I said, do you remember me? I worked under you in this and this place. Please see that they should let me go to the healthy ones. Because I want to go to work.

So he went over to the lieutenant from the SS and said I worked with this man. And he's a good mechanic. And he's a good worker. Maybe you can let him go to the healthy ones. He says let him go to the right.

When were you liberated?

I was liberated May the 8th, 1945 exactly.

Can you tell us about the liberation?

First of all, before the liberation, we knew that the liberation is close because they said that a typhus epidemic-- typhoid, what do you call it, typhoid, typhus-- typhoid epidemic is in camp. I had it already in Blizyn, when I was in Blizyn. So you don't catch it twice.

And the Germans moved out. Everything what was running camp was from the Czechs themselves. Because there was a lot of Czech prisoners, too.

They cooked the food. They delivered the food. And there was a flax put out in the camp, a yellow flax, that it's epidemic in the camp. Don't go in. Thank God that they didn't march in, the Germans, to destroy us.

But when Rabbi Cooper sent me to the ABC for an interview about the commandery, and the assistant producer told me, I didn't know until then that there was a lake, or water was coming through to this camp. And he said that they had already the gates to open up and flood the camp completely to destroy us. But it didn't happen. So we were alive again.

And when we were liberated, the first thing I know when we were liberated is when I looked out through the window. I went from the bunker cell, because we had already a little food, they gave us more bread, to another cell. And we looked out through the window and see what's going on.

So we saw that the German soldiers were going in a big, giant bus, military bus. And they wanted to go straight to Austria or Germany, to run away. And the guerilla Czech fighters opened up fire on them. That's what I saw through the window.

And the bus was on fire. The soldiers jumped out from the bus. And they wanted to run away. And they was a fight. And some of them gave themselves up. Some of them got killed.

And the next morning, we were sleeping in this cell. A guy came in which spoke Russian. And he says the Russian army are here. You want to see a Russian soldier that liberated you?

Because he knew that we were Jews. So he says go into the other room. You'll see him. He's sleeping like a dead person.

Because they chased the Germans first. So I'll never forget. I went in in the second room. And I saw a Russian soldier laying on the floor and sleeping. Then I knew that I was liberated.

I understand that your name is listed on a monument to the dead. You are obviously very much alive. Can you tell us how this happened?

Exactly the way it happened is when I was already in the States in Youngstown, Ohio, and there were talks that the German government will have to pay repatriation to the victims that we can get a pension from the German government. But I will have to show where I was liberated. My wife was liberated in Bergen-Belsen, so she sent a letter to Bergen-Belsen. They sent her a paper that she was liberated and they even showed the cell where she was liberated and everything. With her, everything was fine.

But with me, because I was liberated in Czechoslovakia, and it was satellite of Russia, it wasn't so easy to get the paper. So I said to a lady which was in Youngstown, Ohio, she was in Czechoslovakia, I said, this is the situation. Please do me a favor and send out to the Red Cross or to Terezin, mala pevnost, that my name blah, blah, blah was liberated there. They should send me a paper that I was liberated from the camp.

It took exactly a year. It came a letter back from the Red Cross of Czechoslovakia. That why does Henry Sarna ask for a paper that I was liberated in the Czech lazaret or camp when he has been dead already since May the 8th, 1945 and his name is inscribed on a monument which is in this camp in Terezin festung.

So I took the paper. And they sent two copies. I sent the paper to Germany, the German authorities. And they right away agreed that I am entitled to get a pension.

When did you come to the United States? And what has your life been like?

Well, I came into the United States October 24, 1949 with General McRae, the ship, a transport, military transport. We stayed in New York a few hours. And my wife saw a cousin and the family, which they thought that she is dead, too. When she called them up, she said, I'm this and this and that. They fainted. They thought the whole family was destroyed.

And then next morning we went on a train. Because when I signed up to go to the United States, when I came to the New York Harbor, they told me I cannot go to Richmond, Virginia, because I was assigned to Richmond, Virginia as a displaced person. They said I have to go to Youngstown, Ohio.

I didn't know where Richmond, Virginia was. I didn't know where Youngstown, Ohio was. I said Youngstown, Ohio is good enough for me. What's the difference?

So we came to Youngstown, Ohio. The Jewish Federation took care on us. They gave us a hotel to stay until they find a job or a place where to stay.

And when I found a place where to stay, they found a job. I worked at a public still. It was hard in the beginning, very hard.

Then I worked in an aluminum factory. They used to make awnings, sidings, and doors, windows, and doors. And I made good money. And I started coming to my senses and to start getting a little insurance, a little bit furniture, and eat better, and enjoy American life. I was thinking even about buying a car, a used car.

But luck wasn't with us. Because our son Alan, may he rest in peace, he was seven years old then, he got sick. And then we found out that he had leukemia. And we took him to Cleveland Children's Hospital, then New York Memorial Hospital. And he passed away within six months. And he's buried in Youngstown, Ohio.

Which you never forget it. Because he was born in Germany. We came as a family and tough luck.

Mr. Sarna, I want to thank you very much for coming in today and sharing your experiences with us.

My pleasure.

Mr. Sarna, despite all the trouble and all the sorrow that you went through, your life took a change for the better when you came to California.

It sure did. Of course, I didn't come to California right away. We stayed in Youngstown for 15 years.

And I worked different jobs. I was a foreman, a building superintendent, supervisor. Then I got sick.

Well, the sickness started with my son who passed away. And I tore out my stomach. I had ulcers even in camp and it developed very bad.

And one time I started bleeding. And they took me to the hospital. And I had a heart attack. And then two months later, I had to go to the hospital again, had another heart attack.

And I spoke to the doctor. And the doctor said the best thing for you would have been you should go to a warmer climate. So I had a cousin here in the valley. And I communicated with her.

And she said sell the house. Our house in Youngstown, the sell-- the house was \$14,000. Sell the house. Quit your job. And come to us.

So I came. And she had an apartment for me in the valley, San Fernando Valley. In the beginning, I went to work for the Jewish Federation, when they were on Vermont, as a mechanic.

But we had a little bit of money from the house and a little bit of money from Germany. And we decided to go into business. So me and my wife bought a liquor store on Third Street here in Los Angeles. We stayed in the liquor store for six years and we did very well.

But then I decided to move to Israel. And I sold the business, sold everything out. Went to Israel, stayed in Israel over a year, couldn't make it.

Came back. Bought another store in West Covina, a Hallmark store. Had this store for 3 and 1/2 years.

And we built another shopping center. Didn't work out too good. Didn't make too much money because we had a lot of help. It was a big store.

We sold this store. And in a little over a year, we bought a store in the city again. It's five days a week store. It's a smoke shop, gift shop.

And we did very well. We still keep our home in West Covina. Our two kids, Charles and Penny, which Charles was born in Germany and my daughter was born in the States in Youngstown, Ohio. We would like to see more naches from them. They should be married, but they are not.

So Penny is in photography. Our son is helping us out in the business. And thank God, everything was in [? our-- ?]

Of course, we can never forget what we went through with the Holocaust, with the families that was destroyed, the hell what we went through. And why? Only because we were from Jewish faith.

But never forgive or forget. Life must go on.

Mr. Sarna, yours is an interesting life. Thank you very much for sharing it with us.

Thank you.