

Good morning, Joseph, and we appreciate you coming down and taking the time for this. I would also like to know where you were born and when you were born.

Yeah, I was born in a small town in Romania, called Buchin, September 13, 1923. My mother, her name was [PERSONAL NAME] And my father's name is Schimmel Zwig. He was--

And your name is?

My name is--

Your full name is?

My Jewish name is Yehuda Hillel. And I adopted the name of Joseph on the way, when we had to cross borders. When we had to cross borders, and people took people across the border from Germany to another place, like to France or to Italy, they always send back the papers. And they used the papers again. And when my turn came, the only paper for me that was available was Joseph. So I became Joseph. And since then I'm Joseph.

And did you go by the same last name when you were--

When I was a child--

--a child?

I was Hillel.

But your last name?

Bash.

Bash, yeah.

Yeah. My name was Hillel till-- till I left that home. I left home very early. I think I left home before bar mitzvah, and then I went back home for the bar mitzvah. My father was a shochet. He is still alive. He is in an old-age home. He's 89 years old, in Monsey, New York. We were just two weeks ago there to visit, the whole family.

And he was a shochet and a hazzan. And I was his first born. A year later, I had a brother. And a year after that, my mother had tuberculosis, and she died. So I was an orphan from the age of two.

Did your father ever remarry?

He remarried, yeah. And He remarried soon after that, and he had another-- a bunch of kids. My brother from my mother's side, from my first mother, is the one that died in Israel. He was working-- he got leukemia working in the army on a secret--

Mission

--mission. They were saying maybe they were working with radiation in Weizmann Institute. He was one of those--

He actually did research then?

Yes. But he was a-- he was an officer in the army. And he was-- I don't know what they call them in English, that they throw the dynamites and bombs and blow up houses.

Oh, a demolition.

Demolition. And he was in the demolition. And I was in the army. I was-- we're going to get to the army. Father remarried. He had three sons and a daughter.

What was your--

They're all alive.

What was your brother's name, the one who passed away this year?

Who died, his name was Abraham Heber-- Abraham Heber Bash. He got married in Tel Aviv. He had a baby. And a year later, he died. Leukemia is a terrible thing, in those times. They tell you there is nothing to be done [INAUDIBLE]

Which was in what, in the '40s sometime?

That was in '46-- '46. I was in the-- I still in the army. I was in the army for three years, from '48-- from May 15th-- better yet, May 14th. When Ben-Gurion declared no more Peloton, it's the state of Israel. We were dancing in the streets. The next day, I was in the army, in the Negev, and then in the--

So you fought in the liberation.

I fought for-- I was there for three years. And I didn't even had to, because my eyes were very bad. When I got out of the army, the doctor told me I didn't have stay in the army. It's like-- in like a fourth year, or it would be four year, But this with my situation and health-- health wise.

But I was in the Haganah, and the next morning we had to go. I left there-- her with a tiny baby, right in the middle of another village. We lived in the outskirts of Tel Aviv. The Arabs are in next door. There were citrus fields there. And if you got into the citrus field, you already saw the Arab or the Jew in the other field [INAUDIBLE].

And I was in the Negev. We have hard times there. Want me to tell you about the Munka Tabor.

Excuse me. I would like to backtrack a little bit to your childhood. Did you have any public schooling?

I had public schooling. My father was always getting new jobs. He always traveled to look for-- look to make a living. And my first schooling was in Russian. He got a job in Bessarabia.

In Bessarabia, there was pogroms. They were burning down Jewish houses and he took a job there. So my first grade was in Russian. Then we went to a Romanian school. Of course, I went to cheder all the way. In cheder, I was still-- till the age 11, 12.

Then I had to leave home because there was-- there wasn't enough room for all of us. We had one room. Father had a hard time making a living, being a cantor in a small town. So he was a shochet also. He cut the chickens. He cut the cattle. It was a hard-- a hard way to make a living. We always moved.

You were just a youngster then.

I was a-- yeah, a tiny baby.

When you left.

Yeah.

And how did you get along?

From grandfather to grandfather.

I see.

I was brought up mostly by grandfather, from father's side, and the grandfather from mother's side. When mother died, I was three years old.

Yeah. And these were in different towns then.

As long as we stayed in that town, Buchin, I was with mother's grandfather-- the father. And then father came from a place called Spinka. I'm sure you heard of the Spinka rabbi.

Yes, very famous.

Well, he's from our family. He is a second nephew of father's-- was. So my grandparents from father's side lived in Spinka. And I grew up there. I was there for about four years, until-- until he got a job, and we went to Bessarabia, not far from Czernowitz, Kishinev.

Then we had to move from there too. We were burned out of the house. There were pogroms, Ukrainian pogroms. And they burned down the shul. Burned us out. Burned everything we had, the furniture and everything. So he had to look for another job. And I ended up back to my grandparents.

In meantime, he found a wife. He got married. And we moved to another town and to a third town. And there was all kind of problems. It wasn't easy to get a job.

There were, what you call them, the [NON-ENGLISH], that one rabbi, he wanted to take away the job from another rabbi, and one shochet took away a job from another shochet. So there were parties-- one shul, and another shul. And it got to a point when one shochet bought out the other one, to leave town. And we kept on moving. We kept on moving.

So you have--

By the age of 11, I went to be an apprentice in one of father's brother's stores. He had a big store, a general store, what they called in Transylvania at those times, in a place called Viseu de Sus, Felsoviso. I was with my uncle there as an apprentice.

I worked very hard. I had to go three times a day to the railroad to pick up newspapers. I had to carry water and hack holz, what they called-- split wood. And till I left that Felsoviso, the Hungarians came in.

I was Romanian. And I was very nicely liked by the Romanians. And the Hungarians gave me a hard time. They just wanted me to talk Hungarian. And I only spoke Romanian. And some of those gendarmes, they called them, came.

They arrested me. They beat me up. You're going to talk-- from now on, you're going to talk only Hungarian. I don't know Hungarian. They threw me in jail for a couple of days, till somebody took me out of jail, a Romanian, a notary public. And I went to Budapest.

So I worked and grew up in Budapest from the age of 14 till the age of 22, in all kind of jobs-- bakery, delivery, in the Jewish neighborhood most of the time, with Jewish families, until 1944, when the Nazi's came in.

I presume you learned Hungarian, to speak Hungarian.

I learned Hungarian. I learned Hungarian. We had to-- then we had to put on the yellow star. It was very hard to get a job. And finally, I got a job from a Hungarian Lieutenant General. He had a big restaurant in the main street in Budapest. And he had trouble getting food for the restaurant, because everything was in black market.

And he told his helpers, or his secretary, to find me somebody in the black market. And they found me. And he took me to him, and he says you can work for me, but not with the star. I don't want to get in trouble with the-- you can work without a star. I'll claim that you're not Jewish, I didn't know.

And I worked there till the Nazis found out somehow. They dragged me out of the restaurant. They beat me up good with their rifles. They broke my ribs. They broke my hand. And I had to wear the star.

A few months later, I got caught-- I didn't get called to the Munka Tabor. I volunteered. Because I was getting so many beatings on those Jewish neighborhoods there, in [PLACE NAMES].

So I went to the army. We went to a-- first, we went to a salt mine to work. Then we went to a coal mine to work, with the labor camp, Munka Tabor.

Until we ended up out in Ukraine. We ended up in a place called Stanislav, where we settled down. And all we were doing is digging, digging trenches for tanks, digging trenches for bridges, digging-- carrying out woods, complete woods cut out to the last tree to make roads for the tanks. Because the tanks couldn't travel in the mud or in the lime.

And we worked there under very, very heavy, very bad situation, very bad conditions. Food, we managed somehow, but the labor was heavy labor, lots of beatings, and lots of shootings, lots of lice.

It was misery, but we survived that, till we started-- till one morning, after months and months, maybe six months quiet, the Russian opened up a front. And what we were digging there for six months, everything collapsed. There was nothing but ruins.

The bunkers collapsed. The trenches collapsed. Buildings collapsed. The roads caved in. They were sending those Katyushas, like by the thousands. And we started withdrawing. It was a terrible way to withdraw because we had to walk. And it was--

Were you withdrawing with the Hungarian army?

With the Hungarians, yes.

The Hungarian army.

But it wasn't an army. It was what they called--

A forced labor camp.

A forced labor camp. And we had what they called a keret. They called them-- the guards, they were guarding us. And we were, let's say, 200 Jews, and they were 20 Hungarian soldiers, carried weapons. They carried weapons. We carried shovels.

And we started withdrawing. They withdraw with us. And whoever didn't-- couldn't withdraw far enough, or fast enough, or long enough, they shot him on the road. They left him there, but they didn't leave him alive.

When you were going to the Ukraine, were you transported or--

Transported-- transported from job to job, like from a salt mine, to a coal mine, to road work. The transport us, either by train or by trucks to work. Because they needed the work. First, we settled down in those woods. And that was already in Russia, in Ukraine.

It was more-- I don't know, it was more Polish than Russian, but it was Russian territory. And that's where we were there for six months, digging. Then we started withdrawing by foot.

And the Russians didn't let us withdraw. They kept after us all the time. And the Hungarians didn't want to leave a man alive there for the Russians to capture. Whoever couldn't make it-- even if it was a Hungarian soldier, if he couldn't make withdrawing, then they shot him.

We withdraw from [INAUDIBLE], from town to town. We did a little labor here, a little labor there. We had to fix roads, fix railroads, fix asphalt roads. We had to carry asphalt on our shoulders from railroads to the roads-- cement. Those cement bags were like 100 pounds-- 100 kilo a bag. That's close to 200 pounds. We had to carry that on our shoulder to the roads to make cement.

And we had to unload those trains. And there was no two ways about it. We had to bring the wood down from the woods. Wherever it was possible, they would send it down by rivers. They'd just let it float. And otherwise, we had to carry it. And carrying down those woods were heavier than carrying them up. Because we kept on falling, and falling, and sliding.

And until we ended up in a place in Austria, the Austrian-Hungarian border. They threw us in on some farms. And they put us in some-- what they call them, farms like where they kept the cows.

Barn.

Barns-- they kept the cows and the horses, and they put us in there. And the first night we were there, we had to dig a grave for 300 people. They were just executed. And we got in there, there wasn't too much work to be done. Just occasionally, we had to fix roads or fix, or we dig graves, of our own, from our own people.

Because right after we got there, we fell into Fleck typhus, typhoid. So the people were dying every day from the typhoid. The Germans-- there were already Germans-- they took over from the Hungarians, civilian Germans. They carried weapons, but they were civilians. They were like a different organization. They just were there to watch us.

They didn't come close to us because they knew there's typhoid there. There were some barns that they just burned down with the people in them, to get rid of the sickness. But they couldn't get rid of the sickness because the lice, and the hunger, and the waste that spread, spread, and spread.

And we were there. We had to go-- if we wanted to get our soup, we had to go on all four, on our hands and feet, go to the gate. And the Germans left the soup by the gate and ran. Because they didn't want to come too close to us. They were afraid of that typhoid.

And the Russians got closer. And we went further. And the Russians got closer. We went through Czechoslovakia. We went to Kashau. And the Russians kept on chasing us.

You were evacuating.

Yeah. The Russians--

And the Russians were advancing.

They were chasing us. And they kept close to us all the time. And the Germans had to withdraw. And we had to help them withdraw. They had horses. They had tanks. But we had to do the labor. And whoever couldn't work was just executed. There was no camps. There was no Auschwitz, no things like that.

Were you fortunate to avoid the typhoid?

No, I had typhoid. Then I had-- I was on the first case of typhoid when the Russians came in.

So you were fortunate--

We didn't even know-- well, we were very few left. We were 13 left alive when the Russians came in.

From how many of a group?

From about 250-- from 1,000-- 295 [INAUDIBLE]. The Russians came in. They didn't give a damn. They didn't bother. It's not like-- my wife was liberated by the Americans. They took them to hospitals. They gave them vitamins. The Russian says, so what, you're Jewish? I'm Jewish, my father was Jewish. He was killed in the war.

We talked to officers-- big deal. You're Jewish, so you suffered. My family suffered. My family got killed in Ukraine. And they didn't do nothing for us. Whoever could walk, walked.

But it was very hard to walk back. You couldn't walk on the side of the road because of this-- the [NON-ENGLISH] was mined. You couldn't walk on the fields because the fields were mined. You couldn't walk on the roads because the tanks were going this way. And we had to go opposite if we wanted to survive somewhere, to reach a village or to reach a farm.

We were free to go, but there was nowhere to go till we hit-- when we hit a farm or a village, then we had what to eat. The villagers were happy to see us. They were happier to see us than the Russians, because the Russians didn't behave right-- took away their wives and daughters.

I met a farmer that had three daughters in his attic. He had to take food up to the attic. And he was-- those farmers were very good to us. And little by little, we went to another village, another village. And we took a rest. We were traveling together. Somebody always left far behind. So he's going to stay with a farmer, a farmer fed him. A farmer fed us all.

And I made it little by little. It took me about four weeks to make it to Budapest. The trains were only for the army. If you grabbed a train somewhere, you were between the wagons on those-- what do you call it-- chains, till they threw you off. Because they didn't have enough room for themselves.

And the Russian army was very tough with us. If we found something, they took it away. I went into a baron's castle, Esterhazy, and I found a sterling silver cigar box. And I came out the main gate, and the Russian grabbed it, and took it away from me. I figured I'd have something to sell in Budapest.

And they were suspicious. Some kids-- some of our friends took out-- from the radios, took out tubes. They thought that's worth something to take with them to Budapest and sell them. The Russians took away the tubes. They didn't need them. They didn't know what they are. They thought this was some kind of a spy-- spy gimmicks or something.

And I made it to Budapest. My parents, my father and my stepmother, were in Bucharest. They survived. My father was called to a labor camp in Romania, but he was a rabbi there. And they made him an officer. But in Romania, you could buy yourself out.

The community, his shul, put together a few hundred dollars. They made him a beautiful officer outfit. And they went with him, and they bought off somebody. They gave him 200 lei or something. And he went home. So he went through the war pretty easy, except for standing in line for a whole day, standing around for food.

And his wife was with him all that time?

Yeah, and the kids. My brother-- my brother from my-- from my mother, he became-- he worked for the underground. He worked for the British. There was a Zionist organization called Gordonia. Gordonia was a fraction of Betar. Betar was a fraction of today's Herut.

He worked for-- through the Gordonia for the British. He was like a spy. He got caught. He was thrown in jail. The British took him out somehow. In the Romania, for money, you could buy anybody and do what you want. The British bought him out for a bunch of valuta-- dollars, or pounds, or whatever.

They sent him to Turkey. From Turkey, they sent him to Palestine, way before the war was over. In Palestine, he enrolled right away to the Palestine Brigade. He went back to Europe with the Palestine Brigade. Went to Italy. He went back to fight.

He fought against the Germans.

Against the Germans, yeah. He went back to Italy. Italy was already liberated. He went back to Italy and fought with the Jewish Brigade. Like she told you about her brothers, her brothers were in the Czechoslovakian Brigade, also Jewish Brigade. The Czechoslovakians had their own brigade that fought against the Nazis.

And they joined with the Partisans. They joined with Tito's people. And they fought against them. As a matter of fact, when I finally reached Bucharest, I was liberated by the Russians, April 4th, exactly to the year when the Germans took [INAUDIBLE].

In 1945.

Yeah. And I went in 1944, April 4th. And was liberated. And I made myself through to Bucharest. It was very hard. I met some people halfway that knew my father. Told me my father is all right in Bucharest. But how are you going to get to Bucharest? I find some people that bought me a train ticket, legally already, to send me home to Bucharest.

As a matter of fact, my father was sitting on the sidewalk every day, waiting to see who's coming. There was a Joint HIAS there, an office for the Jewish community. And they had announcements, whoever saw this, whoever saw that. And my picture was on that bulletin board, whoever saw me, whoever knows of me.

He went there every day and waited for people to say. And one day, he was sitting on a sidewalk, and this guy, who bought me a train ticket to go to Bucharest, says to him, Mr. Bash, how are you doing? Want a glass of wine? He was afraid to tell him the news. He was afraid of the shock.

So he took him inside and had a glass of wine. And he says to him you know who I met in Satu Mare-- in Satu Mare? He says, who did you meet in Satu Mare? He says, Yehuda Hillel, just like that.

And there was nothing to do in Bucharest. I was by the railroad station, making soup for the trains. Because trains were coming every day with people who were liberated, like liberated from camps or from lagers. And I was at the railroad, making soup, cooking soup, and asking people, where are you from? And did you meet anybody from this family, from that family?

My father had a very big family. There were 13 brothers and sisters. There was 13 brothers and sisters had a bunch of kids. And we were looking for who's coming back with my family. Not too many came back.

Some cousins came back. Then we had to take them in, in our house, in one room. And I decided I have to leave. I'm standing here all day in line, either for naphtha, for gasoline, to eat.

So you were reunited with your father.

With my father and the kids, my brothers, yeah.

And you were all living in this one room.

In this one room. And we took in cousins every day. Whoever the Joint couldn't find a room for, we had to take him in-- brothers' kids or sisters' kids. And I decided to go and work for, what they called at that time, the Bricha, the underground emigration to Palestine.

So I went back to Budapest. I retract myself. I went back to Budapest. I started working for this Bricha, through the

Joint. And we had some phony Red Cross papers to cross borders, to walk through borders. I took a transport over to Austria. I came back to Budapest. I took a transport over-- mostly kids, with the same papers. I had 10 papers, 10 letters, and I took about 40 kids in one week over and brought them back, walking, through the woods--

Through the mountains.

Through the mountains, through the woods, walking. And if the-- excuse me-- if the Russians caught us, we had to find a bottle of whiskey somewhere to give them to let us go. There was no money. Whoever came with us, most of them didn't have any money.

The cousin that my wife's--

Were you missions mostly successful getting these kids--

Mostly, mostly, mostly. Mostly Hungarian kids, some Polish kids. The cousin that-- like my wife told you about a cousin that she met in Budapest. He was lucky. He went home. And they had, from before the war, from before the ghetto-- you probably know who they were-- they were Greenstein. And they had some buried gold. And they had some houses. And this cousin was lucky. He sold--

And he was able to--

He was able to sell. He was able to find funds. So he found gold.

What was his name? Greenstein.

Greenstein, yeah. His name is Yitzer. He's a dentist now in Hollywood. He's so successful, he did Elizabeth Taylor's teeth.

Wonderful.

So I worked for the Bricha. It was a tough going. We went from country to country, everything illegal, with those few Red Cross papers.

Once you got them to Austria, then how did they continue?

In Austria, we got help from the government-- not from the government, not from the federal government, from the local government. They gave us a school. They gave us a church, like I church, a [INAUDIBLE] church, but they moved out the nuns and gave us their barracks to put in 20 kids there. So we had one barrack for boys, one barrack for girls.

And we tried to find work. We worked for the army. When we went over already to the other side, not to the Russian side, but the American side or the French side, they gave the boys work, kitchen work, paid them a few dollars there, or a few pounds, whatever it was. And we went from-- from Austria, well, we were in Graz. We were in Wels. We were in Judenburg. They were in all kind of camps.

Centers.

Centers, and they started organizing there. The Bricha started organizing kibbutzim camps, little camps, where they had Kitchens already their own. We had our own guards. Like Foehrenwald was a big camp already, where we got married. It was a big camp. And we had our own guards, with rifles, with revolvers, with uniforms, with our own gates, and our own trucks, our own kitchen, our own hospital, and started getting organized.

There was one kibbutz here, one kibbutz there. One was Hashomer Hatzair. One was right side, one was left side, one was socialist-- what they called at that time-- they called them fascists. But we started getting organized and moving



closer to Israel.

To go to Israel, the Bricha bought boats. They came-- the Haganah came already from Palestine, from the Yishuv, from the Sochnut. You know what the Sochnut is?

Yes, agency.

The agency. So they came already, and they came with money. They bought boats. They started shipping people to Palestine. Most of them didn't make it. Most of them either were returned--

Unfortunately.

Unfortunately. Most of them, they didn't make it. The boat was so cheap and so bad that they got stuck in the middle of the ocean, waiting for a wind to blow it somewhere. Ended up back in France. Ended up back in Marseille. We left Marseille. We ended back in Marseille.

But little by little, some of them ended up in Atlit, but the British caught them and threw them in jails there, in camps. And later on, when I made my way already, with my last troop, with my last group of kids, to Palestine from France, in a big boat-- that boat you probably saw on television, that was part of the Exodus.

It wasn't the Exodus, the big Exodus. It was a smaller boat. Belonged to the same group of ships. It was the Yagur, named after the kibbutz Yagur. And by the time we got to Haifa, came up to Cyprus, and they don't have no more room in Atlit. They don't have no more room in Acre. They don't have no more room in the camps. They're going to ship them either back where they came from or to--

Haifa.

--Cyprus. No, they didn't send them--

Cyprus.

Cyprus. I was the first ship that went back to Cyprus. We didn't go voluntarily. We fought. We had battles. We had camps. We hit the British in the head. We threw them-- we tossed them into the ocean, in the water. The girls did-- whatever they could grab, they hit the British on their heads.

And we had a couple Haganah people on the boat. And they were our-- people that brought us that far. The captain was a Haganah man. A few Italian Haganah people, a few Brigade people from the Palestine Brigade that ended up on that boat. And we fought them, but how can you fight Tommy guns?

We ended up in Cyprus. I was the first boat to end up in Cyprus. I was the first one to put up a tent. They didn't give us nothing, but fence. The fence was there. The tents were on the floor, to put them up yourself.

The temperature was 116, 120 degrees. To put up a tent in that sand, that sand was so hot, you put on an egg, it with hard boiled in two minutes. That's how hot the sand was.

Cyprus is a beautiful place, but it wasn't for us. The Haganah was successful to send in a few guys to the camp. And we started getting organized. We started hollering at the British.

We went to their office. We need a dentist. And so the Haganah sent a dentist. It was one of the big Haganah guys. And later on, ended up in the cabinet, in the Israeli cabinet. He was the Minister of Health. He was the one who came in as a dentist to us. I was the garbage man.

I had a chance to get a garbage truck and go out to town every day, to go dump.

You had contact with--

Contact. And there already, I brought back stuff. I brought back fruit. I brought back vegetables. Because the British didn't give us enough. They gave us enough to survive. My wife was pregnant, so she got two glasses of water, instead of one. She got, instead of two cigarettes, four cigarettes. She had double rations.

But we had to bring in from the outside. And whoever had a few dollars, whoever didn't smoke, sold his cigarettes to the British back, and got \$1 for it. I accumulated a carton, and I sold it in town. I got \$2 for it, so I brought fruit for them, for the girls.

And we were there. She was-- my wife was the first one to get the certificate.

Where did you meet your wife?

In Budapest the first time. Then I left her with a kibbutz in Austria. And I went back to Budapest. Through that cousin of hers-- he asked me to do him a favor and take this little girl off his hands. He didn't know what to do with her I mean it. That's how it happened.

He didn't know what to do with her, and I should take her. You're going to Palestine. She doesn't have nowhere else to go, take her. So I went-- I made a few trips, and she was in Wels, and in Graz. And every time I came back, we got together we got to know each other better. We were in the same kibbutz. At that time it was Dror. Then it became Hashomer Hatzair.

And that's how we worked ourselves up to Palestine. And I wasn't too long in Palestine till I joined the Haganah. And I was in the army again. I was in the army--

Fighting for Israel--

Fighting against the-- against the Arabs.

For liberation.

Yeah, I fought against the Egyptians. We were so successful that we captured Nasser, and we let him go. My unit captured Nasser Arafat, and Naguib, before Nasser. I don't know if you heard of Naguib, General Naguib. He was our prisoner, and he escaped. He escaped, and he took the map of our camp.

And the next morning, the Egyptians came with their Spitfires and bombed the camp to pieces, killed half of us. I was in a trench. I jumped from the dining room, jumped on top of a bunch of officers. And that's how I survived. I came home to visit her. I Brought my friend's belongings and told her who to take them to. She got the job of letting them know.

And it was a tough one. We were by the canal, by the Suez, once. Eisenhower said to retreat. They woke up Ben-Gurion in the middle of the night-- don't you make another step. And that's it. And then I was three years in the army and back home.

Did you always have a rifle or a gun?

I always had a rifle. I had a machine gun. I had a Sten. I had a Bren. I had-- when I went home, when I went to visit the family, I took a machine gun. Because we were on the border of the Arab villages, around and around. We didn't live in Tel Aviv, like in a luxury, like in Dizengoff. We lived in a poor neighborhood.

And I had run away from the army once because she didn't get any help. And I told my officers-- I told them, if my wife doesn't get a check, she can't live. I'm going to go home. And the officer says, if you're going to escape, we're going to catch you, and we're going to shoot you.

And the next morning, I took the bus and ran away. And I got a check for her. I got three months or six months, whatever she had coming. And then I volunteered back. I went back. So they put me to clean potatoes for three days. They didn't shoot me. It was a good army. Everybody did their job.

And you were successful in liberating Israel.

Yeah. I couldn't make a living there. Me and my brothers, we set up a small jewelry shop. So the jewelry shop was in one corner of my room. The baby crib was in the other corner of the room. And me and my wife had the main bed in the same room. And the shop was there. And Samuel lived there. And my younger brother lived there. And we survived. We survived.

Today, they're all successful. The company that I set up in New York, that I was bought out of, is a multi-million company today. It's called Bash & Company. I don't want to advertise it, but it's fashion company in my name.

Is one of your brothers still running--

Running it, one of them and his son-- one of my brothers and my nephew.

And in New York, were you reunited--

On 47th Street.

Yeah. Were you reunited with your family, with your father and--

My father went-- yeah, I was reunited. But then he went to Tel Aviv. He went to the neighbor [INAUDIBLE]. He decided he wants to go to Israel. So we weren't too long together. We lived in Brooklyn for a while. He had an apartment in Brooklyn. I had an apartment. And then he went to Israel. And I got busy. I had one store. I had two stores then, working day and night, 18 hours a day to make nicely.

She tried to help me out. Then I got ulcers. I ended up in the hospital. They cut out my stomach. And played the market a while. Made a few bucks and that's it. I'm retired. And then I came here, to Phoenix. I bought a store here in Scottsdale, Papago Plaza. I bought a store called Toys and Things.

And I was there for about eight years. And it didn't do too much. It didn't do too good. It did enough for the landlord. So I told them I'm not working for the landlord no more, and I retired. I put out my whole store for Christmas. Christmas is the main season for the toys. I put a two-page ad in the paper, 50 off. So the big stores can pick through their merchandise, and I had lines.

And you sold out--

Sold everything. Whatever was left, I gave to the Salvation Army.

And that's how you retired.

That's how I retired.

You did not-- you were not able to sell your business.

No. No, there was no market for it. Because while I was in business, they opened up one toy store in Los Arcos. They opened up one toy store further up, on Camelback Road. Then if that wasn't enough, Schwartz came from Fifth Avenue. He couldn't make it. He left the store here and went back.

And I just retired. I just gave up the store. I told the landlady when I had to resign my lease, she wanted \$500 a month rent extra. I paid \$17, so she went to raise me \$5. So I told her I'm not signing a new lease and I'm moving out. She gave

me 30 days to move out.

What else you want to know?

Well, I do want to know that you have a nice family and how many children you have.

I was in New York-- my daughter from New York, with my two grandchildren, they come here once a year. We go there once a year. We were there two weeks ago. This is where I got my flu. We were there two weeks ago. The whole family went to see father-- my brothers, their children, and my sister, her children.

Everybody was there. We had a nice party, spent the day there, made pictures, took film. And that's it. We only went for five days. Because my wife is working, and she wouldn't want to leave out the day's work.

And your father is still alive.

My father is all right. He was very happy. I says to him-- I says to him, what are you thinking about? He's in a wheelchair. I says to him, what are you thinking about? He says, I'm thinking about what a nice family I have. He had a hard time remembering everybody's name, but if you give him two or three seconds, he remembers.

He needs time to think all the time. But his brain is working. He doesn't know if it's Sunday or Monday, but his brain is working. And he says to me, oh, you are you. I says, yeah, I'm me. And then he remembered Hillel. He needs a couple of minutes.

My stepmother died. We were in Hawaii. I couldn't make the-- I couldn't make the funeral because she died Friday, and they buried her the same day. We were in Hawaii. We couldn't make it. She died. She was also very old. She was also in the 80s.

And I hope to live that long, with all that cheap meat that we ate, all that fat meat we ate. In Windsor, we bought meat for \$0.39 a pound, flanken was it? And father was cutting cattle. All the time, had fat meat. He lived on that meat.

He paid the butcher. He paid another butcher. He paid the tailor, the shyster, the grocery man, the bakery, everything he paid with meat. Because when he went to cut 30 or 40 cattle, from every cattle he got a lung, and a liver, a piece of liver, and heart. And he paid some bills with it.

It was a barter.

And then-- yeah. And then he got a good job. He was in Toledo-- going back again. He was in Toledo when he came from Romania. The organization, the Jewish Community Council in New York kept him a hotel. Everybody who came that time was very nicely welcomed to New York.

They gave him a hotel, and told him, you sit here, you eat, we clothe you till we find you a job. They found him a job. He became the rabbi of Toledo-- Toledo, Ohio. And we went to Canada.

We went to Windsor. That's about 100 miles from Toledo. And we saw each other every Sunday. I couldn't go to the States at that time, but he came into us every Sunday.

Wonderful. And so you were a successful man, who raised four children.

Yes.

And--

Worked very hard. And that's what I'm living off now, not on Social Security.

Well, Security is-- It helps somewhat.

It help, yeah. Yeah, it pays basically the light bill.

But for a hard-working man, and who has gone through a great deal--

I retired, I was 62. And since then, I'm watching soap operas.

Anyway, for--

I'm still playing the market.

That's good. You have contributed a great deal by helping those youngsters get to Israel, to Palestine in those days.

I did, but they say that time, I didn't have a choice. We could have just sit in the camps and wait for Israel to come to us, but we could have set there for another 10 years. So we walked, and we schlepped.

And the French gave us trucks. And the Austrians gave us their railroad. And then we had to smuggle ourselves again, through border, through border. Then I went back to Hungary. Then I went to look for my brother in Italy. And I crossed into Italy, but I missed him. He went back to Palestine that time.

When you came back from Israel, did your father send you papers to come to the United States?

No. My wife's aunt, from New York, and my uncle, from New York, sent us paper, but we decided to go-- we were [NON-ENGLISH]. We were Zionists.

So you went to Canada.

No, we went to Israel from Europe. We didn't want to go to America.

Oh, you mean you had the opportunity to come to this--

Yes.

Oh, I didn't--

We could have gone-- from Europe we could have gone to America.

I see.

There was a letter. There was papers in Austria and in Germany consuls for us to go to America. We didn't want to come. We didn't knew about. We were on our way to Palestine.

So when you came from Israel, you decided to come to the United States. Did your father then intervene?

No.

Or no?

No, my father had to shell out some money for Canadian to take us out-- to Canada. In Canada, we waited for the American visa. The Czechoslovakians had a very good quota.

So when I applied for a visa to go-- for a visa to emigrate to the United States, then Council told me in Windsor, why don't you apply on the Czech quota? Your wife's Czech. She is going to get it, 1, 2, 3. We got it our [INAUDIBLE]. We

were healthy. We weren't communists, so we passed.

And in spite of your business that didn't go so well, you enjoy living in Phoenix.

Yes.

Well, we're glad you're--

We've taken a trip once in a while. We went to Hawaii. We went to-- we go to San Diego sometimes. We go-- we travel. We have a new car. I taught my wife to drive. Since then, I'm not driving.

Wonderful. So you have really accomplished and you're comfortable now.

I didn't suffer as much as she did.

Well, it sounds to me that you are-- just that you suffered a great deal in the--

In the labor camp, I was strung up once. You know how they did that in Hungary?

For punishment.

For punishment, they strung me up with my hands back, and they strung me up in a tree because they caught me-- they caught me delousing myself. So I had to leave the work. And I missed carrying wood or whatever was for cement.

So they strung us up. And the doctor came and says, he can't take it. He listened to my heart, then says, cut him down. There was plenty suffering, but she got the-- the main course.

Well, it was an unfortunate period of time for all of Europe, but for the Jews, especially. We were selected for that--

Yeah.

--for that part. Anyway, I appreciate you telling your experience very much. And it does show how displaced and how homeless you were, regardless of--

And we all hope it's not going to happen again. We're sure it's not going to happen again.

That's exactly why we're trying to get these histories and try to prevent that. Thank you very much, Joseph.

You're welcome. It was my pleasure.