

Good morning, Sam.

My name is Sam Hilton, formerly Samuel Shmuel Holckiener-- Holckiener, which I changed to Hilton. I was born on September 23, 1929, the second day of Rosh Hashanah in Warsaw, Poland. My father's name was Joseph, Josef. Mother's name was Sabina, Shifra.

I was born in Warsaw on a street called Franciszkanska in a Jewish-- an upper class Jewish type neighborhood. My father was very well off comparatively. He was a tanner. He owned two tanneries, which means you've made leather goods. And we led a very comfortable life in Warsaw, as normally as normal as you can get, in particular in those times.

I went to school when I was a child. But I had to go to private school instead of public school. And the reason why I went to private school is because due to Polish antisemitism. It was very difficult for a Jewish boy to go to public school because you were beaten up, ostracized, and what have you. So I went to a private school, a very good one too, in Warsaw.

Was this a strictly Jewish learning or was it Polish?

Polish, you know, secular. It was secular. There was cheder. No nothing. This was just a secular type, normal school, except it was private, instead of public. But you didn't have--

Did you associate with non-Jewish boys?

There were a few. Most of the children in that particular school were Jewish because of the public school phenomenon. The poor Jews could not afford private school. They went to public school. And they had constant fighting and problems.

The well-to-do Jews decided, well, we're not going to expose our children to all this and they sent them to private school. And I was lucky enough my father sent me to private school. It was a very nice school too. It was a secular school, taught the normal subjects of mathematics, algebra, and what have you.

How many grades were you able to complete?

Well, I remember I started school when I was four or five. And by the time I finished when the war broke out in 1939, I would say I was equivalent-- when I was 10 years old, I was equivalent to practically I would say like the 10th grade in this country because I do recall when I was nine years old, I took algebra, when I was nine years old. I remember the equations on the board and so forth. So I was pretty well advanced comparatively.

I lived my normal life, very normal, until when I was five years old. My mother died. My mother died of complications after I was born. She had problems. And due to what I would call archaic medical treatment, particularly for infection, she was not treated very well in spite of everything. But in spite of my father's money. And she died when I was five years old.

After my mother's death, about a year later, my father married my mother's sister, my aunt. She was the youngest in the household. And my father married her. It was very unusual having a stepmother be my aunt. But it worked out well.

I had a normal childhood. Went to school. Every summer, went away for two or three months, summer vacation. In the last summer vacation I recall in 1939, I was in a little village, a little resort called, about 30 miles from Warsaw, called Ašwider, when the war broke out. Came back to Warsaw right after that when the war broke out.

Went through for three, four weeks miserable bombardment and very, very rough, very rough. Bombardment and particularly aimed at the Jewish ghetto more than anything else-- the Jewish section, was not ghetto at that time, the Jewish section. For some reason, everything was aimed at the Jewish section of town.

It's a matter of fact, on Rosh Hashanah, the biggest bombardment in Warsaw was in the street where I used to live. Half the street was wiped out under fire on the Jewish holiday. On Yom Kippur 1939, when the bombardment, there was not air bombardment, but artillery bombardment, when the Germans encircled Warsaw and was right into the Jewish section primarily. My grandfather, my father's father, in his tallis and everything stood in the window and looked out at the fire in the street. And he was hit by a shrapnel in the head and died instantly.

By the end of September, the Germans marched into Warsaw. At first glance I seen when I looked down the window, from my second story apartment where we used to live, I recall German soldiers standing with a stick, and yelling at the crowd, Juden, raus. Juden, raus.

And after that, life was miserable because there was no movement. You couldn't go anywhere. You couldn't do anything because of the antisemitic and barbarous treatment of the Jews in the Warsaw. For example, when a German soldier walked in the sidewalk, you had to get off the sidewalk and [NON-ENGLISH].

Salute him.

[NON-ENGLISH]. Hat off. And if you did not do it, you were beaten or sometimes even shot. Well, this was going on '39, '40. On Yom Kippur 1940, during the high holidays on Yom Kippur day, there was commotion in the shul, in the Temple. And then was announced when the ghetto in Warsaw was formed. It was always on the Jewish holiday.

Luckily, I live within the ghetto boundaries that particular time. Not far, we were almost at the edge, but we were just barely in the boundaries. When the ghetto was formed and Jews are pouring into Warsaw from all the small towns because they were driven out or escaped, everybody came to Warsaw. And before you knew, you had families living in one room, two or three families in one flat, relatives. Everybody shoved in a small ghetto.

Disease was rampant, typhoid, typhus. Everything was completely miserable. However, take consideration the fact that my father was, I would say, well off competitively from before the war, we lived better than anybody else considering. And this went on--

By the way, going back one thing, my mother, my stepmother I should say, my aunt, became pregnant just before the war started. And in January of 1940, gave birth to little girl, my little sister, named Ewca Johaneck.

We lived the best record until the dreaded year of 1942. At the beginning of 1942 in Warsaw, there were approximately at that time about half a million Jews squeezed in. Disease, poverty, beatings, murder-- the Germans used to come in to the ghetto every day for a shooting gallery.

People were murdered daily just for the hell of it. You woke up in the morning, and there were dead people in the street which during the night the Gestapo came in and choose certain people at random and shot them in the street. We didn't know who's turn is going to be next.

The dreaded year of '42 is the worst year for the Jews, I think, ever. This was the year where the word [NON-ENGLISH] came across, which means resettlement. It started by the spring of '42, where they rounded up Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, block by block. And what happened-- unfortunately, what happened was the people who helped them with that [NON-ENGLISH], the people who did were the so-called Jewish police in the Warsaw ghetto.

The Germans were smart. They formed the Judenrat. They formed the Jewish police, with the loose hat with the little stick. They helped them to round up block by block.

But, you see, it's like anywhere else. The first people to be resettled, the first people to be resettled were the poor people, the poverty stricken people. They just picked them up. People with intelligence and brains hid, went, hid underground, did something to escape it.

But the poor people were the first ones. Nobody knew where they went. They round them up in the streets by block by block and took them to a place called Umschlagplatz, which is on a little street near Niska, I remember, which was a

railroad siding. They went there and put them in cattle cars. Out they went.

By the summer of 1942, it became worse and worse and worse, every day, every second day, [NON-ENGLISH] started. It was done usually by squads of Ukrainian and Lithuanians, SS, [NON-ENGLISH], supervised by the Nazi SS. But mostly the Ukrainians black uniforms and gray things came into the ghetto.

Were these local people, these Ukrainians? They were brought--

They were brought-- they were Russians-- they were caught. They were Russian prisoners converted to the Nazis. There were a lot of Ukrainians and Lithuanians. There were one or two or three SS, German SS, with a bunch of Ukrainians. They rounded up with the help of the Jewish police, unfortunately.

During the summer of '42, little by little, and then every Jew tried to get a permit, a Meldekarte, to save himself to working for a factory for the Germans. My father bought for I don't know how many thousands of zloty a Meldekarte for himself and for me. We worked for a German factory, which all ersatz, didn't exist, so forth, but he bought it. This saved us a little bit, not much.

By the end of '42, by September '42, half of my family-- my uncles, my aunts, and my grandfather, they were all rounded up. They were all gone. One incident I'll never forget-- and this is very painful to say right now. But I'm going to say it as a matter of record. By September 1942, there were only myself, my father, mother, and my little sister left. Everybody else was gone.

My little sister was two years old. In September-- I don't know the date, but September '42, there was an announcement. All the Jews in that section of town where we were at that time in the ghetto had to report on another section by 10 o'clock in the morning. Anybody caught in this side will be shot on the spot.

We knew if you go to that section, means going to Umschlagplatz and out. There was a hiding place. There was a hiding place in the building-- this is September '42-- down in the basement, in a bunker. But the people adamantly refused to let my little sister, who was two years old, in that bunker.

And the reason why they refuse because they are afraid that she is a child, two years old, she may cry out, in case the Nazis [? and kapos saw ?]. They refused. And we didn't know what to do. This on our last-- what can we do?

My mother and my father were sitting there, didn't know what to do. My father was crying. My mother was crying. And finally, my mother-- and mother's suggestion-- they have decided to save me. But my father and me go down with them in the bunker. And my mother and little Ewca stay locked in in the apartment, locked. I couldn't believe it that my father-- I don't know how it happened, but that's exactly what we did.

And the notice, this happened had to be done within an hour, before 10 o'clock in the morning. We went to the bunker. My father and I went to the bunker. My mother and my little sister was upstairs in the apartment locked in, on the iron gate like.

The Nazis came through, shots heard, and so forth. That night, late at night, about 10 o'clock, my father sneaked out in the bunker-- it was quiet-- to see my mother and my little sister. And I was in the bunker. he just went up himself.

He came back crying, broken. What happened? The door was open. My mother and my sister were gone. The best we know she sacrificed herself and then my sister. She didn't even-- she just left. She went-- This was September 1942.

That winter, by October '42, when this thing was over, the workmen came back in that section of town. We got out of our bunkers finally. And then we found out through the underground that everybody did not go to the East. They went a mere 50 miles from Warsaw to a place called Treblinka. There was even a song in the ghettos about Treblinka.

In the winter of 1942 to '43, they were about-- by that time there were about 30,000 Jews left in the Warsaw ghetto. My father and I were the only two left in the whole family, in the whole family, the only two left. And by that time, there

was an underground movement in the Warsaw ghetto saying, if they're going to take us, we might as well fight. And that's where the Jewish resistance was formed in the Warsaw ghetto in the winter of '42.

I recall there were meetings. I don't remember the names, but I remember the people. And they used to have the word that came in to ghetto in our room, everybody had a [NON-ENGLISH]. You know [NON-ENGLISH] means?

No.

[NON-ENGLISH], a revolver.

Oh.

In the winter of 1942, we're left in a constant fear of any day something else is going to happen. But for some reason, there was nothing going on other than normal Nazi atrocities, but there was nothing-- there was no resettlement, very strong resettlement action during the month of November, December, January, February, '43. By March '43, we heard rumbles because we had very good underground communication that Himmler gave the order to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto.

We're in the bunker, about a block away from we used to live. And on Erev Pesach 1943, April 19-- that's another Jewish holiday again-- the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto started. However, when the first Nazi pigs came into the Warsaw ghetto, they were met. When they came into the gates of the Warsaw ghetto, they were met by a fusillade of Molotov cocktails, gunfire from the Jewish fighters.

I was in the bunker with my father. And I recall this bombardment and the shelling outside the ghetto. They used flamethrowers. And within my bunker, there were people who went out and fought. I helped them with them-- I helped them with some of the bottles of the gasoline type Molotov-- when I was a kid, I helped them. When I'm up on the-- they just threw them down. I went up on the--

Roof.

Roof. And this was going on for three weeks. And they could not subdue us easily. So what they have done in the whole neighborhood where I live, by artillery fire, they just literally burned, incendiary, they burned the ghetto, just burned. I wound up in another bunker with my father on Nalewki, on the street Nalewki, in the bunker. And while we were in the bunker one day, out of nowhere, the Nazi discovered the bunker.

It is my understanding that discovered it by somebody fingering. And let me tell you, there are plenty of people who finger things. Human nature, humanity, is not as noble as we'd like it to be, unfortunately. It's not as noble as we'd like it to be. I hope you understand what I mean.

Yes. But was there some kind of reward usually for--

It's meaningless. It's stupidity. Reward-- let you live one hour. It didn't mean a thing.

We're rounded up. And I recall, [NON-ENGLISH]. I was 12 years old. My father and I marched out, and we knew that beautiful sunny day in May-- I haven't seen daylight for-- we've been in the bunker.

We're rounded up and made to squat down on the sidewalk, in the street, with hands high. And I looked in the sky. And I said to my father, I don't want to die yet. But I knew we were going to death.

It was very thing unusual. A Nazi SS officer on a motorcycle came right in front of us. And he called us [NON-ENGLISH]. Before we were Untermenschen, scum, subhuman. But now, we're bandits. We've got a beautiful promotion. We're [NON-ENGLISH]. I looked at my father and my father looked at me and says, at least we're bandits, and not Untermenschen.

All I can tell you one thing, the wonderful thing the Jews have done and the most wonderful thing they have enough internal guts to fight. And those who fought in the Warsaw ghetto were not the Hasidim, not the intelligentsia, not the pompous asses, but the people who fought were the down to Earth Zionists, Bundists, Revisionists, Jabotinsky people, people who had intestinal fortitude and proud of being Jews. Not the gadflies. Not the coffee and Kuchen crowd. The people who have guts.

After we were rounded up in the Warsaw ghetto, we went to Umschlagplatz. And during Umschlagplatz, there were Ukrainian guards. And they picked up at random two or three people all the time every hour and took them down and shot them.

After being there about two days, they were loaded up in cattle cars, 100 to a car. [NON-ENGLISH] can stand up. When the cattle car pulled out of the Warsaw ghetto, I was only, don't forget, 12 years old, but I knew the route to Treblinka and the route somewhere else. If you go to Treblinka, I recall, you go due east-- I think it was due east. If you go somewhere else you go more South.

When the cattle car crossed the Vistula River, I felt we're going further south. So I said to my father, I don't think we're going to Treblinka. We're in the cattle car for two days, one day, three days without food, no water, no nothing. It's a matter of fact, out of 100 people, at least 15 or 20 were dead in the cattle car, laying there, in their own--

On the third day, the door is opened. And we wound up at the concentration Lager Majdanek, which is outside of Lublin. It is my understanding, I don't know sure, the fact that we're fighters instead of being docile Jews, maybe that's the reason we went to Majdanek instead of Treblinka.

When we got to Majdanek, we went in the field. The following day, there was a selection process. Of course, men were one way, women separately. My father and I were completely naked, completely naked. We went through a line.

When I go through the line, my father was first. My father was a tall, healthy, strong man. And I knew he's going to get through all right. But I was a kid, 12 years old. And I saw there was an SS sergeant standing with a stick, little stick. And he made like this, hunter, hunter, like this.

And I saw a bunch of people on the right-hand side, one had a bleeding arm. Another person was limping. And I was 12 years old, I was savvy enough knowing those people on that side, that goes to the crematorium. And I didn't know what to do.

And I came right in line. And my father was ahead of me. And they pulled him through to this side. And he had this tall SS sergeant standing there. And everybody goes through. And my turn jumps up.

I was panicky. But I had enough guts. I don't know what I did, but I went in front of him. And I stood on my toes. And I said to him, [NON-ENGLISH], Herr Obersturmbannfuhrer. I'm 16 years old, Colonel. The guy was a sergeant. He looked down at me and says, Ach, du junge. He let me go with the men, instead of going that side.

I went with the men. I got beaten up several times, one day, Concentration Lager Werke C. And even then, they had a selection process every day, and every day. I was in that camp for about three weeks.

One incident I'll never forget. They took us out in the field one day. And they had straw and human excrement, had to mix fertilizer. And they made me, my bare feet, I had to go and stamp on it.

Make the--

Make the fertilizer. I was 12 years old. Majdanek camp was one-- was if not worse than Auschwitz, the only difference was there was no numbers tattooed on you because they didn't have to-- they didn't need your tattoo because nobody survived Majdanek. They were shooting every day. There was a [NON-ENGLISH] day, which was every day that you should shoot so many people. Or selection process, the crematorium has gone 24 hours a day.

Did you have the counting, the Appells every morning?

The Appells were every day. Same thing, Appell every day. The Appell was more than once a day. There were several times a day, at night particularly. And my father and I--

What type of food were you getting there?

The only thing we got-- and I emphasize all we got-- in the morning, we got [NON-ENGLISH]. It's called [NON-ENGLISH], black coffee. I mean it wasn't coffee. It was just mud. And a pike of bread about a slice that big with some watery soup at night. And that was it.

I would say if you call it by calories, I don't think it was 500 calories for the whole day. People were dying left and right, not only from beating, from malnutrition. There's nothing to it.

One day, one day-- I don't know how it happened. This is in Majdanek. It was about noontime. There was another selection, another selection. My father and I were standing in a whole bunch of so-called Haeftlinge. They rounded--

Prisoners?

Yeah. They rounded us up and put us to a different barrack. We didn't know what's going to do with us. We didn't have no idea. It was about a couple hundred. They rounded up a couple of hundred, put in a different barrack. This was about after four weeks in Majdanek. I was there about a month.

And then the following day, they put us in two cattle cars with a different SS came in for some reason. And they shipped us from Majdanek to a camp near Radom. It's called Skarzysko-Kamienna. Skarzysko-Kamienna is a camp outside of Radom manufacturing for the Germans anti-aircraft bullets and ammunition and all various things. That camp, we got to that camp, I would say, July of '43.

In that particular camp, there were about approximately 2,000 Jews in the whole camp. But it was-- they were not-- they were not so many beatings like in Majdanek, not too many Appells. But the conditions were so bad, worse, worse than anywhere else because of pure starvation. People were dying every single day from pure malnutrition and hard work.

The diet was about the same?

Worse. The diet was nothing-- nothing to eat. I was 13 years old when I got to that camp with my father. My father was a big, tall man, strong. I was laying in the filthy-- it was filthy as the filthy as you can imagine.

One day, there was an explosion in one of the barracks where we were working. Oh, before I forget, while in Skarzysko-Kamienna, in the winter of '43, I had typhus. I could feel my temperature burning up. And I was walking with it.

They had what you call like a so-called hospital, but it wasn't a hospital. And my father says, what we're going to do with you? And I said, I don't want to go in there. Because if I go in there, because every morning, the SS came in there, the [NON-ENGLISH] came in there. And they picked the people up, the sick people, and took them outside the camp, which we call [NON-ENGLISH]. What is [NON-ENGLISH]? Means a shooting gallery.

And the Ukrainians shot them down and put them in a ditch. I didn't want to go in there, because if I go in there, they're going to shoot me. So I walked with it. I walked with it, and I kept away as much as I could. But I walked with it.

And the pain, it's hot-- it's just-- listen, if you want to live, if you want to live, what can you do? What the hell can you do when you want to live? One day, I was laying there on a crate during the working of it. My father hid me in a crate. And I was so hot. And I fell asleep. When I woke up about an hour later, I could feel I was completely wet but the temperature--

Broke.

Broke. I tell you, honestly, I had typhus in a Nazi concentration camp and I survived. I was exactly at that time we went to-- I was 13 years old. 13.

In the winter of '43, my father was getting worse and worse. He was like a stick, like a pure stick. I don't think-- he is a man who used to weigh 180 pounds, 190 pounds, 6 feet 2 tall. He was-- I don't think he weighed 100 pounds. He was laying in this bunk. I woke up one morning right next to him, and I said, Tate, Tate, Tate. He was dead.

My father died in Skarzysko-Kamienna of one thing. He starved to death, starvation. Can you imagine? Starvation.

I run around like a chicken without a head. I was 13 years old. And I-- and I said to the commandant, the commandant, I want if-- you know, I don't want my father being dumped in a ditch. I want to bury him. Guy looks at me, what burial? What are you talking about? What burial? I want to say Kaddish.

I take my father to [NON-ENGLISH]. We had a-- what can you do? What can you do? You see, I saw that. I saw it. I decided to do all I can to survive, to live.

In 1943, winter '43, in that camp, condition got worse and worse and worse. And now I'm by myself then. That's it. That was it.

In 1943, '44, in the summer of 1944-- no, in the winter of '44, you could hear something was wrong as far as in the camp. You could hear the wächter and everything else. Let me tell you what happened in the spring, summer, I would say probably about May '44.

We all came back from work, so-called detail, in the camp. Every prisoner had to go through a line. And the wächter was sitting there. Wächter Hoffman, I think his name was. And when he went through the line, he was sitting down there. He made a 0 or an X, a 0 or an X. I came in front of him, and he looked at me. He made an X.

About two weeks later, they said they're going to evacuate the whole camp. And the reason why that was because the Russian army was closing in. They were not-- they were far, but not that far. You could hear the Russian armies closing in.

The camp commandant-- the Jewish camp commandant was a fellow named Eisenberg. He comes out one day, one afternoon. He starts calling out names for immediate settlement to different camp. He starts calling out names. And everybody names he calls goes on that side here.

And I looked at the people he call us. And they were older people, some kids. I mean kids, I mean there were no little kids. I mean kids like my age. Then he calls me, Holckiener, Holckiener.

For some reason-- I don't know what. I have no idea what-- but for some reason inside of me says, don't go. He called my name three times, and I did not move. I did not move. Because there was a whole bunch of people, and I went to one of the barracks and I hid underneath. After three times calling my name, he gave up and go to the next name.

Anyway, they rounded up about I would say about one third of the people in the camp were lined up right in a big column. Their immediately surrounded by Ukrainians, taken outside camp. And I remain within the camp. I was sitting there in the barrack within the camp shaking.

It wasn't 15 minutes later, we heard [GUNFIRE SOUND]. We found out that all those people supposed to go out to different camp, they were taken out on the [NON-ENGLISH], the shooting gallery. They are mowed down. I was within the camp.

About three, four days later, the people who are left over in the camp, including myself, were loaded up on cattle cars again. And we're shipped out. We didn't know where. We could see where the train is going. The train was going westward, going westward. Before you know it, we saw German signs, you know, Breslau, and so forth. We were in

Germany.

In June of 1944 the train pulled up. And we wound up in a very famous camp of Buchenwald. In June of 1944, we came to Buchenwald. Of all the camps I was, this was the best. We were in the Juden block, like Zweiundzwanzig, Block 22 of the Juden block.

At least we got some bowl of soup a day. That was the best camp of all the camps. And can you imagine Buchenwald is good? You know? OK.

I was in Buchenwald from June '44 till about November of '44. In November '44, a group of us were shipped out from Buchenwald to a camp called Gera, near Gera, Operation Schwalbe, another camp near Gera, Germany. It was a quarry type, you know, work camp. I was there-- I was lucky because the Frenchman in that camp made me work in the so-called provisions, which I got a little extra food. I worked in that camp-- we were in that camp from November '44 till about March of '45.

In March '45, the Russian army was closing in from the East. And that camp was again liquidated. And we went on a march, south. There was about 1,000 people in that camp, thousand so-called prisoners, of which about 200 were Jews. And the rest of them were Polacks, French, and different kinds.

We'll go day and night, marching day and night. And I was-- by that time, I was 14 years old or 15. I was so weak. I was so emaciated. It was terrible. But I wanted to live. I wasn't going to die.

We're going south. I remember going through-- marching, you know. They were places like Zwickau, Passau, all the various German cities on the outside. We came to a place not far from the Czech border where the Nazi SS comes out and says, Alle Juden, raus. And they separated the Jews.

However, for some reason I didn't move that fast. I stood. There was a big Polack standing next to me, a big Polack. He said, [NON-ENGLISH]. He shoved me out.

That was a lucky stroke because what happened was-- it is my understanding-- when the 200 Jews were left over, they put us on-- there was one car siding, a siding was-- on a railway siding, there was one car. They put all the Jews in that one car.

And we went south. We didn't know where we were going. But as my understanding, the ones who were left over were shot. But us Jews, they put us in a siding, and we're going south, further south. We don't know where we're going.

And guess where we wound up? We wound up in Theresienstadt. We came into Theresienstadt. I couldn't believe it. It was like a ghetto in the city. It was houses and so far. I couldn't believe it.

We got there I think was May 1 or 2, or something like this. And we walked in this big building. And they gave us a piece of bread and soup. And I was completely-- I thought I was dying, but I kept my-- I had blisters in my mouth. I didn't know what the hell is going on.

I was laying there in that big room, one room with a whole bunch of other people. I think it was May 3 or 4. It was quiet, in the middle of the night. One person is already dead. And one is laying there. We didn't know what it's called, but dystentery.

A guy next to me, named Yitzhak, he says to me, Shmuel, it's so quiet outside. It's very quiet. By 5 o'clock in the morning, and looked out your window, it's very quiet. So one of us-- he walked out and I walked behind him. We did not see any guards. No guards.

So he came, he says, no guards. Everybody was barely moving. About a couple of hours later, we heard rumbling.

We walked up-- we were right at the edge of Theresienstadt. The road was coming right through. We looked from far



away. And guess what we saw? We saw tanks. And on the tank, there was no cross. There was no German cross. On the tank was a Russian star.

I have to tell you, the first time I came up, surprisingly, in the first tank came up, with a Russian tank, with a Polish crew-- with a Polish crew on the Russian tank. And the commander of the tank is like a lieutenant. Guess what he was. A Jew.

I don't know how to describe it. You're bone. People were laying and crying. I don't know how to describe it. It's just unbelievable.

One man-- there was a German walking down the road. He had a can of-- he had a little can of like a mess kit. He grabbed this can. And was made out of lard, fat. And this man was so hungry, he took the fat and put it in his mouth. He died an hour later, after that. It was terrible.

Anyway, the Russians came into the camp. To the best of my recollection, I was 15 years old. We're rounded up, the survivors. And they were about-- at that time, they were about, oh, I would say, 60 or 70. And this was-- from all of Europe, they finally rounded up in Theresienstadt. There are about 60 or 70 boys and-- mostly boys, a few girls. Nobody below 14, but between 14 and 17 I would say. And they put us in one little building.

We were fed normally, rationing, military rations. While we're in the camp, after the liberation, little by little with processing, et cetera. And most of the people who survived, and there weren't too many, went back where they came from. But what are you going to do with about 100 boys and girls? What are we going to do with us? We have no family, no nothing.

So the question arose, where are we going to go? The war is over in Europe. I was-- they pulled us through what I would call a processing center, supervised by the four Allied powers. It was a German officer-- there was a French officer, a British officer, an American officer, and a Russian officer, and the four Allied powers. It's a big table.

And all the kids went through-- the name, date of birth, where you from. And they ask us, where do you want to go? And every child in that group said only one place, Eretz Israel. The Russians said maybe go to Russia and go on this, and so on and so forth and so forth.

Well, we decided all of us to go to Eretz Israel. Inasmuch as at that time Palestine, Eretz. Israel, was on the British Mandate. Therefore, it was decided by the powers to be that all of us were to go to England under the British auspices to the Joint Committee-- I forgot if it was the Joint or UNRRA, whoever it was.

In August of 1945, from Theresienstadt, I'll never forget, they reserved, on the train, two cars to go to Prague. And we had the "Hatikvah," little Jewish flags, and rode a train to Prague, all boys and girls singing "Hatikvah," going to Prague.

We came to Prague. We stayed in Prague for two days. Then we went to the airport in Prague. And there were two British Dakota, transport airplane, British military RAF Dakotas. They put all the kids on the transport plane. And we flew from Prague to England with a stopover in Rotterdam, Holland.

I'll never forget when we landed in Rotterdam, the British crew took out bread, a white bread, slices and says, here is the bread. And I saw the white bread. And I yelled, challah, challah. You know the white bread, to me it was like a cake. And we just grabbed it up like this, grabbed up the bread. And the crew looked at us unbelievable.

Anyway, we came to England to a little place. We landed in Carlisle. They put us on buses and went to a little place in Windermere. It was a rest and rehabilitation.

When we got there, we are processed. We took all our dirty clothes off and got new clothes and everything else, all boys and girls. I was there about a week. And I had an aunt and uncle, two aunts and uncles, one in Chicago and one in California.

They found out through the various sources, the HIAS, they found out that I'm the only survivor. They sent affidavits for me automatically to come to America. I didn't know what to do. I was 15 years old. I didn't know what to do.

To make the story short, after discussion with the camp people, you know, the Jewish people in London, they talked me in to, say, listen, you got some family in America, go to America. You have an opportunity to get a chance.

But, you see, I was on-- so I decided, OK, I'm going to go to America. All the other kids went to Israel eventually. They stayed in London, in England, for a while. But they went eventually to Israel.

I was in London. I decided to come to America. But I was under the Polish quota-- Polish quota, which was filled. It was difficult. I stayed in England waiting until President Truman announced 100,000 children are going to come to America regardless of quota.

So in '46, I got a call from the American Embassy. Based on a special law, my number is all right now. So I got my number of permanent residence in the United States. And I got my visa, official visa. And I came to the United States in 1947 at the age of 17, 16, 17.

I came to this country. And I went to Chicago, first my stop Chicago, my aunt. I stayed with my aunt less than a week. I went to my second aunt in California.

Only 17 years old, I went to school-- I went right away to school. When you're 17 years old when I went through-- luckily, I was in good health, luckily. When you're 17 years old, when you go through what I went through, you have a mind of a much, much older than 17.

Mature.

I did not like how the way I was treated when I was in Los Angeles by, not only by my family, so-called family, aunt and uncle, but everybody around me. I was treated like a poor refugee kid. There was no respect whatsoever. And the impression I got nobody gave a goddamn.

I did not like my whole surroundings when I got there. I went to school quickly. I decided when I was 17 years old-- I was not quite 18-- this is not what I want. I want to be an American, and I want to be a good American on my own. Don't forget, I have no skills, no money, no family. I wouldn't call that my family what I had. It was just an aunt and uncle.

I have decided to join the military, the US military. I went down to the recruiting station. And they told me to get my first papers, which I did. I got my first papers. And I want to join the military.

I didn't know what to join-- Army, Navy, Air Force. But at that time, the Air Force and the Army were just barely separating. By that time, the Army and Air Force were together. But then they were split.

I went down to the recruiting station. And don't forget, my knowledge and my command of the English language was not the best. But it was all right. I learned in England quickly.

They gave me a test, an army induction test. When it was all over, they said anybody who scores over 90 on that particular test would have a choice of going in the Army-- I mean, you have a choice to go in the Air Force, in the Air Force.

There were several hundred men in the induction station down there taking the test on 6th and Main in Los Angeles, beginning of '48, I'll never forget it. Out of the several hundred, only six people scored over 90. And I was one of the six. This refugee kid was one of the six scored over 90 on the test.

So they asked me. And I said, of course, I want to go in the Air Force. Why should I go in the Army if I can go in the

Air Force? So I was taken out, put in a special bus, and went to Long Beach Air Force station.

I'll never forget it. It was small base in Long Beach. And after processing, medical and everything else, I was sworn in the Air Force. And I went to basic training at the Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

When I joined the Air Force, I forgot about everything about my life before. I became a new person. I spent in the Air Force, I was there-- I rose in the ranks. I became a corporal and a sergeant. I did very well.

I went to school. Passed the high school equivalency, GED. I went to college in the Air Force. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, I was shipped to Korea and Japan. I went to college when I was there.

To make the story short again, inasmuch I had no practical family to come to, I had no-- as a matter of fact, I had an uncle and aunt. It was nice to see him every once in a while. But that's about it. They didn't give a darn about me whatsoever. They cared less.

They did the obligation to send me an affidavit. It's strictly an obligation. But that's about it. But as far as affection, nobody give a goddamn. They cared less. I knew I was on my own. I knew it.

So I did everything on my own. I went to college while in the service. I spent eight years in the US Air Force. After three years in the Air Force, after three years in the Air Force, I became a full citizen. I was naturalized as a citizen of the United States in the United States District Court in Honolulu, Hawaii. I was a sergeant by that time. I rose in the ranks. I was stationed Japan. I flew all over the world.

Then Congress passed the GI Bill of Rights. And I've decided when my enlistment is up I've done my duty and everything else, I want to go to college on the GI Bill. So I decided to come back to California. And I went to school at California State University and UCLA in Los Angeles on the GI Bill. I got my degree, bachelor of science in accounting.

Let me tell you how I got to be an accountant if I have time.

Sure.

When I came to Los Angeles-- now listen carefully about this, what you call-- when we're talking about Jews. I was a kid. How much was I when I came back from the service. I was like-- no, I wouldn't say a kid. By that time, I was 24, 25.

I came back. I didn't know exactly what to take out. I was told to go to the Jewish Federation in Los Angeles on 590 North Vermont. And they give you counselors. I want you to counseling center and I get through it. I just get out of the service. And so they give me a bunch of tests.

And the guy looks at me and says, you want to go to college, university? I says, yes. A refugee kid like you, a guy in the service, what do you know about the university? They're going to eat you alive. Go out, get a job.

I looked at him and I said to him, like this, sir, just because my family was murdered, just because my family was murdered by the Nazis and I'm all alone, doesn't mean I'm inferior. Then I looked at him, if those yahoos can go to university, I have just as much on the ball as those yahoos sitting over there. Well, suit yourself.

When I walked out the Jewish Federation in Los Angeles, I was so mad-- I was so mad-- I said, I'm going to show him. I went to UCLA and took another test. It was a nice gentleman, so much different, non-Jewish, a Gentile who gave me the test. And he says, he looks at me and he says, well, you scored on this test so much and so much, this is pretty good. The highest rate, a mechanic you will not be because you score low on a mechanical ability. However, you scored very high-