

Good morning, Larry.

Good morning.

We're happy that you could come this morning.

I'm glad to be here.

I would like you to start telling us when and where you were born, your parents, how many sisters and brothers you had in your family.

I was born in 1925, April 2 in a little village, Dombrova. It's 6 kilometers from Krasnik City. [COUGHS] Excuse me. [COUGHS]

And as far I can remember, the first thing I can tell you, 1929 I remember I was four years old. I never forget. We a cold winter, 40 below. There was frost, the windows. We froze-- almost froze to death. And the little stove was warming up the pipes.

My mother put us next to the stove. I was the second in the family at that time, an older brother. And an uncle coming to visit us in that miserable day, cold day, and he just as a joke, he took a piece of coal and burned my foot and my knee.

I don't know what kind of joke it was. I was a kid, a baby. And I got a scar on my knee, on the right knee. It never goes away.

You still have it.

I still got the scar, yes. That's the first thing I can remember. Well, when I started getting older, I start going to school in Poland. My father was dealing, like he bought a cow or a calf. He had a little store, a little tiny one. He used to sell kerosene, sugar, salt, different things. And that's the way we made a living.

And I was the second in the family. Then I had another sister after me.

Her name?

First my brother was-- in Jewish would be Joe, and Yossel in Jewish. So in English it would be Joe. And then my name was-- now I'm Larry. Leibish used to be in Jewish. I was the second in the family.

Then I had a sister, in Jewish was Baucha, her name. So in English, [INAUDIBLE]. Then I had a brother, that the fourth one. He was after my sister. In 1936 my mother had another. I was already 10 years old, almost 11. She had a little sister. She was not quite six years. She was born that time.

Your family name was Weidenbaum.

Weidenhof. First name was-- my name was really actually Weidenbaum. We was writing ourself Pietenel. Because in Poland, my father wrote himself on his mother's name because my grandfather divorced my grandmother, mind you. And when he was two years old, my father-- he was raised by two aunts in Krasnik, in the city Krasnik, only 6 kilometers, like 3 and 1/2 miles you would say, from me, from that village.

OK, so my father was left a little baby, two years old. And then my two aunts raised him and his mother. And his mother got sick after a while. And I guess she-- so my two aunts raised my father and he was a child.

And my father, my grandfather, my father's father, remarried second time he moved to the United States. He was in America, lived in Jamaica, New York. He almost forgot about us. That's it.

So my father was Michal, and my mother was Rivka, her name. You can ask my father-in-law. I can remember I started going to school in public school. I got older. I was gone.

And then I used to go to cheder. They used to send us to cheder, to Jewish to learn. You must. So when I was six years, I started going to cheder. And I was going to public school. So I had to go both ways.

So we had to go to Krasnik every day or every other day. We used to walk as kids, mind you, 12 kilometers back and forth every day to go to cheder afternoon. In the morning we used to go to public school, and then afternoon we go to cheder to Krasnik.

In public school, did you associate with non-Jewish children?

We had children, Polish children. We were the only family, seven people living in that village. And there was about 2,000 Polish people in that village, farmers. I knew them. I grew up with them. I knew them since kids and babies, like in the United States.

Yeah. Did you have good relationship with--

I tell you, they were very antisemitic, very antisemitic. What happened, I was going to school, and I was very good with them. I used to share.

Me, like Jewish kid, we always had a nickel or something. I used to buy something, chocolate, I used to share with them, being because that's the way we feel, to share, even how poor we were. We wasn't rich. We were very poor. We used to rent a house. We didn't own a house, nothing.

So I had a bad experience while I graduate from school in 1939. And that was before that, maybe about two years sooner. That would be '38. I was about 13 years old, maybe 12 years old. I can't remember exactly.

And they used to pick on me, the Polish kids at recess. And all the time they used to call me [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. That means you goddamn Jew or something. Excuse me. I shouldn't even say that word. That was bad. They used to call me dirty Jew, dirty Jew and pick on me all the time and pick and pick.

And I couldn't take it. They used to throw rocks after us and everything else. We had a bad time. So one day we go on a recess. And I went to the teacher, and I told the teacher, the Polish teacher. And I begged her, please, I say, why don't-- they were bullies. They're picking on me all the time. I said, why do you pick-- what did I do to you? I didn't do nothing to you.

And when I got home-- so the teacher ignored me, the Polish teacher. She ignored me. And he was one guy, Kisiazkiewicz, which I never forget-- I remember their name after so many years. It's almost 50 years, I would say.

And so one day we come out on a recess. And one guy pulled a knife on me, wants to stab me. He pulled a knife, about three inches blade. He was going right at me, right through my stomach.

And I couldn't take it. I said, this is the last stroke. Meanwhile there was the lady-- there was about 40 kids in that room. There was a farm place. And I seen they had a little bat she had for mashing potatoes for the pigs.

And I see that bat standing right in the corner. And I grabbed that bat, and I hit him right across to his head. I almost killed him. I opened up his head. He was in a pool of blood.

I couldn't take it. This was my last straw. Because he was after me, want to stab me. And he fell down. And I took off. I run away.

And then after three days, I come back to school. And after that-- I thought I killed him. He pulled through, was not-- a

little bit more he would be dead. He was lucky, really. And I was lucky. I didn't want to kill him. Just I wanted to hurt him or something because he was after me.

You were defending yourself.

Defending myself. I couldn't take it. I said, this was my last. So I come back. After that three days, I come back. Everybody stood away 10, 15 feet. They were afraid of me because I told them I'm going to kill them. Even religion say don't kill, thou shall not kill.

Because I was so mad. I couldn't take it. It was always picking. They didn't leave me alone. And I didn't do nothing to him.

So did you get respect after that?

Oh, yes. I had fully respect after that. I had fully respect.

OK, after this, welcome to 1939. The war broke out. We were five children. We lived in that little village. I used to always help my father, like he used to go in the farm, buy cattle or calves.

I used to help him. I always volunteered with him. I said, you don't have to pay me nothing. I want to help you. I always did.

In 1939, we had a horse and wagon, too. And we used to go in the woods and chop wood. And I used to walk with the horse in mud and mud up to your ankles, hold the horse by his-- what would you call that?

Stirrup or--

The big pole-- what would you call that? Well, what's the difference? A harness-- OK. I hold them so the horse would go straight.

And then I bet you for a couple of months, I bought wood and took it to the city and sold it. And I was going always with my father as a kid all the time. I used to go down in the country, buy-- get chickens and eggs from the people. My hands were falling off many times. The eggs were more heavy than the basket and myself weighed.

I was always working, working so hard that I was crying all the time. I said, look at me. What did I do? Then pulls me down. OK, just I was willing to do it to help.

Then-- you can ask me what else.

Well, as the war was approaching in '39--

In '39, yes, the war, we heard that Germany start, we had big propaganda. Not propaganda-- antisemitism arose in 1938 right in Poland. They were boycotting Jewish stores, Jewish shops and don't buy this and kill Jews. And already coming from Germany, there was boycotting right away. And I knew I was already-- 1939 I was 14 years old. I just quit school exactly.

OK, so while we lived in the village, my mother while the war was going on, they just had a lot of people used to run away from the west and going toward Russia. And my mother on a Friday and my brother, she said, go to the city, because we don't have no kerosene, we don't have no salt, we don't have nothing. Why don't you go and buy it and bring it back?

And I didn't want to go, because I felt that something is wrong. When I got back before the Krasnik city, a mile, German Luftwaffe are coming. There was hundreds and hundreds of people walking-- children, women running, going all back east toward Russia.

And the Luftwaffe plane come down and start shooting. And a lot of people got killed. And I jumped between the potato-- the greens, and my brother. And the bullets were flying over our heads. So lucky I didn't get killed.

Then they took off the plane. A lot of people were dead, a lot of them. I seen a lot of people were-- they were real people. There was no army, nothing.

While coming to the city, I went down to buy that few things what I was supposed to buy and I come back. Meanwhile there was a raid in the city. One plane, a German Luftwaffe plane come in and start bombing. One horse, two horses went through the Polish army. There was no army. Nobody had disappeared. There was nothing, nothing to fight. The Poles didn't have nothing to fight with.

OK, while I'm coming, there was the raid. They were shooting and bombing and bombing. I bet you have half the city, quarter of the city was bombed out that time. A lot of people got killed. Mostly Jewish people got killed because it was right in the middle like-- we call them a marketplace. And all in that city, Jews lived all together, one on top of the other, only Jews.

And Polish people lived farther out. They used to live in the village, in the country, or far away in the city. Almost was everything occupied by the Jewish population. So mostly the Jewish people got killed. There was nobody else killed. Polish people didn't get killed. The Jews got killed. And a lot of people I knew, girls and boys, young people, old people got killed.

OK, then the invasion coming. The Germans come in 1939. While we lived in the village, I see the Polish people, the farmers, brought milk to them and apples and welcomed them, you see, to show the army they're welcome to Poland.

And this progressed coming to 1940, '39, right away '40 come along. The Germans right away set up Judenrat, they used to call it. Like a gemeente, and they used to have a Jewish man who was the top man. And they started making Jewish police.

In other words, organized [CROSS TALK].

Organized so the Jews could control the Jews, you see. And when the Germans need any Jews for work, so they just come in here and say, look, you've got to give us 500 people, 1,000, whatever. We need them, and that's it. So they used to--

They would demand it from--

From the city, and they come in to every house, look, you go, you go, you go, and this, and they took it, you see. So that's the way they start organizing the labor force, you see.

So while we was at that time 1940, it was a cold winter in Poland at that time. I never forget. They chased everybody out from the villages and from the city-- Jews, Poles. Cleaned the road because the main road used to go to Russia. That road was from Krasnik.

That main road used to go to Lublin and used to go way up to Russia, to the border. There was the main road, because all the army was coming through that road. It was like a main road, like--

So this was the German army.

German army, yes, the German. So a lot of people froze their knees, a lot of legs, and everything, a lot of-- they used to stand over you with whips.

The Jews were building the roads?

No, the roads were there. The roads--

Just cleaning them.

Just to clean the snow. They didn't use-- like in America you got snow plows or something, so they used slave work, shovels. So everybody took a shovel, and they had to shovel the snow. And it was six, seven feet snow high, cleared out the road, so miles and miles and miles. So that was the first.

How were the living conditions in the meantime? You were still in your own home?

Well, I was fortunate, because we lived in a village. So we can always get enough food. In the city, it started getting unbearable. They didn't have no food. The Germans make rationing. They didn't give the-- so everything started becoming black market.

So I used to bring from the village to the city, I used to bring potatoes, sneak in early in the morning. I used to bring butter and eggs and chickens. And sometimes I sneaked in calf. Or we sold a cow.

For every time you went and they catch you, they would kill you. You see, I took chances many times, because they would shoot you first on the spot. They would kill you.

OK, so we were doing OK, fine. So what the Germans started taking right in the city was 7,000 Jews lived in that little city Krasnik, and they started demanding young people for work. So they took one time maybe 100 or 200, mostly young people, smarter people, whoever had a little education, the first one they grabbed, the Germans.

And they say they'll take you to work. You know what? They took them in the woods, and they took them, and they killed every one of them. Little by little, they were doing the same thing, you see.

Because people were so naive. They didn't believe it. They thought they'd take them. They said you couldn't take nothing from your house. They gave you something, some little clothes, whatever, a shirt or something, and that's it. You couldn't take nothing from even the house, nothing. They tell you you go to work and you come back tomorrow. And meanwhile they're lying to you, you see. They took you, they killed you. That's it.

So little by little was going on, and then they started building camps. They start building camps. So we knew already there was a process. They were building Lublin Majdanek. I heard that Treblinka and Sobibor and then Auschwitz come along. And we heard. We knew everything. Just we didn't believe it, that's what's going on, you see.

And that's the way how they made the Jews to disappear, little by little. Then after a while, they killed already, they took all the young people, they started taking women and children little by little. And that's the way they shipped them out.

Were you in a ghetto first before?

I didn't get there. I get there when I was in the ghetto. So while this was going on, my mother went to the city. She took something to sell. And they had, they would say an [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. That means the Germans started catching like you catch dog, Jews. You see it? And my mother almost fell in. They caught my mother. Finally she somehow got out and she come back. We was afraid that we lost our mother at that time. That was, I don't know, 1941 that time was it. Esther was gone.

And so little by little, they were cleaning out the city. They were killing. So what did, the richer Jews from the police and the Judenrat, Mr. [PERSONAL NAME] used to pay. [PERSONAL NAME] was there. He was the main man, and he had a dozen or maybe 20 Jewish, what they want to be. They thought they could save the lives. So they become couples.

So they give them a stick, you see it. And they used to beat on the people, the same thing on Jews. So they made one Jew hit the other one. You see, that's the way they organize it, the Germans.

But also these Jews, they thought they were buying favors for themselves.

Yeah, so this one favor, and he was taking mostly the poor Jews. They shipped out the first ones. So the rich ones thought they could buy themselves off. They had money. So they bought-- they had a ring or gold or diamonds, whatever. The richer ones-- there weren't that many rich. There was some rich ones, too. So they thought they're going to spare their life. On the last, they killed them, too, on the last. That's what they done.

OK, as the war-- 1941 the war broke out with Russia. And they had gone tanks and army. But they pushed on Russia unbelievable. They had such a tremendous army that nobody could believe it. And I could see it. I see with my own eyes how they were marching right through that city, Krasnik, going straight on Russia. They were gone by six months. They were pushing army and army. So we knew that's going to be a war. They're going to attack Russia.

In 1940, they start right away, from '40, before '41, they were pushing a tremendous army. Their tanks and Luftwaffe were going and everything. They were going with everything. They had a tremendous army. That's what it is.

So little by little, they start killing all the Jews. We had to carry signs, Juden, on our arms, every Jew.

Besides the yellow star?

A yellow star, yeah, that's what you had to carry. Meanwhile, I never wore it. I put one on, and I threw it away. Because I didn't believe it. I said, if they catch me, let them kill me. I don't care.

So I never put it on. My mother said, put it on, put it on. I said, no way. And I looked-- I was lucky. I looked like a [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], and I spoke fluently Polish. While I was living in the village, I had a good advantage because I learned to speak fluently Polish. Mostly Jews in the city, even Jews didn't look like Jews, they had an accent like I have an accent. I mean, at that time I'm European. I'm not a fluent American.

So me, I had a good advantage because I lived in the village. That saved my life, too, because I spoke fluently Polish. That was a good advantage to me.

Yeah, so you were able to get away with--

Yes, and I was short, too. That's another way. I wasn't too tall. And I got away with a lot of things. And I did a lot of black market. I was trying to help support my family. Because I said, we didn't have how to live.

So as I was short and I spoke Polish, I never wear a star, and I knew a lot of them Polish farmers, and they liked me. Because we were poor Jews, and they always helped me when I need to buy wheat or something. They used to give me without money. I paid them back. That trust me, you see. I had a good faith with them.

Did the farmers know that you were Jewish?

Sure, they know. Sure. They know it. It was Pesach, like we used to-- they know the holidays. They know everything, sure. That's why you always a lot of them Poles. They used to call, Zhyd, Zhyd. So sure they know it. Everybody know it. From little kid they know that I was a Jew.

Yeah. So you were able to help the family?

Oh, yeah, I was supporting, and maybe God spared me for it, because I went, like you say in the Jewish, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. I was going to give my life sacrifice in many ways. I never know that I'm coming back. And I just didn't care. If I'm killed, I'm killed. I tell you father's story, what happened in my later life.

So during 1940, we was going with wood, mind you, taking wood to sell it. I mean, I shouldn't go back. It's already the war.

That's all right.

OK, I just give you that instinct, what happened. So in Poland, they got so much snow. And the Poles tried to slack. And the snow got packed up so much. And I used to take wood in a sled and a horse to the city to sell it, because the Jews need the wood to warm the houses. A lot were left, you see. They would freeze to death. So I used to sell it, used to take it down to the side roads before the city so before the Gestapo could catch me or something.

So while I was gone, the snow was so high, and I drove with that horse. It was already March, end of February. And the snow started melting. And on the bottom was water. And so I throw all the wood off because my horse couldn't pull his legs out from the snow. Because he fell up, up to his belly.

So I hitched the horse, and I pulled the sled back out with that horse, and I put back all the wood back on the sled. While I was putting the last piece of wood, I didn't want to waste it because it was laying, so I stayed under the snow, and I fell in right to my stomach. And water was at the bottom, all water, so my feet was completely wet. It was cold.

So I went to the city with the horse, and I sold the wood and was coming back, start freezing. And I was sitting on the sled, and my feet was stiff like a piece of wood. I couldn't get off the sled, was completely stiff.

So my father come in and carried me and took me down to the house, took me to the house. He took a knife, cut open the boots. And my mother gave me water. I soaked my feet, rubbed my back, and the next day I went back to work. That's the way, you see. We were very tough.

Now you can ask me some more what you want to know.

When was it that you were actually gathered into a ghetto?

OK, now what happened, while we was in that village, another incident I had, 1942 before Pesach, which is before Passover. And I bought 10 bags of wheat. And I was going to another city for my farmer. I didn't even pay him. I didn't have the money. So I said, sell it, and I give you the money. He said, fine. And I took on a sled.

He trusted you.

Oh, yes, he trust me 100%. I took the sled, and I was going. 10 kilometers was another city, Zaklik<sup>3</sup>w, south. So I took the sled, and I was going. It that happened on a Friday early in the morning. So there was a little police station in Swidnik. The police caught me right away.

So what happened, I bought myself off. I gave them money. They let me go. So before I come, I had a partner. His name was Elbaum. And the man had four kids from a different city. He moved into the village. He lived there.

And he was my partner. And while I was coming, the Gestapo was in that village. Maybe two kilometers before the city the Gestapo was right in that village. And they caught me with that flour. They stopped me.

Lucky that Avrumel, it was his name, Elbaum. He jumped off that wagon. He took his hands in the back and said good morning to the Gestapo. He didn't have no sign. He didn't recognize. But don't even point that you're a Jew. They didn't know he was a Jew. And they caught me.

They caught me, they took the flour from me. So I had to wait till afternoon because they had some more business to do. Meanwhile, they caught that Jewish fellow, and he was out of the city coming to that village to try to get some bread or something. They had him arrested, too. Just I spoke Polish, so they took me to the station Zaklik<sup>3</sup>w.

They took my flour away, the Gestapo. And they took me back on the kommandantur. Meanwhile before that, they brought the Jewish guy, too. The Gestapo men come down from upstairs, second floor steps. He pulled his Luger, and he shot him right there in front of me. He killed him. He was 24 years old, that young Jewish fella. They killed him right

in front of me.

So I had fear. I know that I don't know if I'll be able to come home, because I know this was a gangster. He had a [INAUDIBLE] on his face, the old German. He was maybe close to 60 years old. He was a murderer, a gangster.

They took me in the kommandantur upstairs, and they were typing and asking me this and that. I told them I don't have a father. My father was still living, just I had to lie. So they asked me what is my mother's name. I said [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. I think a Polish name I give him.

And what is my name? I said Leon. I said Pietenel. So the Germans, I should really didn't give him the name because Pietenel too, oh-- [NON-ENGLISH], he said between himself. I still gave him Pietenel. That was my first name, Pietenel P-I-E-T-E-N-E-L.

And he asked me how old I am. I said, I'm 13 years old. And he said that is too young to be [NON-ENGLISH] By 14 years, the German law they could arrest you already. So I told him I'm a Polack. If I would say I'm Jewish, I wouldn't be here to tell. I would have had my head blown off right in two seconds, because that would finish me off right there.

Took the flour, so they asked me what did I get the flour. I told them another Jewish fellow was going with a bad horse, and the horse was very weak. He couldn't go. And he loaded me up. I was going for the woods to buy woods, because there's a lot of woods around there in that city Zaklik<sup>3</sup>w.

And they were typing and typing. They beat me on my legs. They picked me up by the ears. They tried to pull my ears. And [NON-ENGLISH] and screamed at me. The Gestapo screamed at me.

And I say, I would take [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. I told him I would take him with my hands. I would know where he is, just like that. Just I was calm. My heart was pickled. Just I just was calm, didn't show off that I'm scared or something. So God was with me, too.

So they asked me if I have a father. I said, no, my father isn't living, I told them. And they let me go. They took the flour away, and they let me go. When they let me go, they gave me the horse back, too.

And it was Friday night. And meanwhile there was living yet maybe about 10 families in that city. And I drove up there to them so I could buy something to eat. I was hungry. I didn't eat the whole day, nothing.

And he said, you have [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. You have luck from heaven that you got out from them gangsters, they told me. I took that horse, and I hit him with a stick, and I just was going back.

So by the time I got back was 8 o'clock at night on a Friday night. My mother put candles on. They were still living there. She was crying. She was so happy to see me.

Meanwhile, the farmer come in, too. He thought that I was-- I told him about where I got the flour. The farmer had seven kids. They moved out of the farm. Because if I would squeal on the farmer, they would burn the farm, and they would kill him.

And I said if they would even kill me, I wouldn't say it. And I didn't say nothing. I didn't give him nothing out. And even my own mind I had this, I wouldn't give him out. So the farmer was really nice about it. He was happy that I didn't squeal.

So he didn't care if you didn't pay him?

I paid him. I don't know if I paid him. I don't think I paid him. I didn't have no money. So he didn't care. He didn't care if I paid him. I don't think I paid him. I don't know if I paid him. I can't remember. Maybe I did pay him before I had some money, too. I can remember because it's been so long.



OK, I got back home. A week later the same Gestapo come in to the same village. So I thought they were looking for me. So we disappeared all from the house. We ran away. We hide herself in barns, farmer barns, because I thought they come in, the same Gestapo came in looking.

So they came to your village?

No, they come to the village, just they didn't look for me. It was lucky.

So while this process was going on, that was 1942 already. The Germans decided in full what's going on in. I had an uncle that he was too something from the villages. He had to report to the Germans how many Jews live in the villages and how many days.

He was on the committee.

On the committee, like in the committee. So meanwhile there was a village [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], not far from us. I would say about five kilometers. There lived maybe six, seven Jewish families in the village.

The Germans come in. That was already in October. September comes before October, right?

Yes.

OK, September I think was it. And they round up all the Jews from the village, and they massacred every one of them. Only one man survived. He ran, and he seen it how they killed his wife and four children, mind you. His name was Carpen, Yossel Carpen.

And he ran in his barn. He lived in the village. He had about five acres of land. He used to deal. He was not too bad off. And they massacred, and my uncle had to come down to that village. And they put a massacre. There was about 35 or 40 people. And they had to bury them in one grave, all the people, children, women, everything. Broad daylight they just killed every one of them, every one of them.

It was tragic. After all, they killed our brothers. It was very tragic. And we were afraid they're going to come to our village and do the same thing.

So they said to my uncle, all the Jews gather from any place you live, come in one spot, Krasnik. That was the one place we got to come in one spot.

So we didn't go because I know they're going to kill us. Because that was the end of us. So we thought we were going to do some hiding, go hiding.

So meanwhile, I had another uncle living with his wife and kids. Probably a week before, they start telling us come. So he brought some four or five chicken, was carrying to the city to sell it and make business, you know. He all was doing.

And the same Gestapo was driving through the village. They caught him right on the road and they shot him, one bullet with a rifle, and I could see he was dead. I didn't see him-- I don't know who buried him after that. They killed my uncle.

So we decided we're going to disperse. Maybe we're going to try to save our life somehow. 1942 was the resolution Hitler to kill every Jew, finish it up. The one to be able to work, work, and the other one, they're going to kill. All the people that took on a cemetery, they make them dig their ditches. And kids they massacre right on the cemetery, and they killed them. And a lot they took them to Auschwitz, I think was the last.

So what happened, while we were running around and there was no place to go, some farmer let us in, me and my brother. Meanwhile I went into a farm. My father went in a different direction. And my mother was different. My two sisters went a different, and my brother was still left in that house. I think my father was there, too, yet.

They told the Poles in the village, like a committee, you got to bring all the [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], all the Jews in one spot-- to kill, that's all. So while three Gestapo coming from Krasnik, one was [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. I never forget the names even.

And they went into different villages. A lot of Jews from the Krasnik ran away to the villages. They thought they could save themselves. So they round up about 30 or 35, and they killed everyone. Only one kid ran away. He had injured his shoulders. Both shoulders were shot. I don't know what happened to him later. Only one ran away. The rest are killed. Massacred every one of them.

So while I was sleeping at night, I had a dream the Gestapo caught me. I had a dream. And the dream was so. The Gestapo caught me next day, sure enough. I was separate in one place, and my brother was in a different place in different farm. And we just dispersed.

And while I was coming to the village where my brother was, the Poles were waiting there with axes and with forks. So they caught my brother. And I didn't know that. I just walked in and like an ambush.

And they caught me, and he said, if you a Zhyd, I'm going to kill you right away with the ax. He had an ax over my head. So they brought us to that village where we used to live, Dombrova. And there was a little tiny room, I would say half of this. This is big, the whole room, and one bed.

And there was a family living, that Elbaum. There was an apartment with four kids, one little bitty room. Oh, you want to stop it?

No, no, no, go ahead.

So they took us in that room, the Poles, and the brothers. So meanwhile my father was there. My mother was there. My aunt was there with the uncle got shot, her kids. We were 12 people. And my two sisters were running around.

Meanwhile, there was my aunt and my grandmother living in another little village probably a mile away. Because my uncle moved in because he got sick and he lost his leg and then he got cancer out of it from that snow winter, and he died.

They went and they shot my grandmother. She was 75 years old. And my aunt was, I would say, at that time about 50, maybe 55 years old. Strong women-- my grandmother had 11 kids. She was such a strong lady. And they shot them, killed them.

Then surrounded us, and we were waiting for execution. So while I was in that room, I begged the Poles, look, I grew up with you. I said, what did I do to? You why do you want to see me to kill? What are you going to get out of it?

No, Zhyd, you're going to wait. They're going to kill you. That's it.

So meanwhile was a little window. And I jumped out through the window. My mother and my father want I should live because they know that I was supporting the whole family. They want so much I should live.

And I want to live myself. I was pulling my hair. I was 16 years old that time. I was crying. I said, I wish I would be a dog, a stone, a cat, anything else. At least I could live.

So I jumped through the window. The Poles caught me. And they brought me back. They see me. There was a little shed there, and I thought I could run there and run away from there. And they caught me. They were watching us. They brought me back in that room, and we were waiting for the execution.

So while they brought us, the three Gestapo come in to that room. And they open the window, and they put the machine gun, and they want to kill us right in the room. Machine gun was already sitting, just waiting, like the camera, just to

pull the trigger and kill us.

So my mother says to me, you know, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], why don't you go under the bed, and there was some baskets with potatoes and this and schmattas, all rag, all kinds of the rag. And maybe after this, maybe if we're going to be dead, maybe you survive on our bodies, my mother said, and my father, too.

The Gestapo come in, and they were calling one by one. That woman was crying from that house. And there was a man from the village. In World War I he was a soldier in the Russian army because Poland was occupied by Russia up to the Bolshevik until Russia had a revolution.

And he knew how to speak German, that guy. And he spoke to the Gestapo. They shouldn't kill us, he said. We were poor Jews. We worked for the Germans. We worked here and there. We don't have it. And order should take us in the woods, kill us.

So meanwhile I thought they're going to kill us one by one. So my mother said, you better come out, because they'll call my father, Michael. Michael was my father's name, Michael. And he was screaming the Gestapo, up. So I thought when he say up, rounds, so they're going to shoot one by one.

Then he called Jabramek, Avrumel was his name, Jabramek in Polish. Then they called Josek. Yossel was my brother's, older. They know I was there, too. He said, Lieba.

So I come out. I walked like I felt so bad, because I know they're going to kill us. See, everybody left, and they want to kill us. And the Polack says, [POLISH]. [POLISH] that I was running away, and they brought me back from that didn't understand. And the Polish man didn't say nothing, you see. The man from the village didn't explain to him, because the Gestapo didn't understand Polish. Because he talked in German to them they should save our life. They shouldn't take-- or take us to the ghetto.

So they tied our hands. So we were four men. The rest were women and children. We were 12 total. They took in the wagons. So I know that after they didn't shoot or they didn't kill nobody. OK, they took us out. They tie our hands. My hands were tied in the back with a rope, my father, my brother, and Avrumel, that one, and the women and the children, and they put us on one wagon, two wagons, and they took us to the ghetto.

They took us to Krasnik ghetto. And that ghetto was over 200 people. There used to be synagogues, and they made a ghetto out of it. They put fences around it and everything, and it was a Jewish ghetto for the last Jews.

It was unbearable. There was one little window. It was hot. Two people suffocated. They put us like herring, one on top of the other ones.

I say, this is the last. We're not going to come out alive. So at night-- excuse me for expression-- my father says to me, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], save your life. You're not going to save [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. It means my life. I say, if you can help yourself, help yourself.

At night, there were buckets they give us to go in the bathroom, excuse me. Buckets-- women and children like animals. They kept us worse than animals, I tell you. Even an animal wouldn't do it.

So in the morning, they open up the door. And I was the volunteer by the door to carry the bucket to the toilets. And I said, if I have a chance, I will run, and let them kill me. There still was some Jewish police and the German.

And I see an open hole. It was open from the other through that, was like a hallway. In the other side, I see the door was open. I said, I'm going to go. And I just keep on going. And I said, they shoot after me, I just I don't care. I said, they kill me.

So I run, and I took off. Meanwhile was a cemetery on top there. It was a Jewish cemetery. I passed there. And I was going back to the village. And my mother was in the ghetto, too, my father.

And I come to the village. Where I go to a farm, nobody wanted to let me in. They didn't let me in. The farmer didn't want to let me in. They were afraid the Germans come in they kill us, they burn us, and this. So I was running around like a mad dog, cold, nothing to eat. Some farmer let me in and give me something.

And meanwhile my two sisters were running around, too. Wherever they went, they chased them out. My sister was at that time six years old, a month to six. And my sister was that time about 14 years old. I was 16. I was two years older.

And while I was going on like this, the sisters I said, what are we going to do? Nobody want to let us in. So I said, I go back to the ghetto, whatever will be. They kill us, they kill us, I said.

So I took my two sisters, because my mother was in that ghetto there. I know they're going to-- there was no place to go. The only place for a Jew to go, six feet in the ground, and that's it. Nobody would let us in.

So I went back to the city with my two sisters, because wherever they went, they chased them out. It was cold already. It's coming to October at that time. I go back to the city, and I see that there was a place they were taking the Jews. They were building a camp there not far from Krasnik, maybe one mile away. It used to be an ammunition factory, and the Germans made a camp from it.

So when I got back to the ghetto, I see the Germans hitting on them, the Ukrainians. They had a lot of Ukrainians help the Germans. Used to hit the young fellow, Jews. Whatever they kept, they wanted to live. They brought them to a bath, because it used to be like a steam bath in that little city, a Jewish steam bath. Every Friday they used to go like a mikvah. They used to go, the Jewish people, to that steam bath.

And I see they were beating on them and kicking them and with the rifles. And I could hear it. It wasn't far away, maybe a couple hundred feet. I said, no way I'm going to die. I say, I'm not going back.

So my sisters went to see maybe you can find my mother. Meanwhile, what happened, my mother ran away and come back. And I met my mother in the village. So she asked me where my sister-- I told her I took them back. So my mother was running back to the ghetto to see if she can find my sisters.

Meanwhile they load up all the Jews, kids and women, whatever what left on the wagons and took them to Zaklik<sup>3</sup>w, that Zaklik<sup>3</sup>w that caught me with the flour. And from there, the trucks go to Auschwitz to clean up the whole camp. Maybe was left a few families in that ghetto, because they used to work for the Germans, used to be [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] with the police and this, the one who collaborated with the Germans. So I said, OK, we'll keep you here, so they kept him to the last minute. Then they killed him on the last time.

Yeah, and in Zaklik<sup>3</sup>w, there was a train there?

A train-- there used to be tracks, big tracks. There was a big railroad. And from there, they used to go and ship them to Auschwitz from there. I think this was when we went to Auschwitz. Because this was the main route to go to Auschwitz.

So what happened, my mother went, and they loaded them up, and they disappeared and took them to Auschwitz.

They caught your mother, too?

Sure, my mother went to look for my sisters. And after, I felt so guilty, why didn't I go with them? Because we didn't have no place to go no place, you see. Nobody wanted to let us in.

So while that was going on, I went back to that village. Wherever I went to a farm, nobody let me in the house. Nobody let me in even in a barn-- nobody.

So what happened? It started getting cold already. So I walked half to the city. That Krasnik used to be a ravine. And I

walked in. It was raining and snowing. I was so soaked. You can wring my clothes out. It was big, like a foxhole.

I walked in there, a Jewish lady-- I used to know her from Krasnik-- she lays there. She was waiting for her daughter to come. Froze to death. So I talked to her, and I didn't have no place to go, either. And she stayed there, and she died probably there also. Some Poles probably caught her.

So I didn't have no place to go. So while I was coming back from the city, I was walking through that little village. So the Polacks were standing. I know a lot of them Polacks. I grew up with them. One of the Polacks want to grab me, and he wanted to grab me to the Germans, to drag me. So

I pulled myself and run away. So I come back to the village. Nobody wanted to let me in. So meanwhile I went into a farmer we used to live one time in the house. And I asked him, could you let me go in your barn? He said, sure, go up in the barn.

I go up on the barn, and I stay on top on the attic, like here, and there was the attic, and here was the barn with the cows. Meanwhile, the same Gestapo that had caught us, took us to the city, they come back in that same barn in the same village looking for more Jews, Juden. And there was no Juden. They cleaned everything up. There was nobody there.

So the farmer knew it. They used to live three families in that farm. I'm laying on the attic, already start getting cold, snow, bitter cold. I lay down in the attic, and the Gestapo come in, and he say, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] And somehow they knew a few words in Polish.

And that Polack said, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. He said that I would take my shift in my fingernails. I would squeeze his head if I would have it. And his wife stands in the barn.

And I'm sitting there. My heart is pumping. And the barn was maybe 10 bundles of straw in the whole attic. There was nothing-- cold, open, wind blowing.

I lay there. And I said [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] to myself, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. And I hoped that he didn't say nothing. And the Gestapo left, mind you. He left. He left. And he said, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. He said, you know you gotta go, because they're afraid they'll come back and they're going to burn the farm and they're going to kill us. So I had to take off.

It was on a Friday night. Never forget-- cold, snow. You can walk on top of the snow. But I bet you it was 20 below that time, already cold, bitter cold. It was quite a bit high snow.

So I thought I will go, but I'm going to go to another village. Maybe somebody will let me in. I go to another village. I was walking between this village and another village. There was a little woods. And one Polish guy, I know him-- I used to go to school with his brother. He worked for the Germans. They gave him a pistol, mind you. And he was a spy for the Germans.

And when he see me, he said, hey, you [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. And he was running after me. He didn't have a chance to pull his gun. He had a gun, I know.

And he was trying to catch me. And thank God, that time I felt good. I was strong yet. And I run. I tell you, it was a beautiful night. The moon, you could see it. You could pick up in the snow a nail you could pick it up. He was chasing me about two miles, two kilometers.

He couldn't catch me. God was with me. I was running like a bird. And while I come in one spot, I fell in the snow, and I lay there for half an hour. I thought my heart will jump out of my body.

So I couldn't go there. Nobody wanted to let me in. So I turned around, and I was going to a different village again, two kilometers, another village where I know farmers. I thought maybe over there I go in, somebody will let me in. Nobody would let me.

So I sneaked in on a barn on a Friday night. That was Friday night. I went up in the barn. And that Saturday at night start coming cold weather. Like we have a wind chill maybe 60 or 70 below, blowing, I thought the barn will come apart, windy, cold. I stay in the snow. I thought, I'm going to freeze to death on top of the attic. The farmer didn't know that I was even there.

I stayed Saturday night, Friday night, Saturday all day. I couldn't feel my knees. I was so stiff, frozen, that I didn't know. Finally I thought, I'm going to get off, and I'm going to go see. Maybe somebody will let me in in the house. I know a friendly farmer. We used to deal with him. He was a pretty nice man.

I walked into his house. I knocked the door. He let me in. The stove was burning. And they had some borscht with potatoes. And they gave me something to eat. And I was so happy.

Meanwhile my knees were so frozen I couldn't move. So I started rubbing. I rubbed and rubbed and rubbed. I rubbed about two hours before my knees start coming to myself.

While I was warming, OK, yeah, he let me sleep in the house. I was happy he let me sleep in the house. It was at least warm. In the morning he said, you know, you've got to go in the barn with the cows. I said, OK, I stay with the cows. Stayed with the cows all day.

At night, Sunday night, he said, you know what? We got news the Germans coming to the village. You're going to have to go. So I took off. Monday morning, sure, the Gestapo, a bunch of Germans with trucks were going through the village.

They were coming, taking pigs and chickens and cows, whatever they need. You have an extra cattle or something he didn't report, so they took him away and then they put a lot of them in prison. Otherwise they took him to Majdanek. Otherwise they killed a lot of them, the farmers.

So I went away, and I got no place to go. So I go and run back and run here. Nobody want to let me in. They chased me with a stick, mind you. Some said, go, go, go. Some friendly farmer gave me a piece of bread. It was cold, bitter cold. I didn't have no place to go.

Finally I lived in the same village-- I used to go with a bunch of guys, the Polish fellas in school. They had a big barn. So I went up to the barn, and asked them, would you let me stay overnight?

Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no. I wouldn't let you stay, because the Germans would look for us because we are five boys in the family, and they used to come chase a lot of Polish boys, take them and ship them to Germany so they could work in factories. Because they need slave work, because mostly the army was tied up in Africa, and it's still fighting the Russian front.

He say, you know what? Two doors away my uncle's got a big barn. He said he got a lot of straw. Why don't you go there? And I was thinking in my head-- I didn't say nothing to them. I'm going. I said, no, no, no, I'm not going to go.

Meanwhile after I left, I sneaked in. They had the wood made there with-- from wood made in the farm and barns, and it's all closed in. You can climb on it like steps, sticking out pieces like log houses in the country someplace.

And I sneaked in. And I went up in the attic. There was a ladder. I walked up. And I said, I'm staying here. I don't care.

Meanwhile, I was lucky. It got so cold I almost froze to death that night. I went down to a farmer, where I had my pillow, a [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. What would you call in English [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]?

Oh, you mean bedding?

Beds. He gave me back a beddings. And that saved my life. If I wouldn't have the beddings, I would be dead. Because

the attic was open, big opening. And it was cold. The attic still in the straw pulls.

And I was going at night, by farmers beg a piece of bread. And I used to go in a farm barn. And I took a bottle, and I used to milk milk from the cows, steal milk from the cow.

And the milk froze like icicles. So I used to put to my mouth, and I sucked like you suck a bottle with ice. Meanwhile it was sweet. It was milk. And that's the way I lived.

So I stayed in that attic for six months. So what happened? While I was there, the farm lady used to come in. They had the cows and pigs and everything. She did the chores. After she closed the door to the barn, I got off about 10, 11 o'clock at night. And I used to walk in the village, just begging for a piece of bread. Some farmers were nice, giving. Some chased me away.

And I used to steal from my dog a piece of-- I don't know, a little pail so I could get some water and wash myself. And the lye start-- I didn't have no clothes, all dirty, everything else.

So what happened? I used to go steal farmers' hanged-up clothes. I used to steal burlap bags, used to have underwear, long ones or a shirt. Everything I steal. It was rough. I didn't care, as long as it was clean. And I stole. And that's the way. It dried up on me and my body.

And I lived there for almost six months. So I was hungry. I had a piece of onion. Somebody gave me a piece of bread. I started losing weight because I didn't have good food, nothing. Sometimes I had one meal a week. Sometimes I didn't have a meal a week. I had a piece, a slice of bread and a piece of onion with the milk.

While I was cutting, I cut my finger. I cut right to the bone, this finger. And blood was running. I couldn't go, no sew, nothing. So I kept it in the ice like this, in the snow. And that's the way it grew together. This is my souvenir from 1942 to '43.

So while I was very weak coming to March--

Do you also have a number, Larry?

No, no, I ran away. I didn't have that. Thank God I wasn't in Auschwitz, Lublin, Majdanek. Otherwise I would be dead. But different Jewish-- like our friends went through, our brothers and sister, what they went through, some survived. They went through horror. I still--

You were running and hiding.

Hiding. So what happened, coming on Saturday night, something was pulling me, I should get off from that attic. And I thought she closed the barn already and she closed the door. While I was coming down, the lady caught me from the step coming down.

I said, now what's going to happen? I have no place to go. So I walked up, way to the village at the end of the village where we used to live there. And we used to live in the second house before the Germans took us that time.

And there was a family, Schmidt, Polish family, almost like a German name, just maybe they descend from German. I don't know. They're very good people. So when she sees me, the lady, she always give me to eat. They were our neighbors.

She said, come on, Lieb, come on, Lieb, I got good news. I said, what is it? He said, come on in the barn. He said, I show you. Your cousin is here. He lived at a different village, Benjamin. He's in Israel now with another brother.

When I looked at him, he was a little boy, 12 years old at that time, about 12 years old. And he cried. I said, what's the matter? He said, they took my mother, the Polacks. They caught them where they were hiding themselves, and a

brother.

And they took uncle [PERSONAL NAME]. The brother was the oldest one. He was 24 years old. And they shot him. They shot my aunt. They shot--

And meanwhile, my uncle ran away. They were chasing after him. He ran away with his little boy. He was at that time, about 10 years old, eight years old. I think about eight years old. He was born in, I think, 1936, too. He was a little kid, eight years old. '36-- about eight years. And he ran away to a different village.

So he cried. So I was crying, too. I said, I got no place to go. was laying for six months in an attic. And I got no place to go. So he said, you know what? Stay here in this barn. The lady will not doing.

There was a hole in the barn. It was like a Fox hole, to dig out the hole so they could hide themselves. In case Germans come in, you could jump in that hole like a rat and cover up with straw.

So I jumped in. While the woman come in, I jumped in there. So at night I went back and got my bedding back. And I said, I'm not going back there. And I didn't go no more.

So I stayed. Maybe two weeks later my uncle come in to the same farm lady. Because they were looking for them in the other village. He couldn't stay there. And so he come to this lady.

My uncle was rich before the war. I mean, he wasn't a millionaire. Just he was rich in average. He had land, and he had a big store with materials. So the lady liked money, you see, so she said she going to keep us there, that lady Schmidt.

Did he--

So my uncle come in. He used to give her material. Because he had a lot of material left from his store. He used to live by one farm, and the farmer let him have it. He hide it for him.

So the lady want money. She was not that rich. Lucky she was a good woman, really her whole family. So we walked in there and stayed in that barn, in a barn, in a stable, the whole works with the cows.

So I was going-- it was 1943 already. So my uncle used to know a lot of farmers, used to go by the farmer's bag. Some give him a cake. Some give him bread.

So he had money. You know what he did? He told me, you go down and start stealing chickens from him. I said, look, Uncle, they're going to catch me. They'll kill me. They find me with a chicken, kill me. No, you have to go steal chickens.

Every time I went, stole a chicken, I used to say [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] 10 times because the farmer will kill you for chicken and the Polish lady made a soup, and she had, too, the chickens. So the whole family, we were all eating from the same chicken. The next night, I went and stole another chicken.

And that's the way I lived. I stole by the farmer some wheat. And the farmer lady, she grind them with two stones by hand, because they couldn't go to a flour mill because the Germans didn't allow. So they used to have two stones with a stick, and they used to feed it with a hand like this. And they grind the wheat and then dry it up and then make bread so they could live. They had a hard time, too, the farmers. Because the Germans took everything away from the farmers in Poland.

OK, so we stayed, and my uncle got so bitter. I don't know, because he lost his wife and his last son. And my two cousins, two sisters, they went on Aryan paper, Polish papers. And one stupid of that cousins mine, she come back to the village parade. And they follow them, the Poles, and she lived in Warsaw. They took her, and they killed her.

They recognized her?



They knew her, yes. And they killed her.

So what happened after this? The one survived. She had an Aryan paper. She was smarter. She didn't come flushing back to the village. She survived.

So while I was with my uncle, he become so bitter he started beating me for no reason. So one day, we went down we picked up some farmer cake they gave us. So his son, a little boy, he asked him, give me-- a cut another little piece of cake. So I went and cut it. And he fell asleep.

And when he woke up and he seen I cut that little cake, he almost killed me. He almost broke my hand with a stick. He almost broke my hand. He said, this is the last one.

Then he made me teach Alef-Beis in Hebrew, the kid, his younger kid. I say, in time like this, why do you want to learn Hebrew? I said, what's the matter? Somebody's going to hear us, they're going to burn us alive. No. So I teach him, Alef-Beis and that all back and forth.

OK, after that, I couldn't take it. So what I decided, I found the guerrilla movement, the partisans. I found the partisans, and I took off-- me and I took his oldest son. He was a little kid at that time, 14 years old, a little kid. We went to the guerrillas. So he cried. He didn't cry for his son. He cried for me, because I used to bring him food, you see. I was his provider.

Was this a Polish partisan?

Polish partisan, was Russians and the Jews. There wasn't many Jews.

Were they aware of the fact that you were Jewish?

Well, this group, there was about half a dozen Jews, and the rest was Pollack. They were friendly partisans there were two groups there. Another group partisans, they used to kill Jews. It was very dangerous.

So this group, they knew it. They didn't say nothing. The more people, the more they wanted.

So while we came to the underground to the partisan, next morning they had some women-- they were officers, too, from the partisans. They used to have women. They liked to have a woman. So they had young girls dragged out from the farm.

So they had sheets they hanged up in the daytime to dry. Meanwhile, German plane come in and was watching. They come in a decoy-- what do you say? A plane he was watching.

So he spotted white linens, you see, and whatever. So they come back, and half an hour, the Luftwaffe, and they start bombing and they start shooting with machine guns, dropping bombs in that spot. I tell you, that's the first hello I heard from the Luftwaffe from 1939. I survived--

So where were you in the meantime?

Right in the woods.

Right in the woods.

OK, they gave me a gun. They teach me how to use it. And I was happy, at least, a gun for me. I was so happy, anxious. So every time they teach us, we used to go attack Germans in stations. Used to be one German, two Germans occupied three villages. We used to at night come and shoot the hell out of them, knocked them out and goodbye, kill them, clean them up, little by little.

We used to watch trains go by. They teach us how to put dynamite sabotage so the trains wouldn't go to Russian front. That was '43.

The German trains--

Polish train-- Germans just used to [INAUDIBLE]. They have rockets.

Ammunition.

Ammunition and whatever, and a lot of Germans. So we used to dynamite the trucks at night, you see. Many times you go and you never know if you coming, because they had a lot of watching, too, you see with guns.

I took a chance. I didn't care. Every time there was something to go, I would volunteer. Because I wanted to go fight. I was so much to take revenge what they had done to us.

OK, so past '43 '44. In '44, the Germans decided that they're going to clean all the partisans out. So we knew it's coming. They call it in Polish oblava. Oblava means a rate, that the Germans decided to clean the [NON-ENGLISH].

OK, so what happened after this, they come in. We was 500, 200, 300 guerrillas all over for miles and miles and miles. So we found out that the Germans will look for us and bring in a big army.

So we concentrate in one spot. We concentrate about 9,500 guerrillas. It's a lot of guerrillas in one place. And we're going to put up a fight against the Germans.

Meanwhile, the Germans brought a whole division-- army, tanks, artillery, plane, everything. And they open up about 8 o'clock in the morning in June-- not June, it was later. It was before harvest time. What time does harvest time start?

July.

July. That was before July, before the harvest at that time. They really open up in the woods, the German. The woods were burning. I tell you, I don't know how we survived.

The leader for my group was a Polish guy. He had a girlfriend. And he got hit from a shrapnel from an artillery shell, blown up to kingdom, he and his girlfriend in a million pieces, tore him up in pieces. Just a shrapnel hit him from the cannon.

And we just ran all over because we run--

A lot of the partisan were killed?

We dispersed. Oh, yeah. We fought as long as-- we fought four days. Then we ran out of ammunition. We couldn't fight. There was nothing to fight. So we dispersed. Each one went in different directions.