

And you can hear children crying and calling, Mommy, Mommy from inside the covered truck. And on the Appellplatz floors were standing the mothers and fathers of the children, crying. And my recollection represent the fight between two instinct-- one instinct, the instinct of survival, and the other instinct an instinct of protection of your children. And nobody moved.

And after a few minutes, the trucks disappeared. And the voices were stilled in the exception of crying on mothers and our [INAUDIBLE] and our standing groups. And a few minutes later, we all marched back to our usual working places.

Can you describe the camp or-- with the guard system, the officers, the way it was structured, how big it was?

The camp was built on the territory of Jewish cemetery. And the headstones were used to build the streets within the camp. It was like a small hill and it was I don't remember how many living blocks. And the sides were on the blocks in which the-- some prisoners work on as tailors and other trades in preparing war material for Germany.

The entire camp was surrounded by the electrified wire, double-wire fence. In between the two walls of wire was a place on which the guards were walking with dogs. And in each corner of the camp, there were watchtowers manned day and night with men with lights and machine-- how do you call it-- machine?

Machine guns?

--machine guns. And there were the other--

Will you describe the guards?

Most of the guards were in Bergen. And there were Ukrainian and Lithuanian soldiers, dressed in black. But they were supervised by German, who were officers of the camp supervisory. The camp commander was living in a special quarter outside the ghetto. And he was every day inside in a ghetto outside of the camp. And inside in the camp, he was supervising and frequently killing without any explanation people who-- for no reason whatsoever.

Were the guards hard on the prisoners?

Yes, the guards were surrounding, frequently kicking, beating the sides. And it was an intra-- internal Jewish police, which was transferred from ghetto to camp and who were-- and they were helping the German to maintain order. And sometimes, they were more cruel than the others.

So for some infraction of rules, flogging was frequently applied. And the flogging was performed by a guard and occasionally also by Jewish Ordnungsdienst. I remember, there was one episode of hanging of some prisoners in public place in front of all camp population. And this hanging was performed by Jewish prisoners who were forced to do it.

And there was a small smuggling going on all the time because the people were coming and going to work and carrying in their clothes, under the clothes, foodstuff and so on. The currency was cigarettes and American dollars. Polish zloty was not frequently used.

Will you describe the kapos and the punishment that they meted out?

That was-- in this particular camp, the kapos was not very powerful. And I don't remember any adverse influence, as far as our kapo is concerned. Some of them were more or less cooperating with German to the degree. But let's say that one of the example of cooperation was that from time to time, the Jewish Ordnungsdienst and kapo received an order, you need to supply a list of elderly or sick people to the German.

And then during the night, the people were picked up, taken to the special place within the camp, and killed, and thrown into the big ravine, and then the tractors covered their body with sand in that. This had-- it was done by a member of the Jewish police and many kapos together.

Can you describe your daily work there, daily routine, what happened when you got up in the morning?

After getting up in the morning, you know, I really don't remember the episode of eating or something there. Something was not-- it was not in my mind at that time. I don't remember what-- how it was. But after washing superficially and the common places near latrine, everybody was washing and had to stand and be counted there in the so-called Appellplatz. And to there, we count.

Then we were divided into the group according to work schedule. And then so during the time when I work in that building murals, I was given some shovels. And under direction of, again, a kapo. And we were digging out the headstones, carrying the headstones in the lorries to indicated places, and built the roads.

Lasting impression on the camp was because it was a new camp, and it was not completed yet, and it was a mud all over the camp because of the 1,000 people trampling over the grass, which very quickly disappeared. And this always-- we were always wet. Our feet were always wet and always cold.

And we are walking in the mud sometimes, and sometimes few inches deep, which make every new step and every work very difficult. As far as the sickness is concerned, as I said before, being sick is very dangerous because if you went to the hospital, the chances were that after a few days, the hospital was evacuated. And all the sick people were taken out.

You didn't describe that to me enough of what happened during the day.

Out in there, this work lasted at the noontime, during the noontime. As I said before, I don't remember eating in the camp-- something I blacked out. Don't know why. At that time, we were not-- that time, the starvation was not the main consideration for some reason. Apparently, we had enough to eat.

And then after a half hour interruption during the midday work, until the-- it was dark, and then we had to go again to the counting up in Appellplatz. And after we were dismissed, we went to our blocks, and to get our eating detentions, and line up for our meals. Shortly after was curfew was in force. And everybody had to stay within his blocks.

So you had no contact with your family?

Yes, then in this camp, it was mixed, male and female camp. And we have a contact in the family. We didn't live together. And my wife was living in the block with the women. My wife, my mother was work-- living and working in that place. But we were able to meet each other between the evening, and call roll, and the curfew.

What happened to the rest of your family during this period? What happened your father?

Well, my father died when I was still in Lwów. And I never find exactly what happened. He was not a well man. And I don't know he was-- because my mother was reluctant to talk about it. And I was-- and I don't know if he was killed, actually, by German or became sick, and because of the lack of medical attention, he died within few hours.

As I said, my brother was in Palestine. My sister was killed in Radom, Poland, which is, again, a subject, a story how it was organized in this situation. Are you interested in telling? But that lasted until August 4, 1944, when I was-- when the camp was in a state of liquidation because of approaching Russian front.

Before you get to that, in the camp, was there any resistance that you know about?

Yes, it was an organized group within the camp. And I was part of the leadership of the group. And again, I don't know if you want me to talk about it. This is involve me to the degree what is part of the history.

Sure. Why don't you talk about that?

Now, in the spring of 1944, the Soviet front moved so near to the camp that during the clear nights, we were able to see at night artillery firing in the distance. At that time, this organized group within the camp get information on the distance. And we are able to smuggle some amount of firearm into the camp.

We also placed some of our members in strategic position within the camp. One was electrician who was in the central electrical station and who was-- would be, if necessary, able to interrupt the flow of the electric current through the wire fence around the camp.

And I remember vividly that we had one clandestine meeting of this leadership of this group, which consisted that time of loosely-organized units, which all together maybe 400 to 500 young men and women. And the situation which was presented to us is as follows. The Polish resistance told us that they will not be able to hurt us. They will be able to sell us, not give us a little more firearm.

But after, in case we are break out of the camp, we will be on our own. And will be up to us to go east through the German line, and then go to the Soviet Union. They also told us, there are no partisan group in this particular section of Poland. And the decision has to be made what to do.

We are possibly-- we will be successful to help to organize a breakout in the camp of approximately 400 to 500 young people. Due to the organization, we had an impossibility to remove the lights and electricity from the wire. And we know where to go. We know the surroundings of the camp.

From the other camp, it was a stated and implemented German policy that for every prisoner who escaped from camp, a group of other prisoners was killed. And we have to make a decision. Do we have a right, in order to question our chance, for a group of 400 to 500 people to get out of the camp, not talking about their ability to defend themselves, and to go through hostile Polish territory, and through the German front to the Russian front, or to hide in some place, and for indefinite period because nobody knew if and when Russian front will move again?

And according to the history, the Russian and other approximately eight months to move to attack again. Do we have a right, in order to possibly save these few hundred lives, expose rest of the camp to retaliation by German, which could be very cruel and take the chance of survival of an enormous number, going in 1,000 members of the camp?

And after very deep discussion and consideration, a group of five men sitting in there, they say that we have no right to expose these people to this danger. And therefore, we didn't go through with our plan to break out of camp.

A few days later, possibly due to the-- somebody who tipped the German, some members of the group were arrested. And I was sent to camp in Auschwitz together with a group of 5,000 men. From-- I was in Auschwitz three days. But I didn't permitted out of the train. And probably again, because of the fact that the German-- Russian front was so near, and the train proceed. And we wind up in concentration camp Mauthausen.

Before we get to Mauthausen, can you describe anything else about the camp, such as were there any cultural, political, or religious activities in Plaszów?

I don't-- there were people who have been performing their daily routines. There were people who were trying to observe kashrut. And as far as the cultural life, it was, as far as I am aware, was not existent at all.

So after your arrest, you were transferred by open or closed train?

We were in closed-- enclosed train, a cattle--

Cattle car.

--cattle car. And was approximately-- I don't remember-- 60 men in each car. And we were on our way for approximately five days or six days. Was very little food was given. And most important, very little water was given. And it was in August. The heat was enormous inside. And we are suffering from thirst and hunger enormous.

So you finally arrived in Mauthausen. Could you describe what happened when you arrived at this camp, what your reactions were?

We arrived to this station. There was few-- railroad station was few miles from the camp. And then we have to walk to the camp this few miles. And not only walk to the camp, we have to carry the dead and the sick. And I remember carrying somebody who probably was dead already together with another prisoners for quite a distance. The camp was situated in the mountain, looks like a fort.

And when we arrive in the Appellplatz over there, we have disrupt completely and with all our belongings on the floor. A small selection was performed. But very few, obviously sick and dead people were taking away, probably to the gas chamber. And the rest of prisoners were herded into the showers.

And after going through the showers, each of us was shaved our head. And other part of the body was shaved. And we are giving our camp uniforms, consisting of the striped pants and striped blouse. And then you have to assemble again on the Appellplatz.

And that time, the German requested all the physician in the group to report to one of the German. The idea was that this big group was supposed to be divided in smaller groups and sent to different working camps, which were not affiliated with Mauthausen.

And with each group, one physician should-- was supposed to be attached to. And for this group of doctors who came from concentration camp in Poland to Mauthausen, in order to go to the so-called Krankenrevier, these hospital blocks in other part, in a separate part of the camp.

The most vivid remembrance of the day when it came to camp was, first of all, we were enormously hungry, especially are very thirsty. And therefore, they gave us water, were drinking enormous amount of water. Another remembrance was difficulty of defecation because of the dehydration, because of lack of water during a long journey, the stool was dry, hard, and in passing it, was an enormously painful and exhausting experience, very frequently causing bleeding. And after this, I was-- I have a pain in my rectum for a few days. But again, I was afraid to admit to any sickness.

When we came to this new location, first impression was that the people were so enormously hungry, so much so, we are not-- I was unable to eat at that time what they serve as a food. And therefore, I would eat only part of it. And the rest was eagerly taken by the other prisoners. I didn't understand that time how hungry they can get. Later on, I find out what it means to be really hungry.

When you were in this camp were you transported with any of your friends or family? Or you were alone at this point?

I was together with two of my brothers-in-law who was transferred to the same camp. And they were-- shortly after that, I was shipped to the other camp, working camp, around the mountains.

Again, can you describe the camp location, size, the guards, the kapos, the security?

It was an old camp. It was organized by Germans shortly after they occupied Austria. It was located near Linz in Austria in the beautiful mountains. And the blocks were large, were very solidly built. And the sanitary facilities, again, was a common latrine and common water. And you can wash everything a few hundred yards from the block.

Because it was a so-called sick block, it was-- no work was performed. And then early in the morning, we were woken up. And it was nice weather. We were counted outside the block. It was in a bad weather, we were permitted to stay within the block. And then we had to spend the time again. If the nice weather outside, weather was bad, inside the blocks. And everybody was receiving, if I remember, small piece of bread a day and one container of so-called soup a day. And in the evening, we were receiving so-called coffee drink.

Because the camp was old, they developed a internal self-government. Most of them were people who were there for

many years and who had contact with German. We have there in this particular camp, our contact with German and with Gestapo, SS was limited because of the fact that our kapo and other members of the staff on our block were old prisoners who had quite a bit of authority, as far as we are concerned. Again, camp was surrounded by electric-- by wire fences, electrified wire fences and towers every so often, with lights and guards in the towers 24 hours a day.

Test-- one, two, three. Can you describe the kapos?

Our kapo Blockalteste, I remember very well. He was a professional burglar from Vienna, very decent man as well as other-- that is concerned, who were behaving quite decently. And he was one of the few guards who, after the liberation, could freely move among the prisoners and nobody touched him, nobody didn't accuse him of any other unkindness toward the prisoners and they call it.

And there are other members of the staff, of the block, was a Turkish doctor for a relatively short while, which was also very, very decent, or the other members, who were carrying-- bringing the food to the camp. And they divided it among prisoners, and keeping records, and so on.

But in this particular period, I didn't have any experience. And I didn't witness any abuse, cruelty toward the prisoners in this particular block. I'm talking only on this part of the camp, which was called sick bay. I understand that in camp proper was quite a bit of cruelty.

And one of the punishment was so-called Strafkommando, in this punishment detail, which were carrying special sign in the form of a red circle on their back. And they were living separately. And they were fed separately. And among other work what they had to perform, they were carrying and working in the-- how you call it-- stone--

Close it out.

--stone quarry. And they were working in a stone quarry, which had almost 999 steps or something like that, very steep steps. And that was part of the punishment was go over the plot.

I would like to talk about hunger because this is something which was pervasive and was influenced everything and everybody in the camp. As I said, we were getting these small pieces of bread. And the hunger is progressing of war. The food was getting worse and worse. And the amount of this was getting smaller and smaller.

And every morning, again, the prisoners were going looking into the beds and pulling the dead bodies. And frequently, so the body was mutilated which was indication that part of the flesh of the dead people were cut out with other prisoner, they use as a food.

But to give you some idea what food can-- what hunger can do to the people, I remember vividly one scene. And that time, we were all naked because was epidemics of typhus fever in camp. And in order to avoid fighting with louse, our clothes were taken away from us. And we are completely naked.

I remember, one afternoon, we were already in our bed because it was a rainy day. And the people who were carrying the big pails of soup came to the camp, came inside the block. One of them tripped. The pail tilted over. And most of the container of the camp-- of the soup spilled on the floor.

Within a second, a group of naked men jump off his bed, kneel on the floors, and all with her hands are licking from the floor, are eating this spilled soup on the floor until the other members of the staff came and chased them away back to their bed. This picture of almost animal-looking creatures, licking the soup from the floor was always remember and remain my memory.

And then I can tell you what people can do when they're hungry. Doesn't-- when they're hungry in this situation, and then gradually nothing is left but the instinct of self survival. And that is left, there is no survival. And therefore, sometimes, people were dying not because of sickness, because they simply gave up.

Can you describe what you did every day at the camp and how you were a physician?

No, I was not a physician. I'm supposed to be assigned to a group. But in meantime, apparently, the German officer, whose plan was to assign the doctors to the group, after a few doctors were assigned and transferred, it was-- he himself was transferred to other position. And apparently, we were forgotten that the group of doctors is sitting over there. We didn't do anything all day long. We are waiting for our assignment.

And then we didn't work as a physician. This position was taken by the prisoners who were already there before we arrived because that was very-- the position was giving certain privileges. They were able to work in clothes and have a little more food.

But in one day, I think, in February or March 1944, rumors spread that our block, which was consisting of Jewish prisoners, will be sent to the gas chamber next day. We didn't have any option.

But the so-called prisoners who were there, like kapos, doctors, and other staff, they have connection in the camp. And therefore, within a few hours, all of them transferred from our camp. Most of them were not Jews. All of them were not Jews. With the exception of the kapo, all of them transferred to other blocks.

And suddenly, our block consisted of a few hundred men was left completely without a staff. Was nobody there to bring the food, nobody there to count the-- make a head count of the prisoners, and so on. And then some German officer came to the-- was called to the block by the Blockälteste. And the situation was explained to him.

And then he asked, are there any doctors among prisoners? The few doctors who were still there jump out of their bed. And I was one of them. And he ordered to give them clothes and let them run the block. And that was few weeks prior to the end of the war and liberation.

And maybe this episode saved my life because from that time on, I was able to sleep with only one other prisoner on the bed, not in four and five. And I was able walk around. And I was clothed. And instead of one in container of soup, I was getting daily two container of soup. My function were that I have to take care of the sick within this hospital block.

Again, I remember a situation. A prisoner came to me with a huge abscess under the pectoralis major muscle of the chest full of pus. And I sterilized in fire a regular knife. And I make incision of this enormous abscess and letting the pus out.

And I don't know what happened to the prisoners later on because it was enormous amount of prisoners, not a large number of prisoners. Is impossible to follow up on the patient. But at least I was able to relieve this severe pain he had in this abscess. That was the practice medicine.

And one of this serious problem was diarrhea. And we didn't have any medication for it. One of the other medical problems was scabies, which is considered a harmless condition. But the condition we were there-- scratching was invitation to [NON-ENGLISH].

And the [NON-ENGLISH] was certain death, unless somebody has cigarettes or some other means to buy himself medication that was used, Prontosil, which is a sulfur medication, which was-- they were able to buy from the German members of the medical staff outside our block.

Did you have any-- did they give you any medicine to work with?

No, they didn't give me any medicine to work with. I remember, once, I asked the medical officer, German medical officer, for some medication for diarrhea. And his answer was don't give them to eat. And then they stop having diarrhea.

So what could you do?

I actually-- was no way to help anybody besides watching that they were washing themselves if necessary and try to relieve the sickness by cold compresses. And in case of temperature, as I describe before, is opening of the abscesses, and so on. But it was no medical practice.

There were different kinds of people in your block from different countries?

Yes, it was a very mixed group. And we came, the majority of the people was Jewish from Hungary, was also Jewish from Greece, was other Jews from France, from Holland, of course, from Poland, from Germany, from Austria.

Were you able to talk with them?

Yes, I was able to talk with some of them in German because that was the language each of them have to use, at least in order to communicate with our captors. And again, as I give you a small picture. I became friendly with a Jew from France. I remember him a very nice fellow. I don't know what he did before the war.

But he was always very optimistic, and very well-built, and had plenty of muscles. I don't know what was he doing on this sick bay. But nobody asked these questions.

And then I remember, once, that he came to me and told me, listen, I don't believe that any of us will ever survive. And in spite of his argument, he persisted in this sudden loss of confidence and loss of hope, he was dead in three days, no sickness, simply gave up.

Was there any resistance in the camp?

Not of I know. The German were proudly stating that during the existence of this cow-- camp Mauthausen, no one escaped and that the escape was impossible because later on, for instance, they introduce another, let's say, mark. They were cutting a wide strip through our hair from the forehead to the back and leaving the rest of the hair on the both sides of the head.

First of all, it was much faster than removing the entire head-- entire hair. Secondly, in case somebody escaped, even if they were able to secure different clothes, and even if he would shave his head, everybody right away could see that something wrong with it because of this exposure to sun, this, even after shaving completely the head, this strip on our head will be still visible to anybody who looked at it. It was one of the method of preventing escape.

Were there any cultural, or religious, or political activities going on?

I don't know of any political activities. There were some kind inside the block cultural, you can call it, activities. There are some people singing arias, and again, expecting that in exchange for it, some prisoners given something to eat, and other prisoners singing German song, Polish song, and so on. But it was actually all activities.

What do you attribute your survival?

Luck. Is the one expression we always-- anytime when somebody asks me, how I say, well, they always answer me. Because I saw people who were consider themselves very smart by making arrangements and didn't survive. And I saw simple people who were no qualification. And for some reason, I survive. Situation, luck, I don't know.

When you were liberated, you were liberated by the Americans?

Yes, I was.

Were you liberated with any family or friends at that point?

This is again a story. On April 28, we get the notice that a group of woman prisoners came to the camp. Mauthausen up to this day was only male camp. And then they requested that the so-called Pflegers, you can actually-- male nurses

from our camp went up to the main camp in order to assist in the selection and the separation of the new woman prisoners.

I remember vividly, was maybe 2:00 AM and one of these male nurses came running to our-- to the camp, toward me, yelling, your wife is upstairs in the main camp. And she is coming down. And of course, I got up. And I tried to go up to the main camp. I was unable to do it.

So I waited in the entrance of our camp. Finally, a few hours later, my wife came down to the sick bay because she was sick. She was sick with typhus fever. She was very sick. She was so small. Her face was so small. She was so pain. She couldn't swallow anything. Saliva was coming out her mouth. She was almost skin and bone, very few hairs left on her head.

She was put together with the other woman in a-- one block which was prepared for them. And that time, I had some food because a few weeks prior to this episode, the Red Cross brought the packages from Switzerland only for Jews, Jewish prisoners. I don't know why only for Jewish prisoners, but only Jewish prisoners received the packages.

And I still have some food left from this package. And I was trying to give it to my wife. And she was unable to eat. The only thing I could give her at that time in supply was so-called tea, boiled water with some leaves in it. And gradually, very gradually, she overcame the sickness.

A few days later, on May 5, we were liberated. We knew that something is going on because most of the German guard left, leaving only very few elderly men in German uniform, [INAUDIBLE] from the German Army. And the gas chamber was not working, crematorium was not working.

And within the camp, the dead body was piled at least six feet high, one after the other, at least 100 yards long inside the confinement of the camp because was no way to dispose of them. And people were dying daily from sickness, hunger.

And then the morning of May 5, we heard the voices, Americans. Americans came, one tank, maybe five soldiers. They stopped at the entrance of the camp.

They collected the rest of the German guards and took them away, told them to govern ourselves for next few days. Because the few days, the rest of the American army will come. And they will come over. And also, still see in front of me the hundreds of naked men running and surrounding this one American tank.

Still remember hundreds of naked men running toward these American, to American tanks, and a few young American soldiers sitting on the tanks, [? rooted. ?] Disbelief. And then they withdrawn. And we were left alone. And then so-called justice was done. Some of the kapos in the camps were attacked, some of them killed.

We opened the magazines in the camp and find out that there were thousands of tablets of sulfur drugs over there, which were not able to receive during the war for bandages and medication in the magazines. We were not able to receive them.

Some of the magazines were full of old clothes. About two, three days later, the American came. And shortly after there, the evacuation hospital came. And Americans started to reorganize the camp. Do we need to talk about it?

How were you feeling at this time? Were you sick?

No, I was one of those people who were able to walk. I was one of two or three doctors and this Jewish bloke. Then very quickly, I find out that the war didn't change anything as far as the antisemitism was concerned. We received the order from the American authorities not to-- to liquidate the Jewish block, to transfer the Polish sick prisoners to Polish blocks, Hungarian to Hungarian blocks, and so on.

Because I was the one who was dressed, who was able to walk, who was able to transfer, I was transferring sometimes on stretcher these Polish Jewish prisoners to Polish blocks. And again, I find out the world didn't change much as far as



the Polish antisemitism is concerned.

When you are bringing these sick person to the Polish blocks, some of the prisoners over there asked the question, are you a Polish or Pole? Was a code work. This way, they knew right away are you Jewish or are you not Jewish.

Shortly after the liberation, we tried to organize a Jewish committee to take care of the need of Jewish prisoners, which possibly a majority over there. And we went to the American commandant of the camp. I still remember, his name was Captain Levy. And we asked him to give us the official authorization.

And he refused, stating that we are, and I quote, "we American didn't fight this war and Hitler so you again be separated according to the religious line. You are from Poland, go to Polish committee. You are from Hungary, go to Hungarian committee." But he learned his lesson very quickly.

Few hours later, he called us again. And he said, now, I understand your situation, and give us official authorization to organize Jewish committee. Because already, fights between Jews and non-Jews in other blocks, Polish and the Hungarian block took place.

What happened after you were liberated? Where did you go? What-- did you search for family? Or what happened? Did you find out what happened to the rest of your family?

As far as my family is concerned, I knew that my sister was not alive. My brother, according to my information was in Palestine. And I didn't expect any of the members of my family to survive. And the decision was, first of all, I was quickly put to work by American authorities.