

Mark. Mark.

My name is Abraham Kay. Today we're interviewing Mr Leo Rzepka, a Holocaust survivor. This project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women. Mr. Rzepka, you were describing right before you went to Zembrov. You were in Ostrow.

Ostrow Mazowiecka.

Mazowiecka-- for the Jewish holidays. This is in the fall--

This was before the Jewish holidays.

This is in 1941.

No, this was in '39.

OK. What were-- you were describing it there was davening in secret that was going on. What was that like, actually?

They was davening in secret, or they got it, a little shul, not special. They got it in private homes. They come together, and they davened. Because they is not allowed by the Germans that they can daven in groups. You know?

And I think you were saying your father was going to that?

Right. My father usually he was-- they call this a baal korei. He read the Sefer Torah. He read. So that he was a little, you know, that all them together. Because not all of them, they can-- they got the qualification to read the Torah, you know? And my father, he used to read the Torah. So they took, let's say, a minyan to daven. They used to need 11 persons, 12 persons, but not less. So that they took together, let's say, a couple, let's say 15, 20 people. They make a minyan, they call this. And they daven privately, not to go in shul because they was afraid to go in shul-- the Germans.

Now you then-- you described you went to Zembrov by train. And what happened when you got to Zembrov.

No, but from Slonim, when I went-- when I started to go to Zembrov, that we come to Bialystok, and the train was changed. There was a Pollack, and if he started fooling around against, to play around against us--

But then, did you actually get to Zembrov though?

No, not by the train because the train go another, let's say about 30 miles, and the train was stopped over there in the station. And then we got to look for other transportation, that we went with the Gentiles with the wagons. And they was afraid to take us because we're Jews, you know? And some-- there was Germans good, you know, that he was afraid.

We-- mine sister, he went over there. Was Germans, the army there, close to them. And he talked to the German, that the Germans tell the man to take us, not to be afraid. But the Polish, he was angry on my sister because he thinks that she's going for a complaint. She was asking them to do a favor, to tell the man not to be afraid to take us. And the German did it, was a good German. They told him, [GERMAN].

And the Polish was angry. Why she was complaining for the German? That means the German got to force them to take them. But anyway, we started explaining them. And he took us.

He took us. And then there was maybe about 10 miles before Zembrov. He took us in his house. In the back, he got a big shed, you know, what he keep the storage there and everything. He let us stay overnight there. He make us food. And he give us food. But he was misunderstood in this situation.

And then we look other transportation, and we come to Zembrov. We come to Zembrov, was not bad. That my sister she

was about 15. We was there by a year there. And I was working there, carpentry work and by the farms.

For the Polish people there?

For the Polish people, yes. Because my--

Would you get paid for the work that you did?

Yeah, they pay. They pay with food or money. They pay. We did a good work. They need us, because after the war, there was not so trades.

There's a little bit of water there. Were there other Jewish people in Zembrov besides your family?

Sure, there was many Jewish people what they left over there from the town.

How were you treated in Zembrov?

Oh, good.

Did you have to live in a special section?

No. No. Not in Zembrov, not in beginning. I will come to the point-- not from beginning. So that we were staying there, you know. And then the Germans, they took the Jewish people. All the time, they took the Jewish people for work.

And later on, they built up, like that meant a Jewish-- what they took the responsibility. They make a office, a Jewish office. And this office, they come to this office, and they ask this office, look, I need 100 people for work, or 200 people for work. They got to bring the people to the Germans for work. Then later on, they build up, they make police, Jewish police. They make like a mayor, the Jewish.

When did all this happen?

This was happened in '41-- between '41 and '42. Was when the German was already there. And then, when I was working in a village, then the Germans-- before they took the Jewish people, and they dig graves in the woods. But they didn't for what this is. They took them for work, and you got to do the work.

And a time later, they give an order that all Jews from 15-- from 16 to the age, let's say, up to 60, got to come in this open flea market there. Who will not come will be shot to death. Everyone was afraid. So what happened, my sister-- I was in the village there.

When was this.

In the farm, in a farm. This was in '42.

Do you when in '42?

Pardon me.

Do when in '42?

Maybe from beginning '42. Then my sister took a wagon with horses there. And she come with the other sister. Two sisters, they come over there. And my brother-in-law's brother, he was the driver. He come there in the village there. He told us the story. That tomorrow morning, everyone got to go on the flea market. And my sister, the youngest, she left over there with my brother-in-law. And she didn't-- wasn't even 16. She was maybe 15, over 15, you know. But she was afraid. She was over there.

She would go there on the market, and my brother-in-law. They took them away, all. No one come back.

What did you do when--

I was in the-- in the farm there. I was there. I woke up and I work with my brother-in-law.

So the two of you stayed on the farm?

One brother-in-law-- yeah, I was staying there. And one brother-in-law was left over, from the older sister, left over. He went on the flea market-- on the flea market there. And they took him away with the sister. And over there to the grave, they shot him, and nobody knows.

So but after this, a couple months later, all the time we think that they took them for work someplace. We was looking whole time to come news, you know, oh, this supposed to come, supposed to come. They release them. We look for them. And they was already dead from the first day.

And later on, we find it out. Because, from the Polish people, they come one by one, little by little, and find it out what happened. No one is back. They killed them there.

So-- and then after this, they concentrated all Jewish. They make a ghetto.

Whoever was left?

Whatever is left, they make a ghetto. All right. They make a ghetto. And then they make a fence around the ghetto.

Now, did you live in the ghetto?

Yes. They make a fence in the ghetto. When they started making the fence, that every people, they didn't know what's going on. It was panic. They think that this is the end. You can imagine how people are-- the feeling from people, when they put you in a cage.

We started looking there. What-- we started looking maybe to find another place, a place what we can go out from there. People started speculating to find somehow a place to go out. But what you can do? But anyway, they make the fence. And they let them stay like this.

This is the Germans?

The Germans with the Polish together. And then they didn't make so very strong that you cannot go out. We couldn't go out through the fence. They'll let you go a little. They give you a little freedom to get used a little bit. All right. And then they make a big, like a big door to go in or with a trailer, to open a gate, a gate.

And then they build up a police, a police station. And then when they need some people, they come to the police station. Look, I need so much and so much people for work. And the police come to you. Come on. Come on. And if you something, you didn't hear to them, they got it a little-- they make a jail, like in a basement.

Is this a Jewish police?

Jewish police. They make in a basement to put you on there for a couple of days in the dark. What you can do?

Were you ever in the jail?

But-- no. But I got my brother. He lives in Tarnobrzeg, not far from Lomza, in a village. So that I didn't was from there because I come to my sister. I didn't want to stay. So that I went to my brother, I stayed couple of weeks. And then I

come to my sister. I stayed a couple of weeks so that they-- I-- they couldn't catch me, the Zembrov, the police from Zembrov. So I was over there in Tarnów by my brother.

In Tarnów there, there was a little village far away. Let's say about 20 miles there. There was two Gestapo with a motorcycle. Every second day, they come to my brother's farm there. And they terrorized him.

They look what you're cooking, what you're eating, what you are doing, what you make a living. And they took the people there to work, the girls, the women's, the men's. What kind of work they did there, they took them in the woods, where they cut off the trees, the left over, the--

The stumps.

Yes. They got to dig it out around there, and they got to take it out this. Girl from 15, from 16 years on, they got to, with shovels, they got to do the work, the thing. But they didn't give them food, no pay, no nothing-- forced labor. What you can do?

To the east, you know, they come every, let's say, every two or three weeks. And they ask for gold, watches, rings, diamonds. They give you, let's say, ultimatum. Let's say, you got to give them 2 kilogram gold. Not everyone, they like to give themselves. They say, all right, if you're not giving yourself, we'll look. And we will find. We'll take away all of what you got.

So they give that everyone what got rings, chains, a little, they give away. Money-- they ask, you know. In the big cities, the same thing. They give, let's say, in the big cities-- you know, from beginning in Ostrow Mazowiecka, right away, they give-- they need 5 kilogram gold.

From the city?

From the city, from the Jews. So they started going, make collections. Who got the rings, who got the diamonds, who got this, and they give away. And they took so much they didn't got it more. They took away all. They took away. This was their job, to take away the gold, the diamonds, everything.

So what happened, they come. The two Gestapo come to this village. They terrorized them. Once they come there in the village, they make-- they stand up all of them. They concentrate on one place because there was maybe about eight, 10 families in this place. They took all 10 families. They put them-- they stand them up in the line.

And they go like this. And they look in the eyes. And they're going to see if you're clean or something. Then he come to one man. He got here a button. He got it from the Russian, with a star, a Russian star, on the shirt. He grabbed them by that. You a communist?

And he took him off the line. And he started taking him in the back. He started crying. And he put the button-- tears the button. I'm not coming. He took him the back. And the one was staying in the front with us know. And we hear boom. And he shot him over there.

And then they got to bury him in this place there behind the--

Were you there when that happened?

Yeah, I was there.

In the line?

In the line. I was there. And I was not so even shaved. And I was blonde. Then he come to me, that I got to be shaved up and say, jawohl. And then they left the village. And they buried him behind there. You can-- what feeling the people got it.

So later on they come back. A couple of days later, there was an older man. From beginning they come into this. They saw them. They shot them with a gun, with the BB gun. They shot him with a BB gun. He got it many places. He suffered about two days before he died. And they bury him, over there, in the yard. They buried him.

So then I-- there was not long. Then they took the all Jews. They concentrated them. That was already like in the middle of '42. Like that was maybe like in September or something, in October, in this kind of months. They concentrate them all, through the all little ghettos. They took them in the big ghettos.

Were you taken?

Yeah. They didn't took me. I ran away. What happened? They took from the little-- from the villages. They took them to Lomza. And then they come in the morning to take them to the Lomza. They come in the morning about 6 o'clock. It was dark already. And they come to the door. They knock on the doors. Aufstehen! To pack. And well, they're going to take us to Lomza, in the main ghetto, there.

And they put the Polish people, the Gentiles by the door to watch, not to let out us. Then my brother opened the window. He was a family. He got a kid, a girl. He was married. He opened the window. He said, we'll jump.

So I grabbed the little shoes. You know, they was open from the summer. They was new, new ones. They were nice. I put in, and the jacket-- no, no coat or nothing. And I jumped from the window. The Polish people what they're staying by the door, they saw me. I jumped from the window. And I started running in the woods because not far was the woods there. And I ran away in the woods.

I was going there.

Were you chased?

No, they didn't chase me. They let me go. I was going in the woods. And I started going. A couple hours, I come to another little village. Was Jews there. I stopped there. And I told them the story, the news what's going on. Get prepared or do whatever one can do to be saved. And I told the story what happened there.

And then I started going to my sister in Zembrov. I didn't know that in Zembrov, already, they cleaned out already. They took out from the ghetto. And they took them over there, in the kasernes, where the army used to be there-- big buildings there, and fenced there. They took them there.

I started to go to Zembrov, find out what is with my sister. And she got a little baby too. Then I started going there. I find it up that Zembrov is not more Zembrov. It's cleaned up already. They're in the kasernes. So I didn't want what to go there. So I went in the woods. And I was staying in the woods.

Then I find it--

How were you living at that time?

Pardon me.

How were you living in the woods?

Just in the woods, like this. I was staying. And it was raining. And I was going into the branches and was staying. And the rain dropped on you. There was a man there, a Gentile with a wagon. I stopped him. I asked him where to go. He said, well he's going there. If I want, he can give me a ride. All right.

He give me a ride. He took me to his house. OK, he said, look. [POLISH], he call me like this. You can stay here overnight. In the morning, maybe you will find somebody, like partisans or something. You will get connection with

them. You will go with them because you are alone. So fine.

He put me in the shanty there in the back, in the hay. And I was staying there. And I was sleeping there in the-- in the morning, I hear the dogs barking, the dogs. That I think that maybe some of the Germans there. Then he come over there. He started calling me to go out. I did it wrong, you know, to call out. But I was afraid. I think maybe he tried to give me over to the Germans, if he will get it a pound sugar or salt for me.

I know that somebody come when the dog started barking. I was afraid. And I was deep in the hay. That was cold. I was sitting there with my pajama. He started looking for me. He started, you know. And I hear him. He couldn't find me. Then he go out. And then I was waiting about two hours more. And then I look out. I see nobody is there.

So I cannot stay forever there. I went down. And I come in the house there. Then he asked me where I was. He was looking for me because he was here, a couple of guys from the partisans. Well, I said I didn't hear you. I was in the hay. So he gave me something, a little food to eat. And then I started to go. And was a Czerwony Bor, called it there. I was going there.

I come there, and I meet another guy-- three guys-- one guy from my city and another two guys.

From R³zan?

From R³zan. One guy from R³zan, and he got it other two guys. No, we're four already. All right, the other two guys, they got pieces gold for teeth. The gold, you know, he got it-- they got it-- I don't know how much they got it. So they was staying by a farm there. And he paid them. Every time, he gives them a piece for every couple of days, the gold for the teeth.

But later on, they decided why they got to stay with us together. They will go themselves. So they split. They went right, and we went left. I went left with mine from mine city. And they went-- runned away. OK.

We were staying there in the woods. Yeah, before, then I was in the woods. I got these shoes. Is a Gentile, a boy. He saw my shoes. He liked the shoes. He started go to me. And I was afraid. I started go to the woods.

And when I go faster, he go faster, I go faster. Then there was a lady from the Polish. She say-- she started yelling on him, why he's chasing me. Because she knows that I'm a Jew. He knows too.

Why-- what do you want from him? Why are you chasing him? Then he started calling me. Don't be afraid. He liked to trade with my shoes. He got it good shoes from the army, the Polish Army. And they was-- I don't know, they was-- what happened, you know. I was happy. It was cold. OK.

I give him away this, and he gave me his shoes. And it was good to me. So I trade him the shoes. And I put on the shoes. And I got warm shoes.

So anyway, I was staying in the woods with him. And then I meet the guys. Then a couple of days, you know, and then there was the-- the Polish people, they give us a little food, you know. And then the rest, before they got it, his mother got a bakery in this village by the Russians. But when the Germans took over, they destroyed this.

But he knows the men what they got the other bakery. He knows from before. And he said, Leo, come. We will go there for bread. I know him. Maybe we will organize a loaf of bread from them. All right, I will go. I went with him there. And he give me a place over there to stay and wait for him.

There was a little house, a empty house. I will stay there on the side, in the house. And he went for the bread. And I was making up with him that he would come to pick me up, and he will get the bread. I stayed there. And there was two men, guards, Polish, big, with sticks. And they're coming in the house. And they light a match, and they find me. Finally, they asked me if is somebody else there. I said I don't know.

Then they started-- they go in the other room, and the match, and they find it. There was already there somebody there, a man too. And I didn't even know. This man was afraid for me. So he was quiet. And if he find him, he took him outside. He raised the-- he raised the-- he tried to hit him.

And I was alone. That the man started running. They started chasing him. Then I go in this way, and he run, so that I run away. I run away. Then I run, run, run. And I come a little space, like this, between two houses. And I went in there to hide, that they didn't see me.

And I make a little noise with the sheet metal there. There come an old man out. And he say, well, who's there? I say, shh, not to talk. He said, hey, I'm looking for you. He grabbed me, right away, from the arm. He take me over.

So he started taking me. Over there was a place, a concentration camp, where they-- where they catch the Jews, but, because they run away, they bring them over there. And from there, they took them to Zembrov in the kasernes for they-- all of them is there. Because many, they run away. That they catch them little by little. They give the Polish people, when they catch a Jew, they give them half a pound sugar or a pound salt to catch a Jew. So they bring them over there in this place.

When he hold me like this, he got me there then started building up people from the back, women. And they say-- now here the say to him, go, go, go, grab them because he can run away.

Meaning grab you?

That many more people to grab me, to hold me that I cannot go away. When I hear this, I kicked him like this. An old man, I kicked him like this. And I did a runner. And I started running. I started running. And there was woods not far from there.

I started running. And there was a little hill, like this. And all of a sudden, I couldn't run, nothing. I cannot even walk. I lay behind a tree, like this, to rest a little. I don't know. And then they started-- where I disappear? Where I disappear? I disappeared, and they didn't see me. I don't know what happened, how they didn't even see me.

What happened? He disappeared. I was laying a couple of seconds. And then I stand up again. I started to run. I cannot run. Then I walk, just a little by little. And I went in the woods. I went in, and then I started walking all night in the woods.

Is what happened, when I was going with him, I know that the moon was in this side, like in the north, northeast, in an angle there, the moon. When I started walking, then I tried to go back in this place that I know that the moon got to be there, that I was staying with the right side to the moon to go to this place there. But the moon is not staying in one place. This happened a couple of hours. The moon was moved. So I was going in another direction. I was going all night.

Then I come to in a house there. I knock in the window. I asked them where to go. Over there, Czerwony Bor, they call this. He told me I have to-- he showed me the place from the window, to go there and there, in this direction. I started going and going.

Well, get me-- I get tired. What happened, I come to a house there. It's the Polish people that was-- for the wintertime, they have big, in the ground, what they keep the potatoes there. And they cover on the top, they cover them with dirt, with straw. And they got a little opening with straw so that I know what this is.

Then I pick up the straw, and I went in inside there. And I went on the potatoes. I lay on a little potatoes. I started shaking-- cold. I took off my jacket. I put on the head, not to lay on. Started shaking. It's cold. So I went out.

And then I went in in the yard. Over there there was a big shanty where they keep the storage there, the hay, straw. Then I opened the door, the big doors. I opened the door. And I went in there. And I digged in the pile of hay. It's warm.

I make a little hole, and I went in there. And I was sitting there like this in the hay. I covered the face there. In the morning, come the farmer, the man. He come, him with his wife. He talked to her, wife, somebody was there inside because that was open. That got a little-- you know?

Because he knows he was close this, and it was open. He see somebody was there. And they started looking. And then he said to her, well nothing missing. All right.

They make the food for the cows, for the horses. They cut the straw. After this, they left. And they closed the door. I couldn't go out even from there. I started looking how to go out from there. Over there by the gable, was a little door. I come there, and there was big piles with the straw. I go there. And I see the door is-- I can open the door.

I opened the door, and I jumped on the little roof there. There was a little shanty-- from there on the yard. Then I come to the house, to them. And I asked them how to go there. And I didn't tell them that I was here. And I told them that I had to go there. And they show me--

Where were you trying to go at that point?

Oh, back to Czerwony Bor, where I lost the boy from mine city. Because we went there for bread. And then we got a place, in Czerwony Bor, by a farm. He let us go and stay in the back, not in the house, but living something.

You got back there?

Yes. And what happened, that he showed me how to go. And they give me food. I eat there. And I was walking to go there. When I walk in the woods, I saw Germans there in the woods. But when I saw the Germans, I didn't go back. I got them straight on the face.

See, if I was started go back, it will be suspicious.

So you just kept walking.

I just keep walking straight. I passed them. I said good morning. They answer me good morning. And I passed them. And I come to this place, back to Czerwony Bor. And I find that this boy is there.

How long did you end up staying there? In--

Oh, what happened, there was like-- there was already, like, from beginning December. There was. After the beginning of December-- and we was in the woods. Sometime there was no up to here. I took off my jacket, and put my hand ahead, and I lay on the ground like this.

Anyway, that was ready like in December, from beginning of December. Then I divided with the boy too because it's no money, no nothing. Then I started to go to Zembrov, to where my sister used to stay with this-- outside the ghetto. She was a tailor. She make the dresses outside the ghetto.

I go there to find it out. But her, what's going on? I come over there, in the city, to her. I come in the hallway there on the second floor. And I hear some noise over there. I was afraid to knock the door. And there was a little locker. I went in in the locker, and I stand on the side, to wait.

There may be somebody there. Then, all of a sudden, I hear somebody walk on the steps. I was quiet. There come a German soldier. They come to here, there. He knock on the door. She come in there. He come in there. He stayed maybe about an hour there, then after, he left.

He left. Then I was waiting another half an hour. I think maybe he will come back.

Did the Germans finally capture you?

Pardon me.

Did the Germans finally capture you?

No.

How did you--

Wait. I will come to the point. Then I was waiting another half an hour. I think maybe he will come back. I was waiting. Nobody come back. I say, OK. I went and I knock the door. She opened the door. Leo! So I told her-- but OK. She let me stay overnight there. She gave me a little food. And then I cannot stay there.

And then she told me that about my sister, that my sister, she's already in Zembrov, in the kasernes. And she told me the story, that she got the baby. And she ran away with the baby. She was in Czerwony Bor, too. She was there.

And she was by a couple there. She couldn't stay there. So that she-- and they stay in the woods a couple of days. And after the kid died, the kid's in her arms. And with her hand, she digged off a little--

This is her own child.

Her own child. She dig it off a little, the-- she dig it off a little with her hand. And she covered the baby. I'll have to wait a little.

It's OK. Did you see your sister again?

I saw her. Then she come in the concentration camp there in Zembrov. And she was there. So when I find it out, this, that my sister is there. My brother is-- two sisters there. My brother is there. My sister and my brother-in-law is there. And I didn't know that from there they will take to Auschwitz. I didn't know. I think that this is another ghetto, and they're staying there because before was a ghetto.

And the people, they survive a little bit. All right. Then I got it a man there, but he know-- I know him before. He used to work. He's a carpenter. But most the trade was in Jewish hands, what they make the wagons. And he started work on this kind because this was a good trade.

Then I think maybe I will find a place by him to stay, and I will do the work because he need me. Then I went to him, and I told him, look. If you like me, I can stay by you, and I will do the work. I don't ask for nothing, just to get a place to stay. He said fine.

He give me a place in the back. And I was work there. He give me a foot and he put a little oven in there to make that it will be warm for me to stay overnight there. I was staying about a week there.

Then later on, he come-- Leo, I'm sorry. I need you like my right hand. I need you. You cannot be better for me. It's my life to keep you. But it's too dangerous to keep you. Because if the Germans catch you, they will kill me and my family.

He's right. What can I do? I said all right. You cannot. But he got a boy from a village. He come there in the town. His father started do the same work. He liked to learn a little more from him. And he liked to be in the town, in the city. He worked for him too.

But he didn't afraid to tell him that I'm a Jew. Then he make up with him, with the boy. Look, take him to your father there. It's not a city, a small place. Maybe I will be able to stay there.

And I used to-- I play mandolin. And I am dancing. He knows me from before. He want me to learn him dance. You know, dancing, and to learn him to play mandolin, if he got a mandolin. All right.

But he was afraid to take me, that the parents will know that he took me there. That he make up with me. He said, Leo, you will come with me. When it comes there, I will go in the house. But you not come with me together. You wait another hour in the woods. And then you will come yourself. And you will ask so that this means that he didn't bring them because he was afraid for the family. I say fine.

He took me. We walk there. He bring me there. He went in there.

Where was that?

Pardon me.

Where was it that he took you to? The name of the--

This was-- I don't know the name, but it was a little village, like a farm.

Was it near Zembrov?

About 10 miles from Zembrov. We walk there-- no transportation. And then he went in. After an hour I come there. And I knock on the door. And I told him the story. Look, I'm in this-- I have a profession of this and this. If you want me, I can stay. I do the work.

Did you tell him you were Jewish?

Yes. And they was happy. Right away they grabbed me. All right. They give me a place in the back to work. And I work. And they give me food. I got just one shirt. And lice, I got it, the whole time. I got a few cents. I give the girl that to wash them out, this. They took the money from me.

But anyway, I was over there another week. Then they come again. Leo, we cannot hold you because it's too dangerous. So I started walking back to Zembrov. I come back to this man. I told him, look, no place for me.

Then he gave me an idea. Look, he say. This-- I know the mayor from the city. You go in the concentration camp there, in Zembrov. Because I in the ghetto they kill them. And I will take you to work so that you will get paid. You will have a home.

So you'd live in the concentration camp, and you'd work for him.

And they will-- because they took the Jewish for work outside. Because with a [GERMAN], not with a guard. You cannot run away. I say, well, I think what I can do. No choice for me. Because if you go ask for food, they grab you and they give you a way to the Nazis. They get it a half a pound sugar for you.

So I think my sisters is there. I make up my mind. All right, I will go there. This was Christmas Day.

Of '42?

In the same day from Christmas, I started going to there, to the kasernes. I come there. I come to the gate. And the German say, what willst du hier? I say, I am a Jew. Bist du kein Jew. Machst du weg. Machst du weg kommst.

Which means what?

That means to go away. I say, no, I'm a Jew. OK, a Jew? He open me the gate. He checked me if I don't have ammunition or something. Go in.

Well, I come in there. I find my sister and the other sister, my brother, my brother-in-law. All right, we was there. Then

my brother-in-law-- my sister's boy was sick-- no medicine, no nothing. He died there. Was a boy maybe four years, a nice boy.

Then they got a concentration camp, a house, where the old people, when they died, they piled them up there. And from there, they took them in the cemetery. When they got, let's say, about 10 thing of them, they took them to the cemetery with little trailers. And they buried them.

And he got to go in and bury them, his own son. All right. Then the Germans, they keep us there. They let us stay in the blocks. They took us outside.

It was cold, because they wash the floors to keep clean. We got to stay a couple of hours outside before they cleaned off. And then they'll let you go in.

Well, they had lined up outside or--

No. Right there, you walk around. But what they did, they did so. They make blocks. Every-- let's say, Zembrov got a block, Zembrov. Lomza got a block, Lomza. Other towns got a-- and make-- they fence them. That from one block, section-- the one block, you cannot go to the other.

To the other blocks.

They let you go, but not special open. They make a little door, and they put guards. Once I was staying in a guard too because the Jewish police, they put you on, you got to stay.

How long did you stay in that camp altogether?

I stay over there maybe about three weeks, about four weeks. Three weeks maybe.

Did you go to work?

No, no, nothing-- about three weeks.

Did you go to work at the other--

I went go out.

Every day you would go, or--

Yeah, because they need carpenters. You know this. I went-- when I come there, then they took me for work. I registered right away I'm a professional. And they took me for work, with a guard. From there you cannot run away because the guard, the SS, they're watching you.

When you would go there, would your-- your friend, would he give you food or anything like that?

No, we bought it from them because in the place was we worked, that was the Polish people, they deal with you. You know, they give the money, they give you food. And you-- it's allowed to bring in. And this place there, you bring in some potatoes and a piece of bread. So that is what-- it's better for me to go out so that I can bring in, because over there, inside, they give you about 100 gram bread a day. So that when I go out, I organize. I I bring in, so I got a little more food.

They didn't pay you for the work, just got a chance to go out to bring in something. So that I-- and then, we was there. and then they come one man. You know what I tell you, they make sections that you cannot go from one block to them. Once I was staying by the door, that there come a man. They bring in the Polish people. They make them count again. They got to bring in food for the concentration camp. Let's see, potatoes or something else.

That one boy, a Jewish boy, he was outside. He was dressed like a Gentile. He come in with another Gentile because he got the family there. He come in. They let him in. Fine. But when he started to go out, when he come to the gate, the Nazi, the guard, they asked him passport. Now, he has no passport. He started running away back, in the kaserne there, in the block. And he started running away there. All right, fine.

Oh, there Eichmann. There was-- I think there was Eichmann. There come Eichmann there, over there. And they give an order. In 10 minutes, this many got to be outside. What they got to do? I ask you, in this case.

They'll come to the block, and the block is about 1,000 people. And he come in the block--

Oh, and they say he's got to be outside in 10 minutes.

In 10 minutes. And over there there was Jewish police, everything. What have we got to do? They took them. They bring them outside. They took them to them. They took them outside. Come here. And he got a dog like this, Eichmann. He didn't talk to the dog. He just made the finger like this, and the dog jumped. In what direction the finger pointed, in this direction the dog jumped over him. He cut pieces here.

This, everything, he tear off him. He was already attacked. He couldn't stay even on the field. Then I can stand up. And he told him to stay underneath. He stay underneath, like this. If he go from the back, and I looked. There was maybe about 200 feet from me. And he made a gun, bkk, like this. And then they come from this, and they took him away.

This was like in December, like maybe in the end of December. And then every day they took us outside. We got to stay outside couple hours. They got to wash the floors and this, and they got the benches there that the people was laying on the benches like herring. No beds or nothing. In the night, no light in the night. So in the night, if somebody make a light, the person get it. They shoot in the windows there, with the guns. Some of them was wounded too, because they-- with the bullets. So you cannot make even a light inside.

So all of this up to January, like January 13, something, in the morning, they take, block by block. And they evacuated to the trains. It was a windy and frozen, maybe about 10 below. They come from the Polish. They give the trailers, with the horses. They put the families on this. And we go, maybe they call this name Cyzewo, the station from the train.

They took us over there. They go maybe about 6, 8 hours. We was walking this. It was frozen. They took us to the train. They took us to the train. We loaded on the train. So that everyone tried to get together. But you know somebody in one train.

Were you with anybody that you knew?

What?

Were you with anybody that you knew there.

Yeah, my sister, my two sisters-- two sisters and my brother-in-law. And the two sisters got two kids. Then they took us on the train. They took us. And they put on so many people on the train that was a place even one stay on the other-- so many people. There was room even to stay.

And they lock the trains, the doors. And they fill up the trains. And then to Auschwitz. No choice. Then in the middle, I tried to jump from the window. One man jumped. Then I go to the window. I will jump too.

Then my sister grabbed me, the youngest. And she started crying. So--

Was the train moving then?

Yeah. This time we are going. So that I decided not to jump because of my sister. And they didn't give they go about

two days. It was going like this. The train stopped and go. And then they didn't give us water. And the people, they was so thirsty that the lips get dark. And many people was dying, that you step on them.

And the people, they got to make something, you know-- by the walls. And it was terrible. It was terrible. And then they bring us to Auschwitz.

Was there any food or no water?

No, no, not. No water, no food, nothing. Then we tried to catch a little snow from the window with a little rope, with a little can, to grab a little snow, just-- And when you come to Auschwitz, they opened the doors. The guards, they're all around. And there was a big light, with a post.

Was it daytime or nighttime?

That was about 6 o'clock in the night. And they, the old people, what they was dead, half dead, they put them on the pile over there. But the Poles, they build up a pile. And the rest, you got to leave everything there, not to take nothing.

And then, to the right, to the left, to the right, to the left. The women separate, the men separate. And from the women, right, left, right, left, like this-- just like this, who to die. Who to live. Who to die. Who to live, like this. And when-- and they took him away.

And when they come to me, he asked me something. He asked me what kind-- what kind of trade I have. That I think that he asked me, by the age. Oh, he give me one like this. I fall to the ground. Right away I stand up. I told him automechaniker. Because automechaniker, a mechanic, maybe it's better, because I know automechaniker, too, because I learned this.

And they took me in the camp. And they took me in camp. On the other side fence, there was a double fence, electric. And like this you see, electric. And on the other side came maybe about 200 feet. It was the crematorium. Yeah.

We saw from the chimney, the fire goes maybe about 10 feet high, the fire and then the smoke. Then I come there. And the other side camp was for the women. And then I started-- when, the first day they let us stay outside, not in block.

Do you know what happened to your sisters there at that time?

No. No, I didn't know. But I still started looking. Maybe I will see my sister there because I saw the ladies there. I'm looking there. But from the inside, what there was before, they showed me. You see, over there? Over there is the people what they're burning.

But it was already a concentration camp before me. So I started looking, looking. They took-- what happened, they took-- my sister got two kids. And the younger sister, she didn't got it, a kid in the hand. They will took her maybe in the place for work. She will be saved.

But the other sister, the older sister got two kids, is what she grabbed one. And she one, you know. Easy for her to handle the kids. So they took them both. They got the kid both in the gas chamber. So that they both go. And my brother-in-law comes with me. And we went in the concentration camp.

So after this, they hauled us all day off-site. For the man inside the Richtung, you got to stay five in the line, like this. They got to see the line is straight, in that way, and the line is straight like this. They let you go one to the other, to warm up a little bit. You got to stay on the second day. Then you got to stay all afternoon. Then they give you a little the soup. They give you a little. And that's the end again. In when they come a little dark, they let you go in the block.

They give you coffee a little bit. That's it. And when you got to go to the toilet, well, to make a big-- they got a big. They got to make inside. In the morning, they grabbed some of to take it outside, to clean them up, to wash up there you know. And they got the benches there. They got about seven, eight people, a bench. You know.

And they give you a blanket, you know. And this was like this. They give you a little bread, maybe 1,000 gram bread.

All right. we're going to take a break again now. And we'll come right back to this in just a minute. OK?