

He may have received more attention than people who want privacy might be interested in.

This is the Holocaust Archive Project, sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section. I am Sidney Elsner. My guest is Mr. Werner Sauer of Middlefield, Ohio, a survivor of the Holocaust from Germany. He was born in the western part of Germany, in the Rhine-Ruhr area, was brought up as a child in very high status. And from Germany, he was taken in early 1942 to Latvia, where he survived the war. He has had incredible experiences.

Middlefield, where Mr. Sauer lives, is east of Cleveland. It is a small, rural community. Mr. Sauer, tell us please about your life as a child, your life in Middlefield, what you do now, what you did before. Go right ahead.

Danke, Mr. Elsner. Oh, thank you. I spoke German. I'm that excited. I'm 66 years old. Presently I live in Middlefield. I was born in, like you said, in Gelsenkirchen. It's in the Rhine-Ruhr, where I visited the schools until I got kicked out because it was mentioned, it was renamed the Adolf Hitler gymnasium. And that was the end of that schooling for me in Germany.

In 1942, in January, I was transported with my parents, with 1,000 other people, to Riga, Latvia, where we were originally in the ghetto. Today I am retired. And I'm married. I don't have any children. But I have animals and enjoy their company. I'll live the life of a retired semi-farmer, since there's all this lots of work on the farm.

What was your work in Cleveland before you went to Middlefield? And how did you come to Cleveland?

I lived, after the concentration camps and ghettos, in Berlin and arrived in '49 from Berlin in Cleveland, since I had the uncle and aunt who owned the Dornburg Hotel. In the beginning, I worked at the Carlings Brewing Company as a beer brewer. And later on, after three years, I started working with Ira E. Baker, a company where I installed boilers in private houses all over the city of Cleveland. I worked there until the company folded. And I retired when I was 62 years old.

Mr. Sauer, could you tell us, please, what was your life like before the war? Tell us what it was like before Hitler came into power in your childhood. You're now 66 years old. At what age will you start?

Well, my earliest childhood memories were when the Rhine-Ruhr was occupied, and troops were present. And I didn't like, even at that time, guns. I remember a short story I had when I saw the first occupying forces. I told my mother, I don't like any guns, and I don't like any shooting.

The French troops?

The French troops, which were occupying the Rhineland. Then I went to the Jewish Volksschule, which were four years. The school system in Germany is different, so it's hard to compare. But this is a grade school, where I went for four years. And after that, I went to a gymnasium, where they teach Latin, Greek, French, English.

And until 1933, I was at that institution. And at that time, when I was 15 years old, that institution was renamed Adolf Hitler Gymnasium. And that was the end of that schooling for me. I was very active in sports, especially-- not especially-- when the time was for soccer, when the time was for skiing, the time was for rowing. I was very active in sports.

And at that time already, the whole situation in Germany changed. It was very-- there was no possibility of any further schooling. And since I had, in Germany, which is very rare, a driver's license with the 16 years, I got an occupation of driver, professional driver. Chauffeur, you would say. And then I worked in the building trade, since a friend of my father was an architect.

At that time already-- I'm talking now about the years after '39, when the so-called Kristallnacht took place, where all people were arrested, where all Jewish stores were smashed, all synagogues burned. Until that time--

Tell us, please, what was your family like? Did you have many brothers and sisters? And the area you lived in, was it a big city? What big city was it near? What was the-- were there many Jews in the community? And how was your treatment there before Hitler?

The city I was living in had 365,000 people. It is very close to what is more famous, Essen, Dusseldorf. All those cities are-- you get from one city to the other with the streetcar. So this is very, very crowded.

I had my parents. I lived with my parents, and I had one sister. That sister got married in 1938 and emigrated to Kenya, Africa. She lives today. She's the only surviving relative I have. She lives today in Santa Barbara, in California.

My parents, which went with me to Riga, came-- were killed in 19-- end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945. They were killed, the one in the concentration camp Stutthof. My father got killed in a camp by the name of [PLACE NAME].

Did you have anybody else in your family living with you in Germany?

No. But other family members, I have approximately eight people who got killed in the concentration camp from my family. And the other part emigrated to either Brazil, Argentine, or like those relatives I had in the United States.

In Gelsenkirchen, was there much of a Jewish population?

We had 1,000 souls, it was called. Now, 1,000 souls, I think, is the equivalent of probably 3,000 people.

Out of a population in the city of about--

365,000.

365,000 is about the size of Toledo, Ohio.

Right.

Big city.

Right. Right. Right. And we had approximately, like I said, they called it "souls" at that time. They had a temple. We had a few congregation. Our was what would be here considered not Orthodox-- liberal.

What was your father's work and your mother's? What did they do?

My mother was, of course, not a housewife, but we owned an outfit, which was in the equivalent of Armour, the meat manufacturing and packing factory. And we employed approximately 75 people. And my mother ran the household. And that's about it.

Well, we were an excellent financial situation until Adolf Hitler came to power, when my father tried to prove that he was more powerful than Hitler and he couldn't touch him. But of course he did.

How did your family get along with your friends and neighbors, Jewish and non-Jewish?

The--

Was there any outward antisemitism in your childhood?

There was, as far as I remember, never any antisemitism I experienced myself, neither my parents. It was probably due to the fact that my father was the founder and the financial godfather, I would say, of Schalke Field, which was, in soccer in Germany, the equivalent of the Yankee dynasty in baseball. And consequently, was extremely popular and well known all over.

And I had only very few Jewish friends with whom I went to school. And most of them were Gentiles, through the sport, which I was very active in. And I didn't see-- I had just limited episodes where I saw any antisemitism at all. One was when I was kicked out of the school. The other thing was an episode, which happened when I participated in a track and field meeting. As each runner came through the finishing line, he was given a number. And when I asked for my number, the man who handed it out, who was, I knew, an SS man, a member of the SS party, he says you don't get a number. He says it's all right all ready.

So I knew that my time had come. But that was approximately 1936. Up until then, I never had any.

Going backwards a little bit, was your family long established in Germany? We know of people who flit from country to country in Central Europe, Eastern Europe. How many years or generations back was your family in Germany itself?

As far as I know, it's five generations. I know from where they lived and how they lived. And I never followed it any deeper. But as a norm, we were-- we always considered ourselves, as a nationality, German, or religion, Jewish. As a matter of fact, on my birth certificate, in Germany in the time when I grew up, they were so much liberal that they called my religion Mosaisch, a member of Moses.

They didn't even call them Jewish or Israel, Israelis or something like that. And of course, I was born in 1918, so I only lived in the Weimar Republic until Hitler came.

Did Zionism have any influence in your childhood, or socialism?

No. I really was too young to be any-- in any kind involved in politics or having any outlook like Zionism or--

Was Yiddish spoken in your home, or any other languages other than German?

No. But my mother and my father all went to-- well, the German high schools, which are the equivalent almost like college, and absorbed them. They all spoke foreign languages, but not Yiddish at all. That was a language-- the few phrases used in our household were actually Hebrew phrases. Like, if we talked about Hitler, we called him a kelev, which was the Hebrew word for dog. So that was the only Hebrew used.

Did you have many non-Jewish friends?

Yes. My father's and my friends and the family friends were 99% non-Jewish. There was, in my youth until Hitler came, never any idea of being different and [INAUDIBLE].

What kind of plans, as a youth, did you have for your future?

Well, until I got kicked out of the gymnasium, I always wanted to become a lawyer. And of course that was all over with when Hitler appeared.

What did you enjoy doing? You mentioned sports and soccer and your father's role in the town because of soccer. Did that shape your life under Hitler? Did it have its influence there?

Well, as funny as it sounds, I participated once in a ghetto in a-- not staged-- in a soccer game between the German Jews and the Latvian Jews, which was very heavily filmed and photographed by the Gestapo troops who saw that. And I played later on in another ghetto. But in another [NON-ENGLISH], which was the out camps of a concentration camp.

And it didn't influence it much, but maybe sport prepared me and made me a little bit tougher than the-- I boxed, I lifted weights. Maybe that prepared me a little bit better for the hard times that were to follow.

After the Nazis took over Germany, did your non-Jewish friendships continue? Did they help you, or did they drop you?

Well, I only can say that the help continued. The worst cases were not antisemitism, but the people kept themselves separate. But I didn't see any turn of anybody to Hitler on that, to Hitler's point of view. They were still friends and helped us until the very last day.

The war, which began in 1939, do you remember the beginnings of the war?

Yes. I remember that beginning. But what had more influence on myself, the-- '39 was the Polish war, which had very little to do. Of course, the last years, like I told you before, I worked in the building industry. And it had the following influence, that more and more bricklayers were working on the defense system and on the military system. And I was more and more the only bricklayer around.

I remember one episode, the last job I had was in the Catholic-- the hospitals in Germany are grouped through religion. There was a Catholic hospital and a Protestant hospital. And I worked in a Catholic hospital. And I don't forget the last experiences I had, when I told the Mother Superior that I wouldn't be coming much longer. She says, oh, they drafted you too?

And I told her, no. I said, I'm Jewish, which really threw her completely. And she says, now wait a second. She came back immediately with all kinds of stuff, which was hard to get in 1941 and '42. And she told me a word I never will forget. She said you, meant the Jews, will leave Germany, and it will be extremely dark because you take the moon and the stars and the sun with you. And those prophetic words I never forgot. And she was so right, since Germany, especially the part I came, was almost completely destroyed due to the war.

What changes did your family make then because of the war?

Well, to begin with, I tried to bring out before, and I said before, that my father thought he could force-- he was stronger than Hitler. And the Hitler regime, within a short while, completely destroyed the whole business. But the only other change Hitler made was my occupation and--

From driver, chauffeur, you became a bricklayer.

Right. The reason was that 1939, all driver's licenses had to be given to the police. And there's an interesting sideline to the German order. Because years and years later, in 1945, '46, I was stopped in Berlin. I was driving a motorbike. And the police asked me for a driver's license. And I had a-- I made a new driver's license. But I said, you know-- which was not for the classification for a motorbike. So I told him, I said, you know, I had a driver's license since 1935. And he says, well, what happened to it. I said the German-- I had to give it to the German police. He said, well, write for it.

And in fact was I wrote for it, and I got the same German driver's license they confiscated before the war. I got the same driver's license back. That's what they call German order. And too bad that it was that orderly about the destruction of the Jews too.

Tell us about your observations and feelings during the Nazi era, pertaining to the family life in your city, the changes in attitudes from before the war and through the war, until the time you went out of Germany into Latvia.

Well, the whole attitude of my parents and our friends were that nobody thought that Hitler could or would continue. My father was especially-- there is-- I just shortly-- I got the history of the Jews in Gelsenkirchen. Young students were working on that project. And in that book is an advertising put up by the Jewish members of the First World War German Army, who thought that, consequently, they would have a different standing with Hitler. My father, being an officer in the First World War, was, of course, under the same impression.

The whole outlook was that it won't last long, and it we'll go over. In our particular case, my father was, sorry to say, that much of a German that he never would have emigrated because he had that attitude I described before, that Hitler can't do anything to him. Now, the changes were, of course, gradual. The whole German-- the persecution in Germany started small and ended big. There was a new decree every two or three months. And it got progressively worse.

Like I said, the real big turning point was, of course, the Kristallnacht 1939, where almost all Jews were arrested. And the Jews in Germany emigrated more or less and the congregation became smaller and smaller until the war with Russia, which changed, apparently, the whole outlook altogether since, as far as I know, there were no official killings in masses up until this war started.

And the changes in life was kind of like unbelievable, and it will go over and nobody would put up with it. And we talked before about the occupation of the Rhineland, for instance. It was the thought of the people in Germany that the other countries, France, England, the United States, would not put up with the-- with the occupation of the German troops in the Rhineland. And at that time, Hitler really wouldn't have any power, and Hitler would have been wiped out overnight.

In 1935?

In 1935. Because-- now, I only mention that-- there was always something where the Jewish population thought, well, that is the end. It can't get any worse. And of course, we found out that it got progressively worse.

What happened to your family then as the war continued?

Well, I guess I mentioned before too that the largest part immigrated. And a few, there were-- when we were sent to Riga, there were a few old, old relatives of mine left. Later on, from former employees, I found out that they were brought to a camp. And of course, were murdered.

Well, did you have many changes in your daily life under the Nazi rule in your home city?

Well really, like I say, now--

Well, that is true.

--in later years, we had to wear a star, the yellow star. Now, about this I remember two things. A, that you had to wear it, but it didn't say anywhere that you couldn't wear a briefcase and halfway covered it. And I remember when I had the first day with the star, the boy who brought coffee and donuts and so on the building site, he took my jacket and pedaled with his bicycle real proud around because he thought the Jewish star was not the degrading mark. But he thought it was a sign of honor.

So it did change the life. You had to keep a secret. And you had, like I said, you had the habit of covering it and so on. And that is the major changes then.

Well, did you walk around the city freely? Were you allowed to go into different stores? Were you barred from parks or cinemas?

Well, that was, I would say, starting in 1940, '41, where they had certain restrictions. You weren't allowed to go there. You didn't-- you could only travel with the railroad unless you had a permit for that. Your steps were extremely limited. But it was not enforced in any big degrees. And I often took a risk, and I never-- plus, this is personal. That's-- I can't talk about other people who might have suffered more on it because they took it more serious and followed orders more. I didn't follow too many of the orders, as long as I could circumvent them. That's what the word I mean.

Was there much planning in the Jewish community to deal with the German orders? Or was it all on an individual basis?

Well, there was no actual planning because I thought, I had the feeling, that the whole attitude was a little of unbelief and that it will go over, and this is the worst it ever will get. So I don't see that there was any big steps taken. And it was just a matter of living from day to day and thought that it would blow over. That would be the end of it.

So tell us if you will, Mr. Sauer, about your father's status in the community. You said he was the leader in the soccer teams. Did this have an influence on how your family was treated as against other families?

Yes. We had a very special status. I was always under the impression that, on the 9th of November, the Kristallnacht, I thought my father was the only one who was not arrested. When the Gestapo came to arrest me, I wasn't home. I was at work. My father says, why don't you take me? So they said, no, we don't have any orders to take you. And we will come back tomorrow to arrest your son, which would have given me plenty of time to disappear.

Well, they arrested me. Now I understand from the history in Gelsenkirchen that they didn't arrest the rabbi of the city either. When it came to the picking up of the people who were being deported, the bus went around, picked up the people on board into an exhibition hall, where they were waiting for the transport.

What month and what year?

That was in 1941, in the beginning of 1941. It might have been the end of '42, too, because this episode I'm describing now was over two weeks. Part of the Jewish population left over, not all of them, were arrested for this transport. My father, too, didn't-- walked even the city, and ran into the top man from the Gestapo, who told him, Mr. Sauer, you don't have to-- oh, my father says, I better come now to the exhibition hall too. He says, no, Mr. Sauer, you don't have to hurry. There's plenty of time.

The exhibition hall was the gathering place for all the Jews of the community.

Right. From that transport, who were grouped together for the transport.

Was this the first transport in the city?

Yes. Yes.

And just to clarify the dates, it would have been the end of '41 and the beginning of '42.

Right. Right. Anyhow, he says, don't come. You have plenty of time. Whereas, the transport left that morning at 5:00 or 6 o'clock. In the meantime, we had asked good friends-- we had a neighbor who was a dentist, a Gentile dentist, who wasn't even our dentist, who usually was our dentist, but he, free of charge, checked and repaired our teeth for that transport. And since he was one of the leading men in the SS, he tried to find out what-- with this immigration, what it really would be amounting to.

And all the information he could get, that they would send us there. We have to settle on fields and work in agriculture and build up the territory.

Now, this was the exodus of the Jewish-- the Jewish Germans from Germany. They were being sent out of Germany to the north and the east, to the Baltic lands. And there was no hint of destruction or death or anything of that nature, which had been going on for several months in Lithuania, Latvia, and so forth.

No, there was no-- nobody expected that. And since you mention it, there's a fact that already, on the 30th of November 1941, the first transport of German Jews, this particular one from Berlin, was shot in the morning in Riga. And in the afternoon of the same day, the reports say 12,000 to 15,000 Latvian Jews were shot with a single shot in the neck by the German troops in a group-- in a group in a trench, which Russian troops had dug.

And during this one day, 12,000 to 15,000 people were shot. And the first of those were this group, which is the only known group, as far as I know, of German Jews who were transported already to Latvia and were killed on the spot. Three days later-- not three days. I'm sorry. It was on the 7th of December, a farther group of 12,000 to 15,000 used Jews from Latvia were shot on one day by the same troops, by the same German troops, on the same location. But this was already after the German-- after reports I have-- killed approximately 37,000 Latvian Jews by the sonderkommandos. Now this shooting was, I described, those 30,000 Jews. They were settled in the so-called Riga ghetto, the grosse ghetto, which they eliminated.

There were 4,000 Jews left in the kleinen ghetto. And then the German Jews were settled in what was called by the Nazis the German ghetto. In the German ghetto at that time, they had approximately 10 groups, each 1,000 people. From the day on, we came to Riga, there were aktion, which was called, which were groups of 2,000, 3,000 people were eliminated from those ghetto inmates.

They had, for instance, one of the famous things, where one of the people who got caught later on, an SS Maywald, who got caught, who called it DÄ¼namÄ¼nde, which was a group of older people, which were told that they would work in fish canneries. And this group was put in trucks. On those trucks, the exhaust were led into the trucks, and the people were killed on that kind. In that connection, it is worth mentioning that those gigantic killings in Latvia alone, which were 178,000 Jews until the beginning of '42.

In October '42, the first command came to dig out the bodies and burn them. This kommando was called, in our particular case, 1,001-- 1,0001. And in other cases, was 1,005.

Mr. Sauer, let's go back a few years to establish this history. We know now that the training for the mass killings came from the German euthanasia programs, where they would destroy imbeciles in lunatic asylums, where they would destroy weaklings, handicapped. And they did it by early gas chambers. Now you lived in Germany, and all this that I've talked about started in Germany.

It wasn't in Poland. It wasn't in Latvia. It wasn't in Estonia. It wasn't in the Ukraine. But it was within the borders of Germany. In those years, in the late '30s, did you at all, did anybody you know even hear about such things?

Yes. There were what they were called rumors of the killings of mental patients. People described. There were rumors about it. And the fact is, they did disappear. But that was already very close to that time when the real killings I described now took place.

This was not, as far as I know-- this must have been 1940 or somewhere around that time. I don't think those killings-- I forgot right now. What was it?

Mercy killings?

No. You used the correct word before. That was euthanasia or something like that.

Yes.

Killings were talked about. But really, nobody thought that this was the-- let's say a harsh word-- kickoff for the big killings. When we were sent to Riga, I think-- as a matter of fact, as a matter of fact, I even have under my papers reports from troops who killed those first Berlin Jews, who told them that where are we evacuated and what are we doing here. Until they were killed, there wasn't even a thought of killing of Jews outright.

I understand. Let's pick up your story in the Ruhr. Tell us about the transport, the physical ride from Germany to Latvia. Who was with you, who of your family, what the conditions were, what you were told, what happened when you got to your destination.

Well, the transport consisted of 1,000 people, 500 from Gelsenkirchen and 500 from Dortmund, which was the city very close to-- industrial city. We were on the railroad. We had regular-- not animal cars.

Not cattle cars.

Not cattle-- not cattle cars. We had the regular passenger cars.

Coaches.

The only trouble was that most of them didn't have any heat. And I said, it's the beginning, and it was in the winter time,

deep winter. Most of them didn't have any heat. All of them didn't have any food. For drinking, we had to jump out of the-- whenever the train stopped, the younger people jumped out of the windows and grabbed snow and drank the snow.

When we-- the train ride took six days. After six days, we arrived in Riga. The-- we had approximately four or five people who froze to death on that trip. We arrived in Riga, was the unbelievable blue sky, and nobody thought that what took place could have any connection with the sky and with nature being that beautiful. We were on our trains--

This is January of '42.

January of '42. All of a sudden, cries Raus. Raus. Raus. Schnell. Schnell. Schnell. The people who-- older people, I remember distinctly, who had a-- walking on a stick, got his stick torn out of his hand and beaten with a stick. The package-- see, on all killings, the German always left the impression that it was only a resettlement.

They always allowed so-and-so much baggage. In our case, I think it was 100 German pounds, with approximately 150 125 English pounds. All those baggage, which we thought, which we prepared thoroughly because it was of extreme importance, we thought, what we would take around under those weights limits, this package was all thrown out. No, we had to leave it in the train. And later on, people from the train had to throw it all out. It was all coming on one pile. And was transported to Riga, to the ghetto.

Now, we, under beatings and kicking and screaming, were torn out of the trains. I remember one episode. The police officer, who was, until then, in charge of the train, was screaming in disgust, what is this? Are those men or animals? Until today, you know, my episodes I call it the same thing. Until today, I don't know if they were men or animals. I don't know whom he meant, the treatment we got or the people who beat us and kicked us out of the trains.

Well, on that same evening, on that same day, I volunteered with my father to stay back. We had to clean out the trains, throw the baggage, like I said, on a pile, and being transported into the city, because my mother walked already to the ghetto. And we met her back in the ghetto.

On the same train where, besides those frozen people, approximately three or four people were injured, who came on a sled. And there was the guy who was in charge on it, a Sturmführer Gymnich, by the way, who-- well, who looked like-- well, I think it's not important how he looked, but he looked like a-- if Hollywood would have made a good-looking SS murderer, he would have made him because he was extremely good looking. He had black eyes. You could kill a person just looking at him.

Anyhow, he was on charge. He had those people in the sled. They were transported, and they were killed on the way.

Do you know what units these Germans came from? We've heard of the various einsatzgruppen. Do you have any knowledge of who was doing what there?

Well, they belonged to the Einsatzgruppe A. And in charge was the [GERMAN] and R-S-H-A group. Those people were not what-- they were not even called SS. But they were called Sicherheitsdienst, which were the uniformed Gestapo. They were a different type uniform. They were in charge of the whole operation. And there they were in charge of. Partially. The German Sicherheitspolizei, SiPo, and the German Kriminalpolizei, Kripo, they also had at their disposal Latvian soldiers of the Latvian Army and Latvian volunteers who were, only to describe, of trained mercenary killers. The troops itself were all under the charge of one man by the name of Dr. Lange.

How do you spell that?

L-A-N-G-E. Now there is an interesting question. Professor Hilberg, who is very much known about, who wrote the book The Destruction of the European Jews--

Raul Hilberg.

Raul Hilberg-- called him Dr. Otto Lange, and writes in his book that after the-- Otto Lange, by the way, was one of the

15 participants on the so-called Wannsee Conference, where it was decided the end of the Holocaust, the final solution of the European Jews.

In January of 1942.

Right. He had the lowest rank of all people there, comparatively, because there was only the real bigwigs. But this Dr. Lange--

You were saying Hilberg called him Otto.

Otto. Whereas, I found out, since I tried later on to follow up on lots of those stories, now the German [GERMAN] says they only know a man by the name of Ferdinand Erwin, Dr. Lange, who got killed later on in the war in Stettin. But I had experiences with other people who changed their names. I know, for instance, of the man who was as Fritz Shervitz, the Untersturmführer of the Sicherheitsdienst of the uniformed Gestapo and the leader of the camp I was later on in. He is today Elke Zarewic, born in Vilna, Polish Jews. And I cannot get, under all circumstances, the file which described his trial.

So what you're saying is that-- give me this man's name again.

I talked last about Shervitz, Zarewic.

All right. He was a high Nazi in the SS, and he's turned himself into a Jew and he's--

Right.

--he's known now as a Jew, and nobody knows his Nazi background.

The real-- files of the real hearings, like I have hearings about other proceedings, were not attainable to me on the highest instance and the highest court because it was said that my research is not scientific enough.

What is the basis for you saying that this man is the same one? Did this come out of testimony in a trial? Can you give us the name of the trial for the record here?

Oh, I have the exact number and where it took place, in Augsburg. I should know it by heart, but I don't. I will look up that number, exact number of that trial. What happened is that I read first in the newspaper after the war, in Berlin, that an article of the Berlin Tageblatt, one of the leading papers there, said that the occurrence of antisemitism. The car of the [GERMAN], which means racist, persecuted-- not prosecuted, persecuted-- Dr. Fritz Shervitz was burned by antisemites. That was the first one.

When I read that article, I knew, since he was an extremely smart operator, that it could be only him.

Later on, when we take a break, you'll look up the records, and we'll read it into the record. But tell us please now what happened on your arrival in Riga. You were on the train. And you're saying that these members of Einsatzgruppen A-- do you know what kommando of A? There were several-- 1, 2, 3, 4.

1 and 2.

1 and 2.

EK Eins and EK Zwei-- that's-- we had kommandos, those people working for them to, EK Eins and EK 2, 1 and 2. And EK means E-K.

Yeah. Now, as I understand it, these killers, these mass killers, had gone through Lithuania and Estonia and were now in Latvia. They'd worked their way north. And you were in Riga. So what was your camp like-- that was the labor camp--

physically? And how long were you there? And what kind of work did you do? And what were the living conditions?

There was yourself, your mother, your father. Your sister was now in Africa. And you had no other family members with you.

No.

But there were 1,000 other people.

Right.

Tell us what happened--

We arrived in--

--including the weather.

--the ghetto to Riga. The Riga ghetto had a street dividing the Latvian ghetto and the German ghetto. In the German ghetto, where we came, each group had a different place of assortment of buildings, which were for that particular group.

We came with approximately six people in one room in the German ghetto, where we were-- those were my parents and me, a lady and her mother, by the name of Baum, and a family with two daughters lived basically in one small apartment. To bring up something else, this was not the best living area of Riga to begin with. As a matter of fact, it was the worst living area of Riga.

We live in this apartment. The other groups lived in their different houses, some of them only-- I would say from our transport, the people were put in approximately six or seven houses total. But those were apartment houses.

Had there been several-- had there been many transports from Germany into Riga previously? Were you very crowded? Were you one person on top of another?

We were the 10th and last transport to go to Riga. As a matter of fact, under the circumstances, later on we found out, if it wouldn't have been a Sunday we arrived, we would have, like many other transports, a total of 60,000 German Jews were either right away liquidated, which was a favorite word of the Nazis, or they came in camps where, of 1,000 people-- one of the most famous one was Salaspils. Salaspils was a camp, which was built by Jewish young men in the wilderness, in the winter, under the most cruel circumstances and had a loss of 700 out of 1,000 people within a time period of approximately four months. That was Salaspils.

Now, all other people were settled in this ghetto by the groups they arrived. Like I say, divided by wire fence from the Latvian Jews, who were on the other side of them, so-called Latvian ghetto. We were, when we came, approximately 10 groups. And every week there was a so-called Appell, and another aktion took place.

An Appell is a roll call?

A roll call of the total ghetto, where people were picked out for, what we were told, I think I mentioned before, D¹/₄nam¹/₄nde [GERMAN], the factory where the old people were picked up for that. And I remember of this Dr. Lange, one sentence. I'll never forget it in my life, which was typical. He came out of the kommandantur, and I stood in order there very close by. And he came and he told to his-- to the next of him. He says, there are 3,000 fresse too many.

Now the German language has a two ways of eating.

Keep going.

And I think they have two ways of eating. The one is called eating, and the other one is called-- essen-- and the other one is called fressen. Animals fressen. So this Dr. Lange says there are 3,000 fresse too many. And he was right. Within two weeks there were 3,000 people coming in-- Germany Jews, coming in.

We'll stop there for a while. Thank you.

OK. Well, I think we did good. I talked and talked and talked. That's one I felt.

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