

We are continuing our visit with Mr. Werner Sauer of Middlefield, Ohio for the Holocaust Archive Project of the Cleveland Council of Jewish Women. And we're going back for a minute.

In the beginning, we were talking with Mr. Sauer about a Nazi, a high SS leader in the camp in Latvia, name of Fritz Scherwitz, who is said to have turned himself into a Jew to escape persecution in Germany. And Mr. Sauer now has the references, the case, and the trial, and the dates. And he will read those into the record for anybody who wants to follow them up in future years.

The trial number is 4JS256-50. And after the trial, his name from Scherwitz, S-C-H-E-R-W-I-T-Z, changed to Elias, or on other information I have, Eleke, E-L-E-K-E, Sirewitz, born in Vilna, Poland. This trial was on the court in Augsburg.

Thank you. Now, in our previous conversation, you had arrived at the concentration camp, the labor camp, and the ghetto in Riga by train. But on the way there, you had some unusual experiences with the German soldiers. Would you tell us about that and what happened on the trains, please?

It-- at one occasion, the train stopped. And on the opposite side of the tracks was a German troop movement car. Those cars were marked clearly with the Red Cross. And actually, that might explain why some troop Red Cross trains were hit by the Air Force. Those troops were German soldiers who came from the hospital and went to the front.

Well, we came-- I came to talk with one soldier. And after a short while, we found out that we participated in similar sports events. And he got very-- we got a little bit more better acquainted. And he asked me what we are doing there. So I says, well, we are Jews who are transported. We are evacuated. That was the proper name in the German language. And he disappeared.

And I thought, originally, that it would be just another disappointment. But after a short time, he came back and threw us-- he had collected between the other troop members cigarettes, candy, and all kinds of foodstuff, which he threw over to our train. Well, he asked us in there-- well, and we felt like human beings again.

Anyhow, he asked us for matches, which they didn't have. And we made a short collection of matches between us. And believe me, if it would be the last matches we would have had, we would have gladly given them to him.

Now, in the evening, we-- I was talking. I climbed out of the railroad car. And I was talking with the same soldier in person outside. And one of the guards, of the German guards, a policeman came and he says-- when he recognized me, what are you Jew talking here to the-- to a German soldier, so-- to the injured?

And the soldier says, we are not injured. And we go into the front. And you disappear because I want to talk to him. I talk to him. So it was just a short episode. It showed that we still had some human beings we encountered.

Now, had you and your father agreed that you would try to stick together throughout this period? What plans had you made for surviving the trip?

Well, the trip itself was-- we thought it would be easy to survive since, like I say, we had preparation. And despite that we didn't get any official food during the whole trip, we did have at our disposal our own food. What I meant to say before is that they send us on a six-day trip without even thinking of giving us some hot coffee or, I don't know what, anyhow, anything hot to eat. And the only supply we had was the stuff which we were-- our careful selected 150 pounds of luggage, checking luggage.

Well, had your family said you would stick together?

Well, that was actually obvious because there was no mind about it, that the only support we would-- could give each other would be, of course, the own family. And we were only separated right on the railroad track since we cleaned out the trains and got the luggage together, where my mother marched with her Kolonne, with the rest of the people. We were approximately 10-20 people who cleaned out the train. And that was with my father. And then we met my mother

right away in the ghetto, in the camp.

And this was not the kind of a camp where they made selections on the platform for death? Was-- were any people taken out and killed?

We were lucky. We came there Sunday. We were the last transport from Germany which went to the Riga ghetto-- Riga ghetto. And from that same transport, which was [NON-ENGLISH], a little railroad track, other transport marched as they came directly to the woods, where the ditches were dug for-- to receive the bodies of the killed people.

And what was the ghetto where you were sent? And were you able to leave the ghetto to work? And was-- did you meet refugees from other cities and countries in the same ghetto?

Well, this ghetto had strictly Jews from Germany and Latvian Jews. In our separate ghettos, we could move around. The population of the ghetto each marched daily to work. There were different groups. I personally worked the first few days at the Riga harbor and saw there that Russian soldiers who worked there too, prisoners of war who worked in the same Riga harbor, were starving to death carrying-- I presume it must have been 200 bags of flour in, running, transporting them from one place to another under a terrific beating.

And I noticed a Russian soldier who tore up a bag, and grabbed this flour, and as raw as the flour was, stuffed it in his mouth. And he got beaten like a dog by the troops who supervised that.

There were other commanders. There were, for instance, young girls who cleaned up the kaserne, the place where the Einsatzkommando I and Einsatzkommando II stood. There were HKPE, which was the [GERMAN].

There were approximately 40-50 different groups went to different places for work. There also were, in the ghetto itself, groups who separated tin pots from other pots. The [NON-ENGLISH], the pieces of-- household pieces, clothing pieces from those 60,000-- not 60,000 in the ghetto, the Latvian ghetto, the approximately 30,000 Jews who were killed, their stuff would be assorted by people who worked in the ghetto. And the clothes were-- the better clothes were sent to Germany. And the other clothes was probably used for the population.

Anyhow, the way we could survive was-- by the way, this was the resistance, which all camp members and all members of a concentration camp did the resistance executed by all people who came in the camp was stealing things, trying to trade them on those out commanders, on those-- let's say in the harbor. You tried to steal a pair of pants and tried to smuggle them out, out of the ghetto, tried to trade it for two slices of bread on the harbor.

Now, all those things were under strict death penalty. And those were executed too. People got shot for a dish, for a plate, got shot for a slice of bread going into the ghetto. Now, all those people survived those circumstances strictly because they put up this resistance, went against the German-made laws, and kept alive on account of that.

So was the non-Jewish people who were helping to smuggle things in?

No, the non-Jewish people made a profit out of buying a pair of clothes, which had a value of, let's say-- just to say an amount of \$20 to give a slice of bread, which had a value of \$0.20. They profited by the trade.

But they could have been shot for it?

I don't think the Latvian population, the Christian population--

Not on that side.

--would have been shot. The Jews would have been shot immediately. There were all kinds of situations. And those possibilities, we used at all times. And those possibilities were the only thing which kept us alive, not the regular food we got into the ghetto or we got in concentration camps.

Then what labor camp were you sent to?

Well, I myself was picked up one of those days. This Scherwitz. We were talking about comes into the camp and must have asked for a bricklayer, put me in his car, raced me to a apartment building, where I met for the first time Latvian Jews, which were all excited because I was the first connection they had with-- as well as the Latvian ghetto and the survivor of there. Because they had been in this place since the ghetto have been liquidated. Those were extremely well artisans. They were--

Craftsmen.

--craftsmen of the highest degree, collected from all over the east. They were people from Lithuania, Jewish people from Lithuania, Jewish people from Latvia. We had from the watchmaker down to a-- what's the name of people who prepare leather, makes skin from--

Tanners?

--tanners. We had a tannery. We had about-- anything possible was produced and made for the RSHA, for the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, in we made-- at one time, we made the leather coats on the inside with the best expensive fur. I can't think of the name.

Sable?

Not-- this particular one wasn't sable. Not-- the mink, the inside filled with mink for Mr. Himmler. So those partisans were-- they needed was-- was I as the bricklayer, those partisans-- were in this men and women, by the way-- were in there since the ghetto, the Latvian ghetto, the large ghetto, as it was called, was eliminated, which was, like I say, in the beginning. That was in November, end of November 1941.

Now, when I came there, I was the first connection they heard of anybody being survivor outside of their group. Now, this camp, due to the fact this-- let's call it factory was-- due to the fact that the biggest experts in the east were there, had a extremely good treatment.

But the fÃ¼hrer, the leader of this particular group, was Scherwitz, who was smart enough. He had, for instance, the manager of everything, was a fellow by-- a Jewish fellow by the name of Litow. But he was-- took the status as an Aryan, as a Latvian Aryan, didn't have to wear a star and wear.

And his bad luck in later years was he was, as a collaborator of the Germans, arrested by the Russian. And he's still in Russian jail today, probably. I don't know. Probably, today, he's out.

Now, I worked there, had to form an order from this Scherwitz with my own group of people who prepared mortar and stuff like that and march from then on daily through Riga to-- and work there until later on, a big factory was taken over. And I had to rebuild part of the factory or all of the factory for places where the Jews would sleep, would bathe, and also had the rooms where the tailors were working and where the shoemakers who made the famous German boots were making.

Where we-- and we had one apartment which made women's socks and fur coats, a watch department. We had cabinetmakers who made furniture for those Gestapo, of uniformed Gestapo. That's all what I would say. And that was this.

Did this camp have a name?

The-- later, it was called Lenta because the first place was on what the Germans called Washingtonplatz, where also, the building from the rest of the Gestapo were. Later on, the name of the factory was Lenta.

Who operated the factory, the Gestapo, the SS?

Under the leadership of the SS or the supervision of the SS, it was strictly worked on operated by the Jews.

Yeah, the labor by the Jews.

The labor strictly by-- but this--

Was it a commercial enterprise such as, say, Krupp?

No, no, no, no, no. This was strictly-- this was strictly-- for instance, we supplied all the Ukrainian SS troops with the uniforms. We supplied all the Latvian with uniforms. We also supplied the high leadership the fancy uniforms. We had, for instance, one department, where I had a extremely interesting experience.

There was a radio station, which sent the message-- what would you call the radio station of that kind? Anyhow, it was a radio station under the supervision, leadership of a fellow by the name of Deibert, a high SD uniform-- SD man, who was one of the few born sadists I met. Now, he had the Jewish man who ran the radio station was a extremely expert.

For instance, on one of his smoker parties, entertaining his dog, he had the Jewish cleaning woman who cleaned for him nailed in a coffin alive. I mention only that to show you what kind of a sadist this man was. Anyhow, one day, he comes over. He was also on the Lenta, on the property of the Lenta. And he comes over.

And I had to go over to his radio station and soundproof part of it, a room where they did the-- not receiving, the sending. Now, I have to mention in that connection to that, they always had me build all kinds of things, never gave me any material. I had to organize that myself, never any plans or anything. Anyhow, that idea was I had to soundproof this room to send messages from.

Well, I built double wooden walls and put ashes between it. When he didn't act fair or unfair. He treated me correct. But now comes the episode I'd like to mention. After this room was finished, I was back to my own group.

He comes. He says, come with me. Come with me wasn't too good, anyhow. So when we were in the room. He says, you soundproofed the room, yes? How did you soundproof the room? Well, I put in between the walls ashes, fly ashes. It's the only material we had available anyhow.

So he says, you did? I said, yes, sir. He says, now, look this here. And he removed a electrical box and showed me where there was no ashes. Now, I described before the sadist so I could-- you can imagine the feeling I had when there was no ashes.

So then I looked over the construction. And I noticed that there was a cross beam running above that on-- and on account of that, the ashes was running past this tree. I described it to him. I had a habit of always looking those people straight in the eyes. I stood at attention and described to him why there was no ashes in it.

And surprise, surprise, he didn't say a word. He says, get lost. So that was an episode where I had even this regular sadist. I got by. And he saw that the reason I gave him were absolutely undisputable. Of course, he would have been right. There was no ashes in that place.

Do you attribute the resistance of people in the camps, and especially your own experience, to being able to stand up to them, to look them in the eye, to say-- do you ever tell them they're wrong? Did you ever get away with anything like that?

Well, actually, this case was where despite that he was right, I explained to him that I-- the reason for it. And I got away with it. Now, during all my times, I was, I would say blessed with two things. First of all, I looked, when I was younger, like the most German could look like. I was light, blond, blue eyes. And I never was afraid of anybody.

My mother had a wonderful motto, which was be only afraid of God, and otherwise, of no human being. And I always

stuck to that motto. And I think, there were counted people who could have-- you can call it if you want to, bring up this chutzpah.

I marched. I had a episode with this Scherwitz at one time, where he caught people where they're dealing something, which was-- which constantly was going on. And he threw them in the what he called bunker-- bunker, which was a hole in the tower with water in it on the floor, with no food, with no clothes, or no place to lay, or food.

And he had a whole Kommando stand to attention, a roll call for the whole Kommando. And he stood in front of us. And he says, the first one who even gets close to them and tries to help them, I shoot personally and without any hesitation. I think I was down there, this Litow, who was the-- a Jewish non-Jewish leader of the camp, was the brother-in-law of one of the people who got thrown in this bunker, who came to me.

He knew right from the beginning that if anybody would ever do anything, it would be only me. And he says, listen, please, he has food for them. Get food down to them. And approximately five-six hours after that Appell where Mr. Scherwitz said he would shoot personally the first guy who helps him, I gave them food.

This brother-in-law is still a survivor. He is one of the biggest-- he was, at the time, one of the biggest fur merchants, international merchants in New York. And I saw him after the war.

And they are, by the way, the one who told me-- they were sending packages. And they were talking that this was Rudow. I said Litow, I'm sorry. The name is Rudow-- R-U-D-O-W. Litow was another fellow in the camp. That this Rudow was arrested by the Russian. On that-- they sent him packages for it. I only wanted to bring out, I think those were extreme cases because--

How were you able to get food to him?

Well, I just snuck into that camp and brought him the food this Rudow gave me. And that was it. And I never was afraid. I never even blinked. I never even have the thought. Actually, today, it sounds more like it was a rash decision, that this-- by the way, two survivors of that survived who were in that bunker-- I don't remember offhand who else was in there. Two survivors I met later on. And of course, they were extremely grateful.

As a matter of fact, this-- it's not Rudow. The brother-in-law's name is Priskin. I met him years later. He gave a big party for me in Palm Beach in the famous Breakers Hotel. And he told the other people who were around, if that guy wouldn't have been, I wouldn't have survived. So it's amazing. Priskin is this fellow's name.

Like I say, I have all those names. I wrote down at one time my experiences. And those names, they-- Litow, by the way, was the Jewish jeweler who, a short while before we left Riga, told me-- I always made occasions to escape and so on.

And this Litow, this jeweler asked me to let him escape and would escape with me in Riga before we were transported back to Germany. And I refused it at that time because he wouldn't take my parents who were alive at that time. He would take me along, but not my parents.

What do you mean being transported back to Germany? Were they sending you back from Riga to Germany?

When the Russian troops came and occupied Riga, they sent us back to-- in my case, to Danzig in Germany, where we were sent to the concentration camp Stutthof near Danzig. And from there, I worked in the [NON-ENGLISH] which are today famous through the Polish resistance to their regime.

The Solidarity.

Right.

The same geography, different names.

The same wharf where I worked at the time, which became famous now today again.

Now, from Riga, you went into a concentration camp, not a labor camp.

No, from Riga, we went to Stutthof. Right. And from--

How did the concentration camp differ from the labor camp, and what you did, and how you got along?

I can only go from my case. And due to the fact that the Nazis needed us almost as much as we needed the Nazis, we had an exceptionally, exceptionally good treatment. As a matter of fact, there were Latvian Jewish people who paid this Scherwitz, the famous Scherwitz, a velvet bag of raw diamonds to get into that camp. That's how good it was. So our treatment was extremely good in Riga.

Now, when we came to Stutthof, of course, there's a difference of day and night. Especially, Stutthof was not-- was mainly a Polish concentration camp, where just one block from approximately 20 blocks was a Jewish block. Consequently, we got beaten not only by the so-called kapos, but we got beaten by anybody who can-- could get another kick in on the Jews since they--

Now, what period was this? What month, what year?

October '45. I remember this date for very specific reasons. My father and I left the Stutthof camp. The Stutthof concentration camp, where my mother was in the woman camp, on the day-- my mother's birthday was the 31st of October.

Excuse me, that was--

'44.

'44. Yeah.

On that day-- it could have been '43, I'm sorry. I'm not-- offhand, I'm not that sure. It could have been '43. It most likely was '44. But it could have been '43. If you're interested, I'll look that up too, of course.

Well, I just want to get the transition from the--

Right. Anyhow--

--one location.

--you asked me that. And the day sticks in memory for that reason because with all our suffering, that was the first time that we were separated, my father from me, from my mother. My mother stood in the woman camp. And we came to a camp by the name of Buchgarten.

While we were in Stutthof, by the way, we worked on daily what's called Kommandos on the outside. We worked in the woods, where people got beaten to death and all kinds of it. The difference in my particular case was unbelievable because Stutthof was one of the worst concentration camps around, where people were-- which was new for us-- were systematically burned and, I suppose, gassed. I'm not-- I couldn't-- I suppose gassed.

So we're in Latvia, in Riga, from the beginning of 1942 to October of '43.

It must have been '43.

I think in '44, the Russians were already coming in.

Well, you see, we went-- when they came in, we-- OK. If you just want, one second, I can tell you. I suppose, I can tell you.

Oh, fine.

OK, well, why do we take any time up. You see, I am sorry to say that most of my experiences in details, especially a date or something like that-- it's 15 and 16. OK.

I did-- Priskin, I just-- the page I got here is Priskin, best friend of our master of the works, Rudow, and the letter gave me food for the tooth. It just happened that I got that page here. I see some kapos here. Now, I shall describe life in KZ Stutthof in general. Provision in the morning and afternoon. But still, we don't get to the date.

Just the year. We don't want to lose a whole year.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I can't--

OK.

No, wait. Wait a second. I was--

It's all right. We'll go on to something else.

It must have been '44.

OK.

October-- yes, October '44, I left that Stutthof concentration camp. We were there approximately two months. So we're getting closer now to that date you're talking about. So it must have been '44.

That day, we went to that camp, which is called Buchgarten and worked in the [NON-ENGLISH] Daily, we were transported by train from this camp to the Stutthof [GERMAN], the wharf, which I think the Leningrad Wharf or something like that, they have a Russian-- Lenin Wharf or something like that-- the Solidarity, rather.

It's on the sea coast by Danzig.

Danzig, it's by Danzig. It's in Danzig.

And how far a distance did they take you by train each day?

I would say we rode at least half an hour to an hour. Again, I'm sorry to say, offhand, I couldn't tell you. I probably mentioned it somewhere there. Then we had to march approximately eight miles to the wharf, to the street. And at the latest-- later stages of this game, I was that weak that the first time in my life, I was desperate. And I dirtied my pants marching. That's how weak I was in that short time only--

Dysentery?

--going through that. Well, it probably was the poorness of the-- my intestines. We didn't get any food at that time at all to speak of. We had coffee and a slice of bread in the morning at this Buchgarten. We went to work. At this wharf, our food was a colored something synthetic, a colored water, I can only call it, which was called soup.

And I have-- I remember, the German man I did the bricklaying for, which had a different commander, told me once, he said, apparently, you are not so hungry either. I never see you eat the soup. Said, I'm sorry, but what the soup does, it's-- that gives me dysentery and nothing else. So I showed him once that soup. And he said, that's unbelievable. They expect

you to work.

The same man gave me what he got in his dining room as dog food, the scrapings of the dishes, including the cigarette butts, and the cigarette ashes, and the cigarette matches. He gave me this food, which was to me a salvation. And I shared that with other people.

And I got beaten once almost to death by a guard who saw me with this thing waiting there for the food. My father dragged me away. So the conditions in that Stutthof between my experience in Riga were not on the same. Like I say, again, I was extremely lucky in Riga.

Of all these experiences, which was the most painful for you?

Meaning real pain?

What? Yes, in physical pain and mental pain.

I tell you, I had an experience later on. I was what was called a Stubenalteste in charge of the cleaning of the room where we went to Danzig. And a kapo-- I don't know if you're familiar with it. In the concentration camps, the top men were called kapos. The real guard didn't get their hands dirty on the inmates. It was the kapo who run the inside of the camps.

Now, there was a kapo who came in and found the room dirty. And he had-- which was not unusual-- found one gloved there. And he was extremely tall and heavy guy. And he beat me down continuously. He knocked me out continuously, approximately 20 times in a row. And every time, I got up.

And every time, I thought, if I get you, expression deleted, ever in my life, I kill you barehanded. And I would have. And that was, I think, the worst beating I got until maybe I think of something else. But this other thing was pretty bad.

Now, any real penalty, I avoided until a much later date when I was escaped, when I got 50, which were not that bad either because I traded it gladly in for lice, which was full of. It was a much later experience after I escaped from the camp.

But your ability to get up off the floor 20 times showed a strength of character and a strength of will that finally wore this man out. And he quit beating you?

I was a physical-- extremely strong before I came in the concentration-- extremely strong. I wouldn't have been afraid. I boxed or lifted weight. I rowed. Just we were all in deep. I wouldn't have been afraid of anybody physically either. And this getting up was strictly physical-- and maybe hatred too because this fellow, by the name, was a Jewish inmate.

The kapo.

The kapo.

Was he a German?

His name is-- no, he was a Latvian Jew. He was very bad. He beat another fellow-- again, the name, I don't know. He beat to death because he called him a dirty pig, which we didn't even have water to wash in the camp. He was crazy about cleanliness.

Of course, it was easy for him. The washroom itself, they were closed for the inmates during the whole day. And then they were open for half an hour. And everybody rushed in. You didn't dare to take your concentration clothes off because you were fear anybody else would steal it. I have, by the way, my concentration camp from the last camp still with me.

Hold that up so the camera can get a good look at it.

Now, I have to--

Little higher.

--make one explanation to it. This was a higher-class concentration cap. We didn't have any lining. Now, the higher-class concentration camp, after I escaped, I was caught again. And I simply, which also is worth mentioning-- I don't have any tattoo marks, which in Riga wasn't given, and which it wasn't given in the concentration camp Stutthof.

I got caught. And of course, as being caught as a Jew, I would have been killed immediately. I told him, I am a German marine deserter, which we had in Stutthof in Block 1.

And there is a very-- to me, until today, unquestionable thing what happened. After Paul Braunschild, a fellow with whom I escaped from the concentration camp, was caught the second time, when we were in where I got this concentration camp camp-- cap, it was called Auffanglager, which means the stragglers from the Stutthof.

At that time, the concentration camps moved around because the Russians came closer and closer. And we marched constantly. Anyhow, I was caught, brought in the jail, where I had an unbelievable-- the most unbelievable experience in my life, brought to this Auffanglager, receiving camp Stutthof, came in there, told them-- which we told them in jail before-- that we were German deserters.

And one of the kapos-- and now comes this thing where I have my doubts. While we, two Jews, stood under the shower, both circumcised, which is not the case in Europe, this kapo comes by with a-- with the SS man. And he says, I know him. And the fact is I had dealings in the camp as a Jew with him.

And he says, I know him. He is the deserter from Block 1. Block is the explanation from that building-- 1. So until today, that's one thing I do not know if he did that to save our lives, which he obviously did or if it was mistaken identity that he thought I was one of the men from the Block 1.

Tell us about your escape. Where did you escape from? And how did you manage to do it? And who was with you? And were there any victims who helped you with this escape, others in the plot?

I had a Jewish inmate who was always under my labor groups, Paul Braunschild, who looked, if anything, more like a Gentile than I do. And we decided, when-- the condition were unbelievable. We decided we would escape.

We told the other inmates that they should collect whatever they had. I'm sorry to say that today, but it wouldn't have made any difference. They should collect whatever they had. And we would try to go to the village and get all the food we could buy.

The guard, we told, we had hidden clothes, which were civilian clothes-- not much, but which were civilian clothes, not the KZ uniform and told the guards that we had to fix-- that our job was to fix fences outside. And the same guard, a German, at that time it was a Landwehrmann, not military. I think it was those old people they were taking in that group. Don't know the English translation for it.

This guard turned to a fellow inmate, whom I met later on, who was, by the way, from Gelsenkirchen too-- Helmut Schmach, and told him, they are not building any fence or repairing any fences. Those two are escaping. And I wish them all the luck in the world. Why should I shoot them?

Now, that was the help I got at that particular case. So we marched. And it took us, I guess, all of a day. The only food we could buy for our money, where we thought we were that rich, what was mustard. And Paul Braunschild and I filled ourselves up with mustard.

And naturally, we didn't have any paper or anything. So they had streets blocked and examined paper. So the same

evening, we got caught. They marched us to a local prison. I think it was in Lauenberg, but I have my doubts about it.

They marched us to a local prison and threw us in that prison as marine deserters from that Stutthof. We were in this camp, in this prison for approximately two weeks under the worst human condition, for the first-- for one of the reason, it was in the wintertime, no heat. We were sleeping on blanket-- on blank concrete floor.

The only thing we had plenty, we had a perpetual [NON-ENGLISH]. We had from the clothes we had for our private, after the escape, I had a-- we had sweaters. On those sweaters, we picked the lice on one side and turned them around and picked them on the other side. We didn't do any work or anything. We were just sitting around, waiting for our ration, which was one slice of bread a day and coffee, which we got in the morning.

Now, I always gave Paul my slice of bread. And I says, hold it because I wanted to eat it slow during the day. But it hardly took 5-10 minutes, I pestered him so much until he gave my part. And I stuffed it down.

Now, those were extremely tough days. And in this jail cell, one day, the door opens. And a man comes in in civilian clothes with the most beautiful beard. I thought it was made like that. There was a German Kaiser, Franz Joseph-- it was the most modeled beard I ever saw in my life. But that was his natural growth.

He came in. One of his first question was do you guys have lice? We said, yes. Well, he says, so I have to take it. We slept from then on three this way, three that way for approximately a week. Every morning, we didn't have anything to do, which makes the waiting worse than anything. Nobody took us out of the cell or anything.

Every morning, he told us his dream, which was always lucky, lucky-- unlucky. And one morning, he told us his dream. Now, everything will work out all right. What happened is he escaped after almost his complete-- part of the army he belonged to was completely wiped out by the Russian. He took civilian clothes and escaped and was caught the same way like we were caught.

So this one morning, when he had the first good dream, he got the news, he had a hearing. They had him out of the cell every morning that he was condemned to die. He was shot. He was let out of our cell. He embraced me. He kissed me.

He handed me which he had smuggled in a three or four golden ruble pieces and said, try to get it to my wife. And he says, from the first moment on, I knew that you two are not Germans. You are not German deserters. You are Jews. And I hope everything goes good with it.

The man was let out of our cell. He never even attempted to save his life in denouncing us. That was the most heroic thing ever-- I experienced ever in my life. And at least the attempt to make-- listen, don't. What are you doing? You shoot me, I'm a German soldier. But those guys, they say, they are German soldiers, they are Jews. They would have beaten us-- not shot us to death, but beaten us to death, I think.

Anyhow, this man was led to be shot. I asked the German officer. Of course, I had all this chutzpah because I was another German soldier, according to what I said. And I asked him for writing paper to write to his wife. I had the address at that time. But like everything else, it got lost anyhow. He says, no, this pig, all my uniform was ruined. I had blood spattered all over when I shot him. So that was how humane he was.

We were in this cell another maybe two-three days. One day, German soldiers marched in with a gun, with the safety off of their guns, one in front of us, one in back of us, march. We march, don't know what's going on. We knew that this man was led out to be shot. Those guys have the guns in their hands. We were led.

We marched two or three miles at least. It probably was more than that. I tried to start a conversation. I said, excuse me. I have to do my business. I said, where are you leading us? [GERMAN]-- keep your mouth shut. He get me the butt of the gun in the back, well, march.

So all of a sudden, we read this sign, Auffanglager. This was where the draggler from the concentration camp Stutthof. And the people in charge there were actually a-- having the complete Red Cross food for all people who were in a

concentration camp Stutthof, which had honor inmates, including the complete Danish police force. They got their Red Cross rations.

Those fellows were in charge of it. Those fellows were in charge of all valuables stolen from the inmates in that concentration camp Stutthof and were living like hogs. This is where I got my cap too.

This is where this experience first-- I'm coming from one piece to the other. This is where that experience first happened with this guy who says, I know him. He is from the-- he's the Block 1. Those fellows didn't even eat the food which they were getting, which was excellent.

They warned us, when we came-- this was the worst stage of my life, when I was getting into this Auffanglager. I was approximately 95 pounds at the time. And I was always pretty solid built. Those fellows warned me to take it slow with the first food we were getting. That was not the good food, but what the kitchen handed out there.

And I never forget this first food in my life. We tried to be slow. We stuffed ourselves. And I had an explosion. The food didn't come back out-- I would say not only through my mouth, nose, and ears because the stomach was absolutely used to no food at all at that time. That's a double negative, no food at all. But that is-- this is this camp. Now, from that camp, we were living, like I say, high on the hogs. Then we marched again, always on the march from the Russian. And one day--

Wait, so they believed you were German deserters?

Absolutely.

And they treated you as Germans after that?

As a German deserter from the concentration camp. There were German deserters in the concentration camp.

Sure. Correct. But I meant, you fooled them?

Absolutely. And I wouldn't be alive otherwise.

That's right. Approximately what month and what year now?

This was in '45 in April-- March, April, around the time of year.

'45?

'45.

The spring of '45?

Right. And this-- oh, then this group marched too because, like I say, they were always on the run from the Russian. And one day, the rumor spread, we will link up with the Jews from the concentration camp of Stutthof. Well, Paul Braunschild and I only had to hear that once when we took off the second time. And that was the final time because pretty soon, the Russians came. And I was liberated under some unbelievable circumstances.

What happened in your second escape, the second time that you and Paul escaped?

Well, this--

So you took off.

Right. We were hiding between farmers on a farm place, where they were Polish farmers and German refugees from the

former eastern provinces of Germany.

And you stayed there until the war was over?

I still-- I stood there until one morning, the door opened, and the Russian-- my liberators came in. And I never forget the first liberator. He looked like Hollywood would have made a Russian soldier, extremely handsome, a leather coat, machine gun over his shoulder like they all had. But he had the other soldiers were from the Siberian parts of Russia, Mongols-- Mongols from that part. So that's the first I saw. And that was the first Russian. And we were liberated after that, so to speak.

And then what happened under the Russians?

Under the Russian, I had--

This would have been about April of 1945.

That was April/May. I didn't have any papers. I was arrested very soon with those gold rubles on the street, which they found on us and arrested us. At first, I had to straighten out the first inmates who found us, told the Russians that we were German deserters. Of course, in the meantime, we had to turn-- told the Russians [RUSSIAN]-- German Jews.

Now, at that time, I didn't know that to the Russians, there is not a thing as a [RUSSIAN]. Either you are [RUSSIAN]-- you are a Jew or you are a German. And I had to stop them. But then I got arrested and got a very bad situation later on with the Russians on account of those gold pieces this man in jail had given me.