

Good morning, Ben. My name is Toby Lewis. And this is our guest this morning, Ben Nebel. We're glad to have you with us and I'm glad that you're here to share your history with us.

I'm glad to be here and the story has to be told. And I hope I can tell it.

Well, I'm certainly glad that you feel that way. Well, let's start very easily. And let's just take it from where you are now. Tell me a little bit about yourself. Give us your name and your spelling of your name, please.

My name is Ben Nebel. I live in at in South Euclid and Greenwald, and I am married. And I am a father of three children. I have two daughters and a son.

OK. And how old are you now?

I am 59.

59.

And what kind of work do you do?

I'm a cabinet maker, and I have my own shop, the East Woodworking Company associated with a couple of other fellas, the Hershey's brother.

You said that you have five children.

Three.

Three, excuse me. Are they living with you or are they married or independent?

I have two daughters. One is Ellen Jacob she's married. She has two children. And my other daughter is Terry Nebel Britzman. And she has two little daughters. They were, in fact, they were moving from Cincinnati. And here they are staying in my house until they are settled. He was transferred. And I have a son, Michael Nebel who is an attorney. And he is living in Orlando, Florida.

Oh, very nice. It sounds like you have a very nice family. OK. Let's go back over a little bit in the pre-war years. Give me a little bit what life was like before the war.

Well, I was a youngster. I was 14 years old when the war broke out. And I was just finishing my public school, which was that's all we had in our town. It was a little town. And I was preparing myself to go to a trade school to learn a trade, because that's the only alternative we had is learn a trade to be able to make a living.

And the town itself, the little town itself, it was located in Southern Poland. I'm from Poland. And it was in a valley between mountains. It was beautiful there. The mountains were, they were called Pieniny. This is the Tatra mountain. And the nearest town, the other bigger town because this was a small town, the other little town was Kroscienko, Zakopane, which was the ski city which was beautiful over there. And this is where I was born.

And the people of the town as far as making a living, they were merchants. And since the area was growing fruit, it was a fruit mostly apples, so most of the people had something to do with it. And also there were prunes. There a lot of prunes. So there were a distillery making slivovitz. This was known the town was known for making slivovitz. And life was going on normal. There was nothing unusual until the war broke out.

OK. What was the name of your town?

The town name was Lacko, Å Ä...cko in Polish, L-A-C-K-O.

OK. And the next town was Kroszno to the West and Nowy Sącz to the East, which was the larger town. This was a small town. The population of the town with the surrounding area maybe were 15,000, 20,000 people or so.

OK.

It's a very small town.

Were there many Jews in your town?

There were about maybe 300 families. The whole town had 300 Jewish families. And everybody knew everybody. Everybody knew, because it was a small town. And the boys I grew up with and we stuck together as far as playing and whatever. And as I said, everybody knew everybody else in the town.

All right. And your family life at that time, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

I had an older sister. She was two years older than me. I had a brother who was eight years younger. And I had a sister she was at the time six years old when the war broke out. And I had another sister, she was three years old.

OK. What did your father do? What was your financial position in the town?

Well, my father was a veteran of the First World War. And he was wounded in the battle. And he was an invalid. He had a right shoulder torn on the battlefield. And after the war after, the First World War, he got a pension. That helped. And also he was dealing with fruits associated with the orchards, with whatever they were growing, pears and apples, whatever. And that's how we make a living.

I see. OK. Did you have to help work to support your family in any way?

I was helping out after school. See in this town, the education was the primary thing of the parents. Every parent was trying to push the kids to school. So I was going to public school. And I remember I started the cheder which was a Hebrew school when I was five years old. By the time I went to public school, which is at seven, I was reading and writing Polish. And I was way ahead of everybody because we started early.

They taught us the Bible. And he taught us that you are a Jew. And you're going to be a Jew whether you like it or not. And this was when I was growing up. There was nothing wrong with it. And I associate in the public schools with my Gentile friends. We didn't have any problems, never a inkling that I'm different than they are, or whatever.

That was going to be one of my questions. How did you get along with your non-Jewish neighbors?

Well, we were only maybe 2% or 3% in the city. So I was fine. My neighbors were fine, not having any problems. We never had any problems. In fact, we studied together with one especially a friend that I met his father later in Auschwitz. But I studied with him together. We went through to all the public school. He went on to gymnasium. And I was trying to get into the trade school, while just when the war broke out.

OK. What was your family life like, a typical day in your family's life?

Oh, my God. We got up in the morning, the same thing. We had school starting at 8 o'clock. I had to go in the morning before the school we had to go to cheder, and say the prayers. And then we went to the public school, which was about till 2 o'clock. 2 o'clock, I had to do some studies. And after, well when I was little, I couldn't do nothing. But when I was already in the fifth and sixth grade, I used to go after across the river where it was not far, and I helped in a bakery. They were making pop.

I used to clean the bottles and help in that little factory. And I made some extra money for spending or whatever. And most of the time, I gave it to my father. They needed it. We were five kids. And I helped out always. That's how it was.

There was no other way.

Then you got along with your parents and sisters and brothers very well?

Well, my brothers were little ones. So they looked up to me. My older sister was away. Before the war broke out, in 1937 she went to an aunt of mine because there in that town they had the better facilities for education. And my aunt was a very rich lady, so she just sort of helped her. And then she had two little children. So she was sort of helping out at the same time.

OK, how religious was your family? How did religion play a role?

Well my father, everybody had some responsibility. So we were religious as far as this was the only religion we had is the Orthodox. There was no other thing, Orthodox or nothing. So every holiday, every Saturday, you had to go to shul. And every holiday, like Pesach, any Jewish holiday we had fun. We were looking as the only holiday that we used to get clothes, new clothes. So it was for Pesach we looked for it. So this was something that it was taking that this is how it is. There was nothing else It was normal upbringing, Jewish upbringing.

And every holiday was very important because that was the part of it that we strived and we looked for to participate.

Life was then normal. And for you it was normal. That was it.

Normal, it was nothing else, until the war broke out. I remember the day when we had a knock on the doors, our neighbor coming. He says, the Germans invaded. It was on September the 1st. See, we were right at the border. It was 18 kilometers from the Slovakian border that little town. And the first shots that were fired, they came in through this border which was Kroskienko [NON-ENGLISH], towards our little town here.

And there was a panic in the city. It was just-- and I was 14 years old. And I knew friends who were already 18 and 20, acquaintances from my town. I knew everybody in town. And they were packing. They were going away from this town, because of the shooting they heard already.

In the meantime, there was so much commotion here. The Polish army came in and took over position in the town. And that town was just jittery. It didn't take more than two, three days. I've seen what goes on in here. And we were right on the highway that was leading from out of town this. And anything coming had to come through this highway to pass by, to go further.

And so I decided I'm not going to stay and wait. And I told my father. I says, I'm not going to stay here. And he says, well, if you think you want to go, I'm not going to hold you back. But you are a young boy. You have nothing. Where are you going to run? I says, I'll go with my other friends, which I never ask. They left and I left with them.

My father which I found out later because I didn't know at the time, he took the whole family and went to a friend of his that he was with him in the army before. He was Polish, a Gentile, into a little village away from the city that he hid him over there till the commotion was over. And I left with the boys. We went from one town to the other. And I remember winding up, I knew that I have an aunt which my sister was there before. That she has place for me if I would come over there. But it was far away.

So what I aimed is to get in on a railroad, to go in into that little town where she was. And I succeeded in here. We were on the railroad. I got onto the railroad. And I lost the friends already because they were going different way. I met different people. And I came to that little town. We were bombed on the way because they bombed the railroad tracks. That was in 1939.

And I did get to this little town. That was Ustrzyki Dolne. That was not far from Lw³w which was a nice big town. And in the meantime, when I got there, my aunt told me that her husband was taken to the army, to the Polish army. He's already in the army. And so she was glad to see me. She needed help wherever there. And we stayed there. I stayed there for about two weeks until the Germans finally caught up at the town too, and they were further down. And we

were occupied then by the German forces.

And there, in that little town, my other aunt from another town came with an uncle and another uncle. So we were all in the same place. And I seen that this is no good in here. It's crowded. And so I told my aunt. I says, I'm going to go back home since the Germans already run over Poland. It was already a month. And I was anxious to see what things happened at home. I didn't know what happened. So I decided to go. But they were afraid.

So I went and I told them that I'm leaving. However I'm going to go, I don't know. But I'm going to go. And I went to that little-- in that town was a place that the German forces, which was the Wehrmacht, the army, they had signs that anybody wants to go back East, home, he is going to get transportation and he's going to get food just to go back, as long as they want to go back. So I says, I'm going to go.

I spoke Yiddish at that time, so it was close to German, and I just said a few words, not to give away who I am or what. They didn't care. I was a little boy, 14 years old. And sure enough, they took me on a truck. And I told them I wanted to go to Gorlice, not my hometown. But where my grandfather was living because I wanted her to know what, if anything, is there, if everything is alive, everything is OK over there. So they said that they're going down there just about 7 kilometers away. That's where they're going to drop me off, because they're not going to this Gorlice.

And that's exactly what happened. They dropped me over that little town which was named is Biecz. which was about 7 kilometers from Gorlice. And I walked this 7 kilometer to Gorlice. And I came in, in the evening. And I knock on the door and my grandfather looked at me. And says Jumek, that was my name in Polish. He says, what are you doing here? Where did you come from?

And I told him. I says, look I'm coming from your daughter, which was my aunt. Everything is fine over there and I met your other daughter there, Shprintze, and I have Uncle [PERSONAL NAME], and I have a cousin over there that came also. They are fine.

Why aren't they here? I says, they were afraid to come. Maybe they'll come. But everything is fine. Do you need anything? What goes on in my hometown? He says, no, I don't know anything. I says, well, I'm going to stay here overnight. Tomorrow I'm going home, which was about, it must have been about 40 kilometer, which is a long way, maybe more.

And that's exactly what I did. The next day they packed me with food. And I start walking. And I hitchhiked a little bit. And three days I came home. When I came home, my father says it's like a miracle. He says it's already four weeks. Nobody knew what it is. I says, where did you go? So I says, just everything is going to be-- I'll tell you everything.

And I told him I was in Ustrzyki Dolne. I seen my aunt. Everything is fine. I came over on my way back, and I stopped over to see your father which was my grandfather, his father. They are OK. They still have food. He had a big garden. They had food it was already fall coming in here. So they had food. And they had potatoes. They had something there. And I told him.

In the meantime, he told me everything is fine as far as my other brothers and sisters. They all are together there. And he told me what happened, that this fellow, Franczek, took him over there. And they gave him to eat. There were three or four days there. And then once they went through, they came back into our house, and tried to normalize the life. So this was in 1939. And things were normal.

Then the Germans-- German police came into the town. Because the Polish police were dissolved. And this was also they were not the SS. These were the Wehrmacht, the police that they administered after the occupation. In other words, this was the beginning of it. And they had demanded that the Jews organize a Judenrat, which is somebody who is responsible for it. And so they can go to the Judenrat, demand things for whatever they have. They had police there, German police, and there was a garrison guarding, because they had a weather station there. They made a weather station to know what weather for the airplanes and things like that.

And this is how it started. They started demanding from the Jews who came back, who were there, they demanded

people to work, to clean whatever they had, and to work for them. So my father was at that time appointed-- so if they have a demand, it wasn't nothing voted on or anything. The Jewish community says, well you speak English, and you are at the highway here. This is where we were living. And if they need something, you have to answer since you spoke German. So he says, OK. I'll take it.

So every time they came in here they needed some help, so the first thing he told me, he says, look where am I going to go? You go first, and then I'll send you some other way. So anything they happen, they m for cleaning or carrying something here I had to always the first one to go here, because he was the good Samaritan. He was the good thing. And I got stuck with all the work, here before anything.

And then he seen that it's not so good in here. So he says, look, this is not the way to do it. And he gave it back to the elders there. And they had a vote, and they voted for someone there that he was taking care of these things in here. And then that was in 1939.

In '40 we had to register. I was already 15. We had to register for to work on a highway. There was a highway going through it. So they wanted to have the highway fixed. So I was also assigned to the highway. There the Polish government, they pay you a certain amount of money every two weeks. So it wasn't like you work for nothing.

You worked for something. You worked for wages. So you made something on it. It wasn't for nothing. And it wasn't for the Germans. It was a job to do. And I worked on the highway with other three or four friends of mine, the same age. We used to prepare stones. We used to break up stones so they could spread out and fix holes and potholes and something. I worked there the whole 1940 up to the winter.

And in 1941, they had more restrictions. The Gestapo moved in already, which was the SS. The German police was withdrawn and the Gestapo was moved in into this little town here. And when they moved in, they used to look for the Jews in here. They looked to beat them up. They seen the rabbi which he still had a beard, most of them have shaved up the beard. So they used to pull his beard and things like this.

And then they had an order out that every Jew who was in this town, who by that time was registered already, he had to wear a band on his left arm. It was a yellow band with a star on it. And if they cut you without it, here they shot you right off. And you were restricted. You couldn't leave this little town. There was a permit that this was as far as you could go. You couldn't go anywhere else.

And it was getting worse and worse in here. And then we still worked on that highway. From my town, must have been about 7 kilometers going backward. That was our territory. We had to see that the highway is clean. And in the winter we had to clean up the snow, so the trucks could go through. And at that time, it was all of a sudden that was in 1940. They used to have a tremendous movement of troops, with German troops coming in from the border, from Slovakia. They're passing through our town.

And at that time in here, they were going. We didn't know where we were going. They were going to Sanok, which was the front of the Russian, and that was when they invaded Russia. It was in 1940. And at that time, they used to when the German army was coming through our town here, we had to leave the highway work what I was working. And we had to go and work for them. And they used to beat us up. They were mean already, the forces that were coming through the second time. They were not the same. Or you could see that something is getting worse and worse.

And then in 1940, by the end of 1940, in December, there came around an order that all the town had to be evacuated. All you could take is your belongings, what you could carry on you. And you have to be, from this time, you have to be out and by not later than January of '41, it was. You had to be in another time, which was 18 kilometers, which was Nowy SÄ...cz. And there my father went right away down to this town and tried to rent some rooms to see what we could do.

And we had to go over there. And we moved whatever we could. We took a wagon, and whatever we could, we took on a wagon. And by the time he already rented by a known Gentile in Nowy SÄ...cz, that he knew him before. And we moved the whole family. And I had to work twice as hard because my father couldn't work. We lost whatever we had in

here.

So I used to saw wood for the winter, for the people who live in that town, or anybody. And I used to work in the field store to help to get food in here. And I used to sneak at night back to my hometown to Lacko, where I came originally from here, because I knew a lot of people there. And the Gentile people helped me. So I used to bring in potatoes. Or I used to bring in whatever I could on my shoulders and walk at night by the [NON-ENGLISH]. We had a river there to this other town where we were relocated.

And then in that spring I worked for one of these people over there in a field for the Gentile people we were living. And at that time, that town, everything was registered here. They knew everybody who was there. And they give you a ration card. In other words, for bread and for food in here. And the only way you could get it, if you were registered, that was for arbeitskommando. In other words, you had to be registered to receive the card.

So I was registered there. And we received a card. Because of me the whole family received for five, we were five kids and my mom and dad. And on that spring of '41, I was working in a field. All of a sudden I've seen from three sides, there was a Jewish police. See, this town had already they were organized. They had a Judenrat and they had police. They weren't armed. But they had orders in here.

And their order was to gather these people, the young people who were registered. I was 16 years old already. And what they did, I seen from three sides that they coming in. They weren't armed. So the guy, the boy who was working with me, he was the son of the owner of the farm over there we were working in the field. He says, Jumeck, you know something? I think they're coming after you. Why don't you run? There's the Dunai there, which was the river going through the town too.

And I thought, what would they want from me? I'm registered. Any work they ask of me, I go and do it. And here, I am not afraid. There was nothing to-- it didn't dawn on me what they wanted. So they came to me. And he says, your name Nebel, Ben Nebel? I says, yes. You come with us. I says, what have I done? I haven't done nothing.

He says, no, you've been assigned to go to another camp to work. I says, what camp? He says, we don't know the details. You come over. So I went with them. They took me to my home. I took whatever I could. And they took me to the Judenrat, to the place the place, their headquarters. And there were buses waiting for us in here. And they took us with other friends from a new town which I didn't know, and some of them from my town that I knew, they came over.

And they took us to [NON-ENGLISH], which means that was a forced labor camp and the name of the town was Rzeszow. What this town had is before the war the Polish government started doing a dam. In other words, they were harnessing water to produce electricity in that town, Rzeszow. This what they want to finish, what the Germans wanted to finish, because during the war when they stopped, when they bombed it they stopped it. So they wanted to finish it. So that's where they took us in this town in here.

And that was they had barracks for us already here. They had guards posted around. They weren't German. They were Ukrainian, from the Ukraine. They were guards. They went over on the German side. And they were guarding us on this. They weren't guards like-- it wasn't fenced in. It was barracks. And they were there. And we were working in this place there, Rzeszow.

What we were doing is digging in the mountains holes for bunkers, in other words, for shelters against the bombings or something for the German people, for the Germans officers, for their families who were in that town here. It was a beautiful, beautiful place over there, because it was everything mountains. And the summer was gorgeous. And I worked there. That was '41.

And now and then for, if you did your quota or we used to do just labor work, you just dig and haul away the stones in here. And if you did your quota and you behaved, you didn't give him a headache, they gave you a pass over the weekend for one day to go and see your parents. And when I had only one chance, once I went back and see my parents during that time, and see everybody. And whatever I could, I brought with me. And I've seen it. They didn't have nothing to live on from anymore. Because whatever they had, they sold.

And I see that it's no good. I came back and I said, I have to run away. Because this is not good in here. And at that time, they came and they locked us out, and this they didn't let us go to work at that day. And we had to be in the barracks. And they told us that we're going back to the town to Nowy SÄ...cz, where my parents were. That they are clearing the town Judenfrei they called it.

In other words, they are clearing the town from the Jews. And we had to report on the appelplatz. And they came with trucks. They took us back to Nowy SÄ...cz, to this town. And when we came in here, everybody, we didn't know everybody, whoever was alive in this town, the Jews, were on that appelplatz. And they told them that they're going to be shipped to a labor camp somewhere, at that time Treblinka, nobody knew what it was.

And the group that we came, there were three groups that we came in from that Rzeszow. We were staying at that same place in here. And when they came back in here, the Gestapo came here with sticks like you whip horses in here, and then they selected from this group in here. And I was small in here. And I was selected among the group in here. And I was slow going. And he whipped me. And I had a scar like this over my eye. I couldn't look. But I didn't say nothing because I didn't want to make-- I didn't know what they was here.

And they took us back on the truck. And they took us back to the work in here. And that's the last time I ever seen my parents. And that's the last time we seen all these people here. We went back to that camp, to this forced labor camp in Rzeszow. And they transported these people which was Treblinka, which was actually gas chambers. That was the last time I heard of my family. We didn't know at the time what it was. We thought they were going, being transported to resettle they call them. They're going to be resettled there.

And that's where I wound up, in Rzeszow in here. And there we were. It was already '41. Over the '41, it was already coming to the winter. So there was restlessness in the camp. And we had three groups in here, boys that I never knew from other towns. They also sent back in here. There must have been about 300 boys, young, all must have been from 16, 17, up to about 30. Nobody was older than 30. That group that went out from that place there.

And it was restlessness. So the two of my friends decided to go. And they came to me at night. And he says, listen, we cannot say nothing. We are running away. I says, you're doing a mistake. Because now it's Judenfrei there. There's no Jews over there, any of these cities. See, what they did is they took from one little town to another town, to a bigger town, and that's to gather them here. We didn't know what they're doing.

See, they took to us from a little town which were 350 Jewish people the family. They took us to Nowy SÄ...cz, a bigger town. Because they cleaned it up. That's how they get this people. Nobody knew what their plan is or whatever they were doing.

So they told me. I said, listen, we are going, running away, whether you like it or not. I know you're not going to betray us in here. But there might be consequences because of us, you might suffer. So I want you to know you have a choice. Either you come with us or take the consequences, what we are going to cause.

Sure enough, when they ran away, they caught up with them because they were posted about a month later, with a poster that they was shot in such and such place. They both were caught, two brothers. They were coming back to my little hometown where I was from. But they seen what is happening, there's restlessness that to remain. So they decided to clear it up the camp. So they came in and picked us up on trucks. And we didn't know where we were going. We thought they were going to shoot us.

So they took us from that place to a town named TarnÄ³w. And they came in and they opened the gates in TarnÄ³w. When we came here, there was a ghetto. We didn't know what it was, because we didn't know that there was anybody existing anymore. This was already, it was 1942 already, January or February. So we came over in that town. And there were people living in poverty, but they were living like human beings.

And in that town, I remember when I was a boy here that I had an uncle here. I wasn't sure, but I knew that he was supposed to be there. He was a tailor. So I went to the Judenrat here. We didn't have nothing here. When we were

working there, they didn't pay us. They just gave us food, hardly. But we organized. We knew people over there, and the Gentiles who worked there as civilians, they got good pay here. They helped us. They didn't want to hurt us.

Some of them, the younger ones, they were instigators so they tried to bait us, like they bait people, to get a response, so they could beat you up. And some fights broke out here. We didn't look for fights. We didn't want to fight with them. We knew what our problem is. We were stigmatized. You're a Jew, and this is what's waiting for you. So I asked as Judenrat, I had an uncle in here. His name is Spira, Bernard Spira.

So he says, they looked over. And he says, yeah. You missed him here. He was transported last week. They took a transport, and him and his wife, he was working in a place [NON-ENGLISH]. That was a name of a school that he was working there, doing tailoring over there for the German army. But they took everybody out because they were making room for other people. So they took people these, they transported them somewhere, to a gas chamber to make room for different people. But he left a cousin, a daughter. Her name is ToÅ>ka, and a son. And they knew that they are there in town.

But they didn't know where they was. So I set myself out to find them in here. And sure enough, I found this girl. She was about two years older than me. And she had a brother, Aksile. He was at that time 9 years old. I says, they knew that I had a cousin. But they didn't know. I says, look, I'm this and this. I'm Ben Nebel. I know your father. I'm a cousin I don't want nothing from you. I just want to know can I sleep somewhere.

She says, look, we had a house. They took away. They brought us to a ghetto. I lost my mother and father. They took them away. And I have a brother in here. And he is illegal here. Because in that ghetto there were two ghettos, A and B. A was an arbeits ghetto. In other words, if you worked somewhere for the Germans or you work in a factory where they assign you, you live in A ghetto. And you had card ration. You had food. You had something. B ghetto were the civilians who were older people in here. There were people for prey.

In other words, if a German wanted target practice, that's where he went. He went to the B ghetto, and here, and he used to shoot them like that. And when they brought us, they brought us to a B ghetto here. They didn't bring us to A ghetto, because we weren't assigned yet.

So I've seen it again here, the problem that I'm facing here. I'm 16 or 17 years old here. I'm further getting deeper and deeper in trouble. But I had to have where to stay. So she told me I says, if you wanted to go, go to my brother there, he's staying with a family over there. You go and see if you can get there. So she gave me an address. And I went over to this family. And when I came over there, I see older people, really old people here. They had some food over there.

And then they begged me. Would you stay here? Would you stay here? They seen there's as a young boy here. And they wanted to have somebody to stay there too for their own protection, and to have somebody. We don't have food. But, I says, don't worry. As long as I can stay here, and we'll see what we can do here. And I went and stayed with this family, with my cousin here. And he was already like a fox. Because he knew everything. He knew everything.

So he told me. He says, look, there you're taking a chance. But you can go volunteer for work in this and this place. Sometimes you hit the jackpot by going, see they were going to the old section where the Jews used to live, because they took the Jews from that section, they took them in the ghetto. So the houses were open. There were a lot of furnitures and things that they were confiscating. But they needed people to take this out for the Germans.

They had a policeman there. So I volunteered here. And we used to go over there and with this one guard or two guards over there to the houses there. And sometimes we picked up a table, me and another guy, we opened up the table. It fell apart. It was hidden wools, they had socks and clothes and sometimes even money in here. So we stuffed ourselves. So I used to come home with money here. It didn't take me long, maybe four or five weeks. I had money. I gave it to my cousins. I gave it to them.

Because that money was found in the boxes that we took out. And I snuck out. But later on, they caught up with the Germans that we were not giving back everything in here. So I've seen that they were frisking somebody there at one time. Here I says, I'm not volunteering anymore.

So what I did, I says, I have to get in into the other ghetto A so I can go out [NON-ENGLISH] kommando to work. So I'll get a number and a ration card, so I went up. And exactly what I did, I knew a guy. I've seen him once and I gave him some money. Before I says, how do you get in, into this? He was a cabinet maker. So he says, nothing. You just get next in morning in here and you stay in my line in here. And we walk over, and you walk with me. There was also a kommando from the ghetto led by the Jewish police, and also supervised by Polish policeman. It wasn't because is was a ghetto here.

The outside, the perimeter of the ghetto was guarded by Polish policeman. So you could bribe him here. Only when there was an aktion, in other words, if they made a raid on the ghetto to get some people out, to kill them or whatever, so that the SS came in here. But otherwise they were guarded by Polish police. So we came. I reported to this thing there. And one of the guys who was leading this, said, you don't belong in here. So the guy tell him, he says, if you're not going to keep quiet here I'll cut your throat here.

He was a good cabinetmaker. He's an older man. But he was an excellent cabinetmaker. If he wouldn't be there, the whole job there what they did in this place, it would be worthless. So the guy didn't say nothing here. And this guy, his name was Zisi. He got liking to me. He says I have to teach you how to work cabinet work, otherwise you're not going to survive in here. And he took me under his wing, this guy. And he showed me, what we did over there, again, they were confiscating furniture, handcrafted furniture. We're bringing it in into our place. They call it this Kopernika school.

There was a big place and they made a warehouse out of it. What they did there they used to come in, Gestapo, and pick furniture to ship to Germany. They were hand-carved in here. So what we did, we selected the furniture they selected, and we took it apart and polished it, and fixed it in here, so it was immaculate. We wrapped it. This was my job. And this guy, this Zis, he taught me. He says, this is what you're supposed to do in here.

And he spent most of the time with me because he didn't care. He had to do it, because he was known for it. He was working before the war in Germany as an expert cabinet maker. So he taught me this, and little by little I picked it up. And we used to get the inspections. They used to come in Germans. We didn't know who they were. We thought they come in for picking up furniture for themselves. In the meantime, one visit of these high officers, they came over there and they observed how we worked.

And I didn't say nothing. Nobody said nothing. And they left. Next day, here everybody and I was already in the ghetto A, and this other ghetto I had ration, I had a number. Here I was legal over there. And next day before we were marching out, I see again and this man, this Zis, he says to me here. Jumeck, I don't like what I see here. We are again surrounded in here by police, and the German police is on top. The Gestapo is there too, not with anything.

You are not going out today. And he goes and picks this Zis, and other people. And he left me out. I didn't say nothing, because I didn't know what they're doing. And then Zis says, if they kill me, they'll kill you too. But you're going with me. And he grabbed me by the hand, and the guy, that Jewish policeman, he knew that he was he's a good mechanic. And he didn't say nothing. I went there. And they took us on trucks.

And I thought they're going to kill us but they took us to another camp. They took us not far from Krakow. Actually it is Krakow. The name of the camp was Plaszow. And they took us by trucks into this camp over there away from TarnÃ³w, which was must have been about 50 kilometer from TarnÃ³w into this new camp.

And there again, you're a stranger. You don't know who is what. So the next day, we were assigned to [NON-ENGLISH], which was not a cabinet shop. It was a mill shop, working with wood, working with windows, doors, not fine furniture, but it was something for construction. And I was assigned to [NON-ENGLISH] with this man, with this Zis again. And there he wasn't-- he was a cabinet maker. But he knew he could do anything there. But he was slow because he wasn't familiar.

And they started to harass him. They harassed him here. So he says to me, we have to organize a cabinet shop here. This is not good for him, because this is labor, hard labor in here. And it wasn't so good to work there.

In the meantime, this was changing from a [GERMAN], which means a forced labor camp to a concentration camp, that Plaszow, because they changed it. What happened, they made a Judenfrei again this town of ghetto. They took out-- we didn't know it at the time, but they took out all the tradespeople from this town, from this town or ghetto. They sent them to Plaszow to this concentration camp. There were women separate, men separate. There were two camps.

And they did also with the tailors in TarnÃ³w, in this ghetto. And we didn't know at the time. They took us in here. But about two or three weeks later, I seen people that I've seen in TarnÃ³w. I said, what are you guys doing here? He says, don't what happened? Nobody knew. Nobody tell you nothing. What they did is they took each of these trades and they brought them to Plaszow. And they liquidated that camp here too. They took these people on wagons. Some of them were shot over there. And some of them were taken to Treblinka which was the gas chambers.

And there we worked in this [NON-ENGLISH] there. That was 1942 I believe already. Yes. In that concentration camp we used to work in one of the barracks. And that barracks overlooked a ravine, which was in the camp. But the ravine was outside the camp in the whole area there. You could see from the window here. And I was working at barrack with another fellow. And I see they're bringing people. They're bringing people in with buses. These were Polish partisans or people, all kinds of people, and they were marching. They were marching down into the gully.

We didn't know what it was. But I could see from the window. And I've seen it. It didn't take long. I heard shots in here. And sure enough, they were shooting them down, right down in the gully there. There was stones around it. And there was a group coming in from the camp covering them up. This is the first time I actually seen what's happening.

And then there was another incident that I was working in a place, in this Plaszow over here. And I've seen, I was working in a block and I was overlooking, a feeling here that all of a sudden I seen a Jeep coming in. And then two SS men come out. And there's three people. And I recognize one, a father of a friend of mine who was from my hometown. He just walked out from the car, from the Jeep in here. And he stayed here. There was three of them. They stood one next to the other in here.

Don't say nothing, just stood there and facing there, and the guy came with a pistol. He put his pistol behind his ear and he pulled the trigger. And they were standing there, not even moving, must have been doped up or something. And I've seen this. This is how they're doing now. It's just that's it. They're open. Just brutally murdering people for no reason whatsoever.

And I seen that this is the end. This is what's coming. The food in the camp were brutal. They were terrible. It was like they had that stew they used to cook for pigs. They used to give us this. And-- and it was, you couldn't believe what was going on over there. They used to come over. We used to work in that [NON-ENGLISH], in a shop, the carpenter's shop over there. I was assigned a night shift at that particular week.

And we had a little stove over there at night. We watched that there were different sections. There was the [NON-ENGLISH] which was carpenters, plumbers, electricians, sections in these barracks there. And for no apparent reason, the chief of the Gestapo who was in charge of the camp, they hung him after the war by the way. He came over for no reason at all. He came to the stove and here is the guy who was an older man who was just warming up a little bit, watering here. And he pulled out a pistol and shot him and everybody was looking.

And he started laughing. And he says arbeit! Arbeit! Everyone had to go back to work. We was panicking. It was unbelievable what they were doing. And that came, it was 1942. And in the spring of '43, they took the whole section, which is my section here-- the carpenters. And they took us to the barracks that where I was working at the time when I seen they were shooting those people over there. And I thought to myself, they're going to kill us here now. What else could they want from us?

And he took us on buses. And they drove us for-- I think it was must have been about a day. And we're winding up by railroad tracks. And they put us on a railroad track. And we didn't know where we were going. We took this railroad track, and was going maybe about four or five hours. And in the evening it was already dark. They open up the doors, and everyone, raus! Raus! Raus!

We walked out. And we didn't know what it was. There was guards, German SS men with dogs all surrounding this area. And we were lined up in here. And the SS men came in over there. The guards from the SS, they looked each one off. And he says go here, go here. So out of this group, there were some older people and people who had glasses. They put them on the left side here. And here, these people here, and I wound up-- and they took away this man, Zis, already on the other side. I couldn't say anything. I couldn't do anything. He was on the left side.

And that's the last time I've seen him. We went to the right. And I found out that was Birkenau. We were put on trucks. And we didn't take more than maybe a half an hour. We found ourselves going through the gates. It says Arbeit macht frei, with a circle over it. It was written down in front of the gate. And it was Auschwitz. And that was already, it was dusk. It was dark already, not a soul in the camp. You could see big red buildings.

And then we came into our block. Everybody got out of the truck. And I've seen on the block. It says block 18 A. They told us, this is the block that you're going to be in. And you are under quarantine. If you go out without permission, you'll be shot.

All right. I think this would be a good place if it would be OK with you. I have a couple of questions that I have to review in my mind. Was that the last time when you were taken to the forced labor camp and to the ghetto, that you had seen your parents? They had already gone to the gas chambers?

They were already gone. I don't know where they were going. I didn't know at the time.

But I knew from Nowy SÄ...cz, when they took me back to Rzeszow from that place, that's the last time I've seen. I didn't see him close, because they didn't let me. But I knew they are there.

OK. What about your sisters, brothers?

They were all together. I didn't see them. The last time I saw my parents actually was when I was on furlough for a weekend.

OK.

And that must have been four weeks before they liquidated the town altogether.

OK. And what about when you were in the labor camp and in the ghetto, was there any time to establish any kind of relationship with Gentiles or with anyone else that you could have any kind of contact with?

No, the only contact we had was with the people, the Gentile people who worked as civilians. That's the only contact we had. When the hours were over, we worked 10 hours. When the time was over, they went home, and we went to the camp. We were constantly guarded by the Ukrainian guards. That was their job to guard us. We were constantly guarded over there. So we had no contact. During the work, we had contact.

I see.

That Rzeszow here, I had no trade, see? I was working just as a laborer here. I had trade when I already had that little trade in here, that was in the ghetto, which was TarnÄ³w and also the concentration camp, which was Plaszow/Krakow. That I already-- I was established as cabinet making because I knew how to make already things. See, it didn't take me long. In one year when an SS said we have to do something, you learn fast. That was my luck that I picked up this trade so fast that he could trust me, this man who will give me-- to really help me. And I lost him in Birkenau when they took him to the left side. And that's the last time I've seen him.

But during the time I was acquainted with other people, there was a rabbi's son here. I became very close with him here. Who he was my age in here, but he went to the yeshiva. In other words, he went to college, and he was educated. I had no choice. I had no college education at the time. I finished school. I was going for a trade. But he was educated.

He knew more about the Talmud, about learning than I did because he did go two more years in it. And he became a close friend of mine.

OK. We will pick this up in a couple of minutes. Thank you.