

Don't be afraid to ask. Go ahead.

I'm Reva Leizman. Today we're interviewing Mike Prayzer of Lorain, Ohio. He is a Holocaust survivor. This project of interviewing Mr. Prayzer is part of the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section, Holocaust Archives Project.

Mr. Prayzer, I'm so happy that you could be with us today. I want you to know how appreciative we are, of the Council of Jewish Women, that you are giving us your time to give us an account of your experiences during this terrible period.

Mr. Prayzer, I wonder if you could tell me a little bit about yourself. I know that you are in living in Lorain, Ohio. Do you have family there and children?

Yes, I got two sons and a daughter. One son is married. He lives in Columbus, Ohio. My daughter lives with me in Lorain. She's a teacher.

My youngest son, he's a pharmacist. He just recently got married, and they got a nice little girl. I got a granddaughter, Jennifer Esther. he's working with Revco, the pharmacy.

I see. So two of your children are in Lorain with you. Is your wife still living, Mr. Prayzer?

No, unfortunately, my wife passed away 1980. She was sick. But she was in a concentration camp.

May I ask you, did you work all of your married life in Lorain?

Not all my life. From the beginning, when I came to this country, I went to Asbury Park, New Jersey, where I learned my trade. My papers were made for New Jersey. My brother-in-law signed it for me, so I have to arrive over there where he lives.

In other words, you were married when you came to this country?

Yes. I married in Germany, 1946, 25th of August. My son was two years old, my oldest son Maurice, when we left Germany.

Then you went directly to New Jersey?

Asbury Park, New Jersey. Over there, I looked around. I didn't have a trade because I was too young when the war broke out. I'd just finished school.

So over there, I want to have a trade in my hands. Because nobody can-- oh, I don't need to labor on that. I learned to be a cabinetmaker and a carpenter.

I see. Well, what made you go to Lorain?

One time on a holiday for Passover, my wife's sisters lived over there, newcomers, too. So we went on a vacation for a week.

She loved it so much, when we went back home, she was always pushing me. Let's move to Lorain. So I said let me learn my trade, and we'll go to Lorain.

I see.

So after the 2 and 1/2, 3 years, I learned. I could go out and make a good living. We moved to Lorain.

Mr. Prayzer, I'm going to skip a little in time now. You were born in a small town in Poland, I know. Could you tell us a little bit about the town, where it was located, and how many people lived there?

The town where I lived in Poland, the name was Bendzin. It was not a small town, really. It was about 150 or 140,000 people living over there.

My father was a businessman. He had fish business. He had fruit stands. He raised a beautiful family. We were five brothers and one sister.

Did your mother work also with your father?

She helped a couple days a week on the market, out. We made a nice, beautiful living, comfortable, very comfortable.

How close was the nearest large city?

It must be Katowice. See, it was over there where they build all the planes. It was a big city.

But you would not call Bendzin a shtetl. It was too big to be a shtetl.

No, it wasn't a little shtetl. It was quite a nice little-- I call it a little city.

Were you the oldest of the brothers?

No. I was the fifth one. My brother, the oldest one, he passed away a few years ago. Another one didn't make it through the Holocaust.

I got two brothers in Israel, the youngest one and the older one from me. So I was the fifth one.

I see. You said you had one sister?

Yes, one sister.

Did she survive?

They took us away, my sister and me, the same date. She never survived.

She did not.

I was the lucky one.

As a family, would you describe your life as being a close knit family?

Very close family.

Were you a religious family? Did you celebrate the Jewish holidays?

Yes, my father, he was a cantor. He was an Orthodox. We observed every holiday.

We had our own small, little temple. We had about 60, 70 members.

Were there 60 or 70 Jewish families in Bendzin, or was it a lot [CROSS TALK]?

Oh, it was about 85% Jewish.

Of the remaining non-Jews in Bendzin, would you say that they got along well with the Jews?

Oh, yeah. We got along very nice, comfortable. The people were nice. We knew each other. If you need some favor, you ask them to do for you.

Was your family active in any political organizations that you remember, any Zionist groups or socialist groups?

No. My father was a religious man. The free time he had, he was sitting and reading a book or something like that.

Let's talk a little bit about you before the war. I know that you have a picture of yourself. I wonder if you wouldn't show it to us and explain where you are on the picture and the other members of the photo.

In this picture, I was walking with my friend and his sister. Somebody took a little picture. So after this, we just walked away and keep on talking.

I see. In other words, someone on the street who just took the picture?

They had some, like, make a picture, and you pay them \$1, or \$0.50.

Then he made it for you.

Yeah. He kept it in his wallet.

How old were you when that picture was taken?

I was 17 years old.

You were 17. How would you describe yourself? What were your special interests or hobbies before the war?

People, it's hard to believe, with about 16 years, I played in a soccer team. I was a top notch soccer player by 16. My friend in the picture, he was the goalie from the same team. So we became good, close friends.

Did you go to school and finish school in Bendzin?

I went to the public school. I finished, like, high school here.

I see. Were there non-Jews in this school also?

No. This was a public school.

But there were just Jewish--

Jewish kids, yeah.

In other words, it was a Jewish public school.

Jewish public. Yeah, I wouldn't call it a Jewish public school. Later, they didn't have so much room, they started to send us to Polish public schools. We started to mix.

I see. But until then, you were in a school that was mainly Jewish, or all Jewish.

Yes.

Did you have any non-Jewish friends during the time you were growing up?

Oh, yeah. I had lots of them. Because soccer players, they come in all kinds of different religions. So we play a game, and we become good friends. And there was no doubt about to mention you're a Jew, or this, or that. Sure, it was a little anti-Semitic, or hardly, you can feel it.

When you talk about anti-Semitism, for example, do you remember anything happening to you that was directly anti-Jewish at this period of time in your life?

Yes, I can remember very well, because I went to night school. I wanted to learn to be a furniture maker. See, after school, I went to a shop. You got to sign a contract for three years without pay. After the three years is going, you a journeyman.

So when we come to the night school, lights was shut off. They would start to hitting us with different things. And always, wait Hitler going to come. Wait, Hitler going to come, some of them, not all of them, you know.

This was about 1938, 1939?

1938 and the beginning of '39.

'39. Would you say that prior to 1938 there had been many overt acts of anti-Semitism directed toward you? Or did you feel very safe in your town?

In our town, special, we felt very safe because was more Jews. We lived with the people nice. If they need a favor, they come. We did it for them. They did it for us.

When you were a young man and just going to night school, what plans did you have for yourself as far as the future? Did you see yourself as becoming a cabinet maker?

Yes. Because, like in Europe, when you build something, everything made by hands, I enjoyed it. You do some masterpieces. You have to have three years' schooling. Without school, you cannot do it.

Mr. Prayzer, when did you first notice, then, that things began to change? You mentioned in 1938 at night school some of the anti-Semitic remarks that were made. But when did things really begin to change for you?

For me, that's 1939, in the middle April, May, we saw already. I don't from where we got it. We got some papers with pictures. We saw what the Jews going through in Germany.

Did you believe what you read?

It was hard to believe because human people cannot do that. The German people, before the war, were beautiful people.

So you found it difficult to understand what was happening in Germany?

We saw proof, just we didn't want to believe it. They're not going to come here, you know.

How close was your town to Germany?

Our town was about 30 miles away from a town called Gleiwitz. That's Germany.

When the war started in September of 1939, then, was your town immediately affected?

It was the almost the first bigger town they stepped in was Bendzin. I saw them marching in. I stood on the side. I just thought, in my mind, I said, now, what's going to be now?

Now I realized the pictures, what I saw in the papers before, was the [INAUDIBLE], was the truth, what they did with the Jewish people over there.

What happened to you as the Germans came into your town? How did it immediately affect your family?

First, affected us because they made a curfew. You can be on the street till 7 o'clock. After 7 o'clock, if you're caught, you'll wind up in jail or maybe be shot.

Every day, you can see bulletin papers on the walls, on the streets, on the poles. You have guns, bring it over here. Now we're going to get for gold, and that, and that, and all kind. Every day you had the big signs, saying a picture, sh, the Jew's a spy, very big propaganda.

Was your family all together for a while after the Germans entered the town?

Yes. My family was together. My brother, one in Israel now, he stood one time in a line for bread. A German soldier was marching down and watching the line.

He took his gun and with the butt, he hit him on the toes. He couldn't stand it. He come back home and packed his stuff and took off.

Where did he go?

He went to another big city called Lodz in Poland. The Russian were there. So he was taken away, then.

He was in Donbas, in Russia. He worked in a coal mine. At least he had to eat and had a place where to sleep.

Now did you remain with the rest of your family?

Yes, I remained with my mother. Because what they did to my father, when the Germans came in, they took out the people. He had clothes on, religious clothes, and he had a beard. They grabbed him by his beard and started to tear out pieces.

Little by little, he got sick. He died.

He died.

He died, after a certain time.

You remained with your mother, then?

Yes.

How long were you and your mother and the other surviving members of your family together?

I was with my family together till they took us a place they called Kamionka. How long I lived in Poland, I never been in this place. I know what it was. That's, like, a quarry, lots of stones. Over there, they made the ghetto.

Would you describe your life in the ghetto? What do you mean by a ghetto?

A ghetto, you take a few blocks, 2, 3 blocks, and they take all the Jewish people, and they put them over there. You find your place. You do what you want.

From a garage, we made one room. The whole family, eight of us, lived over there. Everything was Russian. That's what you got. That's what you live on. Any time they want you, they come over and get you.

See, I was a lucky one. I worked in a factory, what the Germans took over. It was a carpenter shop. We built lots of stuff like beds for the soldiers and everything. So I had a special card. When you go on the street in the morning, and somebody stop you, you show them that, they let you go to work.

Were there refugees from other areas of Poland in this ghetto?

Yeah, they brought lots of German Jews in from Germany. The German government deported them from Germany to Poland.

About how long were you in this ghetto?

In the ghetto, I was about four, five, to six months.

Did you have any kind of religious celebrations, or did you celebrate any of the religious holidays in the ghetto, or was this forbidden, also?

We did secretly. Some of them did. Because we had lots of religious Jews in Poland, in this ghetto. They did that way. They didn't got together hundreds of people, just maybe 20, 25.

Did you have any chance of escaping from the ghetto? Or were there any resistance groups in the ghetto that you remember at this time?

Was a few people. Just you got to have guns. You got to have other things. we did what we could.

Did you find that you received any help from non-Jews in the area? Or was communication with them impossible, too?

No, it's impossible. Because we were cut off. If you have a card, maybe you worked in a different shop, you can go out from the ghetto. You come back in this and this time, back in.

See, that's how we survived. I had a card. Sometime I brought in a few potatoes. Sometime I brought in that or that, to help the family survive.

You said that you stayed in the ghetto between four and six months?

Yeah.

When you left the ghetto, what happened? Why did you leave and where did you did you go then?

Believe me, I left, I didn't want to go. Just I was forced with a machine gun on my back when the Germans come in. Before we left, I remember, we built a double wall, Our neighbors had a house.

We tried to save our mother, because they come every time. We did. When I left, my mother was still alive.

Your sister, also?

No, my sister was taken away the same time. Yeah. Once before, I wanted to mention to you, they made a point, get all the Jews together on a soccer field. They start to sort the people, young one. If a mother wouldn't leave a kid, she goes with the kid.

They called it the point. They start, like, they took my mother. She was 49. His mother, mothers and kids, here older man, like a selection.

So we saw they took our mother. So we start to make a little noise, and that, and that. The guards started to come over.

We were lucky we got our mother out.

Where did your mother go?

We took her back. Then, we took her back to the ghetto.

And hid her?

And we hid her over there behind a wall. But she was lucky. She lived after that before she got taken away, about three or four months.

But what happened to you then and your sister? You were telling me prior to the interview of the Germans coming in and burning the synagogue.

This was a day, it never goes out from my mind. One night, we see fire trucks and everything. All of a sudden, we see a big flame. One of such a beautiful shul, it's called a temple, and another one, and another one, up in flames.

So we looked and went back to the house. We couldn't do nothing. Very soon, we see German soldiers with their guns coming up in trucks, fire trucks, sprinkling gasoline on our houses.

On your own houses?

Yes. We had a friend. He was a fireman. He knew my father.

He said get out how fast you can. Because everything's going to go down. We don't have no water. We have gasoline. All of a sudden, in no time, our house was burning and everything.

I saw my neighbor. She had two little girls. One little girl was two years old and one was six weeks. Her husband went to the Polish army.

I jumped out. And I said, everybody start to run. I grabbed this little girl and the mother followed me. We started running.

I ran about five, six miles down by the train station. I had some friends what I knew. I knocked on the door. They let me in, and we stood overnight.

Next day, I went back. I never saw such a thing, like, what looked like Auschwitz. People burning, people laying shot. That's this night, I never forget in my life.

Did anyone from the area around the ghetto try to help you at all during this time?

Yes. We had a priest over there. Not far from us was a church, a nice church. He saw what happened. He opened the doors to Jewish people who wants to come in. He want to save them. Quite a few got saved by this priest. It's too bad I forgot his name, because it's so long.

Now what happened to you, then? Did you remain in the ghetto or were you deported immediately to a labor camp?

One night, we saw something is wrong. We saw too many Germans, big shots coming around, and looking, and looking, and looking. At something, about 1 o'clock in the night, knock on the doors, so with the machine guns.

They took me out and my sister out. See, my mother was staying over there with other people in this double wall.

Put my hands up. They took together about 100, 200, and took us down to the train station. Over there, we couldn't sit. We would sit on our knees with our heads down till they got together almost 1,000 people in some car boxes. They

loaded us in like animals, you know.

And from over there, we didn't know where we're going. We're on this train going and going. All of a sudden, about 11:00, 11:30 in the night, we wind up in a working camp till find out where we are. It was in Karvine.

Where is Karvine?

Karvine once belonged-- that's it was Czechoslovakia, or the Germans, it belonged to the Germans before they took back. All of a sudden over there, this was a working camp. There wasn't a concentration camp.

Now you told me that you arrived in Czechoslovakia at Karvine at the labor camp approximately April of 1940. How long did you stay there? And what did you do there? What was your life like there?

Over there, the first few days you just looked around. One day, it was early, and it was, I take it, a Sunday. We didn't work.

Was your sister with you?

No, she went other directions. Who was lucky enough, sometime transports go right to the crematorium. Some of them go right to the gas chamber, who was lucky enough.

So somebody tapped me on my shoulder. I opened my eyes up, and I see my cousin. He left us about three months before. I saw him when he got caught, and they put him on a truck and took him away.

You remained in Karvine for about nine months?

Yeah.

Were you forced to work there?

Yeah, we worked over there.

What did you do there? Do you remember?

Yeah, we were building different factories. I had an idea in a little carpenter work. So I was building panels and different things.

Did you live in barracks? What were your living conditions like?

The living condition was we slept four people in one room, ups and downs. The food, the first few days, I couldn't eat. Because it was something. After two days, you eat anything. So you got used to it. The people, what they took together, I knew everyone because it was from my hometown.

Most of the people who there?

Mostly, yeah.

You were about 17 or 18 at this time?

I was 17 years old.

Were there any younger children there?

There was some younger ones, 13, 14, because they looked tall.

Now you mentioned that you only stayed in this camp for a short period of time. Where did you go after that?

After this, they took out a transport. We went to Gross Masselwitz. It was a working camp, too.

How far was that away?

This was five, six hours.

By train?

By train, yeah. There were always car boxes. We didn't see any nice trains or something, always car boxes, like animals, you know.

Why did they take you there?

Probably the job was already in a way where the rest of the people can build. They took all of us. It's got to be free. They took us to another place.

I see. From there, I know you mentioned to me that you had been there about three months?

Yeah.

Then they took you to another camp.

Yeah.

Where did you go after that?

After this, we went to Klettendorf. That's not far from Breslau.

I see. You were there for about 12 months?

Yeah. Over there, we did all the kind of work. We build barracks. They took us out to the farmers. We would build stalls, who had an idea in carpentry.

Now in these different camps, were you still with some people that you knew? Or were you with people from many other areas, too?

When I came to the different camps, people, what they got taken before, they were there. There was from my hometown, was from different towns. I just lost-- I saw people over there, what we were neighbors.

But there were still people there then that you knew?

Yeah.

But there were no relatives of yours, no immediate relatives, sisters or brothers, were not with you?

In this Klettendorf camp, a transport came in after I was already almost a couple of years in it. I see my brother's coming in, the youngest one. He was hiding out someplace. I wait till they brought him in.

I says David. He looked at me. What happened to you? Look at how skinny you are.

I says, what do you think? I'm in a place where they feed you good? He just start crying. In the first three months, I lost

70 pounds.

What was your diet like? What did they give you to eat?

Diet? I wish it was a diet, at least. In the morning, you have a cup of coffee, black coffee. I don't know what they call it. It wasn't our coffee here.

In the night, you get a portion of bread. If you keep it, somebody steal it from you. You got to eat it up. So in the morning, your breakfast was a cup of coffee.

Then, again, at night, the bread?

You go out to work. On the job, sometime we have a soup, skins from potatoes. It's still like nothing. People, from eating so much soup, they was swollen up, because no fat in it, nothing.

Now was your brother in as poor physical condition? Did he lose as much weight in this period of time? Or was he coming from--

No, he was coming where he was hiding. They called it judenrein.

In an area that was--

From Poland.

--being cleared of Jews, then.

So he looked good. He came in in a nice suit and everything. I looked at him. It's really him.

He had a nice topcoat on his hand. I said where is he coming now? Boy, I looked at him. I just don't want to say nothing, because he got to find out himself.

Now at this time, when you were at Klettendorf, did you have any idea of what was happening to Jews who were being taken from the forced labor camps? Did you have any idea that there were Jews who were being taken to extermination camps?

We had an ideas, older people going to the gas chamber. See, my mother was 49. If I try from the labor camps to write letters home through my boss, he was a real Czechoslovakian, nice fella, to his address.

One time, he brought me back a letter what came to him. Nobody home. I figure, you know, no answer.

Did you have any idea of where she had gone now?

But it's selection, what they made. So you only one way they're going. If it's lucky, she's going to go into a camp. Most people 46, 47, you don't have a chance.

Now you remained in Klettendorf, you said, for about a year. Then from there you went to Faulbruk and from there to Graslitz for short periods of time. Did your brother also go, or did he remain in Klettendorf?

No, we went together to Faulbruk. Over there, we worked. I worked in a German factory, Telefunken. They made the radios.

After this, we worked by different schools. We built underground, in case bombs fall or something. So I met an old German over there. He was my boss.

So he liked me. Every day, he brought me a few potatoes, a piece of bread, and even signed his name. He took me out to the lumber yard with him. An old man, and he liked what I did. In a short time after that, I got sick, typhus.

What happened to you when you had typhus?

Typhus, you see, this was the Graslitz. There was a special place where they took sick people. Because over there, you go, if you're lucky you come out. My brother got sick, too, I didn't know, maybe a few days later.

I must have be over there about three months. When I got up, I couldn't walk on my feet. I was so skinny. I had a friend over there from my hometown. He always brought me a little water. I remember, from the beginning. After this, I was [? lame. ?] Excuse me.

I looked around. When I got a little better, I looked around, and I see my brother laying over there, in the same room, about 2, 2 and 1/2 months. And we didn't know each other.

Little by little, I start to get better. I don't know. When I got up, a newborn baby had more power than I had. I couldn't walk. Little by little, I got back on my feet.

So over there was a doctor. I helped him. I'd have to go to the soldiers, to this guy.

So I organized stuff over there, like a few potatoes, a piece of bread. You went in the kitchen, you ask a lady over there, I got a sick brother, give me something for him. Some of them were good and some of them.

I brought him back on his feet. From laying, his leg grow together like that. He couldn't stretch it.

So I asked the doctor what I went with him to different places, can you help my brother? He said where is your brother? So I took him in. I showed my-- and he looked his leg. He cut it open, took out the post, and everything, squeezed it, put some-- after a month and a half, he was walking.

Was this a Jewish doctor?

Yeah, it was a Jewish-- yeah, he wasn't really a doctor. He was for the Red Cross. He had a little idea.

But he was in the camp, also?

Yeah.

Now you mentioned that you stayed in Graslitz for about three months, until you were better. Where did you go after then? Because by this time, it was almost November of 1943. You'd already been from 1940 to 1943 in camps.

They took us back to Faulbruk, see. And from over there, they took us to the concentration camps.

Now how was the concentration camp? Which one did you go to first?

They took us from over there. I went to Gross-Rosen.

But before you went to Gross-Rosen, you had mentioned to me that you went to Hersbruck and Nuremberg.

Yeah.

Were those also concentration camps?

This was concentration camps.

Now how were they different from the forced labor camps?

Over there, you had the stripes uniforms, see, with the hats. Everything was different now. Over there, they want to get rid of you. See they got orders to get rid of so many people every day. Who just couldn't give a day's work, you didn't have a chance no more.

So in them camps, and I was first in Gross-Rosen, you work in them quarries. Every morning, 9 o'clock on the dot. Everything is dynamite.

Later, you grab out the stones with your hand. You clean it out. Or you're sitting over there with a big hammer, making the small little stones.

The food was not enough for me. So what I did, if I want to earn more food, I carry dead bodies to the crematorium.

You mentioned to me-- I want to go back just a little bit before you got to Gross-Rosen. When you were in Hersbruck, you said that that was one of the worst of the camps.

This was a death camp, the mud up to your knees. I said to myself, someday, if I come out from here, I'm going to be alive. Every morning, we got up 5 o'clock. We walk to work.

We built, on hills, tunnels to go in. We had the wooden shoes on. We had to carry the steel up and everything.

Over there, that was a dead job. Over there, I laid, and I begged the guard. I says, please kill me. I can't do it no more. He just looked and smile at me.

Were most of the guards Germans or were they--

It was a mixture.

--Polish nationalists?

It was from different countries, what they fought with Germany together.

I see. Was your brother still with you at this time?

No, at this time, we were separated. See, after Graslitz, I was ready to go back. He wasn't ready because he was still limping.

I walked over. We had an appell outside. I walked over to this officer and I said, please, let my brother come with me.

He looked at me. He said, where's your brother? I saw. I pointed at him. He come out. He was still limping.

See, some of them were good. He says when he gets better, I send him back to the camp where you going to be. He did.

By this time, you were at what camp?

Well, this time I was in Hersbruck.

In Hersbruck, I see. You were in Hersbruck for about eight months doing this very heavy labor.

Oh, on the coldest place in German, Hochtief, that means high and low. In wintertime, on snow, when you got wooden shoes, you carry them steel up on the hills, if one man from the crew fall, the rest of them go with it.

We were pouring concrete by air, them big pipes. In the winter time, they were frozen that locker. Lots of people got

killed on them hills. We were building them tunnels right in the mountains. We built quite a bit. Lots of lives were taken over there.

How many people do you think were in the camp?

It depends. Like Hersbruck, must be 6, 7,000. Gross-Rosen was a big one.

A bigger one.

See, this was the main from the small camps.

Now at Hersbruck, was there also a crematoria?

No, it was too small.

Too small?

Yeah. This one, I don't know. Must be somebody had my hands over my head. God was with me.

I came back from a night shift. Here they need carpenters. I don't know where. Just to get out, I raised my hand.

I didn't tell my kapo, was some person, you know, like a boss. When they announced, people got signed to go out from this camp. When I showed up, I thought he going to kill me.

He says how come you didn't tell me? Because he was anti-Semitic. Then it was already mixed, Poles, and Jews, and the Russians, and all the kind, and prisoners from the war.

So I said they sign me up. I came in. They ask me what I'm doing. I said I'm a carpenter.

So he didn't have no choice. Just he give me the look, if he could kill me, he would have killed me right there. When I walked out of this camp, I just picked up my head. I said thanks, God.

Now from that camp went to Nuremberg, where you stayed for about eight months.

I've got another thing to tell you about this camp. One day we're walking back to camp. A big guy, he was from Vilna, Poland, big, twice so big like me.

He says I'm dying. I'm dying. I says, hold on. I hardly walk, so I hold him till we got back to the camp, little by little.

When he walked into the camp, open the door, he fall down and died. He couldn't take it no more. So you can see how it was over there. So now go ahead.

When you went to Nuremberg, did your brother remain in Hersbruck?

No, they got him out from Faulbruk. They got him out to another camp.

Another one, and you separated at that point?

We separated.

I see. Now when you went on to Nuremberg, you stayed in Nuremberg, which was also a concentration camp.

It was a concentration camp. We had the stripes and everything on. Oh, we were treated a tiny little bit different.

In what way?

In what way? Because we stood with the soldiers. We were the clean up commando. Everything was bombed. We went after this. We have to clean it up and fix it up.

Lots of times, you saw the planes come. You just hit him so hard. We don't care. See, we didn't care because the suffering was enough already.

Now were these planes that you saw, were those Russian planes or American or British?

No, was English planes and American planes.

American planes. This was already 1944. Now from Nuremberg, you went to Gross-Rosen camp.

See, in Nuremberg we stood-- what was the date on it?

You have that you were there from December 1944 for about eight months and then went to Gross-Rosen.

See, in Nuremberg, was two guys from Czechoslovakia and me. We were carpenters. So we did the work. Everything bombed, we build it back and everything. Two Czechoslovakians, good boys, they were in concentration camp, too.

So one day I found lots of potatoes after the bombing. So I put it in my toolbox, took it upstairs. I had a pail. I made a little fire. We cooked the potatoes.

All of a sudden, I hear footsteps, you know, them heavy shoes. I looked down through the railing. I see a German officer.

He's unbuckling his holster for the gun. He took out the gun and comes upstairs. He came up. You got to stay achtung, you know.

What do you do? What are you doing with the potatoes here? So I says I found them on the thing, on the ground. I don't want to get them wasted and took them upstairs. You cook them with three guys here. Are you hungry?

I says no. So he looked around. Who cooked them potatoes? I said I did. I don't want to get everybody involved.

So he says take them potatoes with you. So he took me down to the washroom. He got two more soldiers. They spread me, one of my hand, one was sitting on my legs.

He said in German, give him 75. So the first five, I made noise. After this, I fall asleep.

When I woke up, I was black and blue. I looked around. I had water. I was wet from they're pouring water on me, probably.

I looked around. Nobody was there. I took back the potatoes upstairs and we ate them.

That's when you're hungry. Because hunger hurts. No sleep, you can't even smile. You forget how to smile. So you can see what hunger does to you.

I can also see that you were right in telling me that that probably was one of the worst camps that you were in, also, one of the worst experiences.

This was because he caught me having the potatoes. Because in some camps, you didn't have a chance. Just have to be an angel over you. You cannot be a hero.

I had chances to escape. Where are you going to go? You was marked all over with the stars, like a general.

And no one there to help you.

I had some. I go back a little bit in Karvine. The boss says Mike, I going to help you. Fine, he treated me good. Maybe a man get drunk. He wants to make himself a good name. Hey, I got a Jew here.

But for the most part, you really lived a life of no food, beatings, and terrible physical labor.

Well, you got to expect that. Because if you cannot produce, you cannot do what they want, you going.

Mike, we're going to stop here for a few minutes. We're going to continue with your stay at Gross-Rosen and eventually Buchenwald and your liberation from Dachau. We'll pause for now.

Fine.