

OK, we're rolling. 5, 4, 3.

I'm Judy Levendula. And today, we are interviewing Alex Rabiner, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section. Alex, thank you for being here with us this morning. I'm going to ask you some questions about your life at the present time. First, tell me, where were you born?

Poland.

And what city?

Bukaczowce.

OK. How old are you?

71.

And do you work or are you retired?

No, retired.

What were you doing when you were working?

A butcher.

For how long would you say you were?

I was working 18 years in store. And I was working in a factory. And I just come here on 93rd Street. I was working for Diamond Corporation by Windors.

How long have you been retired?

I am retired from 1969.

OK. And are you married?

Yes.

Do you have children?

No.

Where do you live?

South Euclid, Ohio.

Well, we can bring things up to date again later. But now, let's go back. And let me find out something about your life before the war, if you can remember before 1939 what your family constellation was like and how life was for you then.

I can. OK. We was a family from 12 children. When my father died, I was six months old. So I don't remember my father. My mother died 1937 in January. My oldest brother, he was born, I think-- I'm not sure, I think 1885 because he got married, other-- before the war.

My youngest sister got a little boy. He was about six, seven years when she was killed. Where she was killed, I don't

know either. And the rest brothers and sisters, I don't know because I was not with them.

This was-- I'm talking before the war. 1938, I come home from the Polish Army. 1939, in August-- September started the war Poland with Germany. They draft me in the Polish Army. And the Polish Army was two weeks-- was Poland fighting with the Germans.

Let me stop you for just a minute.

In 1939, when you were drafted, you were what?

I was drafted before. 1939, they called me in in the army.

When you were called in then, you were what, about 27 years old?

About 27-28 years old or so.

OK. And your mother had died two years previous?

My mother died 1937.

OK. What did she die of?

She was an old lady. She was-- I don't know. She died. I don't know what she died. She died.

OK. I see.

I really cannot tell you what she died. There was a doctor. And she say-- Dr. Palicki was-- he was an old doctor, a very good doctor. He says, no cure. She died.

Do you remember anything more about your family life or the community--

Oh, sure I remember.

--before the age of 27?

What you want-- what do you mean the community? How this was in the city?

Did you have friends? What were your activities? What was school like for you?

School, I usually went in a school. Was a school, they call it public school. In Poland, called this [POLISH]. And we used to go in the school. And after the school, we used to go in the Hebrew school, in the Jewish school, the Jewish kids. I used to go in a Polish school. And then from the school, the kids used to playing around. I was younger, naturally.

Do you remember it as a fairly good time of life?

Well, we got not bad because I told you, my parents got a big farm. We got everything till the war. Naturally, when the war started, they took this away from us.

So working the farm is how the family survived and made a living, in effect?

Oh, sure. We had more than a living. We got by-- I think, I don't remember exactly. I cannot tell you exactly. We got 120 more plant. We got about 20-30 cattles, horses, beans, an orchard.

What can I tell you more? I cannot exactly remember how this was. But I know how this-- I remember this because I was younger. But I remember this. Now, this belong to Russia. I cannot even claim nothing. If I would want claim now-- if this be in Poland now, I can maybe claim something. But this belong to Russia. I cannot claim nothing. This is-- was everything before the war.

Yeah. So you basically, then, must have worked on the farm until--

I didn't work nothing of the farm.

You didn't.

Was too young.

How can I work? Wasn't nothing funny. Was people was working on the farm.

Oh, I see. I see. What were you doing before you went into the army?

I was playing around. I was watching with the horses, playing by the horses, by the cows. I was not working in this time.

OK. So let's pick it up from when you went into the army then.

Then when I went into the army, so I come home. And then start the war, talking about the war. So people was excited. Be a war, be a war, be a war. Lots say, Hitler will not come to Poland. Lots say, he will come to Poland. You know how people is talking. The German will come to Poland. What they need Poland? What he want from Poland? But lots say, he will come.

But then when he start talking, they want Danzig, and he want take away Pomorze-- this was another part of Poland. Because he say, this belong to Germany a long time. He want this. And Rydz-Smigly say, we will not give him back. We will start fighting.

And then start to mobilize an army. In September, started the war. And it was an army already. And Poland was a small country. And they didn't have what to fight against Germany, let's face it. But Poland got nothing to fight. Poland was not prepared to a war.

And Czechoslovakia want to go with Poland in partnership, make a pact. Poland don't want. Poland say, we can protect ourselves. But this was not true. Germany was in this-- if you remember-- I don't know if you remember, Poland-- Germany went into Germany-- to Czechoslovakia and took over all planes, and everything, the raw material, everything from Czechoslovakia. Poland got-- Poland was not so very situated to a war.

And then when I was in the army, we hear from radio, this German make a pact with Russia. Don't know if you remember this, what was his name-- Ribbentrop, who went to Russia and make a pact with Hitler-- with Stalin. And they take Poland, half Poland to Russia and half Poland to Germany.

So the Polish Army gave up right away. They don't want fight even. It was no-- they know this is no use to fight because they cannot-- they can do nothing. They cannot fight Germany and Russia. So and right away, they take us-- take away the army in prison.

After how many weeks or months?

I will tell you, I don't know how many weeks because I was over there just two weeks. And I got a friend, a Polish boy, he don't know this I'm Jewish. Because I was not to tell him I'm Jewish. I said, who need just to know? And he said to me one time, you know, Alex, if we will not run away, we will be killed here. They start to building an electric fence around. And if you touch electric fence with something, you'll be killed.

Are you talking about the army prison or the?

Prison. In Germany, they start to make a fence.

So after two weeks of being in the army, you were taken to the prison.

The Polish Army gave up. There was no Polish Army no more. There was-- this was capitulation of Poland. So the German took over Poland.

What was that prison like?

Very bad.

An electric fence around it.

They didn't give us food. They didn't give us food. They gave us 100 gram bread. And this bread was not as flour. I don't know what this was, even. And they gave us a pint milk, one bean, and a piece potato. When you start looking for the potato, you lost the bean. You start looking for the bean, you lost the potato. And I was a little fellow. And was lots of boys, 6'5", they need to eat.

So they get swollen. And they died. And they was buried, 50-100 in one hole. They buried them. And they came out. And they buried them. They beat them. They go with [NON-ENGLISH] and [GERMAN]. You know what [GERMAN] mean? OK. And they beat them. You want a war with Hitler? You want a war with the Germans? And they beat it-- beat us. And they died. And they buried them.

How long were you there?

Two weeks.

In the prison camp?

Same time.

OK. And then what?

And then this boy-- like I told you, this boy, we was friends. And he said, we need to run away before they start building the electric fence. And one night, it was raining, pouring like cat and dog. And he say, now, it's good to go. Come. And we started to go of the knees and of the hand, in water and mud. And they looking with the reflectors.

When the reflectors of us, we lay down quiet, we don't move. If they move the reflector, we start moving little bit farther. And we move in bushes. And then we went into a farmer. And we give him our uniform. He gave us other clothes. And we take a bag with a shovel. And we started walking.

So take us-- take me to walk to Lemberg about eight weeks, nine weeks. He went to his home. And then I went to Lemberg, to my big city-- Lemberg was the biggest city in Galicia. And then over there was the Russians already. Then I went home to mine-- to my city, to Bukaczowce over there, I went there.

What did you find there?

They was over there, these people. My people was over there in this time when the Russians was over there.

All right.

So when I come home, so they say, the Russians starting working this. They start-- everybody was afraid, naturally. Who know? 1941, the Germans started the war in 1941, in June-- in June, the war started, Germany with Russia. So 1941, the Germans come in to us. And this was the end. Then they start to make camps.

Well, what exactly happened in detail to you and your family in 1941?

This is what I want bring you out. So they took me in 1942 in May. They took me in slavery camp. And the slavery came-- you heard from a city Tarnopol? Close to Tarnopol was a city Brzezany, a big city. And over there, they start to make it for the Germans a sport place. Was over there, maybe-- when I come in over there, it was maybe over there 5,000 kids-- people, say, I don't know kids, people.

So they take me. From my city was about 60, they took us. They took us over there. So when I come over there, we used to take little-- the roads, the buggies where they go, the rails, put the ground, and spread this, make a sport.

But this was kids. They got swollen feet, swollen hands. They couldn't work. They couldn't schlep the buggies with the ground-- kids 17 years, 18 years. Old people couldn't schlep because they was hungry. They didn't get food. I was over there not too long either. I was over there just a few days.

What about your brothers and sisters?

I don't know where they disappeared. I left them.

I see.

I really don't know to this day. I know, my brother, they took him off work in a big forum in the docks. They put docks of him-- and the docks turned them down. But the sisters, I don't know where they disappeared about. I don't know from not one of them. So when I come-- when I was over there, and I saw is they don't give food, and you go about 10-20 miles to work, for lunch, and this, and they don't give you nothing, just the dust and the mud. And it was impossible.

So I thought, well, what-- I need to go. I went to a farmer who was right over there. And the farmer say, why are you staying here? They will kill you out here. And this was in Ukraine, a farmer. So I say, what should I do?

He say, you don't look like a Jew. Why you staying here? You talk good Ukrainian. Why are you staying here? These people what they can't talk Ukrainian, they don't know, so they're different. But you look-- you're healthy. Why you staying here? Go away.

So I went from over there to a city, Trembowla, but not in the city, close to the city. And I went over there for food. And I went. He was the major from the city, from the village. And he say, why you need food? I say, because I need to eat. He say, stay and work by me.

I couldn't stay right away, say, I will work by you. But I don't want to be suspicious If I will say, I will work, who work for nothing? A Jew work for nothing. And I say, how much you will pay me? And I start to bargain for the price. And I settled with him with the price. And he supposed to pay-- give me one uniform to work as camp is what they make by themself and one to go out in church.

And I settled. And I worked. And I worked by the horses, by the cows. And I was beating the weeds. And I was working over there a whole summer. I was over there about nine months, not quite nine months. And later, he said to me, I should take beets-- you know, what they make sugar with the beets-- and take the beets to a station, give up for German contingent with a horse and buggy.

And I say, OK. But he come before with few days. And he tell a story. They find-- they catch a Jew over there. And they kill him. People recognize, this a Jew, maybe the same thing like I. And they recognize him. And they right away, they shoot him.

And I-- this follow me in my head. I say, I'm going over there. Somebody will recognize me too. Over there is in the thousands of people come. It's not such a thing you can hide. But everybody people, they know you, especially we got a bar, like a schenk, here, they say-- like here in Europe, used to say a schenk, here you say a bar. People used to come in. We got land. People used to work. Somebody will recognize me.

And I think, what should I do now? Go or not to go? And I say, better is not to go. And I start this-- to bust to mine, just I say, I have a headache, I have this, I cannot go, this, and this. And he said to me, OK. I know where you need to go. You don't want to go, you right away got a headache. I don't know what is wrong with you. But you know, look for another job. I don't need you.

So I say, OK. What is the difference? If I go over there, they will catch me. If I will not go, this is the same thing. So I say, OK. But I don't have nothing. I have two shirts, what they make their own shirts, the canvas shirts. They was old shirts, but I take the shirts.

Meantime, his wife come in. And my name was in this time not Alex. My name was in this time Franek. Because in each place, I change the name. I don't have one name all over. And she said to me of Ukrainian, what is wrong, Franek?

I say, I got a headache, and I got a stomachache, and this. And she say, you must catch a cold. If you catch a cold, she say, lay down, I will cover you. And I will give you a couple eggs and milk. And this will-- because it was not like here to go in a drugstore, buy pills, this. But she don't know he told me to go away, the husband.

Meantime, he comes in. And he said to her, what are you doing what? I tell him to go. And she say, you crazy man, you-- in Ukrainian, this sound different. She say, he works a whole summer. Now, from winter, you chase him away because he is sick and he don't want to go with the horses? And they got one daughter. And the daughter, she say, I will take the beets to the station.

And the girl take the beets to the station. And I lay down. And what is be the end? Still no good. And the other day, fall all the snow. This girl, the daughter, say, I should take her to the end, make-- they make a flax, the cotton. I don't know how you call this here. They make like-- they make the cotton, they make it.

For yarn.

Do you know what I mean? So she say, take me to the aunt. I will stay over there a day. You will pick me up in there. And I say, OK. I take her in the morning. In the evening, I pick her up. I say, what the aunt said? And she say, the aunt say, maybe this is a Jew. Naturally, when she say, this may be a Jew, they will go to the police. And the police, they will come, they will check me. And they-- and this is the end. I'm still in dangerous.

Now, I'm worse in dangerous than before. And I was so scared that I made wet of myself everything. I couldn't sleep in the house. I went sleep in stable. And I was so scared, I was wet. I don't know what to do now.

So 12 o'clock nighttime, I went. He got a-- you say here had a locker, I don't know. And I went bread-- take bread, I take cheese and butter. And I was-- I don't have a-- it was cold. I take his overcoat and his cane.

And I went away, 12 o'clock at night, because I know they will come and they will check me. And over there, they build big hay of in field, like hay they built. And then when they need, the farmers, they take this hay home. And I went in hay. And I make a hole.

And I stay over there three days. I got bread. And I thought, this snow will melted. I don't want to make a bed. I mean, the snow a little bit melted, then I will go away. I got water not far. And I got onion, and garlic, and bread, and I got cheese. And I was over there a few-- two days, I think. Two or three days, I was over there. And I went away in my place.

And I went away in my place. And I come to a man, what he knows me already. He was living in the woods. He used to come in [? Shahrbaraz. ?] He was born United States. But his parents took him home when he was a year old. His name

was Florek.

And I come to him-- to her first. And I come. But she was afraid, I don't know. And she say, oh, you a Jew, I'm afraid. They will come. And they will catch me. And they will do this, this. I'm afraid. Meantime, he comes in, and he said to her, don't you know who he is? My sister was a [YIDDISH], they call in Jewish. We used to come and buy by him. Let him stay over the night. What is-- so let him stay over.

And I stay over a night. In daytime, I went away in the woods. And this was a day after day after day. And I stay over there still a few months. And they was poor. He got an hectare, maybe two hectare land. He was a poor man, a very poor man. He got three kids. And I went.

And I got cotton by a man. And I take his bag the cotton. And I give her the cotton, she should make shirts for the kids. And this was a big deal. OK. I used to come nighttime, she got docks. I go in one stable and sleep in the stable. And this was OK.

But meantime, his mother don't know that he got a Jew. His sister don't know he got a Jew. A little boy from two years-- you know of Christmas, when they come, the Catholics-- how you say this-- praying in the houses, how you say this? Don't you know? They come singing the Christmas, the [NON-ENGLISH], what they call this.

Christmas carols?

Yeah. They come in the houses and they sing. I don't know how you call this. I know how you call this in Ukrainian. I never see this here. I never see this on the TV here. They used to come in the houses, and get us, and they sing, and they pray. I was laid down into a bed.

And this bed was covered. And a little boy from two years was playing off in bed and the girls. They don't say one word. They don't say. They was an hour singing in house. I was cold. I thought I die over there. They went away and I went out from the bed. And this was OK.

But in this time, was a village. And over there was a Jewish-- I'm talking one in a second one. I'm still catching one and another one. I'm not talking about myself. I'm talking-- you ask me just how this was everything before.

Was a Mr. Breitbart. The Mr. Breitbart was so rich over there, then you can say here-- how should I try to give-- the Ratners, the Ratners here. You know them? You see the Ratners, they are rich people? He was rich over there than the Ratners here-- lots of land. He used to send away in the army 25 horses every year.

He was a very wealthy man. 1928, he take in first match in Warsaw with a saw, very famous people, very famous. And she used to go in Tarnopol skating. The whole army would go out with her, a beautiful woman.

Come a man to him. And the man said to him, Florek, I need to talk to you. And I am sitting like they stuck in house, and I'm sitting into the wall. But this man don't know he got a Jew. Do you understand what I'm talking? This man don't know nothing.

And he say, you know who is living? Who-- Breitbart is living. This man got Mr. Breitbart over there by him. And this man got me. But one for another were not supposed to know. But he cannot keep Breitbart more because he is in a village. The Germans come in over there. And he cannot give him food. He is in a bunker in house, in a stable someplace.

And he said to him, Breitbart is living. If he will live, we will live. If he will die, we will not live. We need to help him. But you see, in the first, he say, nobody should know. I'm telling you, don't say he's-- to nobody. His wife and the kids went out someplace. But he say, I must ask his wife. How can I keep a man with a wife with a kid? So ask her.

And he come to me and ask me, what should he do? I thought to myself, what I got to lose? If I will live, is good. If he will not live, so we all not live. He went. And he bring his girl, was about two years old maybe, maybe a year and a half.

And he bring-- and they come from the back. And he put them-- I still cannot explain you. You know where they put hay, the farmers, high?

Hay, in a loft.

In a loft. He put them in the top over there. And I, nighttime, used to put in water and go up there, wash myself. Because there was not water like here. And she said in Polish, oy, somebody is here. They waiting for us. I went. I introduce myself.

And she said, he's crazy. He got one Jew and take other Jews? He is a crazy man. What is he doing? I say, no, he's not crazy. He just want help here. So the end was-- he didn't got nothing what to feed. There's three people and I. And he got his own people.

So we start to going in field and bringing food-- and we bring corn, potatoes, beans. He got a cow. And the cow was a very good cow with milk so we should survive. But later, she comes to me. And she said to me, Franek, I'm sick. I was not a smart boy never.

And I'm not smart now. I don't know the sixth sense. She is pregnant, she wouldn't go to a doctor. I never notice. She is sick. So I thought, she is sick, a person is sick. She won't go to a doctor.

And the doctor was Komarianski-- and I saw him here in the United States, he lives in Parma, the same doctor, when I was working in Prospect, he come in in store. And I recognize him. I never was by him, but I recognize him.

I say, why you won't go? I don't feel good, I this, this. I say, how can I go to Komarianski? Everybody will recognize me, take you out. She say, with whom will I leave a child? What can I do? I cannot go.

So she said, then, Florek, he should take her from doctor. So the Florek said, I keep you to help you. And you want I should go give up to a Ukrainian? And they should kill me? You know what? Go in the woods. I don't want-- I cannot stand more. I this, I this, don't know. They went in the woods.

And he said to me, you too. I said, OK. Later, he called me back. And he say, I don't want you should go out there. You can stay by me. But they let him. She got his baby. And they choke out his baby in the woods.

And he went to a farm or some place for milk. And they catch him and they kill him two weeks before the Russian government. She is still alive someplace. I don't know where. This is one thing.

Second thing, when I went away, like I was by this farmer what I told you because I was working, and he tell me with the-- maybe he is a Jew, I must run away because I was afraid the police, the Ukrainian police will come. They will check me, especially a Jew or a man, they will check me. Then I am in trouble too.

So I went away too. So and then I was in the woods and by another man. And so I survived when the Russian come in. I was in the Russian Army. They took me. And then when I come in the Russian Army, I was shot. And then I went in hospital.

How did it happen you were shot?

A soldier go and fight and he was shot.

By?

By the Germans. This was right-- I don't know if you will know-- between Czechoslovakia and Poland. [NON-ENGLISH], over there, I was shot.

When you first went into the army, shortly thereafter?

No, this was 1943, end of '43.

When did you go into the hospital? Right after this, when I was shot, they took me in hospital. And they-- when took me, is no place. They took me to Krosno, no place. They took me to Lemberg, no place. They took me to Kyiv, is no place.

Then they took me to Kharkiv, is a place. And they put me in a-- outside. They don't give you a little bit of water. Nobody ask you if you live, if you don't die. It was-- the room was full. And later, they take me, they take out the shrapnels from my legs. And I heal up. And this was OK.

And then what?

And then?

And then.

And then I went back in the army. And I went back in the army. And then I was in Czechoslovakia, 1945, May 9, the war was end. Germany gave up the war. Then they send me to Japan. From Czechoslovakia, I went to Japan.

You were liberated in 1945 by the Russians?

By the-- 1945, I was in the army.

The Russian Army?

In the Russian Army.

All right. Who sent you to Japan?

The Russians.

All right, go ahead.

You see, I was interpreter in the Russian Army.

I see.

Because when I come in in the Russian Army, the Russians are like night to day. They couldn't talk Polish. They couldn't talk German. They couldn't talk just Russian. When they catch a man, they see he know little bit more languages, they grab him around. And then when I was shot, I come back in the army. So they send me to Japan.

And what did you do in Japan?

Nothing.

Nothing?

Nothing. When I come to Japan, and then when Truman throw the atom bomb, the war was over.

All right. Then tell me how you got to the States.

OK. Now, I was in Japan. And I want go home back to Poland. So I must write a report to my commander battalion, to my officer. I say, I don't know if my family left, if not. I would like to go see if somebody is living. Can I have an

outpost to go to-- this was Lemberg.

So he said, I don't know. And he take a map, and put the map, and look, and look. And he said to me, this is 10,000 kilometers. It's not so law we can give a boy 10,000 kilometers furlough. I can't do this. I will do this. I cannot do this. Meantime, most soldiers, they got the [NON-ENGLISH]. How call-- you call this? You fall down, you sick, you fall down, and they shake with it.

Epilepsy?

Epilepsy. So mine officer, another commander battalion the other side, they come out and say, listen, here is four soldiers. They got the sickness. And we must send a soldier with him in this where you live, the place over there. Take him home. And then do what you want. So I take him home. And then I do what I want. I don't go back. Who will go look for me?

And then I went. I was in Poland in my city. My city was nothing, no city no more, was everything bomb. The city was just few homes. There was no people, especially Jewish people, well, I find just two families-- not families, just they live together. And the rest was people from Russia, from over there. I don't know these people.

So I went to Poland. I don't know if you know, this belonged to Germany, then Poland-- the German-- the Russia gave us to Poland Stettin, a port, Stettin. I was over there a few months. And from over there, I went to Berlin. And I was in Berlin living few years. And from Berlin, I come here, to United States.

Someone here sponsored you?

The HIAS.

I see.

When did you meet your wife?

1951, I think.

All right. You came to the United States when? In '51?

'50.

And that's-- and so you met her here?

Yeah.

You came directly to Cleveland?

Directly to Cleveland.

What kind of an impact do you think that these experiences have had on your life? How has this changed you or your outlook?

I'll tell you. 1943, when I was by this man over there, by us was a Polish village. And the Polish village name was Lidvikivka-- Lidwik³wka. Over there was living just Polish people. And these Polish people was just working people. The mostly they have a morg land, a morg and a half, two-- very poor people.

But they was all making the canvas. I don't know how you say this. You know what they make for the farmers, the canvas? And the farmers make shirts of this, everything. This is what this was the profession. 1943, February 8, Ukraine people come and kill out the whole village-- just people left what they take out the potatoes from the holes.

When they-- they put them, potatoes in holes, I don't know if you know, of in winter, they shouldn't frozen. In winter, they cut the-- take out the potatoes. And the hole left. Just these people left what they hide in the holes and the potatoes.

And the rest people was all killed out. I never hear a word, somebody should say, this village was killed out. And mostly, Ukrainian people killed them out. Because Ukrainian people don't like the Polish people.

OK. But tell me how that ties in with my question about how this whole experience that you went through in the early '40s-- how you think that has affected your life. Would your life have been different?

Sure, was different.

How would it have been different?

I can-- sometime, I cannot sleep. I'm always thinking about my sisters and brothers. And I am not very anxious to live and not to live. First, I even don't-- what-- you cannot take your life, so you live. You married and you live. That's OK. A big success, I don't care. And I don't think so. I never think of something what happened.

I was sleeping one winter by a farmer of an attic hay. It's nobody knows that I am. Even the owner don't know I'm sleeping over there. So how can this happen, the owner shouldn't know that you sleeping of an attic hay. What you eat? This is what they ask me. How can you? I told this to people. How you eat? I used to go out when the snow was melted, no pet.

I used to go out to farm. I know to which farmer I'm going. But the farmer don't know who I am. When I know you, I go in to you. I know you, but you don't know me. And I knock by the window, I say, give me bread.

Even you don't have, you give me what you have. Just go away-- I want you should go away. And you give me how much a bread. And I crawl up over there. And I sit over there other few days and eat some more bread. I can't-- I don't want go out. And I was over there about six months.

Having to live like that, to just exist.

I was alone. I don't have nobody this time. I was completely alone. You see, this life was so. Everybody was want live, tell how this was-- not to live because I want make a success. I want live tell how people can do to people.

Do you think that people did not believe your stories, like what you're telling me now?

Oh, people believe my stories because these people what I tell them, they know this is true. Because they know this is true. This woman is today in Israel, a Jewish woman. She married-- she was very young. And she was very pretty. And she married a boy. He was much older than she. And she married right 1940, she married him. He was an old bachelor.

And he was-- first, when he was married, he want money, he want this, he want this. Later, he married. She was a cousin to him. And they was hiding too. She was a very pretty girl. She lives in Israel. And he was in the woods. And when they make a fuss-- how do you call this, an oblav-- you know what oblav means? They attack us in the woods, one the men, an Ukrainian.

A man, a Jewish man, know this man. He was in the woods. And he went to them-- Skaliwski was he. And he say, give me a bread, he-- over there and over there, we need to eat. And he asked him, where's Jew, in which woods? He say, over there, over there, over there. And he went, and he passed to the police.

A Friday about 3 o'clock, they come to the woods, maybe about 150 Ukrainian police and the Germans with a tank and take her out this woods. And he say like this is over there, the bunker. This man got a little gun-- not a full gun, just a little gun, just in zamek written this.

And when the Germans say in Polish-- you don't understand Polish, just a little bit-- in Polish, they said to him, don't be afraid. Come out. We will do nothing to you-- in Polish. This man, he was a Polish officer. With the first shot, he killed a German. He killed a German.

Then the German yell in German, [GERMAN]. This you maybe understand. [GERMAN] mean, go back because this a [GERMAN]. And was three men, and three women, and two-three kids. This was the [GERMAN]. Nobody went in in the woods. They was afraid.

But each three was shot down. They shot so much, the woman with the kids crawl up, in February, of the trees. And they were shotting just down because they don't expect somebody is on the trees. And each tree was shot at. And then nighttime, I was with this man, what I told you, with this Breitbart over there. We thought we killed. And they was all alive.

But this man was shot with a [NON-ENGLISH] bullets here. And the hand was bumpkin around, was broke up. His wife take a razor. And she cut him off the hand. And we went to this doctor what he is here in Parma.

And he gave-- this is true. He gave all kind bandages and-- but he say, I will not go in the woods. I'm afraid. But he gave everything. And he lived. And then they make another attack. And they catch him and they kill him.

And this wife, what I want bring out, this wife got a baby in a field. And this baby was crying. And she moved in corn. In meantime, the Germans come in. And they hear, a baby is crying. So she moved away in another piece corn. They say, [GERMAN]. They take out a handkerchief, take this baby by the foot, and throw it to the street, and that's it.

In front of the mother?

No, the mother don't see it. The mother went-- moved away in a little bit farther.

If she will see it, they would kill her. She is today live in Israel. I saw her in Israel. So this is impossible to believe it that the Germans should do it. If somebody tells me the Russians will do it, I would maybe believe it. But the Germans should do this, I could never believe it.

I don't know if it's fair to say that what I hear you saying is that this whole experience has sort of broken your spirit, that you feel, well, you go on.

You must go on. What can I do? I can't do nothing. I try it. I was in Stettin. And I write the same thing what everything was. But I don't know whether disappeared. This was a committee with this, with Jewish writers, and writers, everything.

Tell me, were you at one time a religious man? Or did that not play a part anymore?

I was religious. But I was naturally-- we was a religious. That's right. My whole family is.

What about now?

I am and I am not. I don't know. I don't know. I cannot see this. You see, this is in me. I must-- a person must believe in something. But I cannot believe. I cannot believe this should happen and God shouldn't do nothing. Something, something should be done, something.

I saw of my-- because I was not in a concentration camp. I was free because I told you, I was working. I was working with farmers. And I-- they drive 200, 500 people into the trains like the cattles, and they beat them, and the kids-- three, four kids. It's impossible to believe it.

Stanislaw, you hear about city Stanislaw? This was a big city. In October or November, when this is the Jewish holiday, they take out 15,000 people-- 15,000. The holes was digged already. And they killed one by one, not of dead,

[GERMAN], and then hole, and then one choked the other one.

People was what they was over there. This is impossible. This is impossible to believe this. If I read a book from something, so it's a book. I read it. But to me, this has happened yesterday. This has not happened 100 years ago. If I remember this, how can this happen so long? I'm not 100 years old.

Do you talk about it often with people?

Often.

With other survivors?

Often, where I come, we come together, just a few people, everybody talks his own story.

People that you live near, neighbors?

Yeah, neighbors, and then I come, and people what we-- sometimes, we come and we start playing cards. So I always got to say my story. They say their story, I say my story. They say, they was in concentration camp, this was this, this was this. I always not go away of a moment for my story. Somebody told me a different story, somebody say, you know, this is no use talking. This is already-- I cannot forget this. And I will not forget, I think, so long I live.

Do you talk about it with your wife?

Sure. But you see, my wife is American girl. When I-- I shouldn't say this. My wife is American girl. When I talk to her, she say, now, what can you do? You must forget this. But I cannot forget this. She can forget this because she don't see this. She read it. She saw on paper. She saw on TV. But I can never forget this.

That's part of why we're doing this whole project, though, because we don't want people to forget. And in that sense, you have helped us fulfill our purpose by making this tape for the archives.

Is this over?

Well, I'm going to ask you if there's more that you would like to add.

I can add more. But I saw this man come out.

Yeah, we have about five minutes.

Five minutes-- I can tell you another thing. I was in-- I was going-- 1941 was by us a very hunger, very big hunger. What is the hunger? The water was all over. And the farmers even don't have what to eat. But the farmer still got something from his land.

But a special people, like me, like other people, went of Podolia. I know you know where Podolia is. Podolia is between Russia and Poland. This was better land. And over there was nothing damaged, the water, the crop was everything.

So I went over there. So when I come over there, naturally, I was not looking like a Jew. Nobody take me for a Jew. I went in church. I went to confession. And I was talking perfect Ukrainish. Now, I forget because I don't use the language.

And nobody talked to me this, I am a Jew. Never. And this maybe helped me a little bit too because special Jews, they don't talk very good Ukrainish. They got a little bit big nose. My nose is a little bit shorter. I don't know. This is what they used to tell me. And never took me nobody for a Jew. And I went into him, he right away-- he don't even-- he don't even think to tell me that I am a Jew.

So as it turned out, that was one of the things that helped you survive.

I think so. And another way, they say, this is our luck. Not this, but this is luck. Sometimes, you have luck, you live. You don't have luck, you die, this and this. So this was my luck, I think. I don't know. This is what I think.

Well, again, I would like to thank you for sharing with us and giving your time.

It's very nice to be-- meet you. And I'm glad I could do something. My name is Judy Levendula.

Levendula, are you Italian?

Hungarian.

Hungarian?

Yeah. And I've been interviewing Mr. Alex Rabiner for the Holocaust Archives Project sponsored by the Council of Jewish Women, the Cleveland section. And thank you again.

You're welcome.