

This is tape 2 of the interview of Milton Steinbock, survivor, by Sylvia Abrams. We have just finished. You were telling us about your life when you moved from Deblin to Warsaw. And at the end of the first tape, you told us how, when you were 21 years old, you received the notice that you had to register for the draft and that you were going to be taken into the artillery in a year. Why don't you pick up from there and tell us what happened?

I went back to my job in Warsaw and worked while, a few weeks yet until the war broke out September the 1st.

When were you first aware that there was a war? Were you aware immediately?

We were aware two weeks before that the Germans had already armies around on the borders. The Polish government sent armies also. Then they started to call in reserves. The Polish, I'm talking about the Polish Army. They called in reserves. And then they started to call in those, like I was registered to go to the army.

So one day, I was walking to work. This was a week-- no, about two weeks before the war broke out. And I saw a sign on the corner. And I looked for my initial, like S. I take a look. That's mine initial. And that's the year when you're 21, 1918, it says.

So this was a list telling people that they had to report if their initial--

To report to which-- to this place. They told you where to report. OK. There was-- where the Polish marshal had his headquarters, there was the most beautiful place, like in here the White House lawns in Washington. He had the White House also there. And around that area, they put up-- on the meadows, they put out large tables with signs on wires all over. And they-- each one had his year, like 1919, 1918, 1917, so, so, and so on.

So this was a huge open-air conscription center that was there to--

Right on the field. And they told you, you should report there. So it took me from the morning until I came there and stood in line, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. And this was two weeks before the war. Until I found that table I stood in line, and I came, there was Polish officers-- captains and lieutenants, and they were asking you the pass, and the name, and everything. He saw my pass, that I was born in Deblin and I was registered in Deblin. He says, you take the pass and go right home. And from there, they'll send you. OK.

Do you remember any particular thoughts at this point?

Thoughts?

Thoughts that you had about the fact that you were going to probably be drafted?

That I'm not going so fast. That was my thought. If I was a second citizen, why should I go so fast? So I figured, I got time. Listen, they'll-- any time, they'll take me to go on the butcher block and be something that-- when you're not a citizen in the country that they likes you.

So I went back to work. And the boss, he was a religious guy. And he said to me, what do you have to worry about? He says, you stay in here. He says, work, you're getting paid. He says, there's plenty of work. I got work because they took out all the guys to go to the army. And I was left with only with a few, just maybe four guys. He says, you stay and work. And that's it. So I did. Meanwhile--

Did you discuss this with your family at all?

No, no, I didn't.

Did you-- had you had any plans for the future when all this happened?

Well, I didn't know what kind of war it's going to be. I didn't know what-- that the war is going to be mainly against the Jews. I thought each government will come in, and then you'll go to work, and listen, it'll be normal. But it wasn't like that.

So he talked me and my boss. And I stayed. I stayed. The war broke out September the 1st. I woke up in the morning and want to go to work. Streetcars are already not going. What happened? At night, they had some kind of shooting from the planes. And it wasn't going so right.

So the boss calls me. We had a niche building. We had in the hallway our telephone. And if somebody heard the phone, they used to pick it up and so used to go in and say, hey, it's for you, or it's for him, or it's for her. So anyways, he calls me, I should walk to him. I says, how are you going to walk? It'll take you a whole day to go there.

He says, we'll find transportation. So I walk over to him. This was the first day. And we got on the job maybe about 12:30. But there was already a mess. The first bombardment was on the Jewish hospital. There was a lot of patients.

And the hospital was called Czysta. This was on the name after the street. This was a regular Jewish hospital, a huge one, like comparison here Mount Sinai. Was already bombed in a lot of casualties from the doctors, nurses. And even they had a Red Cross on the roof painted before. It was already bombed.

And was going on bad. The shopping, you couldn't buy no more anything on the streets. And the Germans were going on with their plan. They came every night. And the daytime was quiet a little bit. But they came suppertime on Warsaw-- before suppertime, when it was still light. And they gave a few bombs and they went away.

And the boss got me somehow transportation. We went there for the first five days while the war was going on. And all of a sudden, we hear on the radio that the Germans are close to Warsaw. That time, the mayor of the city, his name was Starzynski.

So he gave orders that each man or woman from that and that age should come to the warehouses, will get a gun. What good is a gun for me? I don't know how to handle it. And we'll show them how to shoot. And they'll put them on the roofs to shoot to the planes.

Meanwhile, the Germans started heavier and heavier. So they came, started to come lunchtime, suppertime, and they did their jobs. Warsaw was already in a turmoil, turned down, a lot of buildings destroyed, a lot of casualties. Because the people went in the basements. And those buildings that were hit, everything fall on the people. There was nothing you can do about it.

So couldn't go no more to work. The Polish police was in charge of grabbing to work. They needed loading, and unloading, and this, and that. This was the sixth day. Was a Friday-- wait, yeah, first started Friday morning, was a Friday the next week. And the police grabbed me right out from my bed at night.

They came to you where you were living?

Well, they went door by door, house by house.

They went house to house?

Right. And they-- whoever was in the house, they took him out, they gave him a shovel. And they sent me-- there was a suburb by the name Zoliborz. And there was a build up, beautiful suburb. It was brand new. And over there was the only station that the Poles can still use it. But the rest of them were burning.

This is a railroad station?

A railroad railroad.

A railroad station.

Yes. The main railroad station was burning. In that day, we were walking from one place to the other. I walked by a factory, like where they made cigarettes. And everything was spread out on the streets. I had a sack in the back of me. And I throw in a few packs of cigarettes.

We went by a factory that they made the whiskey. The Poles, they had little bottles, like in here, the samples. So I throw in a few bottles. We went by a place where they baked the crackers, the Polish crackers. They were black, they weren't like in here, but some kind of mixture, like pumpernickel. So I throw in crackers, candy-- I throw in candy. I had almost a half a rucksack. And luckily, I had my money, whatever I needed, I took it out. I left the suitcase in by that woman, by that Goldstein.

You thought you were going to come back?

Yes. And we went to the Zoliborz. And I see a train pulls in. And we are digging trenches around there, between the train and that main building. And there is a guard. And he walks around. And he says to me, the Jews greeted-- one another greeted-- they want to know, if you're Jewish, they used to ask you, [HEBREW]? It's kind of Hebrew word. So yes, I said, [HEBREW].

That means, are you one of the people, right, are you one of us?

Yeah. Yeah. And he was a corporal, a reserve, a corporal. And he was guarding the train because they're going to load on the train, they're going to load ammunition, horses, cannons, who knows whatever they loaded in a huge, long train. And he started to talk. He said to me, I need a cigarette. I didn't have a cigarette for two nights and two days.

So I grabbed the rucksack. Here, I said. And the cigarettes that they made in Poland in Warsaw, that brand happened to be Mowa, would spell M-O-V-E. Anyways, I gave him. He says, I'll only take one or two maybe, he says. And I thank you. OK, I said, keep the whole package.

I says, could you tell me-- maybe you don't want to tell me, I says, but could you tell me where the train is going? He says, we going, I think, to Lublin. Well, if he's going to Lublin, Deblin had a station, like comparison to the United States, Chicago.

So I says, if you go into Lublin, if you going, I says, you have to pass by Deblin. There was no other way you can go from here. He says, why do you ask? I says, I would like to get on that train. He says, you know I can't take you. I says, well, as a Jew, I says, maybe you can look away because I see you guarding. And you're standing on the steps most of the time.

I says, you'll stay on the steps, I'll get in, and by Deblin, I'll jump down. He says, I'll let you know later. So meanwhile, he came back. I gave him those crackers. I gave him other stuff. I gave him candies. And we got so friendly and everything. He says, the train is leaving by sundown. We going out. I says, whatever I got in my suitcase isn't so important. I want to go home to my town. So I jumped on the train. He let me in. He stood in front of me.

Your parents had no idea you were going to come or anything?

No, they didn't know from nothing, didn't know from nothing. Meanwhile, the train supposed to take maybe three, three and a half hours. It took a whole night. And in the morning, around by, I would say, 10 o'clock, we reached that section coming between Deblin and other roads. So I said, I'm familiar now with that area, I said, I'll jump out.

Soon, the train stopped, it didn't have a way to go through, so I jumped down-- didn't have nothing with me, a few bucks in my pocket-- and walked to the city. All those army camps were already bombed. They were burning. You could see smoke and fire from all over. And as I come closer to the city, nobody is there. The whole city is empty. There was no people. There was a few guards, which I didn't know them, I've been away so long, few police.

And right away, they arrest me. Where did you come? What happened? Where did you come? I took out my pass, and I show him. It says Deblin and everything. The other guy, one guy to the other, says, no, he must be a spy. Well, maybe he got a false pass.

So they took me into the police station. And there was a sergeant sitting by the table. There was no lights. But it was in the daytime. Anyways, give him the pass. He says, from where did you come? I said, from Warsaw. He says, come on, there wasn't trains already more than a week. I says, well, I have I have nothing to prove it to you. But I'm telling you the truth.

Meanwhile, my luck-- you have to have always a little bit luck, a little touch of luck helps you more than money-- that the Germans were just in the time, the Germans came again, and they started to hit the street. And he got scared. He left the passport right on the table. And I'm sitting like I'm sitting in front of you. And he jumps down in the basement, I took the pass, put it in my pocket, and I walked out. And here, they really gone. But I went sideways by the buildings. Buildings-- they weren't such large buildings. But anyways, came to my house, nobody there, walk in.

You were looking to see where your family was.

Right. Walked in in the house, the furniture stays, the pots and pans are there, no people. I was tired from the whole night, I laid down on the floor. And I took a nap until the evening. I had in the rucksack still a few crackers. And so I ate it and that's it. I lay down on the floor. I woke up then after that nap. I have to find out where they are. Where can you find out? There's nobody there.

I go out, I see in the basement a light. The custodian, he was a Pole there from all the buildings. He was going around and taking-- the stores, well, they were empty almost. He took out flour, he took out whatever he could. And he stuffed it in that basement. And I walk over to the window. And I recognized him.

I said, Janek? He says, what do you want? I says, I want to know where my family. He says, everybody run away this way. Where, I don't know, but that road. So I figured, that night, I pick myself up, and I went the whole night. The Germans in the daytime, if they saw people traveling one place, they used to go down with the planes and ra-ta-ta-ta, laid them flat.

So I walked. I came to the nearest town, was that little town Ryki-- 10 miles. Almost the whole night, I walked. Because every time you hear a truck, you're afraid. You're running in the woods. Came in in the town, was already morning.

People are full packed. There was a cross town, like from all the towns that the guys were running, women, men, they were running. Because the radio said that the Russian Army is going to come so far. So people run over on this side in order not to be by the Germans because they knew what's going to happen.

So anyways, came in in the town until I asked, I found my whole family there. Since my mother would-- didn't want to leave sisters, and brothers, and children, and cousins, and-- so we stay there. All of a sudden, we were one day, another day. You could find something to eat.

I see. So your-- how long did your family and you stay in the town of Ryki then?

That's what I'm going to tell you now. I came in, and we found something to eat, we cooked. We cooked for all the family. There was over 40 people, what we found pails and everything. And since a lot of people run away from town, that was in the corner, there was a blacksmith.

And we used his shop. We used to put up on that blower there, we used to put our pails, potatoes, and this, and that. And we ate. OK. Friday morning, my father decides that he wants away from that town. So OK, we take all the children. And we take the mother, the father, and only our family went away.

Now, do you remember what month this is now?

This is in September. The war was going now.

It's still in the first month of the war in September?

The whole war took almost two weeks. So it was the second week, beginning the second week. And we try that going to east. We went in in a big, huge farm. And we came to that farm, we went in in that barn, where the farmer had all this supplies. We paid him to go in and sleep over the night.

And in the morning was Saturday, and they religious, they wouldn't they wouldn't walk no more. So we sit there. Saturday night, my mother decide, no, she can't stay there. She says, we have to go back, together with the family. So Sunday morning, we woke up early, sundown. And we took our packages, whatever they had, and we walked back to that little town.

It happened so that all the soldiers that they run from front, this was a cross town. They had to run through there. And some of them couldn't walk already. They throw away the shoes. So their feet was already hurt. So they used to sit behind trees, and here, and there. Meanwhile, the German spy planes flew by, and they took pictures. And we are preparing ourselves for lunch.

So again, we peel potatoes, put up the pails on that place where we cooked by that blacksmith. And it was almost ready to eat. As we were almost ready to read, soldiers, the Polish soldiers barged in with their guns. OK, everybody, stay still. We need food. OK, take it. What can I do?

So they took it. Whatever was left over, we divide it between ourselves. So I was standing by the door. And each one, there was no place where to sit. You stood and you ate from the dish.

All of a sudden, a bomb came down. And from that detonation, all the glasses, all the windows had fallen in the dishes. And that's all. It was an end to that food. And we started to run. I took a little sister. That time, she was about eight years old. And I took a cousin. She was younger. She must have been about five years old, took them under my arm.

And there was a bridge right by the-- I dived under the bridge. Underneath, there was water. But I was going with my pants, and shoes, and everything, in the water. On the other side were fields, potatoes. And I went in. I laid them down face down. And I laid with my face up to the sky.

And the German planes were coming one after the other, one after the other, until the whole town was leveled. Everything was burning-- the wells, the electric wires, the trees, the poles, the fences, everything was burning-- the houses, everything.

And that day-- this was a Sunday. They started in the afternoon until nightfall. The town lost 800 people, except casualties, like one of them knock off fingers, one of them chopped off feet or foot, whatever it is. After that, we started to go and look for the family.

You were out in this field with the two little girls?

I am in the field with the little girls I picked up. There was a lot of people there. They had the same idea. But under the leaves of the potatoes, the planes couldn't see you so good. When they flew away, when they went away, so I went out, and I came back in town to look for my family. I go on that-- there was a big meadow, where the people were laying. They didn't have no place-- they didn't no chance where to run. And there was people crying, and yawning, and moaning, help.

So some of them, I recognized by voices. Since I've been away so many-- a few years from town, but I recognize some voices. And I went over to help them. Some of them had arms lost, some of them a leg, like I said. Tried to help them, but I'm not a doctor. I don't know what to do.

Anyways, from our family, two aunts-- one of them lived overnight because a splinter from a bomb went through in the

back and cut the meat in the bones in half. The bones were in half too. And the blood went out. And she died in the morning. The other one disappeared like I told you before. She was blown to pieces. We couldn't find nothing. So anyways, a day after that, the Germans came in. This is my first visit with the Germans.

So this is two weeks into the war. After this terrible bombardment, the Germans come and occupy the town. And this is the town Ryki.

That little town, Ryki, that's right. Everything was burned out.

And you've already lost two aunts at this point from the bombardment.

Right. One motorcycle with a basket, the driver sits with a gun, like I have my glasses here. And in the basket sits a guy with a machine gun mounted. And in the back, there is another soldier, sits in the back full equipped with hand grenades, with everything.

They drive in, and they start screaming, wherever people are-- people lived in the basements, on the field. Everybody out on this and this place. OK, listen, put your hands on your head and go out. All right. Went out. My father-- the women was sent back. My father was sent back because he was with a beard. He looked a little older. They didn't do nothing to them. And from that place, they marched us right to the corner.

This is all the young men in the town or who else?

All the young men.

From what age to what age would you think?

At that time, there was no age.

They just they took on appearance?

They looked on your face that you still capable of work, they took you.

Did you get to say goodbye to your parents or anything?

No. Well, we were running out first. But I still came back to the parents. This was not the end yet. This is just the beginning. And we came out to that place. There was a huge hole. And the German headquarters was sitting in that hole. It was from a bomb. And they were having a few tables and everything. And an officer jumps out when they brought us in that field.

And he starts putting us in lines, searching full searching. I had bought myself a watch on a mega watch in Warsaw, a good watch, and I see they're going to take it. So while I'm standing in line, there was hundreds and hundreds of people. I took my stocking, took off my shoe, and took the watch on top here, put the stocking over the watch, put my shoe back, and tightened the shoe.

And I walked by. They just frisk you up and down. Have you got any money, any valuables? I said, that's all. Took a chance. They found me, they-- right on the spot, I would have been shot. But like I said, a little luck works with you, you are a smart aleck. And they took us out. They gave us shovels and-- to bury all those dead horses and everything, dead Polish soldiers, digged holes and throw them in.

Now, is this a group of Jewish and non-Jewish people?

Yes, but they called out the Jews separate and the Poles separate. See, the Poles, they weren't beating. See, they should know who they are and which they are. And I started to work. I was used to work, but not like that. The whips are going over your head. And they're kicking you. And they-- it's already terrible already. This is the first rendezvous with the

Germans.

And since we buried all the dead horses and everything-- and the dead soldiers, they put us all together. And they marched us torch Deblin, towards [INAUDIBLE]. Excuse me. By that time, all those bases, military bases, were already bombed out.

So they took us to the main street. There was a bakery there by the name Kaminski, a Jewish bakery. And the officer went on the balcony. And there was a lot of cameras from the German papers. And we must have been over 1,000 Jews, maybe more, maybe close to 2,000 too. I didn't count them. But I saw, there was a lot of Jews there. And he went up on the balcony, took a bread, ripped pieces, and throw it like you throwing it for animals, for animals.

And naturally, you were hungry already. You worked a whole day. And this was already close to night. And they had beautiful weather. I've never seen weather that we worked for the Germans that time-- perfect-- no humidity, no nothing, nice, perfect. And he throw pieces.

Naturally, everybody was running like animals. Each one pushed the other one, want to grab it. I couldn't get one. Listen, I couldn't get one. And they took pictures. And they put it in the German military paper. And they showed it how hungry the people are. And we came to help them. We giving them food. All right.

Then they marched us on the airbase, which they bombed-- mostly they bombed the fields and made a lot of holes. And we had to fill up those fields. My meat and skin was already cut off from that working fast and everything.

At night, they pushed us in in a hangar. And all the glass was splashed, laying out like nails on the whole floor, on the cement floor. Lay down. So I started to move a little the glass. And since they heard that I moving the glass, I got a beating and kicking. No, you have to lay on the glass. If I hear anything, you'll be shot on the spot. OK, so you lay down on the glass. You were--

So how long were people at this forced labor here to fix this field? How long were you there?

This was the next day already. The first day, we buried the horses. And then at night, they marched us in and they laid us in that hangar.

To work to repair the airfield?

Yeah. And the next day, we went out early in the morning, by about 4 o'clock, when it started to get light, and start working. So they gave us barrels with water. We rolled them right to that field. And we-- part of the Jews throwing the dirt, and part spilled the water, and then we rolled back everything, and running-- not in slow motion, but everything has to be run fast. And they were riding on bikes, and beating you, and rushing you. You couldn't catch your breath. All right, because you were young, you could still withstand.

I see the blood is gushing and everything. There is no way I can stop it. So the next morning, before we went to work, a few officers came out. And he says, who is sick? All right. So I registered too. I went in the line. He says, no, you're not sick. This is nothing, he says. I mean, sick if you can't work, and you can't breathe, you're sick, he said to us. All right. So he released a few older men, a few older Jews. And they promised us that they're going to bring soup and bread.

They hadn't given any proper food yet?

Nothing. The only thing you could, from the barrels, while running, you could give a sip of that water, that dirty water-- nothing. And for three days, they wouldn't give us nothing. But each day, they released. And here, the blood is gushing. So I went, and that night, when it got late, the third night, and I tore off of my shirt a piece of shirt, and I wrapped it around. And the shirt was glued, like with glue, like Elmer's glue to my hand, both hands.

Because they wouldn't give any medical attention to your hands.

No, they didn't bother. So anyways, and I walk out to work in the morning. And I tried to roll it and show that officer. OK, he writes me out a paper that I can go home. Of course, there was a different officer. Each time, there was a different German, I don't know. OK.

As I want to go home, there comes another officer on a motorcycle-- no, nobody goes home. They got an order to take out whatever they can from that airbase because they probably had an idea that the Russians are going to come to the Vistula. And they need every hand they can get. And here, I can do nothing. Whatever irritates it, that's bad.

So he gives me to a big, huge trailer. There was a tractor and three trailers. The driver, everything, was military men and everything. And we had to load telegraph poles, poles from electric lights, other lumber. And anything they got a hold of it, they shipped it over the Vistula on the other side, the other side whatever they going to stay. We unloaded there, and came back, and loaded again, but in the hurry.

And here, I see, without food, that's the third day. Here, I'm bleeding. I see, I wouldn't withstand no more. So I went over, and I picked up, and put a log on my shoulder. And I put my hands on the edge of that wagon-- no, this hand, on the right hand, and I let it go from my right shoulder and right down there. And that smashed the three fingers. I didn't broke them, but it cut off the meat and everything. And the blood started gushing from that side. And I unrolled it. All right.

So he says to me, OK, you lay down. But I want you to tell me the truth, the officer. All right. I didn't understand-- in those days, I didn't understand too much German. But I could figure out what he wants.

So he takes out a yarmulke. And he takes out a prayer book, a Siddur. And he says, what does it say in here on the bottom? That says, that's the place where it was printed in Warsaw, on that and that street. And the manufacturer, his name is so-and-so.

Are you telling the truth? I said, you can see. You can read it yourself. OK. So I was laying. The next day, he says, you'll stay overnight. The next day, you're going home. OK. As I go home, in the morning, he lets me out, I'm already happy. As I walk, another group Germans came-- back to work.

So they're-- all these German officers are giving conflicting orders because they're so busy with this base.

On their own, if they would only obey orders Hitler gave them, some Jews might have gotten through their fingers. But each one was for them own. First, they looked from you some valuable things, then they killed you, then they raped you, then they did anything, and they won. OK.

And as I walk, I was already on that street, walking in on my street where I lived. Another bunch of Germans came on bikes, and let's go. And I showed him that paper that the other German gave. He tore it to pieces. You see, that's how it worked. And he takes me on the road.

And those soldiers from the front, they are dirty from the dust and everything. And they screamed, kill those Jews, kill those Jews. Because they are-- it's their fault. They started the war. We started the war. We started the war. They are-- it's their fault, and this, and do this, and do that, and do this, and kill them. Just kill them. Torture them to death. And there was a guy, a soldier, he was with his eyes, he was closing up. There was a sickness when he talked to me. And he was very mean.

All right, I'm looking for a way how to get to him, how to bite him in, how to make him a human being. It's not nice to say but everybody in those moments thinks for themselves. And here, as we stay on the road, and we fill in the holes that the tanks ripped out, there's a Polish woman walking, a young woman, very young. And she was wearing a basket with plums, ripe plums, in fall, ripe, beautiful plums.

And I said to him, would you like some plums? He said, no, uh-uh. I said, would you like that woman? The way I can explain it to him. He says, yes, do you know her? I said, yes. I told him a white lie in order maybe I'll get out of it. OK. He says, OK, come with me. And he points the gun like that. The gun goes always like that.



I walked over to that woman. I said, I'm sorry, I said. But he said, you have to go with him because that's the way it is. It's a war. She says, why me? What did I do? I says, I don't know. You talk to him. He only took me here, I should be interpreter. So all right. She starts to cry. But there was no choice. She has to go with him.

So he goes down in a burned-out building, he comes out, it's just like a new person. He comes over to me, he taps me in the back that I'm his friend. OK, if I'm your friend, give me a break. Let me go home, eat something. I didn't eat, I didn't drink any water. He says, lunchtime, I'll let you go.

So he start taking out pictures. And he shows me that after the war, he's going home, he'll marry this girl. She's a beautiful girl. But he hasn't got a ring. He wants a ring from me. So I told him a white lie. I'll get you a ring, but you can't go with me. I can't-- you can't go with me.

When you have a little luck, everything works with you. He says, OK, I'm going with you to town. I'll stay on the market, he says. But I'll wait so many minutes. If you're not back, I'll come, and I'll shoot you. I said, OK, you'll do that. I came home. He let me go home.

This is back to the town of Ryki, you're out--

Not Ryki, I'm out from Ryki, back to Deblin.

Deblin-- your family's in Deblin already?

My family's back in the house. But they don't know where I am because I was taken away.

Let me just get this straight so that we get it straight for the story. You're-- when the family is in Ryki, you're part of the group of young men who are pulled out to do all this forced labor.

Right. But then later, they came back, a day or two.

And then the families were allowed to go back to their homes?

Temporarily, yes.

And you knew that they were back in town?

No, I didn't.

Oh, you didn't know where they were.

No, because I was on the roads and all over. In town, I wasn't.

So-- and you're working on all this different forced labor gangs all around the area.

Right. Every time, a different German catches you and he takes you to work.

And each time, you're trying to get-- to go back to your family, and every time you get to go back to the town, another labor gang picks you up.

Another army gang picks me up.

OK, I got it straight.

So I came back. And I'm not going the way he should see me go in on that street, on that house. I go-- instead of going

left, I go right, and I go around, and I jump from the backyard, and come behind that building. And I walk up right the steps, walked up on the third floor, went on the attic. And whatever there was on the attic, I built myself a hiding place. I crawled in. And I lay.

Through the opening from the cracks, I see, he's running with a few Jews in to show him where so and such a guy lives, with a gun. And they pointed. They have no choice. They pointed right here. I didn't see how he walked into my house. But later, I found out from my mother what he said to her. And my mother told him the truth. I've never seen him. He was taken away such and such a time.

Because she has no idea you know hiding in the attic?

No, I'm on the attic. I came down at night. And I'm laying there, and luck was with me. Anytime I need it, this I can say it, till the end, luck was with me, whatever I did. I lay till at night. And meanwhile, at night, I went down, I washed off the blood, and everything, and put it back a clean piece of cloth. And when--

But your family still doesn't know you're hiding in the house?

Yes, when I came down, they saw me. And I told them everything.

So that night, you come down, what was your family's reaction to see you?

They were happy to see me. But listen, they didn't know-- you didn't know what the Germans are planning, what the next move, what this, since this town was occupied by so many Germans. This town had more Germans than the whole Warsaw district--

Because of the military bases

--or because of military bases. There was all kinds of outfits. There was navy, there was marines, there was infantry, there was artillery, there was telegraph engineers, there was all kinds of outfits, everything from the war-- young and reserve, full packed, all the streets are laid with them.

And then here, I'm laying on top on the attic. An as long they don't go search on the attic, I'm saved. So this was going on for a few days. And until I decided, I'll go down. The minute I go down, there was a little hill, they grabbed me for other work.

So your family kept you hidden in the house, and then you yourself thought, you'd go out into the street. Is that it?

No, I didn't go out to the street.

You went down just to the first floor of the house?

Yeah, I went down to sleep. One night, I'll try one night.

To sleep in--

In my own house.

--in that-- in your own house, and not to sleep in the attic.

Right. So they came at night.

And they were searching houses for people?

Right. They were searching. They-- you couldn't get out of it.

So they took you out of your own bed in your own house?

Right. I had to get dressed quick. And they took me to other work. And they took me to other places. But at night, they let you go home already.

So they took you to forced labor around the town of Deblin, but they let you come back into your own house to sleep?

At night. It was always a different a different way of doing things by them. This happened in mine area. In other areas, I don't know how they did. But anyways, they took me to the railroad and fix some-- those wooden ties. We had to take it out, and beating, and knocking.

And that day, I had a day. All my body was stabbed with the bayonets that they had on the guns. Until I saw the night already, it was like a new world for me. Came home at night, the next day again and again. And it was going on for weeks.

I said to my mother, until the border is open, I'm going to run away. I have to leave. I wouldn't withstand it because it's impossible. The conditions aren't so good. You're healthy, OK, everything, but how long can you be healthy like that? She says, are you going to leave us in here and run away? I says, well, I have no choice. You know how it is. She says, I wouldn't let you go. You have to stay with us, and this, and that.

I says, but Mother, you see what's happening. At night, she used to-- I got a lot of hair. So she used to pull my shirt off. And it hurt. The blood was already glued to my body. And OK, she said, no. In Europe, my mother said, no, even you go to die, and you accept it. OK. I listen to her. Didn't go. One day, I came home, and I said, this is it. I can't take it no more. I went back in hiding.

How long was this into the forced labor, how many months?

This didn't call forced labor, they just grabbed you. There was a grab. They used to come in and grab for every work. Every time they needed somebody to unload something, here they are. In every house, a lot of Jews were running over away to the border. A lot of Jews were left. So the only thing they had-- women, older men, and young girls.

So anyways, I came home, I went back to my hiding upstairs. Since they stabbed you, they killed you, there is nothing in the house. There is nothing, not even a little water. You have to go out. There is no running water in the house. You have to go out and you know it. My mother can't go out. The girls can't go out. So I decided, well, I'll go out early in the morning.

As I go out early in the morning, I brought in some water before they started to grab you for work. And I went. I see a line by the bakery where I told you, they took those pictures. So I stood in the line. Listen, a lot of Poles, I thought they were my friends. I thought so.

And I stood in the line until they got open. And each one would get a quarter of a bread. But you had to pay for it. But that's better than nothing. I was already maybe the 12th from the door. And there was three gendarmes. And they come riding on horses.

And they start calling out if there is any Jews. And I like I'm not a Jew. I look them right in the face. And they couldn't recognize me. All of a sudden, a little girl-- she must have been about 14 years old or 15. And she points the finger to me.

And right away, one of them picks up the whip and gives me a smack wrapped around with a whip. He pulls me under the horse, and picks up the horse, the horse should go right on me. But I was fast. I was quick. And I slid out of it with his whip, pulled his whip from his hand. And he got mad. So he jumped on that horse. And he starts kicking me.

But I covered my head because he shouldn't hit my brains. He's kicking, get up. OK. He took me to a place. There used

to be at school before the war. And over there was standing a company or maybe more, a lot of soldiers. And they were occupying the school.

And in the back, they put up huts, all kind of just covered the roof. And there was a kitchen, there was everything in to cook for the soldiers and everything. And these trucks were parked in the mud. So they went out and they brought old bricks from the buildings where they bombed. And you'll start working.

I wrapped around my hands with rags. And I started to lay. I was very handy, always very handy. And they brought loads of sand and loads of bricks. And I took a 2 by 4. I evened out the sand, laid the bricks, brick by bricks. And the officer stays in the window.

And he watches me, the officer from that division, whatever it's called. And he's looking. He stays there. I saw him. He stays there for minutes and minutes. He's watching me. He doesn't say a word. And I laid the bricks. So one guy kicked me. One soldier kicked me. So up in the window, he says, leave him alone. Like to say, he does his work good. OK.

Then when he got dressed in his uniform and everything, he came down, he says to me, are you Jewish? I said, I wish I wasn't. Yes, I am. He says, you're going to work for me. Would you like to work for me? I said, what do I care? I'll work for you.

OK. He says, you see that car? You wash it up. Polish it up nice. OK. I says, I have no pails. He gave me pails. And I went. And I polished up his car. He came out, looked around, good, fine. He says, now, you'll come every day, he says, and you'll light the stoves to make warm for the soldiers. And you'll wash the windows, sweep the floors, he says. You'll have a whole day's work. Would you like that?

I said, yes, what can I say? I says, but you write me out a paper that I'll be able to come to you. He says, yes, OK. He says, you'll get food. All right. So he says to that other soldier, he says, take him to the kitchen. Let him have some soup. All right, got some soup, came back to work, light all the ovens.

All right, was already night, gives me that paper. I go home. He says, in the morning, you'll be back. All right, with that paper, they didn't bother me, the other soldiers. They were a little more organized. I came back. He has to go away.

Now, your family hadn't known where you were all day when this--

They knew that I was by the Germans, I mean, they caught me to work because I was the oldest from the brothers-- from two sisters too, but from the brothers, I was the oldest. And I came in the morning, they let me light the stoves and everything, put in wood and everything.

Then the other German says to me, you're going to go out and wash the windows from outside. There was a two-floor building. OK. Gives me two pails. They had those canvas pails on their trucks. Right away, they were equipped, almost like the Americans with everything. And he gives me two pails. I fill up with water.

He says, fill it up full. All right, I fill it up full. What do I care? All right. He says, you see that ladder? You go up on the ladder. But take the two pails with you right away on this same spot. I said, OK. He looks at me.

By that time, the officer already came back-- not that he was so friendly to me, but he came back. And he saw it that I filled up two pails, and I took one pail, put it in here, and the other one in here, grabbed the ladder, and I started walking.

And he opens the window. He says to the soldier, you see, you see, he's smarter than you. You thought you got him, huh? All right, went up on the ladder. So he got mad. And when I was before the balcony, like that high, he wanted to kick the ladder.

Well, I grabbed it one arm. I grabbed. I was strong and I grabbed that balcony on edge from the balcony. And I got up on the balcony with the water. Half was spilled already from kicking the ladder. Then I started to work. I worked. OK.

Anyways, came another day, moved forward to the east. So I lost my job. They came, they grabbed me again-- other work, other work.

This is all during 1939?

This is all in the beginning. I don't know if you have enough records for that to record it. Anyways, I'll go as far as they allow me. Anyways, I go back home. By that time, came an order, the Jews should wear on the right arm over the elbow a five-inch band with a blue star. This was the order from that commandant from the area. All right. Can you do?

Now, was your-- this was when they began to organize occupied Poland?

Right. Every week, every day, they came out with different orders.

Was this area being made part of-- was this made part of the Third Reich or part of the General Government?

No.

This part was made part of the General Government?

Right, General Government occupied under the Germans.

OK. We're going to stop at this point from this section. And on the next tape, you'll tell me what happened after the occupation was properly organized. And we'll talk about what happened when everybody had to wear the stars and how the town was organized.

Yeah, I said, this is one more tape, that's all?

No, we got we got plenty of tape.

Oh, if you got many plates, I can tell. Otherwise, I would cut things.

We'll talk to him about it.

I would take out from my memory certain things.

We'll ask them how much tape they have.