

I'm Sylvia Abrams. Today we are interviewing Marcel Weintraub, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section.

Mr. Weintraub, you were telling us about how you hid by taking a Polish name and working for a German officer and how you found a letter there that said that someone was going to inform on you. Tell us what happened next.

Well, as I mentioned, I think, before, I hid the letter in my pocket and went to the men's room and tried to read it, to make some sense out of it and what I should do. So I read it. I understood it.

I knew where it came from, too. So I left the office, and that was the end of it. Then I didn't know what to do, again.

What's going to happen? I'm without a job, not that I needed a job, but I needed an occupation to get my mind off. The oppression was crushing my mind, just to look at it. If you have nothing else to do, you can't lock yourself in a room and say yeah, I'm going to sleep it over and forget about it because the duration of it was so long.

So you had to expose yourself to the outside. When you expose yourself, you're seeing the same misery surrounding you. It's hard to cope.

But once you have something on your mind, I thought the job would be-- I don't know if he paid me anything or not, tell you the truth. What could he have paid me? Maybe in a month I would have made for a loaf of bread. So I was not concerned about the money I had to make.

Oh, I used to steal coal. We had enough coal to heat our apartment. In the office, I used to steal bucket of coal every day when I went out. I had the keys. I went down and unlocked the door of the coal bin, loaded up a pail, and carried it out every day.

I never got caught with it. It was something that I thought I would do. For a bucket of coal, I could get a loaf of bread. So that fed me for a long time. It was the only advantage.

One day I also went at the apartment, and I opened the drawer from the nightstand, and I found two bullets in the drawer. I said, well, I'll take the bullets today. Maybe tomorrow I'll take the gun, if I can find it. But I never found it.

So one day, the engineer asked me for something. He says to me, what you got in your pocket. Let me see what you got.

He took everything what I've got and there was two bullets. He must have known that the bullets are missing. He knew. He called me a [GERMAN]. I don't know what the actual meaning is of a [GERMAN] in German, but I think a sneaky little boy, something like that, must be.

So he found the two bullets. So he was pulling his hair. He didn't know what to do with me. I'm going to call the Gestapo, he said. I'm going to have you arrested.

He walked around. He just didn't know what to do with me. I just didn't know. I did a silly thing to get caught like that.

But he never called the Gestapo on me. Evidently, he had a little pity. I don't know what happened. He cooled off and never said anything to me.

When you ran away from working at the office, how did you live next?

I tell you the truth, oh, I had another job. There was another German I talked. We used to get gasoline for our generators. On the construction, we had generators.

I was also in charge of the gasoline. What we used to get from one place, there was a German. Everything was owned by the Germans, so another contractor. I used to make out the requisitions, and he used to sign these.

So that was the next piece of work you found was to work there?

Yeah. I worked there.

Now this is still before forced labor. This is when you're looking, yourself, for work?

Well, I was not in the camp. The camp existed already, I think, at that time.

So just so we get things straight, in Krakow, they took the Jews, and they first closed the ghetto. Then they turned the ghetto into a work camp called Plaszow. Right?

No, no, no, no, no. The ghetto, they kept making it smaller and smaller. They kept taking people.

Well, what they used to do is we used to come out. The Germans would surround the ghetto. For no apparent reason, they used to shoot a lot of them out, just surrender the ghetto. As soon as they surrendered with the soldiers, they'd start panicking in the ghetto. People used to run from one place.

The Germans, as soon as they see somebody running, it was a good excuse for them to shoot them. They used to shoot a lot of them. The rest, they used to segregate them, and separate the old from the young, the disabled from the abled. You never knew which way you going to go when you're able, when you are disabled.

So they used to do all kind of their tricks, Aussiedlung they call it out, Aussiedlung pressure [INAUDIBLE], taking them from one part and putting them someplace else. So but they used to do it quite often.

At this time, you're sleeping in the ghetto basements or you're sleeping outside the ghetto?

I was sleeping in the outside of ghetto.

You're still under the Rozynski papers?

Yeah, but then I met a fellow, and he wanted to go out of town. There was a cafe, na Krakowskiej, on the Krakauer Strasse, street, run by sisters, nuns. We used to gather together there, other side without the Aryan side, na aryjskich papierach they used to call it. So we used to get together there occasionally, maybe once a week or so, and get a bowl of soup.

These were Jewish kids who were hiding on the Aryan side.

Right, right. There was one kid he was wearing a German railroad uniform, all kind of kids there from out of town, some of them I used to know. I used to get there once a week after that.

But less and less used to come into the place. One day I came in, and there was only two guys sitting there. I wasn't sure if they were Germans or if they were Jews. I'd never seen them before so it was that day. Then somebody told me that the Germans came in one day and picked somebody out of the place.

Realized this was a place that people who were hiding on the Aryan side were coming into?

Evidently, the Germans knew already. So I met a guy. I had a king card already made out. Some guys were making out false papers. Cost me a couple hundred zlotys.

So the guy made out a king card for me with the name I had, Rachinski. Then I used to go to the engineer every so often. I'd say I lost my paper. So he used to make me out another paper with that eagle. I used to give it to somebody else.

Then the kid asked me if I can loan him the king card, and he will bring it back. He's going out of town. So I said, why not. I felt kind of like at home, as much as I felt at home, I was.

In Bedzin, one day I remember I was riding the streetcar, right in the front it was only for Deutsche. I don't know, but it seemed to me like I had a satisfaction whenever I can beat their orders. So I used to get in where the German-- only for Germans. There was another section for not German. But I was not too anxious to go in the back.

So I came in the front. There was a kid looking at me. His name was-- his mother had a kiosk. A kiosk is a little booth where they sell newspaper and cigarettes.

His father fell in World War II, I guess. That's how the mother got-- but anyhow, I knew the kid well. Used to play soccer with him. Used to meet on probably a daily basis.

He wears a German uniform. He says to me, get out of my sight. I said, what the hell is he talking about?

He's looking around to see a German policeman or so. He's just a soldier. As he was looking, I snuck between the people, and I jumped out of the street car.

That was the end of it. I don't know if he would have really confronted, my size, not a big guy. So I had to be aware of those guys. too.

How long were you able to live like this, in hiding?

It came to a point where I didn't want to live anymore. I heard one day where Hitler had a speech. I was somewhere downtown. They had loudspeakers all around. I listened to the speech, not that I was interested. But I listened, screaming, actually. His voice was so powerful and penetrating, intoxicating, probably.

He says the Judenfrage [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. I said what the hell is he talking? As much as I don't understand German, I knew what he was referring to. There was no more Jews.

I said he's crazy. I'm here. As much as I don't see other ones, they must be somewhere, somebody there. But I guess he had them well under control at that time. The ghettos and the camps were formed already.

This is well into 1942, already, do you think?

It must be. Yeah. They had them so secured that he knew what he can do with them, just a maneuver away from whatever destiny that he wanted them.

So at that time, I went back into the ghetto. I said whatever is going to happen to the rest of them, will happen to me. I have no more power or desire to fight them or to run.

How old were you then?

16, 17. So I said I'm going back in. Whatever happened.

So I came to the ghetto. I met a kid I used to know before the war. His name was Janek Kane. He said I haven't seen you for ages. Where were you?

So I told him the story. He says, well, come on over to our house. We'll share whatever we've got.

So he took me over there with his sister and his mother and him. They were all, everybody, had to have a job. I don't remember if the mother worked somewhere or not.

But he worked somewhere, you know. Placowka, they call it, place of work. Some of them were better than others. I

don't know what to expect more, more desirable for the German government.

So she had a job in a brick factory. Ruzia, I think, was her name. I remember her before the war. She had red hair, blonde rather, a pretty girl. She was going to Lyceum, to the higher gymnasium.

A lyceum for girls?

Yes. Well, the supper, I don't know what we had, whatever we had. She said, well, I'll try to get you a job in the place where I work. I said I'll be good.

She came home next day and she said I got a job for you. You can go. There is a camp in the place and barracks. You'll sleep there and work there.

What kind of papers did you have now? Everybody needed papers. I didn't have any. You had still the old Rachinski papers, or you didn't have those either?

Well, the kid left with my papers. I never seen him back.

So you didn't have the Rachinski papers at all, then?

Nothing at that time. Not only I gave him the papers, I gave him a pair of boots. I had a pair of German boots. I don't know where I got them.

But I used to do as the people in the ghetto would tell me to go somewhere to a Polish family and bring in some stuff, what they had hidden. They'll compensate me for it. So I used to do that a lot and bring in whatever I could.

I guess I was fearless to walk in through the gate. Usually they what have you got, you know, and things. But whatever I could manage to pack around myself, not with big luggages. Didn't walk in with a briefcase or a big luggage, no, not in the ghetto. It wasn't that open, yeah.

But I had the ways to get in and out in the clothing, mainly. You know, maybe a little package with \$100 packed somewhere, where I didn't know about it, or porcelain, things like that. It was valuable. So I used to do a lot. That's how I made \$1. So now I got off track what I'm trying to--

You were telling about that this family took you in, and they recognized you, and the sister finds you this job. So now tell us about the job. This is a camp in the ghetto or a factory?

Outside the ghetto.

Oh, this is a work camp outside--

A worksite, yes.

--the ghetto?

Yes, it's a brick factory. She got me there. I came in to that camp. There was two barracks of kids, older people. I was the only one outsider. All of them were from the same city, from Miechow all of them from Miechow.

I didn't know any of them. The guy who took care of us, his name was-- Efroim. I don't remember his last name. As a matter of fact, I knew his first name till now. Now I've forgotten his first name.

But anyhow, he took me in. He said, well, we'll get you. You'll have a bed where to sleep. That's the main thing for me, a bed where to sleep.

The rest, it was still free. As long as I work, there's nothing-- I can't run away from work. But I worked, and that brick factory gave me a bed.

All those people in the camp, they used to wake up in the morning, they had their parents yet in Miechow. Everybody was getting parcels, you know. It seems like the shipment of UNRRA, or what they call Marshall Plan coming in every week with bread and butter and margarine and salami.

They all used to sit down before going to work. I had just a little bed. I never had a box for bread. But they used to, some of them, used to give me once in a while.

Then I had enough pride not to. I said, no, I'm not hungry. There's still that pride. Hungry, I was, yeah.

But I had that pride. I'd think, I'll find a way to make my own bread. I did.

How long did you work in this brick factory, then?

Oh, quite a while, I bet you 9 or 10 months, probably, there.

What did they have you do?

I was inside the Festung. It's a round, an elliptical building, a brick factory is. How should I explain?

It's made in a shape where there is eight entrances and eight exits. But it's all round. In one side, you lay the brick to be burned out. And in the other side, you put the burned out.

It's a 24-hour, all year round operation. It never stops. At that time, they needed so many bricks that it kept going 24 hours all the time.

So I used to put the bricks, lay the bricks in the oven, heat, great heat and dust. But I coped with it. There was one Polack with me. And he taught me how to do it, and I laid the bricks.

Once in a while I did something wrong, but he corrected me. He was nice to me. I worked there for a long time. Then, after work, the guys had to do this. There was a big piece of property with the brick factory.

So every night, two guys used to go out and watch the property with a dog. Watch the property. Just walk around it so nobody comes and digs up potatoes or things like that, I guess.

Who were the camp guards there?

Well, did we have guards there or not. I never actually seen any guards there. But the custodian was the guard.

No, actually, we have our own constitution. The guys, we knew the rules. We didn't go outside the barracks. We didn't supposed to.

But I did, whenever I came back from work and after work. I used to wash up and jump the fence. It's not that hard.

There was a store right next door. I used to go out to the ghetto on a Sunday or so. We had a day off. I used to get in the ghetto, just to keep in contact, just not to be in the camp.

Once you're in the camp, when I was not in the camp, I felt I wish I would be in the camp. I had a place where I could sleep. Once I got in the camp, it seems like somebody put hung around my neck, choking me. So I was never happy that way.

So you used to jump the fence and go into the KrakÃ³w ghetto to see what was going on.

I'd take the streetcar and go out. Then at night, we used to go. Some of the guys had a lot of money in that camp, from rich families. They had the families yet. So they didn't want to go for the night service, so they asked me. I used to go. They paid me for it.

So one night, I fell asleep. There was a little shack with the tools, the spades and the picks. So with the dog, I went into that. I was tired after a day at work. I fell asleep.

So there was another, a Polack, or a Volksdeutsche. I don't know what the hell he was. But he was watching over me yet. So he couldn't find me. So he went to that shack and found me in there sleeping.

So he took the lock and locked the door. Then went back to call the army on me, or I don't know who. But anyhow, I must have woke up right away, and I found myself locked in.

So I said what do I do now? What happened? Who the hell at night here could have come and locked me in? So I said the only one guy here is that guy who takes care. Oh, yeah, he had a clock. He had to turn some places, I imagine, for time or so.

So he locked me in. So shovels I had there and picks, it was nothing to knock the door out and get out. So I did that. As soon as I got out, he had no more evidence that I slept.

So in the morning, he asked me were you sleeping? I said no. I was not sleeping. You didn't catch me. I was not sleeping.

Well, I'll get you next time. I said, all right. You'll get me the next time. That's how I used to make \$1 here and there.

I took another night watch. At that time, the guy, the custodian said you're not going to watch the field. He said you going in here and stay, ducks, geeses, chicken. For some reason, the geeses were dying. I don't know.

So he said you're going to watch the geeses. He had a full room of them. I don't know how many.

He says, you're going to watch them before. He said before they die, when you see that they are ready to collapse, you kill them. I said, well, I don't know about that.

The room, at least, it stunk awful. But I fell asleep. I fell asleep. I woke up in the morning. I look, half of them dead.

So the guy comes in. He says, why didn't you kill them? I said I don't know. I didn't know when to kill them.

So the owner of the factory was a Czech by the name of [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], big, 6 foot, over 6 foot tall, big man in stature. He came in. He rapped the hell out of me, why I didn't kill the thing.

So he beat me up. And from then on, I said, well, I don't know. I was bleeding all over the face.

But I washed my face, went back to work. I said, well, won't worry about that. It's not the first time. I guess it won't be the last time.

I just kept working in that place. It was not a depressing place. We didn't see too many Germans. Occasionally, I think, there were some Germans walking around. But I could go out, whenever, on my desire to go out outside the two barracks.

You've described how the brick factory was and that you were there the 10 months. Tell us about where you were next and what happened, why you didn't remain in the brick factory until the end of the war.

No, from there, they finally liquidated. They tried to liquidate all the small camps in the KrakÃ³w. They wanted all Jews

in one place.

This is the German authorities decided to get rid of all these little camps?

We didn't know anything about it.

Because there had been a large chain of these small factories and camps all around the Kraków area, hadn't there?

Quite a few, I would say, at least a dozen of them, small places like that. So one day they came and loaded us up on trucks. I think we marched I don't remember, exactly. But they got us into the ghetto-- not to the ghetto, but to the camp, Plaszow.

They liquidated the Kraków ghetto and put the remaining people in Plaszow, then?

The ghetto still existed. There must have been, I don't know-- the ghetto existed and the camp existed. Because I remember after we got into the ghetto, they made once a count, a big deal. They counted, start counting. All day long what they were doing is lining up and counting.

Then some big shot Germans came in, young kids in their 20s, all 6 foot tall. And they're counting. Something didn't quite correspond, the numbers.

There was one, day man. I was maybe 20 feet away from him. They called him over and looked at the paper. They'd scream to each other. They pulled the revolver and shot that Mr. Katz, he was on the day man, and another guy.

Tried to shake up there-- There was a lot of unscrupulous-- the numbers-- I think what the Germans wanted is a greater number of Jewish people in the camp and less in the ghetto. It was evidently up to the Jewish authorities to do it.

But as the Jews, I guess, they didn't play along with the Germans that well, or they tried to stretch it a little bit. One day, the Germans got tough and they said you must. In order to show them that they are the authority in what they wanted them to do, so they shot the two of them right in the front of everybody.

You saw this?

Yeah. I saw that. I said aw, that's no good.

That camp was not finished yet. The camp was not finished. The front of the camp we had already a gate, a front entrance.

The towers were not meant yet. So I used to go out in the back. The back was still open. I knew that part.

Go ahead. Then I'll ask you the question.

I knew the part of where the ghetto, the camp was built. I knew that part well because we used to play ball back there. It was a big hill.

What I wanted to ask you is about how many people were in the Plaszow camp and about what ages were they.

Oh, at that time, I think there were some 4,000 or 5,000. The ghetto must have had twice as much.

Who were in the camp, what kind of people?

They were poorer people, most of the poorer people, the less privileged were in the camp. I don't know why it happened. But always it seemed that the poor people go first.

The poor people were first to be killed. The poor people were first to be transported into miserable places. Is that a law of nature, you think?

I don't know. What did you do in the camp?

Not much. I worked. There was all kind of jobs in the camp. Every day we had a different assignment.

I was still with a group, what we came from the brick factory. So most of the kids I knew. Then I had other kids, what I went to school with, and other camps. I mean, from the ghetto, some were kids.

I knew some of day men. One guy recognized me one day. He said are you a Weintraub? I said yes.

He was a handsome man. I don't remember his name anymore. But he used to ride with the Kommandant of the camp every morning on a horse. He didn't do me any good, but he didn't hurt me.

So he recognized me. I was Mr. Weintraub's son. I guess all day, or day men, what we had, it seemed to me they were all vulgar, most of them. How they evolved to become that way, none of them were nice. I never met any of them nice.

Who were they? Were they Jews who were in charge?

Yes, Jews were in charge.

Were there any German authorities there in the camp?

On the outside, only in the outside, and I guess the camp commandant, he lived in a new constructed. I don't know. That was a [INAUDIBLE] before. I don't remember that well.

But he was an ugly, ugly, big face. They all looked to me, like, it seems, a suited face for his occupation. Most of the time, he was drunk, they say. I don't know. I never went close to him.

What were the food rations and the living conditions in this camp?

Well, we used to get soup, mainly. Bread, I don't think we got any. Well, we were still in Poland. Most of the people had still some money. We had contact with the outside.

One day I remember they closed the ghetto off. Nobody goes on for work. Then they'd start panic, start getting hungry. There's nothing. If nobody goes out, nobody comes in, we run out.

We didn't have that much food. If you had a loaf of bread, I could eat a loaf of bread one sit down, as little as I was. The loaf of bread was 2 pounds, and I could consume that much. So it was all constantly hungry.

So when they closed the ghetto, and I remember the Ukrainian were watching outside the wire, the barbed wire. There were towers. They walked around every hundred feet or so.

So I walked out from the barracks. I walked toward the wires. The guy, that Ukrainian, is calling me. He said hey, you want some bread? I got a burlap bag of bread.

I said, all right. So he threw it over. I took the bread and went in the barrack and sold it. Then I got the money and I went back to the wires and threw back the money.

So food was coming in somehow. I don't know. But it seems like miracles. Sometimes you didn't know where it's coming from.

You mentioned the interaction between some of the prisoners, that the ones of you who that had been in the brick

factory all stuck together. What about the other people?

Well, I guess everybody had some friends or made some friends in the camps. We co-existed like that, under the conditions. One night, they came in. After all, collecting already so much of the gold and silver, and stripped the clothes off their back, and the day men and the Germans come in.

They said nothing to worry. If you give us the gold and the American dollars, what you've got now, it's been already a long time. The camps are there. Where the hell did they get the money?

But with the big blanket, and people throwing in their money. I said why do people do that? Why do you collaborate with your enemy? If you want to get rid of your dollars, throw them away. Why do you give them that?

Well, maybe that will help. No. You can't buy nothing from the Germans, just an illusion. They just stripping you day by day, or pulling a feather out of you.

How long were you in Plaszow, then, in this camp?

From that camp, I was lucky. They sent me out to another little camp, after they took all camps in. But I guess there were some conspiracy from the German side.

Because I didn't realize it at the time, but after the war I realized that. Schindler's camp was like a sanatorium. It's not a camp. Not that the conditions were so good there, but we felt safe.

Is that where you were shipped to then from Plaszow?

To Zablocie.

To Zablocie, which was run by Oskar Schindler?

Yes.

Mr. Banker was there. He's the owner, who owned the place was Mr. Banker a little Jew, plump, nice little Jew, never heard of him before the war. But they run it. I worked there.

We made cups, enameled cups. I worked by the furnace where they baked them. It was a hot job.

This is already 1943 or '44, then? Do you know?

'43 and '44. I was there for quite a while. Conditions were there, I hardly ever went for soup in the kitchen. So once in a while, I got real hungry, and I felt like something cooked. Otherwise, they let us have whatever we've got.

But it seemed like it was good. We didn't realize at the time. Really didn't realize that the guy is working against the Germans.

Now another time, we had once an appell in Plaszow, before I went there. They took hours. I don't know what they wanted, the Germans. But whatever they wanted, they counted every fifth guy, aus, and laid them on the bench, tried to scare him, or I don't know.

Their conscience didn't permit them to shoot them, I guess, just 25 lashes. Why? There was no reason.

They were saying that the construction, that the work is not going up to schedule. But that was just an excuse. Somebody told me when I was in the camp yet, they spread a rumor that Schindler heard about this. Schindler was a good friend of the lager, the camp alteste, or the camp-- how should I call them?

The lagerfÃ¼hrer?

Yeah, the lagerfÃ¼hrer, he was Goetz's friend. As he heard about it, he said uh oh. Something dangerous going on there.

So he took a ride out. They had cars, Mercedes. He came up right at the ceremony. We're in the middle of the ceremony.

He was a friend. They let him through the gate, evidently. The whole ceremony stopped at that time. We were lucky.

They were not going to shoot us at that time. I don't think they had orders to shoot. But whatever punishment they tried to exert on us, it just died out. So I couldn't realize. But today as you look at it, it's very possible.

I know that Schindler went to Israel after the war. He did a lot of good. There's nobody got killed in that camp. So there was something.

But, again, you didn't stay there till the end of the war.

No, from there, they took--

Why was that camp liquidated? What happened?

Well, the Germans tried to liquidate. They tried to take all the evidence. They had live evidence, meaning thousands of others, what they didn't get a chance yet to kill.

Oh, no. I forgot yet. When we were in Plaszow, we had the kapo from our own group. His name was Marysia Schoenfeld, Sheinfeld, something like that, or Hirschfeld, two brothers. But anyhow, they used to send out guys to work in different places.

You know, an SS man needed a garden, or he needed the floor waxed, or painting, or things like that. So they used to send out.

So one day I decided I'm not going to go. I'm just not going to go now. If not to go, the kids what I work with, they knew, they were afraid that I'm going to disappear someday. You know, the scare tactic they use. If one runs away, we're going to shoot the rest of you.

So they were always afraid of me. Especially, we had a couple older guys who they knew only one thing, that if one runs away, not always held water, not always, not always. Actually, they had to watch me.

They thought that you would run away.

Yeah, yeah. But anyhow, they went out one day without me. I went under a barrack somewhere and fell asleep. Not I fell, I wanted to steal some luggage, small luggage. They had a full barrack with luggages. I wanted to steal some small pieces of luggage. So when I go out, I can sell it for a piece of bread.

As I went there, I fell asleep. The barrack was built on, like, I don't know. When they built places like that, I think I seen on the pictures in Louisiana. They built homes.

They built them on stilts because--

Right, right, right. All right. So that's how it was built. So I ripped the floor and I went in there.

I tried to find a pencil to write something down. It was a piece of pencil. Couldn't find one. I didn't know what I'm going to write, anyhow.

But I said maybe someday somebody will come in and look. Somebody will find it. I couldn't find anything.

So I stayed there all day. The other 24 guys went out to work. They worked somewhere for a big shot. I don't remember his name. Also, he was well-known in the Jewish community as a beast, a cruel beast.

But anyhow, they came back. That was the end of it. Where were you?

I said, well, I don't know. I just fell asleep somewhere, and I didn't go. Oh, don't do that. Don't do that. It's dangerous. I said, well, that's one of the things, you know.

So a day later, we were working inside the camp. A sergeant comes up, we knew him well, Sergeant Zdrojewski, blond kid, 6-foot tall, well-built. He comes up and he calls kapo 25, group 25.

So we were in the group 25. The kapo goes over to him. I don't know, 30, 40 feet away, he's asking him some questions.

The guy, the kapo is giving him answers. All of a sudden, there was another kid with him, a German, blonde, Charlie, I think. He calls him over. He said to him, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH].

I said did I hear something? Then all of a sudden, he takes the kapo and goes. We had already ditches dug. We didn't know what for.

But dug a trench, didn't look like for a human, but a trench. Many of the trenches were dug already. He says to him, get undressed. And I could hear it. I said what's he going to do to him?

Finally, the guy takes his cap off and takes his coat off. He's telling him get in the ditch. Oh, I said, oh. I've never seen a sight like that yet.

Then he pulls his revolver and shoots him twice. We're standing there. I said what the hell? What happened? Why? What did he do?

Then the Sergeant says to us, line up. So we lined up. I was at the very end. I was practically the smallest one, anyhow.

So he started asking questions, the first guy, where he's from, what he's doing. Can he read?

Then he comes up to me, the last guy that we-- [GERMAN], he says to me. I didn't know what to say. I was 16, I think. [GERMAN]. I didn't know what to say.

The SS, that [INAUDIBLE], walks around, back and forth. He said [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. He said, I never seen a dumbest people in my life.

He walks, maybe, 10 times back and forth. He was fighting his own conscience, I guess. As I found out later on, he had orders to shoot the whole group.

The guy for what they worked the other day, he complained that the job wasn't done right. He said shoot them all. But as he looked at the group, I guess, he must have had some humanity in him. He just couldn't do it.

He just couldn't do it, I imagine. I could never do it. I guess nine out of 10 people couldn't.

So then he's looking at us and shaking. And said such a [GERMAN]. Such a dumb creatures never seen in my life. But he said finally [GERMAN].

So we started running. I said, well, I'd better not run, because they're going to shoot me in the back. Well, we finally got away.

Then another group came in later on. That scene must have gone on for a couple of hours, he kept us there. He just didn't know what to do. He was not ready to shoot 24 innocent people, I guess.

So we found out when he got back to the barracks and started talking, another group came in with 11 guys. They just called them aside right away and shot them all.

Northern Germany, it was in northern. They didn't care if they shoot Marcel Weintraub or Moishe Groinem. They wanted 25 people, I guess. Some of them, I guess, had some conscience. So we got away that time.

It was an awful sight. Things like that, it's hard to forget. It doesn't happen to everybody.

It stays with you, though.

I guess so.

Now this was in Plaszow, where this incident was?

Mhm.

Was it soon after that that you were all sent to the other place, to Zablocie?

Soon after that, they took us out to the other place, to Zablocie. Zablocie was a quiet place.

That was the place that was run by Schindler?

By Schindler, yeah.

So I just want to get a sense of the time. You're in Plaszow how long do you think was the time? 9, 10 months, a year, longer?

It was a long time to me, especially. Every day seemed like years and centuries. We didn't see a flower. We didn't see birds.

It seems like the world was all together in close. That there is no more life. There's no more beauty to nature. You just couldn't see all that.

Then when you got transported, you don't know why your group was picked and switched to the other group?

No, just a matter of luck, I guess.

Were you there six months, eight months, longer?

I imagine quite a while, quite a while.

From there, where were you transported?

From Zablocie?

Yeah.

Well, in Zablocie, we worked there for, I don't know, probably close to a year. Then from there, we went back to Plaszow. In Plaszow, they had the trains, the railroad they constructed, the railroad tracks.

OK. I need to ask you some other questions here. At that point, the ghetto of Kraków had been totally liquidated. there

was just--

I imagine so. Yeah.

So this is well into 1944, then, your return--

Must be '43 or '44, right?

I think it was '44 in Plaszow.

Yeah, they liquidated. They had all people already.

So the people are brought back from the factories and these other camps to Plaszow.

To Plaszow, and then from there, they distribute them to other small camps.

So where were you transported then?

From Plaszow?

Yeah. They sent you--

When they got back from Zablocie, we went back to Plaszow. That was the main camp.

Yes, so where were you transported then? You didn't stay there very long, did you?

No. In Zablocie, we had the KLs. I don't have a KL. They did tattoo me. They did tattoo me, like anybody else.

But I had a friend. He said, if you suck it out right away, you can do it, and it will never. I did it. I just didn't want to be tattooed by the Germans.

So they tattooed you in Zablocie?

In Zablocie, right.

You sucked it out right away so that you have no mark.

No. I had a little friend who was with me here, Max Biderman, same camp. He lived right across. He's got it. All others of them have it. I just didn't want to be tattooed by Germans. I didn't want to wear a band, either. Most of the time, I did not wear it.

We're going to have to stop to get ready for the next tape. Where were you transported to after the second time in Plaszow? Where you and the train--

We went to Germany.

Where in Germany?

On a train.

Where were you sent to?

Oh, I think our first stop was in Auschwitz. But in Auschwitz, they had so many trains. The Russians were on their heels. So they tried to get rid of them as fast as they could. I guess the operation was not efficient enough.

So what we're going to pick up in the next tape, then, is what happened when the Germans realized that they're losing the war, the Russians are on their tail, they're trying to liquidate the evidence in Poland, and you're part of the group that gets sent into Germany by way of Auschwitz. You'll tell us what happened then.

OK.

OK, thank you.

Good enough.