

1  
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,020

2  
00:00:03,020 --> 00:00:07,380  
We were talking about your  
experiences in Birkenau.

3  
00:00:07,380 --> 00:00:12,590  
Are there moments that  
you wish to talk about?

4  
00:00:12,590 --> 00:00:14,630  
You said you were  
able to get out of--

5  
00:00:14,630 --> 00:00:15,130  
Oh.

6  
00:00:15,130 --> 00:00:18,470  
--being a room boy.

7  
00:00:18,470 --> 00:00:26,810  
Well, you know, all of Birkenau  
was a continuous unbelievable

8  
00:00:26,810 --> 00:00:33,650  
horror story, much  
of which I'm sure I

9  
00:00:33,650 --> 00:00:36,500  
and many others probably  
have tried to suppress.

10  
00:00:36,500 --> 00:00:39,020

11  
00:00:39,020 --> 00:00:42,610  
I don't remember too  
many details anymore.

12  
00:00:42,610 --> 00:00:44,420

And you were still  
with your father?

13  
00:00:44,420 --> 00:00:46,940  
I was always with my  
father in the camps.

14  
00:00:46,940 --> 00:00:48,500  
Do you feel that  
made a difference

15  
00:00:48,500 --> 00:00:49,270  
being with your father?

16  
00:00:49,270 --> 00:00:49,895  
Oh, definitely.

17  
00:00:49,895 --> 00:00:51,290  
It made a big difference.

18  
00:00:51,290 --> 00:00:52,310  
Do you think you  
would have been able--

19  
00:00:52,310 --> 00:00:53,560  
Made a difference to him, too.

20  
00:00:53,560 --> 00:00:56,410

21  
00:00:56,410 --> 00:01:01,000  
But, as I said, my father was  
very cool and very collected

22  
00:01:01,000 --> 00:01:03,010  
and very unemotional.

23  
00:01:03,010 --> 00:01:05,099  
And he stayed that  
way even in Birkenau?

24  
00:01:05,099 --> 00:01:06,790

Always.

25

00:01:06,790 --> 00:01:08,500

Yeah, well, it's  
how we survived.

26

00:01:08,500 --> 00:01:13,930

Because he had the right ideas  
at the right time for survival.

27

00:01:13,930 --> 00:01:17,560

And also he never made waves.

28

00:01:17,560 --> 00:01:20,380

You hardly ever  
knew he was there.

29

00:01:20,380 --> 00:01:23,770

Did he give you advice  
ever about how to act?

30

00:01:23,770 --> 00:01:25,640

Yes, probably.

31

00:01:25,640 --> 00:01:27,742

Sure.

32

00:01:27,742 --> 00:01:29,200

He must have given  
me enough hints.

33

00:01:29,200 --> 00:01:32,640

But you learn very quickly  
in an environment like that

34

00:01:32,640 --> 00:01:35,950

how to act and how to protect  
yourself and how to survive.

35

00:01:35,950 --> 00:01:37,870

But you're close to 17 now?

36

00:01:37,870 --> 00:01:38,650  
Or about 17--

37  
00:01:38,650 --> 00:01:40,450  
I was 16 or 17.

38  
00:01:40,450 --> 00:01:43,540  
Did you consider yourself  
very old at that point?

39  
00:01:43,540 --> 00:01:44,540  
Well, you do get--

40  
00:01:44,540 --> 00:01:48,710  
I was very young 17, but you  
do grow very old very quickly.

41  
00:01:48,710 --> 00:01:53,800

42  
00:01:53,800 --> 00:01:56,730  
I was a-- yeah.

43  
00:01:56,730 --> 00:01:59,890  
You were saying about,  
though were a young 17,

44  
00:01:59,890 --> 00:02:01,770  
you were old in other ways.

45  
00:02:01,770 --> 00:02:05,710  
Yeah, we grow very old or  
very wise in an environment

46  
00:02:05,710 --> 00:02:07,970  
like that very quickly.

47  
00:02:07,970 --> 00:02:09,880  
What about the  
other boys your age?

48  
00:02:09,880 --> 00:02:11,700

The teenagers?

49

00:02:11,700 --> 00:02:14,630

Were they reacting the same way and responding as you

50

00:02:14,630 --> 00:02:15,490

in coping?

51

00:02:15,490 --> 00:02:17,080

Yes.

52

00:02:17,080 --> 00:02:19,300

Those that survived.

53

00:02:19,300 --> 00:02:22,000

Absolutely.

54

00:02:22,000 --> 00:02:25,680

Did you still at that point know people from Holland?

55

00:02:25,680 --> 00:02:26,660

Yes.

56

00:02:26,660 --> 00:02:28,310

So some familiar faces?

57

00:02:28,310 --> 00:02:30,340

There were familiar faces.

58

00:02:30,340 --> 00:02:32,800

All during this period that we were with a group of people

59

00:02:32,800 --> 00:02:36,700

from Holland and also with many other people

60

00:02:36,700 --> 00:02:39,450

whom we didn't know, but there were always familiar faces.

61  
00:02:39,450 --> 00:02:40,433  
Was that a help?

62  
00:02:40,433 --> 00:02:41,100  
That was a help.

63  
00:02:41,100 --> 00:02:43,860  
It must have been a help.

64  
00:02:43,860 --> 00:02:45,190  
We were then sent--

65  
00:02:45,190 --> 00:02:48,190  
after, I don't know,  
six, seven weeks,

66  
00:02:48,190 --> 00:02:52,450  
I believe I said, in  
Birkenau, maybe longer--

67  
00:02:52,450 --> 00:02:54,160  
to Gleiwitz.

68  
00:02:54,160 --> 00:02:56,470  
Gleiwitz was a labor camp.

69  
00:02:56,470 --> 00:03:01,570  
Auschwitz was surrounded by  
numbers of factory-type labor

70  
00:03:01,570 --> 00:03:03,370  
camps, like the  
Buna, for instance,

71  
00:03:03,370 --> 00:03:11,630  
where IG Farben had the rubber  
factory, where Elie Weisel was.

72  
00:03:11,630 --> 00:03:15,110  
Gleiwitz was a very small camp.

73

00:03:15,110 --> 00:03:16,240

How did you get there?

74

00:03:16,240 --> 00:03:17,050

By a truck.

75

00:03:17,050 --> 00:03:21,052

It was only about two  
hours or so from Auschwitz.

76

00:03:21,052 --> 00:03:21,760

With your father?

77

00:03:21,760 --> 00:03:26,370

With my father and the whole  
group on the back of a truck.

78

00:03:26,370 --> 00:03:29,890

And it was a great  
relief to get to Gleiwitz

79

00:03:29,890 --> 00:03:32,860

because while it  
had a crematorium,

80

00:03:32,860 --> 00:03:35,210

it did not have  
any gas chambers.

81

00:03:35,210 --> 00:03:36,910

It was not an  
extermination camp.

82

00:03:36,910 --> 00:03:39,550

83

00:03:39,550 --> 00:03:43,810

When you were in Birkenau,  
how much freedom of movement

84

00:03:43,810 --> 00:03:44,860

did you have?

85  
00:03:44,860 --> 00:03:46,630  
None.

86  
00:03:46,630 --> 00:03:48,340  
None to speak of.

87  
00:03:48,340 --> 00:03:52,990  
We were adjacent to  
the experimental block.

88  
00:03:52,990 --> 00:03:55,450  
And I did get some information.

89  
00:03:55,450 --> 00:03:57,673  
I did get some input as  
to what was going on at--

90  
00:03:57,673 --> 00:03:59,090  
At the time, you're  
talking about?

91  
00:03:59,090 --> 00:04:01,180  
--at the plant at the time, yes.

92  
00:04:01,180 --> 00:04:02,620  
What was your reaction?

93  
00:04:02,620 --> 00:04:03,480  
Horrible.

94  
00:04:03,480 --> 00:04:06,518  
We were totally horrified  
when you found out

95  
00:04:06,518 --> 00:04:07,810  
what they were doing to people.

96  
00:04:07,810 --> 00:04:10,470

97



00:04:10,470 --> 00:04:13,200  
And yet, some people thought  
perhaps being there was

98  
00:04:13,200 --> 00:04:14,542  
a means of survival.

99  
00:04:14,542 --> 00:04:16,709  
That they might not even  
survive if they hadn't been

100  
00:04:16,709 --> 00:04:18,660  
in the [? e-block. ?]

101  
00:04:18,660 --> 00:04:23,580  
Did you worry at that time  
when you were in Birkenau

102  
00:04:23,580 --> 00:04:26,400  
that you might be  
taken away right away

103  
00:04:26,400 --> 00:04:29,020  
or did you feel  
because you were young

104  
00:04:29,020 --> 00:04:34,480  
and you were pretty  
safe for the time being?

105  
00:04:34,480 --> 00:04:37,983  
You could never feel pretty  
safe, but you always,

106  
00:04:37,983 --> 00:04:40,400  
as I said earlier, you couldn't  
survive unless you thought

107  
00:04:40,400 --> 00:04:42,940  
you were going to survive.

108  
00:04:42,940 --> 00:04:44,980  
But you could never

feel pretty safe.

109

00:04:44,980 --> 00:04:50,500

And once we got to Gleiwitz, you  
could feel a little bit safer.

110

00:04:50,500 --> 00:04:52,180

The dangers were different.

111

00:04:52,180 --> 00:04:53,920

And it was very,  
very cold winter,

112

00:04:53,920 --> 00:04:56,260

and we had to work  
very hard in factories.

113

00:04:56,260 --> 00:05:00,130

My father worked in a factory  
making railroad equipment.

114

00:05:00,130 --> 00:05:08,130

And I was working in an  
ammunitions factory welding.

115

00:05:08,130 --> 00:05:10,140

Were you still wearing  
your Birkenau uniform?

116

00:05:10,140 --> 00:05:11,420

Oh, yes.

117

00:05:11,420 --> 00:05:13,725

That never changed.

118

00:05:13,725 --> 00:05:14,850

But as we got to Gleiwitz--

119

00:05:14,850 --> 00:05:15,850

With your shoes?

120

00:05:15,850 --> 00:05:17,080

With our shoes.

121  
00:05:17,080 --> 00:05:20,770  
But as we got to Gleiwitz, there  
was an old German Wehrmacht

122  
00:05:20,770 --> 00:05:25,450  
guard, not an SS guard, and  
as he was marching my father's

123  
00:05:25,450 --> 00:05:28,990  
group out to work one morning  
at 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning,

124  
00:05:28,990 --> 00:05:34,100  
he looked at my father  
and he said, weren't you

125  
00:05:34,100 --> 00:05:35,770  
Lieutenant Rosenstein?

126  
00:05:35,770 --> 00:05:38,540  
And didn't I serve under  
you in World War I?

127  
00:05:38,540 --> 00:05:41,090

128  
00:05:41,090 --> 00:05:44,990  
And so he was a  
decent man who had

129  
00:05:44,990 --> 00:05:48,320  
been drafted into  
guard duty when

130  
00:05:48,320 --> 00:05:52,340  
he was in his 50s or  
early 60s, an older man.

131  
00:05:52,340 --> 00:05:56,660  
And so my father  
managed to speak to him

132  
00:05:56,660 --> 00:05:59,630  
and he slipped him the \$10.

133  
00:05:59,630 --> 00:06:02,000  
And the guard slipped  
him occasionally

134  
00:06:02,000 --> 00:06:03,410  
some bread or a newspaper.

135  
00:06:03,410 --> 00:06:08,740

136  
00:06:08,740 --> 00:06:13,930  
So that's part of  
the tale of survival.

137  
00:06:13,930 --> 00:06:18,020

138  
00:06:18,020 --> 00:06:20,520  
What were the living conditions  
at Gleiwitz in the barracks?

139  
00:06:20,520 --> 00:06:21,895  
In Gleiwitz, we  
were again living

140  
00:06:21,895 --> 00:06:25,010  
in three tiers, either  
two or three-tiered,

141  
00:06:25,010 --> 00:06:30,350  
I think, three-tiered barracks  
with those straw mattresses

142  
00:06:30,350 --> 00:06:31,220  
and one blanket.

143  
00:06:31,220 --> 00:06:34,370  
And the mattresses had to

be made up like a razor

144  
00:06:34,370 --> 00:06:35,030  
every morning.

145  
00:06:35,030 --> 00:06:38,090  
So it had to be  
absolutely straight.

146  
00:06:38,090 --> 00:06:40,850  
You couldn't have a lump  
showing or else there would

147  
00:06:40,850 --> 00:06:43,310  
be some kind of  
cruel punishment.

148  
00:06:43,310 --> 00:06:46,130  
And the punishment  
often was that you

149  
00:06:46,130 --> 00:06:48,800  
had to stand on one foot in  
the snow for about an hour

150  
00:06:48,800 --> 00:06:50,360  
or something like that.

151  
00:06:50,360 --> 00:06:53,940  
And that would kill you if  
you didn't manage to do this.

152  
00:06:53,940 --> 00:06:57,835  
If you lost part of your  
uniform, they would kill you.

153  
00:06:57,835 --> 00:07:00,980  
It was very severe.

154  
00:07:00,980 --> 00:07:07,065  
And we had to stand at Appell  
twice a day where people--

155

00:07:07,065 --> 00:07:08,190

We're talking Gleiwitz now?

156

00:07:08,190 --> 00:07:10,545

In Gleiwitz, yeah.

157

00:07:10,545 --> 00:07:13,370

How often in Birkenau  
did you have the Appell?

158

00:07:13,370 --> 00:07:14,670

At least twice a day, too.

159

00:07:14,670 --> 00:07:17,480

For how long did that take?

160

00:07:17,480 --> 00:07:19,080

It wasn't so cold then.

161

00:07:19,080 --> 00:07:21,650

It was still fall.

162

00:07:21,650 --> 00:07:24,590

In Gleiwitz, it was winter  
and it was freezing cold

163

00:07:24,590 --> 00:07:25,850

and there was no warm water.

164

00:07:25,850 --> 00:07:30,350

And we had to take [INAUDIBLE]  
and thaw out the water line

165

00:07:30,350 --> 00:07:33,890

every morning in order to  
get some water to wash with,

166

00:07:33,890 --> 00:07:35,600

which was outdoors.

167

00:07:35,600 --> 00:07:39,560

They did feed us  
enough to keep alive.

168  
00:07:39,560 --> 00:07:41,660  
The same soup, always.

169  
00:07:41,660 --> 00:07:43,130  
Did you get any bread?

170  
00:07:43,130 --> 00:07:45,500  
Yeah, coffee and some  
rye bread, I believe.

171  
00:07:45,500 --> 00:07:50,390  
The food was just barely  
enough to keep you going.

172  
00:07:50,390 --> 00:07:54,110  
I had started developing  
holes in all my feet

173  
00:07:54,110 --> 00:07:58,860  
and in my fingers  
from malnutrition.

174  
00:07:58,860 --> 00:08:00,200  
You mean sores?

175  
00:08:00,200 --> 00:08:04,280  
Yeah, deep sores  
from malnutrition.

176  
00:08:04,280 --> 00:08:05,880  
My father did not.

177  
00:08:05,880 --> 00:08:08,590  
About how much did  
you weigh then?

178  
00:08:08,590 --> 00:08:11,432  
About 90 pounds,  
95 pounds, I think.

179

00:08:11,432 --> 00:08:12,140

Maybe 100 pounds.

180

00:08:12,140 --> 00:08:15,050

And you said your  
father did not develop--

181

00:08:15,050 --> 00:08:15,650

Any sores.

182

00:08:15,650 --> 00:08:19,567

No, he managed to stay quite  
healthy through it all.

183

00:08:19,567 --> 00:08:20,900

I managed to stay quite healthy.

184

00:08:20,900 --> 00:08:26,240

You could not not be healthy  
under those conditions.

185

00:08:26,240 --> 00:08:32,200

So we stayed in Gleiwitz until  
just about January 17 or so.

186

00:08:32,200 --> 00:08:36,539

187

00:08:36,539 --> 00:08:38,179

50 years ago next week.

188

00:08:38,179 --> 00:08:42,360

189

00:08:42,360 --> 00:08:46,020

And we didn't have newspapers,  
but we had some news all

190

00:08:46,020 --> 00:08:46,620

the time.

191



00:08:46,620 --> 00:08:48,130  
And we managed to  
get information--

192  
00:08:48,130 --> 00:08:49,047  
How did you get those?

193  
00:08:49,047 --> 00:08:51,375  
From the guards or from  
when my father managed,

194  
00:08:51,375 --> 00:08:55,100  
one of the guards slipped  
him a paper occasionally.

195  
00:08:55,100 --> 00:09:00,340  
From overhearing radio reports  
or something like that.

196  
00:09:00,340 --> 00:09:03,435  
And people were drawing  
maps in the snow

197  
00:09:03,435 --> 00:09:05,480  
to show where the  
Russian Army was.

198  
00:09:05,480 --> 00:09:09,420  
There was always somehow  
information got to us.

199  
00:09:09,420 --> 00:09:11,400  
And information was hope.

200  
00:09:11,400 --> 00:09:14,250  
You know, with  
information, maybe

201  
00:09:14,250 --> 00:09:16,890  
they would get here  
before they got us.

202  
00:09:16,890 --> 00:09:19,960

203

00:09:19,960 --> 00:09:23,350

There were three camps in  
Gleiwitz, one, two, and three.

204

00:09:23,350 --> 00:09:25,150

We were in number three.

205

00:09:25,150 --> 00:09:27,310

And the German  
orderliness is, of course,

206

00:09:27,310 --> 00:09:30,670

that they evacuated camp number  
one first, then number two

207

00:09:30,670 --> 00:09:33,360

second, and number three last.

208

00:09:33,360 --> 00:09:36,550

We luckily were in  
number three, and so we

209

00:09:36,550 --> 00:09:42,640

were last to go on this  
terrible march to the east.

210

00:09:42,640 --> 00:09:44,800

And stragglers were shot.

211

00:09:44,800 --> 00:09:48,700

And the SS shot the stragglers  
amongst the Wehrmacht,

212

00:09:48,700 --> 00:09:51,400

amongst the older  
people that they

213

00:09:51,400 --> 00:09:56,860

had hired from retirement,  
like that man, that guard

214  
00:09:56,860 --> 00:09:58,840  
that recognized my father.

215  
00:09:58,840 --> 00:10:01,020  
We believe he was shot  
at the end himself

216  
00:10:01,020 --> 00:10:04,300  
and that he couldn't  
make the march.

217  
00:10:04,300 --> 00:10:05,050  
What was his name?

218  
00:10:05,050 --> 00:10:05,717  
Do you remember?

219  
00:10:05,717 --> 00:10:07,570  
I do not remember his name.

220  
00:10:07,570 --> 00:10:10,500  
So you and your father  
began this forced march--

221  
00:10:10,500 --> 00:10:11,000  
Right.

222  
00:10:11,000 --> 00:10:12,060  
--out of Gleiwitz?

223  
00:10:12,060 --> 00:10:12,970  
With the whole crew.

224  
00:10:12,970 --> 00:10:15,437  
And we had the blankets  
around us and we were--

225  
00:10:15,437 --> 00:10:17,020  
you know, it looked  
like something out

226

00:10:17,020 --> 00:10:19,920  
of [PERSONAL NAME] drawing.

227  
00:10:19,920 --> 00:10:21,850  
And it was the  
harshest of winters.

228  
00:10:21,850 --> 00:10:25,060  
It was January with deep  
snow and was very cold.

229  
00:10:25,060 --> 00:10:31,410  
And one night, we were  
in some barn or other

230  
00:10:31,410 --> 00:10:34,570  
where we were allowed to sleep.

231  
00:10:34,570 --> 00:10:37,143  
And then the next day we were  
marched on and we ended--

232  
00:10:37,143 --> 00:10:38,560  
About how many  
were in your group?

233  
00:10:38,560 --> 00:10:40,060  
Do you have any memory?

234  
00:10:40,060 --> 00:10:42,130  
It was sort of a  
long, long column.

235  
00:10:42,130 --> 00:10:46,210  
And it was we were just at the  
end of it and in front of us

236  
00:10:46,210 --> 00:10:47,800  
were the other camps, probably.

237  
00:10:47,800 --> 00:10:49,960  
But these all men  
in your column?

238  
00:10:49,960 --> 00:10:52,390  
They were all men, no women.

239  
00:10:52,390 --> 00:10:57,074  
And we ended up in a  
camp called Blechhammer.

240  
00:10:57,074 --> 00:10:58,785  
About how long a march was that?

241  
00:10:58,785 --> 00:11:01,360  
A couple of days.

242  
00:11:01,360 --> 00:11:03,160  
Were you given any  
food on the way?

243  
00:11:03,160 --> 00:11:04,790  
No, I don't think so.

244  
00:11:04,790 --> 00:11:05,600  
I don't remember.

245  
00:11:05,600 --> 00:11:07,762  
I don't think we had any food.

246  
00:11:07,762 --> 00:11:09,590  
And where did you sleep?

247  
00:11:09,590 --> 00:11:10,090  
Did you--

248  
00:11:10,090 --> 00:11:14,410  
One night I remember  
sleeping in some barn.

249  
00:11:14,410 --> 00:11:19,360  
And then I remember  
being in Blechhammer.

250

00:11:19,360 --> 00:11:22,750

And there was  
terrible conditions.

251

00:11:22,750 --> 00:11:26,770

There was lots of typhoid  
and lots of people dying.

252

00:11:26,770 --> 00:11:29,680

And the guards  
were in the towers,

253

00:11:29,680 --> 00:11:32,140

but they were not on the  
ground, and they were just

254

00:11:32,140 --> 00:11:35,080

shooting at anything that  
was moving on the ground.

255

00:11:35,080 --> 00:11:35,810

In the camp?

256

00:11:35,810 --> 00:11:37,450

In the camp.

257

00:11:37,450 --> 00:11:42,120

So you didn't dare go  
out of the barracks.

258

00:11:42,120 --> 00:11:46,270

And then all of a sudden it  
became very strangely quiet.

259

00:11:46,270 --> 00:11:49,390

I remember when I looked  
up and looked at the towers

260

00:11:49,390 --> 00:11:53,530

and the towers had been deserted  
and the guards had fled.

261

00:11:53,530 --> 00:11:57,280

And then the camp gate opened  
and the Red Cross came in,

262  
00:11:57,280 --> 00:11:58,570  
two people from the Red Cross.

263  
00:11:58,570 --> 00:12:00,610  
But they didn't  
go into the camp,

264  
00:12:00,610 --> 00:12:06,340  
wisely, because there was  
probably so much typhoid there.

265  
00:12:06,340 --> 00:12:08,890  
And then before we  
knew it, we found out

266  
00:12:08,890 --> 00:12:11,530  
the Germans had indeed fled.

267  
00:12:11,530 --> 00:12:17,200  
And we organized ourselves  
within a group of 10 or 12,

268  
00:12:17,200 --> 00:12:22,630  
that same group from Holland  
that had been together,

269  
00:12:22,630 --> 00:12:25,390  
and said, the first thing we  
got to do was get out of here.

270  
00:12:25,390 --> 00:12:29,290  
It's much too dangerous to  
stay here with all the disease.

271  
00:12:29,290 --> 00:12:30,850  
What were your  
thoughts at this point

272  
00:12:30,850 --> 00:12:33,790  
that the Germans had fled?

273  
00:12:33,790 --> 00:12:34,378  
People think--

274  
00:12:34,378 --> 00:12:35,170  
Did you believe it?

275  
00:12:35,170 --> 00:12:37,300  
--you throw your caps in  
the air and start dancing.

276  
00:12:37,300 --> 00:12:39,280  
No, it was just traumatic.

277  
00:12:39,280 --> 00:12:40,990  
We believed it,  
yes, but we were so

278  
00:12:40,990 --> 00:12:44,553  
traumatized it made no  
emotional difference whatsoever.

279  
00:12:44,553 --> 00:12:45,320  
You were still--

280  
00:12:45,320 --> 00:12:46,750  
You were still surviving.

281  
00:12:46,750 --> 00:12:49,530  
You were still surviving.

282  
00:12:49,530 --> 00:12:51,730  
And the Russians  
could not be trusted.

283  
00:12:51,730 --> 00:12:53,080  
We found that out very quickly.

284  
00:12:53,080 --> 00:12:54,100  
How did you know that?

285



00:12:54,100 --> 00:12:59,470  
We found that out they  
were, A, very drunk and very

286  
00:12:59,470 --> 00:13:02,020  
undisciplined, and they  
were shooting and raping

287  
00:13:02,020 --> 00:13:03,530  
and shooting and raping.

288  
00:13:03,530 --> 00:13:09,480  
And women had a terrible  
time, particularly

289  
00:13:09,480 --> 00:13:12,000  
if there were Catholic orders  
in that part of the world.

290  
00:13:12,000 --> 00:13:16,780  
And the Russians made  
it the sport to rape,

291  
00:13:16,780 --> 00:13:20,800  
gang rape the women in  
the Catholic orders.

292  
00:13:20,800 --> 00:13:23,020  
That happened constantly.

293  
00:13:23,020 --> 00:13:29,650  
So the minute we met the  
Russians and we saw that--

294  
00:13:29,650 --> 00:13:32,440  
we knew that we had to be  
very careful with them, too.

295  
00:13:32,440 --> 00:13:36,910  
Because, A, we weren't sure  
that they knew who we were.

296  
00:13:36,910 --> 00:13:38,430

Would they think  
we were Germans?

297  
00:13:38,430 --> 00:13:41,200  
But at the time we  
only spoke Dutch,

298  
00:13:41,200 --> 00:13:45,580  
we didn't speak German  
for self-protection.

299  
00:13:45,580 --> 00:13:48,340  
So anyway, 10 or  
12 of us decided

300  
00:13:48,340 --> 00:13:55,540  
immediately we should  
not stay in Blechhammer

301  
00:13:55,540 --> 00:14:01,250  
and we should head  
east towards Poland.

302  
00:14:01,250 --> 00:14:05,080  
So we just left the camp.

303  
00:14:05,080 --> 00:14:07,180  
We had our blankets  
and started marching.

304  
00:14:07,180 --> 00:14:08,063  
And we found--

305  
00:14:08,063 --> 00:14:09,355  
This was the group of 10 or so?

306  
00:14:09,355 --> 00:14:10,360  
Oh, yeah, 10 or 12, yes.

307  
00:14:10,360 --> 00:14:12,403  
All ages?

308

00:14:12,403 --> 00:14:13,820  
Well, I probably  
was the youngest.

309  
00:14:13,820 --> 00:14:17,890  
My father was the  
oldest, I would think.

310  
00:14:17,890 --> 00:14:19,930  
Everybody else in between.

311  
00:14:19,930 --> 00:14:24,840  
But mostly people in  
their 20s, I think.

312  
00:14:24,840 --> 00:14:31,500  
We found an abandoned  
prisoner of war camp

313  
00:14:31,500 --> 00:14:36,358  
where English prisoners  
of war had been--

314  
00:14:36,358 --> 00:14:37,750  
Incarcerated?

315  
00:14:37,750 --> 00:14:39,550  
Incarcerated by the Germans.

316  
00:14:39,550 --> 00:14:41,030  
Do you remember the name of it?

317  
00:14:41,030 --> 00:14:41,530  
No.

318  
00:14:41,530 --> 00:14:42,630  
It was near Blechhammer.

319  
00:14:42,630 --> 00:14:43,630  
It was near Blechhammer?

320  
00:14:43,630 --> 00:14:44,630

It was near Blechhammer.

321  
00:14:44,630 --> 00:14:45,940  
It was within kilometers.

322  
00:14:45,940 --> 00:14:48,760  
We didn't have the strength  
to walk more than a couple

323  
00:14:48,760 --> 00:14:52,060  
of kilometers.

324  
00:14:52,060 --> 00:14:54,510  
But it was clean and  
there were bunk beds

325  
00:14:54,510 --> 00:14:55,990  
and we found blankets in there.

326  
00:14:55,990 --> 00:14:57,880  
We found dishes in  
there, tons and tons

327  
00:14:57,880 --> 00:15:03,640  
of dishes, clean dishes,  
and a canister of tea.

328  
00:15:03,640 --> 00:15:06,850  
And the canister of tea is  
the one can see over there.

329  
00:15:06,850 --> 00:15:08,128  
It's not [INAUDIBLE] coffee.

330  
00:15:08,128 --> 00:15:12,170  
[LAUGHS] It's the only piece  
that survived from then.

331  
00:15:12,170 --> 00:15:20,050

332  
00:15:20,050 --> 00:15:21,800

Well, we--

333

00:15:21,800 --> 00:15:23,290

How long did you stay there?

334

00:15:23,290 --> 00:15:24,700

About two weeks.

335

00:15:24,700 --> 00:15:27,060

Two weeks to recover.

336

00:15:27,060 --> 00:15:30,460

There was one of the guys  
in the group was a butcher.

337

00:15:30,460 --> 00:15:31,400

In your group?

338

00:15:31,400 --> 00:15:32,380

In our group.

339

00:15:32,380 --> 00:15:35,320

And the first thing  
that wandered by

340

00:15:35,320 --> 00:15:40,720

was a pig from some  
neighboring farm.

341

00:15:40,720 --> 00:15:42,700

So we slaughtered the pig.

342

00:15:42,700 --> 00:15:44,410

We had an ax and  
we killed the pig

343

00:15:44,410 --> 00:15:47,500

and we had found some knives  
and we butchered the pig.

344

00:15:47,500 --> 00:15:49,140

And everybody--

345  
00:15:49,140 --> 00:15:50,440  
Did you eat the pig?

346  
00:15:50,440 --> 00:15:52,090  
Everybody else did, I didn't.

347  
00:15:52,090 --> 00:15:54,430  
I couldn't eat the pig,  
but I ate the liver.

348  
00:15:54,430 --> 00:15:55,815  
I had the liver.

349  
00:15:55,815 --> 00:15:56,440  
And everybody--

350  
00:15:56,440 --> 00:15:57,607  
Did your father eat the pig?

351  
00:15:57,607 --> 00:15:58,420  
Yes.

352  
00:15:58,420 --> 00:16:01,010  
Oh, religion had  
nothing to do with it.

353  
00:16:01,010 --> 00:16:03,510  
Hey, we're talking  
about survival here.

354  
00:16:03,510 --> 00:16:07,060  
And at that stage, my father  
had absolutely no idea

355  
00:16:07,060 --> 00:16:09,550  
that he would ever set  
foot in a synagogue again.

356  
00:16:09,550 --> 00:16:13,320

357

00:16:13,320 --> 00:16:15,760

I remember we killed the pig  
and everybody got terribly,

358

00:16:15,760 --> 00:16:20,470

terribly ill because nobody's  
body could handle anything

359

00:16:20,470 --> 00:16:25,150

as heavy as that and  
had terrible diarrhea.

360

00:16:25,150 --> 00:16:29,740

And I didn't because I  
didn't eat the pig meat,

361

00:16:29,740 --> 00:16:32,740

I only ate pig liver,  
and I was fine.

362

00:16:32,740 --> 00:16:36,850

And after a couple of  
days, I started getting--

363

00:16:36,850 --> 00:16:38,560

the sores started healing.

364

00:16:38,560 --> 00:16:40,960

After about a week or  
two it will disappear.

365

00:16:40,960 --> 00:16:42,400

I mean, the scars  
never went away,

366

00:16:42,400 --> 00:16:46,150

but I started healing  
pretty quickly.

367

00:16:46,150 --> 00:16:49,360

Then we slaughtered a heifer.

368

00:16:49,360 --> 00:16:55,410  
We found a heifer, and that  
was more easy to digest.

369  
00:16:55,410 --> 00:16:57,430  
And I think we found  
potatoes or something.

370  
00:16:57,430 --> 00:17:00,610  
So we found food.

371  
00:17:00,610 --> 00:17:01,540  
And we--

372  
00:17:01,540 --> 00:17:03,550  
Were you left alone,  
the 10 of you there?

373  
00:17:03,550 --> 00:17:06,450  
Well, the Russians came by  
and checked us out constantly.

374  
00:17:06,450 --> 00:17:08,575  
But, yes, we were  
pretty well left alone.

375  
00:17:08,575 --> 00:17:09,700  
Did you understand Russian?

376  
00:17:09,700 --> 00:17:10,200  
No.

377  
00:17:10,200 --> 00:17:11,410  
No.

378  
00:17:11,410 --> 00:17:14,069  
But there was one Russian  
officer who spoke English.

379  
00:17:14,069 --> 00:17:16,319  
So we could communicate  
with him in English.



380

00:17:16,319 --> 00:17:17,879

What did you talk about?

381

00:17:17,879 --> 00:17:18,379

Who knows?

382

00:17:18,379 --> 00:17:19,770

[LAUGHS]

383

00:17:19,770 --> 00:17:21,339

Any Russian Jewish officers?

384

00:17:21,339 --> 00:17:22,217

He was a Jew.

385

00:17:22,217 --> 00:17:23,050

Yeah, he was Jewish.

386

00:17:23,050 --> 00:17:25,089

And what was his  
reaction to you all?

387

00:17:25,089 --> 00:17:27,670

Well, he had seen  
a lot by that time.

388

00:17:27,670 --> 00:17:29,110

He didn't react anymore.

389

00:17:29,110 --> 00:17:32,710

He had seen-- he'd already  
been liberating Poland

390

00:17:32,710 --> 00:17:35,410

and Auschwitz and other places.

391

00:17:35,410 --> 00:17:36,910

I don't recall that  
there was much--

392

00:17:36,910 --> 00:17:40,870

He wasn't especially  
sympathetic to you?

393  
00:17:40,870 --> 00:17:42,720  
I don't imagine so.

394  
00:17:42,720 --> 00:17:50,570  
But, you know, the Russians  
looked at us to very strangely.

395  
00:17:50,570 --> 00:17:52,080  
They couldn't make  
us out either.

396  
00:17:52,080 --> 00:17:57,360  
They didn't know exactly who we  
were, what we were, et cetera.

397  
00:17:57,360 --> 00:18:01,360  
Were we the enemy or what?

398  
00:18:01,360 --> 00:18:03,760  
But we were there and we  
were left alone pretty well

399  
00:18:03,760 --> 00:18:04,690  
for 10 or 12 days.

400  
00:18:04,690 --> 00:18:07,570  
And then the Russians  
came and said

401  
00:18:07,570 --> 00:18:11,260  
the Germans had counterattacked  
and they needed us,

402  
00:18:11,260 --> 00:18:13,930  
and we had to help  
them dig trenches.

403  
00:18:13,930 --> 00:18:16,840  
So back with the shovels.

404

00:18:16,840 --> 00:18:19,570

We helped the Russians  
dig some trenches.

405

00:18:19,570 --> 00:18:26,800

And so we didn't find that  
very conducive to our survival.

406

00:18:26,800 --> 00:18:30,430

And after 10 or 12 days, we were  
probably well enough to manage,

407

00:18:30,430 --> 00:18:35,050

and we just packed  
up our belongings.

408

00:18:35,050 --> 00:18:37,480

By that time, we had  
scrounged things together

409

00:18:37,480 --> 00:18:39,460

and we had some belongings,  
and we loaded them

410

00:18:39,460 --> 00:18:42,340

on little hand-held carts.

411

00:18:42,340 --> 00:18:46,480

And like a troop out  
of Mother Courage,

412

00:18:46,480 --> 00:18:47,920

we marched off to the east.

413

00:18:47,920 --> 00:18:50,800

414

00:18:50,800 --> 00:18:53,080

And then we spent  
the first night--

415

00:18:53,080 --> 00:18:54,790

that was after  
the night after we

416  
00:18:54,790 --> 00:18:57,040  
had to dig the ditches  
for the Russians--

417  
00:18:57,040 --> 00:18:59,770  
we spent it at a monastery.

418  
00:18:59,770 --> 00:19:03,640  
And one in our  
group was a doctor.

419  
00:19:03,640 --> 00:19:06,460

420  
00:19:06,460 --> 00:19:09,730  
And he was asked  
at the monastery

421  
00:19:09,730 --> 00:19:11,410  
to examine some  
nuns who were there

422  
00:19:11,410 --> 00:19:14,440  
and who had all been  
raped by the Russians.

423  
00:19:14,440 --> 00:19:17,240  
I mean, the mass rape  
was just horrendous.

424  
00:19:17,240 --> 00:19:19,090  
And there was this  
enormous exodus

425  
00:19:19,090 --> 00:19:22,990  
of people fleeing  
towards Germany,

426  
00:19:22,990 --> 00:19:27,490  
probably Nazi collaborators and

what they called Volksdeutsche,

427

00:19:27,490 --> 00:19:31,180

the German settlers  
of the east, who

428

00:19:31,180 --> 00:19:33,700

couldn't understand  
that we were moving

429

00:19:33,700 --> 00:19:37,910

in the opposite direction.

430

00:19:37,910 --> 00:19:42,290

So we finally got to  
a town named Katowice.

431

00:19:42,290 --> 00:19:47,260

Katowice is in Western Poland.

432

00:19:47,260 --> 00:19:51,970

And there was a Red Cross or  
some kind of refugee service

433

00:19:51,970 --> 00:19:53,260

there that--

434

00:19:53,260 --> 00:19:54,820

or the Russians  
did it, I forgot.

435

00:19:54,820 --> 00:19:59,570

But we were simply quartered  
in with the Polish families.

436

00:19:59,570 --> 00:20:02,890

They were told they have to  
house us and feed us, period,

437

00:20:02,890 --> 00:20:03,430

and did.

438

00:20:03,430 --> 00:20:06,560

439

00:20:06,560 --> 00:20:10,337

And there was some communication  
there with these people.

440

00:20:10,337 --> 00:20:11,170

Between the Polish--

441

00:20:11,170 --> 00:20:12,212

Between us, yeah.

442

00:20:12,212 --> 00:20:14,170

My father and I, we were  
with this Polish woman

443

00:20:14,170 --> 00:20:17,190

and her daughter.

444

00:20:17,190 --> 00:20:19,570

And I know there was  
some communication there

445

00:20:19,570 --> 00:20:21,790

and it was pleasant.

446

00:20:21,790 --> 00:20:26,200

And we were fed and  
registered and looked after.

447

00:20:26,200 --> 00:20:27,910

And we were given some--

448

00:20:27,910 --> 00:20:31,165

we finally got rid of our blue  
uniforms and we were given--

449

00:20:31,165 --> 00:20:33,040

This was the first time  
you were out of them?

450

00:20:33,040 --> 00:20:34,370  
No, actually it is not.

451  
00:20:34,370 --> 00:20:35,740  
I stand corrected.

452  
00:20:35,740 --> 00:20:37,540  
Because in the  
English Army barracks,

453  
00:20:37,540 --> 00:20:43,550  
we found English Army uniforms,  
and that's what we had on.

454  
00:20:43,550 --> 00:20:46,270  
By that time, we had already  
changed to English Army.

455  
00:20:46,270 --> 00:20:49,570  
Had you been wearing the  
same uniforms in the camp

456  
00:20:49,570 --> 00:20:52,583  
or did they give  
you new uniforms?

457  
00:20:52,583 --> 00:20:53,750  
That's a very good question.

458  
00:20:53,750 --> 00:20:55,900  
They must have given us  
new uniforms at one time,

459  
00:20:55,900 --> 00:20:59,380  
though I do not recall this.

460  
00:20:59,380 --> 00:21:00,900  
I don't recall this.

461  
00:21:00,900 --> 00:21:02,650  
Just to back up then,  
do you remember ever

462

00:21:02,650 --> 00:21:06,580

being deloused again and  
again as a precaution?

463

00:21:06,580 --> 00:21:07,480

Oh, yes.

464

00:21:07,480 --> 00:21:09,000

Yes, we were shaven--

465

00:21:09,000 --> 00:21:11,600

No, in the beginning,  
yes, but I meant--

466

00:21:11,600 --> 00:21:12,100

No.

467

00:21:12,100 --> 00:21:12,430

Again, yes.

468

00:21:12,430 --> 00:21:12,880

Oh, yes.

469

00:21:12,880 --> 00:21:14,130

This was a standard procedure?

470

00:21:14,130 --> 00:21:15,490

We were kept-- it was every--

471

00:21:15,490 --> 00:21:19,130

once a month or so with a  
haircut and we were deloused.

472

00:21:19,130 --> 00:21:22,870

Which, in retrospect, was  
probably a very good idea,

473

00:21:22,870 --> 00:21:24,850

you know, because when  
we saw how many people

474



00:21:24,850 --> 00:21:28,020  
died of typhoid afterwards.

475  
00:21:28,020 --> 00:21:30,820  
And the hair does  
grow back quickly.

476  
00:21:30,820 --> 00:21:32,650  
Did you find that demeaning?

477  
00:21:32,650 --> 00:21:33,853  
Of course it was demeaning.

478  
00:21:33,853 --> 00:21:35,770  
Everything, the whole  
experience is demeaning.

479  
00:21:35,770 --> 00:21:37,930  
It's just one of those  
things that just made you

480  
00:21:37,930 --> 00:21:41,810  
a non-person not having hair.

481  
00:21:41,810 --> 00:21:44,860  
But on the other hand, once we  
were in Katowice, by that time

482  
00:21:44,860 --> 00:21:48,910  
I had a full growth  
of hair again.

483  
00:21:48,910 --> 00:21:52,140  
And there, I also  
found another survivor,

484  
00:21:52,140 --> 00:21:54,940  
a guy I went to high school  
with in Amsterdam, about two

485  
00:21:54,940 --> 00:21:56,020  
of them.

486

00:21:56,020 --> 00:21:59,170

And also there we  
found a young woman

487

00:21:59,170 --> 00:22:01,230

who was a friend of  
my oldest brothers

488

00:22:01,230 --> 00:22:04,210

and dated my oldest  
brothers in Amsterdam.

489

00:22:04,210 --> 00:22:06,260

Her name, I remembered,  
was Ruth Asher.

490

00:22:06,260 --> 00:22:11,080

And she came from a very  
fine German-Jewish family

491

00:22:11,080 --> 00:22:13,120

that lived in the neighborhood.

492

00:22:13,120 --> 00:22:16,060

And she had had terrible  
experiences in Auschwitz

493

00:22:16,060 --> 00:22:19,720

and she lost it  
after the liberation.

494

00:22:19,720 --> 00:22:21,760

We had to guard  
her and watch her.

495

00:22:21,760 --> 00:22:28,420

She was totally-- well, she  
was pretty insane by then

496

00:22:28,420 --> 00:22:30,250

and very suicidal.

497

00:22:30,250 --> 00:22:33,490  
And for all that period  
she was with the group,

498  
00:22:33,490 --> 00:22:35,620  
we had to watch her  
and look out after her.

499  
00:22:35,620 --> 00:22:37,760  
I don't know what happened  
to her afterwards.

500  
00:22:37,760 --> 00:22:41,440

501  
00:22:41,440 --> 00:22:46,230  
But we encountered  
a troop of gypsies,

502  
00:22:46,230 --> 00:22:48,120  
of dwarfs that had survived.

503  
00:22:48,120 --> 00:22:52,780  
You know, they had  
experimented on small people

504  
00:22:52,780 --> 00:22:57,580  
in the [? e-block. ?]  
And they were Romanian.

505  
00:22:57,580 --> 00:23:02,335  
They were on a train with us  
from Katowice to Janowice,

506  
00:23:02,335 --> 00:23:05,095  
and they got off the train  
somewhere in northern Romania.

507  
00:23:05,095 --> 00:23:08,420

508  
00:23:08,420 --> 00:23:08,920  
You stayed--

509

00:23:08,920 --> 00:23:11,087

It was very hard to communicate  
with them because we

510

00:23:11,087 --> 00:23:12,700

didn't have a  
language in common,

511

00:23:12,700 --> 00:23:15,250

some French, but very little.

512

00:23:15,250 --> 00:23:18,350

That they had-- and very  
traumatized in there also.

513

00:23:18,350 --> 00:23:21,910

I remember that there was not  
only lack of communication,

514

00:23:21,910 --> 00:23:24,370

there was a wish for  
no communication.

515

00:23:24,370 --> 00:23:27,605

516

00:23:27,605 --> 00:23:28,480

On their part?

517

00:23:28,480 --> 00:23:31,010

On their part, yeah.

518

00:23:31,010 --> 00:23:34,030

But I suppose then it came  
the time where none of us

519

00:23:34,030 --> 00:23:36,360

really communicated or  
talked about it anyway.

520

00:23:36,360 --> 00:23:38,770

That had already,  
that was beginning

521  
00:23:38,770 --> 00:23:45,340  
to set in pretty soon after  
the liberation, in my case.

522  
00:23:45,340 --> 00:23:48,170  
We stayed in Katowice, what  
did I say, four or five weeks?

523  
00:23:48,170 --> 00:23:49,700  
I forgot how long.

524  
00:23:49,700 --> 00:23:52,370  
And then the Red Cross  
organized this train.

525  
00:23:52,370 --> 00:23:55,100  
Because all those  
British prisoners of war

526  
00:23:55,100 --> 00:23:58,227  
that had been in the barracks  
there had also been liberated

527  
00:23:58,227 --> 00:23:59,560  
and they were on the same train.

528  
00:23:59,560 --> 00:24:04,468  
And because of them, this was  
organized, not because of us.

529  
00:24:04,468 --> 00:24:06,010  
Now I have to  
backtrack a little bit.

530  
00:24:06,010 --> 00:24:09,500

531  
00:24:09,500 --> 00:24:12,050  
After we were liberated from  
Blechhammer, in our group

532  
00:24:12,050 --> 00:24:14,750  
there was one guy,  
a Czech fellow,

533  
00:24:14,750 --> 00:24:19,460  
whose wife had also  
stayed in Theresienstadt.

534  
00:24:19,460 --> 00:24:22,970  
And we knew that my mother  
had stayed in Theresienstadt,

535  
00:24:22,970 --> 00:24:24,560  
that she had not  
been transported.

536  
00:24:24,560 --> 00:24:26,720  
Because we knew from  
the last transport

537  
00:24:26,720 --> 00:24:29,270  
that had come in from  
Theresienstadt to Auschwitz,

538  
00:24:29,270 --> 00:24:34,970  
where people had survived and  
that we talked to, that she

539  
00:24:34,970 --> 00:24:36,570  
was still in Theresienstadt.

540  
00:24:36,570 --> 00:24:40,510  
And this fellow knew his wife  
was still in Theresienstadt.

541  
00:24:40,510 --> 00:24:43,780  
He said he was not  
going to go to Eastern--

542  
00:24:43,780 --> 00:24:44,280  
with us.

543

00:24:44,280 --> 00:24:47,600

He was going to wait until  
the Russian army advanced

544

00:24:47,600 --> 00:24:50,460

far enough to go  
to Theresienstadt,

545

00:24:50,460 --> 00:24:52,160

which was only days.

546

00:24:52,160 --> 00:24:58,370

And he went to Theresienstadt  
and he told my mother then

547

00:24:58,370 --> 00:25:01,870

who had survived  
in Theresienstadt

548

00:25:01,870 --> 00:25:03,650

that my dad and I were alive.

549

00:25:03,650 --> 00:25:07,612

That we were somewhere in  
Russia, but we were alive.

550

00:25:07,612 --> 00:25:08,570

So my mother knew this.

551

00:25:08,570 --> 00:25:11,480

552

00:25:11,480 --> 00:25:13,640

Now let me backtrack.

553

00:25:13,640 --> 00:25:18,370

Let me go back to Katowice.

554

00:25:18,370 --> 00:25:21,960

We were put on a train  
then with our group.

555

00:25:21,960 --> 00:25:25,060

There were by then  
not just us 10.

556

00:25:25,060 --> 00:25:28,970

There were about  
100 or 150 survivors

557

00:25:28,970 --> 00:25:31,760

and all those British  
prisoners of war.

558

00:25:31,760 --> 00:25:33,440

And it was a regular  
passenger train

559

00:25:33,440 --> 00:25:36,870

that was organized  
by the Red Cross

560

00:25:36,870 --> 00:25:40,470

and it was sent from  
Katowice to Janowice.

561

00:25:40,470 --> 00:25:43,816

Janowice is in the Bukovina.

562

00:25:43,816 --> 00:25:46,400

It's Northern Romania.

563

00:25:46,400 --> 00:25:51,410

And today, I think it's Belarus.

564

00:25:51,410 --> 00:25:54,770

It's a beautiful wide town  
in the Carpathian Mountains

565

00:25:54,770 --> 00:25:58,030

that had gotten through the  
war virtually unscathed.

566

00:25:58,030 --> 00:26:03,500



It was just beautiful with  
an intact Jewish population.

567  
00:26:03,500 --> 00:26:05,060  
Somehow or other,  
there were a lot

568  
00:26:05,060 --> 00:26:08,560  
of wealthy Jews living in that  
town that managed to survive.

569  
00:26:08,560 --> 00:26:12,210  
And the Jewish community kind  
of really looked after us.

570  
00:26:12,210 --> 00:26:13,460  
They took us into their homes.

571  
00:26:13,460 --> 00:26:16,510  
And they had beautiful  
homes with bathrooms and hot

572  
00:26:16,510 --> 00:26:18,730  
and cold running  
water and something.

573  
00:26:18,730 --> 00:26:22,490  
And, again, we were first  
deloused in Janowice.

574  
00:26:22,490 --> 00:26:26,450  
But it was Russian occupied  
and everybody was very paranoid

575  
00:26:26,450 --> 00:26:31,190  
because Russian spies  
were everywhere.

576  
00:26:31,190 --> 00:26:33,080  
And the Russians also  
had to be quartered

577  
00:26:33,080 --> 00:26:35,610

with the civilian population.

578

00:26:35,610 --> 00:26:38,690

So I know in the house  
where I was quartered--

579

00:26:38,690 --> 00:26:41,260

and they had a son my age,  
and it was very, very nice,

580

00:26:41,260 --> 00:26:42,990

a nice kid--

581

00:26:42,990 --> 00:26:46,340

A, the family, they  
were all preparing

582

00:26:46,340 --> 00:26:49,940

to go to Palestine,  
that entire population,

583

00:26:49,940 --> 00:26:52,250

virtually within weeks  
after we were there,

584

00:26:52,250 --> 00:26:53,960

moved out to Palestine.

585

00:26:53,960 --> 00:26:58,040

But in their home there was  
also a Russian woman agent,

586

00:26:58,040 --> 00:26:59,810

probably NKVD.

587

00:26:59,810 --> 00:27:02,180

and so they were extremely  
careful about what

588

00:27:02,180 --> 00:27:04,500

could be said and so on.

589

00:27:04,500 --> 00:27:06,590

But on the whole, it was  
a wonderful experience

590

00:27:06,590 --> 00:27:11,330

to be in a town, in a war-torn  
part of the world, that somehow

591

00:27:11,330 --> 00:27:16,420

like a little  
paradise had survived.

592

00:27:16,420 --> 00:27:20,060

I mean, most of the Jewish  
population was intact.

593

00:27:20,060 --> 00:27:22,210

I've never exactly  
figured out how that was.

594

00:27:22,210 --> 00:27:24,140

Were you jealous of them?

595

00:27:24,140 --> 00:27:24,872

No.

596

00:27:24,872 --> 00:27:26,480

You weren't?

597

00:27:26,480 --> 00:27:27,200

No, not at all.

598

00:27:27,200 --> 00:27:30,195

599

00:27:30,195 --> 00:27:31,820

We stayed there for  
four or five weeks.

600

00:27:31,820 --> 00:27:33,860

And by that time, it was spring?

601

00:27:33,860 --> 00:27:37,212  
What was your reaction to seeing  
bathrooms and nice houses?

602  
00:27:37,212 --> 00:27:38,090  
You hadn't seen--

603  
00:27:38,090 --> 00:27:39,520  
Oh, you took it--

604  
00:27:39,520 --> 00:27:40,900  
it was very easy to accept.

605  
00:27:40,900 --> 00:27:47,240  
[LAUGHS] It was  
very easy to accept.

606  
00:27:47,240 --> 00:27:53,540  
By now, we-- yeah, somehow or  
other, also at one time my dad

607  
00:27:53,540 --> 00:27:55,290  
and I were lodged,  
well, my dad was

608  
00:27:55,290 --> 00:27:57,860  
lodges with a  
rabbi and his wife.

609  
00:27:57,860 --> 00:28:01,550  
I think this may happen  
in Janowice, too.

610  
00:28:01,550 --> 00:28:04,430  
But they were so  
orthodox that they

611  
00:28:04,430 --> 00:28:05,930  
wouldn't sleep in  
the same room when

612  
00:28:05,930 --> 00:28:08,591  
my father was in the house.

613  
00:28:08,591 --> 00:28:10,450  
It was all very strange.

614  
00:28:10,450 --> 00:28:16,972

615  
00:28:16,972 --> 00:28:20,800  
We were then told in Janowice  
to move on to Odessa,

616  
00:28:20,800 --> 00:28:22,266  
which we did by train.

617  
00:28:22,266 --> 00:28:28,720  
And when we got to Odessa, the  
Russians put us in a sanitarium

618  
00:28:28,720 --> 00:28:30,130  
on the Red Sea--

619  
00:28:30,130 --> 00:28:33,460  
on the Black Sea  
like maybe a couple

620  
00:28:33,460 --> 00:28:35,200  
of miles outside of Odessa.

621  
00:28:35,200 --> 00:28:38,170  
What may have been sort  
of a little resort town

622  
00:28:38,170 --> 00:28:40,750  
at one time or another.

623  
00:28:40,750 --> 00:28:46,580  
And a Russian officer who  
spoke English recruited

624  
00:28:46,580 --> 00:28:51,030  
me to be a translator  
for the Dutch people,

625  
00:28:51,030 --> 00:28:53,620  
Dutch to English,  
to Russian, so they

626  
00:28:53,620 --> 00:28:55,660  
could do their  
administrative work with us.

627  
00:28:55,660 --> 00:29:00,240

628  
00:29:00,240 --> 00:29:02,130  
The weather was pleasant.

629  
00:29:02,130 --> 00:29:04,020  
There was no running  
water in the sanatorium

630  
00:29:04,020 --> 00:29:06,300  
or in the place where  
they had quartered us.

631  
00:29:06,300 --> 00:29:09,090  
And they gave us some  
cold, some salt water soap.

632  
00:29:09,090 --> 00:29:12,800  
And I know we washed  
in the Black Sea.

633  
00:29:12,800 --> 00:29:17,560  
We did our bathing in  
the Black Sea every day.

634  
00:29:17,560 --> 00:29:22,230  
But myself and another guy  
who were doing the translating

635  
00:29:22,230 --> 00:29:24,390  
were given a treat one night.

636

00:29:24,390 --> 00:29:26,250  
The Russians took  
us to the ballet.

637  
00:29:26,250 --> 00:29:28,600  
My first time at the  
ballet in Odessa.

638  
00:29:28,600 --> 00:29:31,530  
And I remember it was  
[?My Death by Delibes?].

639  
00:29:31,530 --> 00:29:35,880  
And there were two Russian  
officers, a man and a woman,

640  
00:29:35,880 --> 00:29:37,620  
with the two or three of us.

641  
00:29:37,620 --> 00:29:39,230  
And we were sitting  
in a box and we

642  
00:29:39,230 --> 00:29:41,460  
were speaking English  
because that's

643  
00:29:41,460 --> 00:29:42,730  
the language we had in common.

644  
00:29:42,730 --> 00:29:46,380  
And one Russian officer, he  
was getting out of the box,

645  
00:29:46,380 --> 00:29:48,540  
was saying something in  
Russian to the woman,

646  
00:29:48,540 --> 00:29:51,300  
but her mind was set  
on speaking English.

647  
00:29:51,300 --> 00:29:53,610

And she answered him in  
English and says, don't worry,

648  
00:29:53,610 --> 00:29:54,750  
I'll watch them.

649  
00:29:54,750 --> 00:29:58,455  
[LAUGHS] So we knew we  
were carefully guarded.

650  
00:29:58,455 --> 00:30:00,450  
We were not supposed  
to have any contact

651  
00:30:00,450 --> 00:30:04,390  
with the civilian  
population there.

652  
00:30:04,390 --> 00:30:05,960  
Well, this was--

653  
00:30:05,960 --> 00:30:08,045  
Russia under Stalin  
was extremely paranoid.

654  
00:30:08,045 --> 00:30:11,220

655  
00:30:11,220 --> 00:30:15,450  
We stayed in Odessa waiting  
until the English Red

656  
00:30:15,450 --> 00:30:18,420  
Cross sent a ship for us.

657  
00:30:18,420 --> 00:30:21,250  
And I remember there were  
300 English prisoners of war

658  
00:30:21,250 --> 00:30:25,050  
and maybe the hundred  
of us survivors.



659

00:30:25,050 --> 00:30:29,010

We were then loaded  
aboard a passenger ship.

660

00:30:29,010 --> 00:30:34,530

And in Constantinople, now  
Istanbul, the Red Cross

661

00:30:34,530 --> 00:30:37,380

or the British  
consul came aboard.

662

00:30:37,380 --> 00:30:38,880

And that's where we could make--

663

00:30:38,880 --> 00:30:41,020

and he took telegrams for us.

664

00:30:41,020 --> 00:30:43,350

And so that was the  
first contact my father

665

00:30:43,350 --> 00:30:46,260

and I could make with  
the outside world.

666

00:30:46,260 --> 00:30:49,170

You got on the boat  
and went to Istanbul?

667

00:30:49,170 --> 00:30:51,930

Well, the boat was  
docking in Istanbul.

668

00:30:51,930 --> 00:30:54,292

But my father was  
docking in the Bosphorus.

669

00:30:54,292 --> 00:30:56,000

We were not allowed  
to get off the boat--

670

00:30:56,000 --> 00:30:56,550  
To get off?

671  
00:30:56,550 --> 00:30:58,320  
--but the British  
consul came aboard--

672  
00:30:58,320 --> 00:30:59,570  
And you gave him the telegram?

673  
00:30:59,570 --> 00:31:03,090  
And we gave him telegrams to  
the United States and England

674  
00:31:03,090 --> 00:31:07,210  
and Egypt, where my  
uncle was living.

675  
00:31:07,210 --> 00:31:19,490  
And so that was in May  
of 1945, May 5, 1945.

676  
00:31:19,490 --> 00:31:22,690  
Because we had all been  
written off for dead by then

677  
00:31:22,690 --> 00:31:24,830  
by the family.

678  
00:31:24,830 --> 00:31:27,910  
We knew that.

679  
00:31:27,910 --> 00:31:31,058  
We found out in Paris when  
we saw some correspondence.

680  
00:31:31,058 --> 00:31:40,140

681  
00:31:40,140 --> 00:31:41,686  
It's now May 5, 1945?

682

00:31:41,686 --> 00:31:42,186  
Mm-hmm.

683  
00:31:42,186 --> 00:31:43,970  
OK, and you--

684  
00:31:43,970 --> 00:31:47,040  
And we were able finally  
to give signs of life

685  
00:31:47,040 --> 00:31:48,150  
to the outside world.

686  
00:31:48,150 --> 00:31:50,820

687  
00:31:50,820 --> 00:31:54,975  
The ship then proceeded to  
Marseilles, where we unloaded.

688  
00:31:54,975 --> 00:31:57,930  
And on the dock, I found  
an old school friend

689  
00:31:57,930 --> 00:32:00,660  
from Amsterdam,  
who was just there

690  
00:32:00,660 --> 00:32:04,050  
to help the Red Cross,  
who had survived

691  
00:32:04,050 --> 00:32:07,200  
the war in the Southern  
France very nicely.

692  
00:32:07,200 --> 00:32:08,550  
And that was very nice.

693  
00:32:08,550 --> 00:32:10,042  
So my dad and I  
got on the train,

694

00:32:10,042 --> 00:32:11,250  
which was going to Amsterdam.

695

00:32:11,250 --> 00:32:15,570  
Because by then, the entire  
group was from Holland.

696

00:32:15,570 --> 00:32:18,100

697

00:32:18,100 --> 00:32:21,000  
But we knew that the conditions  
in Amsterdam were terrible.

698

00:32:21,000 --> 00:32:23,310  
And my father had some  
accounts receivable

699

00:32:23,310 --> 00:32:27,370  
and some money available  
to him in Paris,

700

00:32:27,370 --> 00:32:29,600  
which I didn't know about.

701

00:32:29,600 --> 00:32:31,350  
And in the middle of the night--

702

00:32:31,350 --> 00:32:34,500  
we were in Strasbourg-- he  
wakes me and shakes me up

703

00:32:34,500 --> 00:32:37,350  
and he says, come on, we're  
getting off this train.

704

00:32:37,350 --> 00:32:39,127  
I remember I said, why?

705

00:32:39,127 --> 00:32:40,710  
He said, we're not  
going to Amsterdam.

706  
00:32:40,710 --> 00:32:41,470  
It's terrible.

707  
00:32:41,470 --> 00:32:43,140  
We're going to Paris.

708  
00:32:43,140 --> 00:32:45,920  
And so off the train we  
went at 1:00 in the morning.

709  
00:32:45,920 --> 00:32:47,670  
And there was another  
train he had spotted

710  
00:32:47,670 --> 00:32:49,500  
standing near an  
American Army train going

711  
00:32:49,500 --> 00:32:52,490  
from Strasbourg to Paris.

712  
00:32:52,490 --> 00:32:53,567  
It was the two of you?

713  
00:32:53,567 --> 00:32:54,150  
The two of us.

714  
00:32:54,150 --> 00:32:56,040  
Just got on the  
army train to Paris.

715  
00:32:56,040 --> 00:33:00,330  
And from Paris, there was  
a big reception at the--

716  
00:33:00,330 --> 00:33:04,260  
that was really terrible  
when we got to Paris.

717  
00:33:04,260 --> 00:33:06,240  
In the morning at

the [INAUDIBLE],,

718  
00:33:06,240 --> 00:33:08,490  
as we got off the  
train and came out,

719  
00:33:08,490 --> 00:33:11,310  
there were all these women,  
Jewish women, standing.

720  
00:33:11,310 --> 00:33:13,590  
There was pictures,  
portraits of their children,

721  
00:33:13,590 --> 00:33:16,020  
their husbands, their  
fathers, their family--

722  
00:33:16,020 --> 00:33:17,610  
crying.

723  
00:33:17,610 --> 00:33:21,420  
Would we recognize  
any of these people?

724  
00:33:21,420 --> 00:33:24,270  
And if you look at  
somebody's picture with hair

725  
00:33:24,270 --> 00:33:28,200  
and a well-fed face, and then  
to equate that to somebody

726  
00:33:28,200 --> 00:33:32,010  
you may have known as a skeleton  
in the camps, impossible.

727  
00:33:32,010 --> 00:33:35,400  
You wouldn't recognize anybody.

728  
00:33:35,400 --> 00:33:40,410  
So the first thing was, as  
we came out of the station,

729  
00:33:40,410 --> 00:33:43,520  
was this gamut of  
people there that

730  
00:33:43,520 --> 00:33:51,190  
had survived in Paris trying  
to identify their loved ones.

731  
00:33:51,190 --> 00:33:53,380  
The French [? records ?]  
were very well organized,

732  
00:33:53,380 --> 00:33:57,210  
and they had a [FRENCH] on the  
Boulevard Raspail and then they

733  
00:33:57,210 --> 00:34:02,460  
quartered us in a wonderful  
villa outside [PLACE NAME]

734  
00:34:02,460 --> 00:34:06,240  
and got us back on our feet.

735  
00:34:06,240 --> 00:34:08,829  
And that's when I got sick  
and my father got sick.

736  
00:34:08,829 --> 00:34:09,630  
What from?

737  
00:34:09,630 --> 00:34:12,190  
My father got sick  
from overeating.

738  
00:34:12,190 --> 00:34:14,380  
His body couldn't  
handle food at all.

739  
00:34:14,380 --> 00:34:18,030  
He got terrible kidney  
problems and fluid problems.

740

00:34:18,030 --> 00:34:20,170

He had to be hospitalized.

741

00:34:20,170 --> 00:34:23,739

And I got a galloping case  
of terrible pneumonia.

742

00:34:23,739 --> 00:34:28,865

And when you can afford  
to be sick, you get sick.

743

00:34:28,865 --> 00:34:30,480

And so you stayed in Paris?

744

00:34:30,480 --> 00:34:31,469

We stayed in Paris.

745

00:34:31,469 --> 00:34:34,110

A friend of ours, a son  
of a family from Benshein,

746

00:34:34,110 --> 00:34:36,639

a very good friend, was in the  
American Army in the Signal

747

00:34:36,639 --> 00:34:40,030

Corps, and he was  
stationed in Paris.

748

00:34:40,030 --> 00:34:42,889

And when his family told--

749

00:34:42,889 --> 00:34:44,730

when they wired him  
that we were there,

750

00:34:44,730 --> 00:34:48,040

he found us and made contact.

751

00:34:48,040 --> 00:34:52,440

And meanwhile, my mother had  
been repatriated to Amsterdam.



752  
00:34:52,440 --> 00:34:56,190  
So he gave me one of  
his spare uniforms.

753  
00:34:56,190 --> 00:35:00,360  
And I got on an army  
train to Brussels and then

754  
00:35:00,360 --> 00:35:02,850  
on a streetcar to  
Antwerp and then

755  
00:35:02,850 --> 00:35:05,400  
on an American Army  
truck, a flower truck,

756  
00:35:05,400 --> 00:35:08,740  
and hitchhiked to Amsterdam.

757  
00:35:08,740 --> 00:35:10,700  
Do you remember the  
meeting with your mother?

758  
00:35:10,700 --> 00:35:13,870  
I certainly remember the  
meeting with my mother.

759  
00:35:13,870 --> 00:35:18,330  
When I got to Amsterdam, I  
found a dime, a payphone,

760  
00:35:18,330 --> 00:35:22,350  
and I called her, and  
I said where I was.

761  
00:35:22,350 --> 00:35:26,340  
We knew where she was going  
to be-- with these friends who

762  
00:35:26,340 --> 00:35:27,390  
was my dad's banker.

763

00:35:27,390 --> 00:35:30,270

And his wife was  
Jewish, he wasn't.

764

00:35:30,270 --> 00:35:34,980

They had survived, and she  
was going to be with them.

765

00:35:34,980 --> 00:35:36,870

Yes, I remember that very well.

766

00:35:36,870 --> 00:35:40,590

And I called and  
it was wonderful.

767

00:35:40,590 --> 00:35:43,230

And she had survived  
in fabulous shape.

768

00:35:43,230 --> 00:35:46,200

She looked great.

769

00:35:46,200 --> 00:35:51,060

And she had lost two children,  
but she'd also not lost

770

00:35:51,060 --> 00:35:53,940

her husband and another child.

771

00:35:53,940 --> 00:35:57,780

And that's more, under the  
circumstances, than any family

772

00:35:57,780 --> 00:35:59,930

could have hoped for.

773

00:35:59,930 --> 00:36:08,560

And, yeah, she wasn't  
physically in very good shape.

774

00:36:08,560 --> 00:36:11,080

So I had to get

her back to Paris.

775

00:36:11,080 --> 00:36:13,630

Of course, we had no papers  
and we had no passports.

776

00:36:13,630 --> 00:36:15,280

We had nothing.

777

00:36:15,280 --> 00:36:19,863

And I think I had some  
French identification

778

00:36:19,863 --> 00:36:21,030

papers [INAUDIBLE] passport.

779

00:36:21,030 --> 00:36:24,970

780

00:36:24,970 --> 00:36:26,470

But I wasn't worried  
about myself.

781

00:36:26,470 --> 00:36:29,860

But she drove back with friends  
of these friends in Amsterdam.

782

00:36:29,860 --> 00:36:33,190

They had a farm near the  
border, near the Belgian border.

783

00:36:33,190 --> 00:36:35,350

And so they just drove her.

784

00:36:35,350 --> 00:36:37,630

And they had a car and they  
managed to have gasoline.

785

00:36:37,630 --> 00:36:42,280

So they drove her to the border,  
just took her across the border

786

00:36:42,280 --> 00:36:45,086  
and drove her to  
Antwerp, to Brussels.

787  
00:36:45,086 --> 00:36:47,740  
And we met in Brussels at  
another business friend

788  
00:36:47,740 --> 00:36:48,910  
of my dad.

789  
00:36:48,910 --> 00:36:53,650  
We had an address, and I managed  
to get to Brussels, again,

790  
00:36:53,650 --> 00:36:56,830  
hitchhiking with the army.

791  
00:36:56,830 --> 00:36:59,170  
And in Brussels, there  
was a regular way

792  
00:36:59,170 --> 00:37:04,090  
of getting train  
passages and so on.

793  
00:37:04,090 --> 00:37:11,230  
The survivors, they leaned over  
backward to be accommodating.

794  
00:37:11,230 --> 00:37:12,910  
So we then got to Paris.

795  
00:37:12,910 --> 00:37:14,875  
And how long did you stay there?

796  
00:37:14,875 --> 00:37:16,360  
A year and a half.

797  
00:37:16,360 --> 00:37:18,170  
I was in school.

798

00:37:18,170 --> 00:37:21,310  
My father started a business.

799  
00:37:21,310 --> 00:37:24,430  
My mother, no she  
didn't work, basically.

800  
00:37:24,430 --> 00:37:25,450  
She was a housewife.

801  
00:37:25,450 --> 00:37:28,510  
We had a little apartment  
outside of Paris

802  
00:37:28,510 --> 00:37:30,670  
in the suburbs.

803  
00:37:30,670 --> 00:37:36,220  
But we started our  
psychologically ill-advised

804  
00:37:36,220 --> 00:37:38,330  
behavior right then and there.

805  
00:37:38,330 --> 00:37:45,920  
In that, the camps were not a  
subject of discussion, ever.

806  
00:37:45,920 --> 00:37:49,180  
For the rest of our lives,  
we never talked about it.

807  
00:37:49,180 --> 00:37:52,870  
This was something you all  
three didn't want to do or--

808  
00:37:52,870 --> 00:37:55,300  
This was something we  
all three couldn't do.

809  
00:37:55,300 --> 00:37:57,748  
Couldn't do, OK.

810

00:37:57,748 --> 00:37:59,350

So it wasn't that  
one of the three

811

00:37:59,350 --> 00:38:02,080

felt or was able to [INAUDIBLE]?

812

00:38:02,080 --> 00:38:04,360

All three of you  
were on the same--

813

00:38:04,360 --> 00:38:04,930

Wavelength.

814

00:38:04,930 --> 00:38:05,520

Wavelength.

815

00:38:05,520 --> 00:38:07,120

Yeah, very unhealthy.

816

00:38:07,120 --> 00:38:11,780

817

00:38:11,780 --> 00:38:16,440

And then how long  
did you stay here?

818

00:38:16,440 --> 00:38:16,960

In Paris?

819

00:38:16,960 --> 00:38:17,460

Yeah.

820

00:38:17,460 --> 00:38:18,550

Yeah, a year and a half.

821

00:38:18,550 --> 00:38:19,860

And then where did you go?

822

00:38:19,860 --> 00:38:21,730

New York.

823  
00:38:21,730 --> 00:38:22,620  
With your family?

824  
00:38:22,620 --> 00:38:23,290  
Yeah.

825  
00:38:23,290 --> 00:38:24,490  
We were together, yeah.

826  
00:38:24,490 --> 00:38:26,170  
We lived in New York first.

827  
00:38:26,170 --> 00:38:28,040  
Well, my parents  
lived in New York

828  
00:38:28,040 --> 00:38:30,530  
for the rest of their lives.

829  
00:38:30,530 --> 00:38:33,520  
My father died in  
1959 at age 65.

830  
00:38:33,520 --> 00:38:37,240  
He died relatively young.

831  
00:38:37,240 --> 00:38:44,908  
He had a stroke and uremia,  
mostly a result of diabetes.

832  
00:38:44,908 --> 00:38:46,450  
And then you moved  
out to California?

833  
00:38:46,450 --> 00:38:48,130  
I came to California in '49.

834  
00:38:48,130 --> 00:38:49,450  
Why 1949?

835

00:38:49,450 --> 00:38:52,616  
I was very unhappy in New York.

836  
00:38:52,616 --> 00:38:55,245  
And I think a lot of the trauma  
caught up with me afterwards.

837  
00:38:55,245 --> 00:38:57,850  
And I had eating problems.

838  
00:38:57,850 --> 00:39:01,810

839  
00:39:01,810 --> 00:39:04,370  
And probably living under  
the same roof as my parents

840  
00:39:04,370 --> 00:39:05,260  
was not a good idea.

841  
00:39:05,260 --> 00:39:07,390  
So I needed to get away.

842  
00:39:07,390 --> 00:39:09,850  
So I've been in San  
Francisco since '49.

843  
00:39:09,850 --> 00:39:12,930  
Can we now talk a little  
bit about your reflections

844  
00:39:12,930 --> 00:39:15,650  
and your feelings about  
what you experienced?

845  
00:39:15,650 --> 00:39:18,840

846  
00:39:18,840 --> 00:39:21,804  
How do you feel about being  
Jewish now that you've been

847



00:39:21,804 --> 00:39:23,054  
through what you went through?

848  
00:39:23,054 --> 00:39:23,820  
Oh.

849  
00:39:23,820 --> 00:39:25,620  
Did it make you more  
Jewish, less Jewish?

850  
00:39:25,620 --> 00:39:26,760  
Much less Jewish.

851  
00:39:26,760 --> 00:39:27,630  
Much less.

852  
00:39:27,630 --> 00:39:30,090  
I have gotten to be much  
more Jewish since we

853  
00:39:30,090 --> 00:39:33,660  
started the gay synagogue  
in San Francisco in 1980.

854  
00:39:33,660 --> 00:39:39,620  
And I was involved  
fairly early in that.

855  
00:39:39,620 --> 00:39:42,390  
And I was recruited  
for it, so to speak.

856  
00:39:42,390 --> 00:39:45,048

857  
00:39:45,048 --> 00:39:46,590  
It's the same thing  
to the Holocaust.

858  
00:39:46,590 --> 00:39:48,120  
I was not dealing.

859

00:39:48,120 --> 00:39:50,890  
I could not deal with the  
Holocaust most of my life.

860  
00:39:50,890 --> 00:39:55,650  
I didn't do any work forward.

861  
00:39:55,650 --> 00:39:56,972  
I couldn't talk about it.

862  
00:39:56,972 --> 00:39:57,930  
I didn't go to schools.

863  
00:39:57,930 --> 00:40:01,130  
I didn't give seminars.

864  
00:40:01,130 --> 00:40:03,480  
I had my tattoo  
removed so that--

865  
00:40:03,480 --> 00:40:06,040  
and until that was removed, I  
would never wear a short sleeve

866  
00:40:06,040 --> 00:40:07,890  
shirt because I  
just simply didn't

867  
00:40:07,890 --> 00:40:10,290  
want people to ask me about it.

868  
00:40:10,290 --> 00:40:12,060  
I couldn't deal with it.

869  
00:40:12,060 --> 00:40:14,836  
How old were you when you  
had your tattoo removed?

870  
00:40:14,836 --> 00:40:15,710  
Was that a quick--

871  
00:40:15,710 --> 00:40:16,870

It was in the early '50s.

872  
00:40:16,870 --> 00:40:18,470  
So soon after the war?

873  
00:40:18,470 --> 00:40:20,130  
Yeah, in the early '50s.

874  
00:40:20,130 --> 00:40:22,510  
And then I went a couple  
of years into analysis

875  
00:40:22,510 --> 00:40:27,360  
and dealt with  
things and started

876  
00:40:27,360 --> 00:40:29,588  
getting out of denial  
about the whole experience.

877  
00:40:29,588 --> 00:40:31,630  
But I still wouldn't deal  
with it for many years.

878  
00:40:31,630 --> 00:40:35,280

879  
00:40:35,280 --> 00:40:38,612  
The Jewish involvement  
started really, more or less,

880  
00:40:38,612 --> 00:40:39,570  
with the gay synagogue.

881  
00:40:39,570 --> 00:40:41,590  
Until then, I only was  
forced into synagogue

882  
00:40:41,590 --> 00:40:45,220  
for funerals or holidays when  
I was in New York or something

883

00:40:45,220 --> 00:40:45,720  
like that.

884  
00:40:45,720 --> 00:40:48,420

885  
00:40:48,420 --> 00:40:49,860  
So I never felt--

886  
00:40:49,860 --> 00:40:52,290  
I felt positive as a Jew,  
but I didn't feel positive

887  
00:40:52,290 --> 00:40:56,430  
about the religious end of it.

888  
00:40:56,430 --> 00:40:58,620  
Do you still think  
about the Holocaust?

889  
00:40:58,620 --> 00:40:59,120  
Yes.

890  
00:40:59,120 --> 00:41:00,778  
Does it still influence  
you in any way?

891  
00:41:00,778 --> 00:41:02,070  
It doesn't influence me at all.

892  
00:41:02,070 --> 00:41:04,830  
I don't-- maybe it does  
influence me and maybe

893  
00:41:04,830 --> 00:41:05,520  
I'm wrong there.

894  
00:41:05,520 --> 00:41:08,880  
But one doesn't ever  
not think about this.

895  
00:41:08,880 --> 00:41:11,880

There's far too much, when  
it's reminded too frequently.

896  
00:41:11,880 --> 00:41:15,770

897  
00:41:15,770 --> 00:41:17,930  
Yes, one does think  
about it a lot.

898  
00:41:17,930 --> 00:41:20,390  
And in recent years,  
I've been more involved

899  
00:41:20,390 --> 00:41:23,000  
since I'm the board of the  
Holocaust Research Center here.

900  
00:41:23,000 --> 00:41:26,080

901  
00:41:26,080 --> 00:41:28,340  
You know, one does get involved.

902  
00:41:28,340 --> 00:41:30,345  
I'm also much more  
involved in recent years

903  
00:41:30,345 --> 00:41:32,480  
in all kinds of community  
activities, which

904  
00:41:32,480 --> 00:41:34,270  
I wasn't heretofore.

905  
00:41:34,270 --> 00:41:37,550  
But heretofore, I was  
working until 1980.

906  
00:41:37,550 --> 00:41:39,590  
I was working full  
time and I didn't have

907

00:41:39,590 --> 00:41:41,670  
time or money for these things.

908

00:41:41,670 --> 00:41:45,830  
But now that I have both, I'm  
much involved in the community.

909

00:41:45,830 --> 00:41:50,760

910

00:41:50,760 --> 00:41:53,300  
Did you ever apply or  
receive reparations?

911

00:41:53,300 --> 00:41:54,170  
Oh, yes.

912

00:41:54,170 --> 00:41:55,830  
I received reparations.

913

00:41:55,830 --> 00:41:57,740  
How do you feel  
about getting them?

914

00:41:57,740 --> 00:41:59,700  
Perfectly fine.

915

00:41:59,700 --> 00:42:01,933  
They owe me.

916

00:42:01,933 --> 00:42:03,100  
I don't get a hell of a lot.

917

00:42:03,100 --> 00:42:07,780  
And I get health reparations,  
but I got a lot of reparation

918

00:42:07,780 --> 00:42:11,740  
for a lack and for  
missing education.

919

00:42:11,740 --> 00:42:14,300  
Got paid a lot of money  
for that without me ever

920  
00:42:14,300 --> 00:42:15,490  
applying for this.

921  
00:42:15,490 --> 00:42:18,980  
It was kind of money  
that came automatically.

922  
00:42:18,980 --> 00:42:24,380  
And because I had a bad  
injury in the camps,

923  
00:42:24,380 --> 00:42:27,200  
I've been receiving health  
damages all my life.

924  
00:42:27,200 --> 00:42:29,160  
What bad injury?

925  
00:42:29,160 --> 00:42:31,220  
I was on unloading  
a railroad car

926  
00:42:31,220 --> 00:42:37,220  
and they overloaded me with a  
cement bag and my back cracked.

927  
00:42:37,220 --> 00:42:38,770  
Which camp?

928  
00:42:38,770 --> 00:42:41,010  
In Gleiwitz.

929  
00:42:41,010 --> 00:42:43,280  
And you said you hurt your back?

930  
00:42:43,280 --> 00:42:45,720  
Yes.

931

00:42:45,720 --> 00:42:47,430  
And so you got extra payment?

932  
00:42:47,430 --> 00:42:47,930  
Yes.

933  
00:42:47,930 --> 00:42:50,340  
And also, that paid  
for a lot of surgery.

934  
00:42:50,340 --> 00:42:51,980  
That paid for all  
the operations.

935  
00:42:51,980 --> 00:42:54,470  
I have a fused spine.

936  
00:42:54,470 --> 00:42:57,440  
When you were injured there,  
what kind of treatment

937  
00:42:57,440 --> 00:42:58,130  
did you get?

938  
00:42:58,130 --> 00:42:59,120  
There was no treatment.

939  
00:42:59,120 --> 00:43:00,410  
You just had to ignore it.

940  
00:43:00,410 --> 00:43:03,070

941  
00:43:03,070 --> 00:43:06,275  
You couldn't even tell  
anybody that you'd been hurt.

942  
00:43:06,275 --> 00:43:07,940  
So you had to continue working?

943  
00:43:07,940 --> 00:43:08,510  
Of course.



944  
00:43:08,510 --> 00:43:11,430

945  
00:43:11,430 --> 00:43:14,850  
Actually, the reason--  
well, I noticed

946  
00:43:14,850 --> 00:43:17,640  
when I was injured  
what had happened,

947  
00:43:17,640 --> 00:43:21,210  
the results didn't show up  
until three or four years later

948  
00:43:21,210 --> 00:43:23,640  
or five years later.

949  
00:43:23,640 --> 00:43:25,705  
You had alluded to  
some of it before,

950  
00:43:25,705 --> 00:43:29,880  
what do you think helped  
you get through this?

951  
00:43:29,880 --> 00:43:33,370  
To survive this experience,  
these experiences?

952  
00:43:33,370 --> 00:43:33,870  
What do--

953  
00:43:33,870 --> 00:43:35,440  
Luck.

954  
00:43:35,440 --> 00:43:38,840  
99% luck.

955  
00:43:38,840 --> 00:43:42,920  
99% is to be at the right

places at the right time,

956

00:43:42,920 --> 00:43:49,350  
to have the right reactions and  
not to be in the line of fire.

957

00:43:49,350 --> 00:43:51,780  
Now, you have interviewed  
a lot of other survivors.

958

00:43:51,780 --> 00:43:54,550  
Let me ask you a question.

959

00:43:54,550 --> 00:43:56,863  
How do they-- what do they say?

960

00:43:56,863 --> 00:43:58,215  
The same answer.

961

00:43:58,215 --> 00:43:58,715  
OK.

962

00:43:58,715 --> 00:44:01,960

963

00:44:01,960 --> 00:44:05,300  
And being with your  
father sustained you?

964

00:44:05,300 --> 00:44:05,800  
Yes.

965

00:44:05,800 --> 00:44:07,800  
Did you feel that  
made a difference?

966

00:44:07,800 --> 00:44:10,130  
Mm-hmm.

967

00:44:10,130 --> 00:44:11,400  
Oh, absolutely.

968

00:44:11,400 --> 00:44:14,310

It did make a difference.

969

00:44:14,310 --> 00:44:19,420

And if you let Elie  
Wiesel, I'm sure you have,

970

00:44:19,420 --> 00:44:23,830

who had virtually the same  
identical story as I have,

971

00:44:23,830 --> 00:44:26,380

and who also was  
with his father,

972

00:44:26,380 --> 00:44:30,640

and who was in the camp  
three more months--

973

00:44:30,640 --> 00:44:33,610

because from the  
death march, they

974

00:44:33,610 --> 00:44:36,420

left a day earlier than we  
did or two days earlier,

975

00:44:36,420 --> 00:44:39,430

and they were put on a  
train near Blechhammer

976

00:44:39,430 --> 00:44:44,660

and sent to [PLACE NAME] or  
east to Germany or Austria

977

00:44:44,660 --> 00:44:53,050

to other camps, we escaped that  
because of maybe 24 or 48 hours

978

00:44:53,050 --> 00:44:54,460

time difference.

979

00:44:54,460 --> 00:44:56,170  
That's luck.

980  
00:44:56,170 --> 00:44:58,630  
Because I'm sure we would not  
have survived another three

981  
00:44:58,630 --> 00:45:01,080  
months.

982  
00:45:01,080 --> 00:45:03,150  
Because of your  
health, you mean?

983  
00:45:03,150 --> 00:45:03,650  
Yeah.

984  
00:45:03,650 --> 00:45:07,320

985  
00:45:07,320 --> 00:45:09,870  
Do you have friends who  
are Holocaust survivors?

986  
00:45:09,870 --> 00:45:11,160  
I have one very good friend.

987  
00:45:11,160 --> 00:45:15,300  
My oldest friend from school in  
Paris is a Holocaust survivor.

988  
00:45:15,300 --> 00:45:16,830  
He lives in New York.

989  
00:45:16,830 --> 00:45:19,260  
And I didn't know  
him in the camps.

990  
00:45:19,260 --> 00:45:20,250  
He knew Elie Wiesel.

991  
00:45:20,250 --> 00:45:24,775

He was in the same camp  
at the Buna in Monowitz.

992  
00:45:24,775 --> 00:45:26,850  
And his name's Ernie  
[PERSONAL NAME]..

993  
00:45:26,850 --> 00:45:29,190  
And he has three  
children, and they all

994  
00:45:29,190 --> 00:45:31,980  
live here on the West  
Coast and the Northwest.

995  
00:45:31,980 --> 00:45:35,310  
And we get together  
every once in a while.

996  
00:45:35,310 --> 00:45:37,260  
He was kind of like  
adopted by my parents.

997  
00:45:37,260 --> 00:45:40,630  
He lost everybody  
and his parents.

998  
00:45:40,630 --> 00:45:42,000  
He was alone.

999  
00:45:42,000 --> 00:45:47,577  
And he survived Auschwitz for  
one more year than we did,

1000  
00:45:47,577 --> 00:45:48,660  
one and a half more years.

1001  
00:45:48,660 --> 00:45:51,630  
He's a tough guy.

1002  
00:45:51,630 --> 00:45:53,520  
Yes, and we are in touch.

1003

00:45:53,520 --> 00:45:55,320

We see each other quite often.

1004

00:45:55,320 --> 00:45:58,920

As a matter of fact, we're going to have a 50th year anniversary

1005

00:45:58,920 --> 00:46:00,330

this year in Seattle.

1006

00:46:00,330 --> 00:46:02,490

We're going to meet.

1007

00:46:02,490 --> 00:46:04,200

Have you been back to Europe?

1008

00:46:04,200 --> 00:46:07,238

Often, very frequently.

1009

00:46:07,238 --> 00:46:09,340

Have you gone to Germany?

1010

00:46:09,340 --> 00:46:11,020

Yes, I go to Germany quite often.

1011

00:46:11,020 --> 00:46:14,260

I have many friends, much younger than myself,

1012

00:46:14,260 --> 00:46:18,285

in Germany, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

1013

00:46:18,285 --> 00:46:21,970

What is your reaction, your feelings about going back?

1014

00:46:21,970 --> 00:46:25,960

Oh, I'm very OK about it.

1015

00:46:25,960 --> 00:46:26,725

I have no--

1016

00:46:26,725 --> 00:46:29,540

1017

00:46:29,540 --> 00:46:31,180

I have forgiven a  
lot, I've forgotten

1018

00:46:31,180 --> 00:46:34,020

nothing or very little.

1019

00:46:34,020 --> 00:46:40,220

And I consider myself  
not only a survivor,

1020

00:46:40,220 --> 00:46:43,800

I think, I consider myself  
that I have won in the sense

1021

00:46:43,800 --> 00:46:45,420

that I'm not carrying  
a lot of baggage

1022

00:46:45,420 --> 00:46:56,080

with me of negative things that  
are totally useless, you know?

1023

00:46:56,080 --> 00:46:58,980

1024

00:46:58,980 --> 00:47:02,070

I don't associate with  
Germans much older

1025

00:47:02,070 --> 00:47:06,950

than myself, unless  
I know who they are.

1026

00:47:06,950 --> 00:47:07,815

Why?

1027

00:47:07,815 --> 00:47:09,690

Well, because I can't  
trust them politically.

1028

00:47:09,690 --> 00:47:11,460

And I'm very outspoken.

1029

00:47:11,460 --> 00:47:14,420

I make-- I can be  
very unpleasant.

1030

00:47:14,420 --> 00:47:17,380

I will ask people questions  
that shouldn't be asked

1031

00:47:17,380 --> 00:47:20,400

or don't want to be asked.

1032

00:47:20,400 --> 00:47:25,330

So I just simply avoid and  
I don't really know people.

1033

00:47:25,330 --> 00:47:30,690

The people I know in Germany  
are either Jewish or not Jewish,

1034

00:47:30,690 --> 00:47:32,700

but friends much  
younger than myself.

1035

00:47:32,700 --> 00:47:35,220

1036

00:47:35,220 --> 00:47:38,250

Why should I feel  
negative about?

1037

00:47:38,250 --> 00:47:42,600

How can you blame them for what  
happened in another generation?

1038

00:47:42,600 --> 00:47:46,100



I mean, that doesn't  
make any sense.

1039  
00:47:46,100 --> 00:47:49,260  
Any other ways that  
the war influenced you

1040  
00:47:49,260 --> 00:47:50,802  
that you wanted to talk about?

1041  
00:47:50,802 --> 00:47:55,000

1042  
00:47:55,000 --> 00:47:57,470  
Well, I suppose we're all  
a product of our earlier

1043  
00:47:57,470 --> 00:47:58,240  
background.

1044  
00:47:58,240 --> 00:48:00,190  
And what happens to you  
for the first 10 or 15

1045  
00:48:00,190 --> 00:48:02,830  
years of your life  
is something that

1046  
00:48:02,830 --> 00:48:07,380  
is far more important than what  
happens to you in the next 50.

1047  
00:48:07,380 --> 00:48:15,080  
And so, yes, I would think, like  
everybody, not just survivors,

1048  
00:48:15,080 --> 00:48:18,100  
who we are has been determined  
by what happened to us

1049  
00:48:18,100 --> 00:48:20,380  
or who we were  
very young in life.

1050

00:48:20,380 --> 00:48:23,710

And, of course, those of us  
who have gone through Auschwitz

1051

00:48:23,710 --> 00:48:29,350

and other camps have been  
psychologically, profoundly

1052

00:48:29,350 --> 00:48:30,310

influenced by that.

1053

00:48:30,310 --> 00:48:33,280

1054

00:48:33,280 --> 00:48:35,860

And not all of us have learned  
a lot from the experience.

1055

00:48:35,860 --> 00:48:39,410

1056

00:48:39,410 --> 00:48:40,840

Do you feel you have learned?

1057

00:48:40,840 --> 00:48:43,070

Well, I think I have  
learned a fair amount.

1058

00:48:43,070 --> 00:48:47,660

But when I'm together with  
a lot of other survivors,

1059

00:48:47,660 --> 00:48:54,200

I'm sometimes shocked  
by their intolerance

1060

00:48:54,200 --> 00:49:02,840

and their un-liberal attitudes,  
not just to its gays,

1061

00:49:02,840 --> 00:49:05,780

but to its minorities, to its--

1062  
00:49:05,780 --> 00:49:08,360

1063  
00:49:08,360 --> 00:49:10,230  
I have sensed that very often.

1064  
00:49:10,230 --> 00:49:12,230  
But, of course, there's  
I'm sure many amongst us

1065  
00:49:12,230 --> 00:49:15,350  
who are more liberal.

1066  
00:49:15,350 --> 00:49:17,480  
When you were in  
the camps, were you

1067  
00:49:17,480 --> 00:49:19,740  
aware of the persecution  
of gays at the time?

1068  
00:49:19,740 --> 00:49:20,240  
No.

1069  
00:49:20,240 --> 00:49:22,220  
Or was this something  
you found out later?

1070  
00:49:22,220 --> 00:49:22,890  
Exactly.

1071  
00:49:22,890 --> 00:49:25,130  
Well, I was aware that  
there were gays in the camp,

1072  
00:49:25,130 --> 00:49:27,230  
but in Auschwitz  
there were very few.

1073  
00:49:27,230 --> 00:49:29,450

You saw very few pink triangles.

1074

00:49:29,450 --> 00:49:31,980

They were mostly in  
Dachau and Buchenwald

1075

00:49:31,980 --> 00:49:35,540

and in the German and  
the Austrian camps.

1076

00:49:35,540 --> 00:49:39,800

And also, I had found out  
later that the persecution

1077

00:49:39,800 --> 00:49:42,920

of one person is one too many.

1078

00:49:42,920 --> 00:49:46,790

But recent research  
seems to show

1079

00:49:46,790 --> 00:49:52,250

that the numbers were much  
smaller than it's usually

1080

00:49:52,250 --> 00:49:54,050

anticipated.

1081

00:49:54,050 --> 00:49:56,930

It cannot be established that  
more than 8,000 or 9,000 people

1082

00:49:56,930 --> 00:50:00,650

total were in camps  
because they were gay.

1083

00:50:00,650 --> 00:50:04,340

And surely there were  
millions of gays in Germany.

1084

00:50:04,340 --> 00:50:07,040

So, you, as a child, you  
did not come into contact

1085  
00:50:07,040 --> 00:50:08,330  
with gay prisoners--

1086  
00:50:08,330 --> 00:50:08,830  
No.

1087  
00:50:08,830 --> 00:50:09,747  
--when you were there?

1088  
00:50:09,747 --> 00:50:10,250  
Not at all.

1089  
00:50:10,250 --> 00:50:12,560  
Criminals, yes, but I  
don't remember having

1090  
00:50:12,560 --> 00:50:15,103  
any contact with gay prisoners.

1091  
00:50:15,103 --> 00:50:16,520  
Because I don't  
think many of them

1092  
00:50:16,520 --> 00:50:19,970  
were in Auschwitz  
as gay prisoners.

1093  
00:50:19,970 --> 00:50:22,220  
Right, right.

1094  
00:50:22,220 --> 00:50:23,330  
And besides, I was a kid.

1095  
00:50:23,330 --> 00:50:24,130  
I wasn't--

1096  
00:50:24,130 --> 00:50:27,740  
Right, you were still  
very young, right, right.

1097

00:50:27,740 --> 00:50:29,590  
Anything else you  
wanted to share--

1098  
00:50:29,590 --> 00:50:30,220  
Well, no--

1099  
00:50:30,220 --> 00:50:31,280  
--or you left out?

1100  
00:50:31,280 --> 00:50:33,620  
Anything you'd like to say?

1101  
00:50:33,620 --> 00:50:36,440  
We've covered half  
my, [LAUGHS] you know,

1102  
00:50:36,440 --> 00:50:37,860  
in something like two hours.

1103  
00:50:37,860 --> 00:50:40,160  
There's obviously a lot of  
stuff that we have left out,

1104  
00:50:40,160 --> 00:50:42,870  
but there's just no way of--

1105  
00:50:42,870 --> 00:50:43,970  
You don't have any other--

1106  
00:50:43,970 --> 00:50:45,770  
Well, I've been very  
fortunate in life.

1107  
00:50:45,770 --> 00:50:49,040

1108  
00:50:49,040 --> 00:50:49,790  
I've done well.

1109  
00:50:49,790 --> 00:50:54,200  
And I've been leading a very

nice and productive life here

1110  
00:50:54,200 --> 00:50:57,590  
in San Francisco.

1111  
00:50:57,590 --> 00:51:01,795  
And I think I was very lucky  
to get here when I got here.

1112  
00:51:01,795 --> 00:51:06,060  
And I have many friends and I'm  
very active in the community

1113  
00:51:06,060 --> 00:51:08,980  
and all kinds of communities.

1114  
00:51:08,980 --> 00:51:15,190

1115  
00:51:15,190 --> 00:51:17,830  
Any message to the  
younger generation

1116  
00:51:17,830 --> 00:51:19,410  
that you would  
give if you could?

1117  
00:51:19,410 --> 00:51:22,570

1118  
00:51:22,570 --> 00:51:25,463  
Well, the only message  
is one of tolerance.

1119  
00:51:25,463 --> 00:51:29,900

1120  
00:51:29,900 --> 00:51:32,490  
Others are better able to  
give those messages than I,

1121  
00:51:32,490 --> 00:51:33,170

you know?

1122  
00:51:33,170 --> 00:51:35,130  
We all have our  
limitations, and I'm not

1123  
00:51:35,130 --> 00:51:36,633  
a very good spokesperson.

1124  
00:51:36,633 --> 00:51:39,804

1125  
00:51:39,804 --> 00:51:40,710  
OK.

1126  
00:51:40,710 --> 00:51:41,500  
Good.

1127  
00:51:41,500 --> 00:51:43,020  
Well, thank you very much  
for doing the interview.

1128  
00:51:43,020 --> 00:51:44,062  
You got through that one.

1129  
00:51:44,062 --> 00:51:45,130  
[LAUGHTER]

1130  
00:51:45,130 --> 00:51:45,760  
Thank you.

1131  
00:51:45,760 --> 00:51:49,250

1132  
00:51:49,250 --> 00:51:52,820  
This concludes the  
interview Gerald Rosenstein.

1133  
00:51:52,820 --> 00:51:56,120  
It took place on  
January 13, 1995,



1134

00:51:56,120 --> 00:51:59,000  
in San Francisco, California.

1135

00:51:59,000 --> 00:52:00,800  
It was conducted  
by Gail Schwartz

1136

00:52:00,800 --> 00:52:04,900  
on behalf of the United States  
Holocaust Memorial Museum.

1137

00:52:04,900 --> 00:52:15,000