

1  
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:06,480

2  
00:00:06,480 --> 00:00:09,240  
This is the United States  
Holocaust Memorial Museum

3  
00:00:09,240 --> 00:00:12,810  
interview with Michael  
Silverstein, conducted

4  
00:00:12,810 --> 00:00:19,500  
by Gail Schwartz, on October  
10, 1996, in Washington,

5  
00:00:19,500 --> 00:00:22,080  
DC at the Holocaust Museum.

6  
00:00:22,080 --> 00:00:29,010  
This is tape number one, side A.

7  
00:00:29,010 --> 00:00:30,780  
What is your full name?

8  
00:00:30,780 --> 00:00:33,510

9  
00:00:33,510 --> 00:00:34,470  
It is Michael--

10  
00:00:34,470 --> 00:00:39,080  
Michael Silverstein, just  
the way it's spelled.

11  
00:00:39,080 --> 00:00:46,450  
And in Poland, my first  
name was not Michael.

12  
00:00:46,450 --> 00:00:47,950  
Is this what you want to know?

13  
00:00:47,950 --> 00:00:49,300  
Yes, we do.

14  
00:00:49,300 --> 00:00:52,930  
My name was quite long.

15  
00:00:52,930 --> 00:00:57,620  
It was Miepek, or even  
longer, it was Mieczyslaw.

16  
00:00:57,620 --> 00:00:59,770  
And let me spell it to you.

17  
00:00:59,770 --> 00:01:05,870  
M-I-E-P-E-K was the  
shortened version.

18  
00:01:05,870 --> 00:01:09,017  
And the full version was--

19  
00:01:09,017 --> 00:01:10,600  
could I have a piece  
of paper, please?

20  
00:01:10,600 --> 00:01:20,400

21  
00:01:20,400 --> 00:01:31,200  
M-I-E-C-Z-Y-S-L-A-W,  
pronounced, Mieczyslaw.

22  
00:01:31,200 --> 00:01:34,090  
And where were you born?

23  
00:01:34,090 --> 00:01:39,930  
I was born in a small town  
called Grudziadz, also

24  
00:01:39,930 --> 00:01:42,060  
pretty difficult to pronounce.

25  
00:01:42,060 --> 00:01:48,000  
And it was up in the northern  
part of Poland, not too far

26  
00:01:48,000 --> 00:01:51,930  
from Gdansk near the Baltic Sea.

27

00:01:51,930 --> 00:01:53,410

When were you born?

28

00:01:53,410 --> 00:02:01,830

I was born February 10, 1930,  
the youngest of four children.

29

00:02:01,830 --> 00:02:04,530

I have two sisters.

30

00:02:04,530 --> 00:02:07,800

I had-- my oldest  
was my brother.

31

00:02:07,800 --> 00:02:11,070

And they were not  
born in Grudziadz.

32

00:02:11,070 --> 00:02:18,210

They were all-- my mother  
and father and my two sisters

33

00:02:18,210 --> 00:02:21,450

and my brother,  
they come from Łódź,

34

00:02:21,450 --> 00:02:23,940

which is a much larger city.

35

00:02:23,940 --> 00:02:27,180

It is located in Central Poland.

36

00:02:27,180 --> 00:02:30,990

It had quite a large  
Jewish population.

37

00:02:30,990 --> 00:02:32,640

That's where my  
parents come from,

38

00:02:32,640 --> 00:02:37,470

and that's where my  
three siblings were born.

39

00:02:37,470 --> 00:02:45,240

For business reasons, to  
improve his life financially,

40

00:02:45,240 --> 00:02:48,540

my father felt that there were  
better opportunities, business

41

00:02:48,540 --> 00:02:51,780

opportunities, up in Grudziadz.

42

00:02:51,780 --> 00:02:56,790

And he picked up his wife, his  
three children, his family,

43

00:02:56,790 --> 00:03:01,260

they moved up there, and  
I was born in Grudziadz.

44

00:03:01,260 --> 00:03:03,880

What kind of work  
did your father do?

45

00:03:03,880 --> 00:03:05,280

He was in business.

46

00:03:05,280 --> 00:03:08,640

He opened up a store.

47

00:03:08,640 --> 00:03:12,570

It was the typical  
dry goods store--

48

00:03:12,570 --> 00:03:17,340

suits, fabrics, and  
that kind of thing.

49

00:03:17,340 --> 00:03:18,840

For men and women, or just--

50

00:03:18,840 --> 00:03:21,540

For men and women.

51

00:03:21,540 --> 00:03:26,490

And he did quite  
well for himself.

52  
00:03:26,490 --> 00:03:29,290  
What were your parents'  
and your siblings' names?

53  
00:03:29,290 --> 00:03:29,790  
OK.

54  
00:03:29,790 --> 00:03:35,230  
My father's name was Shia,  
which is the Jewish name.

55  
00:03:35,230 --> 00:03:38,310  
And that's the kind of  
name that he went by.

56  
00:03:38,310 --> 00:03:42,540  
My mother's name was Gittle.

57  
00:03:42,540 --> 00:03:45,480  
In Poland or something at  
times pronounced Gittla,

58  
00:03:45,480 --> 00:03:49,170  
but it was Gittle.

59  
00:03:49,170 --> 00:03:53,610  
My brother's name was Max.

60  
00:03:53,610 --> 00:03:58,310  
My two sisters' name  
was Helen and Mania--

61  
00:03:58,310 --> 00:04:03,080  
M-A-N-I-A.

62  
00:04:03,080 --> 00:04:05,270  
Let's talk a little bit  
about your extended family.

63  
00:04:05,270 --> 00:04:08,570  
You say your parents  
and siblings had moved.

64  
00:04:08,570 --> 00:04:11,460  
Did you have extended  
family in this smaller town?

65  
00:04:11,460 --> 00:04:11,960  
No.

66  
00:04:11,960 --> 00:04:14,480  
We had an extended  
family in Łódź.

67  
00:04:14,480 --> 00:04:20,390  
Because my father's and  
mother's siblings, parents,

68  
00:04:20,390 --> 00:04:23,570  
they all lived in the Łódź.

69  
00:04:23,570 --> 00:04:30,050  
And in Łódź, they almost lived  
in a ghetto before the war.

70  
00:04:30,050 --> 00:04:31,880  
I don't mean the ghetto in--

71  
00:04:31,880 --> 00:04:36,140  
before the war, it was  
a Jewish enclave, very

72  
00:04:36,140 --> 00:04:41,420  
traditional, very religious  
Jewish people, quite poor.

73  
00:04:41,420 --> 00:04:44,280

74  
00:04:44,280 --> 00:04:50,280  
And I really don't know  
that much about them

75  
00:04:50,280 --> 00:04:55,050  
because I was born in  
another small town.

76

00:04:55,050 --> 00:04:59,720

By nine years old-- when I  
was nine, the war broke out.

77

00:04:59,720 --> 00:05:04,890

We went to Łódź, back to  
Łódź after the war broke out.

78

00:05:04,890 --> 00:05:09,870

Because when the war  
started, the Nazis

79

00:05:09,870 --> 00:05:12,250

occupied Grudziadz the  
first day of the war.

80

00:05:12,250 --> 00:05:12,750

OK.

81

00:05:12,750 --> 00:05:14,170

We'll get to that in a moment.

82

00:05:14,170 --> 00:05:18,360

I want to talk a little bit  
about your life before the war.

83

00:05:18,360 --> 00:05:21,900

Can you describe the town  
that you lived in-- how large

84

00:05:21,900 --> 00:05:25,290

it was, how many  
Jews there were?

85

00:05:25,290 --> 00:05:33,150

It was really a nice little  
town, a charming little town.

86

00:05:33,150 --> 00:05:36,330

It was located  
right on the main--

87

00:05:36,330 --> 00:05:38,340

it was on the River  
Vistula, which

88

00:05:38,340 --> 00:05:46,020  
was one of the main rivers, and  
a very low Jewish population.

89

00:05:46,020 --> 00:05:49,842  
Mostly, it was-- there were  
quite a few German people

90

00:05:49,842 --> 00:05:50,550  
lived there, too.

91

00:05:50,550 --> 00:05:52,410  
Because at that  
time, it was fairly

92

00:05:52,410 --> 00:05:54,150  
close to the German border.

93

00:05:54,150 --> 00:05:58,170  
If you look at the borders  
today it is not that close,

94

00:05:58,170 --> 00:06:02,370  
because after World War II,  
the borders were adjusted.

95

00:06:02,370 --> 00:06:04,440  
But before World War  
II, it was pretty close

96

00:06:04,440 --> 00:06:08,220  
to the German border, so there  
was German influence there.

97

00:06:08,220 --> 00:06:10,785  
But we had a synagogue.

98

00:06:10,785 --> 00:06:13,530  
We had an orthodox synagogue.

99

00:06:13,530 --> 00:06:15,150  
As a matter of fact,  
before the war,



100

00:06:15,150 --> 00:06:18,120

I did not know that there  
were any other synagogues

101

00:06:18,120 --> 00:06:20,610

except an orthodox one.

102

00:06:20,610 --> 00:06:28,303

And I remember attending with  
my mother and father, especially

103

00:06:28,303 --> 00:06:28,845

the holidays.

104

00:06:28,845 --> 00:06:31,830

105

00:06:31,830 --> 00:06:33,830

And we led the Jewish life.

106

00:06:33,830 --> 00:06:37,690

There were Jews, but  
not to the degree,

107

00:06:37,690 --> 00:06:41,410

to the number of Jews that you  
would find in Łódź or Warsaw

108

00:06:41,410 --> 00:06:42,630

or Kraków.

109

00:06:42,630 --> 00:06:46,080

All the other big cities had  
much larger Jewish populations

110

00:06:46,080 --> 00:06:48,183

than the city that  
I was born in,

111

00:06:48,183 --> 00:06:49,350

the town that I was born in.

112

00:06:49,350 --> 00:06:51,210

What kind of neighborhood

did you live in?

113

00:06:51,210 --> 00:06:55,230

Was it a mixed

Jews and non-Jews?

114

00:06:55,230 --> 00:06:58,320

Yes, it was mixed

because there was

115

00:06:58,320 --> 00:07:02,220

no such thing in that town

as a Jewish neighborhood.

116

00:07:02,220 --> 00:07:03,930

There weren't enough Jews.

117

00:07:03,930 --> 00:07:05,400

So it was mixed.

118

00:07:05,400 --> 00:07:07,320

Jews lived all over the place.

119

00:07:07,320 --> 00:07:10,860

The neighborhood that I

lived in was very nice.

120

00:07:10,860 --> 00:07:13,980

Because by the time

I was born, my father

121

00:07:13,980 --> 00:07:19,330

was able to afford nice

quarters, nice living.

122

00:07:19,330 --> 00:07:22,120

123

00:07:22,120 --> 00:07:28,640

I-- when I was born, and my

first nine years as a child,

124

00:07:28,640 --> 00:07:38,170

I did not know of the kind of

poverty and the very meager

125

00:07:38,170 --> 00:07:44,140

life that probably my parents  
had when they were young

126

00:07:44,140 --> 00:07:46,090

in the city of Łódź.

127

00:07:46,090 --> 00:07:49,540

So I was-- when I was  
born, the kind of life

128

00:07:49,540 --> 00:07:50,870

I had was pretty good.

129

00:07:50,870 --> 00:07:53,110

We had a pretty good  
life in Grudziadz.

130

00:07:53,110 --> 00:07:58,220

So you were almost the  
upper class of the town?

131

00:07:58,220 --> 00:08:00,773

We were certainly middle class.

132

00:08:00,773 --> 00:08:02,440

Did you live in a  
house or an apartment?

133

00:08:02,440 --> 00:08:04,990

An apartment.

134

00:08:04,990 --> 00:08:10,600

At that time, living  
in a private house

135

00:08:10,600 --> 00:08:17,500

was not the mode of living, even  
with the people that had money.

136

00:08:17,500 --> 00:08:20,170

We lived in a large  
apartment, and we

137

00:08:20,170 --> 00:08:23,860

lived in a nice section  
of town, like, nice.

138

00:08:23,860 --> 00:08:26,400

139

00:08:26,400 --> 00:08:28,530

What language did  
you speak at home?

140

00:08:28,530 --> 00:08:31,130

Polish.

141

00:08:31,130 --> 00:08:36,980

Even though my parents  
spoke Yiddish at home

142

00:08:36,980 --> 00:08:39,980

when they were small  
when they were teenagers,

143

00:08:39,980 --> 00:08:42,600

but they knew both languages.

144

00:08:42,600 --> 00:08:46,870

When I was born in Grudziadz,  
you had to speak Polish

145

00:08:46,870 --> 00:08:47,995

or you couldn't get around.

146

00:08:47,995 --> 00:08:51,020

147

00:08:51,020 --> 00:08:55,160

Day-to-day life was conducted  
in Polish, not in Yiddish.

148

00:08:55,160 --> 00:08:57,500

Schools I went to  
were Polish schools,

149

00:08:57,500 --> 00:08:59,660

even though I went to a cheder.

150

00:08:59,660 --> 00:09:02,840

But the schools that

I went to were--

151

00:09:02,840 --> 00:09:04,040

Polish was spoken.

152

00:09:04,040 --> 00:09:06,620

No different than in

the United States,

153

00:09:06,620 --> 00:09:08,660

Jewish children speak English.

154

00:09:08,660 --> 00:09:10,850

They don't speak Yiddish.

155

00:09:10,850 --> 00:09:13,167

Let's talk about the

school that you went to.

156

00:09:13,167 --> 00:09:14,500

You said it was a public school.

157

00:09:14,500 --> 00:09:15,000

Yes.

158

00:09:15,000 --> 00:09:15,950

Was it boys and girls?

159

00:09:15,950 --> 00:09:20,720

160

00:09:20,720 --> 00:09:21,990

I think so.

161

00:09:21,990 --> 00:09:23,270

I think so.

162

00:09:23,270 --> 00:09:26,050

I'm not quite sure, but

it was a public school.

163  
00:09:26,050 --> 00:09:27,980  
And were there any problems?

164  
00:09:27,980 --> 00:09:29,630  
Again, you were very  
young, of course.

165  
00:09:29,630 --> 00:09:32,380  
But do you remember any  
problems being Jewish at school?

166  
00:09:32,380 --> 00:09:33,320  
Yes.

167  
00:09:33,320 --> 00:09:35,090  
Can you tell us some of them?

168  
00:09:35,090 --> 00:09:36,800  
Yes, there were incidents.

169  
00:09:36,800 --> 00:09:41,510  
I mean, the  
anti-Semitism was rampant

170  
00:09:41,510 --> 00:09:44,850  
in Poland, and especially  
in a town like that.

171  
00:09:44,850 --> 00:09:47,360  
And yeah, there were incidents.

172  
00:09:47,360 --> 00:09:49,670  
Occasionally, you know,  
somebody would call you

173  
00:09:49,670 --> 00:09:52,670  
a dirty Jew, or a--

174  
00:09:52,670 --> 00:09:56,680  
but that was almost,  
not an accepted,

175  
00:09:56,680 --> 00:09:59,240

but it was a way  
of life that Jews

176  
00:09:59,240 --> 00:10:05,000  
were subjected to on a  
day-to-day basis when

177  
00:10:05,000 --> 00:10:06,170  
I went to school.

178  
00:10:06,170 --> 00:10:09,290  
And most of the kids  
were not Jewish.

179  
00:10:09,290 --> 00:10:13,490  
So when I was a-- being  
a Jew, I stood out.

180  
00:10:13,490 --> 00:10:17,840  
Not by the way I looked, but  
by the fact that I was a Jew.

181  
00:10:17,840 --> 00:10:19,910  
Most of the people  
there were non-Jews,

182  
00:10:19,910 --> 00:10:24,590  
were Catholics,  
and very observant,

183  
00:10:24,590 --> 00:10:28,460  
very practicing  
kind of Catholics.

184  
00:10:28,460 --> 00:10:31,670  
So being a Jew, I  
was such a-- it was

185  
00:10:31,670 --> 00:10:36,470  
such a different way of life.

186  
00:10:36,470 --> 00:10:42,260  
It was not the same way as  
when a Jew and a Catholic

187

00:10:42,260 --> 00:10:44,550  
meet here in the  
United States today.

188  
00:10:44,550 --> 00:10:49,190  
It was a completely  
different encounter.

189  
00:10:49,190 --> 00:10:54,415  
Were you yourself ever  
called a dirty Jew?

190  
00:10:54,415 --> 00:10:54,915  
Yes.

191  
00:10:54,915 --> 00:10:57,930

192  
00:10:57,930 --> 00:11:00,180  
Not all the time, but I was.

193  
00:11:00,180 --> 00:11:01,890  
And what was that like  
for a young child?

194  
00:11:01,890 --> 00:11:03,750  
What were your feelings then?

195  
00:11:03,750 --> 00:11:06,480  
Well, first of  
all, you would get

196  
00:11:06,480 --> 00:11:11,550  
scared because now  
I was different,

197  
00:11:11,550 --> 00:11:18,090  
and I knew that I was  
disliked and not trusted

198  
00:11:18,090 --> 00:11:22,920  
and not welcome to become a part  
of the group, a part of the--

199  
00:11:22,920 --> 00:11:26,160



200  
00:11:26,160 --> 00:11:29,850  
to be-- to have friends, to--

201  
00:11:29,850 --> 00:11:32,230  
with your own peers.

202  
00:11:32,230 --> 00:11:33,490  
Not all.

203  
00:11:33,490 --> 00:11:34,320  
I don't-- I want--

204  
00:11:34,320 --> 00:11:37,710  
I hasten to say that not  
everybody was like that.

205  
00:11:37,710 --> 00:11:40,440  
That would be an  
unfair description.

206  
00:11:40,440 --> 00:11:44,040  
I had some friends  
and some were nice.

207  
00:11:44,040 --> 00:11:46,800  
But to answer the  
question, was I ever

208  
00:11:46,800 --> 00:11:48,720  
experiencing anti-Semitism?

209  
00:11:48,720 --> 00:11:49,440  
Of course.

210  
00:11:49,440 --> 00:11:52,080  
Who wasn't in Poland?

211  
00:11:52,080 --> 00:11:56,280  
A Jew in Poland  
experienced anti-Semitism.

212  
00:11:56,280 --> 00:11:58,680

Were you ever physically  
attacked for being Jewish?

213  
00:11:58,680 --> 00:12:01,230

214  
00:12:01,230 --> 00:12:04,360  
Not until later on in my life.

215  
00:12:04,360 --> 00:12:04,860  
No.

216  
00:12:04,860 --> 00:12:06,580  
We're talking about  
your early childhood.

217  
00:12:06,580 --> 00:12:12,210  
No, I wasn't at the time  
that we are talking about.

218  
00:12:12,210 --> 00:12:15,660  
When you were called a dirty  
Jew, did you tell your parents?

219  
00:12:15,660 --> 00:12:19,950  
And if so, did they  
discuss this with you?

220  
00:12:19,950 --> 00:12:24,590  
My-- yes, my parents  
knew about it.

221  
00:12:24,590 --> 00:12:27,150  
The approach-- in those  
years, the approach

222  
00:12:27,150 --> 00:12:31,410  
of parents towards  
their children

223  
00:12:31,410 --> 00:12:36,300  
when the child was confronted  
with being called a dirty Jew,

224  
00:12:36,300 --> 00:12:40,350

or even pushed  
around, was generally

225  
00:12:40,350 --> 00:12:42,570  
to avoid that kind of situation.

226  
00:12:42,570 --> 00:12:48,360

227  
00:12:48,360 --> 00:12:51,840  
My parents would describe  
and tell me, yes, I am a Jew.

228  
00:12:51,840 --> 00:12:52,640  
I'm different.

229  
00:12:52,640 --> 00:12:55,290

230  
00:12:55,290 --> 00:12:58,290  
But we had to try to get  
along as best we could.

231  
00:12:58,290 --> 00:13:02,610

232  
00:13:02,610 --> 00:13:06,990  
Did you talk it over with  
your sisters or your brother?

233  
00:13:06,990 --> 00:13:08,700  
Not really.

234  
00:13:08,700 --> 00:13:11,340  
My brother was 10 years  
older than me, so, you know,

235  
00:13:11,340 --> 00:13:15,510  
there was quite  
a age difference.

236  
00:13:15,510 --> 00:13:23,970  
And he experienced it,  
too, as a teenager.

237

00:13:23,970 --> 00:13:30,390

So he probably-- both him and  
my sisters who are older than I

238

00:13:30,390 --> 00:13:31,350

am--

239

00:13:31,350 --> 00:13:36,000

they probably experienced it  
to a greater degree than I.

240

00:13:36,000 --> 00:13:39,960

Because young children,  
although can be very cruel,

241

00:13:39,960 --> 00:13:43,080

they haven't acquired  
yet, perhaps,

242

00:13:43,080 --> 00:13:46,800

the same hate as adults  
when they get older,

243

00:13:46,800 --> 00:13:49,710

and they are taught  
day in and day out.

244

00:13:49,710 --> 00:13:52,380

And my brother and my  
sisters being older,

245

00:13:52,380 --> 00:13:55,020

they probably  
experienced anti-Semitism

246

00:13:55,020 --> 00:13:57,180

to a greater degree  
than I have when

247

00:13:57,180 --> 00:13:59,580

I was a boy living  
in that little town

248

00:13:59,580 --> 00:14:01,260

that I just described.

249

00:14:01,260 --> 00:14:04,620

By the way, I keep talking  
about it as a little town.

250

00:14:04,620 --> 00:14:09,000

In 1993, just three years  
ago, my wife and my two sons

251

00:14:09,000 --> 00:14:11,040

went to Poland.

252

00:14:11,040 --> 00:14:13,140

We visited Poland, and we went.

253

00:14:13,140 --> 00:14:18,150

Obviously, they wanted to see  
the town where I was born.

254

00:14:18,150 --> 00:14:22,290

So we went to Grudziadz  
and both my sons said,

255

00:14:22,290 --> 00:14:26,110

we imagined it to  
be quite different

256

00:14:26,110 --> 00:14:27,527

than you described it.

257

00:14:27,527 --> 00:14:29,610

Because I was always talking  
about the small town,

258

00:14:29,610 --> 00:14:31,860

they thought it was  
a typical shtetl.

259

00:14:31,860 --> 00:14:33,000

It is not.

260

00:14:33,000 --> 00:14:35,880

It wasn't then,  
and it isn't today.

261  
00:14:35,880 --> 00:14:36,480  
You come in.

262  
00:14:36,480 --> 00:14:38,070  
There is-- it's a fairly--

263  
00:14:38,070 --> 00:14:41,370  
not a big city, but a  
developed town with streets,

264  
00:14:41,370 --> 00:14:45,120  
with cars, with trucks, with  
the normal kind of hustle

265  
00:14:45,120 --> 00:14:49,320  
bustle that you see in a  
town that goes on day in

266  
00:14:49,320 --> 00:14:49,860  
and day out.

267  
00:14:49,860 --> 00:14:52,950

268  
00:14:52,950 --> 00:14:56,100  
At school, were any of  
your teachers Jewish?

269  
00:14:56,100 --> 00:14:57,210  
No.

270  
00:14:57,210 --> 00:14:58,800  
Not at that-- no.

271  
00:14:58,800 --> 00:15:01,560  
And did they give  
you any difficulty

272  
00:15:01,560 --> 00:15:05,220  
in knowing that you were Jewish?

273  
00:15:05,220 --> 00:15:06,240  
Not that I can recall.

274

00:15:06,240 --> 00:15:09,720

275

00:15:09,720 --> 00:15:12,660

Because there were  
so few Jews, it

276

00:15:12,660 --> 00:15:17,050

was an insignificant  
kind of situation.

277

00:15:17,050 --> 00:15:20,040

So there are two or  
three Jews, it is--

278

00:15:20,040 --> 00:15:25,540

it isn't-- we didn't stand out  
to a degree that the teacher

279

00:15:25,540 --> 00:15:29,010

or somebody else would  
give us a problem.

280

00:15:29,010 --> 00:15:32,910

We were just in the  
classroom learning, studying,

281

00:15:32,910 --> 00:15:34,860

the same as anybody else.

282

00:15:34,860 --> 00:15:40,290

I believe in the cities where  
the Jewish population was

283

00:15:40,290 --> 00:15:45,000

larger, and where you had a  
classroom where it was 50-50,

284

00:15:45,000 --> 00:15:48,750

the situation would have been  
worse for the Jewish children

285

00:15:48,750 --> 00:15:50,370

sometimes than it was for me.

286

00:15:50,370 --> 00:15:52,140

Not that it was good  
for me, but it's

287

00:15:52,140 --> 00:15:54,660

a completely different setting.

288

00:15:54,660 --> 00:15:57,450

With those two or three other  
Jewish children in your class,

289

00:15:57,450 --> 00:16:02,010

did you get together  
and talk about how

290

00:16:02,010 --> 00:16:05,610

you were treated by some  
of your other classmates?

291

00:16:05,610 --> 00:16:06,810

Not really.

292

00:16:06,810 --> 00:16:15,140

I knew-- only one person that  
I knew from Grudziadz that was

293

00:16:15,140 --> 00:16:17,000

my age--

294

00:16:17,000 --> 00:16:20,160

the fellow has since died--

295

00:16:20,160 --> 00:16:24,860

that we went to school together  
and we played together.

296

00:16:24,860 --> 00:16:28,700

I saw him and his  
parents in the synagogue.

297

00:16:28,700 --> 00:16:32,810

But we very seldom  
discussed the activities

298



00:16:32,810 --> 00:16:35,180  
in our public school.

299  
00:16:35,180 --> 00:16:37,700  
How observant was your family?

300  
00:16:37,700 --> 00:16:40,940  
You said you went to synagogue.

301  
00:16:40,940 --> 00:16:44,480  
How would you  
characterize your family?

302  
00:16:44,480 --> 00:16:46,880  
Traditional.

303  
00:16:46,880 --> 00:16:55,220  
But they were-- my mother and  
father looked the way I look.

304  
00:16:55,220 --> 00:17:00,500  
In other words, there were no  
outward appearances of Jewish.

305  
00:17:00,500 --> 00:17:01,580  
They didn't have payots.

306  
00:17:01,580 --> 00:17:04,550

307  
00:17:04,550 --> 00:17:12,349  
Although they came from homes  
that were quite orthodox,

308  
00:17:12,349 --> 00:17:17,810  
they themselves were not--  
they would fit in probably,

309  
00:17:17,810 --> 00:17:22,010  
just my description, probably  
into a conservative kind

310  
00:17:22,010 --> 00:17:26,750  
of Jewish situation that exists  
today in the United States--

311  
00:17:26,750 --> 00:17:32,080  
a practicing, conservative Jew.

312  
00:17:32,080 --> 00:17:33,650  
And what kind of  
religious training

313  
00:17:33,650 --> 00:17:35,720  
did you have up to  
the age of nine?

314  
00:17:35,720 --> 00:17:36,510  
I went to cheder.

315  
00:17:36,510 --> 00:17:39,590

316  
00:17:39,590 --> 00:17:40,550  
I don't remember.

317  
00:17:40,550 --> 00:17:42,800  
I really don't remember--  
it was once or twice a week.

318  
00:17:42,800 --> 00:17:45,530  
I think it was twice a  
week I did go to cheder.

319  
00:17:45,530 --> 00:17:49,300  
And I remember learning,  
you know, a little bit

320  
00:17:49,300 --> 00:17:50,930  
in Hebrew and some daven--

321  
00:17:50,930 --> 00:17:52,220  
whatever the kids learn.

322  
00:17:52,220 --> 00:17:55,480  
And I've got a  
9-year-old grandson,

323  
00:17:55,480 --> 00:17:58,540

he probably learns  
the same thing.

324  
00:17:58,540 --> 00:18:01,580  
So the only language at  
that point was Polish,

325  
00:18:01,580 --> 00:18:03,260  
and you were learning  
Hebrew in cheder.

326  
00:18:03,260 --> 00:18:05,400  
Did you understand  
any German or Yiddish?

327  
00:18:05,400 --> 00:18:06,230  
Yes.

328  
00:18:06,230 --> 00:18:10,580  
I understood some German because  
there was quite a bit of German

329  
00:18:10,580 --> 00:18:11,690  
spoken.

330  
00:18:11,690 --> 00:18:13,400  
I did not know Yiddish.

331  
00:18:13,400 --> 00:18:16,280  
It was German spoken in  
town, not in the school

332  
00:18:16,280 --> 00:18:21,350  
that I went to, but  
it was around you.

333  
00:18:21,350 --> 00:18:22,910  
But not to a big degree.

334  
00:18:22,910 --> 00:18:29,060  
It was mostly a Polish town,  
and that's all I spoke--

335  
00:18:29,060 --> 00:18:31,010  
no Yiddish at that time, no.

336

00:18:31,010 --> 00:18:34,370

I did learn Yiddish, and I'll  
explain it to you later on.

337

00:18:34,370 --> 00:18:38,453

But until I was nine, I did  
not know how to speak Yiddish.

338

00:18:38,453 --> 00:18:40,370

Did you have any other  
interests, and granted,

339

00:18:40,370 --> 00:18:43,100

you were very young, but were  
you interested in sports or--

340

00:18:43,100 --> 00:18:43,740

Yes.

341

00:18:43,740 --> 00:18:44,720

Which ones?

342

00:18:44,720 --> 00:18:45,350

Soccer.

343

00:18:45,350 --> 00:18:47,740

That was the kind of  
thing that we all played,

344

00:18:47,740 --> 00:18:51,050

and that's what I did.

345

00:18:51,050 --> 00:18:51,890

Nothing else.

346

00:18:51,890 --> 00:18:52,970

We did some--

347

00:18:52,970 --> 00:18:56,040

I remember when  
we went to cheder,

348

00:18:56,040 --> 00:18:57,980

we would just be  
running around playing

349  
00:18:57,980 --> 00:19:00,950  
ball, that kind of thing.

350  
00:19:00,950 --> 00:19:05,480  
Sports were not quite organized  
as we know of them today.

351  
00:19:05,480 --> 00:19:07,680  
How would you describe  
yourself as a young boy?

352  
00:19:07,680 --> 00:19:09,543  
Were you very adventuresome?

353  
00:19:09,543 --> 00:19:10,460  
Were you more curious?

354  
00:19:10,460 --> 00:19:12,158  
Or were you more quiet?

355  
00:19:12,158 --> 00:19:13,700  
What would you--  
what words would you

356  
00:19:13,700 --> 00:19:14,788  
use to describe yourself?

357  
00:19:14,788 --> 00:19:15,830  
And, yes, you were young.

358  
00:19:15,830 --> 00:19:19,800

359  
00:19:19,800 --> 00:19:24,650  
It's difficult for me  
to think back that long

360  
00:19:24,650 --> 00:19:29,390  
to describe myself as to whether  
I was adventuresome or quiet.

361

00:19:29,390 --> 00:19:31,310  
I don't think I was quiet.

362  
00:19:31,310 --> 00:19:33,020  
I was pretty much--

363  
00:19:33,020 --> 00:19:37,280  
in those years I did pretty  
much what my mother and father

364  
00:19:37,280 --> 00:19:40,340  
told me to do.

365  
00:19:40,340 --> 00:19:44,870  
It was a different life that  
people can imagine today.

366  
00:19:44,870 --> 00:19:47,420

367  
00:19:47,420 --> 00:19:52,760  
Mother and father were authority  
figures, and what they said,

368  
00:19:52,760 --> 00:19:53,780  
we did.

369  
00:19:53,780 --> 00:19:57,300  
Not just me, but my sisters  
and my brother, too.

370  
00:19:57,300 --> 00:20:00,060  
It was different and  
it was a good life.

371  
00:20:00,060 --> 00:20:01,610  
We didn't mind it.

372  
00:20:01,610 --> 00:20:02,360  
We didn't mind it.

373  
00:20:02,360 --> 00:20:04,910

374

00:20:04,910 --> 00:20:08,030  
Hitler came into power in 1933.

375  
00:20:08,030 --> 00:20:14,540  
Were you aware in any  
way of him before 1939?

376  
00:20:14,540 --> 00:20:16,790  
In 1933, I was three  
years old, so obviously, I

377  
00:20:16,790 --> 00:20:17,900  
wasn't aware of him, no.

378  
00:20:17,900 --> 00:20:19,190  
No, I don't mean-- but I  
meant any time up to 1939.

379  
00:20:19,190 --> 00:20:19,690  
Yes.

380  
00:20:19,690 --> 00:20:20,960  
Yes, there was.

381  
00:20:20,960 --> 00:20:23,950  
My father was, because--

382  
00:20:23,950 --> 00:20:25,010  
and my mother.

383  
00:20:25,010 --> 00:20:30,030  
Because sometimes they would  
be talking in hushed terms,

384  
00:20:30,030 --> 00:20:32,420  
and I could hear--

385  
00:20:32,420 --> 00:20:35,390  
I could hear them talk.

386  
00:20:35,390 --> 00:20:38,420  
And maybe with their friends  
they would be talking,

387

00:20:38,420 --> 00:20:41,900  
but they would never  
want me to hear it.

388  
00:20:41,900 --> 00:20:43,880  
When I start recalling  
this, I don't

389  
00:20:43,880 --> 00:20:46,940  
know how clear I am  
about the subject,

390  
00:20:46,940 --> 00:20:51,450  
but there was  
knowledge of Hitler.

391  
00:20:51,450 --> 00:20:56,080  
And we had quite a lot of  
family in the United States,

392  
00:20:56,080 --> 00:20:59,510  
and we will talk about it, I  
suppose, a little bit later.

393  
00:20:59,510 --> 00:21:02,720  
And there were  
opportunities that--

394  
00:21:02,720 --> 00:21:05,030  
probably, my father  
and my mother

395  
00:21:05,030 --> 00:21:09,000  
had opportunities to  
come to this country.

396  
00:21:09,000 --> 00:21:13,830  
However, life was  
pretty good for them.

397  
00:21:13,830 --> 00:21:18,350  
And imagine yourself picking  
up one day-- being born here,

398  
00:21:18,350 --> 00:21:23,450  
lived here, have some



successes, life, friends,

399

00:21:23,450 --> 00:21:26,412

day-to-day your entire  
infrastructure is here,

400

00:21:26,412 --> 00:21:28,370

to say, gee, I'm going  
to go to another country

401

00:21:28,370 --> 00:21:29,790

where I don't  
speak the language.

402

00:21:29,790 --> 00:21:31,200

I don't know the people.

403

00:21:31,200 --> 00:21:33,665

So I think that  
that was almost--

404

00:21:33,665 --> 00:21:38,090

it prevented them from  
being adventurous enough

405

00:21:38,090 --> 00:21:40,040

to pick up and move.

406

00:21:40,040 --> 00:21:43,220

But to answer you  
original question,

407

00:21:43,220 --> 00:21:51,660

I was not aware of Hitler, but  
my parents were, obviously.

408

00:21:51,660 --> 00:22:00,600

Nobody in their wildest  
dreams, including my parents,

409

00:22:00,600 --> 00:22:07,210

would have thought that what  
had happened would happen.

410

00:22:07,210 --> 00:22:09,610

If they did, obviously,  
they wouldn't stay.

411  
00:22:09,610 --> 00:22:12,430

412  
00:22:12,430 --> 00:22:14,260  
Up till the time  
of the war did you

413  
00:22:14,260 --> 00:22:19,190  
notice, again, an  
escalation on the streets,

414  
00:22:19,190 --> 00:22:22,420  
or any changes as a child?

415  
00:22:22,420 --> 00:22:28,030  
Did you sense any heightening  
tensions before 1939?

416  
00:22:28,030 --> 00:22:29,740  
I can't recall.

417  
00:22:29,740 --> 00:22:34,180  
I personally don't remember.

418  
00:22:34,180 --> 00:22:39,310  
But intellectually, I must  
say there must have been.

419  
00:22:39,310 --> 00:22:40,630  
If I were-- my--

420  
00:22:40,630 --> 00:22:45,760  
I am sure that my siblings, my  
older brother and my sisters,

421  
00:22:45,760 --> 00:22:48,640  
felt it, and I'm sure  
my parents felt it.

422  
00:22:48,640 --> 00:22:50,701  
But don't forget, I was just--

423

00:22:50,701 --> 00:22:57,830  
was just a kid being under  
the protection of my parents.

424

00:22:57,830 --> 00:23:00,520  
And it was very different than--

425

00:23:00,520 --> 00:23:04,470  
I was really under  
the protection.

426

00:23:04,470 --> 00:23:08,170  
They knew where I was all the  
time, where I went, how I went,

427

00:23:08,170 --> 00:23:10,420  
who I went with,  
and so on and so on.

428

00:23:10,420 --> 00:23:14,890  
So you-- but you felt  
free to go and do things?

429

00:23:14,890 --> 00:23:15,390  
Yes.

430

00:23:15,390 --> 00:23:15,890  
OK.

431

00:23:15,890 --> 00:23:18,490  
What was the first  
big change then?

432

00:23:18,490 --> 00:23:21,700

433

00:23:21,700 --> 00:23:30,810  
Well, there were  
indications in 1938.

434

00:23:30,810 --> 00:23:33,690  
There were probably  
indications prior.

435

00:23:33,690 --> 00:23:36,510  
We all know that they were.

436  
00:23:36,510 --> 00:23:38,640  
Obviously, there  
were indications

437  
00:23:38,640 --> 00:23:41,670  
from '33 and prior to '33.

438  
00:23:41,670 --> 00:23:45,210  
Most people think that the  
whole problem started in '33.

439  
00:23:45,210 --> 00:23:47,550  
That is not so.

440  
00:23:47,550 --> 00:23:51,660  
The problem started in  
the '20s and even before.

441  
00:23:51,660 --> 00:23:54,600  
So yeah, there were indications.

442  
00:23:54,600 --> 00:23:57,720  
There were some heightened  
tensions maybe in 1938.

443  
00:23:57,720 --> 00:24:00,060  
Things were going on  
that were not quite

444  
00:24:00,060 --> 00:24:01,830  
clear to me what was going on.

445  
00:24:01,830 --> 00:24:04,350  
That you as an  
eight-year-old even sensed?

446  
00:24:04,350 --> 00:24:06,850  
That's right--  
that you sensed it.

447  
00:24:06,850 --> 00:24:10,320  
But there would-- there

was talk about Hitler,

448

00:24:10,320 --> 00:24:16,500  
and there was talk about German  
Jews being really persecuted

449

00:24:16,500 --> 00:24:21,230  
by the new regime, even  
though Polish Jews were--

450

00:24:21,230 --> 00:24:26,310  
the anti-Semitism in  
Poland was just as severe

451

00:24:26,310 --> 00:24:31,530  
as it was in Germany,  
but the approach

452

00:24:31,530 --> 00:24:33,600  
was somewhat different.

453

00:24:33,600 --> 00:24:34,290  
So yeah.

454

00:24:34,290 --> 00:24:35,490  
There were indications.

455

00:24:35,490 --> 00:24:37,080  
There was some  
heightened tension.

456

00:24:37,080 --> 00:24:41,760  
But yet, I think that the older,  
the teenagers and my parents,

457

00:24:41,760 --> 00:24:45,030  
felt it more than  
I did being a kid.

458

00:24:45,030 --> 00:24:46,710  
Did you hear of Kristallnacht?

459

00:24:46,710 --> 00:24:50,340  
Or do you remember your  
parents talking about that?

460  
00:24:50,340 --> 00:24:52,260  
No.

461  
00:24:52,260 --> 00:24:54,910  
I am sure they heard about it.

462  
00:24:54,910 --> 00:24:56,560  
They knew about it.

463  
00:24:56,560 --> 00:25:00,660  
But Kristallnacht  
happened in 1938.

464  
00:25:00,660 --> 00:25:02,160  
I was eight years old.

465  
00:25:02,160 --> 00:25:04,260  
I can't imagine my  
mother and father

466  
00:25:04,260 --> 00:25:09,310  
sitting me down trying to  
explain to me Kristallnacht.

467  
00:25:09,310 --> 00:25:11,910  
I don't even know whether  
you would do that today

468  
00:25:11,910 --> 00:25:13,140  
to an eight-year-old.

469  
00:25:13,140 --> 00:25:16,690  
Certainly, not in those days.

470  
00:25:16,690 --> 00:25:17,190  
All right.

471  
00:25:17,190 --> 00:25:21,570  
So as I was saying, what--  
the first big change

472  
00:25:21,570 --> 00:25:25,830  
that you remember

as a nine-year-old?

473

00:25:25,830 --> 00:25:28,380

Well, of course,  
the war started.

474

00:25:28,380 --> 00:25:30,570

And you were in this  
town at the time?

475

00:25:30,570 --> 00:25:31,320

Yes.

476

00:25:31,320 --> 00:25:33,180

And what was the  
first thing-- how did

477

00:25:33,180 --> 00:25:35,670

you know that the war started?

478

00:25:35,670 --> 00:25:43,120

Well, the Germans  
came into town,

479

00:25:43,120 --> 00:25:49,370

and there was immediate  
fear and chaos.

480

00:25:49,370 --> 00:25:53,825

I saw both my  
parents very afraid.

481

00:25:53,825 --> 00:25:57,200

482

00:25:57,200 --> 00:26:01,340

Because I believe, and  
that's just my judgment now,

483

00:26:01,340 --> 00:26:05,300

that they realized  
that it's too late.

484

00:26:05,300 --> 00:26:08,460

485  
00:26:08,460 --> 00:26:09,335  
And it was sad.

486  
00:26:09,335 --> 00:26:12,400

487  
00:26:12,400 --> 00:26:13,930  
And they were caught--

488  
00:26:13,930 --> 00:26:21,610  
they were caught up  
into a world that nobody

489  
00:26:21,610 --> 00:26:23,110  
knew how to cope with.

490  
00:26:23,110 --> 00:26:25,740

491  
00:26:25,740 --> 00:26:28,810  
And there was tremendous fear.

492  
00:26:28,810 --> 00:26:35,290  
I was afraid by looking at  
my parents' being afraid.

493  
00:26:35,290 --> 00:26:39,410  
That's very fearful to a child.

494  
00:26:39,410 --> 00:26:51,160  
And I remember vaguely that my  
father and my mother had said,

495  
00:26:51,160 --> 00:26:55,020  
we got to go to Łódź.

496  
00:26:55,020 --> 00:26:59,580  
We got to try to get on  
a train and go to Łódź

497  
00:26:59,580 --> 00:27:02,740  
because that's when  
our family was.



498

00:27:02,740 --> 00:27:05,730

That's where my mother's  
sisters and brothers--

499

00:27:05,730 --> 00:27:07,410

and there were quite  
a few of them--

500

00:27:07,410 --> 00:27:10,120

and my father's  
side of the family.

501

00:27:10,120 --> 00:27:12,960

So we felt like going to Łódź  
would be like going home.

502

00:27:12,960 --> 00:27:16,400

503

00:27:16,400 --> 00:27:23,450

And within about two  
or three days, we--

504

00:27:23,450 --> 00:27:29,180

my father put my mother and  
my two sisters and myself

505

00:27:29,180 --> 00:27:33,950

on a train to go to Łódź, and  
he stayed behind with my brother

506

00:27:33,950 --> 00:27:38,570

for a few days to see if he  
could take care of business.

507

00:27:38,570 --> 00:27:40,550

Obviously, he couldn't.

508

00:27:40,550 --> 00:27:43,310

They couldn't do a thing, and  
two or three days later they

509

00:27:43,310 --> 00:27:47,390

were lucky to get on a train

and be able to come to Łódź.

510

00:27:47,390 --> 00:27:50,030

What was it like for you  
to see a German soldier?

511

00:27:50,030 --> 00:27:52,190

Do you remember your  
first impressions?

512

00:27:52,190 --> 00:27:53,750

Frightening.

513

00:27:53,750 --> 00:27:56,292

Frightening.

514

00:27:56,292 --> 00:28:08,300

They looked so imposing, so  
big, so pushy, so confident,

515

00:28:08,300 --> 00:28:12,560

that they were going  
to do whatever they had

516

00:28:12,560 --> 00:28:15,650

to do and take over the world.

517

00:28:15,650 --> 00:28:17,870

Not that they said it,  
not that I understood it.

518

00:28:17,870 --> 00:28:21,380

But their conduct, their  
day-to-day conduct,

519

00:28:21,380 --> 00:28:28,910

the appearance was one of  
being victorious and going on

520

00:28:28,910 --> 00:28:31,460

to be victorious.

521

00:28:31,460 --> 00:28:35,030

So, again, it was all a  
frightening experience

522  
00:28:35,030 --> 00:28:37,690  
to me and to any other Jew.

523  
00:28:37,690 --> 00:28:39,572  
It wasn't just me.

524  
00:28:39,572 --> 00:28:41,030  
Did you talk to  
any other soldiers,

525  
00:28:41,030 --> 00:28:42,230  
or did they talk to you?

526  
00:28:42,230 --> 00:28:44,390  
No.

527  
00:28:44,390 --> 00:28:48,170  
I think my father might have  
had some encounters in Łódź,

528  
00:28:48,170 --> 00:28:50,210  
not in Grudziadz.

529  
00:28:50,210 --> 00:28:52,500  
If he did in Grudziadz,  
I didn't know about it.

530  
00:28:52,500 --> 00:28:55,050  
Perhaps the two or three  
days that he stayed behind,

531  
00:28:55,050 --> 00:29:00,090  
as I just explained, before  
he joined us in Łódź.

532  
00:29:00,090 --> 00:29:00,737  
And--

533  
00:29:00,737 --> 00:29:03,320  
How did you feel about leaving  
the town that you were born in?

534  
00:29:03,320 --> 00:29:05,990

535  
00:29:05,990 --> 00:29:09,350  
We-- at that time we were numb.

536  
00:29:09,350 --> 00:29:15,410  
We didn't-- we suddenly  
realized that it's not a matter

537  
00:29:15,410 --> 00:29:18,110  
of discussion should we  
or shouldn't we leave,

538  
00:29:18,110 --> 00:29:22,670  
we just had to get on and go  
because we had to go to safety.

539  
00:29:22,670 --> 00:29:27,722  
So that's what we did.

540  
00:29:27,722 --> 00:29:29,520  
Did you take  
everything with you?

541  
00:29:29,520 --> 00:29:31,160  
No.

542  
00:29:31,160 --> 00:29:32,030  
Very little.

543  
00:29:32,030 --> 00:29:34,130  
There was-- you couldn't take--

544  
00:29:34,130 --> 00:29:38,900  
and we had all our  
household belongings,

545  
00:29:38,900 --> 00:29:40,040  
everything stayed behind.

546  
00:29:40,040 --> 00:29:43,350  
Because I honestly  
believe by that time

547

00:29:43,350 --> 00:29:47,870  
my parents realized that we  
got to go for fear of our life.

548  
00:29:47,870 --> 00:29:50,660  
So obviously, when you  
fear for your life,

549  
00:29:50,660 --> 00:29:54,230  
everything else that you  
own becomes secondary.

550  
00:29:54,230 --> 00:29:56,450  
It loses value.

551  
00:29:56,450 --> 00:29:58,040  
All the things that--

552  
00:29:58,040 --> 00:30:00,320  
the possessions that  
you had that you thought

553  
00:30:00,320 --> 00:30:04,640  
were so precious suddenly  
were not precious at all.

554  
00:30:04,640 --> 00:30:05,210  
So--

555  
00:30:05,210 --> 00:30:07,940  
Was there anything special,  
though, that you took with you?

556  
00:30:07,940 --> 00:30:08,750  
Yes.

557  
00:30:08,750 --> 00:30:11,630  
I remember, of  
course, small things.

558  
00:30:11,630 --> 00:30:15,120  
I remember my mother  
would take jewelry.

559  
00:30:15,120 --> 00:30:22,400

They would take-- they would  
take money if they had any.

560  
00:30:22,400 --> 00:30:27,230  
They would take certain books.

561  
00:30:27,230 --> 00:30:30,290  
I don't know what  
they took, but they

562  
00:30:30,290 --> 00:30:31,850  
took very little with them--

563  
00:30:31,850 --> 00:30:34,100  
took very little with them.

564  
00:30:34,100 --> 00:30:39,440  
Because other-- we felt that  
whatever we needed maybe we

565  
00:30:39,440 --> 00:30:42,950  
could get again in Łódź, not  
knowing what the future was

566  
00:30:42,950 --> 00:30:44,240  
going to bring.

567  
00:30:44,240 --> 00:30:46,550  
Did you take anything  
special to you as a child?

568  
00:30:46,550 --> 00:30:47,490  
No.

569  
00:30:47,490 --> 00:30:48,350  
No, I didn't.

570  
00:30:48,350 --> 00:30:51,130

571  
00:30:51,130 --> 00:30:52,940  
And how did you get to Łódź?

572  
00:30:52,940 --> 00:30:55,840

By train.

573

00:30:55,840 --> 00:30:59,800

Who else was on the train  
besides your family?

574

00:30:59,800 --> 00:31:00,520

Other people.

575

00:31:00,520 --> 00:31:03,820

I don't remember really.

576

00:31:03,820 --> 00:31:05,500

Not all Jews.

577

00:31:05,500 --> 00:31:09,530

It was just a train going from  
Grudziadz to Łódź and we went

578

00:31:09,530 --> 00:31:10,030

on it.

579

00:31:10,030 --> 00:31:17,774

580

00:31:17,774 --> 00:31:21,170

His business.

581

00:31:21,170 --> 00:31:26,000

This is tape one, side B, and we  
were talking about your leaving

582

00:31:26,000 --> 00:31:28,270

your town to go to Łódź,  
and you went by train.

583

00:31:28,270 --> 00:31:29,020

Yes.

584

00:31:29,020 --> 00:31:33,400

And now you have arrived in  
Łódź, and where did you go?

585

00:31:33,400 --> 00:31:36,820

We went to a--

586

00:31:36,820 --> 00:31:40,480  
to be with our uncle--

587

00:31:40,480 --> 00:31:49,150  
aunt and uncle-- that were the  
family on my mother's side.

588

00:31:49,150 --> 00:31:50,740  
They lived in Łódź.

589

00:31:50,740 --> 00:31:59,200  
He was a tailor, was only able  
to scrape out a meager living.

590

00:31:59,200 --> 00:32:02,410

591

00:32:02,410 --> 00:32:06,440  
And suddenly, six of us--

592

00:32:06,440 --> 00:32:11,130  
the four children, my  
mother and father--

593

00:32:11,130 --> 00:32:12,210  
were welcomed.

594

00:32:12,210 --> 00:32:15,810  
I mean, we were  
welcomed with open arms.

595

00:32:15,810 --> 00:32:18,480  
There was not even a question--

596

00:32:18,480 --> 00:32:20,610  
never, never, never  
a question came up,

597

00:32:20,610 --> 00:32:21,630  
do we have enough room?

598

00:32:21,630 --> 00:32:22,420



Do we have this?

599

00:32:22,420 --> 00:32:23,087

Do we have that?

600

00:32:23,087 --> 00:32:25,020

That didn't come up.

601

00:32:25,020 --> 00:32:27,160

Are we talking about

September 1939?

602

00:32:27,160 --> 00:32:27,660

We are.

603

00:32:27,660 --> 00:32:30,630

604

00:32:30,630 --> 00:32:35,580

And at that time we

moved in with them.

605

00:32:35,580 --> 00:32:39,300

It was tight quarters.

606

00:32:39,300 --> 00:32:45,585

It was not the kind of life

that I came from in Grudziadz.

607

00:32:45,585 --> 00:32:48,360

It was a very

different kind of life,

608

00:32:48,360 --> 00:32:55,740

a much tighter, much less

affluent that at that time

609

00:32:55,740 --> 00:32:56,720

I had come from.

610

00:32:56,720 --> 00:33:00,440

Again, my parents knew

of that kind of life,

611

00:33:00,440 --> 00:33:03,180  
and to some degree, my  
two sisters and my brother

612  
00:33:03,180 --> 00:33:04,620  
knew of it.

613  
00:33:04,620 --> 00:33:08,890  
But I did not, since I  
was the last child born

614  
00:33:08,890 --> 00:33:11,010  
in the other city.

615  
00:33:11,010 --> 00:33:22,920  
So life immediately became  
very, very harsh in Łódź.

616  
00:33:22,920 --> 00:33:29,940  
We got to Łódź, and within two  
weeks the Germans were in Łódź.

617  
00:33:29,940 --> 00:33:33,150  
I mean, you couldn't say  
it took three weeks to

618  
00:33:33,150 --> 00:33:35,640  
of around all of Poland.

619  
00:33:35,640 --> 00:33:38,835  
So there was no place that  
you could go and hide.

620  
00:33:38,835 --> 00:33:41,690

621  
00:33:41,690 --> 00:33:46,490  
There was no place that you  
could go and find safety.

622  
00:33:46,490 --> 00:33:51,800  
There was no such place, not  
in Poland, and not, probably,

623  
00:33:51,800 --> 00:33:57,520

in many, many other  
Eastern European countries.

624  
00:33:57,520 --> 00:34:05,210  
So as soon as the Germans  
arrived in Łódź life became

625  
00:34:05,210 --> 00:34:10,429  
very harsh, very difficult.  
We immediately had to wear a--

626  
00:34:10,429 --> 00:34:14,344  
all Jews were told to  
wear a yellow band.

627  
00:34:14,344 --> 00:34:17,489

628  
00:34:17,489 --> 00:34:20,610  
And pretty quick after  
that, I don't remember,

629  
00:34:20,610 --> 00:34:24,302  
we had to wear the yellow  
star front and back.

630  
00:34:24,302 --> 00:34:26,219  
What was it like for you  
to have to wear that?

631  
00:34:26,219 --> 00:34:27,302  
How did you feel about it?

632  
00:34:27,302 --> 00:34:31,590  
That was very difficult.  
Because suddenly,

633  
00:34:31,590 --> 00:34:34,560  
we felt that we are singled out.

634  
00:34:34,560 --> 00:34:37,090  
We are not the same as the  
rest of the population.

635  
00:34:37,090 --> 00:34:39,900

We are not looked at the same.

636

00:34:39,900 --> 00:34:47,790

And being a Jew was very  
difficult even before the war.

637

00:34:47,790 --> 00:34:49,080

But here you are--

638

00:34:49,080 --> 00:34:54,719

that-- the Jewish star,  
we were told to wear it.

639

00:34:54,719 --> 00:34:59,160

The imposition of that  
was to demean you.

640

00:34:59,160 --> 00:35:02,340

That was a demeaning  
kind of thing.

641

00:35:02,340 --> 00:35:05,340

It was not like we are  
now proud of that star,

642

00:35:05,340 --> 00:35:07,650

and we look at it with pride.

643

00:35:07,650 --> 00:35:10,230

That was not the  
case at that time.

644

00:35:10,230 --> 00:35:15,240

It was a-- the general  
population looked at us--

645

00:35:15,240 --> 00:35:18,070

they looked down upon us.

646

00:35:18,070 --> 00:35:21,390

The Germans, and  
many non-Germans--

647

00:35:21,390 --> 00:35:24,220

again, not all, but

many non-Germans

648

00:35:24,220 --> 00:35:28,750

looked down upon us because  
we were singled out as Jews.

649

00:35:28,750 --> 00:35:32,620

Was your mother the one  
to sew the stars on?

650

00:35:32,620 --> 00:35:34,300

I would say so.

651

00:35:34,300 --> 00:35:36,560

I don't know for sure, really.

652

00:35:36,560 --> 00:35:39,430

It would probably  
be my mother, yes.

653

00:35:39,430 --> 00:35:43,870

And, again, did you talk this  
over with her or your father?

654

00:35:43,870 --> 00:35:46,070

No.

655

00:35:46,070 --> 00:35:47,060

It was just done.

656

00:35:47,060 --> 00:35:51,250

657

00:35:51,250 --> 00:35:57,010

But the difficulty that  
occurred during that time

658

00:35:57,010 --> 00:36:00,820

was that we had to line  
up for food right away.

659

00:36:00,820 --> 00:36:03,580

660

00:36:03,580 --> 00:36:08,040  
To get anything, people had to  
line up, my mother and father,

661  
00:36:08,040 --> 00:36:12,040  
to feed the family.

662  
00:36:12,040 --> 00:36:16,180  
And the rations were imposed  
very quickly I remember--

663  
00:36:16,180 --> 00:36:18,910  
what we can get, how  
much of it we can get,

664  
00:36:18,910 --> 00:36:21,320  
restrictions as  
where we could go,

665  
00:36:21,320 --> 00:36:23,560  
and the fact that you had  
to wear a yellow star.

666  
00:36:23,560 --> 00:36:27,430  
And by the way, the question  
very often that I am asked--

667  
00:36:27,430 --> 00:36:29,230  
what if you didn't  
wear a yellow star?

668  
00:36:29,230 --> 00:36:33,370  
Who would know at the beginning?

669  
00:36:33,370 --> 00:36:37,780  
And sometimes you  
could get away with it.

670  
00:36:37,780 --> 00:36:39,790  
But if they found  
out that you were

671  
00:36:39,790 --> 00:36:42,850  
a Jew for some reason or  
another and you did not

672

00:36:42,850 --> 00:36:45,730

wear a yellow star when  
you were supposed to,

673

00:36:45,730 --> 00:36:48,790

you'd just about get shot.

674

00:36:48,790 --> 00:36:52,000

At the age of nine  
and a half, were you

675

00:36:52,000 --> 00:36:54,760

angry that you were Jewish  
because these bad things were

676

00:36:54,760 --> 00:36:55,910

happening to you?

677

00:36:55,910 --> 00:36:59,850

Were you proud that  
you were Jewish?

678

00:36:59,850 --> 00:37:07,630

I can't recall any of those two  
feelings one way or another.

679

00:37:07,630 --> 00:37:10,390

680

00:37:10,390 --> 00:37:12,040

I wasn't angry--

681

00:37:12,040 --> 00:37:14,380

I don't think so.

682

00:37:14,380 --> 00:37:19,600

But at that time, I don't know  
whether pride came into it.

683

00:37:19,600 --> 00:37:25,390

We were-- we were  
busy just to survive.

684

00:37:25,390 --> 00:37:28,120

685

00:37:28,120 --> 00:37:31,240

We didn't have discussion  
of whether it's

686

00:37:31,240 --> 00:37:33,400

pride or this or that.

687

00:37:33,400 --> 00:37:36,790

It was just day-to-day  
survival was a full-time job.

688

00:37:36,790 --> 00:37:41,330

689

00:37:41,330 --> 00:37:52,760

So I remember this kind of  
life was very difficult for us.

690

00:37:52,760 --> 00:37:54,715

And I remember at one time--

691

00:37:54,715 --> 00:37:57,240

692

00:37:57,240 --> 00:37:59,200

I'm talking during  
the first two months

693

00:37:59,200 --> 00:38:02,200

of the war, September,  
October, maybe into November,

694

00:38:02,200 --> 00:38:04,900

I don't know--

695

00:38:04,900 --> 00:38:07,480

they had people that had to--

696

00:38:07,480 --> 00:38:14,380

certain Jews from Łódź were  
told to report to do some work,

697



00:38:14,380 --> 00:38:15,710  
some hard work.

698  
00:38:15,710 --> 00:38:19,250  
My father was one of them.

699  
00:38:19,250 --> 00:38:22,300  
But my brother said  
he'll go instead,

700  
00:38:22,300 --> 00:38:27,100  
because they saw this-- a  
man from that area, from that

701  
00:38:27,100 --> 00:38:30,880  
family, should go and report.

702  
00:38:30,880 --> 00:38:32,905  
So my brother went  
for my father.

703  
00:38:32,905 --> 00:38:35,980

704  
00:38:35,980 --> 00:38:40,160  
I don't recall  
the exact details.

705  
00:38:40,160 --> 00:38:46,460  
But when he came back, I don't  
know whether he was beaten up,

706  
00:38:46,460 --> 00:38:51,850  
but there was a long discussion  
between him, my mother,

707  
00:38:51,850 --> 00:38:54,610  
and my father.

708  
00:38:54,610 --> 00:39:02,790  
And then they had decided  
that he ought to leave town.

709  
00:39:02,790 --> 00:39:04,290  
He was 19 years old.

710  
00:39:04,290 --> 00:39:07,650

711  
00:39:07,650 --> 00:39:08,710  
I couldn't go anywhere.

712  
00:39:08,710 --> 00:39:09,330  
I was a kid.

713  
00:39:09,330 --> 00:39:12,990  
I was going to-- girls wouldn't  
go anywhere into the world

714  
00:39:12,990 --> 00:39:15,040  
either.

715  
00:39:15,040 --> 00:39:19,170  
So the only one that had a  
chance at that time to, perhaps

716  
00:39:19,170 --> 00:39:22,620  
my parents felt, to  
save was my brother.

717  
00:39:22,620 --> 00:39:25,610

718  
00:39:25,610 --> 00:39:29,720  
And they gave him a  
lot of whatever they

719  
00:39:29,720 --> 00:39:31,850  
had as far as money  
was concerned,

720  
00:39:31,850 --> 00:39:36,320  
and they sent him east to  
go to Russia to get away

721  
00:39:36,320 --> 00:39:38,270  
from the Nazis.

722  
00:39:38,270 --> 00:39:41,840

723

00:39:41,840 --> 00:39:45,500

And we lost contact with him.

724

00:39:45,500 --> 00:39:52,715

It was very, very sad day for  
my parents, for all of us,

725

00:39:52,715 --> 00:39:53,590

especially my mother.

726

00:39:53,590 --> 00:39:56,580

727

00:39:56,580 --> 00:40:01,950

After he left, she was  
never ever the same.

728

00:40:01,950 --> 00:40:07,320

I sometimes think  
when I got older

729

00:40:07,320 --> 00:40:12,030

that it might have been a  
mistake to have done that.

730

00:40:12,030 --> 00:40:15,200

Because she never ever got over.

731

00:40:15,200 --> 00:40:16,770

It was too much.

732

00:40:16,770 --> 00:40:18,840

But yet, he went  
with her blessing.

733

00:40:18,840 --> 00:40:20,430

She allowed him to go.

734

00:40:20,430 --> 00:40:22,230

And I must tell  
you, in those days

735

00:40:22,230 --> 00:40:24,810  
if she said no, he wouldn't go.

736  
00:40:24,810 --> 00:40:28,460

737  
00:40:28,460 --> 00:40:32,000  
So you had to really have the  
permission of both your parents

738  
00:40:32,000 --> 00:40:33,470  
to do that.

739  
00:40:33,470 --> 00:40:37,840  
And they did, and  
he went to Russia,

740  
00:40:37,840 --> 00:40:41,370  
and he had a completely  
different life than we did.

741  
00:40:41,370 --> 00:40:47,010  
When he got to Russia, he  
was arrested by the Russians

742  
00:40:47,010 --> 00:40:47,650  
as a spy.

743  
00:40:47,650 --> 00:40:50,610

744  
00:40:50,610 --> 00:40:53,580  
And even though he  
said, I am a Jew.

745  
00:40:53,580 --> 00:40:56,230  
What would I be spying for?

746  
00:40:56,230 --> 00:40:58,140  
That didn't count.

747  
00:40:58,140 --> 00:41:04,240  
They send them to Siberia with  
thousands of others like him--

748

00:41:04,240 --> 00:41:07,360

749

00:41:07,360 --> 00:41:10,890

not that many Jews,  
but a lot of Poles,

750

00:41:10,890 --> 00:41:13,615

non-Jews also were  
sent to Siberia.

751

00:41:13,615 --> 00:41:18,330

752

00:41:18,330 --> 00:41:28,850

As World War II was developing  
and going on, a army--

753

00:41:28,850 --> 00:41:33,710

the Russians realized that they  
don't have enemies in Siberia,

754

00:41:33,710 --> 00:41:39,650

that maybe all those young  
men could be used and trained

755

00:41:39,650 --> 00:41:43,010

to fight the Germans.

756

00:41:43,010 --> 00:41:44,900

And that's what they did.

757

00:41:44,900 --> 00:41:48,650

So my brother ended up in the--

758

00:41:48,650 --> 00:41:51,080

there was a Polish  
division formed

759

00:41:51,080 --> 00:41:54,770

that became a part  
of the British army.

760

00:41:54,770 --> 00:41:58,930

And he fought in Italy and  
was wounded and all that.

761  
00:41:58,930 --> 00:42:01,720

762  
00:42:01,720 --> 00:42:05,620  
And we met up with him  
after World War II,

763  
00:42:05,620 --> 00:42:08,570  
and that's another story.

764  
00:42:08,570 --> 00:42:11,825  
When he left, did he say  
anything special to you?

765  
00:42:11,825 --> 00:42:13,450  
Or did you say anything  
special to him?

766  
00:42:13,450 --> 00:42:19,650  
There was a lot of sadness and  
tears and crying and hugging.

767  
00:42:19,650 --> 00:42:24,640  
And you didn't have  
to say anything.

768  
00:42:24,640 --> 00:42:27,460  
Did you want to go with him?

769  
00:42:27,460 --> 00:42:28,660  
No.

770  
00:42:28,660 --> 00:42:32,140  
I was-- I was then--

771  
00:42:32,140 --> 00:42:38,380  
I was then clinging to my  
mother, holding on, holding on.

772  
00:42:38,380 --> 00:42:42,580  
I just was so scared  
that I had to--

773

00:42:42,580 --> 00:42:45,730

at that time, all you did,  
you wanted the comfort

774

00:42:45,730 --> 00:42:47,120

of your mother and your father.

775

00:42:47,120 --> 00:42:49,292

You-- I-- nine years old.

776

00:42:49,292 --> 00:42:52,660

777

00:42:52,660 --> 00:42:59,030

So after he had left,  
the five of us--

778

00:42:59,030 --> 00:43:06,540

my mother and my father  
and my two sisters,

779

00:43:06,540 --> 00:43:16,010

we stayed in that apartment with  
my family until the Łódź ghetto

780

00:43:16,010 --> 00:43:17,080

was established.

781

00:43:17,080 --> 00:43:21,740

782

00:43:21,740 --> 00:43:26,070

I believe the Łódź ghetto  
was established the first--

783

00:43:26,070 --> 00:43:29,390

right at the beginning of 1940.

784

00:43:29,390 --> 00:43:32,240

It might have been  
the end of 1939,

785

00:43:32,240 --> 00:43:35,210

but I think it was right  
at the beginning of 1940.

786  
00:43:35,210 --> 00:43:37,730  
I'm pretty sure it was.

787  
00:43:37,730 --> 00:43:39,960  
And we were all told--

788  
00:43:39,960 --> 00:43:42,470

789  
00:43:42,470 --> 00:43:48,800  
all the Jews in Łódź were told  
that you've got to go and live

790  
00:43:48,800 --> 00:43:50,030  
in the ghetto.

791  
00:43:50,030 --> 00:43:52,740  
How were you told?

792  
00:43:52,740 --> 00:43:59,240  
Oh, through media, through  
newspapers, word of mouth.

793  
00:43:59,240 --> 00:44:04,400  
And the Germans  
made sure, soldiers

794  
00:44:04,400 --> 00:44:07,910  
going from building to building  
making sure that the Jews know

795  
00:44:07,910 --> 00:44:08,990  
that they got to leave.

796  
00:44:08,990 --> 00:44:13,270

797  
00:44:13,270 --> 00:44:13,960  
And we all left.

798  
00:44:13,960 --> 00:44:16,840



799

00:44:16,840 --> 00:44:23,420  
And the ghetto was a designated  
part of Łódź that the Germans

800

00:44:23,420 --> 00:44:27,910  
designated to be established  
as a Jewish ghetto.

801

00:44:27,910 --> 00:44:30,430

802

00:44:30,430 --> 00:44:32,970  
And we went.

803

00:44:32,970 --> 00:44:37,380  
And I don't remember how  
we ended up in that place,

804

00:44:37,380 --> 00:44:39,360  
but must have been  
assigned to us.

805

00:44:39,360 --> 00:44:41,190  
I don't remember.

806

00:44:41,190 --> 00:44:48,740  
And we had really two  
rooms for the five of us.

807

00:44:48,740 --> 00:44:50,840  
And the kitchen was  
a part of a room.

808

00:44:50,840 --> 00:44:55,030

809

00:44:55,030 --> 00:44:58,000  
Some of the areas that  
we went to in the ghetto

810

00:44:58,000 --> 00:44:59,620  
were all dilapidated.

811  
00:44:59,620 --> 00:45:04,030  
Even then they were considered  
old and dilapidated.

812  
00:45:04,030 --> 00:45:07,570  
So it was very primitive.

813  
00:45:07,570 --> 00:45:10,225  
I remember that where we  
lived we had an outhouse.

814  
00:45:10,225 --> 00:45:13,000

815  
00:45:13,000 --> 00:45:17,060  
Now, not all-- there  
were some buildings,

816  
00:45:17,060 --> 00:45:21,320  
some areas in the Łódź  
ghetto that had toilets,

817  
00:45:21,320 --> 00:45:26,000  
but where we were  
we had an outhouse.

818  
00:45:26,000 --> 00:45:28,520  
When you went to the  
ghetto from your apartment,

819  
00:45:28,520 --> 00:45:30,350  
did you just go  
directly, or did you all

820  
00:45:30,350 --> 00:45:33,240  
have to assemble  
someplace first?

821  
00:45:33,240 --> 00:45:36,410  
Or did you just go from  
one place to the other?

822  
00:45:36,410 --> 00:45:40,980  
I think we had to assemble,  
but I don't remember.

823  
00:45:40,980 --> 00:45:43,340  
I really don't recall that.

824  
00:45:43,340 --> 00:45:49,160  
And we went-- when we  
went to the ghetto,

825  
00:45:49,160 --> 00:45:51,920  
thousands, imagine,  
thousands of people

826  
00:45:51,920 --> 00:45:58,030  
trying to get ourselves  
pushed into that one area.

827  
00:45:58,030 --> 00:46:00,230  
It was large.

828  
00:46:00,230 --> 00:46:02,810  
But on the other hand, there  
were hundreds of thousands

829  
00:46:02,810 --> 00:46:05,330  
of Jews in Łódź.

830  
00:46:05,330 --> 00:46:09,800  
And once the ghetto  
was designated,

831  
00:46:09,800 --> 00:46:13,370  
as you know and everybody  
knows, barbed wire

832  
00:46:13,370 --> 00:46:17,540  
was erected around the  
perimeter of the ghetto

833  
00:46:17,540 --> 00:46:20,300  
with soldiers,  
with guard towers,

834  
00:46:20,300 --> 00:46:24,560  
the kind of things that you  
see right here in the museum--

835

00:46:24,560 --> 00:46:26,570

pictures of it right  
here in the museum.

836

00:46:26,570 --> 00:46:30,860

As a matter of fact, there  
is an exhibit of the Łódź.

837

00:46:30,860 --> 00:46:37,040

And I saw one of  
the buildings that I

838

00:46:37,040 --> 00:46:42,440

was in that I will describe  
in time, perhaps now.

839

00:46:42,440 --> 00:46:45,995

We-- life in the  
ghetto was very harsh.

840

00:46:45,995 --> 00:46:53,120

841

00:46:53,120 --> 00:47:04,910

Besides not having enough  
food, and besides living

842

00:47:04,910 --> 00:47:13,550

the life of meager subsistence,  
the medical facilities

843

00:47:13,550 --> 00:47:17,630

and medical care  
was very primitive.

844

00:47:17,630 --> 00:47:20,270

There were enough doctors,  
but doctors need something

845

00:47:20,270 --> 00:47:22,970

to work with.

846

00:47:22,970 --> 00:47:28,640

So very often, a

minor ailment would

847

00:47:28,640 --> 00:47:34,550  
turn into a major  
catastrophe sometimes.

848

00:47:34,550 --> 00:47:38,630  
A minor ailment that today you  
wouldn't even think about twice

849

00:47:38,630 --> 00:47:42,733  
sometimes resulted in death  
because there was nothing

850

00:47:42,733 --> 00:47:43,775  
to take care of yourself.

851

00:47:43,775 --> 00:47:47,520

852

00:47:47,520 --> 00:47:52,650  
Also, I remember  
vividly the winters

853

00:47:52,650 --> 00:47:58,410  
being very tough because  
we didn't have enough coal.

854

00:47:58,410 --> 00:48:01,590  
The buildings didn't  
have central heating.

855

00:48:01,590 --> 00:48:06,390  
And there would be a  
stove, like a stove

856

00:48:06,390 --> 00:48:11,430  
in the middle of the room.

857

00:48:11,430 --> 00:48:15,000  
And you would put in stuff into  
the stove, and that would heat.

858

00:48:15,000 --> 00:48:17,070  
And we would be all

sometimes standing around

859

00:48:17,070 --> 00:48:20,160  
the stove to keep warm.

860

00:48:20,160 --> 00:48:22,680

861

00:48:22,680 --> 00:48:29,770  
And we didn't have enough coal  
or anything to keep warm with.

862

00:48:29,770 --> 00:48:33,720  
And we would be burning rags  
and old furniture, whatever

863

00:48:33,720 --> 00:48:38,370  
we could get a hold of, to burn  
so that we could keep warm.

864

00:48:38,370 --> 00:48:44,130  
Because that was just as  
much of a problem, the cold,

865

00:48:44,130 --> 00:48:47,670  
to survive, as it was  
not having enough food

866

00:48:47,670 --> 00:48:49,090  
and everything else.

867

00:48:49,090 --> 00:48:51,480  
So I remember the winters.

868

00:48:51,480 --> 00:48:52,965  
There were so--  
they were terrible.

869

00:48:52,965 --> 00:48:55,800

870

00:48:55,800 --> 00:48:56,560  
Food was rationed.

871

00:48:56,560 --> 00:49:00,250

872

00:49:00,250 --> 00:49:07,300

My two sisters were assigned  
to work in a carpet factory.

873

00:49:07,300 --> 00:49:10,270

They were weaving carpet  
with their fingers,

874

00:49:10,270 --> 00:49:14,170

with their hands, from rags.

875

00:49:14,170 --> 00:49:17,410

They would cut up rags, and they  
would be weaving those carpet--

876

00:49:17,410 --> 00:49:20,440

hundreds of women.

877

00:49:20,440 --> 00:49:23,620

And I believe when the  
carpets were finished,

878

00:49:23,620 --> 00:49:27,550

the Germans used  
them for whatever.

879

00:49:27,550 --> 00:49:32,090

And my two sisters worked there.

880

00:49:32,090 --> 00:49:34,510

And that-- at least  
they had a job.

881

00:49:34,510 --> 00:49:35,890

It was all right.

882

00:49:35,890 --> 00:49:37,570

Because going to  
the factory, they

883

00:49:37,570 --> 00:49:39,260

would get a bowl of soup a day.

884

00:49:39,260 --> 00:49:43,930

885

00:49:43,930 --> 00:49:49,900

By that time, I was getting  
to be 11, almost 12, in 1942.

886

00:49:49,900 --> 00:49:54,570

I got a job working  
in an electric shop

887

00:49:54,570 --> 00:49:58,990

where they would repair  
motors and so on.

888

00:49:58,990 --> 00:50:00,280

And--

889

00:50:00,280 --> 00:50:02,380

What did you do with  
your time before that?

890

00:50:02,380 --> 00:50:05,090

891

00:50:05,090 --> 00:50:07,750

There were initially  
in the ghetto,

892

00:50:07,750 --> 00:50:11,860

there were some schools that  
were set up for children

893

00:50:11,860 --> 00:50:16,060

to go to school and study  
the normal kind of subjects

894

00:50:16,060 --> 00:50:19,360

that children need to study.

895

00:50:19,360 --> 00:50:22,900

But that didn't last for long.

896



00:50:22,900 --> 00:50:28,690  
I don't think that that  
lasted for more than a year,

897  
00:50:28,690 --> 00:50:30,760  
maybe till 1942.

898  
00:50:30,760 --> 00:50:36,340  
I doubt it, because it's at that  
time that I started working.

899  
00:50:36,340 --> 00:50:39,020  
And being two years old--

900  
00:50:39,020 --> 00:50:41,830  
12 years old-- 11,  
12, what could I do?

901  
00:50:41,830 --> 00:50:45,160  
So I would be an errand  
boy, sweep the floor

902  
00:50:45,160 --> 00:50:47,690  
or whatever needed to be done.

903  
00:50:47,690 --> 00:50:50,950  
And that was all right,  
too, because at least I

904  
00:50:50,950 --> 00:50:51,730  
was in a building.

905  
00:50:51,730 --> 00:50:52,860  
I wasn't cold.

906  
00:50:52,860 --> 00:50:54,850  
And I also got a  
bowl of soup a day.

907  
00:50:54,850 --> 00:51:02,850  
So being able to go to a  
place where you did some work,

908  
00:51:02,850 --> 00:51:04,900  
there was an advantage.

909  
00:51:04,900 --> 00:51:08,960  
Not that we ever got enough  
food to fill ourselves--

910  
00:51:08,960 --> 00:51:10,560  
we never did.

911  
00:51:10,560 --> 00:51:12,860  
But that's what I did.

912  
00:51:12,860 --> 00:51:16,715  
Did you feel safe leaving  
your mother to go to work?

913  
00:51:16,715 --> 00:51:17,215  
Yes.

914  
00:51:17,215 --> 00:51:20,370

915  
00:51:20,370 --> 00:51:27,100  
The fears that we used to have,  
the way the Łódź ghetto was

916  
00:51:27,100 --> 00:51:31,870  
built, and the way the barbed  
wire was set up around its

917  
00:51:31,870 --> 00:51:36,070  
perimeter, there was a part--

918  
00:51:36,070 --> 00:51:38,140  
there was a street  
that they did--

919  
00:51:38,140 --> 00:51:41,500  
the Germans did not want  
to include in the ghetto.

920  
00:51:41,500 --> 00:51:44,230  
So to get from one  
part to the other,

921

00:51:44,230 --> 00:51:48,340  
you were crossing a  
bridge, a wooden bridge.

922  
00:51:48,340 --> 00:51:51,850  
And I remember crossing  
that bridge every morning

923  
00:51:51,850 --> 00:51:55,040  
and in the afternoon  
when I came home.

924  
00:51:55,040 --> 00:51:58,120  
And I was always afraid when  
I was on top of the bridge--

925  
00:51:58,120 --> 00:52:01,600  
because when you look down,  
you could see German soldiers--

926  
00:52:01,600 --> 00:52:04,830  
that they would shoot at us.

927  
00:52:04,830 --> 00:52:08,400  
So I remember that.

928  
00:52:08,400 --> 00:52:16,710  
Once I got to work  
I felt I was OK.

929  
00:52:16,710 --> 00:52:21,290  
And once I got back  
home it was OK,

930  
00:52:21,290 --> 00:52:25,190  
except for the difficulties that  
we had just day-to-day living,

931  
00:52:25,190 --> 00:52:29,880  
with not having enough food and  
not having enough medical care.

932  
00:52:29,880 --> 00:52:30,710  
And I am--

933

00:52:30,710 --> 00:52:33,200

I mentioned medical  
care a couple of times

934

00:52:33,200 --> 00:52:38,210

because my father  
became very sick because

935

00:52:38,210 --> 00:52:41,310

of lack of medical care.

936

00:52:41,310 --> 00:52:44,270

So that stands out  
in my mind more so

937

00:52:44,270 --> 00:52:48,770

than perhaps other people  
would experience the same thing

938

00:52:48,770 --> 00:52:51,230

if they had different  
experiences.

939

00:52:51,230 --> 00:52:52,220

So--

940

00:52:52,220 --> 00:52:53,750

Did you work every day?

941

00:52:53,750 --> 00:52:55,160

Yes.

942

00:52:55,160 --> 00:52:58,550

I worked every day.

943

00:52:58,550 --> 00:53:01,950

And I don't remember whether  
it included weekends or what.

944

00:53:01,950 --> 00:53:03,320

It's--

945

00:53:03,320 --> 00:53:07,140

What about contact with  
other children your age?

946  
00:53:07,140 --> 00:53:07,730  
Yeah.

947  
00:53:07,730 --> 00:53:09,530  
We had contact.

948  
00:53:09,530 --> 00:53:16,205  
It's in the Łódź ghetto that I  
learned how to speak Yiddish.

949  
00:53:16,205 --> 00:53:19,050

950  
00:53:19,050 --> 00:53:23,940  
In fact, initially,  
I had problems

951  
00:53:23,940 --> 00:53:33,310  
because the boys didn't like me  
because I didn't speak Yiddish.

952  
00:53:33,310 --> 00:53:36,310  
They felt like,  
who the heck is he?

953  
00:53:36,310 --> 00:53:41,620  
He doesn't speak Yiddish,  
and where does he come from?

954  
00:53:41,620 --> 00:53:47,270  
And I learned to speak  
Yiddish pretty fast.

955  
00:53:47,270 --> 00:53:49,820  
So that's when I was  
first exposed to Yiddish,

956  
00:53:49,820 --> 00:53:52,970  
and that's where I learned  
how to speak Yiddish.

957  
00:53:52,970 --> 00:53:56,930  
But I had difficulties, but,  
you know, at 11 or 12, 13,

958  
00:53:56,930 --> 00:53:58,850  
you learn pretty  
fast, especially when

959  
00:53:58,850 --> 00:54:00,500  
you hear it every day.

960  
00:54:00,500 --> 00:54:02,540  
And at that time, we spoke both.

961  
00:54:02,540 --> 00:54:06,920  
Some boys we spoke Polish with,  
and others we spoke Yiddish

962  
00:54:06,920 --> 00:54:16,010  
with because there was an influx  
of Jews from all over Łódź.

963  
00:54:16,010 --> 00:54:23,200  
I must tell you  
that those Jews that

964  
00:54:23,200 --> 00:54:29,680  
were able to get a better  
education in Poland,

965  
00:54:29,680 --> 00:54:33,100  
those Jews that  
were more affluent

966  
00:54:33,100 --> 00:54:34,700  
spoke Polish, not Yiddish.

967  
00:54:34,700 --> 00:54:39,900

968  
00:54:39,900 --> 00:54:42,380  
So there was a--

969  
00:54:42,380 --> 00:54:43,580  
there were like a--

970  
00:54:43,580 --> 00:54:47,000

there were two  
classes right there.

971  
00:54:47,000 --> 00:54:50,990  
Jews that lived in  
Łódź all their life,

972  
00:54:50,990 --> 00:54:57,560  
and they came from an area,  
and they led the lifestyle of--

973  
00:54:57,560 --> 00:55:00,920  
never got a good education,  
never went to a school,

974  
00:55:00,920 --> 00:55:02,330  
never went to a gymnasium.

975  
00:55:02,330 --> 00:55:05,180  
I don't know whether that  
means anything to you.

976  
00:55:05,180 --> 00:55:08,960  
My two sisters, my  
brother, went to gymnasium.

977  
00:55:08,960 --> 00:55:14,190  
And so we were lucky enough  
to get a better education.

978  
00:55:14,190 --> 00:55:16,440  
And if you went to a gymnasium,  
if you went to school,

979  
00:55:16,440 --> 00:55:19,460  
that was all in Polish.

980  
00:55:19,460 --> 00:55:22,160  
So all we knew was Polish.

981  
00:55:22,160 --> 00:55:24,380  
During the war we learned  
Yiddish, especially

982  
00:55:24,380 --> 00:55:26,930

in the ghetto.

983

00:55:26,930 --> 00:55:30,890

And I had some great  
friends I made then.

984

00:55:30,890 --> 00:55:31,685

We got very close.

985

00:55:31,685 --> 00:55:34,440

986

00:55:34,440 --> 00:55:43,560

And in 1942, the  
Nazis would come

987

00:55:43,560 --> 00:55:49,320

in into a part of the  
ghetto, different parts,

988

00:55:49,320 --> 00:55:54,045

and they would have a  
roundup, maybe one street

989

00:55:54,045 --> 00:55:55,800

or two streets.

990

00:55:55,800 --> 00:56:01,890

We all had to get out into  
the street, and we had--

991

00:56:01,890 --> 00:56:03,600

at that time, for  
the first time,

992

00:56:03,600 --> 00:56:07,740

we experienced a selection.

993

00:56:07,740 --> 00:56:11,010

The word selection wasn't in  
our vocabulary at that time,

994

00:56:11,010 --> 00:56:14,840

but that's what it was.



995

00:56:14,840 --> 00:56:18,150

And we all lined up  
and there was chaos.

996

00:56:18,150 --> 00:56:21,840

Everybody was running and crying  
and screaming all directions,

997

00:56:21,840 --> 00:56:25,470

because there were Nazis  
all around us with rifles

998

00:56:25,470 --> 00:56:28,470

and there were trucks.

999

00:56:28,470 --> 00:56:32,925

And they loaded my  
mother and I on a truck.

1000

00:56:32,925 --> 00:56:36,670

1001

00:56:36,670 --> 00:56:39,190

My father and my two  
sisters did not get on one.

1002

00:56:39,190 --> 00:56:42,970

They were pushing us  
in all directions.

1003

00:56:42,970 --> 00:56:47,110

They loaded us on a  
truck, and they took us

1004

00:56:47,110 --> 00:56:48,300

to an assembly point.

1005

00:56:48,300 --> 00:56:51,090

1006

00:56:51,090 --> 00:56:58,260

That assembly point used to be  
a hospital, the picture of which

1007

00:56:58,260 --> 00:56:59,940  
is right here in this museum--

1008  
00:56:59,940 --> 00:57:04,160

1009  
00:57:04,160 --> 00:57:07,850  
hundreds of us, thousands.

1010  
00:57:07,850 --> 00:57:10,440

1011  
00:57:10,440 --> 00:57:15,810  
I was there with my  
mother clinging to her.

1012  
00:57:15,810 --> 00:57:18,030  
I mean, we were scared--

1013  
00:57:18,030 --> 00:57:21,300  
not just me, my mother.

1014  
00:57:21,300 --> 00:57:26,880  
And when you are so  
young, you get very scared

1015  
00:57:26,880 --> 00:57:30,280  
when your mother is  
scared because you

1016  
00:57:30,280 --> 00:57:35,890  
know something isn't right,  
because you look to her for--

1017  
00:57:35,890 --> 00:57:40,850  
I don't want to use this word  
strength, but for security.

1018  
00:57:40,850 --> 00:57:44,200  
So when she's afraid, you  
know something is wrong.

1019  
00:57:44,200 --> 00:57:47,450  
And we were all scared.

1020

00:57:47,450 --> 00:57:52,420

And I remember that outside,  
both my father and my two

1021

00:57:52,420 --> 00:57:58,210

sisters were going frantic  
trying to get us out.

1022

00:57:58,210 --> 00:58:01,390

And everybody else was  
going frantic trying

1023

00:58:01,390 --> 00:58:02,800

to get their loved ones out.

1024

00:58:02,800 --> 00:58:05,900

1025

00:58:05,900 --> 00:58:08,540

We were there overnight.

1026

00:58:08,540 --> 00:58:12,380

And in the morning,  
they lined us up again

1027

00:58:12,380 --> 00:58:16,145

within the halls and  
rooms in that hospital.

1028

00:58:16,145 --> 00:58:19,280

1029

00:58:19,280 --> 00:58:23,890

And there were nurses, there  
were Jewish nurses assigned

1030

00:58:23,890 --> 00:58:25,570

to help out, keep order.

1031

00:58:25,570 --> 00:58:28,430

1032

00:58:28,430 --> 00:58:32,870

And a Jewish nurse came

over to my mother and me.

1033

00:58:32,870 --> 00:58:35,200

And we were all lined up,  
imagine, hundreds of people

1034

00:58:35,200 --> 00:58:39,070

lined up like alongside here.

1035

00:58:39,070 --> 00:58:43,450

And she grabbed me, and she  
told my mother to let me go.

1036

00:58:43,450 --> 00:58:46,100

1037

00:58:46,100 --> 00:58:47,630

And my mother did.

1038

00:58:47,630 --> 00:58:51,690

And that nurse told me,  
she says, you go here,

1039

00:58:51,690 --> 00:58:56,770

and you go there, and you  
run as fast as you can.

1040

00:58:56,770 --> 00:58:59,810

You get to a fence.

1041

00:58:59,810 --> 00:59:01,570

You've got to jump  
over that fence,

1042

00:59:01,570 --> 00:59:02,830

and you got to keep going.

1043

00:59:02,830 --> 00:59:06,760

I mean all this  
happens in seconds.

1044

00:59:06,760 --> 00:59:08,380

Again, there isn't  
the discussion--

1045

00:59:08,380 --> 00:59:09,880

should I or shouldn't I?

1046

00:59:09,880 --> 00:59:11,290

It's all instinctive.

1047

00:59:11,290 --> 00:59:13,300

It all happens very fast.

1048

00:59:13,300 --> 00:59:15,860

I did that.

1049

00:59:15,860 --> 00:59:20,920

My father-- my  
mother stayed behind,

1050

00:59:20,920 --> 00:59:25,710

and she was put on a truck,  
and she was sent to Chelmno.

1051

00:59:25,710 --> 00:59:55,150

1052

00:59:55,150 --> 01:00:05,020

So after-- at the time, when  
my mother was taken and sent,

1053

01:00:05,020 --> 01:00:11,710

we really did not know in  
1942 where she was going.

1054

01:00:11,710 --> 01:00:14,860

We found out later.

1055

01:00:14,860 --> 01:00:18,470

I and my two sons,  
doing a lot of research,

1056

01:00:18,470 --> 01:00:22,390

and other people were telling  
us that all those people that

1057

01:00:22,390 --> 01:00:27,250

from that hospital at that

time, they all went to Chelmno.

1058

01:00:27,250 --> 01:00:32,922  
And Chelmno was a terrible  
day for all of us,

1059

01:00:32,922 --> 01:00:36,370  
for my father and my two sisters  
and myself, we lost our mother.

1060

01:00:36,370 --> 01:00:39,220

1061

01:00:39,220 --> 01:00:43,940  
And our mother was  
the strong woman.

1062

01:00:43,940 --> 01:00:47,620  
She was-- she used to be--

1063

01:00:47,620 --> 01:00:50,360  
hold the family together.

1064

01:00:50,360 --> 01:00:54,650  
So when she is gone, the family  
is beginning to fall apart.

1065

01:00:54,650 --> 01:00:57,800

1066

01:00:57,800 --> 01:01:04,700  
So it was terrible for us  
not knowing where she went,

1067

01:01:04,700 --> 01:01:09,170  
but knowing that  
she is not with us.

1068

01:01:09,170 --> 01:01:14,320  
And terribly hard for my father.

1069

01:01:14,320 --> 01:01:16,370  
He went-- he went crazy.

1070

01:01:16,370 --> 01:01:21,360

1071  
01:01:21,360 --> 01:01:26,340  
And I believe that  
both my sisters and him

1072  
01:01:26,340 --> 01:01:29,895  
felt so inadequate not  
being able to help.

1073  
01:01:29,895 --> 01:01:34,340

1074  
01:01:34,340 --> 01:01:38,220  
You know, I was a small kid,  
so nothing was expected of me.

1075  
01:01:38,220 --> 01:01:43,050  
But they felt that they  
should have done more,

1076  
01:01:43,050 --> 01:01:44,920  
but they couldn't.

1077  
01:01:44,920 --> 01:01:47,990

1078  
01:01:47,990 --> 01:01:52,540  
So it was very sad, very sad.

1079  
01:01:52,540 --> 01:01:59,950  
And we struggled along  
without her having terrible--

1080  
01:01:59,950 --> 01:02:07,510  
at the beginning when my  
mother wasn't with us, I had--

1081  
01:02:07,510 --> 01:02:09,910  
I went through a  
period of time that I

1082  
01:02:09,910 --> 01:02:14,990  
felt almost guilty for being.

1083  
01:02:14,990 --> 01:02:18,160

1084  
01:02:18,160 --> 01:02:24,310  
And not only guilty for being,  
but that I was able to live,

1085  
01:02:24,310 --> 01:02:26,410  
that I was able to cope.

1086  
01:02:26,410 --> 01:02:31,870  
You know, here I am, 12-year-old  
being so close to mother.

1087  
01:02:31,870 --> 01:02:37,270  
Mother isn't there, but I am  
still doing what I am doing.

1088  
01:02:37,270 --> 01:02:39,880  
And it felt very--

1089  
01:02:39,880 --> 01:02:43,180  
it was very bad for me.

1090  
01:02:43,180 --> 01:02:45,010  
Very bad.

1091  
01:02:45,010 --> 01:02:47,710  
But, you know, we can  
survive almost anything.

1092  
01:02:47,710 --> 01:02:51,660

1093  
01:02:51,660 --> 01:02:58,490  
So we lived in the ghetto  
for two more years.

1094  
01:02:58,490 --> 01:03:02,960

1095  
01:03:02,960 --> 01:03:04,500  
My--



1096

01:03:04,500 --> 01:03:05,000