

1  
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:05,430

2  
00:00:05,430 --> 00:00:07,920  
This is the United States  
Holocaust Memorial Museum

3  
00:00:07,920 --> 00:00:10,620  
interview with Michael  
Silberstein, conducted

4  
00:00:10,620 --> 00:00:15,600  
by Gail Schwartz, on October  
10, 1996, in Washington, DC,

5  
00:00:15,600 --> 00:00:16,800  
at the museum.

6  
00:00:16,800 --> 00:00:21,300  
This is tape number  
2, side A. And you

7  
00:00:21,300 --> 00:00:24,150  
were talking about your father's  
health condition in the Lodz

8  
00:00:24,150 --> 00:00:24,820  
Ghetto.

9  
00:00:24,820 --> 00:00:25,320  
Right.

10  
00:00:25,320 --> 00:00:28,410

11  
00:00:28,410 --> 00:00:33,240  
My father developed some  
problems with his back.

12  
00:00:33,240 --> 00:00:38,560  
We didn't know what

problems they were,

13

00:00:38,560 --> 00:00:42,460

but I suspect that they  
were not major problems.

14

00:00:42,460 --> 00:00:47,800

I have problems with my  
back, and I am OK being here.

15

00:00:47,800 --> 00:00:52,450

So you know, by having  
the proper medical care,

16

00:00:52,450 --> 00:00:57,500

you can overcome a lot of  
things and be well again.

17

00:00:57,500 --> 00:01:01,360

But because he couldn't  
be treated properly,

18

00:01:01,360 --> 00:01:04,540

things deteriorated for  
him and he was laid up

19

00:01:04,540 --> 00:01:08,590

for a long time in bed.

20

00:01:08,590 --> 00:01:13,990

And things didn't go  
very well for him,

21

00:01:13,990 --> 00:01:15,580

even though he was a young man.

22

00:01:15,580 --> 00:01:19,060

You know, when you're a  
kid, 12 or 13 years old,

23

00:01:19,060 --> 00:01:21,640

your father is 45, you  
think he's an old man.

24  
00:01:21,640 --> 00:01:24,390

25  
00:01:24,390 --> 00:01:25,520  
Now I'm 66.

26  
00:01:25,520 --> 00:01:27,500  
I don't think I am that old.

27  
00:01:27,500 --> 00:01:28,940  
He never made it to my age.

28  
00:01:28,940 --> 00:01:32,640

29  
00:01:32,640 --> 00:01:41,880  
So as I mentioned before, we  
lived in the ghetto till 1944,

30  
00:01:41,880 --> 00:01:45,000  
my father being  
sick, my two sisters

31  
00:01:45,000 --> 00:01:49,560  
trying to take care of  
him as best they could.

32  
00:01:49,560 --> 00:01:52,110  
The three of us  
worked in the places

33  
00:01:52,110 --> 00:01:58,650  
that I had previously described,  
and life was very dreary day in

34  
00:01:58,650 --> 00:01:59,630  
and day out.

35  
00:01:59,630 --> 00:02:01,935  
It was-- it was hunger.

36

00:02:01,935 --> 00:02:04,680

37

00:02:04,680 --> 00:02:08,970

And some of the things  
that we take for

38

00:02:08,970 --> 00:02:13,110

granted, things we did not have.

39

00:02:13,110 --> 00:02:15,240

There was no communication.

40

00:02:15,240 --> 00:02:18,780

There were no newspapers,  
no radio, no television.

41

00:02:18,780 --> 00:02:21,210

We did not know  
what was going on.

42

00:02:21,210 --> 00:02:24,030

We did not know whether the  
war was coming to an end

43

00:02:24,030 --> 00:02:26,340

or whether it's going to  
go on for a long time.

44

00:02:26,340 --> 00:02:30,180

We were all hoping and praying  
that the war would finish

45

00:02:30,180 --> 00:02:34,050

quickly, because that was  
the only possibility for us

46

00:02:34,050 --> 00:02:35,730

to survive.

47

00:02:35,730 --> 00:02:40,740

But we did not know how the

progress of the war was going.

48

00:02:40,740 --> 00:02:47,390

And so we lived there  
for two more years.

49

00:02:47,390 --> 00:02:51,120

And there were some  
lighter moments

50

00:02:51,120 --> 00:02:54,510

in life too for my two sisters.

51

00:02:54,510 --> 00:02:57,930

They had made friends and  
they got together occasionally

52

00:02:57,930 --> 00:02:58,790

with their friends.

53

00:02:58,790 --> 00:03:01,230

Most of them I did--  
again, I was a kid.

54

00:03:01,230 --> 00:03:08,300

But my two sisters tried to  
have some kind of social life.

55

00:03:08,300 --> 00:03:11,180

Not too much, but you always  
had to have some friends,

56

00:03:11,180 --> 00:03:18,020

somebody to talk to, somebody  
to laugh with occasionally.

57

00:03:18,020 --> 00:03:24,250

And I was more with my father  
whenever I came back from work,

58

00:03:24,250 --> 00:03:27,300

came back home from work.

59

00:03:27,300 --> 00:03:32,495

And we got into the routine  
of getting our rations

60

00:03:32,495 --> 00:03:35,870

and living that kind of life.

61

00:03:35,870 --> 00:03:40,430

As the war went on, the  
rations became less and less,

62

00:03:40,430 --> 00:03:44,310

and we were more  
and more hungry.

63

00:03:44,310 --> 00:03:47,025

But we survived.

64

00:03:47,025 --> 00:03:51,300

65

00:03:51,300 --> 00:04:01,330

In 1944, the Germans  
decided to liquidate,

66

00:04:01,330 --> 00:04:04,110

to do away with  
the large ghetto.

67

00:04:04,110 --> 00:04:04,610

OK.

68

00:04:04,610 --> 00:04:06,320

Before we go on  
with that, I just

69

00:04:06,320 --> 00:04:09,770

want to back up a little bit.

70

00:04:09,770 --> 00:04:12,180

Did you feel like an  
adult at that time?

71  
00:04:12,180 --> 00:04:13,180  
You were still a child.

72  
00:04:13,180 --> 00:04:15,830  
Or did you feel like a child?

73  
00:04:15,830 --> 00:04:21,140  
I was beginning to feel  
more like an adult because I

74  
00:04:21,140 --> 00:04:27,270  
was taking care of myself,  
whether it was with food

75  
00:04:27,270 --> 00:04:28,240  
or with dressing.

76  
00:04:28,240 --> 00:04:31,900  
And you became tough.

77  
00:04:31,900 --> 00:04:38,410  
There was no one that  
I could go to to get--

78  
00:04:38,410 --> 00:04:40,720  
to cry on someone's  
shoulder, so to speak.

79  
00:04:40,720 --> 00:04:43,740

80  
00:04:43,740 --> 00:04:49,580  
And so in that respect,  
I grew up fast.

81  
00:04:49,580 --> 00:04:55,730  
I think that after my mother  
was taken away, I grew--

82  
00:04:55,730 --> 00:04:58,670  
I had to.

83  
00:04:58,670 --> 00:05:02,060  
It was just-- it wasn't  
something that you decided,

84  
00:05:02,060 --> 00:05:04,070  
I better do that.

85  
00:05:04,070 --> 00:05:06,290  
It wasn't something--  
it just happened.

86  
00:05:06,290 --> 00:05:09,950

87  
00:05:09,950 --> 00:05:13,110  
It just happened that  
me and all the people

88  
00:05:13,110 --> 00:05:18,090  
and all the boys and girls that  
are in my situation, we all

89  
00:05:18,090 --> 00:05:18,870  
grew up fast.

90  
00:05:18,870 --> 00:05:21,710

91  
00:05:21,710 --> 00:05:24,800  
And we were able to  
take care of ourselves.

92  
00:05:24,800 --> 00:05:27,950  
When it's day-to-day  
care, you know,

93  
00:05:27,950 --> 00:05:30,860  
nobody told me what to  
wear and how to wear it

94  
00:05:30,860 --> 00:05:32,180



and to wash and to do it.

95

00:05:32,180 --> 00:05:35,700

It was just a  
matter of doing it.

96

00:05:35,700 --> 00:05:37,630

And so I became--

97

00:05:37,630 --> 00:05:40,610

yes, you grew up fast.

98

00:05:40,610 --> 00:05:41,760

You grew up first.

99

00:05:41,760 --> 00:05:48,050

You sort of-- many, many  
times you think that we

100

00:05:48,050 --> 00:05:51,980

were robbed of our childhood.

101

00:05:51,980 --> 00:05:58,160

But that was the cause of war,  
and that's the way it was.

102

00:05:58,160 --> 00:05:59,945

Did you see any  
beatings or killings?

103

00:05:59,945 --> 00:06:00,600

Yes.

104

00:06:00,600 --> 00:06:01,100

Yeah.

105

00:06:01,100 --> 00:06:03,500

Occasionally, you  
would see somebody

106

00:06:03,500 --> 00:06:05,330

being roughed up and beaten up.

107  
00:06:05,330 --> 00:06:08,840  
And it became-- you  
became numb to it.

108  
00:06:08,840 --> 00:06:11,430

109  
00:06:11,430 --> 00:06:17,210  
You saw it and it  
became a part of life.

110  
00:06:17,210 --> 00:06:23,110  
And that in itself  
was tragic, that one

111  
00:06:23,110 --> 00:06:32,510  
could see pain being  
inflicted on others,

112  
00:06:32,510 --> 00:06:34,100  
and you sometimes went on.

113  
00:06:34,100 --> 00:06:37,260

114  
00:06:37,260 --> 00:06:45,610  
You became desensitized  
to some of the things

115  
00:06:45,610 --> 00:06:49,670  
that a human being  
is sensitive to.

116  
00:06:49,670 --> 00:06:55,300  
But because of the conditions  
and because of the urge

117  
00:06:55,300 --> 00:07:01,200  
of survival, because  
you are so busy

118

00:07:01,200 --> 00:07:07,680  
trying to survive that you  
very often unfortunately become

119  
00:07:07,680 --> 00:07:10,920  
desensitized to other  
people's problems,

120  
00:07:10,920 --> 00:07:15,460  
because you've got  
so many of your own.

121  
00:07:15,460 --> 00:07:18,020  
And I believe that that  
happened to a lot of us.

122  
00:07:18,020 --> 00:07:21,300

123  
00:07:21,300 --> 00:07:27,480  
And that's the way life was.

124  
00:07:27,480 --> 00:07:30,900  
Remember that in the ghetto,  
we had our own police force.

125  
00:07:30,900 --> 00:07:32,730  
There was a Jewish police force.

126  
00:07:32,730 --> 00:07:33,930  
There were Jewish cops.

127  
00:07:33,930 --> 00:07:36,510

128  
00:07:36,510 --> 00:07:44,010  
The fellow that was the eldest  
of the Lodz Ghetto, his name

129  
00:07:44,010 --> 00:07:45,540  
was Rumkowski.

130

00:07:45,540 --> 00:07:47,710  
He ran the ghetto.

131  
00:07:47,710 --> 00:07:50,300  
There was what they called  
at that time in Germany

132  
00:07:50,300 --> 00:07:58,020  
a Judenrat, and that was  
like a government of Jews,

133  
00:07:58,020 --> 00:08:01,680  
of Jewish leaders that  
ran the internal operation

134  
00:08:01,680 --> 00:08:02,700  
of the ghetto.

135  
00:08:02,700 --> 00:08:05,330  
And they got their  
directions from the Germans,

136  
00:08:05,330 --> 00:08:05,955  
from the Nazis.

137  
00:08:05,955 --> 00:08:08,460

138  
00:08:08,460 --> 00:08:21,120  
And at one time, we really  
thought very badly, not much

139  
00:08:21,120 --> 00:08:22,090  
of Rumkowski.

140  
00:08:22,090 --> 00:08:26,110

141  
00:08:26,110 --> 00:08:28,750  
We thought at that time  
that he was a terrible man.

142

00:08:28,750 --> 00:08:32,409

143

00:08:32,409 --> 00:08:40,990

But in retrospect, when you  
read books and you read accounts

144

00:08:40,990 --> 00:08:46,870

and you read history, and you  
get a little older and perhaps

145

00:08:46,870 --> 00:08:53,740

a little wiser, and the  
experience of your own life

146

00:08:53,740 --> 00:08:59,170

looking back upon it,  
perhaps he was not the demon

147

00:08:59,170 --> 00:09:01,390

that we thought he was.

148

00:09:01,390 --> 00:09:04,700

He did the best he could  
under the circumstances,

149

00:09:04,700 --> 00:09:09,690

I'm not trying to  
defend him, but I

150

00:09:09,690 --> 00:09:15,670

believe that we thought of  
him in much harsher terms

151

00:09:15,670 --> 00:09:20,100

in those days, that perhaps  
some of us that survived--

152

00:09:20,100 --> 00:09:23,370

and we think of some  
of the events then.

153

00:09:23,370 --> 00:09:25,950

Perhaps we don't think  
of him as harshly,

154  
00:09:25,950 --> 00:09:29,520  
because I know other people  
that survived the Lodz Ghetto.

155  
00:09:29,520 --> 00:09:32,430  
I know them today.

156  
00:09:32,430 --> 00:09:37,020  
And we very seldom talk  
about our war experiences,

157  
00:09:37,020 --> 00:09:39,945  
but sometimes when  
his name comes up,

158  
00:09:39,945 --> 00:09:43,170  
this discussion that I am  
trying to describe to you

159  
00:09:43,170 --> 00:09:47,250  
goes on, that he was--

160  
00:09:47,250 --> 00:09:50,730  
perhaps he did  
the best he could,

161  
00:09:50,730 --> 00:09:54,060  
and we were really  
too harsh with him.

162  
00:09:54,060 --> 00:09:56,230  
But the truth is  
that at that time,

163  
00:09:56,230 --> 00:09:57,930  
we did not think much of him.

164  
00:09:57,930 --> 00:10:01,890  
We thought that he was  
too chummy, too close

165  
00:10:01,890 --> 00:10:03,300  
with the Nazis.

166  
00:10:03,300 --> 00:10:06,150  
But very often, perhaps  
that was one way

167  
00:10:06,150 --> 00:10:11,520  
of him being able to  
deal with situations.

168  
00:10:11,520 --> 00:10:13,350  
That's the only way he  
could deal with him.

169  
00:10:13,350 --> 00:10:15,990

170  
00:10:15,990 --> 00:10:18,780  
Do you remember the famous  
speech in that town square

171  
00:10:18,780 --> 00:10:21,240  
about the children  
and the old people

172  
00:10:21,240 --> 00:10:26,460  
that he gave, asking parents  
to give up their children?

173  
00:10:26,460 --> 00:10:28,110  
Were you aware of that?

174  
00:10:28,110 --> 00:10:30,690

175  
00:10:30,690 --> 00:10:32,490  
I was aware of that.

176  
00:10:32,490 --> 00:10:35,220  
I didn't hear the speech.

177  
00:10:35,220 --> 00:10:38,310  
But that was-- that  
was a terrible thing

178  
00:10:38,310 --> 00:10:42,540  
to ask for mothers to  
give up their children.

179  
00:10:42,540 --> 00:10:44,548  
How do you do that?

180  
00:10:44,548 --> 00:10:45,340  
How do you do that?

181  
00:10:45,340 --> 00:10:48,370  
You don't do that.

182  
00:10:48,370 --> 00:10:51,460  
So what could you say?

183  
00:10:51,460 --> 00:10:53,670  
But there is no--

184  
00:10:53,670 --> 00:11:00,450  
I don't know of any parent  
that would willingly

185  
00:11:00,450 --> 00:11:04,320  
give up their child,  
regardless of the consequences.

186  
00:11:04,320 --> 00:11:08,030  
Regardless of the consequences.

187  
00:11:08,030 --> 00:11:11,390  
It's been said that there were  
a few children that Rumkowski

188  
00:11:11,390 --> 00:11:15,610  
had kind of taken  
under his protection,



189

00:11:15,610 --> 00:11:18,950  
and they lived in a special  
place and got special teaching.

190

00:11:18,950 --> 00:11:20,960  
Were you aware of  
that at the time?

191

00:11:20,960 --> 00:11:23,790  
No, I was not.

192

00:11:23,790 --> 00:11:25,570  
I hear about it  
for the first time.

193

00:11:25,570 --> 00:11:26,360  
I was not.

194

00:11:26,360 --> 00:11:27,290  
And that may be true.

195

00:11:27,290 --> 00:11:28,400  
Maybe he did.

196

00:11:28,400 --> 00:11:31,220  
I just didn't know it.

197

00:11:31,220 --> 00:11:33,300  
You turned 13 in the ghetto.

198

00:11:33,300 --> 00:11:33,800  
Yes.

199

00:11:33,800 --> 00:11:34,883  
What did that mean to you?

200

00:11:34,883 --> 00:11:37,590  
This is typical bar mitzvah  
time for a young boy.

201

00:11:37,590 --> 00:11:41,580

202

00:11:41,580 --> 00:11:47,240

Very difficult. But at that age,  
we didn't think much about it.

203

00:11:47,240 --> 00:11:50,220

204

00:11:50,220 --> 00:11:52,800

We really didn't.

205

00:11:52,800 --> 00:11:56,280

My mother wasn't there.

206

00:11:56,280 --> 00:11:57,270

My father was sick.

207

00:11:57,270 --> 00:12:00,430

208

00:12:00,430 --> 00:12:02,610

And believe it or  
not, at that time,

209

00:12:02,610 --> 00:12:04,460

it didn't seem that  
important to me.

210

00:12:04,460 --> 00:12:08,170

211

00:12:08,170 --> 00:12:11,608

I think it was more  
important to my father

212

00:12:11,608 --> 00:12:12,900

than it was to me at that time.

213

00:12:12,900 --> 00:12:18,320

214  
00:12:18,320 --> 00:12:23,050  
So that's-- there was no--

215  
00:12:23,050 --> 00:12:27,580  
there were no-- you  
couldn't go to a synagogue.

216  
00:12:27,580 --> 00:12:29,620  
Of course, you don't  
need to go to a synagogue

217  
00:12:29,620 --> 00:12:30,850  
to be a bar mitzvah.

218  
00:12:30,850 --> 00:12:31,960  
You can do it at home.

219  
00:12:31,960 --> 00:12:35,830  
If you have 10 people you say  
you pray it, and that's it.

220  
00:12:35,830 --> 00:12:36,820  
And that was it.

221  
00:12:36,820 --> 00:12:39,460  
I mean, that's-- you--

222  
00:12:39,460 --> 00:12:45,810  
I mean, all you have to do for  
a bar mitzvah is say the brucha

223  
00:12:45,810 --> 00:12:47,260  
with the Torah, you know?

224  
00:12:47,260 --> 00:12:50,290  
The rest of it is all niceties.

225  
00:12:50,290 --> 00:12:52,990  
I know we have a lot of  
dislikes of this today,

226

00:12:52,990 --> 00:12:57,020

and I myself enjoy them  
when I go to a bar mitzvah,

227

00:12:57,020 --> 00:12:59,630

but a lot of it  
is not necessary.

228

00:12:59,630 --> 00:13:03,910

So again, it was not  
something that I gave it

229

00:13:03,910 --> 00:13:07,030

that much thought at that  
time or anybody else.

230

00:13:07,030 --> 00:13:15,880

It was-- we really had  
more important things

231

00:13:15,880 --> 00:13:23,810

to deal with that dealt with  
life, that dealt with survival.

232

00:13:23,810 --> 00:13:28,780

And the bar mitzvah was not  
on our mind at that time.

233

00:13:28,780 --> 00:13:31,460

What was a typical  
day like for you?

234

00:13:31,460 --> 00:13:33,870

235

00:13:33,870 --> 00:13:35,120

I would get up in the morning.

236

00:13:35,120 --> 00:13:40,130

237

00:13:40,130 --> 00:13:41,660

Share a room with your father?

238

00:13:41,660 --> 00:13:43,730

Yes.

239

00:13:43,730 --> 00:13:44,375

Yes.

240

00:13:44,375 --> 00:13:46,280

At one time, even

my sisters were

241

00:13:46,280 --> 00:13:49,130

in another part of the

same room, because it

242

00:13:49,130 --> 00:13:50,375

was very close quarters.

243

00:13:50,375 --> 00:13:54,260

244

00:13:54,260 --> 00:13:56,270

But in order for them

to have more privacy,

245

00:13:56,270 --> 00:13:59,690

they had, like, a sheet.

246

00:13:59,690 --> 00:14:03,110

I mean, girls need more privacy.

247

00:14:03,110 --> 00:14:08,660

And we would get

up in the morning.

248

00:14:08,660 --> 00:14:12,855

I don't think we ate

anything in the morning.

249

00:14:12,855 --> 00:14:14,105

I think we ate in the evening.

250  
00:14:14,105 --> 00:14:16,670

251  
00:14:16,670 --> 00:14:22,870  
And we would get a bowl of  
soup at our place of work.

252  
00:14:22,870 --> 00:14:23,767  
I don't remember.

253  
00:14:23,767 --> 00:14:24,850  
Maybe there was something.

254  
00:14:24,850 --> 00:14:28,270  
I don't remember  
eating in the morning.

255  
00:14:28,270 --> 00:14:31,900  
And we would get up and  
go to our place of work.

256  
00:14:31,900 --> 00:14:33,850  
Walk, obviously.

257  
00:14:33,850 --> 00:14:36,070  
Walk through across  
the bridge that I

258  
00:14:36,070 --> 00:14:39,400  
had described previously.

259  
00:14:39,400 --> 00:14:42,670  
And do our thing and  
come home at night.

260  
00:14:42,670 --> 00:14:45,700

261  
00:14:45,700 --> 00:14:51,400  
And usually, one of my sisters  
would prepare something.

262  
00:14:51,400 --> 00:14:53,200  
There wasn't much to prepare.

263  
00:14:53,200 --> 00:14:56,815  
So that was-- it wasn't like you  
were going to prepare a meal.

264  
00:14:56,815 --> 00:14:59,480

265  
00:14:59,480 --> 00:15:00,680  
We used to have--

266  
00:15:00,680 --> 00:15:04,700  
we had a ration of bread every  
day, so there was some bread.

267  
00:15:04,700 --> 00:15:08,090

268  
00:15:08,090 --> 00:15:10,940  
I don't remember whether we  
had cooked soup or whatever.

269  
00:15:10,940 --> 00:15:12,470  
I don't recall that.

270  
00:15:12,470 --> 00:15:15,350  
But preparing the  
meal wasn't an issue,

271  
00:15:15,350 --> 00:15:20,400  
because there wasn't much  
that you could prepare.

272  
00:15:20,400 --> 00:15:28,340  
So again, occasionally,  
I remember sometimes

273  
00:15:28,340 --> 00:15:29,600  
trying to play soccer.

274

00:15:29,600 --> 00:15:32,570

We would make a  
ball out of rags.

275

00:15:32,570 --> 00:15:35,000

We would put some string  
around it as best--

276

00:15:35,000 --> 00:15:37,340

and then we used it as our ball.

277

00:15:37,340 --> 00:15:40,100

And it was fine.

278

00:15:40,100 --> 00:15:43,190

And my two sisters  
had some friends,

279

00:15:43,190 --> 00:15:47,750

and they would go to visit them  
or they'd come to our place.

280

00:15:47,750 --> 00:15:49,340

Very seldom they'd  
come to our place

281

00:15:49,340 --> 00:15:51,380

because our place was so small.

282

00:15:51,380 --> 00:15:55,370

People that had lived  
in Lodz before the war

283

00:15:55,370 --> 00:15:58,580

had better accommodations  
in the ghetto.

284

00:15:58,580 --> 00:16:00,530

And that's nothing  
negative to say about them.

285



00:16:00,530 --> 00:16:02,990

It's just that some of  
them had lived there

286

00:16:02,990 --> 00:16:06,230

before the war in the same  
area, so their accommodations

287

00:16:06,230 --> 00:16:09,050

were a little better than  
the ones that were newcomers

288

00:16:09,050 --> 00:16:12,410

and were assigned housing  
as best-- you know.

289

00:16:12,410 --> 00:16:23,260

So I remember that where  
we lived in the ghetto,

290

00:16:23,260 --> 00:16:25,550

the house had--

291

00:16:25,550 --> 00:16:27,460

it was almost like  
a wooden structure.

292

00:16:27,460 --> 00:16:30,150

293

00:16:30,150 --> 00:16:33,480

And there was some  
people that lived there

294

00:16:33,480 --> 00:16:34,575

before the war, Jews.

295

00:16:34,575 --> 00:16:37,330

296

00:16:37,330 --> 00:16:38,690

Poor.

297

00:16:38,690 --> 00:16:42,590

I mean, you talk  
about being poor.

298

00:16:42,590 --> 00:16:45,650

And that's where we ended up.

299

00:16:45,650 --> 00:16:53,060

And I believe that my father's  
brother lived there too.

300

00:16:53,060 --> 00:16:55,910

I think he had lived there  
perhaps before the war.

301

00:16:55,910 --> 00:16:58,510

302

00:16:58,510 --> 00:17:01,160

He-- he was a poor man.

303

00:17:01,160 --> 00:17:03,890

Couldn't afford much.

304

00:17:03,890 --> 00:17:08,599

So I think that's why we  
ended up in that building.

305

00:17:08,599 --> 00:17:10,519

But it was an awful place.

306

00:17:10,519 --> 00:17:15,089

307

00:17:15,089 --> 00:17:20,220

Old, decrepit wooden floors.

308

00:17:20,220 --> 00:17:24,984

When I say wooden floors, I  
don't mean parquet, you know,

309

00:17:24,984 --> 00:17:27,660  
boards.

310  
00:17:27,660 --> 00:17:30,280  
Old boards.

311  
00:17:30,280 --> 00:17:35,570  
And I remember that building.

312  
00:17:35,570 --> 00:17:38,100  
And I remember--

313  
00:17:38,100 --> 00:17:40,360  
I remember going to an outhouse.

314  
00:17:40,360 --> 00:17:41,190  
I remember that.

315  
00:17:41,190 --> 00:17:43,710

316  
00:17:43,710 --> 00:17:46,230  
It was so bad for me,  
but my two sisters

317  
00:17:46,230 --> 00:17:48,720  
had to do the same thing.

318  
00:17:48,720 --> 00:17:56,980  
It was-- life was almost  
tougher for them than for me

319  
00:17:56,980 --> 00:17:58,910  
because they were  
a little older.

320  
00:17:58,910 --> 00:18:01,300  
They were teenagers.

321  
00:18:01,300 --> 00:18:04,720  
And I believe that  
as teenagers, they

322  
00:18:04,720 --> 00:18:08,170  
had needs that I did not have.

323  
00:18:08,170 --> 00:18:12,160

324  
00:18:12,160 --> 00:18:18,370  
Social, friends, other  
girlfriends, boyfriends,

325  
00:18:18,370 --> 00:18:20,970  
whatever.

326  
00:18:20,970 --> 00:18:26,990  
So life was tough for  
them, as it was for me.

327  
00:18:26,990 --> 00:18:29,480  
But I sometimes  
look at it, and I

328  
00:18:29,480 --> 00:18:33,860  
think that they had a  
tougher time because them

329  
00:18:33,860 --> 00:18:35,620  
being a little older.

330  
00:18:35,620 --> 00:18:38,230  
And when I say older, I  
mean they were teenagers.

331  
00:18:38,230 --> 00:18:40,490  
I was-- but there is--

332  
00:18:40,490 --> 00:18:42,638  
my sister is eight years older.

333  
00:18:42,638 --> 00:18:44,180  
I have one that is  
eight years older,

334  
00:18:44,180 --> 00:18:45,620  
one that is six years older.

335  
00:18:45,620 --> 00:18:47,330  
By the way, they both  
live and they both

336  
00:18:47,330 --> 00:18:49,730  
are in the United States.

337  
00:18:49,730 --> 00:18:53,030  
How did you keep yourself clean?

338  
00:18:53,030 --> 00:19:02,990  
[SIGH] There was a public bath.

339  
00:19:02,990 --> 00:19:05,600  
Now again, describing  
my conditions,

340  
00:19:05,600 --> 00:19:10,040  
there were other apartments  
that had better facilities.

341  
00:19:10,040 --> 00:19:13,970  
We were able to wash in a--

342  
00:19:13,970 --> 00:19:14,780  
what do you call?

343  
00:19:14,780 --> 00:19:15,460  
A com--

344  
00:19:15,460 --> 00:19:16,200  
A trough?

345  
00:19:16,200 --> 00:19:20,560  
A trough or some-- not a  
trough, but you know, a round--

346

00:19:20,560 --> 00:19:21,060  
Sink?

347  
00:19:21,060 --> 00:19:21,590  
Sink.

348  
00:19:21,590 --> 00:19:22,090  
Yes.

349  
00:19:22,090 --> 00:19:24,560  
And we were able  
to wash ourselves.

350  
00:19:24,560 --> 00:19:30,660  
But in order to really wash  
yourself, your entire body,

351  
00:19:30,660 --> 00:19:34,210  
there was a public bath  
that we could go to.

352  
00:19:34,210 --> 00:19:36,005  
I remember.

353  
00:19:36,005 --> 00:19:37,490  
I would have never  
thought about it

354  
00:19:37,490 --> 00:19:40,040  
if you didn't ask that question.

355  
00:19:40,040 --> 00:19:43,710  
Once in a while, we  
were allowed to go

356  
00:19:43,710 --> 00:19:44,960  
where you would take a shower.

357  
00:19:44,960 --> 00:19:48,560  
It was a big public shower,  
which was all right.

358

00:19:48,560 --> 00:19:52,462  
At least you were able to get  
your whole body nice and clean.

359  
00:19:52,462 --> 00:19:54,170  
That's the way we  
tried-- that's the way.

360  
00:19:54,170 --> 00:19:57,140  
We did the best we  
could to keep clean.

361  
00:19:57,140 --> 00:20:00,170  
And if we didn't go there,  
we would wash ourselves

362  
00:20:00,170 --> 00:20:04,220  
as best we could not under a  
shower, not in the bathtub.

363  
00:20:04,220 --> 00:20:05,540  
Some people had bathtubs.

364  
00:20:05,540 --> 00:20:07,610  
We didn't.

365  
00:20:07,610 --> 00:20:11,970  
So like, we did everything we  
could in a sink kind of thing.

366  
00:20:11,970 --> 00:20:14,210  
What was it like to see  
barbed wire and a fence

367  
00:20:14,210 --> 00:20:17,030  
around the perimeter  
of the ghetto?

368  
00:20:17,030 --> 00:20:20,270  
Well, initially, it was scary.

369  
00:20:20,270 --> 00:20:22,620  
After a while, you

get used to the sight.

370  
00:20:22,620 --> 00:20:23,120  
It's there.

371  
00:20:23,120 --> 00:20:26,830

372  
00:20:26,830 --> 00:20:30,220  
And you know, like  
everything else,

373  
00:20:30,220 --> 00:20:32,440  
you begin to accept  
life as it is,

374  
00:20:32,440 --> 00:20:35,260  
and cope with it  
as best you can.

375  
00:20:35,260 --> 00:20:38,500  
So yeah, initially it  
was hard, but at the end,

376  
00:20:38,500 --> 00:20:41,530  
it was just another  
object that was there.

377  
00:20:41,530 --> 00:20:43,450  
Did you keep any  
kind of a journal?

378  
00:20:43,450 --> 00:20:45,970  
Were you-- did you  
write down any thoughts

379  
00:20:45,970 --> 00:20:47,260  
when you were that young?

380  
00:20:47,260 --> 00:20:47,890  
I did not.

381



00:20:47,890 --> 00:20:49,618  
No.

382  
00:20:49,618 --> 00:20:50,512  
No.

383  
00:20:50,512 --> 00:20:51,970  
Did you ever think  
of running away?

384  
00:20:51,970 --> 00:20:54,420

385  
00:20:54,420 --> 00:20:54,920  
No.

386  
00:20:54,920 --> 00:20:57,485

387  
00:20:57,485 --> 00:20:59,720  
I was too-- I  
wouldn't know where--

388  
00:20:59,720 --> 00:21:01,610  
I wouldn't know where to go.

389  
00:21:01,610 --> 00:21:03,290  
I wouldn't know what to do.

390  
00:21:03,290 --> 00:21:06,590  
You must remember another thing.

391  
00:21:06,590 --> 00:21:13,490  
In order to run away, you have  
to have a place to run to.

392  
00:21:13,490 --> 00:21:17,480  
So yeah, if you really  
put your effort to it,

393  
00:21:17,480 --> 00:21:19,790  
you could probably get

through that fence,

394

00:21:19,790 --> 00:21:21,200

barbed wire at night.

395

00:21:21,200 --> 00:21:24,050

Maybe do something

to get over it,

396

00:21:24,050 --> 00:21:26,450

across it, or underneath it.

397

00:21:26,450 --> 00:21:29,990

But now when you got

out, where would you go?

398

00:21:29,990 --> 00:21:33,245

You needed a population

that was willing to help.

399

00:21:33,245 --> 00:21:36,750

400

00:21:36,750 --> 00:21:41,170

And if the population wasn't,

then you were in trouble.

401

00:21:41,170 --> 00:21:44,250

Again, I'm not saying

that it was all that way.

402

00:21:44,250 --> 00:21:48,900

There were many heroic

events that took place

403

00:21:48,900 --> 00:21:52,830

by non-Jews helping Jews.

404

00:21:52,830 --> 00:21:54,030

There were.

405

00:21:54,030 --> 00:21:55,200

People risked their lives.

406  
00:21:55,200 --> 00:21:58,100

407  
00:21:58,100 --> 00:22:02,300  
And remember something,  
that when the person

408  
00:22:02,300 --> 00:22:06,350  
that helped you  
or helped anybody,

409  
00:22:06,350 --> 00:22:11,510  
if that person was caught,  
that person would be shot.

410  
00:22:11,510 --> 00:22:16,910  
Maybe that person's entire  
family and children will die.

411  
00:22:16,910 --> 00:22:24,770  
So you have to ask yourself  
if the penalty was so harsh,

412  
00:22:24,770 --> 00:22:25,805  
how would I act?

413  
00:22:25,805 --> 00:22:28,370

414  
00:22:28,370 --> 00:22:34,700  
If I was confronted with a  
similar situation whereby

415  
00:22:34,700 --> 00:22:39,830  
helping someone else I  
could have my entire family

416  
00:22:39,830 --> 00:22:42,230  
destroyed, I don't  
know what I would do.

417

00:22:42,230 --> 00:22:45,530

I really don't.

418

00:22:45,530 --> 00:22:49,450

What was your physical  
condition like?

419

00:22:49,450 --> 00:22:51,140

OK.

420

00:22:51,140 --> 00:22:52,190

Yeah.

421

00:22:52,190 --> 00:22:56,060

I-- it was OK.

422

00:22:56,060 --> 00:23:01,190

I don't remember being too sick.

423

00:23:01,190 --> 00:23:04,610

I remember being hungry, but  
that was a normal condition.

424

00:23:04,610 --> 00:23:08,762

425

00:23:08,762 --> 00:23:12,440

I don't remember having  
any major sickness.

426

00:23:12,440 --> 00:23:14,390

I had a couple of times  
that I had a cold.

427

00:23:14,390 --> 00:23:16,100

Maybe some fever.

428

00:23:16,100 --> 00:23:18,230

And you know, I stayed in bed.

429

00:23:18,230 --> 00:23:20,180

Then the next day I was OK.

430

00:23:20,180 --> 00:23:23,150

So my physical  
condition wasn't bad.

431

00:23:23,150 --> 00:23:29,810

I was able to cope with all the  
lack of malnutrition and food.

432

00:23:29,810 --> 00:23:34,530

Not lack of-- lack of nutrition  
that causes malnutrition.

433

00:23:34,530 --> 00:23:38,450

And I was able to cope  
with it fairly well.

434

00:23:38,450 --> 00:23:39,680

Fairly well.

435

00:23:39,680 --> 00:23:43,575

And that's why I'm here.

436

00:23:43,575 --> 00:23:44,450

Well, now it's, what?

437

00:23:44,450 --> 00:23:45,920

June '44.

438

00:23:45,920 --> 00:23:49,550

And you had started to say  
another change in your life.

439

00:23:49,550 --> 00:23:51,350

Yes.

440

00:23:51,350 --> 00:23:56,150

June 1944 is right,  
maybe it was July.

441

00:23:56,150 --> 00:24:00,005

But June, July it  
started that we--

442  
00:24:00,005 --> 00:24:04,768  
that there were going to  
do away with the ghetto.

443  
00:24:04,768 --> 00:24:05,810  
They meaning the Germans.

444  
00:24:05,810 --> 00:24:08,960

445  
00:24:08,960 --> 00:24:13,310  
And we were told in a  
very organized manner

446  
00:24:13,310 --> 00:24:15,410  
that if you lived in  
this part of the ghetto,

447  
00:24:15,410 --> 00:24:17,580  
you had to report to  
the railroad stations

448  
00:24:17,580 --> 00:24:20,240  
at a certain time  
and certain date.

449  
00:24:20,240 --> 00:24:22,640  
How did they tell you this?

450  
00:24:22,640 --> 00:24:26,870  
Through the infrastructure  
within the ghetto.

451  
00:24:26,870 --> 00:24:32,150  
As I said, there  
were Jewish police.

452  
00:24:32,150 --> 00:24:34,970  
There was some-- there  
was some infrastructure.

453

00:24:34,970 --> 00:24:38,190

There was some things that  
they were able to communicate.

454

00:24:38,190 --> 00:24:40,430

And I think it was  
through the police

455

00:24:40,430 --> 00:24:44,420

that we were informed  
when to go and where.

456

00:24:44,420 --> 00:24:45,400

The Jewish police, now.

457

00:24:45,400 --> 00:24:48,080

458

00:24:48,080 --> 00:24:52,290

Did you have any incidents  
with the Jewish police?

459

00:24:52,290 --> 00:24:52,850

I did not.

460

00:24:52,850 --> 00:24:54,970

Or Germans?

461

00:24:54,970 --> 00:24:59,060

I did not have any incident  
with Jewish police personally,

462

00:24:59,060 --> 00:25:02,460

but that doesn't mean  
that other people did not.

463

00:25:02,460 --> 00:25:05,010

And not of them-- not  
all of them were good.

464

00:25:05,010 --> 00:25:07,376

Some of them were  
terrible incidents.

465  
00:25:07,376 --> 00:25:08,840  
You know, not kind.

466  
00:25:08,840 --> 00:25:11,090  
Not nice.

467  
00:25:11,090 --> 00:25:12,140  
So--

468  
00:25:12,140 --> 00:25:14,420  
Did you have any direct  
connection with Rumkowski?

469  
00:25:14,420 --> 00:25:15,530  
Did you ever talk to him?

470  
00:25:15,530 --> 00:25:17,127  
Never talked to him.

471  
00:25:17,127 --> 00:25:17,960  
Never talked to him.

472  
00:25:17,960 --> 00:25:19,502  
I saw him, but I  
never talked to him.

473  
00:25:19,502 --> 00:25:25,170

474  
00:25:25,170 --> 00:25:32,900  
So in 1944, we knew when  
they wanted us to report.

475  
00:25:32,900 --> 00:25:36,430

476  
00:25:36,430 --> 00:25:40,480  
And my two sisters, my father.



477

00:25:40,480 --> 00:25:43,090

478

00:25:43,090 --> 00:25:47,470

My father couldn't walk at that  
time because of his problems

479

00:25:47,470 --> 00:25:49,700

with his back.

480

00:25:49,700 --> 00:25:52,570

Some people had to  
almost carry him

481

00:25:52,570 --> 00:25:55,030

towards the railroad station.

482

00:25:55,030 --> 00:26:06,340

We got there, and  
hundreds of us,

483

00:26:06,340 --> 00:26:11,650

maybe thousands, they  
packed us on a train

484

00:26:11,650 --> 00:26:16,990

into cattle cars, the kind  
of cattle cars and trains

485

00:26:16,990 --> 00:26:19,480

that you all have  
seen a dozen times.

486

00:26:19,480 --> 00:26:22,140

487

00:26:22,140 --> 00:26:30,240

And we were told  
that we were going

488

00:26:30,240 --> 00:26:38,970

to be resettled to another labor

camp and that we would work.

489

00:26:38,970 --> 00:26:41,070

That's all we knew.

490

00:26:41,070 --> 00:26:44,100

We did not know  
where we were going.

491

00:26:44,100 --> 00:26:47,610

At least I didn't, and  
my two sisters didn't.

492

00:26:47,610 --> 00:26:51,730

If anybody else knew, we didn't.

493

00:26:51,730 --> 00:26:55,920

And I remember,  
they put us on a--

494

00:26:55,920 --> 00:27:00,540

on the-- into those cars.

495

00:27:00,540 --> 00:27:06,580

And they had a big pail of water  
that they put into the center

496

00:27:06,580 --> 00:27:08,880

so that we would  
have some water.

497

00:27:08,880 --> 00:27:11,595

I think we got some bread.

498

00:27:11,595 --> 00:27:15,590

499

00:27:15,590 --> 00:27:20,842

They shut the doors after  
they packed us all in.

500

00:27:20,842 --> 00:27:22,050

And they really packed us in.

501

00:27:22,050 --> 00:27:24,720

502

00:27:24,720 --> 00:27:28,280

And I remember, we had  
men, women, and children

503

00:27:28,280 --> 00:27:29,260

in the same car.

504

00:27:29,260 --> 00:27:33,940

505

00:27:33,940 --> 00:27:47,960

And the train left, and I  
believe that we traveled

506

00:27:47,960 --> 00:27:49,490

a whole day and a whole night.

507

00:27:49,490 --> 00:27:53,250

508

00:27:53,250 --> 00:27:56,650

Not that where we were  
going was so far away,

509

00:27:56,650 --> 00:28:00,778

but it seemed like  
it was forever.

510

00:28:00,778 --> 00:28:02,320

As a matter of fact,  
there was a time

511

00:28:02,320 --> 00:28:06,160

that I felt we traveled  
a couple of days.

512

00:28:06,160 --> 00:28:08,390

But I talked about  
it with my sisters,

513  
00:28:08,390 --> 00:28:12,160  
and they don't remember.

514  
00:28:12,160 --> 00:28:18,340  
Let's say it was 24 hours,  
not to exaggerate the point.

515  
00:28:18,340 --> 00:28:20,100  
Were you all together,  
all four of you?

516  
00:28:20,100 --> 00:28:21,730  
You, your father,  
and your sisters?

517  
00:28:21,730 --> 00:28:23,230  
No.

518  
00:28:23,230 --> 00:28:26,170  
My father, because  
he was sick, he

519  
00:28:26,170 --> 00:28:28,090  
was put into a different car.

520  
00:28:28,090 --> 00:28:33,550  
We were on the same train,  
but not in the same car.

521  
00:28:33,550 --> 00:28:36,550  
There were other sickly people,  
and they took all of them

522  
00:28:36,550 --> 00:28:38,470  
and put them in a  
separate car, and we

523  
00:28:38,470 --> 00:28:40,655  
were told to take care of them.

524

00:28:40,655 --> 00:28:42,780

How did you feel, being  
separated from your father?

525

00:28:42,780 --> 00:28:44,110

Terrible.

526

00:28:44,110 --> 00:28:48,405

But they assured us that  
it was for the better.

527

00:28:48,405 --> 00:28:49,780

So we all thought  
that, oh, well.

528

00:28:49,780 --> 00:28:53,090

It'll be fine.

529

00:28:53,090 --> 00:28:58,430

My two sisters and I were  
together in the same car.

530

00:28:58,430 --> 00:29:01,010

531

00:29:01,010 --> 00:29:04,890

And as I mentioned, we traveled.

532

00:29:04,890 --> 00:29:06,830

We traveled it  
seemed like forever.

533

00:29:06,830 --> 00:29:11,870

And those 24 hours or 48  
hours were the most awful

534

00:29:11,870 --> 00:29:18,520

that you can imagine,  
being in that car.

535

00:29:18,520 --> 00:29:22,140

536  
00:29:22,140 --> 00:29:27,000  
You have to do what you have  
to do, being a human being.

537  
00:29:27,000 --> 00:29:28,470  
It was the--

538  
00:29:28,470 --> 00:29:32,760  
I think that was the most  
dehumanizing experience

539  
00:29:32,760 --> 00:29:39,210  
that you can have, that my two  
sisters and I and everybody

540  
00:29:39,210 --> 00:29:43,110  
else in that car experienced.

541  
00:29:43,110 --> 00:29:46,290

542  
00:29:46,290 --> 00:29:50,550  
We finally arrived  
at our destination.

543  
00:29:50,550 --> 00:29:54,010  
We did not know what  
the destination was.

544  
00:29:54,010 --> 00:29:55,830  
What were the conditions  
like in the car?

545  
00:29:55,830 --> 00:29:58,650

546  
00:29:58,650 --> 00:29:59,265  
It was hot.

547  
00:29:59,265 --> 00:30:03,240

548  
00:30:03,240 --> 00:30:03,820  
It was tight.

549  
00:30:03,820 --> 00:30:08,840

550  
00:30:08,840 --> 00:30:12,820  
And it was difficult to  
get away from each other,

551  
00:30:12,820 --> 00:30:15,560  
because we were so tight.

552  
00:30:15,560 --> 00:30:21,820  
I remember sitting  
crouched all night,

553  
00:30:21,820 --> 00:30:27,620  
and it was very miserable.

554  
00:30:27,620 --> 00:30:32,320

555  
00:30:32,320 --> 00:30:33,990  
I don't know how  
else to describe it.

556  
00:30:33,990 --> 00:30:46,340

557  
00:30:46,340 --> 00:30:48,230  
This is tape 2,  
side B, and you were

558  
00:30:48,230 --> 00:30:51,630  
talking about the  
conditions in the car.

559  
00:30:51,630 --> 00:31:01,590  
They were very harsh and  
it's difficult to describe.

560  
00:31:01,590 --> 00:31:06,580

561  
00:31:06,580 --> 00:31:12,010  
With so many people  
being packed in,

562  
00:31:12,010 --> 00:31:20,630  
into a cattle car with the  
door shut for 24 hours--

563  
00:31:20,630 --> 00:31:25,670  
maybe it was longer, but  
I felt it was 24 hours.

564  
00:31:25,670 --> 00:31:27,280  
Some other people  
felt it was 40.

565  
00:31:27,280 --> 00:31:28,130  
I don't remember.

566  
00:31:28,130 --> 00:31:31,020  
24 hours for sure, because  
I remember traveling

567  
00:31:31,020 --> 00:31:33,210  
a whole day and a whole night.

568  
00:31:33,210 --> 00:31:35,400  
How did you know it  
was day or night?

569  
00:31:35,400 --> 00:31:37,550  
We could-- there  
were cracks, so you

570  
00:31:37,550 --> 00:31:40,606  
could look out and see  
whether it was day or night.

571



00:31:40,606 --> 00:31:44,105  
You now, you could see outside  
through the-- in the cars,

572  
00:31:44,105 --> 00:31:46,730  
because there was  
small openings,

573  
00:31:46,730 --> 00:31:50,230  
so you knew whether it  
was nighttime or daytime.

574  
00:31:50,230 --> 00:31:53,000  
Did you talk to other  
people in the car?

575  
00:31:53,000 --> 00:31:57,080  
Not much, no.

576  
00:31:57,080 --> 00:32:00,590  
Talked with my sisters.

577  
00:32:00,590 --> 00:32:03,890  
Talked a little bit with a  
couple of fellows next to me

578  
00:32:03,890 --> 00:32:04,865  
that was strangers.

579  
00:32:04,865 --> 00:32:08,660  
Met for the first time.

580  
00:32:08,660 --> 00:32:12,050  
We were all very  
scared, and it was

581  
00:32:12,050 --> 00:32:14,900  
more of a matter of silence.

582  
00:32:14,900 --> 00:32:18,050  
We were all silent.

583

00:32:18,050 --> 00:32:20,480  
Some other people talked.

584  
00:32:20,480 --> 00:32:21,425  
Some people cried.

585  
00:32:21,425 --> 00:32:24,680

586  
00:32:24,680 --> 00:32:26,000  
Some people almost wailed.

587  
00:32:26,000 --> 00:32:30,580

588  
00:32:30,580 --> 00:32:31,410  
I did neither.

589  
00:32:31,410 --> 00:32:34,030

590  
00:32:34,030 --> 00:32:34,980  
And I was numb.

591  
00:32:34,980 --> 00:32:40,120

592  
00:32:40,120 --> 00:32:43,020  
The emotions didn't  
take over yet for me.

593  
00:32:43,020 --> 00:32:50,030

594  
00:32:50,030 --> 00:32:55,490  
And finally, when we  
got where we were going

595  
00:32:55,490 --> 00:33:01,765  
and it was early morning,  
the train stopped.

596

00:33:01,765 --> 00:33:05,360

597

00:33:05,360 --> 00:33:07,100

They flung the doors open.

598

00:33:07,100 --> 00:33:10,250

599

00:33:10,250 --> 00:33:15,050

We saw soldiers with dogs.

600

00:33:15,050 --> 00:33:18,995

And we saw, for the  
first time I saw

601

00:33:18,995 --> 00:33:21,890

at that time Didn't  
know they were prisoners

602

00:33:21,890 --> 00:33:25,850

with striped suits,  
the kind of suit

603

00:33:25,850 --> 00:33:27,590

that I would be  
wearing for a year.

604

00:33:27,590 --> 00:33:30,430

605

00:33:30,430 --> 00:33:33,140

And they told us to  
get out very quickly.

606

00:33:33,140 --> 00:33:36,140

Get out from the cars.

607

00:33:36,140 --> 00:33:39,730

We got out onto a ramp.

608

00:33:39,730 --> 00:33:44,050

The first thing they did  
is separated men and women.

609

00:33:44,050 --> 00:33:46,240

Women had to go one  
direction and men

610

00:33:46,240 --> 00:33:49,340

had to go the other direction.

611

00:33:49,340 --> 00:33:53,920

This is for the  
first time in my life

612

00:33:53,920 --> 00:33:56,940

that I found myself  
completely alone.

613

00:33:56,940 --> 00:33:59,990

614

00:33:59,990 --> 00:34:06,030

And I got scared that I  
was-- my two sisters were--

615

00:34:06,030 --> 00:34:06,910

we separated.

616

00:34:06,910 --> 00:34:09,100

I didn't know where they went.

617

00:34:09,100 --> 00:34:11,710

They did not know where I went.

618

00:34:11,710 --> 00:34:13,850

Were you able to say  
anything to say goodbye?

619

00:34:13,850 --> 00:34:18,699

All we said is goodbye,  
waving, some crying then,

620

00:34:18,699 --> 00:34:20,620

because they were  
pushed to go one way

621

00:34:20,620 --> 00:34:23,440

and we were pushed  
to go the other way.

622

00:34:23,440 --> 00:34:24,860

Not too far apart, but apart.

623

00:34:24,860 --> 00:34:29,650

624

00:34:29,650 --> 00:34:31,989

And I said, my god,  
what is happening?

625

00:34:31,989 --> 00:34:33,040

I am alone.

626

00:34:33,040 --> 00:34:43,550

And that's-- I remember that  
I think that's the first time

627

00:34:43,550 --> 00:34:52,130

that I had really started to cry  
since my mother was taken away.

628

00:34:52,130 --> 00:34:55,460

I knew I was alone.

629

00:34:55,460 --> 00:34:58,640

And it is not the  
feeling of being

630

00:34:58,640 --> 00:35:04,360

alone that necessarily scared--

631

00:35:04,360 --> 00:35:11,120

what is so scary is that I  
realized that no one, no one

632  
00:35:11,120 --> 00:35:14,650  
cares what will happen to me.

633  
00:35:14,650 --> 00:35:16,080  
No one.

634  
00:35:16,080 --> 00:35:23,060  
I instinctively knew it, and  
everybody was by themselves.

635  
00:35:23,060 --> 00:35:25,257  
Everybody had to survive.

636  
00:35:25,257 --> 00:35:26,840  
And if something  
were to happen to me,

637  
00:35:26,840 --> 00:35:30,720  
it just wouldn't  
even be noticed.

638  
00:35:30,720 --> 00:35:33,500  
Wouldn't even be noticed.

639  
00:35:33,500 --> 00:35:35,520  
And that was quite scary.

640  
00:35:35,520 --> 00:35:38,420

641  
00:35:38,420 --> 00:35:41,048  
We had to line up  
for a selection.

642  
00:35:41,048 --> 00:35:44,324

643  
00:35:44,324 --> 00:35:50,870  
And I was then 14 years old.

644

00:35:50,870 --> 00:35:58,610  
And I remember-- and just  
to give you an incident.

645  
00:35:58,610 --> 00:36:01,340  
When we were getting  
off the cars,

646  
00:36:01,340 --> 00:36:03,470  
there were some  
people that had money.

647  
00:36:03,470 --> 00:36:04,760  
Maybe gold watches.

648  
00:36:04,760 --> 00:36:08,690  
And so when we got off  
the cars, the people that

649  
00:36:08,690 --> 00:36:10,910  
had some money, gold  
or so on, were maybe

650  
00:36:10,910 --> 00:36:15,470  
trying to bribe the  
guards or something.

651  
00:36:15,470 --> 00:36:17,060  
They took it and  
they threw it away.

652  
00:36:17,060 --> 00:36:17,965  
It meant nothing.

653  
00:36:17,965 --> 00:36:21,810

654  
00:36:21,810 --> 00:36:22,650  
It meant nothing.

655  
00:36:22,650 --> 00:36:25,670

656

00:36:25,670 --> 00:36:28,310

I remember someone was saying--

657

00:36:28,310 --> 00:36:32,900

they looked at me and they said,  
if you're asked how old you

658

00:36:32,900 --> 00:36:34,895

are, tell him that you're 16.

659

00:36:34,895 --> 00:36:37,910

660

00:36:37,910 --> 00:36:42,030

Maybe I was a little  
bigger than a 14-year-old,

661

00:36:42,030 --> 00:36:44,730

and I could get away with it.

662

00:36:44,730 --> 00:36:49,940

I didn't know why, but I  
heard somebody say, 16.

663

00:36:49,940 --> 00:36:53,600

So when selection took  
place, when I got--

664

00:36:53,600 --> 00:36:55,340

I was asked how old I was.

665

00:36:55,340 --> 00:36:56,205

I said I was 16.

666

00:36:56,205 --> 00:36:57,800

He looked at me and says, OK.

667

00:36:57,800 --> 00:36:58,400

Go this way.

668

00:36:58,400 --> 00:37:01,180



669

00:37:01,180 --> 00:37:02,500

Some people went the other way.

670

00:37:02,500 --> 00:37:05,720

671

00:37:05,720 --> 00:37:07,310

Those that went the  
other way, we all

672

00:37:07,310 --> 00:37:08,435

know what happened to them.

673

00:37:08,435 --> 00:37:11,280

674

00:37:11,280 --> 00:37:17,533

The car that my father was in,  
being sick with other sick,

675

00:37:17,533 --> 00:37:19,950

we all know what happened to  
them as soon as they arrived.

676

00:37:19,950 --> 00:37:25,550

677

00:37:25,550 --> 00:37:32,830

The old, the sick, and the  
young never had a chance.

678

00:37:32,830 --> 00:37:36,250

679

00:37:36,250 --> 00:37:37,300

So--

680

00:37:37,300 --> 00:37:38,980

Did you see your father at all?

681

00:37:38,980 --> 00:37:41,590

No.

682

00:37:41,590 --> 00:37:46,090

When I arrived, when we arrived,  
I did not see my father,

683

00:37:46,090 --> 00:37:50,440

even though after the  
war someone told me,

684

00:37:50,440 --> 00:37:55,240

a distant cousin, that  
day did see my father.

685

00:37:55,240 --> 00:37:56,230

Maybe for an hour.

686

00:37:56,230 --> 00:37:59,140

Just a glance, you know?

687

00:37:59,140 --> 00:38:04,120

They saw him being unloaded,  
and that was the end.

688

00:38:04,120 --> 00:38:10,190

It was the end for him and  
for many thousands of fathers.

689

00:38:10,190 --> 00:38:12,220

Did you see your sisters  
going through the line?

690

00:38:12,220 --> 00:38:17,110

No, because the women  
went in another direction,

691

00:38:17,110 --> 00:38:18,880

and it was a completely--

692

00:38:18,880 --> 00:38:19,900

we didn't see the women.

693

00:38:19,900 --> 00:38:21,700

Pretty soon they put them away.

694

00:38:21,700 --> 00:38:25,540

Not that they went that far  
from us, but far enough so

695

00:38:25,540 --> 00:38:26,950

that we didn't see them.

696

00:38:26,950 --> 00:38:30,430

Because in Auschwitz--  
by the way,

697

00:38:30,430 --> 00:38:32,650

we had arrived at Auschwitz.

698

00:38:32,650 --> 00:38:35,350

How did you know that?

699

00:38:35,350 --> 00:38:39,570

Because suddenly everybody  
said, you're now in Auschwitz.

700

00:38:39,570 --> 00:38:40,850

Did you know what that meant?

701

00:38:40,850 --> 00:38:41,350

No.

702

00:38:41,350 --> 00:38:43,930

703

00:38:43,930 --> 00:38:46,510

At that time, I did  
not know what it meant.

704

00:38:46,510 --> 00:38:50,860

But it didn't take us too long  
to find out what it meant.

705

00:38:50,860 --> 00:38:54,240

The crematoria were going  
day and night at that time,

706

00:38:54,240 --> 00:38:59,890

because in-- that was  
in the summer of 1944.

707

00:38:59,890 --> 00:39:04,600

Jews from all over Europe  
were coming to Auschwitz.

708

00:39:04,600 --> 00:39:09,520

Not just Polish Jews,  
but Hungarian Jews,

709

00:39:09,520 --> 00:39:14,560

Romanian Jews from all  
over Eastern countries.

710

00:39:14,560 --> 00:39:15,490

Bulgaria.

711

00:39:15,490 --> 00:39:21,100

Jews from all over were  
coming to Auschwitz.

712

00:39:21,100 --> 00:39:25,390

I believe that one of  
the more famous Jews that

713

00:39:25,390 --> 00:39:27,190

arrived at that  
time at Auschwitz

714

00:39:27,190 --> 00:39:32,190

was Elie Wiesel I think  
at that time here.

715

00:39:32,190 --> 00:39:34,330

I didn't know him then  
or I didn't see him,

716

00:39:34,330 --> 00:39:37,570

but I believe reading enough  
about him that that's where--

717

00:39:37,570 --> 00:39:38,610

so Auschwitz.

718

00:39:38,610 --> 00:39:40,180

The people were  
coming from all over,

719

00:39:40,180 --> 00:39:45,820

not just from Poland, but  
mostly Polish Jews because there

720

00:39:45,820 --> 00:39:48,320

were more Polish  
Jews than any other.

721

00:39:48,320 --> 00:39:51,670

There were three million  
Polish Jews in Poland.

722

00:39:51,670 --> 00:39:54,170

That's a large number of Jews.

723

00:39:54,170 --> 00:39:59,410

724

00:39:59,410 --> 00:40:03,347

And the trains were  
arriving continuously.

725

00:40:03,347 --> 00:40:04,930

So what do you do  
with all the people?

726

00:40:04,930 --> 00:40:11,410

So the gas chambers  
were going all the time.

727

00:40:11,410 --> 00:40:14,240

After a few days--

728  
00:40:14,240 --> 00:40:17,680  
OK, I was-- the  
selection took place.

729  
00:40:17,680 --> 00:40:19,990  
I was told to go one way.

730  
00:40:19,990 --> 00:40:25,480  
And we were marched  
off to a barracks

731  
00:40:25,480 --> 00:40:27,970  
in a place called Birkenau.

732  
00:40:27,970 --> 00:40:29,710  
I don't know.

733  
00:40:29,710 --> 00:40:33,280  
Auschwitz is a large  
complex, and it

734  
00:40:33,280 --> 00:40:39,430  
consisted of two complexes.

735  
00:40:39,430 --> 00:40:41,170  
One was Birkenau.

736  
00:40:41,170 --> 00:40:45,070  
The other one was the  
main camp in Auschwitz.

737  
00:40:45,070 --> 00:40:48,310  
They were both really Auschwitz.

738  
00:40:48,310 --> 00:40:51,460  
Birkenau had all the crematorium  
and all the ovens going.

739  
00:40:51,460 --> 00:40:55,540

740  
00:40:55,540 --> 00:40:57,920  
I arrived in Birkenau--

741  
00:40:57,920 --> 00:41:01,670  
When you saw the smoke,  
did you know what that was?

742  
00:41:01,670 --> 00:41:03,440  
Not right away.

743  
00:41:03,440 --> 00:41:04,880  
Not right away.

744  
00:41:04,880 --> 00:41:06,740  
Took a few days.

745  
00:41:06,740 --> 00:41:10,910  
The smell and so on and  
being 14, again, I said,

746  
00:41:10,910 --> 00:41:13,860  
what is that?

747  
00:41:13,860 --> 00:41:15,890  
That's when you grow  
up fast, by the way.

748  
00:41:15,890 --> 00:41:18,640

749  
00:41:18,640 --> 00:41:22,130  
And so we were there.

750  
00:41:22,130 --> 00:41:25,190

751  
00:41:25,190 --> 00:41:26,990  
We went to Birkenau.

752  
00:41:26,990 --> 00:41:31,850

Thousands of us went  
to the barracks.

753  
00:41:31,850 --> 00:41:33,900  
In other words, we avoided.

754  
00:41:33,900 --> 00:41:35,780  
We survived the first selection.

755  
00:41:35,780 --> 00:41:41,820

756  
00:41:41,820 --> 00:41:46,140  
Now my sisters were  
in Birkenau too.

757  
00:41:46,140 --> 00:41:48,690  
I am saying it now,  
but at that time,

758  
00:41:48,690 --> 00:41:50,730  
I had no idea where  
they were and they

759  
00:41:50,730 --> 00:41:52,260  
had no idea where I was.

760  
00:41:52,260 --> 00:41:57,590

761  
00:41:57,590 --> 00:42:05,800  
I was in that barracks  
for about three weeks.

762  
00:42:05,800 --> 00:42:08,130  
What did they do immediately  
when you got there?

763  
00:42:08,130 --> 00:42:10,363  
Did they-- you were  
dressed in your clothes

764



00:42:10,363 --> 00:42:11,530  
and you got to the barracks.

765  
00:42:11,530 --> 00:42:14,640

766  
00:42:14,640 --> 00:42:21,010  
They took us into a place where  
we got rid of all our clothes.

767  
00:42:21,010 --> 00:42:23,400  
We went through showers naked.

768  
00:42:23,400 --> 00:42:28,530  
But it was summer, so  
it wasn't that bad.

769  
00:42:28,530 --> 00:42:32,880  
For us it wasn't, but they  
did the same thing to women.

770  
00:42:32,880 --> 00:42:39,360  
And we went through showers,  
we went through a disinfection,

771  
00:42:39,360 --> 00:42:40,500  
and we got other clothes.

772  
00:42:40,500 --> 00:42:44,270

773  
00:42:44,270 --> 00:42:46,550  
Clothes that didn't  
fit anything.

774  
00:42:46,550 --> 00:42:49,910  
It wasn't yet-- I  
didn't get my stripes.

775  
00:42:49,910 --> 00:42:50,970  
Not at that time yet.

776

00:42:50,970 --> 00:42:56,590

777

00:42:56,590 --> 00:43:00,310

And after that, after  
that process that I just

778

00:43:00,310 --> 00:43:03,190

described with going  
through a shower,

779

00:43:03,190 --> 00:43:07,660

being washed, taking out  
our clothes that we had on

780

00:43:07,660 --> 00:43:10,930

and giving us new  
pants and shoes and--

781

00:43:10,930 --> 00:43:14,620

nothing fit, but just--

782

00:43:14,620 --> 00:43:15,850

Was your hair shorn?

783

00:43:15,850 --> 00:43:17,235

Yes.

784

00:43:17,235 --> 00:43:18,360

What was that like for you?

785

00:43:18,360 --> 00:43:22,810

786

00:43:22,810 --> 00:43:25,390

I didn't mind it.

787

00:43:25,390 --> 00:43:29,470

Being 14, that wasn't  
very important to me.

788

00:43:29,470 --> 00:43:36,650

Now I know to my sisters that  
was a shocking kind of thing.

789  
00:43:36,650 --> 00:43:39,740

790  
00:43:39,740 --> 00:43:43,100  
I know that there were  
mothers and daughters that

791  
00:43:43,100 --> 00:43:50,300  
didn't recognize each other  
after they lost their hair.

792  
00:43:50,300 --> 00:43:54,800  
My hair was shaved, and  
everybody else's was shaved,

793  
00:43:54,800 --> 00:43:56,300  
and we went on.

794  
00:43:56,300 --> 00:44:00,890

795  
00:44:00,890 --> 00:44:04,870  
So yes, the question was  
we had all our hair shaved.

796  
00:44:04,870 --> 00:44:08,410  
That was even before we  
went through showers,

797  
00:44:08,410 --> 00:44:11,070  
before we got clean.

798  
00:44:11,070 --> 00:44:12,070  
Did you get a tattoo?

799  
00:44:12,070 --> 00:44:14,620

800  
00:44:14,620 --> 00:44:15,990

Yes, but not yet.

801

00:44:15,990 --> 00:44:19,850

802

00:44:19,850 --> 00:44:29,270

So we were in Birkenau in those barracks for about three weeks

803

00:44:29,270 --> 00:44:30,650

in my case.

804

00:44:30,650 --> 00:44:32,120

Some people were there longer.

805

00:44:32,120 --> 00:44:34,595

My sisters were there for several months.

806

00:44:34,595 --> 00:44:37,160

807

00:44:37,160 --> 00:44:44,710

And during the day, we were just doing nothing.

808

00:44:44,710 --> 00:44:45,880

Hanging around.

809

00:44:45,880 --> 00:44:47,530

Every morning, we had an appell.

810

00:44:47,530 --> 00:44:48,370

I don't know.

811

00:44:48,370 --> 00:44:53,270

They counted us and they made sure that we are all there.

812

00:44:53,270 --> 00:44:56,138

How long did the appells take?

813

00:44:56,138 --> 00:44:57,580

Oh, sometimes they took--

814

00:44:57,580 --> 00:45:00,220

they took quite a long time.

815

00:45:00,220 --> 00:45:02,920

Just-- we were standing there.

816

00:45:02,920 --> 00:45:04,750

Sometimes it was quick.

817

00:45:04,750 --> 00:45:07,340

818

00:45:07,340 --> 00:45:09,560

We would get-- we would  
get a bowl of soup.

819

00:45:09,560 --> 00:45:14,310

We would get a bowl of  
soup and a piece of bread.

820

00:45:14,310 --> 00:45:16,870

821

00:45:16,870 --> 00:45:18,870

And I don't know whether  
it was in the morning--

822

00:45:18,870 --> 00:45:20,570

I think it was later  
on during the day.

823

00:45:20,570 --> 00:45:26,060

824

00:45:26,060 --> 00:45:26,860

And we were there.

825

00:45:26,860 --> 00:45:29,700

826

00:45:29,700 --> 00:45:35,000

And one day, it was decided  
that they wanted some young men.

827

00:45:35,000 --> 00:45:39,060

They wanted-- the Germans  
needed a group of young men.

828

00:45:39,060 --> 00:45:41,440

We didn't know for what.

829

00:45:41,440 --> 00:45:46,570

So they had many selections  
in many barracks,

830

00:45:46,570 --> 00:45:49,570

and I was lined up  
for that selection

831

00:45:49,570 --> 00:45:52,420

with hundreds of others.

832

00:45:52,420 --> 00:45:57,220

And they told us  
again, you go here.

833

00:45:57,220 --> 00:46:00,580

Somebody else go over there.

834

00:46:00,580 --> 00:46:05,530

They selected from the various  
barracks about 250 of us.

835

00:46:05,530 --> 00:46:09,080

836

00:46:09,080 --> 00:46:13,570

They marched us to  
another barracks

837

00:46:13,570 --> 00:46:15,250  
and we all got tattooed then.

838  
00:46:15,250 --> 00:46:19,890

839  
00:46:19,890 --> 00:46:23,550  
And from there, after  
we got our tattoo,

840  
00:46:23,550 --> 00:46:30,580  
they marched us to Auschwitz,  
to the main camp in Auschwitz.

841  
00:46:30,580 --> 00:46:33,850  
How did you feel  
getting a tattoo?

842  
00:46:33,850 --> 00:46:35,740  
Strange.

843  
00:46:35,740 --> 00:46:37,180  
You know?

844  
00:46:37,180 --> 00:46:39,370  
The tattoo was given not--

845  
00:46:39,370 --> 00:46:41,175  
I don't think the  
way it is done today.

846  
00:46:41,175 --> 00:46:42,550  
I don't know how  
it's done today,

847  
00:46:42,550 --> 00:46:46,330  
but they have machines--  
it was like this.

848  
00:46:46,330 --> 00:46:51,310  
Everybody was saying, telling us  
that it's a good thing that we

849

00:46:51,310 --> 00:46:52,960

are getting the  
tattoo, because that

850

00:46:52,960 --> 00:46:58,030

means that they have targeted us  
for work rather than for death.

851

00:46:58,030 --> 00:47:01,960

852

00:47:01,960 --> 00:47:05,020

What is your tattoo number?

853

00:47:05,020 --> 00:47:15,000

B8093.

854

00:47:15,000 --> 00:47:20,010

And when we got to the  
main camp in Auschwitz--

855

00:47:20,010 --> 00:47:22,440

that's the main camp where  
it says arbeit macht frei.

856

00:47:22,440 --> 00:47:26,210

857

00:47:26,210 --> 00:47:27,770

We got into the barracks there.

858

00:47:27,770 --> 00:47:30,710

The barracks in the  
main camp in Auschwitz

859

00:47:30,710 --> 00:47:32,870

were nicer than the  
ones in Birkenau.

860

00:47:32,870 --> 00:47:37,220



861

00:47:37,220 --> 00:47:38,195

Birkenau was horrible.

862

00:47:38,195 --> 00:47:41,420

863

00:47:41,420 --> 00:47:45,800

That, by the way, just to go  
back a little bit to Birkenau,

864

00:47:45,800 --> 00:47:49,130

that is the first time  
that we have learned

865

00:47:49,130 --> 00:47:51,410

what the word kapo means.

866

00:47:51,410 --> 00:47:54,130

You know?

867

00:47:54,130 --> 00:47:56,165

And there were Jewish kapos.

868

00:47:56,165 --> 00:47:59,830

869

00:47:59,830 --> 00:48:05,060

Some of them were  
very bad people.

870

00:48:05,060 --> 00:48:06,140

They would beat us up.

871

00:48:06,140 --> 00:48:09,410

They would push us around.

872

00:48:09,410 --> 00:48:14,170

They would-- they  
were mean and cruel.

873

00:48:14,170 --> 00:48:16,800

874  
00:48:16,800 --> 00:48:19,265  
And very often, perhaps  
that's how they survived.

875  
00:48:19,265 --> 00:48:22,960

876  
00:48:22,960 --> 00:48:24,310  
But--

877  
00:48:24,310 --> 00:48:25,280  
Did you get beaten up?

878  
00:48:25,280 --> 00:48:27,910

879  
00:48:27,910 --> 00:48:30,790  
At that time, not too bad.

880  
00:48:30,790 --> 00:48:31,690  
I was pushed.

881  
00:48:31,690 --> 00:48:35,620  
Pushed around a little bit, but  
that wasn't really beaten up.

882  
00:48:35,620 --> 00:48:42,760  
I mean, the beating is somebody  
that takes with a rifle butt

883  
00:48:42,760 --> 00:48:44,290  
and gets beaten up.

884  
00:48:44,290 --> 00:48:48,430  
Just being pushed and  
knocked over and so on,

885  
00:48:48,430 --> 00:48:51,970  
that was such a minor thing  
that we never even thought of it

886  
00:48:51,970 --> 00:48:53,080  
as being beaten up.

887  
00:48:53,080 --> 00:48:54,460  
Today, it would be a big deal.

888  
00:48:54,460 --> 00:48:56,560  
At that time, it wasn't.

889  
00:48:56,560 --> 00:49:01,330  
What was it like for you  
as 14 years old to see

890  
00:49:01,330 --> 00:49:04,870  
the beatings, the bodies?

891  
00:49:04,870 --> 00:49:06,015  
Frightening.

892  
00:49:06,015 --> 00:49:11,360

893  
00:49:11,360 --> 00:49:15,240  
You were just  
trying to make sure

894  
00:49:15,240 --> 00:49:16,740  
that it doesn't happen to you.

895  
00:49:16,740 --> 00:49:19,720

896  
00:49:19,720 --> 00:49:23,800  
You were trying to  
avoid the situations

897  
00:49:23,800 --> 00:49:25,750  
by which this may happen.

898  
00:49:25,750 --> 00:49:28,210

By the way, when we were in  
the barracks in Birkenau,

899  
00:49:28,210 --> 00:49:30,160  
we were really tight.

900  
00:49:30,160 --> 00:49:33,750  
At night when we would lie down,  
we were just like sardines,

901  
00:49:33,750 --> 00:49:36,950  
lying one next to one another.

902  
00:49:36,950 --> 00:49:38,410  
There were hundreds of us.

903  
00:49:38,410 --> 00:49:40,950

904  
00:49:40,950 --> 00:49:44,300  
Did the older-- did the older  
men help the younger men?

905  
00:49:44,300 --> 00:49:48,940  
Did anybody take  
you under his wing?

906  
00:49:48,940 --> 00:49:50,830  
There may have been  
some, but I did not

907  
00:49:50,830 --> 00:49:52,700  
experience it personally.

908  
00:49:52,700 --> 00:49:57,880

909  
00:49:57,880 --> 00:50:00,790  
The older men had to  
take care of themselves.

910  
00:50:00,790 --> 00:50:04,750

911  
00:50:04,750 --> 00:50:06,700  
I remember for the  
first time that we

912  
00:50:06,700 --> 00:50:13,680  
had the experience of being  
marched to an outhouse.

913  
00:50:13,680 --> 00:50:18,340  
You know, we had one  
common long, one barracks.

914  
00:50:18,340 --> 00:50:20,920  
It was the whole  
barracks was the outhouse

915  
00:50:20,920 --> 00:50:23,340  
with a lot of seats, you know?

916  
00:50:23,340 --> 00:50:25,330  
All open.

917  
00:50:25,330 --> 00:50:28,570  
And you had to go when  
they told you to go.

918  
00:50:28,570 --> 00:50:30,810  
Not when you wanted.

919  
00:50:30,810 --> 00:50:32,650  
And at a certain point  
in time, that's it.

920  
00:50:32,650 --> 00:50:34,570  
If you didn't go then,  
that was bad luck.

921  
00:50:34,570 --> 00:50:38,290

922

00:50:38,290 --> 00:50:44,620

That was a-- that was  
not a frightening,

923

00:50:44,620 --> 00:50:46,510

but a horrible  
experience for me,

924

00:50:46,510 --> 00:50:51,630

seeing that for the first  
time and being told,

925

00:50:51,630 --> 00:50:52,480

that's when you go.

926

00:50:52,480 --> 00:50:53,730

Not-- you know.

927

00:50:53,730 --> 00:50:58,050

928

00:50:58,050 --> 00:51:00,780

And there were several of  
these barracks in Birkenau.

929

00:51:00,780 --> 00:51:04,890

By the way, they exist  
today as a museum.

930

00:51:04,890 --> 00:51:07,800

I mean, my wife and my  
two sons have seen them

931

00:51:07,800 --> 00:51:09,425

when we were there.

932

00:51:09,425 --> 00:51:10,050

They are there.

933

00:51:10,050 --> 00:51:11,730

It's all there  
for people to see.

934

00:51:11,730 --> 00:51:15,430

935

00:51:15,430 --> 00:51:17,640

So when we-- when  
we were marched,

936

00:51:17,640 --> 00:51:22,050

when I went to the  
main camp in Auschwitz,

937

00:51:22,050 --> 00:51:28,260

they had quite a few  
of us, all young guys.

938

00:51:28,260 --> 00:51:29,452

Teenagers.

939

00:51:29,452 --> 00:51:30,910

I was probably one  
of the youngest,

940

00:51:30,910 --> 00:51:36,240

but you know, almost  
getting 15, 16, 17.

941

00:51:36,240 --> 00:51:45,270

And they had us working outside  
the camp, any hard work that

942

00:51:45,270 --> 00:51:50,520

needed to be done,  
whether it is sweeping,

943

00:51:50,520 --> 00:51:51,810

cleaning out barracks.

944

00:51:51,810 --> 00:51:54,150

There were some  
military barracks not

945

00:51:54,150 --> 00:52:00,010

too far from Auschwitz  
for the German soldiers.

946  
00:52:00,010 --> 00:52:02,630  
And a lot of days, we  
didn't do anything.

947  
00:52:02,630 --> 00:52:06,100

948  
00:52:06,100 --> 00:52:08,730  
We just-- they were counting us.

949  
00:52:08,730 --> 00:52:10,650  
They had appells two  
or three times a day,

950  
00:52:10,650 --> 00:52:11,910  
whenever they felt like it.

951  
00:52:11,910 --> 00:52:14,760

952  
00:52:14,760 --> 00:52:16,020  
And they would count us.

953  
00:52:16,020 --> 00:52:23,470

954  
00:52:23,470 --> 00:52:33,130  
Again, the worst thing that I  
felt when I was in Auschwitz

955  
00:52:33,130 --> 00:52:37,570  
is the uncertainty of  
life from day to day.

956  
00:52:37,570 --> 00:52:43,900  
Fear of you never knew what the  
next day was going to bring.

957  
00:52:43,900 --> 00:52:46,570



You never knew  
whether you were going

958  
00:52:46,570 --> 00:52:49,930  
to be the one the  
next day that is

959  
00:52:49,930 --> 00:52:52,210  
going to go through  
some selection,

960  
00:52:52,210 --> 00:52:55,420  
never to be seen again.

961  
00:52:55,420 --> 00:52:59,090  
And we all experienced that.

962  
00:52:59,090 --> 00:53:04,230

963  
00:53:04,230 --> 00:53:11,100  
And I have lived that  
life for about 10 months.

964  
00:53:11,100 --> 00:53:16,220  
However, during that  
time, I got sick.

965  
00:53:16,220 --> 00:53:19,470

966  
00:53:19,470 --> 00:53:23,850  
And every morning, early  
morning when we had our appell

967  
00:53:23,850 --> 00:53:27,980  
and they counted us, they would  
yell out, is anybody sick?

968  
00:53:27,980 --> 00:53:30,920  
Does anybody feel sick?

969

00:53:30,920 --> 00:53:33,530

Well, none of us  
that felt sick was

970

00:53:33,530 --> 00:53:36,290

going to admit to it,  
because we were afraid.

971

00:53:36,290 --> 00:53:37,520

What are they going to do?

972

00:53:37,520 --> 00:53:39,020

What are they going  
to do to me when

973

00:53:39,020 --> 00:53:40,640

I tell them that I am sick?

974

00:53:40,640 --> 00:53:42,430

I knew he wasn't going  
to love me for it.

975

00:53:42,430 --> 00:53:45,920

He's not going to  
take care of me.

976

00:53:45,920 --> 00:53:49,920

But I got to the point  
where I got very sick.

977

00:53:49,920 --> 00:53:52,460

I got temperature.

978

00:53:52,460 --> 00:53:55,400

I felt that something was  
going to happen to me anyway.

979

00:53:55,400 --> 00:54:00,950

So one morning, I told  
him, yes, I'm sick.

980

00:54:00,950 --> 00:54:04,920

981  
00:54:04,920 --> 00:54:08,980  
And with a few others,  
they marched up--

982  
00:54:08,980 --> 00:54:10,930  
marched us off.

983  
00:54:10,930 --> 00:54:13,840  
There were a couple of  
barracks within the main camp

984  
00:54:13,840 --> 00:54:15,550  
Auschwitz that was a hospital.

985  
00:54:15,550 --> 00:54:18,730

986  
00:54:18,730 --> 00:54:29,150  
So I go to that hospital, and  
I was marched into an office

987  
00:54:29,150 --> 00:54:33,440  
that there was a  
doctor, a prison doctor.

988  
00:54:33,440 --> 00:54:34,190  
He was not Jewish.

989  
00:54:34,190 --> 00:54:37,160

990  
00:54:37,160 --> 00:54:42,310  
Auschwitz also had  
political prisoners.

991  
00:54:42,310 --> 00:54:44,710  
So although most  
were Jews, but there

992  
00:54:44,710 --> 00:54:48,700  
were some that were

non-Jews, political prisoners

993

00:54:48,700 --> 00:54:52,450

that the Germans  
sent to Auschwitz.

994

00:54:52,450 --> 00:54:58,990

And it was a young doctor,  
and he took care of me.

995

00:54:58,990 --> 00:54:59,980

I got on--

996

00:54:59,980 --> 00:55:01,285

I got assigned a bunk.

997

00:55:01,285 --> 00:55:04,000

998

00:55:04,000 --> 00:55:06,910

He looked at me.

999

00:55:06,910 --> 00:55:07,840

He gave me something.

1000

00:55:07,840 --> 00:55:08,382

I don't know.

1001

00:55:08,382 --> 00:55:10,960

Some pill or something.

1002

00:55:10,960 --> 00:55:16,000

I think I had some kind of pox,  
whether it was smallpox or--

1003

00:55:16,000 --> 00:55:18,130

because I had some  
blotches here,

1004

00:55:18,130 --> 00:55:21,500

but the high fever was  
really getting to me.

1005  
00:55:21,500 --> 00:55:31,350  
And within two or three days,  
it went away and I felt good.

1006  
00:55:31,350 --> 00:55:35,100  
But here I am in that hospital,  
and I want to get out.

1007  
00:55:35,100 --> 00:55:36,490  
I was afraid to  
be in a hospital.

1008  
00:55:36,490 --> 00:55:40,060

1009  
00:55:40,060 --> 00:55:47,470  
The doctor told me  
that I should not

1010  
00:55:47,470 --> 00:55:49,480  
be afraid to stay  
in the hospital

1011  
00:55:49,480 --> 00:55:55,360  
because he needs somebody,  
again, to sweep the floor,

1012  
00:55:55,360 --> 00:55:56,840  
to be an orderly.

1013  
00:55:56,840 --> 00:55:59,320  
You know, anything like that.

1014  
00:55:59,320 --> 00:56:01,610  
And he would--

1015  
00:56:01,610 --> 00:56:02,770  
I'll be OK, you know?

1016  
00:56:02,770 --> 00:56:04,210  
I won't have to go out anywhere.

1017  
00:56:04,210 --> 00:56:05,140  
No.

1018  
00:56:05,140 --> 00:56:08,383  
I'll be under his care.

1019  
00:56:08,383 --> 00:56:08,925  
And I stayed.

1020  
00:56:08,925 --> 00:56:11,890

1021  
00:56:11,890 --> 00:56:17,830  
And to some degree, it was  
a very lucky break for me.

1022  
00:56:17,830 --> 00:56:25,400  
Being in that hospital with  
that doctor who was not Jewish

1023  
00:56:25,400 --> 00:56:31,813  
helped me by wanting me to  
stay and making me work there.

1024  
00:56:31,813 --> 00:56:35,520

1025  
00:56:35,520 --> 00:56:40,540  
And I remember-- and  
all that happened

1026  
00:56:40,540 --> 00:56:43,960  
within maybe a 10-week,  
maybe eight-week period

1027  
00:56:43,960 --> 00:56:45,970  
that I am describing now.

1028  
00:56:45,970 --> 00:56:49,330  
I remember at one  
time, there was

1029  
00:56:49,330 --> 00:56:52,600  
a selection in the hospital.

1030  
00:56:52,600 --> 00:56:53,620  
We all had to line up.

1031  
00:56:53,620 --> 00:56:55,100  
Me too.

1032  
00:56:55,100 --> 00:57:04,620  
I mean-- and there was the  
SS officer, the SS man,

1033  
00:57:04,620 --> 00:57:09,070  
and that prisoner doctor  
right next to him.

1034  
00:57:09,070 --> 00:57:14,530  
When I came up, the  
doctor told the SS guy

1035  
00:57:14,530 --> 00:57:19,900  
that I am now healthy  
and that I am working

1036  
00:57:19,900 --> 00:57:24,160  
for him to help him out.

1037  
00:57:24,160 --> 00:57:29,200  
So here I am.

1038  
00:57:29,200 --> 00:57:31,660  
So there were incidents,  
small incidences

1039  
00:57:31,660 --> 00:57:35,530  
in a situation that had  
they turned one way,

1040  
00:57:35,530 --> 00:57:37,520  
you would go one way.

1041  
00:57:37,520 --> 00:57:43,428  
And because of somebody's  
word, somebody's kindness,

1042  
00:57:43,428 --> 00:57:44,470  
you were able to survive.

1043  
00:57:44,470 --> 00:57:48,170

1044  
00:57:48,170 --> 00:57:55,040  
Auschwitz was a horrible  
place, but if you

1045  
00:57:55,040 --> 00:57:58,470  
talk about the Auschwitz complex  
and you talk about Birkenau

1046  
00:57:58,470 --> 00:58:04,760  
and the main camp Auschwitz,  
Birkenau was the one that was--

1047  
00:58:04,760 --> 00:58:07,870  
when everybody talks about  
the atrocities in Auschwitz,

1048  
00:58:07,870 --> 00:58:11,540  
they really talk about  
that area of Auschwitz,

1049  
00:58:11,540 --> 00:58:14,180  
because that's where  
the crematoria were.

1050  
00:58:14,180 --> 00:58:18,290  
There was a small  
crematorium in Auschwitz,

1051  
00:58:18,290 --> 00:58:20,690  
in the main camp Auschwitz.

1052



00:58:20,690 --> 00:58:25,600

If they wanted to major  
selections that took part,

1053

00:58:25,600 --> 00:58:31,250

that took place, and there were  
many, many people that had to--

1054

00:58:31,250 --> 00:58:32,630

that they wanted  
to do away with,

1055

00:58:32,630 --> 00:58:34,730

they could only  
do it in Birkenau,

1056

00:58:34,730 --> 00:58:38,840

because that's where the mass  
operation, the mass gassing,

1057

00:58:38,840 --> 00:58:40,880

and the mass burning took place.

1058

00:58:40,880 --> 00:58:43,280

There was a small--

1059

00:58:43,280 --> 00:58:53,240

there was a small  
crematoria in Auschwitz.

1060

00:58:53,240 --> 00:58:58,080

1061

00:58:58,080 --> 00:59:00,780

I did not know while I  
was there what it was,

1062

00:59:00,780 --> 00:59:02,250

but I knew it was there.

1063

00:59:02,250 --> 00:59:04,530

Right outside the  
gate of Auschwitz.

1064  
00:59:04,530 --> 00:59:07,050

1065  
00:59:07,050 --> 00:59:08,790  
When they had a  
small selection, they

1066  
00:59:08,790 --> 00:59:11,370  
didn't have to send  
them to Birkenau then.

1067  
00:59:11,370 --> 00:59:14,130  
And they also had people  
that were dying every day.

1068  
00:59:14,130 --> 00:59:16,110  
You know, natural death.

1069  
00:59:16,110 --> 00:59:18,240  
Somebody died.

1070  
00:59:18,240 --> 00:59:19,495  
I mean, there were no burials.

1071  
00:59:19,495 --> 00:59:20,370  
They would burn them.

1072  
00:59:20,370 --> 00:59:22,500  
So that's what it was useful.

1073  
00:59:22,500 --> 00:59:26,190  
In '93 when we  
went to Auschwitz,

1074  
00:59:26,190 --> 00:59:29,130  
my two sons and my wife, and  
we were walking around all

1075  
00:59:29,130 --> 00:59:32,190  
the places where I  
was, the crematorium--

1076  
00:59:32,190 --> 00:59:35,880  
and we have pictures of my  
wife and my two sons standing

1077  
00:59:35,880 --> 00:59:36,800  
there--

1078  
00:59:36,800 --> 00:59:40,650  
was maybe, oh, a few hundred  
feet away from the barracks

1079  
00:59:40,650 --> 00:59:41,730  
that I stayed in.

1080  
00:59:41,730 --> 00:59:43,590  
And at that time,  
I didn't realize

1081  
00:59:43,590 --> 00:59:48,000  
that that was a crematorium.

1082  
00:59:48,000 --> 00:59:50,850  
So you were-- you  
were so close to it,

1083  
00:59:50,850 --> 00:59:55,230  
and sometimes you don't know  
what's going on because it

1084  
00:59:55,230 --> 00:59:56,910  
was a small operation.

1085  
00:59:56,910 --> 00:59:59,580  
And therefore, the fumes  
and everything else

1086  
00:59:59,580 --> 01:00:03,270  
didn't billow to a point where  
you could smell it every day.

1087  
01:00:03,270 --> 01:00:09,360

But you got-- by the way, you  
get used to that smell too.

1088  
01:00:09,360 --> 01:00:14,640  
Pretty soon, you get numb to  
all these different senses

1089  
01:00:14,640 --> 01:00:17,190  
that you as a human  
being possess.

1090  
01:00:17,190 --> 01:00:18,902  
The sense of smell and-- yeah.

1091  
01:00:18,902 --> 01:00:19,726  
It's there.

1092  
01:00:19,726 --> 01:00:26,600

1093  
01:00:26,600 --> 01:00:30,500  
Did you form any close  
friendships with any other men?

1094  
01:00:30,500 --> 01:00:32,270  
Yes, I did.

1095  
01:00:32,270 --> 01:00:41,350  
I became-- I became very close  
with a young man in Auschwitz.

1096  
01:00:41,350 --> 01:00:43,270  
We became buddies.

1097  
01:00:43,270 --> 01:00:43,990  
And it was good.

1098  
01:00:43,990 --> 01:00:46,720  
You needed friends.

1099  
01:00:46,720 --> 01:00:52,630  
And after Auschwitz

was liquidated, which

1100  
01:00:52,630 --> 01:00:56,620  
is another story, we never met.

1101  
01:00:56,620 --> 01:00:58,570  
We never met again.

1102  
01:00:58,570 --> 01:01:00,310  
I don't know what  
happened to him.

1103  
01:01:00,310 --> 01:01:02,350  
How did you become  
friendly with him?

1104  
01:01:02,350 --> 01:01:03,980  
In the barracks.

1105  
01:01:03,980 --> 01:01:05,590  
You know, we were--

1106  
01:01:05,590 --> 01:01:08,320  
when we first got to  
Auschwitz, there's a lot of us,

1107  
01:01:08,320 --> 01:01:11,290  
you know, together  
day in and day out.

1108  
01:01:11,290 --> 01:01:12,760  
And you begin talking.

1109  
01:01:12,760 --> 01:01:16,180  
And you talk to other  
people, to other young men

1110  
01:01:16,180 --> 01:01:18,280  
that we were all together.

1111  
01:01:18,280 --> 01:01:22,060  
And one of them, you

know, we became friendly.

1112

01:01:22,060 --> 01:01:26,050

And the more we talked about his  
background, about his family,

1113

01:01:26,050 --> 01:01:30,820

I talked about mine, and pretty  
soon we became very friendly.

1114

01:01:30,820 --> 01:01:34,630

Were you primarily, before  
you became the orderly,

1115

01:01:34,630 --> 01:01:37,930

with a group of young  
teenagers like you?

1116

01:01:37,930 --> 01:01:39,280

Yes.

1117

01:01:39,280 --> 01:01:40,300

Yes, I was.

1118

01:01:40,300 --> 01:01:44,380

The selection was when they--

1119

01:01:44,380 --> 01:01:49,630

when they had-- when they  
sent us to Auschwitz,

1120

01:01:49,630 --> 01:01:55,450

the group we were called--

1121

01:01:55,450 --> 01:01:58,750

in German, it was called  
the mauerer schuler.

1122

01:01:58,750 --> 01:02:03,082

It was like a school  
for bricklayers.

1123

01:02:03,082 --> 01:02:05,290

That's what they thought  
they were going to teach us,

1124

01:02:05,290 --> 01:02:07,500

to be bricklayers.

1125

01:02:07,500 --> 01:02:08,000