

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:00,540

2
00:00:00,540 --> 00:00:03,210
This is the United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum

3
00:00:03,210 --> 00:00:06,120
interview with Rene
Tressler, conducted

4
00:00:06,120 --> 00:00:10,680
by Gail Schwartz on
February 20, 1997,

5
00:00:10,680 --> 00:00:13,050
in Silver Spring, Maryland.

6
00:00:13,050 --> 00:00:17,610
This is tape number
3, side A. And we

7
00:00:17,610 --> 00:00:21,990
were talking about the
family camp in Birkenau, B2b.

8
00:00:21,990 --> 00:00:27,780
What was a daily
routine like for you?

9
00:00:27,780 --> 00:00:30,750
I believe, for me--

10
00:00:30,750 --> 00:00:32,320
you mean for the
children or for me?

11
00:00:32,320 --> 00:00:33,270
Well, no.

12
00:00:33,270 --> 00:00:33,930

Well, for both.

13

00:00:33,930 --> 00:00:35,347

For you and then
for the children.

14

00:00:35,347 --> 00:00:37,920

For me, it practically
was the same routine

15

00:00:37,920 --> 00:00:41,800

like the other children,
except that I was,

16

00:00:41,800 --> 00:00:44,130

as I said before,
carrying those barrels

17

00:00:44,130 --> 00:00:48,600

with the soup for the
kids, of which I did not

18

00:00:48,600 --> 00:00:52,020

get any portions because
I was considered adult

19

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

and got my portion
in adult barracks--

20

00:00:55,020 --> 00:00:59,400

the lousy watery
stuff, you know.

21

00:00:59,400 --> 00:01:02,010

So in that barrack--

22

00:01:02,010 --> 00:01:04,110

in the children's barrack--

23

00:01:04,110 --> 00:01:06,510

for me, the routine was
actually the same as

24
00:01:06,510 --> 00:01:08,830
for the other children.

25
00:01:08,830 --> 00:01:14,190
We were trying to do some
singing group, some theater

26
00:01:14,190 --> 00:01:16,560
group, some reading groups.

27
00:01:16,560 --> 00:01:21,780
Fredy also got some
allowance of books--

28
00:01:21,780 --> 00:01:24,820
children's books, fairy
tales, and things like that,

29
00:01:24,820 --> 00:01:27,180
which usually was in German.

30
00:01:27,180 --> 00:01:32,730
The Germans supplied--
actually supplied,

31
00:01:32,730 --> 00:01:36,240
they allowed to take it
out of the possessions

32
00:01:36,240 --> 00:01:38,400
that we all brought with us.

33
00:01:38,400 --> 00:01:41,340
Some books and some
things came always

34
00:01:41,340 --> 00:01:44,590
in the luggages, which
they confiscated.

35
00:01:44,590 --> 00:01:49,290

And during the
stay there, they're

36
00:01:49,290 --> 00:01:53,310
allowed to have those books
brought into the camp--

37
00:01:53,310 --> 00:01:54,630
some of them, a few.

38
00:01:54,630 --> 00:01:55,980
I know there was--

39
00:01:55,980 --> 00:01:56,710
About how many?

40
00:01:56,710 --> 00:01:57,210
Do you know?

41
00:01:57,210 --> 00:02:01,680
Oh, there was a little library
there, which we called library.

42
00:02:01,680 --> 00:02:05,650
I think there were about
50 books there, or so.

43
00:02:05,650 --> 00:02:09,509
And as I said, usually just
fairy tales, picture books,

44
00:02:09,509 --> 00:02:12,330
and things like that.

45
00:02:12,330 --> 00:02:15,240
Any particular books
that you remember?

46
00:02:15,240 --> 00:02:17,280
The only thing, as I
said, that I remember,

47

00:02:17,280 --> 00:02:20,400
we were trying to do the--

48
00:02:20,400 --> 00:02:23,370
I think it was Snow
White or some fairy tale.

49
00:02:23,370 --> 00:02:25,200
I really couldn't say exactly.

50
00:02:25,200 --> 00:02:26,490
And there was that book.

51
00:02:26,490 --> 00:02:29,670
And since I spoke German at
that time already, fluently,

52
00:02:29,670 --> 00:02:32,520
and Czech, I was the
one who translated

53
00:02:32,520 --> 00:02:35,160
that from the German
into Czech so we

54
00:02:35,160 --> 00:02:39,210
could make a little
scene, a fairy tale scene.

55
00:02:39,210 --> 00:02:41,520
So did you teach
the children too?

56
00:02:41,520 --> 00:02:43,980
No, no, no, I did
not teach at all.

57
00:02:43,980 --> 00:02:49,410
No, I was just one of the
kids there, of the older kids,

58
00:02:49,410 --> 00:02:50,370
you know.

59

00:02:50,370 --> 00:02:53,880

We were divided into
age groups, naturally.

60

00:02:53,880 --> 00:02:58,080

And each of the group had
its own teacher provided.

61

00:02:58,080 --> 00:03:03,330

And so I was in the
group of the eldest ones.

62

00:03:03,330 --> 00:03:07,110

And the 16-year-olds, or
up to 14-, 16-year-olds

63

00:03:07,110 --> 00:03:09,420

About how many
were in your group?

64

00:03:09,420 --> 00:03:13,740

Oh, I wouldn't be
really able to count.

65

00:03:13,740 --> 00:03:21,150

I think, oh, probably, 20,
25, or so in that group.

66

00:03:21,150 --> 00:03:24,930

I wouldn't even know exactly
how many kids were there

67

00:03:24,930 --> 00:03:27,180

in that children's block.

68

00:03:27,180 --> 00:03:32,850

Could have been around
200, 300, maybe 400.

69

00:03:32,850 --> 00:03:34,200

I really wouldn't know.

70

00:03:34,200 --> 00:03:37,350

This is block 31 of
the children's block.

71

00:03:37,350 --> 00:03:38,300

Right.

72

00:03:38,300 --> 00:03:45,420

And so I lived the normal
life of any other child there.

73

00:03:45,420 --> 00:03:46,950

And--

74

00:03:46,950 --> 00:03:50,820

Were there roll calls for
the children, for you?

75

00:03:50,820 --> 00:03:54,270

I don't think so.

76

00:03:54,270 --> 00:04:00,210

But I had to stay roll call
with the adults every morning.

77

00:04:00,210 --> 00:04:04,470

And after the roll call, I
went to the children's block

78

00:04:04,470 --> 00:04:06,750

for work, you know.

79

00:04:06,750 --> 00:04:10,500

Tell me about the roll
call the roll calls.

80

00:04:10,500 --> 00:04:14,880

That's something really
very hard to describe

81

00:04:14,880 --> 00:04:18,510

because every

barrack, every block,

82

00:04:18,510 --> 00:04:22,860
had to come out of the barrack,
stand in front of the barrack,

83

00:04:22,860 --> 00:04:31,920
in line, and wait until
being counted by the SS men.

84

00:04:31,920 --> 00:04:35,940
You know, they had sheets
of numbers and names

85

00:04:35,940 --> 00:04:37,050
and I don't know what.

86

00:04:37,050 --> 00:04:40,830
And they were
trying to figure out

87

00:04:40,830 --> 00:04:45,420
by counting the rows of
prisoners if by any chance

88

00:04:45,420 --> 00:04:47,610
is somebody missing there.

89

00:04:47,610 --> 00:04:50,670
And then they had to
count the ones that died.

90

00:04:50,670 --> 00:04:54,330
And the ones that are in a sick
barrack and things like that.

91

00:04:54,330 --> 00:04:58,140
Sometimes it took hours.

92

00:04:58,140 --> 00:05:01,600
Sometimes it took the whole day
if they couldn't find somebody.

93

00:05:01,600 --> 00:05:04,240

They couldn't get
the number right.

94

00:05:04,240 --> 00:05:08,590

And we were standing out
there in attention, actually,

95

00:05:08,590 --> 00:05:13,450

winter, summer, snow,
hot, doesn't matter, rain.

96

00:05:13,450 --> 00:05:14,960

And the clothes--

97

00:05:14,960 --> 00:05:18,550

I think it's not necessary
to describe what we wear,

98

00:05:18,550 --> 00:05:19,780

what we wore.

99

00:05:19,780 --> 00:05:25,060

Just thin prisoners stripe,
or either the thin prisoner's

100

00:05:25,060 --> 00:05:26,343

clothes or--

101

00:05:26,343 --> 00:05:28,510

actually, in that time, I'm
sorry, no, in that time,

102

00:05:28,510 --> 00:05:30,700

we had our clothes from
the Theresienstadt.

103

00:05:30,700 --> 00:05:36,610

But we had only what they left
to us, what we had on us--

104

00:05:36,610 --> 00:05:39,560

shirt, jacket, pants.

105

00:05:39,560 --> 00:05:44,230

I'm thinking now, I don't
think anybody of us had a coat.

106

00:05:44,230 --> 00:05:46,540

No, I don't think we had a coat.

107

00:05:46,540 --> 00:05:52,060

And so it was really
not very good dress.

108

00:05:52,060 --> 00:05:59,770

The shoes usually went already
because the ground in a camp

109

00:05:59,770 --> 00:06:01,240

was mud.

110

00:06:01,240 --> 00:06:04,390

And the mud was there
winter, summer, all the time.

111

00:06:04,390 --> 00:06:06,430

And you go in that
mud, sometimes

112

00:06:06,430 --> 00:06:07,750

you lose your shoe there.

113

00:06:07,750 --> 00:06:11,240

And sometimes you break your
sole and things like that.

114

00:06:11,240 --> 00:06:14,980

So the clothes was really
very quickly used up,

115

00:06:14,980 --> 00:06:16,670

and the shoes too.

116

00:06:16,670 --> 00:06:20,140
And so that's what we had to
stand in every morning there,

117
00:06:20,140 --> 00:06:23,710
until they figured out
if the count is correct.

118
00:06:23,710 --> 00:06:25,500
That was so-called Appell.

119
00:06:25,500 --> 00:06:27,940
They called it Appell.

120
00:06:27,940 --> 00:06:32,980
And when it was done, then I
went to the children barrack

121
00:06:32,980 --> 00:06:34,870
and stayed there
the rest of the day.

122
00:06:34,870 --> 00:06:37,960

123
00:06:37,960 --> 00:06:40,000
What about the
sanitary conditions?

124
00:06:40,000 --> 00:06:46,240
There was one barrack in
which there were washbasins.

125
00:06:46,240 --> 00:06:50,590
Actually, one long metal--

126
00:06:50,590 --> 00:06:51,490
what you call it.

127
00:06:51,490 --> 00:06:53,290
Such a--

128

00:06:53,290 --> 00:06:54,310
Trough?

129
00:06:54,310 --> 00:06:54,880
Pardon?

130
00:06:54,880 --> 00:06:55,510
Trough?

131
00:06:55,510 --> 00:06:57,110
Yeah, something like that.

132
00:06:57,110 --> 00:07:02,680
And there were a few faucets
there, of which some of them

133
00:07:02,680 --> 00:07:04,390
were working.

134
00:07:04,390 --> 00:07:07,600
But ice cold water, naturally.

135
00:07:07,600 --> 00:07:09,880
Not very filtered water.

136
00:07:09,880 --> 00:07:13,210
Sometimes the water was
coming out brown and black,

137
00:07:13,210 --> 00:07:17,210
and you definitely couldn't
drink it most of the time.

138
00:07:17,210 --> 00:07:21,820
So the only drinking you could
do was the morning so-called

139
00:07:21,820 --> 00:07:25,720
coffee they served
us-- they let us have--

140
00:07:25,720 --> 00:07:27,640

that came with a big barrel.

141

00:07:27,640 --> 00:07:31,540

And each prisoner got one big--

142

00:07:31,540 --> 00:07:36,400

what you call it-- this big

spoon full of that watery

143

00:07:36,400 --> 00:07:38,800

coffee substitute,

which, naturally,

144

00:07:38,800 --> 00:07:41,770

I don't have to

mention was not even--

145

00:07:41,770 --> 00:07:43,640

had no taste, was terrible.

146

00:07:43,640 --> 00:07:46,780

But we drank it because we

had no other water to drink,

147

00:07:46,780 --> 00:07:47,650

really.

148

00:07:47,650 --> 00:07:51,190

Because the water from the

faucet was, most of the time,

149

00:07:51,190 --> 00:07:52,990

not drinkable at all.

150

00:07:52,990 --> 00:07:55,870

How was your health

at this point?

151

00:07:55,870 --> 00:07:59,230

Personally, my health

was, compared with others,

152

00:07:59,230 --> 00:08:01,330

very good all the
time, actually.

153

00:08:01,330 --> 00:08:04,510

Until the last day of
concentration camp,

154

00:08:04,510 --> 00:08:07,600

I was always better on
than other prisoners.

155

00:08:07,600 --> 00:08:12,910

And I think it's because
of my physical upbringing,

156

00:08:12,910 --> 00:08:17,890

my sportsmanship, and so I
think I was physically much

157

00:08:17,890 --> 00:08:22,540

better than most people were.

158

00:08:22,540 --> 00:08:25,900

Did you feel very Jewish by now?

159

00:08:25,900 --> 00:08:31,780

By now you couldn't help but
feel Jewish because you knew

160

00:08:31,780 --> 00:08:33,400

the whole camp is Jewish--

161

00:08:33,400 --> 00:08:35,049

you know, Jews only.

162

00:08:35,049 --> 00:08:37,690

And by then, we
knew that Hitler is

163

00:08:37,690 --> 00:08:42,110

trying to destroy the
Jewish race of the world.

164
00:08:42,110 --> 00:08:43,750
He wants to get rid of us.

165
00:08:43,750 --> 00:08:45,490
Were you angry that
you were Jewish

166
00:08:45,490 --> 00:08:48,300
and this was happening to you?

167
00:08:48,300 --> 00:08:51,030
Was I blaming the fact
that I was Jewish?

168
00:08:51,030 --> 00:08:53,790
No, no, I don't
think so-- no, never.

169
00:08:53,790 --> 00:08:57,030
I didn't even think of
it, why it happened.

170
00:08:57,030 --> 00:08:59,130
It was the fact I was Jewish.

171
00:08:59,130 --> 00:09:00,150
I had to go through it.

172
00:09:00,150 --> 00:09:02,130
That was it.

173
00:09:02,130 --> 00:09:02,910
No, I didn't.

174
00:09:02,910 --> 00:09:06,190
I was not angry at the
fact that I was Jewish.

175
00:09:06,190 --> 00:09:09,480
I did not try to blame
my parents or somebody

176
00:09:09,480 --> 00:09:11,870
that he made me Jewish, no.

177
00:09:11,870 --> 00:09:14,490

178
00:09:14,490 --> 00:09:16,020
That was a given fact.

179
00:09:16,020 --> 00:09:20,250
And during the time of
concentration camps,

180
00:09:20,250 --> 00:09:23,880
you didn't really philosophize
in that way at all.

181
00:09:23,880 --> 00:09:26,700
You just knew you were
in the mud and that's it.

182
00:09:26,700 --> 00:09:28,350
You have to try to get out.

183
00:09:28,350 --> 00:09:30,240
Why are you in the mud?

184
00:09:30,240 --> 00:09:33,510
You didn't waste your
time thinking about it.

185
00:09:33,510 --> 00:09:36,060
What did you and the
other 16-year-old boys,

186
00:09:36,060 --> 00:09:38,430
at that point, talk about?

187
00:09:38,430 --> 00:09:41,680
I think we talk in the barrack--
in the children's barrack,

188
00:09:41,680 --> 00:09:42,180
you mean.

189
00:09:42,180 --> 00:09:44,190
I think we talked
about things that we

190
00:09:44,190 --> 00:09:48,770
would talk in Prague about,
or in Theresienstadt about.

191
00:09:48,770 --> 00:09:51,840
The same thing-- about
sports, about soccer,

192
00:09:51,840 --> 00:09:55,500
about girls in our age.

193
00:09:55,500 --> 00:09:57,030
That's it, yeah.

194
00:09:57,030 --> 00:09:58,480
What else can one--

195
00:09:58,480 --> 00:10:01,830
you can only talk about
things that you know, right?

196
00:10:01,830 --> 00:10:04,290
You cannot talk about
something you don't know,

197
00:10:04,290 --> 00:10:06,180
you have never experienced.

198
00:10:06,180 --> 00:10:07,950
So we were 16-year-old kids.

199
00:10:07,950 --> 00:10:11,190
We knew things that a
16-year-old kid knows.

200

00:10:11,190 --> 00:10:12,930

And that's what we talked about.

201

00:10:12,930 --> 00:10:17,400

And what we knew was
sports and girls.

202

00:10:17,400 --> 00:10:20,380

Did you talk about what
you saw surrounding you

203

00:10:20,380 --> 00:10:23,550

in Auschwitz-Birkenau?

204

00:10:23,550 --> 00:10:24,210

Again?

205

00:10:24,210 --> 00:10:27,180

Did you talk about what
you saw around you?

206

00:10:27,180 --> 00:10:28,320

Yes, naturally, we did.

207

00:10:28,320 --> 00:10:33,090

We did talk about it, because
you couldn't ignore what

208

00:10:33,090 --> 00:10:35,430

you saw, even from far away.

209

00:10:35,430 --> 00:10:42,330

Specifically, we talked,
surprisingly enough,

210

00:10:42,330 --> 00:10:46,810

in a joking matter, we
talked about gas chambers.

211

00:10:46,810 --> 00:10:48,900

We talked about crematorium.

212
00:10:48,900 --> 00:10:52,050
We said, oh, we are going to
fly through the chimney anyway,

213
00:10:52,050 --> 00:10:53,160
and things like that.

214
00:10:53,160 --> 00:10:54,150
We didn't mean it.

215
00:10:54,150 --> 00:10:58,840
We just wanted to joke
about it in that time.

216
00:10:58,840 --> 00:11:01,950
And we also didn't
believe it that much.

217
00:11:01,950 --> 00:11:04,890
We thought it's maybe not
even true that there's

218
00:11:04,890 --> 00:11:06,000
a gas chamber there.

219
00:11:06,000 --> 00:11:10,410
Maybe the crematoriums are only
because people die, obviously,

220
00:11:10,410 --> 00:11:11,970
and they have to burn them.

221
00:11:11,970 --> 00:11:12,915
But the amount--

222
00:11:12,915 --> 00:11:15,540
How did you know that
they were crematoria?

223
00:11:15,540 --> 00:11:17,070
Oh, that was no secret.

224
00:11:17,070 --> 00:11:18,270
Everybody knew that.

225
00:11:18,270 --> 00:11:20,590
They were so close
you could see them.

226
00:11:20,590 --> 00:11:25,080
You could see, sometimes,
cars with dead people

227
00:11:25,080 --> 00:11:28,260
loaded, going towards
the crematorium.

228
00:11:28,260 --> 00:11:33,420
And so you knew it's not a
bakery, I mean, you know.

229
00:11:33,420 --> 00:11:36,930
Did it upset you to see
so many dead people?

230
00:11:36,930 --> 00:11:39,180
We were not too happy
about it, obviously.

231
00:11:39,180 --> 00:11:43,200
There was a certain point
of fear in our souls.

232
00:11:43,200 --> 00:11:49,240
And a certain point of hope that
we will never get close to it.

233
00:11:49,240 --> 00:11:52,320
But we knew about it,
in that time already.

234
00:11:52,320 --> 00:11:55,860
Specifically, at the end of--

235

00:11:55,860 --> 00:11:59,760
specifically, after being in
B2b for a longer time already,

236

00:11:59,760 --> 00:12:01,110
a couple of months or so.

237

00:12:01,110 --> 00:12:02,700
So we knew its crematorium.

238

00:12:02,700 --> 00:12:05,220
And we just hoped
it's not for us.

239

00:12:05,220 --> 00:12:06,900
That's for other
people, you know.

240

00:12:06,900 --> 00:12:11,220
We also knew, or heard about,
that there are transports

241

00:12:11,220 --> 00:12:14,350
coming and they go straight
in the gas chamber.

242

00:12:14,350 --> 00:12:17,580
And we just said, oh, that's
just the Kapos are making

243

00:12:17,580 --> 00:12:19,440
fun of us, they're
just teasing us,

244

00:12:19,440 --> 00:12:21,090
and they just want to scare us.

245

00:12:21,090 --> 00:12:24,060
But inside us, we
knew it's true.

246

00:12:24,060 --> 00:12:27,480

And so we were just
hoping we will never

247
00:12:27,480 --> 00:12:31,760
learn the facts about it.

248
00:12:31,760 --> 00:12:34,400
Were there Kapos
in the family camp?

249
00:12:34,400 --> 00:12:35,060
Kapos?

250
00:12:35,060 --> 00:12:36,050
In the family camp.

251
00:12:36,050 --> 00:12:37,360
Yes, right, yeah, there was--

252
00:12:37,360 --> 00:12:39,290
Who were they?

253
00:12:39,290 --> 00:12:42,590
I remember only one by name.

254
00:12:42,590 --> 00:12:45,870
His name was Fisher.

255
00:12:45,870 --> 00:12:49,560
And he was a little
hunchback man

256
00:12:49,560 --> 00:12:53,260
who, I think there was
something about him.

257
00:12:53,260 --> 00:12:57,390
He was a hangman or
something in some place.

258
00:12:57,390 --> 00:13:01,170
But I really don't remember

that anymore too well.

259

00:13:01,170 --> 00:13:04,230

I think there's some literature
about him too, somewhere.

260

00:13:04,230 --> 00:13:05,970

What was his first name?

261

00:13:05,970 --> 00:13:07,710

I wouldn't remember that.

262

00:13:07,710 --> 00:13:10,650

I know he was Kapo Fisher.

263

00:13:10,650 --> 00:13:12,480

And that's all I remember.

264

00:13:12,480 --> 00:13:15,060

But I really don't know
too much about him.

265

00:13:15,060 --> 00:13:17,700

And there were other
couples going through,

266

00:13:17,700 --> 00:13:19,320

which names we didn't know.

267

00:13:19,320 --> 00:13:27,540

They usually were Polish
guys or German prisoners

268

00:13:27,540 --> 00:13:29,970

who had some business
to come into the camp

269

00:13:29,970 --> 00:13:31,650

and out and in and--

270

00:13:31,650 --> 00:13:36,450

So you stayed in within

the family camp limits?

271

00:13:36,450 --> 00:13:37,110

Pardon me?

272

00:13:37,110 --> 00:13:40,760

You stayed within the
family camp, within B2b.

273

00:13:40,760 --> 00:13:41,260

Right.

274

00:13:41,260 --> 00:13:43,740

We never left that
camp, that B2b camp.

275

00:13:43,740 --> 00:13:45,240

Never left it, no.

276

00:13:45,240 --> 00:13:46,367

Until the end, then.

277

00:13:46,367 --> 00:13:46,950

Until the end?

278

00:13:46,950 --> 00:13:48,120

Yeah.

279

00:13:48,120 --> 00:13:51,460

What was your contact
with girls your age?

280

00:13:51,460 --> 00:13:55,150

Well, there were girls of my
age in the children's barrack,

281

00:13:55,150 --> 00:13:56,550

naturally.

282

00:13:56,550 --> 00:13:58,080

And--

283

00:13:58,080 --> 00:14:00,870

Did you notice a
difference in the way

284

00:14:00,870 --> 00:14:03,180

the young women, the young--

285

00:14:03,180 --> 00:14:07,350

the girls reacted to this
situation than the boys?

286

00:14:07,350 --> 00:14:12,930

287

00:14:12,930 --> 00:14:15,780

I don't think I
noticed any difference.

288

00:14:15,780 --> 00:14:20,220

I don't even think there
was a difference, really.

289

00:14:20,220 --> 00:14:21,950

We were all in one boat.

290

00:14:21,950 --> 00:14:25,620

We were all in one
same situation,

291

00:14:25,620 --> 00:14:29,010

trying to do the same
thing just to survive.

292

00:14:29,010 --> 00:14:34,080

I believe that's what the
girl's feelings were, at least.

293

00:14:34,080 --> 00:14:38,490

Detail I wouldn't really
know because I'm not a girl.

294

00:14:38,490 --> 00:14:42,330

And they would not tell
us in that time, you know,

295
00:14:42,330 --> 00:14:44,490
what their feelings are, really.

296
00:14:44,490 --> 00:14:49,840
But I think it was just the same
difference between boy and girl

297
00:14:49,840 --> 00:14:54,660
as it would be in normal life.

298
00:14:54,660 --> 00:15:00,120
Physically, I imagine, they must
have probably have problems,

299
00:15:00,120 --> 00:15:02,295
but we did not.

300
00:15:02,295 --> 00:15:10,670

301
00:15:10,670 --> 00:15:13,040
I wouldn't know the
difference between girls--

302
00:15:13,040 --> 00:15:15,110
Did you feel very old then?

303
00:15:15,110 --> 00:15:16,940
Did you feel older than 16?

304
00:15:16,940 --> 00:15:18,160
I did not feel old.

305
00:15:18,160 --> 00:15:21,140
I felt experienced.

306
00:15:21,140 --> 00:15:25,190
And so did five-,
six-year-old children.

307

00:15:25,190 --> 00:15:31,160

I am sure [? they's ?] mind
worked in a different way

308

00:15:31,160 --> 00:15:37,460

than the mind of a regular
child outside in civil life.

309

00:15:37,460 --> 00:15:40,820

Because even those five-,
six-, seven-year-old knew

310

00:15:40,820 --> 00:15:44,030

there's a crematorium nearby.

311

00:15:44,030 --> 00:15:47,330

And they also heard
about the gas chambers.

312

00:15:47,330 --> 00:15:56,570

And they tried to
be adult about it.

313

00:15:56,570 --> 00:15:57,770

How would I say?

314

00:15:57,770 --> 00:16:01,610

They tried to be
heroic about it.

315

00:16:01,610 --> 00:16:06,530

They tried to say, that
concerns me as well as my father

316

00:16:06,530 --> 00:16:08,570

over there.

317

00:16:08,570 --> 00:16:10,610

So we were more experienced.

318

00:16:10,610 --> 00:16:12,380

We were not older, no.

319
00:16:12,380 --> 00:16:15,610

320
00:16:15,610 --> 00:16:20,590
Did you have any
social opportunity

321
00:16:20,590 --> 00:16:22,450
to be with a young woman?

322
00:16:22,450 --> 00:16:26,350
Not in-- no, not in B2b, no.

323
00:16:26,350 --> 00:16:30,700
And I didn't even care for that,
what it is you have in mind,

324
00:16:30,700 --> 00:16:31,390
I think.

325
00:16:31,390 --> 00:16:39,120
No, we didn't really care for
physical contact with women.

326
00:16:39,120 --> 00:16:41,810
Or even just-- what about
just talking to a young girl

327
00:16:41,810 --> 00:16:42,950
by yourself?

328
00:16:42,950 --> 00:16:46,770
Was that something that
you had any desire to do?

329
00:16:46,770 --> 00:16:50,940
You see, like in
Theresienstadt, each boy

330
00:16:50,940 --> 00:16:54,600

had to have a girlfriend,
like in civil life.

331
00:16:54,600 --> 00:16:58,650
In Auschwitz, I think
that was not the case, no.

332
00:16:58,650 --> 00:17:00,660
That was not the case.

333
00:17:00,660 --> 00:17:04,950
We didn't think in that
terms in Auschwitz.

334
00:17:04,950 --> 00:17:08,130
Obviously, the adults
were helping the children

335
00:17:08,130 --> 00:17:09,314
in the children's barracks.

336
00:17:09,314 --> 00:17:09,999
No, the old.

337
00:17:09,999 --> 00:17:10,874
I meant the teachers.

338
00:17:10,874 --> 00:17:12,839
Only those who were
teachers there, yeah.

339
00:17:12,839 --> 00:17:14,430
The teachers.

340
00:17:14,430 --> 00:17:17,280
Did you notice how adults--

341
00:17:17,280 --> 00:17:19,814
if the adults were
helping each other?

342
00:17:19,814 --> 00:17:23,940

343
00:17:23,940 --> 00:17:28,040
That is a very
difficult question.

344
00:17:28,040 --> 00:17:32,540
But to be very
honest, and not to try

345
00:17:32,540 --> 00:17:35,360
to make it better than it was.

346
00:17:35,360 --> 00:17:39,830
I think, in a concentration
camp everybody was for himself,

347
00:17:39,830 --> 00:17:44,060
trying to do the best
for himself he can,

348
00:17:44,060 --> 00:17:47,250
not caring for the
other person, no.

349
00:17:47,250 --> 00:17:49,310
I'm sure of that.

350
00:17:49,310 --> 00:17:54,380
Although it is said
that some camps had

351
00:17:54,380 --> 00:17:57,110
groups that helped each other.

352
00:17:57,110 --> 00:18:00,530
I never found any
of such groups,

353
00:18:00,530 --> 00:18:03,806
and never found any
people that I would--

354

00:18:03,806 --> 00:18:06,770

that, systematically,
would help each other.

355

00:18:06,770 --> 00:18:08,900

So, naturally, there were cases.

356

00:18:08,900 --> 00:18:11,780

One person helped another
person in some way.

357

00:18:11,780 --> 00:18:16,100

But it would be organized or
systematic or something, no.

358

00:18:16,100 --> 00:18:19,940

I believe-- and that was
actually the credo of everybody

359

00:18:19,940 --> 00:18:21,710

in a concentration camp--

360

00:18:21,710 --> 00:18:24,270

you got to do the
best for yourself.

361

00:18:24,270 --> 00:18:25,320

You are for yourself.

362

00:18:25,320 --> 00:18:26,820

Nobody will help you.

363

00:18:26,820 --> 00:18:30,050

And if you don't help
yourself, you die.

364

00:18:30,050 --> 00:18:36,800

And you can't just try to care
for somebody else for the price

365

00:18:36,800 --> 00:18:38,820

of not caring for yourselves.

366
00:18:38,820 --> 00:18:41,810
First of all, you have to
care for yourselves, yeah.

367
00:18:41,810 --> 00:18:45,410
Was there any talk
of resistance?

368
00:18:45,410 --> 00:18:46,770
Not in Auschwitz, no.

369
00:18:46,770 --> 00:18:52,010
Well, there was talk, yes,
but not organized, again.

370
00:18:52,010 --> 00:18:55,340
Like, when we come
further down to the way

371
00:18:55,340 --> 00:18:57,620
when I left Auschwitz,
I will tell you

372
00:18:57,620 --> 00:19:02,630
about a certain
quasi-organized way we planned.

373
00:19:02,630 --> 00:19:06,200
But no, I don't think there
was an organized situation

374
00:19:06,200 --> 00:19:08,780
anywhere in Auschwitz.

375
00:19:08,780 --> 00:19:11,060
Now you said Fredy
Hirsch's group

376
00:19:11,060 --> 00:19:13,100
came three months before yours.

377

00:19:13,100 --> 00:19:17,630
So what happened three months
after you arrived in Auschwitz?

378
00:19:17,630 --> 00:19:22,370
OK, three months after
we were together in B2b,

379
00:19:22,370 --> 00:19:27,260
there were told that
the first transport--

380
00:19:27,260 --> 00:19:29,960
the first half of
B2b, family camp--

381
00:19:29,960 --> 00:19:36,400
is going to go to another
camp in Heydebreck.

382
00:19:36,400 --> 00:19:38,280
I don't even know if
Heydebreck exists.

383
00:19:38,280 --> 00:19:40,390
I don't think it does.

384
00:19:40,390 --> 00:19:42,940
Heydebreck was supposed
to be the place

385
00:19:42,940 --> 00:19:48,870
they would be moved to-- that
first transport-- for work.

386
00:19:48,870 --> 00:19:54,330
But we soon enough learned
that they separated them

387
00:19:54,330 --> 00:19:55,290
from our camp.

388
00:19:55,290 --> 00:19:57,510

They put them in the A
camp, where there's only

389
00:19:57,510 --> 00:19:59,700
that one row of barracks.

390
00:19:59,700 --> 00:20:04,050
And soon we knew
what's going to happen.

391
00:20:04,050 --> 00:20:05,640
And that happened.

392
00:20:05,640 --> 00:20:07,740
One day-- one night--

393
00:20:07,740 --> 00:20:12,030
they loaded them on trucks
and they disappeared.

394
00:20:12,030 --> 00:20:15,720
And we learned that
they were gassed,

395
00:20:15,720 --> 00:20:18,740
the whole transport was gassed--

396
00:20:18,740 --> 00:20:21,560
or half of our camp--

397
00:20:21,560 --> 00:20:24,580
children, adults, everything.

398
00:20:24,580 --> 00:20:26,410
Half were gassed.

399
00:20:26,410 --> 00:20:30,860
And Fredy too, that's
another story of Fredy.

400
00:20:30,860 --> 00:20:34,120
He was-- he committed suicide.

401

00:20:34,120 --> 00:20:37,840
He never got to the gas chamber.

402

00:20:37,840 --> 00:20:41,440
He had a friend there
who wanted to help him.

403

00:20:41,440 --> 00:20:43,390
I don't want to go
into details again.

404

00:20:43,390 --> 00:20:45,370
That's a part of my writings.

405

00:20:45,370 --> 00:20:52,180
And he refused to be helped, to
be taken out of the transport,

406

00:20:52,180 --> 00:20:56,040
because, he said, if I go,
my children have to go to,

407

00:20:56,040 --> 00:20:58,820
which was impossible,
the children couldn't go.

408

00:20:58,820 --> 00:21:01,780
So he decided he is not
going to take the offer

409

00:21:01,780 --> 00:21:03,340
to go out of the transport.

410

00:21:03,340 --> 00:21:09,675
And he, in some way, somebody
helped him, gave him veronal.

411

00:21:09,675 --> 00:21:11,740
That's just a poison, you know.

412

00:21:11,740 --> 00:21:14,880

And he took that and died.

413
00:21:14,880 --> 00:21:18,760
We know that for sure.

414
00:21:18,760 --> 00:21:22,210
You are 16 years old
and you hear this news

415
00:21:22,210 --> 00:21:25,490
about him and the other people.

416
00:21:25,490 --> 00:21:27,765
What-- how did you respond?

417
00:21:27,765 --> 00:21:30,520

418
00:21:30,520 --> 00:21:32,580
We were horrified, obviously.

419
00:21:32,580 --> 00:21:36,870
And even the
16-year-old knew already

420
00:21:36,870 --> 00:21:39,060
what's going on, naturally.

421
00:21:39,060 --> 00:21:43,830
But again, we were not
100% sure that they

422
00:21:43,830 --> 00:21:45,690
went to a gas chamber.

423
00:21:45,690 --> 00:21:51,030
And, actually, it was our own
doing that we were not sure.

424
00:21:51,030 --> 00:21:53,070
We just didn't want to be sure.

425

00:21:53,070 --> 00:21:57,300

Although tens of people came
into the camp, out and in,

426

00:21:57,300 --> 00:21:59,760

those different
commanders, and so--

427

00:21:59,760 --> 00:22:00,540

the Kapos.

428

00:22:00,540 --> 00:22:02,850

And they told us, the adults.

429

00:22:02,850 --> 00:22:05,410

Later, I learned
details about that.

430

00:22:05,410 --> 00:22:08,820

We were told-- later
we learned, not told--

431

00:22:08,820 --> 00:22:15,120

we learned later that this group
of people, when they took them

432

00:22:15,120 --> 00:22:19,350

to the gas chamber, were singing
the Czech national anthem.

433

00:22:19,350 --> 00:22:24,010

And the Hatikva.

434

00:22:24,010 --> 00:22:26,470

And they were killed.

435

00:22:26,470 --> 00:22:28,030

That's it.

436

00:22:28,030 --> 00:22:30,010

And we learned that
later, naturally.

437

00:22:30,010 --> 00:22:31,750

But during the time
when we were there,

438

00:22:31,750 --> 00:22:33,280

we didn't know anything on that.

439

00:22:33,280 --> 00:22:35,350

Although they were
telling us details,

440

00:22:35,350 --> 00:22:38,650

we just didn't want
to even hear them.

441

00:22:38,650 --> 00:22:41,320

Because it would
have, obviously-- not

442

00:22:41,320 --> 00:22:44,890

would have, it did--
affect our own morality,

443

00:22:44,890 --> 00:22:49,480

our own feelings, our own
philosophy, everything.

444

00:22:49,480 --> 00:22:53,620

We didn't want to get
into a worse mental state

445

00:22:53,620 --> 00:22:56,050

than we were already anyway.

446

00:22:56,050 --> 00:23:01,540

So, therefore, we choose
not to believe it.

447

00:23:01,540 --> 00:23:08,000

At least, the kids and the
people as I was, you know.

448

00:23:08,000 --> 00:23:11,840

And then later, three months
after that, those next three

449

00:23:11,840 --> 00:23:16,810

months were not
very interesting.

450

00:23:16,810 --> 00:23:18,280

Very interesting, nothing that--

451

00:23:18,280 --> 00:23:21,310

Did the children's barracks
continue without him?

452

00:23:21,310 --> 00:23:26,080

The children's barrack continued
under the leadership of--

453

00:23:26,080 --> 00:23:29,200

his name was, I think,
Hans [? Brommer. ?]

454

00:23:29,200 --> 00:23:33,250

He still lives, also, in Israel,
in kibbutz with my brother.

455

00:23:33,250 --> 00:23:36,580

And then another one,
[? Cep ?] something.

456

00:23:36,580 --> 00:23:38,260

I forgot now the name.

457

00:23:38,260 --> 00:23:41,410

And they kind of kept
the children's barrack

458

00:23:41,410 --> 00:23:43,840

as long as it was
possible to keep it.

459

00:23:43,840 --> 00:23:46,400
And you kept doing the same
thing in the next three months.

460
00:23:46,400 --> 00:23:47,775
Yes, I kept doing
the same thing.

461
00:23:47,775 --> 00:23:52,330
And then after three
months, it was our time

462
00:23:52,330 --> 00:23:55,870
to leave, our transport.

463
00:23:55,870 --> 00:23:58,283
Was there a Passover Seder in--

464
00:23:58,283 --> 00:23:59,200
No, nothing like that.

465
00:23:59,200 --> 00:24:01,780
Nothing like that in Auschwitz.

466
00:24:01,780 --> 00:24:02,770
In the children's--

467
00:24:02,770 --> 00:24:04,300
No, not that I would know.

468
00:24:04,300 --> 00:24:05,800
Or in the family camp?

469
00:24:05,800 --> 00:24:09,130
Not that I would
remember or know of, no.

470
00:24:09,130 --> 00:24:11,060
Maybe I didn't pay
attention to it.

471
00:24:11,060 --> 00:24:14,350

But no, I wouldn't
know about it.

472
00:24:14,350 --> 00:24:17,530
Maybe there was something,
some little group somewhere.

473
00:24:17,530 --> 00:24:19,540
But I wouldn't know that.

474
00:24:19,540 --> 00:24:22,780
I wouldn't also join that.

475
00:24:22,780 --> 00:24:27,370
So after those
three months, there

476
00:24:27,370 --> 00:24:34,690
started to be rumors that
we are going to leave.

477
00:24:34,690 --> 00:24:37,420
And so that was a slight panic.

478
00:24:37,420 --> 00:24:42,250
And actually because we knew
it's six months, it's our time.

479
00:24:42,250 --> 00:24:47,410
But in the same time, we
also knew, even before,

480
00:24:47,410 --> 00:24:52,450
that Hitler is slowly
losing the grip on the war.

481
00:24:52,450 --> 00:24:56,330
And that he will need people
working in the factories

482
00:24:56,330 --> 00:24:59,680
so he can send the German from
the factories to the front,

483
00:24:59,680 --> 00:25:01,240
as soldiers.

484
00:25:01,240 --> 00:25:03,580
And that was something
that was going,

485
00:25:03,580 --> 00:25:06,550
the rumor, very
seriously around.

486
00:25:06,550 --> 00:25:12,520
And also, I think we heard
about some group of people

487
00:25:12,520 --> 00:25:13,810
leaving Auschwitz.

488
00:25:13,810 --> 00:25:17,210
And so, although we didn't see
them, but we heard about it.

489
00:25:17,210 --> 00:25:19,600
We thought it's a
possibility that they really

490
00:25:19,600 --> 00:25:22,480
want to send us out again.

491
00:25:22,480 --> 00:25:25,880
We wanted to believe that.

492
00:25:25,880 --> 00:25:29,180
So what happened
was, one day they

493
00:25:29,180 --> 00:25:33,650
said we're going to make
transports out of Auschwitz.

494
00:25:33,650 --> 00:25:39,900

First, a men's adult transport,
men who are capable of working.

495
00:25:39,900 --> 00:25:42,650
Which sounded interesting
because they really

496
00:25:42,650 --> 00:25:50,910
choose only men like of a
working age, between 18 and 40,

497
00:25:50,910 --> 00:25:51,840
50.

498
00:25:51,840 --> 00:25:55,520
The younger stayed
and older stayed.

499
00:25:55,520 --> 00:25:58,610
So we said, that
would be really tricky

500
00:25:58,610 --> 00:26:00,800
if they send those
people to the gas chamber

501
00:26:00,800 --> 00:26:04,370
and leave the old and
sick and the kids here.

502
00:26:04,370 --> 00:26:06,410
Although everything
was possible, you know.

503
00:26:06,410 --> 00:26:09,530
They knew all kinds of tricks.

504
00:26:09,530 --> 00:26:12,170
Also, at that
time-- so they built

505
00:26:12,170 --> 00:26:19,250
a transport of man, which, my

brother was in that transport.

506

00:26:19,250 --> 00:26:23,840

And we saw them going
to the next camp

507

00:26:23,840 --> 00:26:25,730

there across the railroad.

508

00:26:25,730 --> 00:26:31,460

And we saw them because the
railroad ramp was by our camp--

509

00:26:31,460 --> 00:26:33,470

like, by any camp, actually.

510

00:26:33,470 --> 00:26:37,460

And we saw them
embarking the train.

511

00:26:37,460 --> 00:26:39,140

So we said, that's fine.

512

00:26:39,140 --> 00:26:41,840

I mean, I don't think
they ever took anybody

513

00:26:41,840 --> 00:26:44,010

by train to the gas chamber.

514

00:26:44,010 --> 00:26:47,300

So it was impossible really.

515

00:26:47,300 --> 00:26:49,670

And the transport left.

516

00:26:49,670 --> 00:26:51,050

My brother left.

517

00:26:51,050 --> 00:26:54,590

Next day, they built
a women's transport--

518

00:26:54,590 --> 00:26:57,920
also, again, working-age women.

519

00:26:57,920 --> 00:26:59,330
My mother left.

520

00:26:59,330 --> 00:27:03,470
And we saw them across the
railroad at the woman's camp.

521

00:27:03,470 --> 00:27:05,450
And my mother waved at me.

522

00:27:05,450 --> 00:27:08,270
And we knew she's
fine and she's there.

523

00:27:08,270 --> 00:27:12,440
And we saw them already
in striped suits.

524

00:27:12,440 --> 00:27:13,970
They changed them suits.

525

00:27:13,970 --> 00:27:19,130
And we also saw them embarking
the train and leaving.

526

00:27:19,130 --> 00:27:24,290
So in the camp was children,
old people, sick people.

527

00:27:24,290 --> 00:27:26,480
Me too.

528

00:27:26,480 --> 00:27:32,030
So then the next day
they came and said there

529

00:27:32,030 --> 00:27:34,340
is going to be a selection.

530

00:27:34,340 --> 00:27:40,610

They need a small group
of a hundred or so people

531

00:27:40,610 --> 00:27:44,560

to take to a working camp.

532

00:27:44,560 --> 00:27:48,940

And they're going to select
capable people from that group.

533

00:27:48,940 --> 00:27:51,070

So we all played
adult and strong.

534

00:27:51,070 --> 00:27:54,040

We had to undress and show
our muscles, you know.

535

00:27:54,040 --> 00:27:57,430

They really selected--
left, right, left, right.

536

00:27:57,430 --> 00:27:59,530

So I was lucky enough.

537

00:27:59,530 --> 00:28:01,090

They picked me.

538

00:28:01,090 --> 00:28:03,460

And they picked me
together with, I

539

00:28:03,460 --> 00:28:07,900

think it was about 60
kids around our age,

540

00:28:07,900 --> 00:28:09,790

and a couple adults.

541

00:28:09,790 --> 00:28:17,370

And they put us on a truck,
on a canvas-covered truck.

542
00:28:17,370 --> 00:28:22,200
And I know when they
loaded us into the truck--

543
00:28:22,200 --> 00:28:24,480
and now I'm back to
that, what I wanted

544
00:28:24,480 --> 00:28:30,810
to tell you, the story
of organized resistance.

545
00:28:30,810 --> 00:28:34,480
And we, kind of-- between us,
while the Germans were not

546
00:28:34,480 --> 00:28:37,830
listening, we
said, if that truck

547
00:28:37,830 --> 00:28:42,030
goes to the left, that
means we go to gas chamber.

548
00:28:42,030 --> 00:28:46,210
Because the gate to out of
Auschwitz is on the right.

549
00:28:46,210 --> 00:28:49,350
So if we go to the left,
we're going to jump the guard

550
00:28:49,350 --> 00:28:52,810
and do what we can to
kill as many as we can.

551
00:28:52,810 --> 00:28:56,670
And if it's one or two managed
to run away through the gates

552

00:28:56,670 --> 00:28:58,480
or through the wires, fine.

553
00:28:58,480 --> 00:29:02,980
If not, we rather die being
shot than go to the gas chamber.

554
00:29:02,980 --> 00:29:06,000
And we were sure we'd do that.

555
00:29:06,000 --> 00:29:09,820
Unfortunately, what
happened, the Germans--

556
00:29:09,820 --> 00:29:12,390
the guard in the
truck, who was sitting

557
00:29:12,390 --> 00:29:14,670
on the end of the
truck with his gun--

558
00:29:14,670 --> 00:29:19,710
pulled the canvas down, so we
couldn't know where we going.

559
00:29:19,710 --> 00:29:24,140
And there were puddles
in the road there--

560
00:29:24,140 --> 00:29:27,060
what you call it--
holes in the road.

561
00:29:27,060 --> 00:29:31,720
And the truck was trying
to go around those holes,

562
00:29:31,720 --> 00:29:34,650
because he would be in danger
to break a wheel or so.

563
00:29:34,650 --> 00:29:36,600

It was so bad, that road there.

564

00:29:36,600 --> 00:29:39,420

And so we lost directions.

565

00:29:39,420 --> 00:29:42,060

We didn't know were we going
right, were we going left.

566

00:29:42,060 --> 00:29:45,680

We have no idea where
we are, where we going.

567

00:29:45,680 --> 00:29:50,570

And unfortunately, one
kid lost his nerves

568

00:29:50,570 --> 00:29:54,810

and jumped out and got shot.

569

00:29:54,810 --> 00:29:58,860

And in that moment, when
we saw the kid is dead

570

00:29:58,860 --> 00:30:03,690

and shot because he was full
of bullets, in that moment,

571

00:30:03,690 --> 00:30:07,810

we saw we are passing the
gate out of Auschwitz.

572

00:30:07,810 --> 00:30:09,250

So we were out.

573

00:30:09,250 --> 00:30:12,010

And we went and
came to Blechhammer.

574

00:30:12,010 --> 00:30:24,210

575

00:30:24,210 --> 00:30:28,270

This is tape 3, side
B. And you had just

576

00:30:28,270 --> 00:30:33,750

related the story about leaving
Auschwitz and on the truck.

577

00:30:33,750 --> 00:30:36,480

578

00:30:36,480 --> 00:30:38,460

What was it like
to leave Auschwitz,

579

00:30:38,460 --> 00:30:41,400

once you realized you were
going through the gate?

580

00:30:41,400 --> 00:30:47,970

It was a sad and a tragic
moment and, for us,

581

00:30:47,970 --> 00:30:49,860

a happy moment too.

582

00:30:49,860 --> 00:30:52,470

If there are such things
like happy moments

583

00:30:52,470 --> 00:30:54,600

in concentration
camp in that time.

584

00:30:54,600 --> 00:31:00,420

But we really saw, thanks to
that poor guy who got shot,

585

00:31:00,420 --> 00:31:05,820

the guard put the canvas up
again-- the rear canvas--

586

00:31:05,820 --> 00:31:08,940

and we could see that we
are passing the main gate

587
00:31:08,940 --> 00:31:10,680
of Auschwitz, outside.

588
00:31:10,680 --> 00:31:14,250
And they took us
on that one truck

589
00:31:14,250 --> 00:31:19,320
all the way up to the camp
of Blechhammer, which is not

590
00:31:19,320 --> 00:31:22,920
very far away from Auschwitz.

591
00:31:22,920 --> 00:31:29,700
I would guess maybe
80 miles or so.

592
00:31:29,700 --> 00:31:34,410
And there we stayed
in Blechhammer.

593
00:31:34,410 --> 00:31:40,400
That was a working camp,
and only a men's camp.

594
00:31:40,400 --> 00:31:42,170
Although there was
a woman's camp too,

595
00:31:42,170 --> 00:31:45,440
but in a different section.

596
00:31:45,440 --> 00:31:48,500
In that section where
I was, were just men.

597
00:31:48,500 --> 00:31:49,310
And that was--

598

00:31:49,310 --> 00:31:51,980

At this point, when you
were leaving Auschwitz,

599

00:31:51,980 --> 00:31:54,830

you did not know where
your mother was going.

600

00:31:54,830 --> 00:31:58,940

No, we had no idea where my
mother or my brother went.

601

00:31:58,940 --> 00:32:01,370

We also had no idea
where we were going.

602

00:32:01,370 --> 00:32:05,000

We just knew that Auschwitz
is getting further and further

603

00:32:05,000 --> 00:32:05,900

from our view.

604

00:32:05,900 --> 00:32:09,500

And that was the happy
note of the whole song.

605

00:32:09,500 --> 00:32:13,730

And so we-- as I said,
that was a work camp.

606

00:32:13,730 --> 00:32:18,260

We marched every
morning, the whole camp,

607

00:32:18,260 --> 00:32:24,840

to a working place of the name
Oberschlesische Hydriewerke,

608

00:32:24,840 --> 00:32:29,990

which was a giant
planned factory producing

609

00:32:29,990 --> 00:32:35,530

artificial fuel for the
war machines, naturally.

610

00:32:35,530 --> 00:32:43,240

And that factory was bombed very
frequently, almost every day.

611

00:32:43,240 --> 00:32:50,500

And some of my friends died
there because of the bombing.

612

00:32:50,500 --> 00:32:52,630

And some of the friends
I made from some

613

00:32:52,630 --> 00:32:56,200

of the people of
the camp died there.

614

00:32:56,200 --> 00:32:58,690

You had been in Auschwitz
for six months then.

615

00:32:58,690 --> 00:32:59,650

Yes, right.

616

00:32:59,650 --> 00:33:05,192

So this is now summer of '44?

617

00:33:05,192 --> 00:33:10,650

This is now June or
July of '44, right.

618

00:33:10,650 --> 00:33:15,090

And so we worked in that
factory, actually worked.

619

00:33:15,090 --> 00:33:21,840

Our group, the group I was in,
was digging ditches for pipe.

620

00:33:21,840 --> 00:33:28,790
So for-- what you call it--

621
00:33:28,790 --> 00:33:29,870
just for pipings.

622
00:33:29,870 --> 00:33:33,320
All kind of different
pipings, you know, digits.

623
00:33:33,320 --> 00:33:36,950
And so that's what we did there.

624
00:33:36,950 --> 00:33:42,530
And the food there was just
slightly better than Auschwitz,

625
00:33:42,530 --> 00:33:44,270
again.

626
00:33:44,270 --> 00:33:46,970
Generally, we thought
in the beginning

627
00:33:46,970 --> 00:33:49,310
that it's better than Auschwitz.

628
00:33:49,310 --> 00:33:52,490
We had-- the
lodging were better.

629
00:33:52,490 --> 00:33:54,380
The barracks were smaller.

630
00:33:54,380 --> 00:33:56,330
They had wooden floors.

631
00:33:56,330 --> 00:34:00,650
The beds were only
in two levels.

632
00:34:00,650 --> 00:34:02,940

And very clean, very nice.

633

00:34:02,940 --> 00:34:08,270

The barracks had windows, which
all in Auschwitz did not exist.

634

00:34:08,270 --> 00:34:13,830

There was a washroom there with
water flowing, clean water.

635

00:34:13,830 --> 00:34:17,000

So we felt like we really
have a better place now.

636

00:34:17,000 --> 00:34:18,710

But we worked.

637

00:34:18,710 --> 00:34:20,210

And very hard, naturally.

638

00:34:20,210 --> 00:34:26,389

And then we learned very
soon that every Sunday when

639

00:34:26,389 --> 00:34:29,520

there was a off day-- because
some Sundays they let us work,

640

00:34:29,520 --> 00:34:30,020

too.

641

00:34:30,020 --> 00:34:32,270

But some Sundays was off day.

642

00:34:32,270 --> 00:34:37,340

And every Sunday of such,
there were hangings.

643

00:34:37,340 --> 00:34:40,040

They had selected five people.

644

00:34:40,040 --> 00:34:44,929

There was a gallow there, in the
middle of that counting place

645
00:34:44,929 --> 00:34:46,909
and marshalling place.

646
00:34:46,909 --> 00:34:50,870
And every Sunday, they
found five people to hang.

647
00:34:50,870 --> 00:34:53,179
And that's what they did.

648
00:34:53,179 --> 00:34:54,595
And there was a hangman there.

649
00:34:54,595 --> 00:34:57,430

650
00:34:57,430 --> 00:34:59,650
I call him Pierre in my writing.

651
00:34:59,650 --> 00:35:01,270
He was a Frenchman.

652
00:35:01,270 --> 00:35:05,990
He was in the French resistance.

653
00:35:05,990 --> 00:35:07,760
And he was caught--

654
00:35:07,760 --> 00:35:08,810
not Jewish.

655
00:35:08,810 --> 00:35:10,350
He was in the French resistance.

656
00:35:10,350 --> 00:35:14,520
He was caught with the French
partisans in some mountain

657

00:35:14,520 --> 00:35:15,470
area.

658
00:35:15,470 --> 00:35:22,060
And he was a medical
doctor, a physician.

659
00:35:22,060 --> 00:35:26,620
The story was, long before
we came there, actually,

660
00:35:26,620 --> 00:35:29,890
that they were
looking for a hangman.

661
00:35:29,890 --> 00:35:32,710
I don't know what happened
to the old hangman.

662
00:35:32,710 --> 00:35:35,350
But they were looking
for the hangman.

663
00:35:35,350 --> 00:35:38,410
And they tried out
several hangmen.

664
00:35:38,410 --> 00:35:41,770
And they did such a lousy
job that even the German

665
00:35:41,770 --> 00:35:45,160
SS couldn't watch
that, how bad it was.

666
00:35:45,160 --> 00:35:47,470
So finally, they found this guy.

667
00:35:47,470 --> 00:35:49,420
And they said, you are a doctor.

668
00:35:49,420 --> 00:35:53,440
If you can heal people,

you can kill them too.

669
00:35:53,440 --> 00:35:54,700
So that's what happened.

670
00:35:54,700 --> 00:35:57,010
He became a hangman.

671
00:35:57,010 --> 00:36:00,435
And there was a--

672
00:36:00,435 --> 00:36:03,893

673
00:36:03,893 --> 00:36:06,060
what do you call, where the
sick people were-- the--

674
00:36:06,060 --> 00:36:06,890
Infirmary.

675
00:36:06,890 --> 00:36:08,190
Infirmary, right.

676
00:36:08,190 --> 00:36:14,910
Infirmary where a Czech
doctor was in charge.

677
00:36:14,910 --> 00:36:16,125
His name was Hirsch.

678
00:36:16,125 --> 00:36:19,640

679
00:36:19,640 --> 00:36:21,350
Was he Jewish?

680
00:36:21,350 --> 00:36:22,880
I don't think he was Jewish.

681
00:36:22,880 --> 00:36:25,340

I'm actually not
sure about that.

682
00:36:25,340 --> 00:36:29,390
Although the Jewish-- the name
would indicate that he was.

683
00:36:29,390 --> 00:36:33,260
But in that camp it was
difficult to recognize

684
00:36:33,260 --> 00:36:36,530
because we all had
the same clothes.

685
00:36:36,530 --> 00:36:40,340
And we had no the insignias
on the chest anymore.

686
00:36:40,340 --> 00:36:43,340
And everybody came
from somewhere else.

687
00:36:43,340 --> 00:36:45,590
You were wearing a uniform
by this time, not your--

688
00:36:45,590 --> 00:36:45,800
Pardon?

689
00:36:45,800 --> 00:36:46,925
You were wearing a uniform?

690
00:36:46,925 --> 00:36:48,890
Yes, right, the striped uniform.

691
00:36:48,890 --> 00:36:52,200
And we really didn't
know where who was from,

692
00:36:52,200 --> 00:36:55,110
and so except those few
guys who came with me.

693
00:36:55,110 --> 00:36:58,760
And it was a camp
collected from all kinds

694
00:36:58,760 --> 00:37:01,620
of different other
camps, you know--

695
00:37:01,620 --> 00:37:02,660
Jews and non-Jews.

696
00:37:02,660 --> 00:37:05,600
How many young men
came with you from--

697
00:37:05,600 --> 00:37:09,560
I think the truck
load was about close

698
00:37:09,560 --> 00:37:13,470
to 60, something
between 50 and 60.

699
00:37:13,470 --> 00:37:17,890
And so they were
hanging people there.

700
00:37:17,890 --> 00:37:19,080
And--

701
00:37:19,080 --> 00:37:21,450
How did they decide
who was to be hanged?

702
00:37:21,450 --> 00:37:27,120
They found illegal stuff on
them-- so-called illegal.

703
00:37:27,120 --> 00:37:32,430
Like, for example, I
remember one boy of our group

704

00:37:32,430 --> 00:37:33,750
who was not hanged.

705

00:37:33,750 --> 00:37:39,210
He was beaten on a
bench with a stick.

706

00:37:39,210 --> 00:37:43,140
And he was selected because he--

707

00:37:43,140 --> 00:37:45,450
when we came back
from work and his--

708

00:37:45,450 --> 00:37:50,040
we had wooden-soled
shoes with canvas top.

709

00:37:50,040 --> 00:37:54,480
And there were strings in there.

710

00:37:54,480 --> 00:37:55,350
You know, the--

711

00:37:55,350 --> 00:37:55,850
Laces?

712

00:37:55,850 --> 00:37:56,850
Laces.

713

00:37:56,850 --> 00:38:00,700
But the laces usually
got broke very quickly.

714

00:38:00,700 --> 00:38:03,580
There was not good material,
And we didn't get a new one.

715

00:38:03,580 --> 00:38:05,880
So we used whatever
we could find.

716

00:38:05,880 --> 00:38:13,380

And this boy found a isolated
thin red wire in the factory

717

00:38:13,380 --> 00:38:16,070

on the ground somewhere,
a piece of it, you know.

718

00:38:16,070 --> 00:38:17,320

He didn't steal it in any way.

719

00:38:17,320 --> 00:38:18,810

He just found it on the ground.

720

00:38:18,810 --> 00:38:20,860

And he put it in said laces.

721

00:38:20,860 --> 00:38:23,790

And he came back and they
were so red and shiny.

722

00:38:23,790 --> 00:38:25,230

So they caught him.

723

00:38:25,230 --> 00:38:30,780

And he got 30 hits with a
stick, which was very little--

724

00:38:30,780 --> 00:38:32,880

very, very little.

725

00:38:32,880 --> 00:38:37,200

People got 50, 100 sticks
hits, and lived through it.

726

00:38:37,200 --> 00:38:40,920

Unfortunately, something
happened with this boy's heart,

727

00:38:40,920 --> 00:38:41,940

I think.

728

00:38:41,940 --> 00:38:44,970

And he died on the table there.

729

00:38:44,970 --> 00:38:50,430

And then there was--

730

00:38:50,430 --> 00:38:55,500

the time came when the Russians
were pushing the front near,

731

00:38:55,500 --> 00:38:57,570

you know.

732

00:38:57,570 --> 00:39:00,810

Were you ever beaten in there?

733

00:39:00,810 --> 00:39:03,420

Not systematically, no.

734

00:39:03,420 --> 00:39:05,190

I got hit here and there.

735

00:39:05,190 --> 00:39:07,370

A punch in the nose,
a punch with a stick.

736

00:39:07,370 --> 00:39:08,190

Why?

737

00:39:08,190 --> 00:39:11,010

Oh, for no reasons at all.

738

00:39:11,010 --> 00:39:15,090

Just for skipping one step
by marching somewhere,

739

00:39:15,090 --> 00:39:16,810

or something like that.

740

00:39:16,810 --> 00:39:22,560

And we also had one SS man in

that camp was a specialist.

741

00:39:22,560 --> 00:39:25,670

They punished us
too with exercise.

742

00:39:25,670 --> 00:39:28,500

We came back from work and he--

743

00:39:28,500 --> 00:39:31,020

a group he didn't
like for some reason.

744

00:39:31,020 --> 00:39:33,180

And, unfortunately,
I was in that group.

745

00:39:33,180 --> 00:39:36,360

And he made us exercise for
about five hours at night.

746

00:39:36,360 --> 00:39:39,510

All the way through the
night, jumping up and down.

747

00:39:39,510 --> 00:39:45,360

And all those gymnastic
things in the mud.

748

00:39:45,360 --> 00:39:48,940

How did you keep going
during that time?

749

00:39:48,940 --> 00:39:50,820

Keep going?

750

00:39:50,820 --> 00:39:53,150

Like everybody else,
you had to keep going.

751

00:39:53,150 --> 00:39:54,420

That's all.

752

00:39:54,420 --> 00:39:58,320

I mean, there is no special
philosophy, how to stay alive

753

00:39:58,320 --> 00:40:02,040

or how to survive.

754

00:40:02,040 --> 00:40:05,370

You just did the
best at the moment

755

00:40:05,370 --> 00:40:09,400

that you thought would be
for you to behave like.

756

00:40:09,400 --> 00:40:12,190

And that was it.

757

00:40:12,190 --> 00:40:13,300

There was no plan.

758

00:40:13,300 --> 00:40:15,150

There was no system.

759

00:40:15,150 --> 00:40:19,380

It was just to try to survive
that particular minute,

760

00:40:19,380 --> 00:40:21,390

that particular day.

761

00:40:21,390 --> 00:40:22,425

And that's what I did.

762

00:40:22,425 --> 00:40:24,780

And what we all did, I think.

763

00:40:24,780 --> 00:40:26,915

Were you thinking of your
mother or your brother

764

00:40:26,915 --> 00:40:27,790
while you were there?

765
00:40:27,790 --> 00:40:30,270
Oh sure, naturally, you know.

766
00:40:30,270 --> 00:40:33,930
Especially in my
age, surely I was

767
00:40:33,930 --> 00:40:36,900
thinking of my father and
my family and everybody.

768
00:40:36,900 --> 00:40:39,540
What happened to
them, where they are?

769
00:40:39,540 --> 00:40:44,970
So I didn't-- except a few, the
ones who died in the Auschwitz

770
00:40:44,970 --> 00:40:49,020
gas chamber, I did not really
know what happened with anybody

771
00:40:49,020 --> 00:40:50,450
other than them.

772
00:40:50,450 --> 00:40:53,170
Were you forced to
watch the hangings?

773
00:40:53,170 --> 00:40:54,270
Yes, right.

774
00:40:54,270 --> 00:40:57,510
That was on the marshalling
yard every Sunday.

775
00:40:57,510 --> 00:41:02,250
The whole camp had to come stand
there like for the counting.

776
00:41:02,250 --> 00:41:05,310
And they brought those guys.

777
00:41:05,310 --> 00:41:07,380
They usually already
separated them

778
00:41:07,380 --> 00:41:11,220
in some way in a special
jail in the camp.

779
00:41:11,220 --> 00:41:14,220
And they brought them
already shackled,

780
00:41:14,220 --> 00:41:15,900
the chains and everything.

781
00:41:15,900 --> 00:41:18,690
And they put them up
there on the bench,

782
00:41:18,690 --> 00:41:21,990
and nooses, and just hung them.

783
00:41:21,990 --> 00:41:24,530
He read the-- what
do you call it--

784
00:41:24,530 --> 00:41:27,040

785
00:41:27,040 --> 00:41:29,800
the decision of the court--

786
00:41:29,800 --> 00:41:32,890
which was, there was no court--

787
00:41:32,890 --> 00:41:39,340
for the German Reich and
for behaving in a manner

788
00:41:39,340 --> 00:41:42,310
that is not legal
in the German Reich.

789
00:41:42,310 --> 00:41:44,640
And that's it.

790
00:41:44,640 --> 00:41:47,190
And so they hung them.

791
00:41:47,190 --> 00:41:50,850
And that French guy, that
doctor who was the hangman,

792
00:41:50,850 --> 00:41:52,410
he hung them.

793
00:41:52,410 --> 00:41:54,840
And he also had to--

794
00:41:54,840 --> 00:41:57,480
there was a little
crematorium there.

795
00:41:57,480 --> 00:42:00,135
Very small, probably
the size of this room.

796
00:42:00,135 --> 00:42:03,510

797
00:42:03,510 --> 00:42:09,310
And I was in Blechhammer
three years ago with my wife,

798
00:42:09,310 --> 00:42:11,320
just looking for the camp.

799
00:42:11,320 --> 00:42:14,710
First of all, it was very
difficult to find the camp.

800
00:42:14,710 --> 00:42:16,390
And as I was driving to Europe--

801
00:42:16,390 --> 00:42:18,460
I had a car rented and drove.

802
00:42:18,460 --> 00:42:20,320
We went to all those camps.

803
00:42:20,320 --> 00:42:23,140
And I went to Auschwitz.

804
00:42:23,140 --> 00:42:26,140
And from Auschwitz,
I went to Blechhammer.

805
00:42:26,140 --> 00:42:28,600
And it was the nearest one.

806
00:42:28,600 --> 00:42:31,570
That was my doloroso trip.

807
00:42:31,570 --> 00:42:34,950
We went to Auschwitz, to
Blechhammer, to Weimar,

808
00:42:34,950 --> 00:42:37,630
to Buchenwald--

809
00:42:37,630 --> 00:42:38,890
except Theresienstadt.

810
00:42:38,890 --> 00:42:41,238
Theresienstadt-- I went
then, when I went to Prague,

811
00:42:41,238 --> 00:42:42,280
I went to Theresienstadt.

812
00:42:42,280 --> 00:42:43,660

So I saw all those camps.

813

00:42:43,660 --> 00:42:46,630

Anyway, we were driving
and it was very late.

814

00:42:46,630 --> 00:42:49,720

And I was asking
people in Poland

815

00:42:49,720 --> 00:42:51,520

how to get to that
Blechhammer camp.

816

00:42:51,520 --> 00:42:53,340

Nobody even knew
what Blechhammer is.

817

00:42:53,340 --> 00:42:58,750

And so finally, I found
the name of the factory.

818

00:42:58,750 --> 00:43:02,710

It's not obviously
[INAUDIBLE] is Blachownia.

819

00:43:02,710 --> 00:43:07,000

So finally, they directed
us towards that area.

820

00:43:07,000 --> 00:43:12,730

And in one moment it
was like a fairy tale.

821

00:43:12,730 --> 00:43:15,430

My wife-- it was
getting dark and we

822

00:43:15,430 --> 00:43:18,160

were on the road,
not very good road,

823

00:43:18,160 --> 00:43:20,410

in the middle of the forest.

824

00:43:20,410 --> 00:43:24,800

And then, far away, I saw
chimneys of a factory.

825

00:43:24,800 --> 00:43:29,110

And I said-- by the
formation of those chimneys,

826

00:43:29,110 --> 00:43:30,890

I said-- that's the factory.

827

00:43:30,890 --> 00:43:31,550

I worked in.

828

00:43:31,550 --> 00:43:32,810

And that was it.

829

00:43:32,810 --> 00:43:35,410

But the camp we
still couldn't find.

830

00:43:35,410 --> 00:43:36,820

And then I stopped.

831

00:43:36,820 --> 00:43:40,300

It was almost getting dusk.

832

00:43:40,300 --> 00:43:41,980

And we were stopped
in the middle,

833

00:43:41,980 --> 00:43:44,230

not knowing where to go.

834

00:43:44,230 --> 00:43:48,250

And suddenly-- and
it's, until today,

835

00:43:48,250 --> 00:43:50,350

absolutely unbelievable--

836
00:43:50,350 --> 00:43:55,750
suddenly, in front of our
car, a man on a bicycle stood.

837
00:43:55,750 --> 00:43:57,190
I don't know how he got there.

838
00:43:57,190 --> 00:43:59,980
If he passed us by while
we were standing or what.

839
00:43:59,980 --> 00:44:01,060
I don't know.

840
00:44:01,060 --> 00:44:06,790
And I said-- partially
Polish, partially Czech--

841
00:44:06,790 --> 00:44:12,430
if he knows where the camp is
or was where the people worked

842
00:44:12,430 --> 00:44:13,990
in the Blachownia.

843
00:44:13,990 --> 00:44:18,460
And I said, Blechhammer.

844
00:44:18,460 --> 00:44:20,710
And he said, yeah,
it's right here.

845
00:44:20,710 --> 00:44:23,060
And I turned around,
and on a tree,

846
00:44:23,060 --> 00:44:27,190
of one of the trees of that
forest where we're standing at,

847
00:44:27,190 --> 00:44:32,410

was a little rusty metal
plate which said on the top,

848
00:44:32,410 --> 00:44:36,370
something used to be
camp buh-buh-buh nothing.

849
00:44:36,370 --> 00:44:37,930
You couldn't read it anymore.

850
00:44:37,930 --> 00:44:40,600
It was so rusty, so worn out.

851
00:44:40,600 --> 00:44:42,320
And he said, it's right here.

852
00:44:42,320 --> 00:44:44,430
I said, yeah, but
it's just a sign.

853
00:44:44,430 --> 00:44:46,940
And he said just go
through the woods there.

854
00:44:46,940 --> 00:44:50,500
There's a little pathway.

855
00:44:50,500 --> 00:44:53,320
You go there and you come
a couple of hundred yards,

856
00:44:53,320 --> 00:44:55,480
you come to that camp.

857
00:44:55,480 --> 00:44:56,230
It was dark.

858
00:44:56,230 --> 00:44:57,700
I was scared to walk there.

859
00:44:57,700 --> 00:44:59,280
I turned-- the car was small.

860
00:44:59,280 --> 00:45:00,820
I turned the car around.

861
00:45:00,820 --> 00:45:03,700
And while I was
turning the car around,

862
00:45:03,700 --> 00:45:05,830
I wanted to say thank you.

863
00:45:05,830 --> 00:45:08,440
And the guy was gone.

864
00:45:08,440 --> 00:45:09,460
Gone.

865
00:45:09,460 --> 00:45:11,832
If I would be there myself,
I wouldn't believe it.

866
00:45:11,832 --> 00:45:12,790
I thought I made it up.

867
00:45:12,790 --> 00:45:14,215
My wife was there.

868
00:45:14,215 --> 00:45:15,340
She said, where's this guy.

869
00:45:15,340 --> 00:45:16,215
I said, I don't know.

870
00:45:16,215 --> 00:45:18,290
He was standing here.

871
00:45:18,290 --> 00:45:20,660
I was like, I don't
know, if I would

872
00:45:20,660 --> 00:45:22,610

be a very religious
man, which I'm not,

873
00:45:22,610 --> 00:45:27,110
I would say somebody
from above directed me.

874
00:45:27,110 --> 00:45:28,700
Why, I don't know--
why he wanted

875
00:45:28,700 --> 00:45:31,130
to see that I see it again.

876
00:45:31,130 --> 00:45:33,470
I drove the car
around and I went

877
00:45:33,470 --> 00:45:36,320
into that little wooden part.

878
00:45:36,320 --> 00:45:38,600
That part was just
about wide enough

879
00:45:38,600 --> 00:45:41,240
so I wouldn't scratch the car.

880
00:45:41,240 --> 00:45:45,200
No road, really,
just broken grass

881
00:45:45,200 --> 00:45:48,080
and broken branches and things.

882
00:45:48,080 --> 00:45:52,580
And after about 100 meters,
I came to our gate--

883
00:45:52,580 --> 00:45:57,200
to a ruin of a gate.

884

00:45:57,200 --> 00:46:01,640
Metal and steel and cement,
all just fallen about.

885
00:46:01,640 --> 00:46:04,010
If I wouldn't
know, I would never

886
00:46:04,010 --> 00:46:06,240
recognize what it used to be.

887
00:46:06,240 --> 00:46:10,010
But immediately, when I saw
those ruins I said, that's it.

888
00:46:10,010 --> 00:46:12,080
That's the entrance to the camp.

889
00:46:12,080 --> 00:46:13,030
And that was it.

890
00:46:13,030 --> 00:46:14,270
And we went in.

891
00:46:14,270 --> 00:46:16,350
The fence was not there anymore.

892
00:46:16,350 --> 00:46:19,580
But the stands were
there for the wire.

893
00:46:19,580 --> 00:46:22,040
So we went in there, drove in.

894
00:46:22,040 --> 00:46:27,230
There was a nice place there
with a little monument on it.

895
00:46:27,230 --> 00:46:29,720
So, actually, it was
kept by somebody,

896

00:46:29,720 --> 00:46:32,720
but nobody knew
how to get there.

897
00:46:32,720 --> 00:46:35,390
And why I'm telling
you this story--

898
00:46:35,390 --> 00:46:38,690
that little crematorium
of the size of this room

899
00:46:38,690 --> 00:46:39,680
was still there.

900
00:46:39,680 --> 00:46:42,800
And it's still there and I have
photographs and films of it.

901
00:46:42,800 --> 00:46:44,810
It's still there.

902
00:46:44,810 --> 00:46:47,780
That was also not
just a crematorium.

903
00:46:47,780 --> 00:46:50,990
It was meant for people
who die in the camp.

904
00:46:50,990 --> 00:46:53,660
Not too big, you
know, just a few dead

905
00:46:53,660 --> 00:46:55,910
at a time he could burn there.

906
00:46:55,910 --> 00:46:59,720
That henchmen-- that
hangman, the doctor--

907
00:46:59,720 --> 00:47:03,500
had also a little room there

where he lived, where he slept.

908

00:47:03,500 --> 00:47:09,200

And he also burned and
served the crematorium.

909

00:47:09,200 --> 00:47:13,350

And he also-- there
was, in the fence

910

00:47:13,350 --> 00:47:16,790

there was a little gate with
a reflector with a tower

911

00:47:16,790 --> 00:47:18,350

with a watchman on the top.

912

00:47:18,350 --> 00:47:22,520

And that doctor, that
hangman, was allowed,

913

00:47:22,520 --> 00:47:28,130

every time he burned people, to
drag it out with a two-wheeler

914

00:47:28,130 --> 00:47:29,290

through that little gate.

915

00:47:29,290 --> 00:47:30,920

That watchman would
open the gate.

916

00:47:30,920 --> 00:47:33,560

And he would go out the
camp through this gate.

917

00:47:33,560 --> 00:47:37,250

And there was a hole dugged
out, a big hole there,

918

00:47:37,250 --> 00:47:41,870

where he always put the
ashes of those dead people

919
00:47:41,870 --> 00:47:45,080
into that hole, and
went back again.

920
00:47:45,080 --> 00:47:48,320
The watchman closed
the gate again.

921
00:47:48,320 --> 00:47:53,210
And that's a part
of my leading story

922
00:47:53,210 --> 00:47:57,500
of the book that has
lots of other things

923
00:47:57,500 --> 00:48:01,640
in there, like the boy
whom I am talking about

924
00:48:01,640 --> 00:48:06,710
escaped with the help of
this hangman and the doctor

925
00:48:06,710 --> 00:48:08,570
because he was
supposed to be hanged.

926
00:48:08,570 --> 00:48:09,700
But that's complicated.

927
00:48:09,700 --> 00:48:10,920
I don't want to go into that.

928
00:48:10,920 --> 00:48:14,560
So anyway, those two guys
hope this boy to escape.

929
00:48:14,560 --> 00:48:20,450
He escaped and the
German didn't notice it,

930

00:48:20,450 --> 00:48:23,840

because he was supposed to
be hung and dead and burned.

931

00:48:23,840 --> 00:48:26,060

And so he escaped.

932

00:48:26,060 --> 00:48:31,370

And, in the woods, he
was found by a girl

933

00:48:31,370 --> 00:48:37,100

who was the daughter of the
forest man, or the forester.

934

00:48:37,100 --> 00:48:39,410

And he had a shack
there in the woods.

935

00:48:39,410 --> 00:48:42,560

And they spent time
in those woods.

936

00:48:42,560 --> 00:48:44,210

They were together.

937

00:48:44,210 --> 00:48:46,050

And she took care of him.

938

00:48:46,050 --> 00:48:51,650

And she also was taking care of
a little farm, of a pig farm.

939

00:48:51,650 --> 00:48:55,790

Which was delivering the pigs
to the German army, the food,

940

00:48:55,790 --> 00:48:56,540

you know.

941

00:48:56,540 --> 00:48:59,300

And some food, some

pigs got lost there

942

00:48:59,300 --> 00:49:04,130
because those two kids used
that within a couple of months.

943

00:49:04,130 --> 00:49:06,470
And then they
decided to run away

944

00:49:06,470 --> 00:49:09,830
because they were after her.

945

00:49:09,830 --> 00:49:12,020
And so they decided to run away.

946

00:49:12,020 --> 00:49:16,670
And they jumped a train that
was carrying the fuel out

947

00:49:16,670 --> 00:49:19,700
of the factory, to the front.

948

00:49:19,700 --> 00:49:21,560
And they wanted to
jump on the train.

949

00:49:21,560 --> 00:49:22,980
And they did that.

950

00:49:22,980 --> 00:49:26,570
But, unfortunately,
as I said, there

951

00:49:26,570 --> 00:49:31,760
were air raids on the factory
and also the surrounding area.

952

00:49:31,760 --> 00:49:36,710
And while they were jumping the
train, there was an air raid.

953

00:49:36,710 --> 00:49:39,530
And the air raid hit the train.

954
00:49:39,530 --> 00:49:43,220
And the boy was capable
and still lucky enough

955
00:49:43,220 --> 00:49:45,290
to jump off the train.

956
00:49:45,290 --> 00:49:51,690
But the girl exploded
with the fuel tank.

957
00:49:51,690 --> 00:49:56,240
But the boy was found
and sent to the--

958
00:49:56,240 --> 00:49:57,980
because he was
unconscious, naturally.

959
00:49:57,980 --> 00:50:02,990
And he was sent to the camp
because even German people went

960
00:50:02,990 --> 00:50:05,450
to the camp to see
the doctor there,

961
00:50:05,450 --> 00:50:09,440
because the famous Czech
doctor, he was so famous,

962
00:50:09,440 --> 00:50:12,740
known to be very good
in taking care of people

963
00:50:12,740 --> 00:50:14,600
that even civilians--

964
00:50:14,600 --> 00:50:20,340
Germans and SS men-- came to him

to take care of their illnesses

965

00:50:20,340 --> 00:50:21,320
and problems.

966

00:50:21,320 --> 00:50:23,810
So there were also dead--

967

00:50:23,810 --> 00:50:26,870
or injured, actually--
people, railroad

968

00:50:26,870 --> 00:50:28,790
guards from that train.

969

00:50:28,790 --> 00:50:33,350
And they loaded all of the
unconscious people on a train

970

00:50:33,350 --> 00:50:38,930
and quickly took them to the
doctor in the camp there,

971

00:50:38,930 --> 00:50:42,470
not knowing that
this one guy is one

972

00:50:42,470 --> 00:50:45,710
of those who was in the
camp before and escaped.

973

00:50:45,710 --> 00:50:48,200
And he was found out
after a while, naturally,

974

00:50:48,200 --> 00:50:50,600
and was supposed
to be hung again.

975

00:50:50,600 --> 00:50:56,120
But in that time, the Russians
were pushing the front

976
00:50:56,120 --> 00:50:57,950
very quickly.

977
00:50:57,950 --> 00:51:01,970
And before they managed
to hang this boy,

978
00:51:01,970 --> 00:51:05,180
they liquidated the camp.

979
00:51:05,180 --> 00:51:08,780
And that was when the camp
went on the so-called march

980
00:51:08,780 --> 00:51:11,720
of death-- death march.

981
00:51:11,720 --> 00:51:15,020
The March took about
10 days or 11 days,

982
00:51:15,020 --> 00:51:18,110
and wound up in Gross-Rosen.

983
00:51:18,110 --> 00:51:20,120
Well, let's talk
about that march.

984
00:51:20,120 --> 00:51:21,100
OK.

985
00:51:21,100 --> 00:51:22,220
OK.

986
00:51:22,220 --> 00:51:30,560
The march, I also describe it,
is, just quickly, 4,000 people

987
00:51:30,560 --> 00:51:35,100
left the camp of Blechhammer.

988

00:51:35,100 --> 00:51:41,580

Out of which, about 60 or
70 arrived in Buchenwald,

989

00:51:41,580 --> 00:51:45,040

for different reasons.

990

00:51:45,040 --> 00:51:48,480

First of all, they started
to-- they had not enough

991

00:51:48,480 --> 00:51:51,390

guards to watch the march.

992

00:51:51,390 --> 00:51:53,790

And the guards had to march too.

993

00:51:53,790 --> 00:51:58,680

So they started to shoot the
people for all kind of reasons.

994

00:51:58,680 --> 00:52:03,480

You know, you stop, bind your
laces or need to go bathroom,

995

00:52:03,480 --> 00:52:05,520

they shot you right away.

996

00:52:05,520 --> 00:52:08,190

You step one step
behind, they shot you.

997

00:52:08,190 --> 00:52:10,770

Or sometimes they
just randomly shot.

998

00:52:10,770 --> 00:52:13,980

So they let people lay
down and they kick them

999

00:52:13,980 --> 00:52:17,580

into the side of the road.

1000

00:52:17,580 --> 00:52:20,070

And after a while, they
were not too many anymore.

1001

00:52:20,070 --> 00:52:23,520

And there were so few
prisoners that the guards

1002

00:52:23,520 --> 00:52:25,120

could divide in two.

1003

00:52:25,120 --> 00:52:28,290

And one half of the guards
would march with the prisoners,

1004

00:52:28,290 --> 00:52:32,280

and one half would be
taken by truck, by car,

1005

00:52:32,280 --> 00:52:33,460

to the next station.

1006

00:52:33,460 --> 00:52:35,370

And then they
would switch again.

1007

00:52:35,370 --> 00:52:37,410

So they made it
comfortable for them.

1008

00:52:37,410 --> 00:52:39,960

We're talking January, '45, now?

1009

00:52:39,960 --> 00:52:43,080

February-- end of
January, February, right.

1010

00:52:43,080 --> 00:52:44,520

February, '45.

1011

00:52:44,520 --> 00:52:50,400

And so then they march in

this way, no food, only once.

1012
00:52:50,400 --> 00:52:51,285
They got a ship--

1013
00:52:51,285 --> 00:52:53,410
When you say "they," you're
talking about yourself.

1014
00:52:53,410 --> 00:52:54,300
Yes, right.

1015
00:52:54,300 --> 00:52:59,010
I mean the-- yeah, the group,
I mean-- the prisoners.

1016
00:52:59,010 --> 00:53:00,450
Me too, right.

1017
00:53:00,450 --> 00:53:07,170
We marched and we got food
only once, as I remember.

1018
00:53:07,170 --> 00:53:11,430
And that was a situation
where, close to Prudnik,

1019
00:53:11,430 --> 00:53:16,710
in Poland and Silesia, where
they brought so little food

1020
00:53:16,710 --> 00:53:19,000
that there was not
enough for everybody.

1021
00:53:19,000 --> 00:53:23,600
And so there was a big group of
people who didn't get any food.

1022
00:53:23,600 --> 00:53:25,450
There was not enough.

1023

00:53:25,450 --> 00:53:27,990
So they told them,
you stay here.

1024
00:53:27,990 --> 00:53:30,960
It was winter, freezing,
snow like this.

1025
00:53:30,960 --> 00:53:35,310
In the thin clothes,
we slept in the snow.

1026
00:53:35,310 --> 00:53:37,380
The only thing
that we could drink

1027
00:53:37,380 --> 00:53:40,320
was the snow, the melted
snow in the hands, or so.

1028
00:53:40,320 --> 00:53:41,300
And no food.

1029
00:53:41,300 --> 00:53:43,260
So finally they
brought that bread.

1030
00:53:43,260 --> 00:53:44,740
It was not enough for everybody.

1031
00:53:44,740 --> 00:53:48,990
So they said about I don't know
how many hundreds of people,

1032
00:53:48,990 --> 00:53:49,530
stay here.

1033
00:53:49,530 --> 00:53:53,310
We bring you a new load of
bread and we march after them.

1034
00:53:53,310 --> 00:53:58,050
Only when we marched away, we

heard the shooting very soon

1035
00:53:58,050 --> 00:53:58,890
afterwards.

1036
00:53:58,890 --> 00:54:01,470
And then we learned that
they shot all of them.

1037
00:54:01,470 --> 00:54:05,830
And it's-- I think it's
historically in the--

1038
00:54:05,830 --> 00:54:10,990
there's a book about
Blehammer somewhere.

1039
00:54:10,990 --> 00:54:13,570
And it describes that situation.

1040
00:54:13,570 --> 00:54:16,300
I think I have an
excerpt here somewhere.

1041
00:54:16,300 --> 00:54:21,100
So where it says about
a Prudnik massacre, too.

1042
00:54:21,100 --> 00:54:24,340
Did you stay with any
friends on the march?

1043
00:54:24,340 --> 00:54:25,820
Did you stay with
the same people?

1044
00:54:25,820 --> 00:54:27,040
Yeah, how did you know?

1045
00:54:27,040 --> 00:54:27,540
I didn't.

1046

00:54:27,540 --> 00:54:30,250

1047

00:54:30,250 --> 00:54:36,930

I have one very good Polish
guy who was, in Blechhammer,

1048

00:54:36,930 --> 00:54:42,020

a provision distributor.

1049

00:54:42,020 --> 00:54:44,390

In fact, he worked in a kitchen.

1050

00:54:44,390 --> 00:54:48,110

And he distributed the
food over the camp--

1051

00:54:48,110 --> 00:54:50,480

the bread and the coffee,
the soups and everything.

1052

00:54:50,480 --> 00:54:54,230

He came to the barracks with
the barrel and the bread.

1053

00:54:54,230 --> 00:54:57,590

And he marched with me.

1054

00:54:57,590 --> 00:54:59,060

Was he your age or older?

1055

00:54:59,060 --> 00:55:01,310

No, he was much older.

1056

00:55:01,310 --> 00:55:06,530

He was probably in
his 30s, maybe 40s.

1057

00:55:06,530 --> 00:55:11,540

And he kind of played father to
me, protected me all the trip.

1058

00:55:11,540 --> 00:55:13,370

I wanted to do
all kind of things

1059

00:55:13,370 --> 00:55:16,550

and he kicked me and
punched me and dragged me.

1060

00:55:16,550 --> 00:55:17,660

What did you want to do?

1061

00:55:17,660 --> 00:55:19,040

I wanted to rest.

1062

00:55:19,040 --> 00:55:20,820

I wanted to go into the woods.

1063

00:55:20,820 --> 00:55:23,420

I wanted to wait
for the other bread

1064

00:55:23,420 --> 00:55:25,070

because I didn't have enough.

1065

00:55:25,070 --> 00:55:28,670

So he had some
bread in his apron

1066

00:55:28,670 --> 00:55:30,590

that he took from
the kitchen with him.

1067

00:55:30,590 --> 00:55:31,920

And he shared it with me.

1068

00:55:31,920 --> 00:55:34,550

He said, no way, you
cannot stay there.

1069

00:55:34,550 --> 00:55:37,400

And he dragged me away and
he punched me, he kicked me.

1070

00:55:37,400 --> 00:55:41,240

And then we learned that
those people got killed there.

1071

00:55:41,240 --> 00:55:44,020

What was his name?

1072

00:55:44,020 --> 00:55:48,140

[? Swintig ?] was the
name that we called him.

1073

00:55:48,140 --> 00:55:50,990

But I don't know his
last name, really.

1074

00:55:50,990 --> 00:55:52,940

But [? Swintig, ?]
we called him.

1075

00:55:52,940 --> 00:55:59,330

And so this guy--

1076

00:55:59,330 --> 00:56:04,268

we marched all the
way up to Gross-Rosen.

1077

00:56:04,268 --> 00:56:05,360

Do you have to stop?

1078

00:56:05,360 --> 00:56:05,860

OK.

1079

00:56:05,860 --> 00:56:06,360

Oh.

1080

00:56:06,360 --> 00:56:07,730

And in Gross-Rosen.

1081

00:56:07,730 --> 00:56:12,830

I think we were probably still
a little bit around a thousand

1082

00:56:12,830 --> 00:56:16,070
people arriving in Gross-Rosen.

1083

00:56:16,070 --> 00:56:17,570
And then a couple days--

1084

00:56:17,570 --> 00:56:19,003
About how long did
the march take?

1085

00:56:19,003 --> 00:56:19,670
Do you remember?

1086

00:56:19,670 --> 00:56:21,800
I think 11, 12 days, or so.

1087

00:56:21,800 --> 00:56:23,520
I really wouldn't know, exactly.

1088

00:56:23,520 --> 00:56:24,080
But--

1089

00:56:24,080 --> 00:56:27,020
And the only time you stopped
was at night to sleep?

1090

00:56:27,020 --> 00:56:27,800
To sleep.

1091

00:56:27,800 --> 00:56:30,050
Once they let us
sleep in a barn.

1092

00:56:30,050 --> 00:56:34,970
Or twice they let us sleep in
some barn, in some farmer's

1093

00:56:34,970 --> 00:56:38,780
barn with straw and so.

1094

00:56:38,780 --> 00:56:43,340

And once we got the bread food.

1095

00:56:43,340 --> 00:56:45,170

Once they brought us some--

1096

00:56:45,170 --> 00:56:47,270

I think it was, like, hot soup.

1097

00:56:47,270 --> 00:56:49,040

But it really wasn't soup.

1098

00:56:49,040 --> 00:56:49,940

And that was all.

1099

00:56:49,940 --> 00:56:53,930

During the whole 10 or 11 days,
that was the whole food we got.

1100

00:56:53,930 --> 00:56:57,020

The only thing that saved
us, actually, was the snow

1101

00:56:57,020 --> 00:56:59,000

that we could drink.

1102

00:56:59,000 --> 00:57:06,470

And so in Gross-Rosen they
fed us there as normally

1103

00:57:06,470 --> 00:57:08,360

as every other
prisoner, actually.

1104

00:57:08,360 --> 00:57:13,040

And three days later,
we got some provisions.

1105

00:57:13,040 --> 00:57:18,480

And they took us to
the railroad station.

1106

00:57:18,480 --> 00:57:20,480

So you stayed in
Gross-Rosen for three days.

1107
00:57:20,480 --> 00:57:20,780
Three days, yeah.

1108
00:57:20,780 --> 00:57:22,363
What else did you
do there while you--

1109
00:57:22,363 --> 00:57:23,690
Nothing.

1110
00:57:23,690 --> 00:57:25,620
In fact, they locked
us in one barrack

1111
00:57:25,620 --> 00:57:28,010
because they didn't
want us to interfere

1112
00:57:28,010 --> 00:57:31,550
with the regular
prisoners, because they

1113
00:57:31,550 --> 00:57:33,410
didn't want to count us.

1114
00:57:33,410 --> 00:57:36,770
Because they didn't even know
how many we are supposed to be.

1115
00:57:36,770 --> 00:57:39,710
So they actually locked
us in the barrack.

1116
00:57:39,710 --> 00:57:44,030
And then when we were ready
to leave, they let us out.

1117
00:57:44,030 --> 00:57:47,150
But they gave us the regular
prisoner food and so.

1118
00:57:47,150 --> 00:57:48,980
Because if somebody
would interfere

1119
00:57:48,980 --> 00:57:52,460
with the count of the
regular occupants,

1120
00:57:52,460 --> 00:57:55,160
it would be a mess for the SS.

1121
00:57:55,160 --> 00:57:56,840
So they did that.

1122
00:57:56,840 --> 00:57:59,030
And so we get to the train.

1123
00:57:59,030 --> 00:58:06,650
And the train from Gross-Rosen
went and in day or so, too,

1124
00:58:06,650 --> 00:58:10,280
and we came at night.

1125
00:58:10,280 --> 00:58:14,630
I think it was the 13th
or 14th of February.

1126
00:58:14,630 --> 00:58:24,080
And the train stopped in
Dresden, out of all the places.

1127
00:58:24,080 --> 00:58:27,110
And I think you
know what happened.

1128
00:58:27,110 --> 00:58:30,650
The whole-- the night of
they stopped the train

1129
00:58:30,650 --> 00:58:36,850

there, Dresden was leveled
with the ground of the Earth,

1130
00:58:36,850 --> 00:58:39,740
was erased from the maps.

1131
00:58:39,740 --> 00:58:41,180
And that was the night.

1132
00:58:41,180 --> 00:58:45,740
And we were sitting on
trains on an open wagon.

1133
00:58:45,740 --> 00:58:49,610
And out of those thousand
or whatever we were,

1134
00:58:49,610 --> 00:58:52,170
there was only about 100 left.

1135
00:58:52,170 --> 00:58:53,810
That was it.

1136
00:58:53,810 --> 00:58:56,570
The last was died
from the bombardment.

1137
00:58:56,570 --> 00:58:58,790
Oh, the prisoners
died from the bombing.

1138
00:58:58,790 --> 00:59:00,650
Right, yep.

1139
00:59:00,650 --> 00:59:03,500
And then after the
bombing, there were--

1140
00:59:03,500 --> 00:59:05,600
What did the bombing
look like to you?

1141

00:59:05,600 --> 00:59:07,160
Oh, incredible.

1142
00:59:07,160 --> 00:59:11,360
I mean when we came there,
it was a nice, nice railroad

1143
00:59:11,360 --> 00:59:18,740
station and railroad yard,
with several lines of rails--

1144
00:59:18,740 --> 00:59:22,280
guards and rails--
train rails, I mean.

1145
00:59:22,280 --> 00:59:26,390
And when the bombardment-- in
the morning, when we looked,

1146
00:59:26,390 --> 00:59:27,650
there was no rails.

1147
00:59:27,650 --> 00:59:32,870
There was just piles of
metal, piles of soil.

1148
00:59:32,870 --> 00:59:39,380
And here parts of wagons,
of railroad trains, cars.

1149
00:59:39,380 --> 00:59:41,540
The only car that
was not touched

1150
00:59:41,540 --> 00:59:43,520
was the car I was on it.

1151
00:59:43,520 --> 00:59:47,630
But even there, people
were hit by falling debris

1152
00:59:47,630 --> 00:59:49,860
and died from that.

1153
00:59:49,860 --> 00:59:54,770
And I was-- when I
woke up in the morning,

1154
00:59:54,770 --> 00:59:57,650
I know I wasn't sleeping,
I was just unconscious.

1155
00:59:57,650 --> 01:00:03,281
Because a railroad wooden--

1156
01:00:03,281 --> 01:00:04,190
what you call it--

1157
01:00:04,190 --> 01:00:04,760
Trestle?

1158
01:00:04,760 --> 01:00:06,830
--trestle hit me.

1159
01:00:06,830 --> 01:00:10,070
And I woke up in the
morning and the trestle

1160
01:00:10,070 --> 01:00:17,510
was leaning on the
sidewall of that wagon.

1161
01:00:17,510 --> 01:00:20,450
And the other end
of the trestle--

1162
01:00:20,450 --> 01:00:22,280
you know, they're
heavy, big like this--

1163
01:00:22,280 --> 01:00:26,660
was implanted and it's
in [? Swintig ?] body.

1164
01:00:26,660 --> 01:00:27,630

And he was dead.

1165

01:00:27,630 --> 01:00:34,580

And I was just underneath, saved
by his body, by the trestle.

1166

01:00:34,580 --> 01:00:39,650

And so they took us on a bus,
because there was no train.

1167

01:00:39,650 --> 01:00:40,610

There was nothing.

1168

01:00:40,610 --> 01:00:42,990

And they somehow guarded us.

1169

01:00:42,990 --> 01:00:44,780

I don't even know how.

1170

01:00:44,780 --> 01:00:48,470

They tried to
gather all German--

1171

01:00:48,470 --> 01:00:50,570

no German-- prisoners,
no prisoners

1172

01:00:50,570 --> 01:00:53,990

from the railroad
track area in front

1173

01:00:53,990 --> 01:00:56,210

of the what used to be
the railroad station,

1174

01:00:56,210 --> 01:00:59,600

was just ruins, just
pile of bricks left.

1175

01:00:59,600 --> 01:01:02,910

And there was like a plaza,
a little bit left over.

1176

01:01:02,910 --> 01:01:06,230

And they all shifted
us over there--

1177

01:01:06,230 --> 01:01:08,420

civilians, prisoners,
everything.

1178

01:01:08,420 --> 01:01:11,960

And then they picked us
by our clothes, naturally.

1179

01:01:11,960 --> 01:01:14,310

Prisoners were not too many.

1180

01:01:14,310 --> 01:01:20,300

And they put us on an old,
halfway broken-down bus.

1181

01:01:20,300 --> 01:01:25,220

And the guy who was [INAUDIBLE]
responsible for the transport

1182

01:01:25,220 --> 01:01:31,330

took us, with a
bus, to Buchenwald.

1183

01:01:31,330 --> 01:01:33,000