

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**  
**RG-50.106\*0115**

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audiotaped interview with Noah Roitman, conducted by Gail Schwartz on April 8, 1999 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Potomac, Maryland and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

**NOAH ROITMAN**  
**April 8, 1999**

**Beginning Tape One, Side A**

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Noah Roitman**, conducted by **Gail Schwartz** on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1999 in **Potomac, Maryland**. This is tape number one, side **A**. Please tell me when you were born and where you were born.

Answer: I am born in the town of **Baranowicze** in January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1923.

Q: And what is your full name?

A: **Noah Roitman**.

Q: Did you have a middle name, or was that your only f – only name?

A: This is o – my only name.

Q: Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about the town. What do you remember? And again, this is before the war. Can you describe the town before the war?

A: Yeah, I think I can. I can describe the town, was like, most **Ashkenazi**, not – not tra-tradition – not **Sephardish**, very little of them. People who were very intellectual, like for instance, people in our town used to speak Yiddish and Hebrew, Russian and Polish and German and French, it – fluently, a lot of them. Many young people went to **Israel** as [indecipherable]. Many went to **Rome** to get education like doctors or others, because in **White Russia** where I lived was – was **Poland** that time we lived, but it was actually **White Russia**, and the Polacks were very

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

anti-Semites and they didn't let a Jew to become a lawyer, engineer or a doctor. So most of the Jewish people who were richer, sent the children to – most of them to **Italy**.

Q: About how many Jews were in the town as you were growing up?

A: Approximately i – before the war was like 20,000, and in time for the war people came from all over, from **Romania**, from **Poland**, and they used to say that we have 50,000 Jews.

Q: And did you live in a Jewish neighborhood, where your family was?

A: Yes, we – most of the Jews used to live in the center of the town. The Christians used to live around it in the – all in the edges from the town, all around the center of the – of the city, the schools and the yeshivas **nits**, centers of business, everything was in the center of the town, and the Jewish population lived in the center, too.

Q: Who made up your family?

A: I had a father, **Jakov**, and a mother, **Esther**. And I had a older brother, **Mordechai**. Then myself, and I had a sister who her name was **Rachel**, and then another sister, **Devorah** and the youngster was **Moshe**.

Q: And for how many generations back were your – was your family in this town?

A: **Baranowicze** was – was actually a new city. **Baranowicze** was born maybe a hundred, 150 years ago, 120 years ago, they don't know exactly why. It used to be a

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

little farm – a farm place, but because the Russian – the Russian tsar decide that time that he wants to build in **Baranowicze** two airports and two railroad stations, and since then, the town become very famous. My grandpa was in the Russian army for seven years and he was a reli – a religious man, so when the war was out in 1911 to '18, he came to **Baranowicze** and his gen – general give him a permit to become a baker and supply food for the whole army.

Q: This was your grandfather on your father's side?

A: [indecipherable] Yes.

Q: And his name?

A: His name was **Mordechai Roitman**. And his brother was here in **America**, **David Roitman**, the **Chazan**. Was a famous **Chazan** here, **Roitman**, it was his brother.

Q: So your father was born in **Baranowicze**?

A: In **Baranowicze**, yeah.

Q: And what about your mother's family?

A: My mother was born near **Baranowicze**, seven kilometers from the **Baranowicze**. It was a little place wef – was called **Nowa Mysz – Nowa Musz(ph)**. From all the little cities around **Baranowicze** like **Nowa Mysz**, **Stelavisz(ph)**, **Horodisz(ph)**, little places like that, all the people came to settle in **Baranowicze**

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

because it was [**indecipherable**] and put – people lead a better life, and they left the little places and came to the city, and that why the city grow so fast.

Q: Did you have a lot of extended family, aunts, uncles, cousins around?

A: Yes, yes. I had a very large city – a – a very large family, because my grandpa has six children and they all married and have six children. So from both side of the family, we had in our family a-around 200 people. And nobody was left over except me. One of my cousins was in the partisans too, but the Russian took him out in 1944 and they took him on the front and in anur – **Bialystok**, he – he was killed. A lot of Jewish partisans was killed in the Russian army because the Russian want them to be killed. They didn't give them no arms, they didn't give them even food. With the same clothes that they – they left the partisans, with the same clothes they went to the Russian army. And most – all most of them killed, why – h-how do I know that? Because from the 300 Jewish partisans, was left maybe 10 or 15 who arrived to **Israel** in the – in the 40's and they told me what was happening.

Q: What language did you speak at home?

A: At home we spoke Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian more than Polish.

Q: So you really knew four languages when you were a child?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And what kind of school did you go to?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: I, even I was a youngster from – when I was three years old they send me to a **cheder**, and I remember I came to the **cheder**, so was between one **cheder** and the second one was a **mechitzah**, and boys and girls used to be a difference.

Q: This is the separation between boys and girls.

A: Right. And then, they – they throw candies on the floor, and I was probably very shameful, I didn't want to even pick up a c – a candy [indecipherable] pick up a candy from the floor. So th-they come to me, said hey, it's for you. I said, but I cannot pick up candies from the floor, I am not used to this. So [indecipherable] understood it, I had – I had come – I came from a good housing, I don't do things like this. So they – some to pick it up and put me some candies in my pocket and I was happy. And I went in [indecipherable] in the **cheder** for probably about two, three years. Then from [indecipherable] I – they send me to [indecipherable] that he have to be – become a good **shorish**(ph), a good **yesud**(ph). I been there for another two, three years. Then I went to the **yeshiva** in **Baranowicze**, th-the small **yeshiva**. It was a big **yeshiva** and a small. So I was there for another two years and from there I went to a high school, like [indecipherable] **Majewski**(ph). Was a big school in the city and I was learning there almost until the war. But one year before the war, my parents decide – I didn't know why, they – they send me to **Slonim**, to **yeshiva** for a year. Probably – or I was a good student or a bad student, I don't

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

know what was happening. And they send me away from house, and it was very hard on me. I couldn't stay in the **yeshiva** and learn like I used to, because I couldn't – I couldn't get used to it, not to see my mummy, my sisters, my – a-all the family. And I – I run away from the **yeshiva** and I came home, it was a Friday. And when I went home, one of my uncles, my youngster – the youngs – the youngster brother of my father, they all went to **yeshiva** in **Slonim** because that time **Baranowicze** was a little place, so they went [**indecipherable**] to **Slonim** because **S-S-Slonim** was famous. And he says to me, where you coming from? I said, I'm coming from **Slonim**. Are you going home? I said yes. Don't do it to my brother, he says, your brother will not able to take it. I'll give you the two **zlotys** and go back to **Slonim**. I said, Uncle, I'm not going back to **yeshiva**. I'm going to learn here. And I left. I came home. My mummy was happy. My mother ca – my father came home and I was sit [**indecipherable**] was sitting, I ind – I was sitting at the kitchen and eat **latkes**, Friday. And he looked at me and I felt that I did something wrong, with not the right thing, with not saying anything. But he came, and I explained – I explain it to him. So he says to me, you promise me you're going to learn good? I said, of course. And I was learning at home. And I was in – in the school [**indecipherable**] **Majewski**(ph) and I finish up with the eighth grade and had to go to the ninth, and then broke out the war in 1939 and I had to go into ninth, and the Russian are here.



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

So I went to the school and the Russian came. I was there for three month probably, in the Russian school and I jumped right away to the 10<sup>th</sup>. And almost finished the 10<sup>th</sup> and the war with **Hitler** came.

Q: We'll get to that in a minute. While you were growing up as a small child, did you have any friends that were not Jewish?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you get to meet them, because you didn't live among them.

A: Be-Because, we had some neighbors here and there, you know, very little. My father was a bookkeeper and it – he couldn't make a living. A bookkeeper in that time, it [indecipherable] business w – everybody was not – so he decided to do pal – business in th – what he – so he became a – a store – a store owner. And a store owner was better, and was – so people used to come to the store, and many times used to come from school, go to the store and help out a little bit, so they can [indecipherable] a little [indecipherable]. So a lot of [indecipherable] used to come and buy cigarettes or buy [indecipherable] many things. And that where you become friends with many. They used to tell me, oh, you're not Jewish, right? I said, why not? They said, your name is **Roitman**, you must be from **Germany**. Jokingly, you know. So I said no, I'm a double Jew. [indecipherable] I said, I am **Noah**, **Noah** is a Jew, huh, and I used to talk to them, argu – ar-ar-argue and we

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

used to come to a point that we become friends. So – but when we used to come and used to play soccer, be – so all of us we have to play soccer between school – in schools, the **Maccabee** and na – against the – the Christian, so bra – it was a war. If the Jews won [indecipherable] the game, you had stones [indecipherable] like that [indecipherable] you wouldn't believe it. So you feel all the – your life, that – the – the pressure against you and against – and my father [indecipherable] used to say nu – now you got to work, save 10,000 **zlotys** and be running away from here. We have nothing to do over here, we going to [indecipherable] another year, another year. And ye – hit – and the Russian came, and then **Hitler** came, so –

Q: So your father was a Zionist, your family wa –

A: Oh yeah, he was – ma – my father was a big mathematical, and a big languages, he was – by 18 years he was a bookkeeper. By 18 years. That's how sharp he was. And he was a singer, he used to play fiddle, every Shabbas [indecipherable] with the fiddle and people from the big town, from the big shul used to come to our house, it was like [indecipherable], some [indecipherable] you know, it was. The only hope we had is just to – to arrive to [indecipherable] someday, but they didn't have a chance.

Q: What were your other interests as a child growing up? You said you played soccer, any other interests?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: I played soccer, bi-bi-biking and I want to become a – a teacher in h – in Hebrew, Hebrew teacher. This was my goal. I used to study a lot the **Temach**(ph). It was no limit for me to study the **Temach**(ph).

Q: And did you have any other – any other interests?

A: Yes. My father [**indecipherable**] to tell me that we have to know to ride horses better than the [**indecipherable**]. We had to swim better than them. We had to work in – on fields, make a gardens and be physically strong. And we used to go out and jump from trees that was impossible, people believe that we're gonna kill ourselves. My brother and I were the best to jump from cre – from trees. You know, you got so many branches in between. And we – we never missed it, we always were the best.

Q: Di – how did you – how would you have described yourself then? Were you Jewish, were you Russian, what were you? What did you think of yourself?

A: Always Jewish. I had so many chances to – n-not to be Jewish, even the Russian army, and in the partisans, they used to call me that, you are not Jewish. I said, how come? You see, because you always all over the front, when I wa – told – I said, look, the Germans here around, we got to do something about it. I was the first to say, I'm – I'm here. Secondly, I know better the roads than many, many people, because we used to go out –

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: W-We'll talk about that in a minute. You were 10 years old when **Hitler** came into power in – in **Germany**, 1933.

A: [indecipherable] in 1941.

Q: No, no, no, no, I'm saying when **Hitler** came into power in 1933 in **Germany**.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Did your parents know about that, did they talk about it? Did you – did the name **Hitler** mean anything to you when you were 10 - 11 - 12 years old?

A: We have to have three papers a day. The **Moment**(ph), the **Radio**(ph) and **Hinde**(ph). So we read and we knew everything what was happening. We knew everything, but i-i-in our places where I came from – I – I believe – I believe in mostly European, the Jewish people were poor. A Jewish man couldn't work like – like a ga – a – a – a not Jew. He go – he wants to work in the railroad, he got a job. Said, I'm gonna take a Jew? A Jew wouldn't have the chutzpah to go – to ask for a job like this. The Jews had to be milkman, shoemaker, leathers, roofers. Even some, maybe one or two or three, maybe families were cement workers, like bricklayers, right? If – if he was a carpenter he was to p-put you a door, but not build a house. So the Jews were very, very poor.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: What was your awareness in, before the war started, what was your awareness of what was happening to the Jews, let's say, in **Germany** under **Hitler**? Were you aware, did your parents talk about it with you and your siblings?

A: All the time. All the time they used to curs – talk about it, how to get thr – how to get out of here, how to do it. So that's why my father se – sold the store and become a milkman. So –

Q: Wha-What year was that, do you know?

A: It was like four or five years before the war, it like 1932 - 1933, become a milkman, it was a better business. And then, this way we had to go out with my father many times vacation in the fields, and we start being more aggressive, more **mensch** ma – stronger and – and better people, and we hoped that in – in a – in a few time, in a few years we gonna make what we have to make in order to have th – enough money to go out. You couldn't go without the certificate there

[**indecipherable**]. So you have to be [**indecipherable**]. But a man who is married with three – with si – with five children, how can you go with that certificate? My father would never leave his wife and children and go to **Israel**, never. Because mine uncle left and his – my – my father's brother left **Argentina**, and in seven years he couldn't bring his wife with his child from **Baranowicze**, so everybody used to say, uh-huh, you see? **Aaron** left his wife and his child, but he took his time

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

until he could save a penny. I mean, I came to **America**, the first thing I save thousand dollar, I went to **Argentina** to – to see my uncle. And he told me the story, everybody said **Aaron** is **Aaron**, look what he did. He left the – a wife with the child and he's not taking her.

Q: So you were in school, and then September 1939 the –

A: The war broke out.

Q: – the war broke out, but previous to that, the – in the – the previous year was **Kristallnacht** and it – did you know about that? Di-Did you read about it, did you hear about it?

A: We knew – we knew everything, and you couldn't do anything except to help with money, but they wouldn't accept it, th – the Jews couldn't do anything for – for the Jews in **Germany**. Secondly, people who came from **Poland**, or from **Lithow**(ph), or from th – other places in **Germany** 50 years ago, they send them all back – back to **Poland** and – and to **Russia**.

Q: Yeah. Do you remember being particularly frightened? You were 15 - 16 years old at the time of **Kristallnacht**. Were – were you particularly frightened when you heard about it?

A: Yes, yes. A-All my Christian friends used to come and tell me, **Noah**, prepare yourself. And making the hands like this, like I'm going to get killed. So I said to

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

them, if I'm gonna get killed, you gonna get killed too. First will be the Jews, and then the Polacks.

Q: Did you yourself experience – again, before the war started – experience any anti-Semitism?

A: Very much so. Not – not so much from the White Russian, but from the Polacks it was terrible. They used to come [indecipherable] and used to scream, don't buy from Jewish stores. Poles – Polacks to Polacks, not to Jews. And they used to make noises, it was anti-Jewish terrible things.

Q: Wer-Were you ever in any fights?

A: Many times. We fight with stones, cause they used to start st – every – with stones, so we had to give them back. That was life.

Q: Would you describe yourself as physically strong?

A: Yeah, I was very strong. I nev – i-if somebody gets me, I give – give him the doubles. And first of all, I wasn't – I was the type that I was – never let people hi-hit me, because I knew he is bigger, he is stronger, I got to start first. And that was happen always, even the Russian army had [indecipherable] I have to fight. When I was in the partisans, I used to go and train people, so they used to tell me, who needs Jews? We need arms. So they put me in jail.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: Okay, we-well again, we'll get to that. As conditions got worse with **Hitler**, di – is this something that your family was open and talked about with you and you talked about with your brothers and sisters –

A: Many times –

Q: – and friends?

A: Many times we used to talk, but sometime – we couldn't talk openly so much, because we knew that our father would like to do it, run away, but he hasn't got enough money yet. [indecipherable] make him [indecipherable] when he wants to go so much. So many times we spoke – I used to speak with my older brother, with the other cousins, that maybe we should run away and we'll go to **Russia** for [indecipherable] go to **Israel**. And we were afraid, in case we the oldest too, we'll go away and Papa stays with Mom, with the smaller children, who knows if something happen, who is gonna help them? And that's was the reason we didn't go. Actually, in – when – before **Hitler** came, we wanted to run away from the **Russia**, and my mama used to told me, okay, if you want to go, go. But you'll never see your mommy again.

Q: So now **Germany** invades **Poland** in September 1939, what are your memories of that?



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: They – I remember th-they f – they – they bomb our city, and our house was bombed and wit – and it was destroyed. So we already 1939, before – before – a couple of days before the Russian came, we didn't have a house, we didn't have nothing, everything was destroyed.

Q: Where were you when the house was bombed?

A: We were in **Mush**(ph) in the little city what my ma – where – what my mommy was born. We went to our uncle over there. And we stayed there for a couple of days, because we knew **Baranowicze** is a bigger city and they gonna bomb. So we did smart, went, took off – adif – our horses with the wagons and everything what's in the house, it was our little models that we had and [**indecipherable**] and we came back. Otherwise would have nothing.

Q: And so then you came back and saw your house?

A: Yeah, the whole street.

Q: And what – and –

A: So we had to ra – so we had to rent up another place to stay there. We had –

Q: What's it like for a 16 and a half year old boy to look at his house that's destroyed?

A: I-It – it didn't bother me the house destroyed, it just bothered me that we have a situation that – the thought that **Hitler** is coming and everything will be destroyed.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

How – how we running away, how can we save it, s-something? How we can do most of it? What – what should we do? It – I think that the situation was so tense, the rabbis, the big rabbis run away to li – to – to **Vilna**. From there they want to go to **America**, to **Israel**, to **China**, wherever they can go. And the people were left like – I d – I don't want to say that, but it – it was something wrong. The **mazel** was that we youngsters, we dint – we didn't know about it exactly, but the parents knew. And this was like a **[indecipherable]**, you know what a **[indecipherable]** **finster(ph)**, **schwartz(ph)**. This cou – I look at it as ar – it's something is very wrong, it's no **[indecipherable]** the whole thing. And this was very, very bad, because people – you know how you say when you leave – when you lose money it's nothing, but when you lose hope, you lost everything. And this was a station of losing hope. It was very dangerous situation. Then the Russian come in. When the Russian come in, first of all, they took away the rich and the – and – and this what – and what they didn't like the ca – ca – zi-zi – Zionist, and took them to **Siberia**. The **rove(ph)** was in shul, Shabbat, they took him, and many other people who came from **Poland** who wasn't register. And they took him to the wagons – the wagons to **Kamchatka**, I don't know where they took him to – to – to **Russia**, deep i-in **Siberia**. Many die from verra – from hunger, from anything. But our – our **[indecipherable]** was alive, he lived **[indecipherable]** with us, al-all his

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

grandchildren, his children and the rest of them die in the ghetto barrage. So it was [indecipherable], it – it was a **mishmash**, that you cannot control it and you cannot say anything. But we were so religious in heart, but **Israel** [indecipherable] that we – we didn't blame the rabbis. We – we didn't want to say nothing about the rabbis, but in – in heart you have to say, my good – my father wouldn't leave because he wants his wife and his children. The rabbi the same thing, got to be in the city, because he got [indecipherable] city. So is na – I can't give you the [indecipherable] but it wasn't – it wasn't so [indecipherable], you know.

Q: What was it like for you to see a Russian soldier in a Russian uniform?

A: Well, I, as a Zionist I didn't like it, because they were wear – anti – anti-Zionist and – excuse me – and they – the propaganda that I should become a **Komsomold**(ph). A **Komsomold**(ph) means a communist. And because I didn't want to become a communist, a **Komsomold**(ph), they wouldn't take me in – into the better schools. And I had to go to school where they send me to. And then I – I want to become a –

Q: What kind of school was it that they sent you to?

A: This a old, like old school. You know, physically, t-to learn a –

Q: Trade?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: – a trade, and mathematics. And I decided I want to be a pilot. So they send me to **Lida**, not far from there was a airport, and th-they want to – they want to see if I am – if I am fit, if I – if I can take all the examines, it just wasn't some examines, it was terrible. The-They bring you to a place, they put you on a chair, the chair is flying, and you look over, yeah, what's – what's – what's **[indecipherable]** too. So m-most of the people fall down, and then they have t – you have to go out and – on **[indecipherable]** they call it, to – to pick up **[indecipherable]** and the things, and your head down and the feet on top, to stay for five minutes like this, a-and – and not – and not to move. So who was the best, they accepted. And they – I-I was accepted.

Q: The Russians sent you to this place?

A: Yes, true, th-the Russian with the bal – with the **[indecipherable]** th-th-they decide – decide what to do. Even I didn't want to be a communist, they – th-they took me in.

Q: An-And what city did they send you to?

A: **Lida**.

Q: And – and then what happened?

A: Then, when I – I was in the school over there, I – I – it was no kosher food. It was no Shabbas religion there. I felt that my world is going under me. I wanted to

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

run away, but I c – I couldn't, because if I would run away, they would take my family and send to **Siberia**. So I had to wait, to wait, to wait until a chance, and all of a sudden the school was burning in a fire. Something – probably Polish guys did it. So we had to go home, everybody goes home for awhile, and then the **Hitler** – **Hitler** came. When **Hitler** came –

Q: What happened to your f-father during the time of the Russian rule?

A: He – he – my father didn't do anything. Didn't do anything. He used to go to – down [**indecipherable**] send people to get us [**indecipherable**] in a private house and nobody should know about it. That's the way they did it.

Q: Was he able to keep his business when the Russians were really –

A: Way – the business was out i-i-in – in one week they took everything away. They clean up the stoves and the milk with the cheeses, it – it didn't – they didn't left even a smell of it. In one week the city was clean up from everything. Was no fish, no bread, no butter, no cheese, no nothing. They sent from **Russia**. You know what they send? They send bread with **roszingas**(ph), I call it – all kind – this stuff filled up in – in white bread, what was nice, but you have to stay in line a whole night to get a – one – one – one bread. Oh, they send vodka for – for **Russia**, right?

[**indecipherable**] Jews need wh-white bread with vodka? They need feed, they need

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

bread, they need a job, they – the shoe. So it – it wasn't good, no. But we played the game, you know, for two years.

Q: And then, during those two years, did you yourself notice any more anti-Semitic incidents?

A: Not really. It was much better. The Russian was watching that they sh-shouldn't happen. Secondly, we had the majority of Jews in the city, who came from **Poland**. We were almost – most of the city were Jews. So the Polacks were afraid, so they were quiet, and the White Russian didn't say anything because they wanted to become higher and higher. And the Russian [indecipherable] to them, so it was quiet.

Q: Did you say that you moved back to your house? Or you said it was bombed – bombed badly, but did you mix –

A: A half house – a half house was burned, and a half house was standing, but you couldn't live there. So whatever you could take, we took the vi – until we came already was everything empty, wa – th-they – they cleaned up everything. I came – I – I – I remember I came with the bi – we – I had a bike, so I came the first with the bike to the city and I came near my house and [indecipherable] so I jump with [indecipherable] with nothing, I went on the [indecipherable] in the second story, and I – and I looked, ev-everything in the **boydim**(ph), you know, the **boydim's**(ph)

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

the second floor, to look with what's left over there. Was nothing left. Only thing that was left, my father [indecipherable] when he – when a ch – when a child was born, he used to take a big bottle, la – so – so high, so big, and put up it vodka and all kind of –

Q: Fruit?

A: – fruit, and every – every year he used to put mos – more spirit. And when this – when the child was older, he used to bring it to the house wi – if you just touch it so much, you – you were [indecipherable] already. So I went up there and I opened one bottle like this, and I – and I – and I was enjoying this, so sweet, [indecipherable] I fell asleep over there. And everybody came home, they looked for me and they couldn't find me for two days.

**End of Tape One, Side A**

**Beginning Tape One, Side B**

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Noah Roitman**. This is tape number one, side **B**, and we had just gotten to the point where the Germans had come in and this would be June 1941.

A: 1941.

Q: What is your first recollection in – of that time?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: This – when the Germans arrived, the first thing when they came, we thought they were liberators too. Quiet, nice, no – not – not – not hardships, no – no hard times. But after being two, three days they show what **[indecipherable]** they start beating and taking people just in the street to work an-and to ro – clear th – everything what in th – done is not in order, you know, and everything the Jews has to do. Pri – the same time –

Q: Up to this point, did you know what was happening in other countries in **Europe**? What the Germans had been doing in other countries?

A: We knew but we didn't – we knew everything and we didn't believe it **[indecipherable]** possible so much. We knew that – we knew that everything what they say today is more or less – but maybe not so much, maybe it's – it's people – people say about it more than it is. So we – but we do believe, of course we knew. And secondly, many Germans used to come to our house and said, run away, because the Jews were – will be killed in – in a very short time. So I don't know all the Germans for Jews, or the Germans for Socialists or something like that, but they were all Nazis in the army. Used to come and tell us, please run away because you will be killed.

Q: Th-These were German soldiers who told you that?



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Yeah, and we used to say, where we gonna run? How? We have no arms. The Russians left everything behind them. **Vlasov**(ph) give up three million best soldiers from **Vlasov**(ph) in the Russian army gave up, because they didn't like the communism, right. But after, what **Hitler** did to the – I call it to the prisoners, and not many prisoners run away to deep **Russia**, and they told them, look, th-the Germans burn them [**indecipherable**] they put a – a – a little h – you know, hole, and you put **naft**(ph) and oil and they burn them. I saw it with my own eyes. So that was – this person decide, hey, you got to fight for yourself, otherwise they're gonna kill us. And that why they stop by **Leningrad**, ba – by **Moscow**, by a-all the places. Otherwise, the – the Germans would take it away no time [**indecipherable**]. And say – the winter brought, c-came over altogether was a hell for the Russians. But people – the Russians didn't come for communism, be fighting for our Russian mama, but not for s – not for **Stalin**.

Q: Yeah. It is now summertime of '41. What did you do that first summer when the Germans came in?

A: The first – the first few months we didn't do anything. We just was sitting in a place where we used to say eat and think what should be done. Ho-How to manipulate. Nobody was [**indecipherable**] what to do. Some people went from big cities to small farm, from small to bigger, you know. For the time being everybody

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

has a little money, the clothes. I-It was the same f – the family, you know. But when it – after three months, four months, they say that you gonna sit in a ghetto very soon. You have to prepare yourself that you gonna lose all – all your – whatever you had **[indecipherable]**

Q: Belongings?

A: All – all your belonging.

Q: How did you hear about that? How did they tell you?

A: They – they – it was **[indecipherable]**. Th-Th-They – th-they – it was written on the walls that – that all the Jews got to go into the ghetto from this and this and this and this street, eight streets like this, five streets like this, six streets like this, and that's the – the place the Jews should be living. And it came a time they say they had to go **[indecipherable]**, so we go. We – but we couldn't take horses and wagons with us. You could take only what you can carry. Because the White Russians and the Polacks were waiting for this moment and they were – they used to stay and right – ro-rob everything. They took it away.

Q: Whatever you couldn't take.

A: Right. And better things, the Germans saw after a few days what the Polacks and the **[indecipherable]** doing, so they say stop. Now, y-you have **[indecipherable]** in here. We gonna take first, then what we got leftover, you gonna take. They become

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

smart. And that's the way we – we – we arrive in a house in **Baranowicze** at **Poniatowska** street. And over there my uncle – my mommy's sister had two houses and a husband and three children. So when all the family from my mommy's side to – went the other side and the **[indecipherable]** side all together came into the houses, maybe 200 people I'm telling you, in the two houses, because –

Q: Stayed in the family relative's house?

A: Yeah **[indecipherable]** in a room like this, maybe 20 people, we build – we **[indecipherable]** from wood. This is just a bed, this is for the older people. The middle was for the young people, and at the top, the third floor was for people like me, 15 - 16 - 17, they – you know, they sleep on the third floor. So –

Q: Ha – had you heard of ghettos before? Did you know what they were?

A: We – yeah, we knew what they ha – what – Jews lived in ghettos, but between listen and – or – or read the paper, a – a – a book, a-and being yourself is two different things. You couldn't feel, all of a sudden 10 Jews smashed in – so many people in one room. Then, the water wasn't inside the house at – you have to go outside, bring the water. So the water was **[indecipherable]** but it was not toilets enough. We have to – to – to build toilets because so many people come in such a sh – place. The toilets was always packed, an-and to get water was a problem, but you had it. Then the Germans took young people to work. Every morning w – you had to

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

come in the front of the ghetto, and from the ghetto they took the people to work.

So, you had groups, people who worked for Russian, for them, with the clothes.

Some people had, like me, I work in [indecipherable]. This is a group who took all the arms the Russian left and we have to send it to **Germany**. So we had to work physically so hard, no food, no nothing. So we had to be strong people.

Q: What – wha-what did you take – what did you, as a 16 - 17 year old take with you from your house to go to the ghetto?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Did you take anything special?

A: Yeah, we – we – all of us took three, four dresses, you know, and many –

Q: Shirts?

A: Shirts, and underwear and shoes, whatever we can. And you schlepped whatever you could, you could schlep 50 kilos, 60 kilos on yourself, you schlepped. That's all you had.

Q: Did you take any special books with you, or anything of interest?

A: Very, very few, because it was more important to take a **lila**(ph) or – or a – a **kishala**(ph) under your head. A pillow or something like that. Because who would – would care for the [indecipherable]? Who would care if I'm a – grand-grandma was na – 103 years old? We – all the people who were young like me, we

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

had to do it, everything. So it was not time to think [indecipherable] books. The older people carry books. [indecipherable], but we didn't took anything. Father probably took. But we used to schlep the – th-the [indecipherable] the – many things what is really hard. And it was probably about two, three kilometer to – to carry, it wasn't so easy. So the only thing we could do is stop – and again, stop again until we came to the house of our – our uncle, and then we had to put it – it's no room to sleep, it's no room. We didn't have even tools with what to do it.

Q: Did the ghetto have a wall around it, or wire?

A: Wires. Double wires. It was double wires all around, and in one place it was a opening. Th-The Jewish police they called it inside, and the German police outside, and in case somebody died, to go out from here, right, to the – to the [indecipherable] you know, to bury it. And that's it.

Q: Did the Jewish police wear any special uniform?

A: No, just had a – a blue – a blue **Magen David** in his arm [indecipherable] **Magen David** in the front and th – in the – your back, a yellow **Magen David**.

Q: Y-You had to wear one?

A: Everybody.

Q: Everybody.

A: Everybody.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: Right from the beginning of the ghetto?

A: Right from beginning. From the beginning was a yellow – like this, half round, a  
l – a little piece, and then this side got to be a **Magen David**.

Q: How did you feel about wearing those stars?

A: Well, i-i-in one case I was proud that I am Jewish. But we cou – when – when  
we had to go to work, or go out – out to the ghetto, we weren't allowed to go out  
[**indecipherable**] we have to go like the horses, on the street. On the street  
[**indecipherable**] to walk [**indecipherable**] back and forth. And some people wa –  
used to bee – beat up or killed on the job because the German like his nose o-or  
maybe he didn't work so fast or whatever. They never thought that you hungry.  
Some Germans were very, very [**indecipherable**]. They used to say – take it, I have  
enough, I ca – I can't eat any more, because he – he likes you, he wants to give you  
his food, you know, h-half of it. So you – you – he was – this was very nice of him.  
But from the Polacks we didn't have nothing. They used to come around the ghetto,  
they – well, you got – what are you waiting, they're gonna kill you anyway. Give us  
your clothes, give us your – what are you waiting for? Give it to us. So different  
between one another. The **SS**, of course, it wasn't good, the **SS** and the – the other  
G-Germans, but a lot of Germans were – were [**indecipherable**] work. He used to  
say to me – they – they like me so he give me a name, **Otto**. Come

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

[**indecipherable**], instead [**indecipherable**] he says **Otto**. I said, why are you calling me **Otto**? He said, it's a German nice name and I like you, because you're working with, you're always happy. And way – what could you do? Th-The cho – [**indecipherable**] in life is not to give up and to try with all your care how to hold it, you know, because if you're holding, a lot of people lu – do like – if you can, I'll do tr – I'll try. And I – I did many things that I organize things that people was very happy, helpful. And that was my father's [**indecipherable**] he used to tell me always, don't give up until it's on the last second, you still have a chance. So that was going on like this until one day they took me and another older man and they took us to the railroad. They had to clean up the railroad, the toilets. Excuse me. So they took me with him and they ta – and the **Hauptman**, a German **Hauptman** came and say, you two, you got to clean up this area. The older man wa – somehow went to look – find a pail and **smutters** and nak – somehow with his hand, poor guy did it. I didn't do anything. So I – and we – before we had to go to the ghetto back, he came and he says, I want my two man. So we went out from the colony. They called us and we went back to this place. Went back to the place, he said, who is the [**indecipherable**] who didn't clean it up? I said, me. And he took his gun like this in his hand and made a smear on my face, like this, you know, my nose, my – my ear was in a minute like this. And then with his hand on the second side. And I didn't

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

wait. After I – when he had th-the hand in the – still out like this, I start running. I thought they were gonna kill me [indecipherable]. I ran zig-zagem(ph), zig-zagem(ph) and I came home. And I said to my parents, I am going away to **Russia** or to the partisans, I am not here any more. And my mom start begging me and begging me and begging me. I was lucky that my name wasn't on the list that I run away, otherwise they would come to the ghet – to find me, you know. And since then I change, and I went to the [indecipherable] where I work with the arms all the time. And from there, I pe – heard group who was in the Polish army and the Russian army, we came out from there in – at – in – in – into the ghetto back from the arms – from the armies, and we decide to fight. We have to organize ourselves, we organize ourself. We had a group –

Q: Okay, ju – let me ask you a few more questions first. Bef – an-and we'll come to that point. What were your parents doing in the early part of the ghetto times? Was your father working?

A: My – my father was a broken man. It was – it was – you cou – I cou – ee – I just look at his face, I – I wanted to cry. He was in such a miserable situation he probably felt, what should I do with my wife and my children? What can I do, what should I do? He was – he never cried, but I saw his face, he was – was like skin, like very skinny, you know. H-He – he [indecipherable]. You understood what I mean?



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

He die in his life. He couldn't – he couldn't take this. And when I came home and I told him the story, he says, you got to take it. You're young, you'll be alive and you'll do it. But remember, he says, if you gonna get killed and you'll be alive, you should be like a lion. A lion. And I used to think to myself, yeah, how can you be lion? No arms, no help. **Hitler** was [indecipherable] into **Russia**. The Russians are dying from hunger over there, what gonna happen here?

Q: What were your – did your mother have to work?

A: There was no work. Y-Y-You were happy –

Q: Sh-She just stayed in the house in the ghetto.

A: She had to cook for five, six, for seven, 10 – 10 people with grandmas and grandmas, we have to give food, how to get food? When I got to work, I used to [indecipherable] a Polack or White Russian, my shirt or pants and – or shoes, when he get some, to make something for soup. O-Or a piece – a – a – or some bread or – or something to bring in. And it was m-mazel if you bring it in and he didn't caught you. If they caught you, they gonna beat up.

Q: Wh-What about your sisters and your brother, did any of them work?

A: They were too young. My brother was with me the same thing, he – he was the – with the same thing what I did, to supply food for the family. And we – we used to bring arms the same time and in our house we built a – under the floor we built a

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

place that from our house we could go out to the water supply, to the sept – system – system. Not septic, no.

Q: Cistern?

A: Sure, si – sure. And we made a – a opening to this – to the sewer.

Q: But the sewer was still inside the ghetto?

A: Yeah. And the [indecipherable] house was very close to it.

Q: Yeah.

A: So we prepare everything so we can go out at night only as a group and nobody gonna know what's going on. So we prepare ourselves and we were a group who called it – **Moma Kopelowicz. Moma Kopelowicz** was our commandant –  
commandeer

Q: This is while you're still in the ghetto?

A: The ghetto. And we had few places where they had already about 17 rifles, two machine guns and we had like 500 hand grenades, and bullets ready to go out.

Q: How did people get the information? How did you get to know – ho-how did they transmit the information to you about this?

A: What, the front? What's going on in what?

Q: About the – these arms and – and how to – by word of mouth?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Pe – we – we had – we had – we read the G-German papers, we knew everything.

Q: No, no, no, no, my question is, how did you hear about **Kopelowicz** and – and the –

A: Learned it from a friend of mine. [indecipherable]

Q: Right, so, which is by word of mouth in the ghetto.

A: Yeah, because we decided he is – he is the right man to organize this. We decide that he is the man who can run us. And he was a younger, maybe two years older than us, but he was a – a **mensch**. So we decide that he can be the man who – to hold us together.

Q: His first name is what?

A: **Moma. Moma Kopelowicz**, because we were for all parties, I was [indecipherable] all my friends were from **Betar**, some **Hatshomer Hatzair**, some from **Gordonia**(ph). So, i-it – we wasn't like in – from same school. We were from the same city, friends, but – but every [indecipherable] idea – idea. He had to be the [indecipherable] to the idea to bring altogether for the one – for this one thing what we have to do. And he did. He very smart. And he was the first that was killed in – in – in the – in the **putsch**. Later. So he was our master of the group, and we decided one day to get out. When we wanted to get out from the night –

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: How many were in the group?

A: We were like 40 – 47 people.

Q: These are young men?

A: All ya – all young, from – between 15 - 16 to maybe 27 - 28.

Q: Any wa – any woman, was it all men?

A: It was like 10 women between them too. So all people who used to work by the Germans, who ha-had to smuggle into the ghetto arms, bullets, grenades, everything. So when time came, we organize ourselves, this was approximately, I would say by the te – November the – the 10<sup>th</sup> of 1941, we decide to be going. And all the people came to my – to my house, and from my house we had to go out from the [indecipherable]. All of a sudden came, from my city, his name was **Eliezer Lidovsky**. He was a big [indecipherable]. He decide that we cannot go out, because if we gonna go out, what will happen to him and the other groups? It wa – we had – it was many groups in the ghetto. And he wants to be the top, that he can say to all the groups when to go, when not to go. And we decide we want to go.

Q: Many resistance groups.

A: Yeah, yeah. So he came and said, if you gonna go out, the Germans will wait for you outside and you all will be killed. So **Moma Kopelowicz** and another friend, **Eli Zaryckevicz**, he was from **Russia**, a Russian officer, was a young man maybe

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

25 years old. He went with him to the ghetto to explain them that we are going out, our little group from 47 people, and after we gonna settled, you know, make it, everything [indecipherable] shoot, we'll come, we'll take hundreds of people out from the ghetto. Nice? He says no, you cannot go out. He was afraid that you'll go out, something happened, he gonna be stuck in ghetto. And that what's happen. So one of my friend, **Moishe Taub(ph)**, he was in the Russian army too, and he was in another group, from nervous **keit**, he took and he shot – he gave a shot in the house with – with the rifle. **Moishe Taub(ph)** did it, and everybody thought the Germans will come right now and they'll destroy everything here. First of all –

Q: He shot into the air?

A: Yeah. So everything – everybody went home back again, and I had to repair at night, the cement which we did, in case the Germans come to check everything. And I worked the whole night in the cement, in the water, un-until my knee – until I – I re – I repair somehow –

Q: This is closing off that entrance?

A: Yeah. And got – got – got [indecipherable] like if nothing happened. They didn't find it out. Now, in a – the Germans had a feeling, because they had – they had e – e – espionage probably from the outside people, Polacks, Russians, who used to tell them that the Jews running around to buy arms. And they – they told to

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

the Germans all these things, that the Jews ca – buying guns, the Jews trying to bring guns from the Germans of – you know, and this and this. And it – it was – it was like this for a f – for a few months, and then in [indecipherable]

Q: 1942, March '42?

A: Fo – yes, came the [indecipherable] the first [indecipherable] in **Baranowicze**. And we were prepared. We were probably five groups, wi-with 500 organized boti – rebels to – to fight the Germans, in case they come in. One of my friend, he just die in **Israel**. **Ilya(ph) Schneidel(ph)**. **Ilyong(ph) Schneidel(ph)** there had to throw a hand grenade, because he was in the police. And he, when he saw the Germans coming, he's supposed to throw out a hand grenade and we all will go out in the streets, fight the Germans outside the ghetto. We had a – we had a lot of ammunition. We had maybe a hundred, a hundred fifty rifles, pistols and machine guns. We would kill in the thousands, maybe. So when the – the Germans arrive, they arrive few and he thought – he asked over there, what – what are you doing over here, and they – they said they came for inspection just. And this was the biggest mistake. The way – where he didn't throw the hand grenade, after 10 - 15 minutes they came in the hundreds. Lithuanians, White Russians, all kind, and Germans you know, and pouring into the ghetto, fire in the houses, in the people, in – all over the places. And this was a – such a tragedy. We lost half of our best

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

people was die – died. The other, after the [indecipherable] – after the three or four days of [indecipherable] they killed over 5,000 people and they took a lot of people into the concentration camps, not in **Germany**, but near our place, like

**Moldachewa**(ph), kola -- **Koldachewa**(ph), **Moladecznai**(ph) and a lot of my family went into this category, they took them away to work over there, and they made them so miserable, you wouldn't believe what they did, the Germans did to the Jewish people over there. The White Russian used to tell them things that I am ashamed to – t-to say it, what – what – what they did to them. And then a lot of them run away to the partisans and the rest were killed by the White Russian police.

We are [indecipherable] who would like to run away to the partisans, but we cannot go. After the [indecipherable], after they killed they Jews, they made the ghetto smaller. And all the arms we had was on the second – on the s – on the second half.

Q: What – what were you doing during this – these days? Were you in hiding? How is that you – you weren't called up?

A: I – I – I was, together with my parents, when they took out everybody from – from my house, when the Germans came in, and they used to come out to say **Juden raus, Juden raus**. Was quiet, me and my cousin were sitting near the opening, in case a German will find the place, we'll tell him – we'll push him – we'll shove him

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

inside and cut his head off. Two or three, until my a – my aunt – mine uncle, **Yikael**(ph), who wanted to me – to send me back to the **yeshiva**, his wife **Gittl**(ph) had two little children, **Moishele**(ph) and **Jankele**(ph). So when the children were feeling the – the pressure from **[indecipherable]** **Juden raus**, they start screaming. And she says, we're coming **raus**, we're coming **raus**, we're coming **raus**. And she was coming out, and everybody like **sheef** – I mean, I mean **shefon**(ph), you know, like animals, the little animals that go, went – the whole family went after her and they went out. Just a few of my cousin were left in – in – inside. After a couple of hours we went into the – look around what – what's going on, we find out nobody's – you know, just the both of us. We went outside to look, maybe we can do something **[indecipherable]** something. All of a sudden the police run after us, start shooting. And we run, somehow, we're – we're young, you know, we made it.

Q: Is this y-you and your brother?

A: No, my cousin.

Q: Oh.

A: My – my brother was already – taken away. I forgot to tell you this. My older brother was – was-was – was taken away far – before the **[indecipherable]**. They took 72 young guys, and they took him to the barracks where the army was. And they killed them with s – with – with – with metal – with metal – with – with



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

isen(ph), with steel. And this was the first 72 [indecipherable] before the [indecipherable]. And now we decide –

Q: Wa-Was there a Jewish council in the ghetto?

A: Yeah, sure it was.

Q: The **Judenrat**?

A: Yeah, the **Judenrat** –

Q: Can you tell me a li – to tell me a little bit about that?

A: The **Judenrat** was very nice, very nice people. These – hm, many people went themselves to give up. They had good places t-to – to – to save themselves – themselves, but they say no, they don't want it. They di – di – the top man for the police, and they keep asking for people, **Altman**(ph). So he said, I have no people. What do you mean you don't have? He said, you can take me, but I haven't got people. The people belong to God. They took him and the best 40 police [indecipherable]. The best, and th – and – what can – a city can have. All students from – from – from college, from this, and they – and they shot them because he didn't want to give Jews.

Q: Wa-Was one of the heads **Isaacson, Joshua I – Yehosha**(ph)

A: **Izaakson**(ph), **Izaakson**(ph)

Q: **I-Izaakson**(ph).

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: [indecipherable] yeah.

Q: Did you know him?

A: Sure.

Q: And what can you say about him?

Q: I – I can say he's – he's – he's – he was a – actually the rabbi. He was a ruler, he was something. He [indecipherable] another one in **Kalevich**(ph), they went to give a life f-for – for the Jewish population. Many people. And one was **Goldberg**. Daf – not – not from **Baranowicze**, he came from **Lódz**. And he was the last – from the last **Judenrat**, he was the – the top man.

Q: Did you know about these cards that were marked with the letter **O**? Does that have any meaning for you? To show the people had jobs, these were like identity cards.

A: Oh?

Q: Yeah, I had read that that – in the – in the ghettos and people had cards.

A: Yeah [indecipherable]. We – we had cards at – from the place I bele – where we worked, that I [indecipherable] I have to come out, because otherwise they wouldn't let you out from the ghetto.

Q: Mm-hm.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: We had so many hundred people who came to the – to work for  
**[indecipherable]** because they had to load the arms back to **Germany**.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh. All right, so now it's you and your cousin and your parents in  
March?

A: Are they re – they – they already not home, I don't know. Aft – after a couple of  
days I find out that they were there and they were killed. So I – we used to  
**organizize** – organize and say kaddish after them. And my **Feder(ph) Phil**, my  
Uncle **Phil** was alive. His wife and children weren't alive, but he was alive. He was  
probably somewhere else. And I used to tell him, we have to run away. He says to  
me, you can run. If I lost **Gitl** with my children, I lost everything, I have nothing to  
learn – I – I don't want to run. And he didn't want to – he didn't want to run. And  
he was killed near the **Idolar(ph) Street**. And I went to the partisans with a group of  
17 people, or – or 15 people maybe. How did we went – how could we go out from  
the ghetto? We went to a policeman, a White Russian policeman and we told him  
that the second house from here – because on the other side was the ghetto before.  
And now already the Germans **[indecipherable]** ghetto. And we wanted to take out  
the rifles. How could we go to the partisans without – with no arms? And he says – I  
said to him, look, we have a lot of gold hidden in the house, and I had to go take it  
out. I'll give you 90 percent, just give me 10 percent and I'll – I – I have enough for

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

me. He said, are – are you talking it serious? I said yeah. The White Russian said okay. Come tonight and[indecipherable]. We came the whole group, we were waiting, and I went the first to – to see that he is not taking away the rifles from his shoulder, you know. He let me in. When I – he let me in, I had – before I had to come out, the guys came out, couple of guys [indecipherable] and they cut him, you know [indecipherable] and they cut – and they did not kill him. They did leave him he couldn't talk already. Took away his rifle and threw him in a – in a place over there, and we took out the rifles from where we have to go, and went to the partisans. Took us two weeks to – to arrive the partisans. Actually shouldn't take more than two, three days.

Q: How did you know where to go?

A: We knew.

Q: How?

A: We had a – a guy before, **Mishka**(ph) **Salmonovicz**(ph). He went out the first, him and **Labolitz**(ph) **Aitman**(ph), the two s – two guys went before to the partisans. And when we came to the partisans and they saw they have to – rifles and grenades and pistols. So the partisans thought that the Jewish people have so much arms, we need you, we need you, come on. And then, when we come and not everybody has a rifle, and not everybody was young – we were young, but then

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

come more groups, plus the – they're like – half of them were already people 40 - 50 – 45, the partisan didn't like it. They only wanted just young. And is – in particular the group what we came to were **Zhorkinsis(ph)**, their name was **Zhorkin(ph)**, the commandeer was **Zhorkin(ph)**, very anti-Semitic and very bandit – bandit. A very bandit. He killed Jews for – for shoes, for – for a watch, he killed them. So, wh-what – what – we – when you come a whole group he couldn't do it, but if he caught one or two people who run away from ghetto, he – that what he did. And he did many like this.

**End of Tape One, Side B**

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

**Beginning Tape Two, Side A**

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Noah Roitman**. This is tape number two, side **A**. And before we continue, I just wanted to ask if you had seen any Russian POWs before you went off in to fight – to fight with the partisans.

A: Yes, yeah, I saw many – I saw many of them, hungry, with bad clothes, they couldn't move. They was **skelets(ph)**, you know what **skelets(ph)**?

Q: Skeletons?

A: Skeletons. And they were **mamesh(ph)**, never you hear somebody cry or something, just – just die from day by day, hour by hour, in thousands, and nobody could help them, because if you do something for them, you were killed from the Germans. And another thing, maybe 10 Germans had 5,000 Russians, and they stoo – th-they didn't stoo-stood up. Just **[indecipherable]** about it. Why didn't it – they kill them? They'd killed thousands, the rest was run already to the woods. But when we came to the woods, the partisans they say, you gave away the – to the Germans your gold, your parents and your money and now you come here to us, we should – we should – we should keep you, we should watch you? We need partisans. We need women, we need old – older men, we need arms. That was their – the we di –

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

they – they – but we became right the – the – the – the – the – the most of the people they were maybe 10 people, we were already a hundred in – in – in a few weeks. So we had [indecipherable] and we were a Jewish group.

Q: So – so you didn't stay with the Russian group, you formed your own Jewish group?

A: No, when we – when – when we came they want to take us the rifles and give us ju – junk what they had find somewhere. So we said no, that's enough. They did it already once to somebody, but no – not any more. So we didn't want to be with them. So they were separate, and we were separate. And we become bigger, we had 300 in the – in no time we were – we were [indecipherable] we were good [indecipherable] and all the Christians used to say, you Russians, you just drink and you [indecipherable] you – you – you – you – you [indecipherable] what you doing, look the Jewish guys, they go, they destroyed the railroad, they did, they bring people that they all over. What are you doing over here, sleeping? Who needs you over here? The goyim used to say this. So they were afraid that something will happen, so they – and – and the Russian, a lot of Russian prisoners run away. Five, 10, 10, you more, more, more, more, and the ghettos was empty already. So they become m-more than us, how you call it, you know. How you sa – say it in English? Mine English is not so good. In the beginning they were – they fight, 10 – 10

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

partisans [indecipherable] three, four Jews, and then they come more Jews. The [indecipherable], how you call it?

Q: Well, your group became larger than theirs.

A: Yeah, so – so th-they want us to – to be together, and we didn't want it, but by the time we were 300, they were already 3,000 all of a sudden. And the [indecipherable], the Germans used to burn the – the – the – the [indecipherable] I call it, the farms, [indecipherable] partisans. And everything toge – altogether they become a lot. So we had to become one group, because otherwise they would fight with us. So we didn't want to fight, so we decide okay, we'll work with you, we'll be [indecipherable] I'll be the sergeant. I – I just – there should be quiet, you know. But all the jobs we had to do, they were sitting and drinking, an-and ta – and tell you what to do. But we accepted it, we had no choice, until –

Q: So this was March or April of '42 that you went to an – to – to be with the partisans?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And-And the – when – I was there three months and we were big group, so I went and I brought my wife, and [indecipherable] a-another group, and – like a group from 17 people, and we came back to the partisans with them –

Q: How – te-tell me about how you went and go them.

A: I couldn't go legally to – to do it.



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: You – you went back to – to the ghetto to get them?

A: Yeah, but I couldn't do it le – legally, so I had to wait for a chance and we going for [indecipherable] you have a – a mission to do. They send you to – to destroy the railroad and they give you two weeks. You have to come back from – from the woods to – to go to **Leshen(ph)**. **Leshen(ph)** was a – a b – this – the – the road is come at here this way and this way and – and it was the last time that we going like this. We calling it – like the railroad comes like this, you see here –

Q: Inter-Intersects?

A: Yeah, in – something like this. So we had to go over there and destroy it. And – by the same way, we used to have to count at night how many transports come from **Germany**, with wounded and with the – s-some of us shoot – shoot down airplanes and tanks and this we sent to **Russia** all what's going on, that means they – they destroying the Germans. And by the time they finish up I worked a week – a week – I said to myself, I am going to the ghetto – I'll – I'll do something. What I did, I ca – I – I had anof – another friend what he had suffered in ghetto and he – I told him the story, he said oh, I'm coming with you.

Q: His name?

A: **Seric(ph)**. **Seric(ph)** [indecipherable]. So I bi – and I told him this, he said, but you know what, seven people over here, five will come back and we will not return,

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

will be a – a – don't worry, what can happen? Come. And then he says, do you know how to get there? You're sure, do you know the – the – the right way? Of course, I used to ride with my father for years, bring the milk from the – from the – from the [indecipherable] you know, from the farms. I know. When it was dark we two quietly moved away, moved away with the – from the others, and pffft, we ran – we went into the ghetto.

Q: How far was the ghetto from where you were?

A: [indecipherable] like probably maybe 20 kilometers, something. And we came into the ghetto, he –

Q: What was left in the ghetto?

A: You – you ha you have li – you have another probably 10,000 people left, maybe more. So he went to his friend – his friend and I went to see my uncle, I still had a uncle from my mommy's side. But we went to the ghetto in these houses, my aunt came over there, I – I knock on the door and my uncle wake up, he says, who is this? I said me. He says to me, I thought you were already dead. Everybody said you were di – you dead, they killed you. How come you alive? And he fall then on me for – from his place, and he start crying. I said, Uncle, don't cry, prepare yourself. I couldn't talk because if I talked to him, every – the whole – the whole house would – would run – like to run to [indecipherable]. Can I take from the hundreds of

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

people into – to the partisans? What shall I do? I'm asking you. And

[**indecipherable**] question, you told me before not to ask questions. What can you do? I ca – I – I – I left – right away I saw I am – I have problems, you know. If I'll stay here they – they gonna eat me up. And what – everybody wants to life – they want to live. I'll – I left this place and I went to other place and hide – in hiding.

And I came to my friend I told him the story. He says no, it's no good, we gotta take everybody. Be – over here, hundreds of people are waiting already. I don't know how we're gonna get out from the ghetto. They're watching every step of us

[**indecipherable**] like that. We had to leave. We had to leave the ghetto at night and tell the people how to get out from – from the job that they working. They should come on the – to – on the Polish cemetery behind the city, and we'll be there, and we'll come over there when they – by like 10 o'clock at night. In the meantime, we had one Polack, his name was **Hatcha**(ph). He was one Polack in the city who helped Jews. And says, whenever you go out or you come, you can go to my place where my car is there, and you can sit and wait over or whatever you need to do, stay there, with no problems. It was very nice of him. So we went there and we waited over, and then we went to the – by 10 o'clock we went to the Polish –  
Q: Cemetery.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: – cemetery, and we say three [**indecipherable**] [**whistles**]. They understood, they came out and we took them and we went to the partisans. We came to the partisans –

Q: Okay, how many people were in the group?

A: 17.

Q: And who were they?

A: I – I think you got here the names, I said, my wife is the first, and then two sister, **Luba(ph)** and **S-Simma(ph) Mandel**. And then sh – a couple –

Q: Were these all young people?

A: All young. All young between 17 to 25 maybe.

Q: So you knew your – your future wife at that point?

A: I knew, but –

Q: How did you know her?

A: I know her because she run away from **Poland** 1939 and she came to her aunt – to her uncle. Her uncle married my – my cousin in 1938 and he came to **America**.

So when they broke – when the war broke out, she saw with the Germans beating up shi – Jewish children in her little place, so she decide to run away, came to us. So she was in a different place, but I know her, I – so I said, if I can t-take her, why shouldn't I? And – because she was actually working with the whole group on one

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

place. They used to wash for the Germans officers the – the clothes. So they said to go back to the group and come to the ghetto, they went – couple – couple of us before that, in hiding and then di – they went to the cemetery. So I had to take the whole group, but I don't know the people, I didn't know. I know maybe five, six, seven people, maybe. I didn't know even.

Q: So you and – were the – the two leaders brought these people back to the partisans?

A: Excuse us?

Q: You said you – you – you – you led these people back to the partisans at night?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, at night. It took us more, took us two days to come. It was 70 kilometer. And then from 10 o'clock at night until four o'clock in the morning [indecipherable] young people hungry a little bit, and a little tired, you cannot make 70 kilometer, it's hard. And the snow was like this. So we had to come to a place and we had a man in a – in a place we called **Ouchosse**(ph). And in this place they had a man, a Russian guy who came, the first World War II, he married a White Russian, and his name was **Matt Rosov**(ph). And he was the guy who told us all this. I sent my son to the police, so nobody will think that I will let Jewish partisans in here. And this way we used to come and with the cows, used to stay. We open – we knew how to open and get in, take hay, lay down sleep over and next

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

day in the evening, we used to go. Come in the – that day we came to the partisans and we arrived at the partisans, the group looked, five to six ladies, no arms, just two – two pistols or some, and they said, who needs ladies, who needs Jews? It was – was a – a – it was a – you know, we need, arms we need, we don't need these things. And they wanted to kill me because th-the – you was organize this, you. Because they knew all the time I used to say, let me go to the ghetto, to bring people out, bring arms, bring this. So they knew that I – I am the [indecipherable] I was a [indecipherable] to me – talk to – to go, I – before I – they knew tha – I went already. So, they knew that I – I was the one, but they didn't kill me, but they had a eye on me and that next time what – what to do.

Q: Were you wearing any kind of uniform?

A: Just a – a b – a blue jacket and still, I call it boots. That's it.

Q: What did you do with that Jewish star you had to wear?

A: We had – we – we – we were – we were clean, we were washing. We washed every day in cold water.

Q: No, no, the Jewish star that you were – you had to wear before in the ghetto, what did you do with it?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Oh [indecipherable]. Well, maybe not, maybe I had it, because we had to go in – in the ghetto back again, back and forth. I – I – I k – I **keep**ed it, I think, a long time. And then it was a little quiet.

Q: Wha-What was the name of the – of the commandeer of this partisan group?

A: This time –

Q: The Russian commandeer.

A: **Bogachev**(ph). This time [indecipherable] commandeer was **Bogachev**(ph) the commandeer. And –

Q: And the Jewish leader was?

A: It wasn't already this – this – the Jewish leader jus – Jewish leader already was killed. What was happen, the group who took us in the beginning, the **Zhorkins**(ph), what I said, they murderers, they were o – that time already like 30 people. And they didn't accept no Russian, no Polack, no nobody, they were just their group, all Russians, anti-Semites. And they wer – group was separate. We were already few hundred people. So they decide one day that the Germans supposed to come to check the roads and the railroads, so we want to go with the crossfire there from [indecipherable] from the other side, and they were gonna kill them. But that's what they did. **Moma Kopelowicz** was our commandeer. We went like maybe 20 - 30 people, we were sitting in one end of the [indecipherable] and

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

they sit on the other side, the – the – the Russian, the **Zhorkinses**(ph). By the time the Germans arrive, they quietly left us alone. So when we asked – asked fire from this side, right, they ca – they turn around and came from the other side where the Russians supposed to be. And was a lot of – l-lot **[indecipherable]** between them. They jump in – into the woods, arms they have so much, they shot on us for an hour, millions of – of bullets. And we were watching every bullet we had, we – we watch to be perfect, you know. **[clears throat]** Excuse me. And all of a sudden, my friend **Kopelowicz** shot a **[indecipherable]** in his head and he fall down. And a – and a second one he was wounded, and then the third one shot him. So our friend **Moma** took out his – his **[indecipherable]** and he want to cover his – his – so he was with his hand **[indecipherable]** like this on his head and that's the way they fall. We made it until the evening, in the evening we came. We took off all the blood all around him, we made a **kevir**(ph), we say Kaddish, and we let him, the first ca – the first **kalban**(ph), the first casualty we had. And then, from then we n – we knew that's a war, we have to – we'll have casualties, we got to get used to it. It was very hard for us, because in so many hundred and thousands of people were killed in the ghetto, it wasn't so shocked like here in the woods. **[indecipherable]**

Q: Wha-What's the difference?



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Because over here we – we were like partisans, we – we fighting the Germans. They cannot kill us, we got to kill them. So it was – and he was the – the – the – the [indecipherable], he was [indecipherable] it was a shock. But then we get used to it, people get killed, it's a war. They killed, they – we kill and that's – that's the way it goes. And then from then –

Q: What – what were the daily living conditions like? Where did you sleep?

A: The living condition, the first time we sleep under the sky, under the trees. We used to take the ha – the dry wood, branches and make a fire and – and – and cook like soup. Some meat or some fish or some fish or some this, we – we took away from the Christian population. But after being a half a year already, we went deep into the German zones and we took horses and cows and pigs, and whatever you want to have. And we had like a farm in – in – in – in – in the woods. And Jews, you know, they made already milk, cheeses and – and [indecipherable] an-and meat, and it was – people, maybe 10 working and preparing everything. Sh – new shoes, new hairs, new clothes, and some people the arms, and th-th – a factory become i-in – in – in – in less than a year. You wouldn't believe what there – a hospital we built under – under the earth, deep and from the trees we had air. The trees were so big, but very old, so you could see the sky.

Q: So you had one location, you were not always moving.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: No, no, we – wa – one – one location. This is what one location, was a very good place. We call it **Ostrow(ph)**. Why we call it **Ostrow(ph)**? In Russian is a place where all around the swamps. And one place in the center, or more or less in the center, is higher. This place is dry. So we used to live in these places. And over there be you – for winter, we – we prepare houses 50 percent inside the earth, and 50 percent covered with wood, right, and we used to take away from the Germans **benzene(ph)** or – or things like this. So we had a [**indecipherable**] in side, one side open with many holes, put wood and we were burning all of 24 hours. Was warm, beautiful. And a lot of posts, posts every hundred meter, every thousand meter, every 1500 meter, every 2,000 meter. And then, th-the – when we became already strong, we had the radios an-and wit – big radios and what – music and dancing like – like a normal family. Yeah, because the Russians send us paratroopers and they came with radios and – and many things. And since then –

Q: So Russian soldiers kept joining you?

A: Yes, we had the Russians – I told you, we have the Russians and Jews together, it's no – no more are Jews separate.

Q: No, no, no, no, but Russians soldiers would join you, continue to join – come into the group?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Yeah, a lot. Jews wasn't there already any more, because almost the Jews – some, a gr – little – maybe after the second [indecipherable] already was nothing left, one group 200, one group 500, who was to work for the Germans. They were – most just were killed already.

Q: Oh.

A: But we – we – we wanted to take care of the Jews too, take them out. So –

Q: What were your thoughts when you heard about the second and third selections in the ghetto?

A: We went, let's say, to – to – to – to the ghetto few times, and we knew that this – this will happen. So I went tha – over there, and instead to take a whole group, I took out two – two people. **Bayla(ph)** **Trebovicz(ph)** and **Tuvia(ph)** **Narnek(ph)**. I took them v – all the people went already to the [indecipherable] they took them to kill, and I took the two girls and went out from the ghetto, and I don't know what the **mazla(ph)** had, they didn't caught us.

Q: Wh-Why did you pick them? How did you decide?

A: There was one had a – a – a husband in the – in the partisans and the second had a brother. And they were prepared we should take them, so I – I – they send me to take them. I want to take them more, but I couldn't. See, it was a situation that –

Q: How did you handle your fear when you were doing something like this?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: I [indecipherable] no fear.

Q: How is it you had no fear?

A: Well, it – it didn't bother me, I – I – the only thing was – I was – wanted it to do, is to kill Germans, and my role was to destroy them. They destroy me. I remember my father used to say, if somebody will be alive, remember what they did to us. And after they killed my father, I was [indecipherable] the yeshiva from school. I became a lion, I wasn't afraid for nothing. Always I used to be the first, jump into the fire like a hell. How many times I had bullets in my – in my head, i-in my arms over here [indecipherable]. I – I never was wounded, never.

Q: Did you ever kill anybody?

A: Oh yeah. I had to. I had no choice.

Q: This is while you were a partisan.

A: I – I never kill a – a ra – a White Russian. If I kill somebody it's because he wants to kill me. I – I kill a partisan too.

Q: When was that?

A: Because he wanted to kill me. The jealousy on me was so big, that even Jewish people were jealous. Where we go [indecipherable] successful. We were – they -- like I told you before, they went to – to the ghetto too. We come to the ghetto f-five [indecipherable] he came back. He used to come to the partisans [indecipherable].

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

So I – an-and in their look they’re like Christians, the people who went to the ghetto, people who most – I wouldn’t, my nose, you can see, like a Jew. I said, I am not afraid with my no – my Jewish nose, I – I’ll go an-and I’ll be – I’ll do it. And I – I – I did. I had mazel, I had mazel. Let’s say I – I had mazel. I save a lot of people, I save maybe, I would say 70 to 80 people I – I saved out – fr-from ghetto to take it out.

Q: S-S – 70 to 80?

A: Yeah [**indecipherable**] time.

Q: Yeah.

A: I went maybe five, six times into the ghetto.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And all the time – all the time I came out perfectly. Whenever they send me to destroy the jer – the Germans railroad or bridges, never one man – I was always the responsible man for the group, and never somebody hit – was hit from my – my – mine – mine people, never.

Q: And you were given orders to do these different sabotage?

A: Oh, yeah, I – I – when – when the Russians came from **Moscow**, they teach us how to put mines, how to use arms. So a lot of people doing it, but you see, is not what is – is afraid, he is shaky, he is shameful. And – but a lot of people were like

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

come on, it's my life, that's – I have to d – I have a chance now to take

**[indecipherable]**. I have a chance, do it. But not too many. Not too many, because this was de – you know, when you leave your woods, you're in danger for death.

And people were afraid. Probably I di – I had – I wasn't smart enough, yeah.

Q: Was there any particular experience that was extremely – more dangerous than others?

A: Oh yeah, it was a time that people have **tsinga(ph)**. The teeth fa – start bending and the – because we didn't have salt. Now, I have to get salt, we have to get into the German zone, and the Germans, let's say two, three kilometer from the – from the farms, they used to give them sugar and – and salt and – and salt, everything. 10 - 15 kilometer deeper they didn't give nothing, because they want them to die to

**[indecipherable]** partisans. So I took a group. Myself, my cousin **Arnold(ph)**

**Sheefis(ph)** and **Sam Averkovicz(ph)** and **Davidal(ph)** **Winarnik(ph)** and we went, four guys, young people. We went and we start taking from the ri – to a gor – we came to a place with – very near, maybe two, three kilometer from the Germans. We knock on the door, don't open the light, give us all the salt you have in the house.

Ahh! One more word you killed and the house is going on fire. The lady brings 10 kilograms salt. And from house to house and house to house, I'm think we went to – the last house that would have to go back we see, so further from the police. We

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

came over there with a hundred kilogram. This is shre – hi -- heavy for four people, is 25 kilo for each. We came with that, it's almost morning, we took off the shoes, we start cleaning out the rifles, and we asked the owner should give us our coffee or tea, something to eat. And we were eating, and no shoes on us. And she said, children, Germans. [indecipherable] a big window, Germans. I said, [indecipherable] fire. We let them come close and [indecipherable] fire to the windows, like this. [makes gunfire sound]. And we jump up and go back house and they open a fire. You know, they're – it – it what to shoot. And we took the salt and we [indecipherable] the shoes, and it was winter. So we run away in a – in a place where the – it was a – a wat – water, and on top on the water it was like a wooden bridge, and under this was lower places on a lot of branches. Our mazel they didn't have docks. We went under the branches, and they come too look for us and they went further and we were sitting freezing all winter day with the salt. In the evening we were so hungry and – and – and thirsty and from – I call it the – I – I cannot [indecipherable] in English, from [indecipherable] is all, we went out. We stood up, look around, not [indecipherable] we went to the first Christian house, tell them to give us hot soup and give us shoes. He say he hasn't got no shoes. Give us food, and wa – you haven't got shoes? I remember I was so mad on him, he said he had no shoes. I caught him like this and I gave him a knock. He – I pushed him to

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

the next – next wall. He was running b-b-b-b-b-back. Fall down and I put – took off his shoes, put them in my sh – my feet. So he said to me, don't kill me please. And he give us so much things for everybody, shoes and – and clothes and he become soft and good. Then we said to him, now we taking your horse. By a Christian [indecipherable] horse. He had two, otherwise we wouldn't take. We took away the horse and we took a – a – a cow and put everything – salt on this and we went to the woods. To – we – we came home, we were heroes. We got salt, ay yi yi yi yi. When th-the commandeer came he said I – he kiss me and he says to me, **Noah** from today on your name is not **Noah**. Today ma – you are **Nikolai**(ph). This is a little – little story but this is very – then – then th – the second time I took the same group. And one of the group, the **Averkovicz**(ph), **Sam Averkovicz**(ph) has parents in – in the woods, a father and a mother from **Baranowicze**. They told me I should take this group because I am so successful I – I should go to find out, because couple partisans were killed – [phone ringing, tape break] – couple days before, couple partisans went to destroy the railroad and the electricity and one of our friends, **Yakov Press**(ph) were killed. When they start cutting the – the – the – the – the column from the electricity to the da – Germans put a mine. All of a sudden the mine destroy, and a-a – op – hi – has – his head was off. So we took him on the rifles and brought him back to the partisans. And then they send me, I should find



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

out who did it. So I went with these three guys. I didn't want old, I want young kids, what I say is – is holy, cause I knew, the young kids, they underst – not understand [indecipherable]. Older one thinks, I will not go, I can be afraid, I'll – I find it out very short – in the very beginning, and I said, that's it, no – just with these ki – guys I go. And I came to **Matrosov**(ph) [indecipherable] but he was a Russian, he came in the first war took, and he – he married a White Russian shi – goya and we went to – I went over there and I told him, Mr. **Matrosov**(ph), we got to find out, your neighbors who – some of them told to the Germans about the group who went to destroy the railroad and they caught him and they killed him. And the – and the Jewish guy with another gun, who went to – to destroy the electricity was killed, was too much, you know, for us to take. And he finded out who – who – who did it, and we went t-to this guy at night, had two – two chil – two daughters, teachers, and a son in the police by – by the Germans. And went to the house, the – the dogs start barking and he came out, he was – was sure that's probably **policia**, so non – nobody – partisans would come here. I told him to take in the dog, she shouldn't bark and should be quiet. He said, wh-who are you, police? [indecipherable] we are police from **Moscow**. [indecipherable] he became red. [indecipherable] n-nothing. And I looks up and he brought his daughters dressed to the table and they give us – want to give us a good time, you know. They prepare food. They prepared food and

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

we ate, and we drink, even enjoy it. And then I said to him, you see, you did this and this and this and you did this and this through your two daughters. You all three get killed with one bullet. And they put them head to head, three – all three of them on the floor, and one bullet destroyed them all three. The older lady, the m – his wife start to screaming, so I didn't want to do it nothing, but we put the whole house on fire with [indecipherable] she get burned anyway. We took away the horse and what we can loaded on the horses, and back again. Paid them off. But many – man – many things that wasn't so easy. What I am saying is just ah – but this was taking days to do, to figure out everything and be sure that's you're doing right, right? So.

**End of Tape Two, Side A**

**Beginning Tape Two, Side B**

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Noah Roitman**. This is tape two, side **B**, and we've been talking about your experiences with the partisans.

A: I forgot to tell you about when we were a group from **Bogachev**(ph) and then from **Bogachev**(ph) went to the east. So we were left a group with I would say like maybe a hundred people, 80 people were left. What was happening?

Q: Was this Jewish and Russian partisans together?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Yes, together. That was the time when we were already in **Bogachev's**(ph) group. **Bogachev**(ph) was the commandeer.

Q: The Russian commandeer.

A: Right. And he decides to go east, why? I told you before that one of the Jewish guys [**indecipherable**], his name. Hm. Oh, no, no, no, I have to tell you – tell his name. Excuse me a minute, I – [**tape break**] I told you before about eza –

**Eliezer**(ph) **Lidovsky**(ph), who didn't want us to leave the ghetto the first – he was a older person, had a family in the ghetto and he – it was true that he will be the first arriving in the – in the – in the woods. When he was like second hand by ku –

**Bogachev**(ph), he used to tell him to do this and get that, tell him stories with [**indecipherable**]. But he didn't do anything good for anybody. So he – you – he used to say that if he went as a – with his face as a goy, and he couldn't go into the ghetto, how could I go to the ghetto? And we had a little – you know, I said to him, I am younger, I am stronger than you, I can do it better than you. He didn't like it.

And when he was such an important man but a commandeer, so I was nothing, and h-he wanted to get rid of me somehow, it – every – every – I shouldn't be in between, you know? So when the – the commandeurs came in – in from **Moscow**, was a commandeer **Muha**(ph). **Muha**(ph) is a fly in Russian. He was telling us, when you go to do something near the Germans, you should know. He gave you a

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

little speech. This is our land and you should be like a lion. The Germans are nothing. Today they are here. In a month, a half a year, in two years they will be back in **Germany**, and we will be in our **[indecipherable]** here. So you – he gave you such a impetus to – to fight, to do something. And young people my type were very encouraged, you know. So when I used to come and do things and that and that and all the young people used to come to him and say you **[indecipherable]** you're doing nothing, look **Noah**. With a Jewish nose, he – he said, he – he does everything. So they – they wanted to get rid of me, and they – and they went get rid of me. And they send me out to a group who came near **Pinsk**, and the commandeer was **Igor. Igor**, when I came to them was plain Russian, all from **Moscow**.

**Moscow, Leningrad –**

Q: Yo-You went – you were the only one to leave to go to **Igor**?

A: I was the only one, in Jewish. And I came over there, I see all of a sudden, three – my – from my city, three guys, **Worlansky(ph) Eller(ph), Worlansky(ph) Simcha(ph)**, and **Worlansky(ph) Abrusha(ph)** the youngster, my friend. When I saw them, they said, **Noah**, where you come from? I said, my group send me over here. I – he – they said, what you gonna do? I said, we're gonna go to destroy the – the railroad here. They said, we have so many people, they know everything. I said, I know, too. They said, how do you know? I said, I am already a year and a half in

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

the partisans, it's time to learn. They just came, they were just new-coming from – they were [indecipherable] in a – in a place hid – hide – hiding. Okay. Over there was groups, 12 - 15 people groups, and the commandeer was a Russian officer and the rest was all Russians. And they took us, me and the hi – the younger, **Abrusha**(ph), my friend to the same group. And we went at night. They give us clothes forsta – first of all and machine guns, and good, everything perfect, to be dressed like a **mensch** with grenade, with a pistol, with – like a **mensch** you dressed, and got arms. They give you a little education what you can do, and which bombs you have to put under – under the railroad. So we came out, over there was five people sitting behind a water. Water was up – water was he – to here. So the Germans never thought that we'll be going seven kilometer into the – into the swamp to here to destroy the railroads. So they – they left this – this zone open. We came over there vert – [indecipherable] seven kilometer at night to go, you know, and I was short so I had to go with two **shtettins** I shouldn't fall in. We came on the other side, we were like fi-five people, the communists said, **Noah** [indecipherable] **Baloja**(ph), you both go to put the mines. **Baloja**(ph) said to the commandeer, him, he's Jewish, he doesn't know ho-how to put mines. I'm not going. So he says, step away, right away. In **Russia** there's not such a thing you're not going. So he said, who wants to go? And my friend **Abrusha**(ph), he – he – I'm going with **Noah**. So

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

we went both, we put on the mine, you know, we had to dig out the hole, put the mine deep that they smell th – from the dogs, the dogs shouldn't be able to smell it. Put a metal like a half a meter deep. When the railroad come and just a little **critch** is up in the air. We did it, came back and now – in couple hours after they left the – the swamps, boom [**indecipherable**]. So the – the Russian came to me, he said I'm sorry, I didn't know you know how t – how to – how to – the – they say Jewish people don't know how to fight. I say, well you're right, Jewish people don't know. What they don't know, they know. [**indecipherable**] instead. And I was there with them fighting every night, some other place, some other place, some other place. Not fighting with guns, with – with pistols, just bombs and bombs and bombs. We destroy them like dogs every night a – a – a – a transport, every night a transport. You know what it is, night – arms we had, how much we want. Food, the best. It was sitting a whole week every day, then we went back to the grou – to the [**indecipherable**] near **Pinsk**. Come there, change clothes, the best shower in the world. Food is unbelievable, the cook was from **Hungary** [**indecipherable**] in – in order to cook good food for the commandeer.

Q: Ho-How big a group was this **Pinsk** group?

A: We were like probably about a hundred people.

Q: Were there – were there women in the group?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: No, not one. The commandeer [indecipherable] to have it, the cook and [indecipherable] was men.

Q: What was the role of the women in your previous partisan –

A: They used to clean the pot – potatoes, wash clothes for the men. They have lot to do, it was a – a big group, couple hundred men to – to provide with – with the – clean everything and it was what to do. And then, even my wife, you can ask her, she was on post. Took a rifle an-and – and to watch, but they close the p – not the post near the officers, you know, not – not far away, far away just – just men.

Q: How was your health during all this, your physical condition?

A: Nobody was sick. The sick ova – become healthy. Sick people from ghetto become healthy in – in the partisans.

Q: Was there medical attention though, there?

A: Yes, yes, it had everything. It's not per-perfect [indecipherable] but we had. Let's say if y – if you needed [indecipherable] saw a regular doctor break [indecipherable] in order to take the [indecipherable] it was – things like this happen, many things.

Q: So you're now in – in **Pinsk**, any other stories about the partisans in **Pinsk**?

A: Over there – over there we were until December 1943. In 1943 we had a **pricass**(ph). It means you have to go and meet the Russian army, the Russian army

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

needs you. We haven't too much – too many partisans, because the – the – the Germans going back to **Germany**, to **Poland**, right, and is no room for the partisans, so it's enough the older people should stay and watch the Germans shouldn't get in – into the woods. Because the Germans will t – take it over.

Ukrainians, Lithuanians, no, they are all who work for the **SS**, you know? And the younger people had to go on the front. So when we came to a place in whi – in **White Russia**, when we met – when we went out from the woods, we had a – a **garmonika** playing music, we knew we – we met – we met in the Russian army soon. This was near **Slutsk**. We came from **Pinsk** to **Slutsk**, you know?

Q: Wh-When you were in the **Pinsk** partisans, did you still have any relationship with your first partisan group?

A: No. I had no – no – no – no ki –

Q: Connection, or –

A: No connections, no connections because the pi – the only people who had met each other on groups, on – on – on – on places they used to meet each other, maybe destroying things or we're buying food, or m – something like that they could see each other, otherwise nobody would – you – you – you – you shouldn't see it, because no group was wanted – interested you should know what's going on in the other one.



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: Did they – did the underground group in – the partisan group from **Pinsk** talk about what happened in **Pinsk**?

A: We couldn't speak of it to nobody about political or about anything else. Only one thing, whenever we have time you – you had – you had a week, you have to go out, destroy a whole week, every night. Then you come for a week vacation. In the week you eat, you sleep, and you learn the new a-arms what they send you from **Moscow**, all kind. And airplanes come every – every two weeks, every two weeks the airplanes, **Russia**. We used to make a fire, fi-fires and the Russian [indecipherable]

Q: And they would drop supplies?

A: Oh they – he just come the airplane down.

Q: The airplane would come down?

A: Yeah, yeah, we built like aerodrome.

Q: And then they would –

A: It was – it wasn't so simple, it was very hard. Most of the t – of the time they used to drop, but many times they were afraid to go back because they knew that the fire from the Germans was terrible, and if they went back they were killed.

Q: Did you ge – g – when you were in these partisan brigades, did you always go by your name? Your – your first and second name, or did you have another name?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Oh yeah, they – they used to call me **Nikolai**(ph) because they jokingly say **Noah** is a Jewish name, you're not a Jew, you're not a Jew, you're – **Roitman** is a – is a German, and **Noah** is good, and **Nikolai**(ph) is better.

Q: And so your – obviously your Russian language skills were excellent.

A: No, they're not excellent. I – I – I – I didn't went to school when I was eight and 12 - 15. Only when the Russian came, it wa – I – I was from 19 – I – I knew Polish good, but Russian, I didn't learn Russian because I hated communism. I didn't learn English – English because I hated British because what they did in **Eretz Israel**. Is not a – not a joke. I'm telling you. Not all of them, not all of my friends like this, I was like this. My family is very [indecipherable] Zionism. This was – **Israel** was all of it. So i – I – if I didn't like this, I didn't learn. It was a big mistake, right?

Q: But you had to communicate when you were in the partisans in Russian, right?

A: Oh, I – I knew how to read and to do everything, but not in a grade, you know. I was two years in school, after all. Young people two years learn in school they know, but I didn't know enough. I – I mean, I wanted to be engineer, to learn. I – I would study later on, after the war. But it didn't work out, I decide to run away. I don't want to do engineering, I don't want to do language, I want to go home. But home is **Eretz Israel**. [indecipherable] in '46 already.

Q: Okay. So now it's December '43, and you said that –

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: '43, and then we – we went and with the Russian army in **Krasny(ph)** **Baraki(ph)**. **Krasny(ph)** **Baraki(ph)** is between **Slutsk** and another city don't – I don't know exactly, but was – was a to – a little place. And when they saw us they took me right away to the army. We had to give up the rifles, give up the grenade [indecipherable]. And they took us in with the clothes and didn't give us clothes. They took me in a field, a lot of woods, and we had to dig a ditch, right? We dig out the ditch, this was the – like a side – the sidewalk, on both side was dirt, that was the place to sleep. No clothes, not – with nothing, just the clothes that came up from your boots. We were hungry and depressed. Just all day long, right, left, ri – kill [indecipherable] you know, they teaching us all the – this – like o-on the front.

Q: And how many were there in your group of partisans in –

A: Oh, [indecipherable] partisans, we – in our place – in our place where we came, we were couple hundred. And then come thousands and thousands and thousands came every – every hour to the army, cause this is – this is central point from here. All of a sudden ki – one somebody ca – co – one – one guy of the – from the – the army came, he said, where is **Nikolai(ph) Roitman**? I said, me. He – officer **Bilmis(ph)** wants to talk – talk to you. **Bilmis(ph)**? I said to myself, Jewish? Now Jewish **Bilmis(ph)**? I came over there [indecipherable] sit down. You have no – more Jews over here? I said yeah. **Wolansky's(ph)** a Jew, **Hamut(ph)** is a Jew. Jew

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

– these Jews, bring them all to me. I bring all the [indecipherable] my close friends. They – he ed – he made us food, we ate, we take a re – took a rest and – and he was such a **geshmak**(ph), such a **nahas**(ph). I'm telling you, he – he – our morale was to the sky. And nothing to worry, he says, from no – now I'll take care of you. And he did. One day the Russian army decide that all officers got to know how to dance, but dancing to ge – to **Germany**, in **Germany** everybody is **kultura**(ph). They cult – culta – **kultura**(ph), so people in **Russia**, they are not, everybody. So we went for dancing in **Russia**, in – in – in the **Krasny**(ph) **Baraki**(ph), in the place. We all came to see what the – how the officers dancing, just officers. And all of a sudden some Ukrainian about something, start with – with this [indecipherable] of mine, my friend, my **Bilmis**(ph) and he told him – I said, this is this and then he said to him – to the je – to the **Bilmis**(ph), you are **parshiva**(ph) Jew. You are pig – pig Jew. He took the pistol out and he [indecipherable] just shot him on – on the place. Everybody was – **Bilmis**(ph) such a officer, such a quiet, such a intelligent. He said, I couldn't take it. I can see my friends all die in the part – in the partisans and in the ghettoes and a Ukrainian like this, who worked together with the Germans, he's [indecipherable] he'll told me I am a dirty Jew, he cannot live any more on this world [indecipherable] The general – the general came, he said, [indecipherable] **Bilmis** [speaks Russian] friend, what punishment you want? He said, send me on

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

the front. He said, you got it. Normally, he said, we killing. You should be killed. And he send him [indecipherable] by **Berlin** if he – there was – he was killed. Was a big tragedy for all of us because he said, when the war will be over, we'll all meet together and we'll go [indecipherable] to **Israel**. And that's aft – in the – I was, and that's the way we – we went on the front. I went to artillery on the front, and they se – they send me on a course, on this place where I was, I was on a course for a couple of weeks to learn artillery. It's a **minamyot(ph)**, you know what **minamyot(ph)** and artill – artillery too. I learn so good, I knew it, I was proud of myself that I learned the way it should be. And I became a sergeant and they send me on the front. Send me on the front to white rush – to **shuko(ph)** White Russian – first White Russian front. I came into a place, my general was **Plachin(ph)**, my commandeer was 99 **Guardia(ph)** **artilleriskipolk (ph)** and I was Sergeant **Roitman** on the third battery. And since then I fought with all of them until we came to **Berlin**. But in between, when we be – didn't fight, we had to go out, three or four people from each cannon and go and get prisoners of Germans. Sometime we did, sometime we didn't, yeah. Sometime they killed us, sometime we killed them. And one place – we came to a place, ot -- **Ottertoti(ph)** **Berlin**, we saw we – the Germans at – attack here back again. They instead – Russian attack – attack all the time, but they some – somehow a group of Germans start attack sho – attack the

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Russian art – infantry. And they caught a group, they put all these, they call it –

Q: Belt?

A: Belts to each other and to the hand, to the each other and they killed them out.

And we came, we – we saw the Germans running and we open fire. We killed them all, not one was left. So it was a big tragedy. Here the – th-the 50 - 60 Germans just killed maybe – maybe a hundred Russians in – in – in a minute. And over here we came and we di – killed the – the – the Germans. But what – what the Germans where we ki – there were so many Russian were killed. So when the army came, the officers tell me everybody was crying like children. Why, oh, thought this **Berlin** ready, the last minute we – we get such a [indecipherable] they – they killed so many people. It was unbelievable, they couldn't take it. And then, from then on until we came to **Berlin**, we didn't left one German alive, not one. We had oth-other undefe – und – un – under – un – u-u-under our feet Germans and Russian, are mixed, th – because the – the – the – the – the – the fight was so intense and the artillery of the Russian was giving fire [indecipherable] and bombs that i-it was a – you couldn't see anything, like rain before you. And whatever we saw is – was mixed up, until we came to **Berlin**. We came to **Berlin**, a commandeer came over, he said **Noah**, now you see you – you have to go. Where I have to go? He said. You take one cannon with 10 people and we'll push you on the ropes, because the trucks

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

cannot go in. The fire is in – unbelievable.

Q: Before you – before we get to **Berlin**, did you see any – did you come across any camps, any labor camps?

A: Yeah, it was in **Lódz** when we were on the **Wiesel**(ph) – on the **Wisla**. **Wisla** near **Warsaw**. W-We were standing there for months, and then we pushed and we went back to **Lódz** to see because we – we knew they still had the Jewish people over there. And in **Warsaw** we saw was everything destroyed. And from there wh – by the way w-we went to – to **Berlin**, we came to a – to the water in the – the other [indecipherable] is like this and the **Warta** is like this, two waters go [indecipherable]. And we – we – we – and we had to go over on the other side in order to stop the ger – the Germans, they shouldn't be able to – to go – to go the bridge. All night long we build the bridges, you know, pontoon bridges under the water. And we took lines, like oil, so the tanks can see the – the lines oil, how to get on – on the bridge, because everything's under the water. And we came with our truck, a **GMC**, American **GMC** and our cannon, 105 millimeter **Howitz**(ph), and we were sitting on – and – and going through and all of a sudden Germans came and started bombing. And all the bridge was collapsed and our truck is in the water and me and one another guy ju-jump out from – on top of the water was a piece of ice, you know? This was 1945 already, maybe in February, March. And we were sitting

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

on the – on the piece – on the – on the ice, and we running with the rifles wet, back to **Küstrin** where the Germans are. I said it – I am not going, I am jumping. And I start jumping from one piece of ice to the other – to the other with the big clothes on yourself and somehow the energy made it I should be able to come on the other side, and we came alive, two of us. When we came on the other side they didn't believe we are alive because everybody is under the water already.

Q: As you were on the move, did you see any Jewish refugees?

A: Yes, I saw.

Q: Did you talk to them?

A: I talk.

Q: And what – what did you talk about?

A: Oh you – we talk that i-if they can be alive another day or two, and we shouldn't – they – they – they were afraid to – to eat too much, because the American in some places they didn't give them nothing, in some places they give them chocolate. The Russians were better, I'm telling you, the Russian gave them soup. Skinny, not that fat, just to – to – little by little, not too much, so they – they **[indecipherable]**

Q: Did you know anything about the camps at that time?

A: Yeah, sure we knew. We knew everything.

Q: How did you know?



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Because the trou – Russian propaganda was – was telling us everything. Telling every – we used to hear news three, four times a day.

Q: And you heard of a place called **Auschwitz**?

A: Sure. **Auschwitz** and **Majdanek** and **Treblinka**. And we knew that this probably happened to Jews and the Russians, because they will not take American or British over there, that what we knew. Because all the time we had a – a **[indecipherable]** we were afraid that one day **[indecipherable]** the American and the British will attack us. It was almost **[indecipherable]** said, the American going to – to – to attack us, maybe a day or two or three, it was very close to it. I don't know why it did not happen, but it was on the agenda in – in – in **Germany**, before we took **Berlin**, because the Russian wanted to press so hard, kill how many Russians and Germans together, just to be the first in **Berlin**. And they did. And we have to be the first, we have to be the first and push and push. This what I'm telling you is nothing. If I would tell you stories how many days and nights we didn't sleep, we didn't eat, we had to fight and fight. Some places we had hills, where the Germans give us fire hell. We couldn't go up the hill. We have to shot for days, you know, in order to get through to these places, because the Germans were so defendable. They had **[indecipherable]** arms, and – and – and good soldiers.

Q: When you were fighting the Germans, were you fighting as a Jew, or were you

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

fighting as a Russian soldier?

A: Well, in my heart I was a Jew, but with the clothes and everything, he – I was a Russian soldier, of course. I couldn't say – say – when – when I f – when I get the Germans prisoners. So I tell them **[speaks German]**. He never responded, he never say anything. He thought I am going to kill him a lot. I didn't touch him, I didn't do nothing to him because I had a order not to do anything. To kill, somebody else will kill him, but not me. And if he – if he a – he was a general, he wouldn't even speak to a **[indecipherable]** he wants a general to speak to. Such a **chutzpah** from the Germans y-you wouldn't believe, yeah. **Unheardable**, the – the – the – the respect for **[indecipherable]**

Q: So – so now you're in the outs – on the outskirts of **Berlin**?

A: Now – now we have to go into **Berlin**, so he says to me, **Noah**, you take y – nine people and you will commandeer, and we'll bring you at night into the city. What you have to do, the first floor everywhere is already Russian soldiers. The second floor, third, Germans. How do we get rid of the Germans, how – how can we do it, we cannot send our people with – with rifles? What can – what can do our infantry men? If we go up, it'll **[indecipherable]**, it'll kill them. Now, on every cross is snipers. The Germans killed every Russian, couldn't go through. So the only thing, at night we'll bring the **[indecipherable]** and you'll start shooting in the houses, and

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

that what we did. We did it for a few days. We destroyed houses, second and third floor mish-mash. So maybe I kill a German [indecipherable] too, I don't know. What do you think? So after maybe – by a week, we couldn't move the – the – the machines to other place, because if we would move they would kill us, the snipers. So we stood over there until I heard a shrapnel is coming. A – when I knew when the shrapnel is coming, one behind me and one in the side of me, and one before of me, I knew the [indecipherable] will get into me. So I said to the guys, let's jump in into the – into the places where the bombs fell before. And we didn't have a chance to jump out and an air cannon, boom, and nine people were killed in – in one shot. One guy was his head split in half, and I was wounded, but I det – I didn't feel nothing. I took my [indecipherable] and take his head, it – it shouldn't fall apart [indecipherable] ban-bandaged it, and I call for help should come, we – we had nothing. And they used to be in touch with us thr-through telephone. All of a sudden the telephone was e – e – not in contact. There I knew already so something happened. This was like five in the evening, we found out afterwards – at this time. And we were wait – li-li – sitting and waiting until 11 o'clock at night they came with that big American truck, and they took us out both, and they took us to **Schöneichel**(ph). This is **Forstit**(ph), a little village before **Berlin**. And they took it over there and you see doctors i-in red, all the clothes is red from – from blood.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

And you see with the cut hands, legs, people operate – operate on the field. And I – I sa – I said, oh, I'm nothing. Came to me later somebody with a – with a scissor, starts cutting my head, I was wounded here, I was wounded here, I was wounded here. I said, a little needle, or something, i-in Russian, he said, don't talk nothing. We gonna save your life, otherwise you're gonna die. And they cut what they did whatever the thing they – I scream to the – to the sky, and took me to the hospital. I – took – took me to hospital. I went to the hospital, I look, full of Germans, full of Russians. Full. I took me – and I look to my – said to myself **[indecipherable]** I'm alive, maybe they – I'll be alive. So the May fifth, three days before the war was over, my friend die. He was – had the split head before, he – me – he die. So we had nothing left, just me. And I said, my God, I – I had – I have no sense t – of crying, or of begging or this. And I cried and said **[indecipherable]** ah, I am alive. I want to see this – th-the – the – the end of **Hitler** and then I should die, you know? And I was alive, a-and I ke – wake up. And my sister came to me, and I see sh – chocolate under my head, apple. How come? One day, two days, three days, I k – the best food. In one week I was already ou – in hospital a – moving around the hospital. And they – they give me some clothes, you know, **[indecipherable]** and I went to the city. And I look, somebody before me goes with the **Magen David**. And this was in **Leipzig**. **Leipzig** in **Germany** – **Germany**. I went with – I was bended, I

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

couldn't stand up straight because I was wounded. So I went with all my strength and I turn around, and he says to me, **[speaks foreign language] Jude?** You – you are – you are Jewish? I said yes. He says to me, listen my young man. I have a daughter in **America** and a son in **Eretz Israel**. You are a young man, try to live, you got to fight for your own. I am sitting from 1936, i – he was a pharmacist. Him and his wife were sitting in the same house what he owned the pharmacy, and they give to a German th-the – the business and they kept him over there for ho-how many years? At ye – eight, nine, 10 years. So he said, I took him to the hospital where I came from.

**End of Tape Two, Side B**

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

**Beginning Tape Three, Side A**

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Noah Roitman**. This is tape number three, side **A**.

A: And he said to me, you have to go to **Israel**. When I heard this, he w – he opened my world. I said, and God will give me life and I will be alive, I promise you. This the only place I hope for all my years since I was a child, and I will fulfill your – your **bakasha**(ph). And took him to the hospital, a-and his wife, and they checked them up from top to bottom. And they give him so much food, and I have to carry with him all the food back to his house, and we say hello, and I said to him, what should I do? He said, I'll give a address, and you will [**indecipherable**] as a Russian soldier to this place, and you'll tell him he should make you a picture as a – that you were in – in the camps, in the concentration. I said, what if – he said, don't ask. I went – I took off the clothes and I went to a goy, a German, make me pictures and [**indecipherable**] you know [**indecipherable**]. Do you have more Jews in your – in your place? I said one more. So how can I take – I take him? I don't know if I can take him. But the –

Q: I – I just wanted to clarify, he took a picture of you as –

A: As a – as –

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: – as a prison –

A: – I would be, as – as a – as I would be i-in the camp, as a Jew in the concentration camp.

Q: Oh, as a Jew in the concentration camp.

A: And make me a picture out like this. He said keep it, I'll tell you what to do. I said, all the man talks to me, I should do it, I was afraid to keep this like – something like that, but I did. When I came back to my army, I have a – a friend of mine, very close friend in the army, in the artillery. His name was **Shika**(ph) **Mykohn**(ph). And I s – tell him, **Shika**(ph), I am preparing myself. He said, what do you mean? I said, I'm going to **Israel**. What? He start crying, I said yeah. Ho- How come? I said, don't ask. I'll come out from the hospital, I'll be back in two weeks, prepare yourself mentally. Don't be afraid. Remember sh – that's th – our way.

Q: Did you – did you think at all of going back to **Baranowicze** to see if any family members were alive?

A: Not yet, but I want – I wanted to go to **Baranowicze**. Actually – actually after the war, but we'll come to this. So after I told him this, I went back to the hospital, and after two weeks I felt that I am a **shtikel mensch**, I'm feeling good. Every day I used to walk out from the – from the hospital and go in **[indecipherable]** in the city

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

[**indecipherable**] and – and look, maybe I'll find a Jew or something that. One evening I'm going back like six, seven o'clock in the evening and I hear somebody is going behind me and screaming **amhor(ph)**, **amhor(ph)**, **amhor(ph)**, and I couldn't get what – what – what the **amhor(ph)**, who is **amhor(ph)**? When I went almost in to – to open the door to go in behind the – the soldiers thing and – and the [**indecipherable**]. When you have to go into the army, you got a [**indecipherable**] it's not – not a like a garage, but it's a opening –

Q: A guard post?

A: Something like that, the guard post. H caught and he said [**speaks foreign language**]? I said of [**speaks foreign language**] it's a half an hour I'm going after you, I see you're Jewish and I'm screaming you don't want to enter. I will give you my heart away. I c – I couldn't understand, maybe my thoughts were some – somewhere else. He didn't knew that, what I am thinking, how to run away, and how to get rid of this. I said [**indecipherable**] So I said, what can I do for you? He said look, I left th-the concen – the camps a couple – two weeks ago, a week ago [**indecipherable**]. And after the war I find my wife alive, and we are together again. So, I took away from a German a radio. From that – from a second house I took a bike. You see here? This is my [**indecipherable**] that's what I have, a bike, a radio and my wife and I'm going this way to **Poland**, so maybe this will help me to – to



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

get or-organized somehow. And I laughed. I said, th-this will help you in wa – in **Poland, Poland**, the anti-Semites don't go over there. He said, I must go, maybe I'll find somebody from the family. I car – I took him to a house. Here this – this was the road. Over here the Russian com-comi-**comisseriate**(ph), the police, and over here was a private house. I said, that's good ta – for him to stay here because the Russian are close. I knocked on the door and that – the Russian was very afraid. A lady came out, old, you know, you **[indecipherable]** up everything with **[indecipherable]** she was afraid that the Russian were coming, do something to her. I said, don't be afraid lady, just open the door. She opened the door, I said, I want you to give this pair a room until tomorrow morning, but you will be responsible. Whatever you eat, you give them, and whatever happen to them will happen to you. And she says, **[indecipherable] zufrieden**. I am very happy. Took in the – the – the bicycle **[indecipherable]** put them aside and give them a room, she **[indecipherable]** going to sleep and tomorrow morning everything okay. Tomorrow morning – I couldn't sleep already at night. S – was – something worries me. Very early I wake up and I run. I came, I see two horses with a wagon from the Russian army, and the bike and the radio is the same – I think this is like the same **[indecipherable]** the Jewish people had **[indecipherable]** my friend **[indecipherable]**. I start running across the house with all my care, and I was

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

running on the steps. One Russian ran between me, somehow bended and he run away, and the second after him. I caught the second one and not let him go. And I said to him, what are – what you doing over here? He says not – it's not your business. And I hold him – and all of a sudden the j – the guy jump out from the room. He saw me probably [indecipherable] and he told me the story. They came in the middle of the night, they took away the guy – the – the bike and this and – and they wanted his wife. So she jump out from the window and he – he doesn't know where she is, and they made me miserable all – half a night until he – was five o'clock in the morning, from – from 12, they murder him. I was so shocked, it was so – but it [indecipherable] you know [indecipherable] I cou – I couldn't take that a Russian should do to a Jew. I said to him in Russian [speaks Russian] do you know he is Jewish and I am Jewish too? And you do to a Jew, whatever he left from the concentration camp here, all his family is killed. He is quiet, he's not saying anything. He almost cried, too, the Russian. But I couldn't stop myself and I give him a shot and I knock him out, his eye. And I knock his out – e-eye out. He starts to – I – I am a bad Jew [indecipherable] and I – he didn't let me go, he just grabbed me and grabbed me like this and he didn't let me go and he starts screaming and biting me and he bite me and I shot in him. And I said to the Jew, you go out, find your wife and run away from here, you see what's – here's your bike, here's

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

everything, go. And then he slap him, and I slap him, and we went down like the steps like this. And in two minutes a Russian officer come with a re – a red band here, with a **tomaht**(ph), leave everything alone. **[indecipherable]** the hand. And the Russian want to say something. He says no, he's a sergeant, he's supposed to talk first. I think he was Jewish or Armenian, but we – we b – like – like **[indecipherable]**. I tell him **[speaks foreign language here]** no. He took him for the ear and slap him and took the other one too. I went to the army, I told the officers in the **[indecipherable]** what's happen. He said, we'll make you a passport, in two hours you – you go on back to your place, you – you're not here any more. Cause they're gonna zoo – look for you. And they will find you, cause he said, your – your clothes. And I came back to my – with my **polk**(ph) to my – to my artillery, I call it, my unit. Came there – no, I came there, I went to my commandeer that I am feeling well, I have pe – I got **[indecipherable]**. Very happy to see me. He says to me, **Noah**, you know what? I thought about you. When you coming back from the hospital, we have to open a cantina. You know what a cantina is? I said, what – what do you mean? I – I – I'm a businessman? He says to me, what your father did? I said, my father was a – he had a horse and that's what his living. And what did your grandpa? I said, a shoemaker. And **[indecipherable]** I said, no, but – no – no, but – because over there you was afraid if somebody is handling or is something

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

business, they take, put you in jail. So I made everybody so [indecipherable] nobody's in business. So he says to me, such a smart man – his name was Commandeer **Plattin**(ph) – if nobody was in business in your family, now you will be the [indecipherable]. So I said, my God, he want to get me somehow. And I said – I said to him, please, let me go too. I like to teach artillery. Okay, he said, go. And let me teach, in two weeks he called me and show [speaks foreign language] you must, I ha – I have no other way. Go and put all – all your clothes and everything away. He give me a pistol, give me clothes and give me two chauffeurs with two big trucks, two bags, millions o-of – of marks. We'll fa – we'll fill up the cantina – make a cantina, the cantina in – in **Leipzig** was so big. One of the biggest towns in **Germany**. And I said, what can I do? How – how can you do everything? With marks, can I – can I make a cantina? And then one of the chauffeurs told me, come on, we-we – we'll – we'll – we'll find a way. We went to a farm, and we took pigs and we gave them marks. And I took – second place we took topa – potatoes. In a – in a – in one place we take clothes, and we start – we start changing. We di – we d – in the jo – in **Germany**, changing. And then one day I – I brought clothes, you know, material, li-like this. Twen – 20 ton. The second, I bought shoes, thousand pairs. Then I bought sweaters, a million. And I start in – in one month, trucks, 10 trucks I took, 10 trucks I took five times a day, 10 trucks I – thousands of soldiers

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

worked just to load them – make everything, you know them – after two, three months, we had four – billions of dollars materials. And the commander from the **brigada**(ph) [indecipherable] general came, and he said, every officer gets 10 kilogram packet to **Russia**. S-Soap – regular soap, [indecipherable] and then – you call it pens, clothes, shoes and this, 10 kilogram. Soldiers, five kilogram. And we had people walking and make them – in the packages, and send them **Russia** [indecipherable]. I became so famous that to come to me to talk to me was like to come to a general. I have a private car, and whenever I go with my pistol they go – they have two or three people around me to watch me, nothing should happen to me. So I went and I bought a car myself. I had so much money I didn't know what to do – what to do with it. And all my officers used to come and beg, **Noah** [indecipherable] a bottle vodka. Give him a bottle vodka. It's a – everybody was my friend. I organize games, chess, soccer, volleyball, right? And everybody with clothes and everything. And then we had such a good game, we played it in **Bymar**(ph), then – the English army, we played, and then I run away. When I run away I came to commander and I said to him, I had to go – I had a dream that my – somebody of my family is alive. So he said, what do you want to do? I said I wanted two – ones passport. We – may – prepare everything so, in a way that it will work for half a year. So I'll give you two months. And he did. And then I came, say, I would

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

like my friend **Shika(ph) Mykohn(ph)**, he is Jewish, I want him to come with me. Why? I said, because the Polacks is sh – har – killing Jews and the Russian. Oh, yeah, good idea. And he let me go with him. Then we come to – to **Poland**. And instead to go to **Baranowicze**, to see what's going on there, right, first of all I was in 1943 as a partisan I was there, so I knew what the – our house is th – and the people are killed, is – is nothing special for me to see. And whatever I could see is to see her and oth-other friends who – who are alive. But to me – to me was more important to take Jewish people from **Poland** and bring them over to **Czechoslovakia**, because I had two months **passporten(ph)**. I was sitting with locomotive with the Polacks, give them 10,000 **zlotys**, which was a hundred dollars maybe. Man – money I have, bigger than me. And I spend the money to bring Jews from **Poland** to – to – to **Czechoslovakia**. After they caught me, the Russian caught me.

Q: Ho-How did you find these Jews?

A: Oh, in every city, in the – was the centers from Jews who came from the concentration camp, from **Russia**, from – from partisans, th – everybody wants to go to **Israel**. So you have to go from je – from – from **Poland** to **Germany**, and from **Germany** to **France**. **France**, with a ship. I – I knew, because we ha – I had the connection already with the **Israeli [indecipherable]**

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: How did you have that connection?

A: It was very easy. They find you all over. The Israelis find us all over. They had the set-up centers. The Israelis were working perfect. They were – they were like – like British spies, you know, dressed in British, and the **Magen David** on – on the [indecipherable] so you know this Israeli. But they knew everything, they speak all languages and they knew how to co-communicate, right? And they to – worked very, very well, very well.

Q: And so your role was to do what? What was your role at that time?

A: My role is to just take out pe-people from **Poland** to – to – to – to – to **Czechoslovakia**.

Q: And did you go with them?

A: I go in the front with the locomotives so the Russians should see a Russian, they will not stop him, you know. Or the Czechs or the Polacks. But the m – and then [indecipherable]

Q: So you went back and forth?

A: Back and forth, and then they caught me. They caught me and put me in jail, the Russians. And I got 15 years severe.

Q: Okay, before we get to that, when the war was over, what did you feel like?

What were your thoughts and what were your feelings when you realized that the

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

war –

A: Ah [**indecipherable**]. I was feeling that a Jew will be like cream on – on the top of the milk. Who is gonna see a Jew is gonna say oh, we got to keep him, we got to watch him, we got to respect him, we got to thank him he is – is alive. But it's not like this. You see, the whole pi – the whole politic is against the Jews anyway right – right after the war. So, I would never believe this will happen, but that's what happen. And then after we – I c – we came to **Israel** in 1946 and th-they – they took us back to ca – **C-Cyprus**, right.

Q: Yeah, we'll talk about that. Okay, so now you said you were escorting these Jews to **Czechoslovakia**, but you were caught.

Q: And the – and the – and they caught me and they took me to **Oranerbunger**(ph) **Strasse 10**, in **Berlin**. And they put me in jail with Nazis, Ukrainians, couple hundred people on the sixth floor.

Q: They being the Russians?

A: The Russians. When the Russian caught me and they thought I am gonna run away. So one was Jewish, and the rest was **NKVD**, **NKVD**, the Russian. So the Jew got tol – ta – talked to me like this. [**speaks foreign language**] and you'll never be smarter than me. I'll put you in jail. And they grabbed my hand like behind my – my back. They put me in – in **katen**(ph), you know, in steel, in metal. And they put



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

me in a car, they throw me in, **Oranienburger Strasse 10 in Germany**, and they put me in jail. Three days and three nights I was sitting staring straight – not sitting, standing. No air, excuse me, and no toilet, no nothing. Three days, 72 hours like this.

Q: Because they thought you were gonna desert?

A: Yeah, they thought they go – I'm gonna go **[indecipherable]** to the **Americas**, and th – and – from the Russian army. So here it – they – when it comes – after three days they took – they take you out and say **Noah Roitman**. You go out. When you get fresh air, yo-you – you – you dropping. Y-You almost dying. You – you – you – y-you don't go, but you – you – you ch – you – you chasing like – like somebody would – would – would – I don't know, you are not a **mensch**. And then little by little, you come for yourself, it takes you in, in a big **zoll(ph)** and sitting over there a general and why – wha-wha-what you – what were you doing against the Russian? You take people and take them over to the Americans for money. And then I tell – I want to – can I sit? He says to me, you dog, you stay because I am gonna smash you with my pistol, you fascist. I said to him, I am Jewish, I am wounded May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945 from the Germans and you don't tell me I am fascist. Don't talk to me like that. I said, I am not afraid for you stomping your f – your feet like that. I fought for myself. I am deserving something better than this. Not you should

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

talk to me like that. Take him out, this dog, take him out. Took me out. Took me out a little truck, and then come out two, three other people, and between the other three was one **Meyer(ph) Boldusov(ph)**. **Meyer(ph) Boldusov(ph)**. He wasn't Jewish, he was Russian. And he says, when you were answering this, so I was behind you, and I heard everything. You good, he says to me. You're not afraid for them. I said, what can they do, more than severe, what can they do more? He says to me, I am officer, a major in the army. And in **Berlin** I couldn't do whatever they – they told me do this and this and this and I couldn't do it exactly what they wanted from me. So after two days in fighting with the Germans, they told me that I didn't fill out the – the – he didn't do it hundred percent [**indecipherable**] and they put him in jail [**indecipherable**] and he got 10 years severe. Now we were sitting in the truck, in the – behind the truck, in the – in the front is a officer and our driver. And the driver was a young guy, and the officer was a young si – we saw right that y-young people came from **Russia**, from **Siberia**, somewhere. It's a – children. So he th – **Boldusov(ph)** told me, look, I'll take care on – on this guy, who was sitting wi-with us with a rifle. But you, as a Jew, you gonna run first, because you understand German. And we got to go away, **Poland, Finland**, not – just not **Russia**. And all of a sudden he give me a – a – a – a [**indecipherable**] and this guy's head was already laying down and the rifle is not here. And we jump out the – the truck runs maybe

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

20 - 30 miles an hour and we jump from the back. No belts, no **pagrones**(ph), no nothing, and like – like prisoners. And we run. We run maybe two, three kilometer. And we came to the city where the – we heard **Ein zug**, and **zug** is a railroad. **Ein zug nacht Posen, ein zug nacht Poland, ein zug nacht Czechoslovakia**. I heard **Poland, Łódz**, I said to him, come on, because I know the language. And we went into the railroad, to the wagons, yeah. And – and – and the railroad is running. And we had to go out – some out – to sit between, because if the Russian come in we'll – they'll ch – when they check with the **[indecipherable]** they gonna get you. So we waited until the r – the locomotive will stop somewhere. And they stop. When they stop we jump out and we went in between the two wagons, you know, and we stood, four people, and – and we hold on each other t – tight, sh-shouldn't – shouldn't move, we couldn't – no, here's the water – the water too, we had to go through **[indecipherable]**. We stood and we – we – we see what's going on. The – the Russian already they're coming just looking for us. Th-The – every – every wagon. And then they stopped, and they went down and we came to – before **Łódz** in a – in a shtetl. **Lignitz**(ph)? And we went down – we went down, we went to the – the – change the – the – the wagons from here they go – go straight, we have to go to **Łódz**. So we went down and we took a **[indecipherable]** everybody was sitting and quiet. All of a sudden two – not two, three girls came in and they were Jewish, I was

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

sure, because they schlepped pack-packages. In that time after the war the Jewish girls used to come from **Poland** to ger-**Germany**, bring food from in **Poland** and from **Germany** take some clothes and they used to make a living somehow. And they went in, they were sitting in the corner. And we sitting in this corner. All of a sudden you see in the front of the door, Polacks from the army, with the rifles on the arms like this. Went back and forth, back and forth, and they mimic with the eyes to each other, and one went in – into the café. They went to the café and we watched them and we see they are going to the g – where the girls are. So my friend **Shika**(ph), my other friend, the Jew, says to me in Yiddish, **[indecipherable]**. I said **[indecipherable]**? He says, look, they're going to the girls, they s – probably Jewish. So **Boldusov**(ph), th-the – the Russian, th-the – the strong guy who – who – who was really a strong guy, he said to me, you can talk **[indecipherable]** if you want, just tell me what's going on. You tell him. Oh boy. When the Polacks take the girls **[indecipherable]** in Polish **[indecipherable]** they had to – no – no – no – no choice, crying and go. But before the door he stopped them and he said, da – give me your documents. He was a major in the – the Russian army. The Polacks was right away nah – give me – a Russian, you know, he's **[indecipherable]**. And all of a sudden, full of people, was most Russian. So he said to all the people, a Polack wants to kill three Russian girls. Come. And a – like – like seeing a Russian

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

[**indecipherable**] you say give them, give it. You should see what was happen.

Everybody on – on te – two Polacks. They – they made them **shmattas**(ph) on there, on the floor. And [**indecipherable**] somebody came in and it was a Jew with a – a nose like this, shorter than me, and he says, you are i-in – over here too? I said yeah. He says come in to [**indecipherable**]. I came to [**indecipherable**] said give me a passport. He said, fly to **Lódz**, right away. And we took the girls, we came to **Lódz** and that's was enough. Soon as we there we start flying and – and – and doing things. And goodbye [**indecipherable**] and a couple of weeks later we went – oh, my wife and I and all my friends –

Q: How did you – how did you find your – your wife?

A: I knew – I knew. I – I – she used to write the letters and I used to write her letters. And I used to write letters to the – from the **Russia** – from the Russian army, all t – to all my friends, the girlfriends [**indecipherable**] if you'd be in contact. So I knew who die in the front and who is wounded in **Moscow** and who is wounded in [**indecipherable**]. I knew everything.

Q: So where did you meet up with your wife?

A: **Lódz**.

Q: And then what happened?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: And then we came to ger – we became from a – from a – from **Poland** to **Germany**, and we come to a kibbutz [indecipherable]. And then they married there, and three other couples, four couples. The rabbi was Rabbi **Stone**(ph) from **America**. And the guy who give us the [indecipherable] was a guy from the partisans who wrote the [indecipherable] by hand, not [indecipherable] everything, we had it. And we went to [indecipherable]

Q: So what was your – what was your date of marriage?

A: I – I wouldn't know. It – it's written, but I – I can't remember.

Q: What was it like to be in **Lódz** after the war?

A: No-Nothing special. Just co – ju-just came from all over **Hungary** from **Russia**. No money, no – no clothes, no nothing. Just thank the **UNRRA** and the Jewish group from the **brigada**, the Israelis help a lot, they send them right away to **Austria**, to – to **Italia**, all over, to **Israel**. That's why so many people came to **Israel** that time, because they have the choice. [indecipherable] people from concentration camp, [indecipherable] people from **Russia**, some from the partisans and the Russian army. [indecipherable] right to a – to – to **Israel** [indecipherable]

Q: Did you feel at that point truly free, truly liberated, truly free? The war was over, you were with your future wife? [phone ringing]

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Yeah, we did. But when we take a little [indecipherable] and we went to **Israel** in 1946 from French –

Q: Well, okay, fi-first your – you got married, and then –

A: Yeah, and – and we went fracto – to – to **France**. And we – and we were staying inside –

Q: How did you know to go to **France**?

A: Because the – the is – the Israeli **brigada** mention – did it. They took us maybe 50,000 t-to – to **Saint-Jerome**, in – in – in **France**. And from **Saint-Jerome** we went to a little ship and went to **Israel**. So when we went to **Saint-Jerome**, it was no food, no – no place good to sleep, but we were young, and the power to leave and the power to go to **Israel** was so that nothing stopped you, you see?

Q: What – what had happened to your wife? You had left her in the partisans and then what – what had happened to her after –

A: She came – she came out in 1944, she came out from the woods to **Baranowicze**, but she has no friends, no wa – nobody. Her aunt was die – is dead. I was a friend who was in the army. We just write letters to – once in awhile, that's all. And she suffered very much, hunger and – and no place to stay, nothing. Very bad. Very, very bad. She made it [indecipherable]

Q: What were the conditions like at **Saint-Jerome**?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Bad. It wasn't enou – it's got too much people. In one shot she want to go to **Israel**. And was no ships, we had to wait, and the British was shi – sending airplanes to check if – if we – if we are ready to go with the ships, and they couldn't tro – control us until we arrived to **Israel**. We ca – after **Israel** they used to caught us and take us back to fr-fr – to [indecipherable] **Cyprus**.

Q: So when did you – when did you leave **Europe**?

A: **Europe** I left probably in 1945, I came out from the Russian army, came to **Germany** and sit there for three months in the kibbutz. In beginning of '46, I believe a – we – we a lot – we arrive over to **Israel** 1946.

Q: You went to **Israel** at – at what p-part of 1946?

A: I believe probably in July, August [indecipherable]

Q: But you had to go to **Cyprus** first?

A: No, we – we had to fight the British. They – they start jumping on our ship near – near **Netanya**, and we wanted to go down into the water and jump into the city. So they start – they start j – sh-shooting on us. They killed four of us.

Q: Okay, what does that do to you after all you had been through during the war, to have that?

A: Yeah, we – we – we decide that time, it's not [indecipherable] way just to fight. In this moment I became [indecipherable] Zionist. I didn't want to be a



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

[indecipherable], I didn't want to be a – a – a **Mizrachi**. I'm born **Mizrachi**. Said no, **Mizrachi** is not enough. We have to be terrorists. We have to fight the British to dead. Because of them we lost so many millions. How many millions would be alive if they would left open **Palestine**? So we have to fight British and I fought them. And now I can fight the British, like to Germans I se – I had the same feeling. Same feeling.

Q: So you're on your boat outside of **Netanya**, and what did you do?

A: We – we – we – when with the British c-came jumping from their ship, military ships, two big ones, scr-scr-scratch us. So we had to fight them. S-So we had, I call it [indecipherable] sardines, all kinds, big boxes and bottles of water. And, you know, we were 600 guys. We start shooting on them, we wounded this faces and did di – many of them [indecipherable] tears in the eyes. They said they couldn't get us, they start shooting, kill four of us. Time we gave up and took us from – from **Netanya** to **Haifa** and from **Haifa** they [indecipherable] out from the – our [indecipherable] in the **Negev**. No man can took it – three English pol – had to take us out, one man, with bayonets they start cutting us, until they took us in – in **Cyprus**. They come in **Cyprus** –

**End of Tape Three, Side A**

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

**Beginning Tape Three, Side B**

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Noah Roitman**. This is tape number three, side **B**.

A: When we come to fa – **Cyprus**, the British give us something to sleep, you know, and some cookies and this and we throw them into the faces. What was – this is not soldiers' fault, but we had such a, really such a hate for – hatred and that we couldn't take it. After a few days we got used to it, we na – hungry, we got to eat, we got to – and then all of a sudden **Golda Meir** came. Took [indecipherable] to tell us that you should – we shouldn't be upset, in a short time we'll be there. In four months we were in **Israel** already. Some [indecipherable]

Q: But what did you do in those four months on **Cyprus**?

A: We – we made strikes every day. We burned the – the – the – the houses, the little bar –

Q: Barracks?

A: Barracks. We burned the – we destroyed the – the – the wires what they had we should – between us and between the British. We made them miserable every day. They used to come with water and give us water. Oh, we made them – the devil made the – they will ever reme-remember us.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: Were you able to stay with your wife during that time?

A: Yeah, sure.

Q: Men and women could stay together?

A: Yeah. And then when we arrived to **Israel**, there came **Eggert(ph)**. The buses now said **Eggert(ph)**, company **Eggert(ph)**. Took t – took us from – from the brit – from the – from the ships to hors –

Q: Before – before you go on, I want to know what it was like for you to put your foot down on the soil of **Israel**.

A: We – we weren't in **Israel**. We were – we were yest – on – on – on – on – on the ship. Came back to **Israel** and over there we have to go on a bus, right to a bus, n – not – not on the dir – on the – on the – on the soil. Went into the soil, was a small bus, maybe 40 – 50 people. We came out – we open the door and we came out and we pick up the bus and we hi – look at [**indecipherable**] **Israel**. [**indecipherable**] the British, two crazy guys.

Q: You picked up the bus?

A: Bus, in the – in the air. Then – then we came in back, right, and we start singing Hebrew – Hebrew songs. And we were o – so overwhelming, that everybody was singing crying. And when we came to **Israel**, they ask me if I want to go – people who wanted to go to kibbutz, went to the kibbutz. My wife and I said – my wife

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

said, I don't want to go on kibbutz. I want a private life. I said, we'll only g – we'll go to kibbutz for a – a year, two, three, maybe you're gonna like it.

Q: You're n – you're now 23 years old?

A: Yeah. And she says I – she don't want it, so – so we – so they said, where do you want to go? My wife said we want to go to a hotel. What else? They took us to a – to a [indecipherable] is a big opening, you can go up on the third floor. And on the third floor, you wa – you know, it's a lot of tar on – on – on the – on the third floor, so the water shouldn't be dropping through the cement. And we go up up there, and see the hotel they – they brought us. We were sitting there for two or three hours, and all of a sudden your feet get **clapped** to – to – to the – to the – to the tar, and get hard and you can't even pick up the shoe, the shoe stays in – in the tar, you have no – und – only s-socks, and socks, everything was rotten, they were **shmattas**. So we went down a little bit and we didn't know what to do. No money. We – we – we had one thing to cover ourselves, cut in half, and a bottle of water, that what we came in. A bottle of water and a **shmatta**(ph) to cover just one side of – of my – I said to myself, my God, I – my wife is suffering, I may – may – me, I am a man, but she? So we went down, and somehow, I don't know, one of my friends who was already in **Israel** a year, he's a dentist, he find out that we came. He left his job and he came to **Petah Tikva** for a half a day he spent to find us. And he took us to **Montefiore** in

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

**Israel.** We came to **Montefiore** he says, look, I am living over here by my wife and whom they don't have, but they have a – how you call it, **izza, izza**, you know what the **izza** is? To me like a little – what – what do you call it? A little animal, gives milk, tell me the name.

Q: Oh, a calf, you mean? A goat, a cow?

A: No, no, what is –

Q: Goat?

A: Goat. So, I'll take out the goat outside and you can sleep over there. So that's what he did. With – with – he put new hay a little bit on top and all night we – we gon – we thought we gonna die from the smell.

Q: How did he know that you had gotten to **Israel**?

A: The connection was working perfect. Everybody knew every-everybody and everybody want to help each other. Because I took these people out from ghetto to the partisans, so he – he wants to repay, you know? So, we went over there, better than **Petah Tikva, Petah Tikva** is hot an-and over here we had what was something to eat and [indecipherable] sleep. Next day I said to him, I'm going to **Giv'atayim**. He said **Giv'atayim** is a long way. I said, I'll go. Went – took my wife, went to **Giv'atayim**. I went to **Giv'atayim** until I came to street [indecipherable]. At street [indecipherable] my father had a cousin, and he was a – there's – there's

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

[**indecipherable**] the – the – th-the second h-h-hand to the mayor in the city, and his name is **Shika**(ph) **Ellerstein**(ph). He was the s – top man for **Solel Boneh** who build all the airport – the airports in **Israel** and the **mamalim**(ph), the ports. So when I – all of a sudden we went through the house, she came out and she says, hello, hello mister. Tell me, your name is not **Roitman**? I said yeah. She said, you're my cousin, come in. So we went into her house and she telephone her husband that we are alive, that we are the – the only from the family. And she started asking me about her cousins, her father, her mother and ah, na, na. I said nobody's here, nobody. So he came and he was sitting with us all night. We were laying in his bed and he said, tell me everything. Tell me from **A** to **Z**, like I am talking to you. That time I remember ma – better. And he says to me, I am surprised that you know such a nice Hebrew. I said, I – for the last couple of months we be – we – we talking a little Hebrew better than before and I learn Hebrew when I was younger. He said, don't worry, you're young enough, you're gonna learn Hebrew perfect. And you will work. On second day he find me a job right away in a factory and I went to cut steel – metal, and I cut my hand because I didn't have no gloves. And I made 25 or 35 cents a day. And I was happy as happy can be.

Q: And then you stayed there for how long?

A: 18 years.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: And – and – while you – but you stayed in that location the whole time?

A: No, I – I didn't stay. From there, I like to work myself, I [indecipherable] you know. I cannot work for somebody. So I said I'm gonna learn a – a trade. So I went to a second cousin, her husband was a builder. So I went to him to – to learn the trade of building houses. I work over there by a couple of years until I learned the trade, then I went for myself.

Q: And – so and then where did you – did live in **Israel**?

A: [indecipherable]

Q: [indecipherable]

A: Yeah.

Q: And do you have any children?

A: Yeah, I have two – two daughters. Two daughters, one is **Tamar**(ph), born in 1948, January 16, and **Esther** is born in 1954 [indecipherable] June – forgot, I'm – I am not so good, you know why? Since I ha – I had operation two years ago, I am not remember everything so – the way I di – used to be.

Q: And then you lived in **Israel** until when?

A: Til end of 1963.

Q: And then you came to the **United States**?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Then I came to **United States** because her uncle – her uncle, my wife's was afraid that if I'll get caught – killed in the army, wh – how can you take this? He was in the American Army during the war. So after the war he actually came to – to – to **Germany** to take us, but we left early to friends. We – we didn't wait like other people, sitting.

Q: Did – did you fight in the War of Independence in 1948?

A: Oh yeah, I was 1947 already in the army. I was three years, and 1947, the first thing when I went to **Israel**, I – we took **Wilhelma**(ph). **Wilhelma**(ph) was the first places to take away from the – from the Arabs or from the British. And then –

Q: What was it like for you to wear an Israeli army uniform?

A: Ah, I wore it. I wa – you do – you do it for yourself. The first off, I was very particular, I – I am **[indecipherable]** me, even you – when you go to my place and you see my tools the way the-they hang and the way everything is in order.

Everybody knows my place is perfect. Every nail is in place, every screw

**[indecipherable]**. I'm a builder, but I am not a **schlumper**(ph), you know?

Everything – I don't like people come, take the whole box tools, spread all over.

**[indecipherable]** Right? And I'm very p – if I am telling you, I am a perfectionist.

So, I made in **Israel** a nice life. In a very short time I build a house for myself and I become a builder and have a car. A **Land Rover** I had in 1954 - 1955, you know



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

what it was? [indecipherable] people say, where you got your money from? But they didn't think I wanted to learn, I wanted to become engineer, as I said. How can you become engineer when **Israel** [indecipherable] engineer? Everybody's a doctor, and everybody's a professor. I'll become a builder, it's good enough. Money I don't have, protection I don't have, I have to work hard. My luck was I was strong enough. I used to work at night in [indecipherable] to took out two or three trucks milk to the – for the ladies who – who sell milk, yeah, in order to make five pounds. These five pounds I saved a year and I saved thousand pounds and I bought a piece of property. Then I buys – bought sand and blocks and I built a house and I sold it and I made 16,000 pounds. I was the richest man i-i-in **Giv'atayim**, I think.

[indecipherable] was going everything the way I wanted it. My wife just wasn't feeling too good, the heat was very depressing, she couldn't – she wouldn't take it.

Q: So then you came to the **United States**, and where did you settle?

A: We settle in **Rohrbach, Brooklyn** in 1963 in October, November, cold winter. No language. Dirty. We had a house was **shmakt**(ph) everybody [indecipherable] **oy vey, vey, oy vey**. It was ver – we wanted to go back. I didn't have the money, but I had the money I would go back right away, I wouldn't stay here a day. But, you know, you get used to the sl – slowly, slowly, but we are more Israelis. We ha – we – we – we live in **Israel** a lot. We live in **Israel** two, three times a year sometime.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

All our – our children don't want from us nothing, just leave what – what you be sure to leave. Go ahead and enjoy. [indecipherable] We have everything we need. I – I ask just God for health, that's all.

Q: Do you think that you would be different, a different person today if you hadn't lived through the war years and experienced what you did experience?

A: I would. I would be different. I was – from the war I became hot, a beater against a lot of people. Oh, I couldn't take you see – you see somebody's – even a Jew against a Jew is hounding, not right, I – I cannot take this. I got to help – you got to help people, you [indecipherable] help not – not to take. A lot people just taking. I cannot take this. I have many [indecipherable] with people about things like that. And if I would be – if not the war, I'm telling you, I would be a teacher and I would be much cooler, much slower. Because of the war, I had to change myself, because if I went to school in **Russia**, I had to be better. If I wouldn't be better, they would **mamish**(ph) beat me up. If a Jew is not better, he – he feels like a **shmatta**(ph). So I – I think I would be different, and secondly, if I would have my parents, my father especially, such a smart man, oh, I would – I would be – oh, hi – hi – high in th – in – in school, in – in – in [indecipherable] you know. I would learning a lot. But I had from him to learn, because school is nothing. School gives you a – the way how to learn, but if you have a father and mother who knows, and they know how to give

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

you a little **shtup** here, a **shtup** there, you can reach everything. And that's what I was missing. All the years I used to say, uh, I have to go to school. School is far. A- After a day's walk, we [indecipherable] went by hand to **Israel** in the hot day, they have – you have – the – you strong enough to go into school twen – 20 kilometer. And you [indecipherable] money for – to – to – to pay for the bus. But if my father would be li – alive, I – I would sit with him for an hour I learn something. So I was always telling myself, that what I'm missing the most. But I know I couldn't return the whole thing, so I used to learn myself, I used to ta – buy books and sits to [indecipherable] after – after a day's work, I used to take couple hours of sleep and my – my daughter and my wife was sleepy, sleepy and I used to wake up, get in the kitchen, the kitchen was big, you know, like – like this – this thing, and take a pen and paper and write. I used to write poems and I write a book, was 700 pages. And because I wasn't [indecipherable] **Israel**, so I keep the book because they said everybody who – who had material, you should keep – we should know in the future, and they took it away and never returned me.

Q: This was a book about your experiences?

A: Mm-hm. I wrote it from the partisans and the Russian army and th – **Israel**, and they took it away. So this I lo – this I lost, cause over there the dates and the – and the things, you cannot return this.

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: When your children – when your daughters were your age – w-were the age that you were, the 16 year old, 17, when you went through such terrible, terrible times in the ghetto and losing your family, did that remind you, did that bring back those times to you?

A: When – whe – I used – I – I – when – after the war, I – I didn't want to have nothing to know with the shul, with – with the [indecipherable] because I was from – I – I was – I would – I would either drink with [indecipherable] at night in the morning. Not the [indecipherable] no, no, not the [indecipherable], British. And I came to **Israel**, I didn't want to know about it, but Shabbas and **Yontif** [indecipherable] my wife put the lights, and I used to get to shul sometime. But I didn't give my children that feeling. And my daughter, my older [indecipherable] the older, she says to me, why I don't have uncles and – and this and this and that? Fa – one, two, three times? What can you tell her? So instead to tell her the stories what we went through, we decide not to tell her. After many, many years she didn't even ask. We wi – decide she will grow up, she [indecipherable] and then we're gonna tell her, and she understand better. And that was a mistake, should be – we should tell her, we had to tell her. So, we all living on mistakes, with no mistakes you cannot live. And – but I have good children, e-even my g – my g – my grandchildren have the – have the wa – two daughters [indecipherable] one become

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

a doctor very soon and one is in business, very famous. And the son is almost a professor of mathematics, so I-I have – at least I didn't do it, so they doing it. And I have – and I am – I am successful. Look, I [indecipherable] English, I didn't finish any school. In **Israel** I was a successful builder and the same thing over here.

Q: Are you angry that you had to go through the experiences that you did, whereas other people didn't have to, other people your age in other countries like the **United States** didn't have to. Are you angry that you had to, and lose your family?

A: No, no, I wish them the best. I am glad that they didn't have to do this. Because in order to – to go through that what I went through, I do believe that a lot of people wouldn't be able to do it. If you th-think about physically, emotionally, it wasn't so [indecipherable], it wasn't so easy. You had to think about it and then say, I don't want to know about it. I have to continue living. I have to go and – go and kill or to get killed. I-Is – is thi – is – is this a life? I-Is this easy to say about it? When you're living in – in the woods and they call you up at night, say now you have to go. You know, when you leave this place, finish every – every – every minute you can get killed. And you have to go in snow so high, right, no food. You don't know what t – before you and behind you. And if you're making, you're making it [indecipherable] gonna make, nobody will go crying you. It was like hefka(ph), you know he – it's not – not something – it's – to do this i – this alone, just to think

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

about it is – is – it – it isn't so simple. And now this, many times I had to take a horse and go and find out where the Germans are. So, I used to go with [indecipherable] you know, with such a ambition. I – I am the first who gonna see Germans and tell my commandeer that over here they're here and we'll come with a group and we're gonna destroy them. This was the day the [indecipherable] that you – what you did, you accomplished something. And many times I came, I came to a – to a plo – to a place where I used to run with my horse, like a machine, and d – I call a **lalka**(ph), **lalka**(ph) in – in Russian or Polish is a **buba**(ph), you know what a **buba**(ph) is? A doll. So I came to a place and my horse jumped, a little water, maybe 10 feet. I went to the road, Germans in the right and in the left. They go to get – go to get the partisans. I jumped from the horse on his neck, and jumping back into the woods, until the g – the Germans d-decided this not theirs, I was already back on th – on the horse and come and tell my group that here come the Germans and we came out, a group maybe 50 - 70 partisans and we let them – let them – let them go, you know, maybe 50 feet and more, 80 feet, a hundred feet and from all the side we open fire on them. And they were so surprised that they – they couldn't **schlep** the – the hand grenades and the [indecipherable], they took off the – the pants a – a – they should be able to run. And that's the way they run into the woods, nobody ever get them out [indecipherable]. You know what – what a

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

feeling this is? Like the [indecipherable] they explain, if you do something like that, and you have the [indecipherable] with the – you know what the [indecipherable] is? Power. [indecipherable] Is – this is the sweetest thing in your life, when you see something like that. So I – many things I made – what made me really ah –

Q: Proud.

A: Proud.

Q: Do you think, as you've gotten older, do you think more about your experiences during the war?

A: Ah, I – I – I – I – I don't think too much about that. What I wanted to do, I – I wrote and I s-said for a – here and there, something about this, something like today I – I never – I would never th – just a little, short. Many, many years I didn't do anything, I didn't want it.

Q: Why didn't you want to?

A: Because I had a feeling, let's say I'm gonna do it, what – what – what – what – what I am accomplishing? I'm accomplishing maybe for the future generation, they should know what was happening. But so many people writing books, and most of them what I know are **gormisht**(ph). They do nothing. They were sitting in the partisans, make – was a – a cook – a cook man, a shoemaker, a – a this – but a

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

fighter was from the – you heard from the Russians, not from the Jews. How many f – how many fighting? Ten fighting and nine – 19 eith – are around it, but ever-everybody write a – a – a poem, or a book or something like this. He was a partisan. L-Let – think about it. I know f-for our hundreds of people, we had 20 - 30 people that really fighters, were these fighters, fire. And that's enough, you didn't need any more, right, cause you didn't need any more. But most of the people are not fighters.

Q: What are your feelings about **Germany** today?

A: I – I – I cannot say nothing good about **Poland**, nor about **Germany**. About **Poland** or **Germany** I had nothing to say, because they – I would say actually, I should, the – the Polacks are worse than the Germans. Do we agree? Would you agree?

Q: It's your discussion today.

A: I – I – I would say ma-many Germans I know, who wanted to help, they did – they did help. And Polacks if they did something, it's just for money, right, and again for money and for – for – many for – for good things for themselves, not – not – not f – to be proud men. Yeah, yeah, here and there, one or two or three, but very little. Look, the Jews [indecipherable] half a million Jews, two million Jews maybe [indecipherable] right? You had in **Poland**, they had two million people sh-shoot



**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

the [indecipherable] Jews, right? Six million Jews in **Poland**, 35 million Polacks.

No, you haven't – you didn't have a – even hundred thousand good people, no way.

Q: Politically, do you think that in today's world your views are influenced by what you went through?

A: I don't think so. I – I don't think the world is thinking about Jews at all.

Q: Do you think the world has learned any lessons from the war?

A: I think the Jews didn't learn nothing, how can the – the – the others learn? By my grandchildren asking me, **Saba**, do you think in **America** can happen that's what happen in **Germany**? I said, of course. What? I said, of course, there no question about it. And this will [indecipherable] shouldn't happen. I think just in **America** will this happen. Never, **Saba**. Here you got so many, we got Jews, we got blacks, we got Ukrainians, you got the Polacks, you got Germans. I said, they all the same goy. The Jews are different. Since [indecipherable] until today, we are different. And they see us as difference. Secondly, they see the Jews all rich. Go to work and see how many hundreds have no – no – no food in the house. Th – somebody [indecipherable] over there? Tell me **Saba**. **Saba**, the Jews are not poor. My grandchildren. So what I have to say, huh? What do I have to s – what do I have to say?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

Q: When you looked at – look at the picture in today's news about **Kosovo** and you see refugees, does it bother you?

A: [indecipherable] bothers me very much those people had something like that. And I don't think so the president of ours should do something like that. First of all, they [indecipherable] have the Americans and the Jews in the World War II. And they the same Christian like the Americans. Our president is a Arab, excuse me for the expression. He does – he does everything what good for Arabs. He press **Israel** because the Arabs. His wife is pro-Arabic, everybody knows that. He is the same thing. He thinks he's a smart man, he got a brains because God give him a chance that the business is good, e-everything works for him like even if we do something wrong. Then secondly, look, we got 67 percent Americans, and even Jews 67 percent who voted for him. I vote for him too, because I didn't like the way **Bush** – **Bush's** way with the handling in the Middle East. But I can't understand after such a wars – after the second war, **Vietnam, Korea**, all over the world, people should be so left-handed for the President **Clinton**. I see what's going on, I – I – I'm shocked. I'm shocked. In **Israel** the same thing [indecipherable].

Q: You were making a distinction about what you did in the partisans did and what other people did. Why do you think you were the type that had the ability to fight back and the strength and the courage?

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

A: Other people had [indecipherable] but they didn't have the courage.

Q: Why did you have the courage?

A: I don't know, I wasn't afraid. It's not just I wasn't afraid, m-my love to my father, I think, to my family was so great, that I felt when I go to do something, to destroy something, I had a feeling that my father is holding his head – his hand on my head, and he's telling me how to turn. Serious. And I used to say, maybe this is the reason. In **Germany**, in **Berlin**, I had a bullet in – in my casket. So I said [indecipherable] all the years I wanted to be tall like my brother, and I am a short man like my **savta**. See, if I will be tall, I would be killed. So I should be tall – short and happy. So – so there's the answer, what can you say? I'm right, you see. So you see, there is no answer to many questions, like m-my – my **kinder** will – will ask me, **Aba**, how can you be religious when you saw everything what's happen? I said to her, look, I became religious 20 years ago when I saw you and your children don't go to shul and don't eat kosher and you don't watch Shabbas, and this way my other daughter, look – look – look the different. Look – look your sister. Friday night to shul, the children sitting with father, Shabbas – Shabbas [indecipherable]. She has nothing to say, but she always say, how could God do something like that to my grandfather? You're telling your father was such a special man. I said, well maybe everybody said that his father was a special, but I know my father was a

**Interview with Noah Roitman**  
**April 8, 1999**

special, because if he had to learn something from mathematics or [indecipherable], everybody come to my house. I didn't go to – to – to somebody's house. So it's a fact that my father was smart, right? Hm, **Aba**, you got – you got s – you got something here. Look, look my grandchildren, look, I tell her. She said, you're right. My grandchildren learning, i-it's some – it's no-nothing in the world is hard for them. See what it – what it means?

Q: Is there anything else you wanted to add that we haven't talked about?

A: I – I – I would ask – I would add that you are a great lady. If you can come today and do it, otherwise I wouldn't do it. So I would very proud that we will meet some other time and we'll enjoy in really good times and say hey, we got better years, better times and we – we should have **shalom** in **Israel**, and you shouldn't have to do something like that, do something, better things. Nice to meet you, it's a pleasure.

Q: That was a good note to end on. This concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Noah Roitman**.

**End of Tape Three, Side B**

**Conclusion of Interview**