

Interview with Fred Gutter
October 30, 1999

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Fred Gutter**, conducted by **Gail Schwartz** on October 30th, 1999 in **Washington, D.C.**. This is tape number one, side **A**. Please tell us your name, when you were born.

Answer: My name is **Fred Gutter**. I was born on December 25th, 1926.

Q: And what was your name at birth? Was that your name then?

A: My name was **Romawald Gutter**.

Q: A-All right. And where were you born?

A: I was born in the city **Sanok** in **Poland**.

Q: And about where is that located, to the west of **Lvov**? That was located a little bit to the west of **Lvov**?

A: This was located in the south of **Poland**.

Q: Let's talk about your family. How long had your parents or grandparents been in this location? Had they been there for many years?

A: My parents were born in **Poland**, in **Sanok**. My mother actually was born in **Sanok**, my father was born in a -- in a village about 20 miles from **Sanok**, which they had a farm over there.

Q: What was the name of that village?

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A: Th-The name of the village was **Vola Niesna**.

Q: What were your parents' names?

A: My par -- my father's name was **Liam**, my mother's name was **Miriam**, from **Home Pinkus**.

Q: And what about going back in their generations. Had your family been in **Poland** for many generations?

A: As long I remember, for many generations, they were in **Poland**.

Q: And did you have any brothers or sisters?

A: I have one brother, younger than me.

Q: A-And how much younger, and what was his name?

A: His name is **Heinrich -- Henerik** in **Polish**.

Q: And how much younger is he than you? When was he born?

A: He was born in 1929.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about the town of **Sanok**. Did you live right in the town itself, the center of the town?

A: It wasn't the center, but it was in the -- it was to the south of the center.

Q: Did you live in a house or an apartment?

A: We lived in a rented apartment, a two family house.

Q: And how would you describe your family, were you middle class, or --

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A: My father was selling fertilizers for the field, field fertilizers. I would describe as a middle income family.

Q: And did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

A: You do -- it wasn't exactly Jewish neighborhood, it was a mixed neighborhood, Polish people and -- and Jewish people.

Q: Did your mother work?

A: My mother didn't work.

Q: Wa --

A: She was a housekeeper, she didn't work. We -- the children were small then. I was -- when the war started I was 12 years old, so she took care of us.

Q: What kind of work did your grandparents do?

A: My grandfather from my father's side, he had a farm, with cows, horses, goats.

Q: What was his name?

A: Oh, **Haim**. And I remember we used to go every summer to his farm on vacation.

Q: And your mother's family, what did they do?

A: My mother's f-father, they had a house and they -- he used to -- he used to deal with -- with lumber.

Q: And what were your grandparent's names on your mother's side?

A: My g-grandfather's name was **Mendel**. My grandmother's name was **Batya -- Basha**.

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Q: And your grandmother's name on your father's side?

A: On the father's side I wouldn't remember. This I don't remember.

Q: Was your family very religious? Was your family very religious?

A: Sure, they -- my -- they -- my family [**indecipherable**] the region, that's right.

Q: They were very religious?

A: My -- they were very religious, they went every day to **shul**. Moi -- both my grandparents were ever -- were v-very religious.

Q: And your parents?

A: My father was religious also.

Q: And your mother?

A: My mother -- when the father's religious, the mother has to be religious. [**sirens**]

Q: What about your schooling? Did you go to a Jewish school, or just to a Polish school?

A: I went -- when I was smaller, I went to a Jewish school, just to pick up religion. And then I went to a public school, and af -- then I get -- I got a hi -- 11 years old, I think, I went to high school.

Q: Did you have many relatives? Was it a large, extended family? Did you have aunts and uncles and cousins nearby?

A: Not exactly nearby. My mother has si -- two sisters in **Sanok** and then they married and they moved to **Lvov**.

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Q: And your father's family, was that a large family also?

A: He had a brother in the town, it's not far, about 10 miles from **Sanok**, the name was **Rymanów**.

Q: When you were small and going to elementary school, did you have any friends who were non-Jewish?

A: I had -- most of my friends were Jewish in the public school, but when -- when I went to high school, so my -- I had Jewish friends also, but my professors -- they call them professors there -- were very anti-Semitic and they didn't call the Jews by name, only **Zhidek**, which is Jew [**indecipherable**]

Q: In -- in -- in Polish?

A: In Polish, yes. **Zhidek**. The a -- he did no -- I di -- I didn't have a name, only my name was **Zhidek** in high school.

Q: When you were younger, did you have any hobbies, did you have any other interests? What did you do -- when you were young --

A: Yes.

Q: I'm talking before the war.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have any hobbies or other interests as a child?

A: I used to play soccer and -- in a public school wi -- i-in the school's s-soccer team. I used to be between the 11 soccer players.

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Q: Were you a very athletic child?

A: I don't know athletic, but I liked to play soccer. I -- I -- we had -- once a week we had the lesson in the -- in high -- in -- in public school, we -- jumping and running, but I don't know if this was athletic or not.

Q: Did you like to read?

A: I liked to read. I liked to read. In fact, there's -- from the American cowboy stories.

Q: Y-You read those in Polish?

A: In Polish, like **Buffalo Bill** and other such stories. This was my preference.

Q: Did you -- were you musical at all? Was there any -- was -- was music a part of your life?

A: No, I was -- I was not musical. I didn't have nothing to do with music.

Q: How would you describe yourself as a small child? Were you very independent, or were you very dependent on your parents?

A: Look, I was dependent on my parents, they had the income, I only went to school.

They helped me with homework sometimes, but this was the -- this how it was.

Q: You said you liked the American cowboy stories. Why did you like them?

A: I don't know, I -- I liked the **Buffalo Bill** stories. Why I liked them? I think I liked them because they were fighting, they were ga -- fighting with the Indians and this what I liked.

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Q: Okay. Were you very close to your parents? Did you -- were you able to talk things over with them?

A: I da -- we didn't talk over th -- over the books, but I was close with my fam -- with my parents. They paid for high school, we -- over there high school you had to pay.

Q: What about your relationship with your younger brother, were you close to him while you were growing up?

A: I don't know where my relations -- I remember one year, my mother used to tell me, when he was born I wanted to throw him out through the window. How it sounds?

Q: Very natural. What memories do you have, a favorite holiday? Or do you have any memories of favorite holidays with the family? Before the war, we're talking about.

A: I remember the holiday **Purim**, what I had to -- I -- we put on mask and went to my neighbors to collect money, or goodies.

Q: Do you remember Passover?

A: Passover, yes.

Q: Can you describe that?

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A: Passover I remember we had to eat matzos. My mother clean up the kitchen, the kitchen should be kosher. She clean up all the parts and we had -- we observed Passover seven days a year with matzos, no bread.

Q: Okay, so -- and you observed **Shabbat** every week?

A: **Shabbat**, I had to go to **shul** with my father and we observed **Shabbat**. Ma -- my mother light the candles, we observed **Shabbat**.

Q: What kind of religious training did you get as a child?

A: When I was small, when I went to public school, I had to go to take Hebrew lessons and Torah lessons, ti -- and then I went for the lessons when I got -- when I got even older, I went for Hebrew lessons and -- and Torah and the history lessons.

Q: Did you feel very Jewish as a child?

A: I knew I -- I was Jewish. I didn't imagine something else I could be, because the teachers told me that I am Jewish, they call me Jew.

Q: How does it feel to have a teacher call you Jew?

A: I knew that he was anti-Semite, this I knew.

Q: What -- what did an anti-Semite mean to you at that young age? What did the words anti-Semite mean to you at a young age?

A: The word anti-Semite meant to me a Jew hater. That's all.

Q: Were you very frightened of your teachers?

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A: I was friendly with my teachers, only I hate this particular teacher, because in his
nay -- in his thoughts I was Jew. I had -- didn't have a name.

Q: So it was one teacher that you're talking about?

A: Yes. It was one teacher who to -- who talked liked that. And I remember even his
name. His name is **Mosarro**.

Q: And did you tell your parents this, how he talked to you?

A: They knew about it. They knew that this teacher is anti-Semite. Not -- oh -- other
my parent -- my -- my friends' parents knew also about him, that he was anti-Semite.

Q: Did your parents do anything about this, or say anything to you?

A: I don't think they could do anything about it. They just had to keep quiet.

Q: And you said you had Jewish and non-Jewish friends and there were Jews and
non-Jews in your neighborhood? What --

A: Not -- not too many non-Jews. Mostly my friends were Jewish. And I remember
when I was small, yes, I was reading in the newspapers in -- and radio, that Jews,
when they went to college, I -- I remember this, they had to sit in separate rows. And
this I was questioning, why this is like that?

Q: Were you proud of being Jewish, or were you unhappy that you were Jewish
because of these restrictions?

A: I -- I was proud being Jewish, but we were used to -- to those restrictions already,
so you just pass by.

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Q: So you -- did you talk about the f -- about these restrictions with your parents?

Did --

A: I talk about them, but they told me they can nothing do about it.

Q: What language did you speak at home?

A: Yiddish and Polish.

Q: In school you spoke Polish?

A: In school only Polish.

Q: Now in -- I know you were very young, of course, in 1933, but as the years went on after **Hitler** came into power and before the war started, had you ever heard of a man called **Hitler**? Did your parents talk about it?

A: I didn't -- we knew the parents talk about it, we knew that **Hitler** comes to power and it's no good for the Jewish people. But otherwise, we only saw **Hitler** -- we only saw the Germans wi -- in 1939 when the war started.

Q: Did your parents u-understand any German?

A: My mother understood German, my father I don't -- I don't think so, but Jewish is similar to German was, so they could understand.

Q: How was your health as a child? What was your physical condition like?

A: Well, I played soccer, so my physical condition was good. And I played in the -- in the team of the school.

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Q: All right. The 1930's are moving on. What were the first restrictions that you remember as a child?

A: This was in 1939, when the Germans came into **Sanok**.

Q: So up to that point, aside from the teacher that you had in school, who di -- who spoke to you that way, yi -- yi -- how would you describe your childhood, as something pleasant and that you could do what you want?

A: It wasn't too pleasant. There were many anti-Semites between the P-Polish neighbors, and it wasn't too pleasant, but we were used to it. I remember one day, I was child, I -- I t -- probably 10 years or nine years old. And down the street went a Polish clerk with a suitcase, and I just told him -- this was on April fools, and I told him, sir you lost your suitcase. So he ran after me and he hit me with the suitcase over the head and I fell down, I was bleeding and I -- because I just said, April fool, you -- you lost your suitcase.

Q: What did you know about the **United States** at that time?

A: Not too much. Only about the books.

Q: And -- all right, so then the next thing that you remember is when the war began.

A: When the war, yes --

Q: And -- and the Germans came into your town. What was the first thing that you remember about that?

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A: The first thing what I remember, when the Germans came to town, they took my father to work to clean the streets in **Sanok**.

Q: Now this is in September, 1939?

A: No, they didn't come in September, maybe they came in October, I don't remember exactly the month when they came. In September the war started, but took them couple weeks til they get to **Sanok**.

Q: Did you -- had you heard about the previous -- **Kristallnacht**, before? Was your family aware of that in the year before?

A: No, I didn't hear about th -- about the **Kristallnacht**.

Q: What did you -- what was your -- your reaction when you saw your first German soldier? What was your reaction when you saw your first German soldier?

A: I was afraid and I -- only Jews were afraid. I was too small they should call me to -- to work, but they took my father. They took all the Jews who are -- who were able to work, they took them to clean the streets.

Q: He would come home at night?

A: He came home at night, yes.

Q: What's it like for a child to see the father going off to do something like this?

A: We didn't go to school because the schools were closed. I just -- I was just thinking the bad times are coming.

Q: How did you feel that school was closed, was that upsetting to you?

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A: No, we knew fr-from newspapers, whoever it is, they closed, the Germans closed all the s -- all the schools.

Q: Let's back up a little bit. When germ -- the Germans came into **Poland** on September first, what -- do you remember what your thoughts in **Sanok** were?

A: The Germans came first to the border with **Poland** to the west of **Poland**, this border. They came to **Poland** and I remember this from the newspapers from the -- they were advancing, advancing and eventually they going to come to us.

Q: And again, did you -- what did your parents say to you, you're 12 and a half, almost 13 by then, what -- what kind of words did they express to you? Your parents.

A: Oh, my parents. They told me to stay home, not to go out and not to get in trouble with them.

Q: And then your father continued to clean the streets. Did you ever see him cleaning streets?

A: No, I never saw him. He just told us that he's cleaning the streets. I never saw him cleaning, I didn't go out of the house.

Q: How was his health, your father's health?

A: He was in good health. He was in good health, but he didn't complain too much, he just -- he just said that they gave him to clean, he has to clean.

Q: How did he clean the streets, do you know?

A: They gave him a broom, and with the broom he cleaned the streets.

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Q: Did you have any contact with your friends, then?

A: No, I have no contact with nobody then.

Q: Cause you were staying inside the house.

A: I was staying inside because my parents told me not to go out.

Q: What does a German soldier look to a 12 and a half year old boy?

A: He looked to me very nasty. I remember them, the uniform, they were walking around, I -- the bosses in town, and we didn't like them.

Q: Were you afraid of them?

A: We were afraid of them, yes.

Q: Did you have a **Bar Mitzvah** in December of '39?

A: No, I did not have a **Bar Mitzvah**, because in December we weren't any more in **Sanok**.

Q: Wh-When did you leave **Sanok**?

A: I think we left about two months with the Germans. The Germans told us that whoever -- what's happened -- I'll give you the **[indecipherable]** -- what's happened, German took half of **Poland** and the Russians took the other half. So **Sanok** was actually on the border between the Russians and Germans. So the Germans told us one day, whoever wants, all the Jews, whoever wants to leave **Sanok** can go to the Russians. So we went to the Russian side. My mother had over

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there two or three sisters, in **Lvov**, which this was occupied by the Russians then. So she went to stay with the sisters.

Q: And were you in **Sa-Sanok** when the synagogue there was destroyed?

A: I don't remember when the synagogue was destroyed. This I don't remember.

Q: So, after two months your family tells you you're going to be leaving. What was your reaction to be leaving the town that you were born in?

A: I think I was happy because we hated the Germans. I figure maybe I'm going to have more freedom.

Q: But you're leaving your friends.

A: We didn't see friends any more because everybody was afraid to -- to go out, the Jewish people.

Q: You said when you were younger that you had g-gone to your grandparent's farm. Had you done any other traveling outside of **Sanok** besides going to the farm? This is before the war.

A: Yes, I remember traveling once to a hospital in **Lvov**. I put some cotton into my ear and I couldn't get it out. So they had to go to the hospital in **Lvov** and over there they took out the cotton.

Q: And any other experiences of traveling besides that?

A: No, I didn't go no -- no other places. Yeah, if I went to the farm, we stopped over in my uncle's town **Rymanów**. But usually we went every year to the farm.

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Q: So here you're asked to leave your town that you grew up in and to go to **Lvov**, and you --

A: What?

Q: Now you -- you've been asked -- your parents are telling you that you're going to be leaving **Sanok** and going to **Lvov**.

A: **Lvov**.

Q: And you thought that would be good because it would be free.

A: More -- more free.

Q: More free. Did you take anything special with you? What did your family take, what did you take with you when you left?

A: They -- they didn't give us too much to take. We just took a few clothes in a bag and this how we left the city.

Q: Did you take your **Buffalo Bill** books with you?

A: Probably yes. I also took my -- I was a stamp collector. I took my stamps with me.

Q: And where did you have your stamps from all -- what countries?

A: I had them in **Sanok**.

Q: No, but your stamp collection was wi-with stamps from other countries, or --

A: From oy -- from all the other countries, I a -- I liked collect the stamps.

Q: How did you get those stamps?

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A: I used to buy them in the stores, together with the **Buffalo Bills**.

Q: Any other hobbies besides stamp collecting?

A: No, not I remember, only stamp collecting.

Q: Who went with you to **Lvov** besides your parents and your brother? Did anybody else go with you to **Lvov**, besides your parents and your brother?

A: No, nobody else. Only me, my brother and the parents.

Q: How did you get to **Lvov**?

A: We took the train to **Rymanów**, where my uncle lived. From there, horse and carriage.

Q: And tha --

A: To -- to the [indecipherable]

Q: And then you get there and you stay with your aunts? Your mother's family in **Lvov**?

A: My father's family.

Q: Oh, it was your father's family in **Lvov**?

A: Family -- no, **Lvov**? No, **Lvov** was my -- my mother's family. Oh, yes we stayed in their apartments. Only me, me and my mother stayed in one sister's apartment. My brother stayed in another sister's apartment and my father, he stayed with some club over there because was no room for all of us to stay in the same apartment.

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Q: Was it dangerous for your father to leave **Sanok** since he -- since he had been doing forced labor? Was it dangerous for him to go?

A: No, they -- they let him go. They told whoever is Jewish, wants to go to the Russian side, is welcome to -- to leave. Take just your clothes and you can leave.

Q: And how many days did they give you to do this?

A: I think about few days, not too long. Maybe less than a week.

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 **Fred Gutter**. This is tape number one, side **B**. And we were talking about the fact that you were now in **Lvov**, you left with your family. This is before your 13th birthday, which was in December 1939. What can you tell me about the day that you turned 13, which is so important for a young Jewish boy?

A: I knew it is war, I cannot have **Bar Mitzvah** and I agree with it.

Q: Mm-hm. Was that a very difficult decision?

A: Was difficult, but I have to go with -- with it.

Q: Now your parent -- you said your family was divided between different locations in **Lvov**. Was that hard for you to have the family split up?

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A: No, I -- I could visit my other aunt, my brother from the other side. Was hard for me -- for the father. The father couldn't visit us, he was hiding to some place, which I don't know where. And I didn't see my father.

Q: Why was it necessary for him to hide in **Lvov**?

A: Becau -- he didn't have wh-where to live. He was hiding in some -- I don't remember, some place he was -- he was hiding. Let me just tell you. After we came to -- to **Lvov**, few months later -- I think this was already in -- in '40 -- '40 or '41, the Russians, they start transferring us from **Lvov**, whoever came from the other side, from the German side, they start transferring us to **Siberia** and the other long distance places. So they di -- we knew that they are going that night transfer us, so they came, they took my mother --

Q: Well let's -- we'll get to that in a minute. Let's talk about your year in **Lvov** first, what -- what it was like. What were the living conditions like in **Lvov**?

A: Living conditions were -- weren't bad. We were staying with my aunts, which -- and we cou -- we ri -- we had more freedom. The only thing, we couldn't work. My mother couldn't work, my father couldn't work. But we had freedom.

Q: You were out on the street?

A: Yeah, I walked out in the street. I couldn't go to school.

Q: Was that hard for you not being able to go to school?

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A: Well, sure it was hard for me not to go to school. I was in the middle of high school, and I -- I had to stay out of school.

Q: Did you have many friends your age in **Lvov**?

A: No. I didn't have no friends, I -- I couldn't get no friends. I had my -- my aunt's son, which was my age, so I was playing with him.

Q: This is your cousin?

A: My cousin, yes.

Q: And did your family observe holidays that year in **Lvov**, Jewish holidays?

A: I don't remember. We weren't too long in **Lvov**. I don't remember about Jewish holidays, if we observe or not. This I don't remember already.

Q: So you just spent the day playing on the streets, and --

A: In the streets, going to visit my other aunt, one where my brother was.

Q: Did you come in contact with many other people who had left the other part of **Poland**?

A: No, I d -- I wasn't in contact with them. No contact.

Q: The fact that you had to leave, we-were you still -- did that change your feelings about being Jewish in any way, that you had to leave your town because you were Jewish?

A: Sure, it changed my feelings. I knew because I am a Jew I have to leave my hometown. But I could nothing -- do nothing about it.

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Q: Did you think a lot about **Sanok** while you were in **Lvov**?

A: Yes, I was thinking I always remembered the street where I was born, I was playing soccer. I was thinking even in the -- even now sometimes I'm thinking about **Sanok**. Was a nice little town.

Q: Why was it a nice little town?

A: Everything was close, many people knew one another. It was a -- it was very pleasant. We used to go swimming, they had -- they had a [**indecipherable**] in **Sanok** and we had a good time there and except the anti-Semites, but otherwise we had a good time.

Q: What was the name of the street you were born on?

A: **Gunwaldska** five.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Do you know how to spell it? I can give -- I give you the spellings.

Q: Okay. So you spent the -- this time in **Lvov**.

A: Yes.

Q: And then what was the next change?

A: Next change was we -- there were rumors that the Russians, whoever -- whoever came -- whoever came from the other side where the Germans were, they are going to transfer them to -- to **Siberia**, to the **Volk** labor camps. So we were all s-staying in my one aunt's hou -- a-apartment, including my brother, came from there to us, from

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the other apartment to us. My mother said if they took -- take us, so let's take us, all of us.

Q: What were your aunts' names?

A: My brother?

Q: No, your aunts' names.

A: My aunt -- **Etta**.

Q: And her last name?

A: **Kurz. K-u-r-z.**

Q: So your brother came.

A: My brother came to us and we slept together already, in the same apartment. So f -- bu -- except my father, he was hiding some other place. They -- somebody told us that if it's no men in the family, they not going to send us to **Siberia**. So my father was hiding some other place. But they came one day, which I don't remember the date is, actually. I think it was in late '40 or beginning 1941.

Q: So that meant you were in **Lvov** for a year?

A: I was in **Lvov**.

Q: For one year.

A: Yes. So --

Q: Wi-With no schooling?

A: What?

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Q: With no schooling. No school.

A: No school, no, we didn't have no school. So one evening the Russians came to our apartment and they took me, my -- my brother and my mother they took into the train and they -- and they took us to **Rowe** mountain.

Q: Now, did you know they were coming? Were you able to prepare for this? Did you know they were coming? Could you prepare ahead of time?

A: We -- w-we knew they are coming, but we didn't know when.

Q: How did you know they were coming?

A: There were rumors on the streets in -- in the city of **Lvov**. They -- whoever came from the other side di -- is going to be transferred to -- deeper into **Russia**.

Q: Did you have suitcases packed and ready to go?

A: We had suitcases packed, but they didn't let us too much to take, only clothes, a bag of clothes and let's go. Now m-my father, he was hiding in a different place. He didn't know that we to -- they took us. When he -- he came to my aunt and the aunt told us that thi -- told him that they took us. So he asked, where are they? She said, they are on the train station. So he went to the train station. Was many stations there and over there a conductor told him all the trains they're going da -- going the same direction. So he said okay, he will go in any train to meet us. In the meantime we went to the **Rowe** mountain and he went to the far away east, near the j -- near the

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Japanese border. And he was in a labor camp over there. He wa -- he was there til the war finished and then they let him to -- to reunite with us.

Q: What were your feelings that you had to leave **Lvov** without your father?

A: Mm, the feeling, the feeling was -- we have a bad feeling but there nothing what we could do. The Russians came, took us, you had to go and that's it, you go.

Q: Did you keep any kind of journal, did you write anything down about your thoughts -- when you were young --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- did you write any of your thoughts? Did you keep like a diary or a journal?

A: I wasn't **Anne Frank**.

Q: And what kind of things did your mother say to you when you had to leave without your father? That must have been a very --

A: She said --

Q: -- difficult time.

A: -- she said, we have to ik -- we have to leave, everybody's leaving and we cannot stay here, we have to go.

Q: Describe your mother to me, was she a very strong woman in her personality?

A: My mother was a strong woman, yes. She was a very strong woman and she actually controlled the house.

Q: Even when your father was at home?

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A: When the father was out, yes, she controlled the house.

Q: So she was a woman at that time in her 40's, in her 30's or 40's in 19 --

A: She was born in the for -- she was born in 1904, so she was 40's -- in the 40's then, right. I never fi-figured this out.

Q: So she -- she and you and your brother got on the train. Anybody -- were you with anybody else on that train?

A: The train was full, thousands of people.

Q: Did you know any of the other people when you left?

A: No, I didn't know nobody there. They were from all the places who -- who the Germans -- who wanted to leave **Germany**, the German part of **Poland**. They all were taken.

Q: Mm-hm. And -- and when you got on the train, what were the conditions like?

Was it a passenger train, did you have seats?

A: No, it was not passenger, it was a freight train.

Q: So what were the conditions like? Describe them.

A: We went there like -- like cattle in -- in -- in the train. Was about, I don't remember how many, 50 - 80 people were in one wagon. The conditions weren't good.

Q: It was just one empty space? It was one big, empty space for all these people?

How long did the journey take to the mountains?

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A: The journey took few days, to the **Rowes** mountains this is a -- was probably about 2,000 miles from **Lvov**, so it took a long time.

Q: Did you know where you were going? Did they tell you that you were going to these mountains?

A: No, they t-told me they would -- they'd -- they want to resettle us deeper in -- in **Russia**.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. And so were you allowed out of the train at any time to walk around?

A: No, I don't remember that, if we were out, but I don't remember.

Q: Were you a very optimistic child? Did you think good -- that good things would happen, or were you more pessimistic?

Q: I didn't know what to think about the whole thing. I was only 13 years old and I figure okay. I -- I wasn't too optimistic anyway.

Q: When you were in **Lvov**, did your mother or father have -- or your mother have contact with what was happening in **Sanok** the year she was in **Lvov**?

A: No, we didn't have no -- we didn't have no contact with **Sanok**.

Q: So you had no idea what was happening there.

A: We did not have -- we only had, after the war finished, we had -- whoever was left over, they took them to concentration camps.

Q: And so you didn't know about a ghetto or anything like that?

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A: If I remind myself, I had two very good friends, neighbors on the same street where I live and the -- they -- they took them to concentration, I never saw them there any more.

Q: What were their names?

A: Their last name was **Fierer**. One name was **Ignatz** and one name was **Shunek**, two boys my age, as it wer -- one of -- but younger one was my age. And I ne -- we -
- we played together, and I never heard from them.

Q: Now let's go back to the train to the mountains. Did your mother bring food along with you so you had something --

A: No, they gave us some food. I think my mother brought some food from the train, but they give us food on the train, the Russians. They give us food on the train, I don't remember what kind of food, but they give us food.

Q: What kind of treatment did the Russian guards give you on the train?

A: They treated us -- they treated us on the train better than when we arrived to the place. Over there my vo -- they took my mother to -- to the work camps --

Q: Okay, I just want to finish with the train voyage. What were the sanitary facilities on the train?

A: Not such [indecipherable] existed. In a freight train you don't have sanitary conditions.

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Q: And what were people's state of mind? Other people. Were people frightened?

What was the sense and the atmosphere?

A: They didn't -- nobody knew where we are going, but the Russian told us we are going to resettle us, so we figure maybe it's going to be something good out of it.

Q: So people were -- were not out of control, they were not -- they didn't act like they were extremely frightened?

A: No, no. They were not out of control. They were -- they were only saying what will happen, will happen. **Que sera sera.**

Q: As they say in Polish. And then wa -- how did you sleep? How di -- how did people sleep in the car, in the railroad car?

A: We slept on the floor. The -- the baggage, the clothes were the -- the pillows and this how we slept.

Q: Now, what month was this?

A: Oh, this is --

Q: This is winter -- wintertime?

A: I don't remember. Oh, it was the end of '40 or beginning '41. It wasn't summer anyway. It was like s -- maybe winter or spring or something like that.

Q: What was your brother's reaction? He was a few years younger than you.

A: He was young -- he was younger than me, he was -- I was 13, so he was nine. He didn't have nothing to say.

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Q: Were there many other children in the car with you?

A: There were children there. There were other children from other families.

Q: Did you stay together with the children?

A: No, I don't think so, no. We didn't get together with the chil -- other children.

Q: Did -- were people a help to each other?

A: If people helped each other -- I don't remember this question.

Q: And then you said it took a few days.

A: A few days and we arrived to the -- we arrived to the **Rowe** mountains. The town of **Dereszowska**.

Q: And you get off the train.

A: We got off the train --

Q: What did it feel like to get off the train?

A: Finally is over.

Q: And what did -- what was your first impression of this place?

A: They had -- they had little wooden houses where we would -- not -- i-it's not -- it wasn't wooden houses, was like a barracks. And a few families were sleeping in one of the barrack and they said you -- you sleep here, you sleep here and that's it.

Q: And so you and your mother and your brother, and anybody else with you, or just the three of you?

A: Only three of us.

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Q: And you went into this one barracks that they told you.

A: Yes.

Q: And then what happened?

A: We sat with -- in -- in those barracks, then next day or next two days they took my roo -- my mother took out trees in that c -- c -- in that camp **Volk** camp in **Orab**. So she went to cut trees. Was very cold. A lot of snow. I remember this -- the day -- it was quite winter when they took us. A lot of snow and she had to -- in other families she had -- they had to cut trees.

Q: And what did you and your brother do when your mother left?

A: I will -- he -- happened to be in **Russia** we went to school. I finished high school in **Russia**.

Q: When your mother left to go to work, were you upset by that? To see her having to leave to do hard work?

A: Look, I didn't have nothing to say. I remember just that she went to work and I went to school.

Q: Did you sleep in bunk beds, one on top of the other?

A: We slept in bunk beds, yeah.

Q: Was there any privacy?

A: Not too much. Next to us was another family and another family.

Q: About how many people were in a barrack?

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A: Probably about 50 people in one -- in one of those barracks.

Q: Did they have bathrooms in the barracks? Did they have bathrooms in the barracks?

A: It was one bathroom for the whole -- for the whole barrack.

Q: Mm-hm. And could you wash yourselves, was there like a shower, or any kind of facility like that?

A: I think we could do that, as long -- you had -- maybe you had to wait in line, but we could do that.

Q: So now you and your brother are going to school, every day?

A: I went every day. I don't remember my brother, he probably went to public school, he was younger than me. I remember I went to high school every day.

Q: And the language was Russian?

A: Language was Russian.

Q: Did you know any Russian before?

A: No, I didn't know Russian.

Q: So how did you -- how did you pick it up?

A: Russian is a Slavic name -- Slavic language like Polish. So it's a little bit similarity between Polish and Russian. And you go to school, you pick up. But it is a Slavic name.

Q: And what about your friends there, who were your friends?

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A: My friends? I don't -- I don't remember si -- who was my friend there. I don't --

Q: You're a 15 year old boy and a 15 year old boy has friends --

A: I was -- no, when I came -- when I came there I was -- I was 13.

Q: Or 14 --

A: 14.

Q: 14.

A: I don't remember having some friends. I remember in 1944, wi -- th -- by then I was already how old?

Q: 18.

A: 18. Then I f -- I was finished high school and I used to work in a Russian factory to repair sewing machines.

Q: Previous to that, what did you do before you finished high school? You went to school during the day, what else did you do with your time?

A: Doing homework.

Q: And did you do anything for recreation? You and other teenage boys?

A: I -- I used to like skiing, so probably I took skis.

Q: They gave you skis there?

A: They -- I -- I don't remember if they gave me or we bought it, but I got skis, I remember. I don't remember how I got them.

Q: Did you have enough warm clothing?

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A: They gave us warm clothes, those quilted jackets.

Q: And did they give you boots?

A: They gave us boots, th-this what the Russians are wearing, is from -- from a --
how you say, from flannel such a big boot. And this keeps you warm.

Q: Mm-hm. So you had enough warm --

A: Felt. Felt boots, some felt. And this keeps you warm, yeah.

Q: So you had enough warm clothing?

A: Yes.

Q: And -- and what about food?

A: They ga -- they gave us food. They gave us all -- we c -- we could buy food in a --
in a -- that cafeteria with the -- not cafeteria, a little store over there in that village.

Q: So you could walk around in the village?

A: [indecipherable] can walk -- I can walk around, yeah, you could walk around.

Q: Where did your mother get the money for you to buy food?

A: She -- she cut trees, so they paid her something for it. This how she got the
money.

Q: So she got it. And now what was her state of mind in those years?

A: I will tell you, she only for about one year cut the trees. And then they took her, or
she volunt -- she didn't volunteer, she not volunteer, she start to work in a bakery to
bake bread. And over there she brought be -- bread and cookies home. So we had the

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holiday then. Don't forget, during the war this was, when the Russians were at war with the Germans. Was no too much food, even for the Russians they didn't have food. So to work in a bakery was something very good then.

Q: What were the Russian soldiers or Russian guards like to you in that village?

What was the treatment of the Russian guards to you in that village?

A: The treatment was good. I -- I remember I got sick from the cold weather, I ha -- I had -- I had ne -- pneumonia. The Russians sent a doctor and they -- they gave me injections and I became healthy, yeah. No, then -- the treatment was good from the Russians, oh yeah, cannot complain.

Q: Did you miss your father a lot, did you think about him?

A: We missed him, awa -- he send us le-letters and we sent letters to him, but we could -- he couldn't come to us. He was also in a camp over there.

Q: And what kind of work was he doing?

A: Probably cutting trees. This was during the -- but they have plenty of trees over there.

Q: Again, did you know what was happening in the rest of **Europe** during those years you were in the mountains?

A: We knew that the Russians are fighting the Germans, that the Germans are near **Moscow**, they want to take **Moscow** and the Russians are fighting. And we knew that the -- we just were praying the Russians would win the war.

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Q: Were -- was there any contact that you had in those years with the other relatives?

A: No, we didn't have no contact with the other relatives.

Q: So you didn't know what was happening to the rest of the family?

A: We didn't know. In fact, his -- when -- when the Russians we-were fighting near **Moscow**, they knew from newspapers that they took the town of **Lvov**. And we c -- didn't have no connections with them.

Q: So you were reading Russian newspapers?

A: I was reading, yes. I wa -- I was fluently -- I na -- I was speaking fluently Russian bu -- and was reading Russian newspapers. This how we knew what's going on in the war.

Q: And when you heard about **Lvov**, what were your thoughts?

A: We were anxious what's happened with our family.

Q: But no contact.

A: No contact.

Q: Did you, when you were in the mountains, did your mother try to observe any holidays?

A: Nobody observe holidays, we even didn't know probably how to observe holidays there. Nobody knew about holidays there. They knew about Russian holidays, but not about religious holidays.

Q: So there was no such thing as **Shabbat** or Passover for you --

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A: No.

Q: -- during those years?

A: Passover wa -- the Russians didn't supply us m-matzos. We were lucky we have bread.

Q: What would you say your state of mind was as a teenager then? Did you think the war was going to end?

A: I was thinking, look what's happened to the Jewish people. I was thinking -- was already -- you're talking about 18 and I was 17, then I started thinking about the whole thing was happening. But was out of my control.

Q: Were you during that time ever angry that you were Jewish and that this was happening?

A: No. I knew that who -- I cannot change my religion and I -- I was born Jewish, I have to be Jewish. Can we go [indecipherable]

Q: Absolutely.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Fred Gutter**. This is tape number two, side **A**, and we were talking about your experience in the mountains in -- in **Russia**. Are there any particular smells that you associate with being there in that time, any --

A: Where, in the --

Q: -- in -- in the -- in **Russia**. Or sights of -- any particular scenes or sights or smells that you remember from that time, that have stayed with you?

A: I -- I don't remember too much, I just remember I used to play also soccer in -- with the Russian in the high school, and I used to go skiing with them. But we couldn't go nowhere, we just had to be in that little town **Dereszowska**.

Q: Was that -- was that hard for you to be so limited?

A: I was already resigned to everything. I knew I have to be there, I was there.

Q: Did your mother talk about your father a lot with yo -- with you?

A: She talked that he is not with us. She tried to bring him to g -- to go to some office over there, I don't know about which one, to bring him to th -- to unite the family.

No a -- was no help. They didn't want to allow him to -- to leave.

Q: And so then you graduated from the school. Was there any kind of ceremony when you graduated?

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A: Was no fa -- we -- we just -- you graduate, you get your diploma. I don't remember if I ge -- if I ge -- if [indecipherable] got the diploma. You graduate, you go, you finish school, an-and that's how it was.

Q: Were the other students Jewish refugees like you, or was it a mixture of Russian students and Jewish students?

A: No, was a mixture Russian -- in fact it was more Russian than Jewish people. But I didn't feel antisemit -- [indecipherable] with the Russians. They were nice to us.

Q: Yo-You had said before that on the train, the Russian guards on the train were nicer than the Russians that you met in **Russia**.

A: Yeah, an-and I didn't --

Q: You -- you had said previously, that when you were on the train going to the mountains --

A: Yes, right.

Q: -- that those Russian guards treated you better than the Russians did in **Russia**.

A: Correct.

Q: How did the Russians treat you in **Russia**?

A: They knew -- th-they were free people, the Russians in **Russia**, in that town. We were on -- on a work force like -- my mother, not me, we were in a camp, outside that village. We were in a walled camp. So we didn't have no connections with the Russians who were free.

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Q: Did you have to wear any identifying mark on your clothing showing that you were in that camp?

A: No. No, we di -- no **IDs** on the coats or whatever it is.

Q: Did you have special idife -- **ID** papers?

A: We got some special papers, but in **Russia**, even the Russians have to have **ID** cards. We had some papers, I don't remember what kind, but this was normal for them to give **ID** cards.

Q: What was your brother's state of mind?

A: My brother didn't bother too much. He was -- he wanted also that the father should come back, but he probably went to school also there already. This I don't remember. But he -- he was resigned whatever it is. He was four years younger than me.

Q: What did you do during the summer, or did you go to school all year round?

A: In the summer, no, we just had -- we just had vacation and that's all. We didn't go no -- we couldn't go nowhere. We not -- we're not allowed to go nowhere, we're in a camp. They treat us as nice, but we -- still we're in a camp, in a walled camp.

Q: And then you graduated from high school, and then what happened?

A: I think I was 18 or 17, I don't remember. I got a job in a Russian -- where they sew uniforms for soldiers. And I was la -- I was with somebody over there who was teaching me how to repair sewing machines and I was repairing sewing machines.

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Q: And so you were still living with your mother?

A: I still was living [indecipherable] w-we -- we were still wi --

Q: In the same barracks, did you stay in the same barracks?

A: -- in the same barracks, too, we were still in the same barracks wi-with the mother. [inaudible]

Q: And -- and then how long did you work at repairing the sewing machines?

A: In the sewing machine? Til 1945 or '46, I guess '40 fi -- maybe '46.

Q: Well, the war was over.

A: And the war was over.

Q: Yeah.

A: The Russians told us if we want to go back to **Poland**, we can go.

Q: What were your reactions when they told you the war was over?

A: Oh we -- we were very happy. We were very happy the war is over and all the miserable things are over.

Q: Did you celebrate in any way?

A: No, we didn't celebrate. We just -- the -- the Russians were d-dancing that I remember, they were very [indecipherable] but we weren't [indecipherable] we didn't celebrate. We were just -- I -- I think in that camp we were about a couple hundred people just, that's all. We didn't celebrate.

Q: It was a small -- it was a small camp.

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A: Yeah, it was a small ca -- no, there was outside the town -- the town wasn't so small. It was outside the town just a -- a -- a walled camp.

Q: But you said there were a couple hundred people in the camp.

A: Yeah, I think so, there was a couple hundred people.

Q: So you hear the war was over, and then what did you do?

A: When the war was over the Russian told us if we want to go back to **Poland**, we can go. So we went on a train. We told all the people and we went -- but thi-this wasn't a freight, this was already a regular train, and we went to **Poland** with the train from there. We came to -- you want -- we came to **Poland**. In **Sanok** was already non-Jewish people **[indecipherable]**

Q: Did you go back to **Sanok**?

A: We went back for a day or two days, I don't remember already.

Q: What did it look like to you?

A: Was a empty city.

Q: How did that feel?

A: Was Polish people there, but was no Jewish people. So --

Q: Ho-How did that feel to you?

A: -- we si -- we could feel still the anti-Semites from -- from the Polish people.

[indecipherable] you see -- you see, the Jews are coming back.

Q: Did you go back to your house -- your apartment?

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A: No, we didn't go -- maybe we g -- went -- go apartment. The apartment, somebody else lived already. Maybe we went back to the apartment, didn't think about it. But then I think it was we still could feel the anti-Semitism in **Poland**, there were always anti-Semites in **Poland**, even when -- but they -- they -- then we could - - we heard that mostly Jewish people are going to **Germany** by tr -- by train because **Poland** was no Jews.

Q: When you said you could feel the anti-Semitism, can you give me an example?

A: It was only two days when I came back, but I -- I remind myself now the Polish people, I da -- wouldn't say all of them, but a lot of them were anti-Semites. They didn't -- they hate the Jews.

Q: Did you have any particular experiences of that?

A: No, I didn't -- no, I didn't have no particular case. So we packed our bags and we went to **Germany**, where over there we were greeted by the **United States** as a **DP**, displaced persons, and they put us in a --

Q: W-When your mother was in **Sanok**, what was her rel -- her reaction? After all, she had been an adult there.

A: Well sh -- it was very bad. She -- we -- we felt very bad in **Sanok**. We felt like we became strangers over there.

Q: Did it look at all familiar?

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A: And may -- and mine was up -- maybe somebody of the Polish people say to my mother, why you came back? I -- they didn't say it to me, I think they said it to my mother. Then my father was also ready, he was united with us, he also came.

Q: To **Sanok**?

A: No, he ca -- they let him go first to the place where we went.

Q: He -- he -- in -- in the mountains?

A: And then from there --

Q: He went to the place in the mountains where you were?

A: Yeah, he went to the walled camp, but they di -- they [indecipherable] the walled camp [indecipherable] after the war.

Q: What -- what -- tell me what your thoughts were when you saw him, you hadn't seen him for years. What were your thoughts when you saw your father?

A: [indecipherable] Oh, my father? The tolls?

Q: What were your thoughts when you saw your father after all those years?

A: Oh sure, we were very happy, the -- the family was u -- is united.

Q: Did he look different?

A: I don't know if he talked different, but we were happy that the family was united, and we were all decided we go back to **Poland**. He was with us already then. Then we -- we -- from there we went oy -- all together to **Poland**, with the father.

Q: And did he talk about what his experiences were in the work camp?

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A: [**indecipherable**] he told us they were near the Japanese border. His town I -- his town was **Yakutsk**. That was near the Japanese border. It was very cold, he told us. He had to cut trees.

Q: Was his health good? Was his health good?

A: His health was still good. He got old already, but his health was still good, didn't complain.

Q: And when you were in **Sanok** and you went to **Germany**, how did you know where to go?

A: Where everybody went. They said they all go to **Germany**, and over there we went to the town of **Noyome**.

Q: But how did you know to go to that particular town?

A: Other di -- other people went to that town, so we went to that town.

Q: What were your thoughts about leaving **Poland** a second time?

A: Oh, we were happy then. We heard on the newspapers they had -- they had the big pogrom in **Kielce**, if you n -- they had the big pogrom in **Kielce**, from -- also the Jews who came from **Russia**, they went through **Kielce** and then the Polish people made the pogrom, they killed something there, I don't remember how many. So after that we saw we are lucky that we are leaving **Poland**.

Q: How long did you stay in **Russia** after the war was over, before you went back to **Poland**?

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A: Listen, I think it was in '40 -- May '45 the war was over. I think it was in the beginning '46.

Q: So you stayed up in **Russia**, in the mountains for all those --

A: We stayed up there in **Russia**, yes, my wife -- my wife -- my mother worked in the bakery and I worked in the sewing machines over there and we -- we -- we didn't know yet where to go til they -- the Russian didn't tell us, if you want to leave **Russia**, you want to go to **Poland**, we were afraid to do it.

Q: Okay, now you're in **Germany** in this camp.

A: **Noyome**. [indecipherable]

Q: **Noyome**, and it's west of **Munich**. It's west of **Munich**.

A: It's -- I don't know if it's west or east. No, not east for sure. I -- I thought it's north of **Munich**, but maybe you're right.

Q: And please describe the camp t-to me, what the conditions were.

A: Very good. The Americans took care of us with the -- with the food, with the --we have rooms over there, we used to -- we lived in a -- used to be over there a -- a -- a - - German soldiers used to live, so they gave us that thing, we -- the conditions were good. Plenty of food we had already there, and this was the best conditions in the war since the war started.

Q: And did you work there?

A: I went -- I went to **ORT** school -- **ORT**. This is --

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Q: The **ORT. ORT** school.

A: -- **ORT** school. I took up some trade, I don't remember what kind of trade I picked up. This I don't remember already. Because I wasn't too long in **Noyome**. I actually -- maybe I was two years, or -- a year and a half. In 1940 - '48 -- I was til 1948 in **Noyome**.

Q: And you said you had enough food, did you --

A: Yeah, you get food from the Joint.

Q: And did you talk to a lot of the other refugees, other young men your age?

A: Yeah, we -- we talk, we were free to travel wherever we want to go. My -- my brother he worked as a photographer for some kind of [indecipherable] or whatever. And we were free to travel. Nobody told us we have to be in the camp.

Q: So you could go in and out of the camp, yeah. Was there a big black market in the camp?

A: There was a black market in the camp. There were black markets i -- all kind of items, electronics. Not food, but food we had plenty, but all kind of clothes, electronics. They had black market there.

Q: And did you hear the stories of other refugees and what they went through? Did you hear the stories of other refugees and what they went through?

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A: We had few -- I don't know on the refugee -- we had few refugees which we knew them from the Russian camp in the same town. And they were also happy. They were happy.

Q: W-Where had the other people come from in the camp? The other **DPs**, where had they come from?

A: From that camp wer -- in **Russia**.

Q: But were there -- were there any other people in **Noyome** from other places?

A: They were from other places also. I don't remember what places, but those two, we were friends even in that camp in **Russia**, so wo -- we decided probably with my parents, all together to go to that **Noyome** camp.

Q: And so you stayed there and you said you went to the **ORT** school?

A: I went to **ORT** sch -- I went to **ORT** school. I picked up some trade which I don't remember, I never used the trade, I don't remember what was it. And I don't think I finished that school because in '48 they came from **Israel** and they ask -- **Israel** became -- wa-wanted to be independent, and they ask if we want to go to **Israel**, so I went.

Q: Why did you want to go to **Israel**? Had your parents been Zionists when you were young?

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A: A little bit on a volunteer, and a little w-was pressure. The Israeli government pressured th-the young people -- I was 20 years old, pressured the young people to go to **Israel** [indecipherable] to be soldiers.

Q: Were your parents Zionists back in **Poland** when you were a child? Were your parents Zionists when you were growing up, when you were a child?

A: I don't think so they were Zionists, I don't think so. I never heard them talking about Zionism. May -- if they would be Zionists they would leave **Poland**, they would go to **Palestine** then. I don't think they were Zionists.

Q: So these people -- was this -- wha -- what -- wa -- was this after the state of **Israel** was formed, in May 1948?

A: No this -- I went to **Israel** -- I went to **Israel** before the state of **Israel** was born.

Q: What were your parents reactions when you said you wanted to go?

A: They -- in the beginning they didn't agree with -- they didn't agree with it, but then was all kind of little pressure to go to **Israel**. And I saw a lot of young people are going, so I went with them.

Q: And what were your thoughts about leaving your family?

A: My -- I didn't want to leave to -- my family, but I was a -- probably by then a little Z-Zionistic inclined.

Q: Did you speak Hebrew at that point?

A: No. I learn Hebrew in -- in the army, in the Israeli army.

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Q: When did you leave **Germany** to go to **Israel**?

A: In 1940 -- I think was May -- May or m -- or April s -- it doesn't --

Q: Before independence?

A: Before the independence, yes.

Q: And how did you get there?

A: The very Israeli people who took us to the border with the train, to the borders of **Czechoslovakia, France, Italy** and then with a ship to go to **Israel**, at night.

Q: So this was done in secret?

A: Nobody should -- nobody should know. At night we used to travel with the train to those three countries, **Czechoslova -- Czechoslovakia, France, Italy**.

Q: And again, did you take anything special with you?

A: Just my shirt.

Q: Not your cowboy books?

A: No, the cowboy books, I think I left them in **Russia**. I think so.

Q: And then you got on the boat to go to **Palestine**.

A: Yeah, we got o-o -- on the boat, with the boat. They took us straight to a recruiting camp where the recruiters, they --

Q: In what city? In what city?

A: What?

Q: What city?

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A: Wasn't a city. It was a camp, in **Beriakof**. It wasn't a city, was a little village, or whatever was it.

Q: W-We'll get to **Israel** in a minute. What I wanted to ask you was, when you left **Poland** and came to **Germany**, and you put your foot down on German soil in this camp, what was it like for you? Here it was that it was the Germans who had waged the war, the Germans who had caused you all these troubles, and now you're in their country of **Germany**. Was -- was that difficult for you to be in **Germany**?

A: It wasn't too difficult. I wasn't thinking that way. I was thinking we are free, we have food, so it's better than it was til now. Ca-Can you close it? I have to take --

[tape break]

Q: I had asked you about what it felt like to put your foot down on German soil after the history of **Germany**. Now I'd like to ask you, what was it like to put your foot down on Israeli soil when you arrived --

A: It was very exciting. We are very happy, excited to be on our ow-own homeland.

Q: You felt that this was your homeland?

A: Yes, I felt this was my homeland. I became a Zionist.

Q: So after all you had been through during the war, you felt like you were home?

A: I felt that it's time to be home.

Q: On the voyage over, on the boat, did they do -- teach you anything, or --

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A: No. They started teaching us in that military camp in **Beriakof**. M-Military exercises.

Q: And did you wear a uniform?

A: Yes, we all got uniforms.

Q: What's it like to put on an Israeli uniform?

A: We were, in those days we were very proud to wear an Israeli uniform. Til now we saw uniforms, German uniforms, Russian uniforms and now we got Israeli uniform -- Polish uniforms I remember. Now we got Israeli uniforms.

Q: Were you able to keep in contact with your parents and your brother?

A: Yes. I wrote letters all the time, they wrote letters to me. And then they were in -- in **Noyome** from ma -- I left 1948, they were in til 1950 in **Noyome**. In 1950 I guess they -- I don't know which agency did it, **HIAS** or whoever it is said whoever wants to go to **United States** can register, so they registered to go, or they going to stay in **Germany**. They registered to go to **United States**.

Q: Did you try to persuade them to come to **Israel**?

A: I tried to persuade them to go, but those days the situation in **Israel** weren't too good. And fact is they wrote to me after you ge-get out of the army, you wouldn't know -- you wouldn't have where to live. So they decided to go to **United States**.

Q: Which they did.

A: Which they did.

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Q: And where did they go?

A: They go to -- they went to **B-Brooklyn**, to **New York**.

Q: Did they have relatives there?

A: My mother had some cousins in **Brooklyn**, but they didn't go to the cousins, they rented an apartment in **Bay Ridge** and this where they stayed.

Q: So now you're -- you're here in **Israel**, and you said you got there before independence day.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: What was the celebration of independence --

A: Independence day I was there already.

Q: What was that like?

A: We are dancing on the streets, everybody was happy. Finally we got rid of the English people, **England**. And finally we had our own homeland. The whole city was dancing, everybody was very happy.

Q: And then did you fight in the War of Independence? The 1948 war?

A: I -- I was for two years, 1948, and I -- I was released f -- discharged from the army in 1950.

Q: Were you ever in any danger during those two years?

A: I was in -- well, they took us from **Beriakof** under -- at night with the helicopter -
- or not, there was an airplane, a small plane. They took us near the Egyptian border.

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A-Actually they took us to -- to the town of **BaSheva**, near bashe -- **BaSheva** was in the Egyptian hands and this was our first combat, to -- to free **BaSheva**, to liberate **BaSheva**, which is -- is in the **Negev** desert.

Q: So you were in that battle?

A: I was in that battle in **BaSheva**, yes.

Q: Where else did you -- were you involved in the War of Independence?

A: After **BaSheva** we just were s-stationed in **BaSheva** as a -- as soldiers to -- to i -- to be in **BaSheva** to --

Q: To guard it?

A: -- to guard it in **BaSheva**, yes.

Q: Here your life was in danger during that battle.

A: Yes.

Q: And then I --

A: Yeah, a few of my friends were killed over there. Best friends.

Q: Were they **Sabras** or were they refugees from **Europe**?

A: No, they were all refugees who -- who came from **Germany**.

Q: When you got to **Israel** and you were with all these other young people who were refugees, did you talk about your stories, did you tell each other what you had gone through?

A: We didn't talk about that. We didn't talk about it.

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Q: Why not?

A: We didn't talk about it. We were just talking how is life in the army, what did you do today in the army, what'd you do yesterday in the army? We forgot what's happening til now.

Q: And when did you -- so you stayed in for two years, in the army?

A: Where, in the army?

Q: In -- in the army.

A: Til 1950.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: In 1950 I went to a -- to a civilian job. I used to -- I -- I used to help to repair a -- trucks, I mean electrical parts for different trucks. I learned this in the army, also.

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 **Fred Gutter**. This is tape number two, side **B**.

And you were saying how you left the Israeli army and then you went to work in 1950. And can you tell a little bit about then, what happened?

A: I used to work as a civilian for the Israeli defense department. And I worked there til -- til 1959, when I left **Israel**.

Q: What did you do for the defense department?

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A: I used to repair generators and starters for the army.

Q: And when did you meet your wife?

A: I met my wife in 1958.

Q: Was she from **Europe** also?

A: She came to -- she came to **Israel** also from **Germany**, but sh-she's younger than me and they didn't took -- take her to the army then. And I met her through a friend.

Q: And then when did you get married?

A: I got married in 19 -- in May 1959.

Q: In -- in **Israel**?

A: In **Israel**, yes.

Q: And then you said you decided to come to the united -- you left in 1959, what -- why did you leave?

A: My -- my parents wrote to me they want to be together with me, with us, so 19 -- at the end of 1959 we came to **United States**.

Q: Was that something you wanted to do, or did you want to stay in **Israel**?

A: If would be up to me, I would probably stay in **Israel**, but was a little pressure from the parents.

Q: And your wife was willing to leave, too?

A: My wife was willing to --

Q: Her -- was her family in **Israel**?

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A: Her family name is fe -- is **Roosevelt**. It's **Roosevelt**.

Q: Ha -- wa -- did she leave her family in **Israel**?

A: She left -- no, her father was already in **United States**. Her family was still -- her family is still in **Israel** now. And fact is her brother comes quite few times already he was here to visit us. Fro -- he li -- he lives in **Tel Aviv**.

Q: And then you -- so you came to the **United States** in 19 -- the end of 1959?

A: Ye -- on New Year's eve 19 -- 1960 actually. New Year's eve, 1960.

Q: And where did you settle?

A: My brother picked me up from the **Brooklyn** -- we came by boat. Was no -- I don't think was planes then even. I didn't hear n-nobody t -- went by plane to **America**. We came by boat. The boat's name was **Zion**.

Q: Z-**Zion**? **Zion**?

A: **Zion**, yeah, it was a Israeli boat. And we came th-this and ma -- my brother waited at the shipyard over there in [indecipherable] and we came, we -- we lived with my parents in **Bay Ridge** in their apartment til we got our -- their -- our own apartment here.

Q: And then what did you do here?

A: I got -- I got a -- a job in the electronic firm. I forgot the name of it. I got the job [indecipherable] firm, to assemble some electronic things, but ne -- I didn't speak English [indecipherable]. And I work there for a couple -- til 1964. In 1964 I co -- I

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contacted **Zenith**, **Zenith** radio, and I got a job with them, til we open up -- they closed our department. We used to work in the hearing aid department for **Zenith** and they closed in **New York** the department, so me and two other coworkers opened up our own place in **Manhattan** to sell and ma -- repair hearing aids.

Q: Mm-hm. Do you have any children?

A: I have my daughter and I have my son which is th-three years younger than her. He's in **Hawaii** in **Honolulu**. He's a lawyer, by the way.

Q: Are you still working?

A: No, I'm retired.

Q: Can we talk now a little bit about your feelings and your thoughts about what you went through during the war? Do you feel you would be a different person if you hadn't gone through the experience that you went through?

A: It's very hard to say. Maybe I would go to college, maybe I would be a lawyer or a doctor. But otherwise, I don't know, because I -- I like -- even today I like the law studies, and maybe I would be something else.

Q: Do you feel that you lost your childhood, because this happened when you were very young?

A: Yes, I feel I lost my childhood. First, I didn't have a **Bar Mitzvah**, this is already a big loss. And then I had to finish high school in two countries. So I think I lost my childhood.

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Q: Did you ever get it back?

A: Never got it back.

Q: When your children were your age when you had to leave your home, did that bring back memories for you?

A: When I?

Q: When your children were your age when you had to leave **Sanok**, you know, when the Germans came in and you had to leave **Sanok**?

A: Yeah.

Q: When your children were that age, did that remind you of what you went through when you were their age?

A: No, because I were -- because I left **Sanok** under different circumstances. They were here -- they were born here, they were free to do whatever they want. They didn't have g -- Germans over their head.

Q: No, no, no, but I meant, when they became the same age you were in -- in **Sanok**.

You were --

A: 12.

Q: -- 12 or 13. When they were 12 or 13, did you think about what you had gone through when you were 12 or 13?

A: No, I don't think so. I didn't think th-that way.

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Q: How do you describe yourself now? Are you Jewish, are you Polish, are you American, are you Israeli? How do you describe yourself?

A: I am Jewish. In the beginning I used to say I am Israeli, but how long can you say you're Israeli when you live here? So I'm Jewish.

Q: Do you feel any connection to **Poland**?

A: No, not whatsoever. I would never visit them even.

Q: Why not?

A: Bad memories. I always knew the anti-Semite, most of them anyway. And I didn't have good memories from **Poland**. This -- this doesn't -- I di -- even don't think to visit them.

Q: Did you tell your children about what you went through when they were growing up?

A: Oh, I told my daughter. My son is already quite a few years in **Hawaii**.

Q: No, but while they were growing up. When they were young --

A: No, I didn't --

Q: -- did you tell them what your background was?

A: No, I just in -- I just -- my daughter knows everything what's happened to me all during the war. But I don't think it -- maybe my -- my son knows about it. But I didn't specially told them. Maybe wa -- during the -- just accidentally I put some words there. I was in **Russia**, I was in camp, or the Germans, whatever it is.

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Q: How did you impart Jewish religion, Jewish culture to your children?

A: They both -- my daughter went to a Jewish Hebrew school here. And in fact is also my son went to a Hebrew school here. They know they are Jewish, but observant Jews, I don't think they are. I -- I don't know if I am observant now.

Q: Do you think about your experiences and what you went through, often?

A: Sometimes. I think what I went through during my years. But it brings me bad memories.

Q: Is there any noise or any sight today that triggers you? Do you see something today, or hear something that makes you think of what you went through?

A: Where, **United States**?

Q: You know, a certain sound or a certain sight or a smell that make -- that reminds you.

A: Sometimes when -- when I reme -- when I rema -- bring me thoughts about it when President **Reagan** went to -- to the concentration camp over there. So maybe I was thinking about it.

Q: But there's no specific -- I mean, like for instance when you see snow, or something like that, does that remind you of the work camp in the mountains?

A: No.

Q: Is it difficult for you to be on a train?

A: On a tr --

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Q: Is it difficult for you to be on a train because you were in a train when you went to the mountains?

A: No. I don't remember when I was on the train, I -- in **New York** I am going by train every day. No.

Q: Do you think you were at an advantage that you were so young when this happened, that you really weren't aware of the danger that you were in? You were a young -- you were a young child then.

A: Oh, sure.

Q: Was that an advantage?

A: Probably was advantage. I didn't go to work with the Germans. I didn't go to work with the Russians. So, because I was young, this was a advantage.

Q: Are you angry that you had to go through these experiences and other people didn't, let's say people, Jews in the **United States**. Does that make you angry that you had to go through that?

A: No, no. Look, some people go here, some people go their way. I don't think this would be any **[indecipherable]**. No.

Q: What were some of your thoughts during the **Eichmann** trial?

A: I wanted he should get the death sentence, which he got. He deserves it. I was watching on **TV** the trial every day and I thought, oh, how good is that th -- that they got him.

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Q: Do you think that you have more sensitivity to what's happening today in other countries because you lived through a time of restrictions and difficulty and danger?

A: Other countries. Look, I think have to be very careful and other **Hitlers** wouldn't come up.

Q: Is that possible, for another **Hitler** to come up?

A: It's possible if -- it's possible if -- they shouldn't let another **Hitler** to come to power.

Q: What should people do?

A: Vote the right way.

Q: Pardon?

A: Vote the right way.

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

A: What do I think about **Germany** today? I think they are forgiven because Israeli government, they took reparation for them. Once you take reparation, you have to forgive the person. And they forgive. They forgive **Germany**. They have diplomatic relations with them and everything, so I go along.

Q: So you forgive also?

A: So I go along. If they -- if they forgive, I forgive.

Q: Do you get any reparations?

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A: No, I didn't get. I don't think I was in the concentration camp, so if -- if -- people who were in concentration camp, they deserve it.

Q: Are you more comfortable today around people who came from **Europe** and experienced the war than you are among people who did not?

A: Yes, I am more comfortable today.

Q: A-Are you more comfortable today being with people who experienced the wartime --

A: This --

Q: -- than with people who did not experience the war?

A: No, no, I don't think this is any -- and fact is, I have more friends Americans than people who were in concentration camps. This is not affect -- affected. People are people.

Q: What language do you think in?

A: I am thinking mostly in Hebrew and in English. I never -- I never think nothing -- I still speak a little Polish, but I never think Polish and I never -- I don't have with whom to talk for if e -- to speak Polish I don't have with whom. But my mostly thought is in the -- is in Hebrew, in -- oh, sometimes in Yiddish. I've also s-start forgetting the language already.

Q: What about Russian?

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A: I don't remember. And I finished high school and I don't remember Russian. My wife remembers few Russian words, she was also in **Russia**, but I don't remember nothing.

Q: Do you think that the political views that you have today, your political views are influenced by what you went through?

A: My political views?

Q: Are they influenced by what you went through and the dangers you faced as a young person?

A: Some places, some thing. Like I would never -- I would never vote for somebody who belonged to **KKK**. Like what's his name, **Duke**, or even **Pat Buchanan**. He doesn't get my vote.

Q: During the Civil Rights movement here in the **United States** --

A: In the 60's.

Q: -- what were your feelings then? Because you had lost your civil rights in **Poland**.

A: The truth is, I didn't have no views whether Civil Rights. I just was -- I just came to this country and I didn't have no views on the Civil Rights.

Q: How often do you think about those war years? Do you think more as you've gotten older, about what you went through?

A: Which years?

Q: The wartime years.

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A: I think I've forgotten about them. Maybe years ago I was thinking more.

Q: Well, is there anything else that you want to say about the interview?

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Want -- wait a moment? [tape break] I had asked you if there was anything else you wanted to talk about.

A: Yes, I remember my Aunt **Et** -- my mother's sister from **Lvov**, she used to tell us that -- how she survived the Nazi **Germany**. She -- she was a blonde woman, she didn't look Jewish and she was hired by the German officer's club to be a chef. And she cooked for them, she baked for them and this how she survived the Nazi regime. And she became such a good cook that after she came to the **United States**, we used to go for Thanksgiving to dinner. This the ever -- the best dinners what we ever had.

Q: And what about her family? Her husband?

A: She passed away.

Q: No, did she have a husband?

A: Husband was killed one day before the end of the war. She -- he was walking the streets, he thought that the war was over. In the meantime a Polish man saw him, he recognized him, he called down a German s -- officer or soldier, he said, he is Jew. The offi -- the German soldier t-took him and we never saw him since then.

Q: What happened to ma -- other members of your family?

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A: My other sister, where we stayed in **Lvov** was int -- and two other -- there were five sisters. Two survived and three were killed.

Q: Do you know where they were killed?

A: They were killed in -- in **Lvov**, when the **Germany** occupied **Lvov**. Only survivor is my mother and the one who was a cook for the German officers.

Q: A-And which aunt was that, what was her name?

A: Her name was **Etta**.

Q: Th-That's **Etta**.

A: **Etta**.

Q: And the names of the three aunts who did not survive?

A: **Sapka**, **Tonka**, and **Ithka**, the three other ones.

Q: Wa -- any other relatives that you know about?

A: Now, from my father's, the -- the -- the gran -- the grandparents were killed. Now, my f --

Q: Y-Your father's parents?

A: My father's parents were killed.

Q: How?

A: I don't know. Nobody knows. My father's brother did -- from **Rymanów** was killed, with his wife. How, nobody knows. Only w-we survived who -- because we

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were in s -- in -- in **Russia**, in **Soviet Union**. And the other way, **Etk**a survived because she was a chef for the German army and they didn't know that she is Jewish.

Q: Do you think about the relatives that you've lost, frequently?

A: I don't remember them too much already. I was only 12 years old. I don't remember those too much. Happened to be -- you know, happened to be I remembered those names, but I -- I didn't think about those names for 30 - 40 - 50 years.

Q: Has the world learned lessons? The lessons it should learn?

A: I don't think so. They still have all kind happening -- I don't -- I don't think so, they all -- the only lesson what the world should -- should learn, not to let another **Hitler** to come to power. Whoever country it is.

Q: And that they can do by voting the right way, you said.

A: What?

Q: And you said they can do that by voting the right way.

A: By voting, yeah, th -- by voting their conscience, the right way. Not to give a -- no dictatorship to come to power.

Q: Does education play a role?

A: Education plays a big role. Educated people know what's going on.

Q: Yet **Germany** was a very educated -- **Germany** was a very educated society.

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A: Yes, **Germany** came to power because **Hitler** promised them he will make big **Germany**, everybody's going to be rich. And he -- he -- that he came from -- to power. Then he wanted occupy one land after another, and one country after another, and this is now very important, the -- the **United States** shouldn't let another -- as a bold power, shouldn't let another country to come a **Hitler** as the head of the state.

Q: If you were to meet a German on the street today, would you be uncomfortable?

Do you st --

A: No --

Q: -- do you hold -- hold a grudge against the Germans?

A: No, I used to work with -- when I came to this country, I used to work with two Germans, non-Jewish. I was -- I didn't feel nothing about -- about them. Okay, maybe because they were many years here, and they w -- have nothing to do with the German **Hitler**, but I wouldn't feel comfortable. Like I said before, it's forgiven. You take money, it's forgiven. I didn't take money.

Q: So why do you forgive them, you did not take money.

A: Well, you cannot hate somebody forever. Can you hate somebody forever? Has to c-come an end to it.

Q: Well, is there again, as I said, anything additional that you wanted to say that we haven't talked about?

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A: I'd -- I tried to remind myself something, but I think everything what I remember, I said it. Don't forget, this is already 60 years ago, I cannot remember everything.

Q: Well you -- well, you remembered a lot. Thank you very much. We appreciate your doing the interview.

A: Okay.

Q: This concludes the united --

A: Was it --

Q: This concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Fred Gutter**.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Conclusion of Interview

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