

This is Sally Lewitt. interviewing Samuel Einhorn at the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors on April 13, 1983. Mr. Einhorn, would you please share your story with us?

Thank you. Well, first I want to say that I was the American-- I'm an American citizen in concentration camp, an American Jew with American citizenship in concentration camp.

How did you wind up in Europe at that time? What year were you stuck in Europe?

I was not born in the United States. My father was born in the United States, and his siblings were born in the United States. And they came back from the United States to Poland. And my father got married and registered us with the authorities. And because of the American law that anybody who had children in Europe and he was an American citizen, the children of American citizens.

Automatically, even if your mother was not an American citizen?

Yes. Yeah. And in 1933, my father decided to go back to the United States and see what it's all about and possibly take us-- bring us to the United States. And that was right after the Depression, 1933. And at that, times were rough, couldn't get a job. And at some point, he wanted to return back. And before we turn around, it was 1939, and the war broke out.

And you were stuck.

And we were stuck. And in 1940, we received a letter from the American Consulate in Berlin, that we should-- that we should come to Berlin and get our American passports. But we couldn't get permission. We couldn't move around freely.

From Poland?

Was the occupied Poland, by the German-- by the Nazis.

So this was after September 1.

That was 1940.

Oh, OK.

It started in 1939.

Mhm.

And at one point, I figured maybe I'll be safe because of the American citizenship. But before we couldn't get, couldn't move--

That letter from the embassy in Berlin didn't allow the authorities-- let me ask you this. How did the authorities in Poland respond when you showed them the letter?

Well, I tried to come to the authorities-- doesn't mean a thing. They just neglected it. And actually, the American Embassy did not follow it up. See? They should. They should have.

Sure, the American Embassy-- you were not at war with the United-- Poland-- Germany and the United States were not at war.

Not at war.

Sure.

They should have followed up. But obviously they didn't care either.

Yeah. I guess it would appear that way to you.

To me-- at that particular time.

Sure.

And to make the story short, at one point, I realized that my search for permission is in vain. And then I didn't--

How old were you at the time?

17.

And you had brothers and--

Youngest-- younger brothers and my mother.

Your father was in the United States?

In New York at the time. And my grandmother and also my aunts and uncles and all that. Well, this were in the same time.

OK. I'm going to ask you to speak up so that we can be sure we get this on the tape. OK?

And before we turned around, United States declared war.

Yeah.

And then I was even afraid to mention the word.

Then you got it from both sides.

I got it from both. I was really caught in the web without any way out. And then they grabbed me. I mean, they just took me to work.

What town were you in when this happened?

In Sokolów, a small town, so-called-- now they call it Galicia in the United States. But at that time, it was in Poland.

OK.

And the family was together, tried to be together as much as possible. We lost all contact with my father right from the start.

OK. Where did they-- when they picked you up, was it the Gestapo?

Yeah. They picked me up. The SS actually picked me up, and they took me to a camp, to a labor camp. And--

Where was that?

That was in Nowy Sącz, Poland. That was sort of near the--

Did they take your brothers as well?

No, just myself at that time. But they caught me on the street.

Oh, OK.

And after being there a few weeks, I hurt myself working there and chopping granite, cutting granite. And [PAUSES] they took me to some infirmary.

An infirmary.

Infirmary.

A hospital.

Yeah, a little hospital. And they just tried to patch me up because I had infection in my leg. I still have a big scar here. And they gave me three-- they gave me a disability for three days. I took this, and I just put a zero.

A 30?

I didn't look too much, too Jewish. I was blond and blue eyes. And I figured I'll get away with it. I took off my yellow star, and I went on the train back home.

Was your family there when you returned home?

My mother was still there, so 41. And they were looking for me, but I was hiding. I had a little hole in the attic.

Someone actually-- the SS came back to your house looking for you?

Yeah, they looked for me.

And so I was hiding like that till 1942. In '42, they assembled all the remaining Jews in the town, and they took us to the ghetto. In other words, we marched.

To which ghetto?

Rzeszów, ghetto Rzeszów. And from there I was separated again from my family. They grabbed me on the street in the ghetto, and they put me in a camp, [NON-ENGLISH], which was a village near Rzeszów. There was a lot of people there under terrible, terrible circumstances, sleeping in the, actually, dirt. And we were working. And after several months--

Why did they just take you and not your whole family?

They grabbed people in the street.

Just off the street indiscriminately, right? But when you left-- when you left there, your family was all together.

My family was in the ghetto when they left me-- when they picked me from the ghetto.

Right. And your family was in the ghetto.

In the ghetto.

Right.

And I left the family in the ghetto. And when I came-- and then--

Where did you live in the ghetto?

I don't really remember one particular street.

OK. No, I just meant in what type of a house. Did you live with another family?

Oh, with another family. Yeah, we bumped into about six families in three rooms under terrible, terrible conditions. Because, I mean, the Jews that was in the ghetto, that was taken so many the others from the small towns into the same homes. In that camp, in [NON-ENGLISH] we've been working-- we were working for a few weeks.

What were you doing?

Demolishing a military runway.

Was this sort of a make-work project, or did you think it had some meaning?

No, I don't know. I had no--

It didn't matter.

--no idea what it meant and why they did it. After a few weeks, there were rumors going around that they were going to ship us out. And they took-- everybody lined up into four abreast. And they just-- one guy separated, doing that, went across and-- this group on this side, this group on the other side. They were talking about one group will remain, and the other group will be put back into Rzeszów.

And I realized that there's a problem there because if there the job is finished, and if people are going to remain, they're not going to live.

You were very aware of a life-and-death situation.

And then also, a lot of brothers were separated. With their separation, one brother was this side, the other one-- so a whole night-- the morning we're supposed to leave, and the whole night there was really--

[BACKGROUND NOISE]

Shhhh.

A whole night people were debating what to do because we could still switch around.

Right, they just-- yeah.

A little bit, you know? So I sort of flipped a coin-- or not a coin, but something. I just tested my luck, which way to go, which way to turn. And it came out I should leave. I should not change. I should stay where I am because I was separated to leave.

And SS were putting people on trucks. We heard a lot of shooting and flames. This whole thing went up in the air, and there were several, several hundreds of people which was already killed outside and burned. They were dead. I really don't know exactly what happened. But that's what I saw.

And when I came to Rzeszów, the ghetto was liquidated already. There was no more family.

Do you have any-- was there anyone there who could tell you where everybody was sent to?

No. They were sent away, and I don't really know exactly where. To this day, I don't know what happened.

To this day, you still have no idea where they went?

No idea where they went. And they put me to work again, building some pumping stations. And from there after [INAUDIBLE] it was winter, all living in the cold and misery, hard work and beating and all that stuff. And they needed tailors. And my whole family was in the tailor business, four generations, and I learned a little bit.

You suddenly became a master tailor. [LAUGHS]

And I registered. No, I really knew because I learned.

You registered as-- sure.

I knew. And I registered. They need a tailors. The Germans needed tailors. So I figured, if they need me to work, they'll keep me alive. It was as simple as that. So I registered. And they took me to Plaszów. At that time, they weren't ready to use tailors.

Was there a camp in Plaszów?

Yes. There was a concentration camp in Plaszów, with all the trimmings, with the barbed wires and the watchtowers.

Was this an extermination camp or a work camp?

An extermination camp.

It was an extermination camp.

And we worked. I mean, they--

What did you do?

Build barracks. And the people kept coming, and we built barracks. And there was a guy there, an Austrian, head of the camp, which was real, real murder and torture.

Do you remember his name?

Yes. Goeth. And he--

Did he wear an SS uniform?

Yes. Every morning he was riding on his horse with his dogs, pointed out certain men that were working, certain Jewish fellows, just at random, and put the dog on him, and then he shot him. A few times a day he did that.

How many people were in the camp? Do you know? Was it a very large camp?

Large camp, yeah. And then later, towards '43, they brought in people from Romania, some women and some other people. And they finally built barracks, tailor shops. And then they put me in a tailor shop.

What did you do in the tailor shop?

Repairing uniforms.

SS uniforms?

SS uniforms. And we saw some nice bullet holes, which we were very happy seeing that.

I bet you were. I bet you were.

But we really weren't doing much work because there was always a watch, looking somebody was coming. We were really not under guard, under gunpoint in the shop. But we were surrounded. People were going around. But as anybody was approaching the door, the machines were all going fast.

Why did you not work as hard as you might have? Was this just to--

Well, we were sabotaging it. Why should we wait for the effort, really?

That was your private little resistance.

That's right. [PAUSES] And anyway, we were there till 1943. And we were hearing the Russian guns, the Russian big guns at night. And we knew that the Russians are coming, or we're going to be liberated by the Russians, or we're going to be--

Killed.

--moved again or killed.

Or killed.

One or the other.

Did they--

Incidentally, even in the shop they were pulling out people and kill us.

Based on-- was there any basis that you could--

No basis whatsoever.

Just randomly.

There was a big hole, sort of mountain in a valley, and they were-- we can see it from the shop. And they were pulling out people and just piling dead bodies up.

How did they exterminate people?

Just shot them.

Just shot them? Well, at some camps-- at some camps they were--

No, at that particular, there was no-- there were no crematoriums or gas chambers. There were just mass graves-- shot them.

Who dug these graves?

People themselves in most cases. In that particular case, they were just sort of like a little hollow between the-- a little--

Like a valley?

--valley between mountains. And they were just piling up their graves-- the bodies.

What did you have to eat in Plaszów?

Soup, once a-- soup a day, which was some kind of-- who knows what it was in there, some water with some floating around something, very, very little floating.

[LAUGHTER]

A lot of liquid, not a lot of floating.

And so for eight of a kilogram of bread a day.

They actually weighed it out?

No, they just cut the bread in eighths.

Oh, in eighths. OK.

Yeah. And I saved this bread for twice. In other words, I always cut it in half, tried to keep it-- I should have-- I shouldn't eat it in one time and then be very hungry.

Till tomorrow.

And anyway, I was an optimist all the time. I figured if they were not going to kill me, if they're not going outright shoot me, I'll live. I was young. My constitution was good. And my morale, I was-- I never gave up.

And from there, they took us to Mauthausen, as the Russian was approaching. Put us on the cattle trains, riding for days and nights.

They were moving everyone east-- west?

West, through Austria-- terrible conditions, terrible sanitary conditions.

These were in the cattle cars?

In the cattle cars.

You were there for days and nights?

Days and nights.

Did it ever stop?

It stopped in Mauthausen, which was an extermination camp built, I think, even before the war.

What happened to the people who perished on the trains on the way?

They would just throw them out-- down.

Just open the doors and throw them out? Were their guards on each car?

Yeah. They weren't inside the cars.

Sure. What happened--

I really don't--

I'm sorry. Go ahead.

I really don't remember if there was every car, every second car. You know?

But you were under guard on these trains?

Oh, at all times.

And the trains never stopped so that you could get out?

It stopped sometimes because they didn't get the connection. In other words, they couldn't get the switching.

But they didn't stop it for your comforts at all?

No. They only stopped because they didn't have to right-of-way, the switching or something.

What happened in Mauthausen?

Mauthausen was a real with crematoriums, a real extermination camp. And also, they needed us in Melk, which is there. In Melk, they were building underground, in Alps, underground with steel and concrete tunnels and factories underground, ammunition factories. And they used us to build these factories underground, protected by three-feet, four-feet walls and so much dirt that-- safe from bombing.

What were these factories? These were just supposed to be ammunition factories for the Nazis?

Ammunition and parts, you know, like--

And what year was this?

--parts of guns. What year?

1944?

'44.

'43?

'43, '44-- probably '44, the beginning of-- I don't remember exactly.

OK.

And they built tremendous factories there. And they used them. And at one point, one tunnel, one area was already working and we were building another one. We were just using the jackhammers, you know, and cutting in deeper and deeper and making this wooden thing-- pouring concrete.

Were there any further efforts on your part to sabotage any of these efforts?

Well, we tried. But over there, at that point we couldn't because they were very anxious to get this done as fast as possible because the Germans was being bombed already in 1944.

Were you under heavy guard?

Yes, very heavy. And a lot of beating and working all kinds of hours, from sunrise to sundown. And the conditions in the winter with just cotton, these striped cotton uniforms. And I used to use the cement paper, wrap myself around.

Put it under your clothes?

Under my clothes and also in the shoes. And I used to fix mine. Used to take-- make socks out of rags to protect my feet.

Where did you get the rags?

From discarded old uniforms, which were laying around in different areas. I even put soles on my shoes from that conveyor belts.

Very creative, you're very creative.

I design women's clothes.

See I told you you were. I knew you were creative. What other the conditions do you remember? [PAUSES]
You were all alone. You were 19 years old at the time.

Well, at that time, it was 1944. In '44 I was already 21.

OK.

22.

You were under the assumption that your whole family had perished at this point?

Well, at this point, I knew, when they were taken out of the ghetto and there was no one in the ghetto, I was aware of it. Then we heard already at different times. People were coming from different areas, new people. And they're exterminating people by the millions. But at that point, there was no way out except to do the best and sabotage without being noticed.

Were there any organized efforts that you knew of to sabotage?

Some. Well, if they walked away, we stopped working.

Today they call those "sickens," I think. [LAUGHS] It's the same thing. You originated them. How did you get to Wels?

Well, from there--

Or tell me more about Melk, if you'd like.

In Melk, we were just staying in Melk.

What kind of facility did you-- were you living in Melk, if you call it living?

Well, I would say much better than in [NON-ENGLISH] or the others. We had some barracks. And we had three, four-- what do you call it?

Tiers of-- levels? Levels of--

Yeah. And we had-- that's where we slept. And every morning at sunrise we-- that was a-- we had to get up and get washed in cold weather. I mean we had-- whoever really wanted to keep as clean as possible, we had to do that. And we marched, marched to the job.

How long did it take to get there every day?

Well, I don't know. It was a few miles, and then we got on the train for a few miles. I don't know why. They could have marched us. Because maybe they wanted to get us faster.

They wanted to get you-- maybe they wanted to get the work done.

They were very anxious to get that done. That was for the war effort, and that was very important to them. And that was, you know, real sheltered, underground. At that point, in Wels, that was already the end. They just took us there. It was-- we were just starving to death. We weren't working anymore. We didn't get any food. Yeah, it was just--

How did they transfer you from Melk to Wels?

It was a death march.

So they liquidated--

As we were going by-- under siege

They liquidated Melk? Did they finish the project, or did they just take the sick--

No, they just moved it.

--and the weak.

They just moved it. And of all of us-- but I know I was with it, and there were thousands of others. And we marched, marched days and night, picked up grass. I ate grass. I ate bark, whatever I could find. And--

Did they stop during these marches to give you any broth with very little floating in it? Or was it just--

They gave some, but very rarely. I mean, there were days there--

Was the purpose of the march to move you or to exterminate, do you think?

Probably to exterminate because there was no reason to take us there because there was nothing there in the woods.

In Wels?

In Wels.

Where did you-- when you arrived at Wels, it was a destination.

There were some barracks, unfinished barracks. And we were just sleeping in these semi-enclosed areas in the woods, with some watchtowers watching us.

It wasn't a camp, barbed-wired in?

It was because they-- first they barbed-wired us. And then the-- in other words, the camp was not inside completely finished, but the outside was. In other words, the setup was there. And people were dying right and left, from malnutrition, from disease, and some shot.

Did you form any associations or attachments to people in any of the camps, if you spent any length of time in a camp?

Well, we sort of-- groups sort of stick together. And I, for one thing, tried always to encourage people to keep their head high and to-- not lose hope, not give up.

That was quite an undertaking on your part, to make yourself responsible not only for yourself but for other people.

And I just telling people to-- [PAUSES] well, we were just hoping that the world will not let that happen and will, somehow, will help us. But after so many years, in fact, most people gave up, that there was no-- nobody listened to any cries. But I never gave up because this was-- I'm an optimist. I still am?

Do you think that accounts for your survival?

In a great degree.

What accounts for the rest of it?

Also, the will to survive and to maintain-- to maintain myself to the utmost under these terrible conditions, the health, the hygiene, and naturally kept myself warm as much as possible. Like I told you with the--

With the [INAUDIBLE].

[CROSS TALK] and all the other things.

Tell me what happened to you in Austria.

When? After--

Well, before we started taping, you made a reference to the Austrian Nazis.

Well, we thought there were a lot of Nazis in the camp, who really killed a lot of Jews, a lot of Austrian Nazis.

Not just German SS troops?

Not just Germans-- there were Nazi SS. I mean, Austrian SS. And nobody talks about the Austrians, the antisemitism, the Austrian population cooperating in the liquidation of the Jews, into the Final Solution.

Did you run into many of the Austrians before you got to-- I guess, Melk is in Austria, right?

In Austria, right.

OK. So before--

But in Plaszów there were Austrians.

How did the Austrians wind up in Plaszów?

The Austrians--

[BACKGROUND NOISE]

--joined the S--

Shh.

The Austrians joined the SS. This guy, the Goeth, who was an Austrian, who was the head of the whole camp, was such a sadist that he had to have, for breakfast, the Jewish blood every morning.

What else do you remember about him?

Well, I know that they-- they hanged him in Poland. After the war, they caught him.

What else do you remember about him? Do you remember seeing him?

All the time.

Other than-- what did you see?

Saw him every day.

What was he doing when you saw him?

He was riding on a horse and picking out people.

Picking out people and having his dogs attack them?

Attack And then shoot them. 95% that the dog attacked he shot. Some he decided--

Did he just let his dog loose to choose who he will--

He picked out certain people that maybe to his weird mind didn't look that they're working or something. I don't know what kind of [INAUDIBLE]. Who can tell?

Do you ever remember-- do you ever remember looking at his face?

Yes.

And what did you see?

I saw a beast, a wild, wild beast. That is the way he acted like, worse than wild beast. Beasts don't kill unless they need the food.

That's right. Maybe it was worse than a wild beast.

How did you come to the United States? No, let me ask you this. Let's back up. When you were in Wels, Austria, when did you--

I was liberated by the US Army. In other words, the first I-- that one morning, we have noticed there's no watchtowers, no soldiers guarding us. And so I was about 80 pounds. Whoever-- most people couldn't move, couldn't walk.

This is after you arrived from Melk in Wels. And you didn't have tasks to do, did you?

No.

There you just more or less lay down. You fell in-- you fell into these half-made barracks?

I just-- we-- I was able to walk. They were in the woods. I ate some bark, some green bark and tried to keep alive, hoping that any day it will be over, which eventually it was over. But thousands and thousands died there. Even just plain from malnutrition, from the conditions.

Your eyes have seen horrors.

And the first US Jeep whatever-- I remember a tank I saw on the road as I was walking out of the camp, slowly, trying to--

When you saw that there were no watchtowers, did you all try to walk out?

Yeah. And I asked, what did you do to Hitler? This was my one question. And naturally, I was trying to tell them I'm an American citizen. So who was going to believe me? There's a Hebrew expression, [HEBREW].

I'm King Solomon, but who's going to believe you?

Yes.

And I was very sick. And they took me the American headquarters, or the army somewhere. I don't remember exactly. And they took most of the people out.

Did you hear any shooting in the night, or did you just assume that the SS left when they knew that the Americans were coming?

I heard some shooting. But in the morning, it was daylight, and we looked around. There was no guards. Anyway, I was about two weeks, a week to two weeks-- I don't remember exactly how long-- in the hospital. The Americans opened a hospital there.

Right near Wels in Austria?

In Wels, in the town. We were outskirts, in the outskirts, the camp. And I had diarrhea and all kinds, hardly could move, couldn't eat, stomach shrunk.

Did they give you-- how did they help you to learn to eat again?

Well, it was little by little, different kind of foods, and natural medical attention, whatever.

Do you remember dreaming of any particular kind of food when you were so hungry all those years?

I'll tell you something. I, at that point, I don't think I was really capable of much, doing of anything except just hoping it will end tomorrow.

Day by day.

That's it-- hour by hour. And in Wels, when I got out of the hospital, I tried to get into the United States headquarters, little headquarters. Since I'm an American citizen, try to help me. Try to locate my father. But naturally, they [INAUDIBLE] a little at me, and then they led me at gunpoint. Because-- I don't blame them.

Why don't you blame them? Why?

It's war times. I mean, the war's still on.

Yeah. It would seem to me, and I wasn't there, but that you wouldn't have posed much of a threat. [LAUGHS]

Well, you know.

I mean, if they had helped you, why would-- I guess it was security.

Security, yeah. And--

Did anyone-- did you finally find someone to listen?

No, nobody listened.

Do you remember what the command was there? I mean what rank or-- I guess--

No, it wasn't the high officer.

American military ranks probably wouldn't have been very meaningful.

I didn't know that. Yeah. So finally, to make the story short--

Don't make it short. We have plenty of tape.

I decided that I must do something to find my family. The first thing that came into my mind, try to get back to Sokolów. But I heard there were Polish pogroms. They were killing [AUDIO OUT] --ahead of myself. It was [INAUDIBLE]

OK.

And then I finally decided that I must go to my hometown. Naturally, I had to smuggle, of course, you know, and try trains. People were going all directions. Everybody was looking for everybody. And things were jammed. And I traveled on the roof of the trains from Austria through Czechoslovakia to Poland.

And I finally reached to the town of Kraków, which I also was there before the war at different times and had some relatives there. And I met some people, and they told me about what was happening and that in Rzeszów they had killed some Jews. And in Sokolów they killed some Jews.

They killed Jews because the Jews came, and the Jews left property.

Sure.

And these Polish people occupied this property. They didn't want to give it back. They figure they'll kill the Jews, nobody will claim it.

Did you see any of this firsthand or it was just--

No, I have not seen it.

OK.

But that's what I heard.

But you heard it from enough--

By the [INAUDIBLE] I was--

--from enough places to know that you didn't want to go there.

I heard a friend of mine was killed in my hometown. He had a big property, and he came back. So I did not go any further. I was in Kraków. That's where I tried to live. So I got a job with a tailoring. And then they, the Polish people decided they need soldiers. They need me.

[LAUGHS] It was nice to be needed, but not by the Polish Army.

Yeah. After being in concentration camp for three years, over three years. I mean, different camps, but in concentration camp actually for three years.

It's wonderful. And it's such a tribute to you that you kept yourself alive.

I'm not going to go to Polish Army, especially when I was an American citizen. If I be in the army, I might lose my American citizenship. I knew that. I mean, I have a pledge allegiance to a different country.

Right. How did you manage to escape that?

Same day I was supposed to register for the selective service, I was hitchhiking with my backpack. And as a matter of fact, a Russians truck picked me up and went towards the Russian-- towards the Czechoslovakian

border. And there in Katowice, crossing a different town, we met already some Israeli who were in the British Army, in the Jewish Brigade, brigade.

The underground?

No, the Jewish Brigade.

Jewish Brigade, OK.

The Jewish volunteered from Israel. They formed a unit in the British Army.

Right. Within the British Army, yes.

It was a Jewish British brigade-- the Jewish Brigade in the British Army, attached to the British Army. There were some soldiers already in that uniform because then the Allied forces were there already in Czechoslovakia. And I went to the Czechoslovakian border. These people were helping smuggle people out.

But we're now in Russian-occupied territory.

In Poland, yes, towards Czechoslovakia and towards Germany. Well anyway, they managed to put me on a train. They guided me and gave us some food and helped us along and guided us out of the seat. There were only a few. I mean, there wasn't mass organization.

And I got on the train. And the Russians arrested me in the train because I had no passport, no visas, no documents. So I sneaked away from the train.

How did you sneak away from the Russians?

Well, the Russians put me in a special wagon, one car. And they got it. They put the soldier there. And the soldier didn't care.

You were lucky.

Didn't care-- I mean, it didn't mean that much to him, I assume. And it was cold and at night. So he was just walking this way, and I just slipped down the embankment.

And away you went.

And I went. And I went--

Where did you go?

Again, on the-- to the-- cross [INAUDIBLE] towards Germany. I knew in Germany there were DP camps. And maybe there I'll try to contact my father from there. And there was the UNRRA already. We were talking about it. So then--

Knowing that your father was alive, or hoping that he was alive in the United States seems to be a great source of strength for you.

Yes, because that's all I had. I had nothing else.

You were lucky. But you were lucky to have that.

Sure.

You were lucky to have-- to know that you had to go someplace, that there would be--

People had nobody. Because, I knew that ultimately my goal will be the United States.

So what happened?

Well, it's another big story too. Finally, I went to-- wind up in a camp Foehrenwald, a DP camp, Foehrenwald, near Munich-- contacted the UNRRA and the authorities. And they finally suggested that I should-- yes, they organized the American-- the Nazi trial in Nuremberg. And there were some American officers and some lawyers, you know, in the truck.

It was very clever.

So I got on a train, and I got to Nuremberg. In Nuremberg, I was--

You still had no papers at this time.

Yeah, no papers. In Nuremberg, I finally located a Jewish fellow. To this day, I don't know who he was. I don't remember. And he took me [CROSS TALK].

He was an American?

An American Jewish officer.

He was an army officer, not a newsman?

A army officer and, I think, an attorney attached to the trial in Nuremberg. And he took the story. And I finally contact my father-- well, my father finally--

Wait. Wait. Wait. Back up. How did-- you told him the story?

I told him I've got my father. I knew approximate the street where he used to live. And somehow he contacted my father.

How much time passed from the time you saw him--

Well, months.

Oh, really? So what did you do in Nuremberg until then?

No, that-- in Nuremberg, I came back. I went back to my camp, to the DP camp. And because I told that officer that's where I'm going to be. So my father finally wrote me a letter.

Did you continue looking for your father and not relying strictly on this soldier?

Yes, I was looking. I put some-- I kept-- anybody I met in the UNRRA and the new people, because the people were transferred, people coming. I told my story. And anyway, this man probably did help me. And I received a letter from my father. And I was able to correspond.

What did he say in his letter? Do you remember?

Not really. Well, actually he asked about my family, the rest of the family. I told them that, to my best of my knowledge, that nobody is alive.

How sad it must have been for him.

Yeah. And naturally, I sent a photograph. And finally, my father got in touch with somebody in here. And they advised him to get me out as fast as possible. And the best way to do it would be to get me to the United States, but through the back door.

So I got the letter from them that-- then I got a letter from Paris to my camp, that I have a Cuban visa waiting for me in Paris through some agency, travel agency, also a Jewish agency in Paris. And so with this letter, I got permission to go from Germany-- legal permission to go to France.

That must have felt good, after all that time, to legally be going someplace.

And then in Paris, they wanted to give me an American-- Polish passport. So I didn't want to take it. Because if I'll take a Polish passport they'll think I was a--

They'll think, ah, Polish citizen.

And I wouldn't be an American citizen anymore. So I took a passport-- I still have it-- of non-nationality.

I was no even-- I was not aware that you could have possibly have done that.

Yeah. No nationality, and I got a stamped of a Cuban visa. And that-- and I got an American visa with an American transit visa to New York for 14 days, 14-day visa. And when I came to New York, I told my father, I said, you take me to an attorney.

I got to an attorney. And I told him the--

It had been, now what, nine years since you'd seen your father?

All since the end of '33 to '46.

13 years.

Beginning of '46.

You hadn't seen him since you were a little boy.

Yeah.

You were what, 13 when you saw him last.

Yeah. Took me to the attorney. And I says, listen, I'm an American citizen. Go to Washington and dig up the papers. He looked up the books, the law books. And there were two laws in my favor. One passed in '21, which was before I was born, 1921. The second was passed, I think, in '44. I don't remember correctly. Because the GIs-- I think in '44, because with the GIs-- or '41. I'm not sure of that.

OK.

Anyway, he looked up the books. There were two law in my favor. And he says, from now on you're an American citizen, and you've got to register at the selective service.

[LAUGHTER]

That's almost like a bad joke. [LAUGHS] That's almost a bad joke.

Anyway, so that's what I had to. It's the law. The law's the law.

And you know, when you're 26 years old, you're registered-- yeah.

The law is the law.

Did he arrange for you to get appropriate birth certificates and paper.

No, I was 24.

You're 24, right.

I was 24. The law was the law. And so he helped me. Naturally, he went with me. And [PAUSES] he said that-- filled out the papers. I was in this concentration camp and this concentration, the other concentration camp. And they finally gave me a classification. And he looked up the initial. They gave me like a classification which meant American citizens served in a foreign army, something like that.

Well, good for him. So that exempts you from service?

Yeah. And they did not take me. And it took about six months, with all the red tape. And I got my petition of citizenship. And it only says, born on this-and-this day, June the 29, 1922. And the citizen paper he gave, give me, it was this, this, and this district. It doesn't even say where I was born.

But you were actually born in Poland. Tell me about the reunion with your father.

Well, it was-- naturally, it will be-- I recognized my father too because I have been getting pictures [INAUDIBLE]. It was--

Did you remember him from when you were little?

Yes. Yes. I did remember. And I remember the times we had together, different things we had attend to and so on and so forth. But it was very emotional because it was sad and happy because my parent couldn't make it. I mean, my mother couldn't make it. My brothers couldn't make it. And well, that's about it. I lived with my father for a while.

Where did you live?

In the Bronx, Simpson Street.

Oh, I know Simpson Street.

You do?

Did you have to-- you had to learn English at this time.

Well, I went to evening school, and I met my wife.

She was a United States citizen.

No.

No? She was also in--

By coincidence, she was born only about 20 kilometers from of my town.

Oh, a love story.

But she was in the-- she was hiding as a non-- as an Aryan, non-Jew.

In Poland?

On an assumed name, in Poland, in the woods. And then she volunteered. They were taking some Polish girls to replace, to the army, the soldiers, in the factories. Then she assumed a different name. And she says, I want to go. I'm going for this-and-this person.

What happened to her family?

All got killed, some in the woods. They were hiding in the woods, in the fields.

How did she get to the United States as quickly as you did?

She got--

Because I assume, from the timetable, that you got there very quickly.

I came from France, but she came from Germany on the first ship. She located her family. Her family was-- aunts and uncles were here. It's two-- somebody in-- also an American serviceman, who sent the information to his father in Philadelphia. And the father put it into The Forwards. And the parents read the announcement, the ad. And that's the way she got contact.

She contacted her family in the United States. And she was living for a while until we got married.

So you met her. You're going to night school in the Bronx to learn English.

Night school, yeah. Yeah. Herman Ridder High School.

[LAUGHS] Were you working in the United States at the time?

Yes.

What were you doing.

I took jobs as tailoring, and then I went to school, designing school.

Good for you. Good for you. You obviously decided that you were going to rebuild.

That's right, actually.

Mr. Einhorn, looking back over the things that we've talked about, is there anything that you'd like to go back and fill in some details on?

A lot of details I forgot, including my-- the name of the house, the buildings I used to live when I was a child, and even after that, even in Germany, the exact little other details after the war. I forgot. And subconsciously, I pushed-- seems to me-- a lot of things back in order to forget, in order to be able to start anew. And even my wife says, and my kids even talk about it.

What do they talk about?

That I'm in better shape than my wife is. My wife did not succeed in doing that.

Do you think that part of that might be due to the fact that, at some level, you still, through all of the horror, considered yourself an American citizen, and that that was some little ray of hope?

Yes, that helped. But that helped. And--

You were still hungry. You were still hungry.

Well, yes. But I figured maybe somebody will locate me somehow and get me out of the hell. That was part of it. That was help, I guess.

You said you spent three years in the camps. Did you manage to maintain reasonably good health?

Yes. I managed. I probably was physically in good shape to start with.

Were you athletic as a young man?

Yes. And I managed to maintain, as I mentioned to you before, to maintain my hygiene.

How did you manage to do that?

Get out in the cold weather and-- 20 degrees-- and wash in cold water.

When you say wash, did they have shower facilities? Was it outside, inside?

In Melk, they had some outside-- not showers really, not to that point. But they had basins and water coming down, cold water. And we were able to wash as much as possible. And also, I was protecting my feet. A lot of people got-- hurt their feet, and they got infections. They couldn't walk. And if they couldn't walk, they shot them.

I was able to manufacture a needle with a piece of wire.

How did you do that? How did you do that? Where did you-- where did you find the wire?

Wire? Because we were working on conveyors.

On the conveyor belt, building the ammunition plants?

And the conveyors were-- they repaired the conveyors, and there were pieces laying around. And there were wires.

And how did you make this needle?

Needle? With a rock, with a rock, made a little hole.

You say it like it should be so obvious. Not many people had to make a needle out of a piece of wire.

And I pulled out thread from some rags. And I had a pair of socks, which I had from the start, in 1942, which lasted me for three years.

One pair of socks?

Yeah. The tops were all right, but the bottoms I used to make-- sew new ones.

Out of rags?

Out of rags.

How about your shoes?

The shoes? I had a pair of shoes.

You resoled them?

I resoled them with the-- with this-- the rubber.

How did you get it to stay on?

We found some nails, some small nails. And because they were building the plant, and there were a lot of things around.

Right, a lot of the equipment that you could use for nails.

There was equipment. I mean, nails and different things. And at different times, we managed to get that.

When you say "we," did you-- was it a group of you that were so creative, were so-- I mean, this was the kind of thing you shared?

Well, I did it, and some people followed it because I was telling a lot of people to do that. And a lot of people did follow.

What else did you do to help yourself? It's hard to remember?

Well, first of all, I was trying to manage to get as much food as possible, as I told you.

Were there were other ways to get food besides just the ration that you were given?

Yes, getting-- trying to get some peel, potato peels and any kind of.

Was it dangerous to try to get that?

You got killed, but you had to risk your life. But--

Was this in the trash, and you had to sneak there? Or was this--

No. We weren't allowed to do that.

Obviously.

At different points, we managed.

Did one person try to go out and get for other people and get for himself? Or was it just that everybody sort of went and did it?

Well most people did it alone. But in some cases, people worked in the kitchens. They were able to smuggle out.

Do you remember specific examples of specific camps you were in where that happened?

It happened practically everywhere. The people who worked in the camps helped the others, smuggled out some food, an extra pail of soup and divided into people.

How did they get it out? Do you know? Did you ever receive smuggled out food?

Yes. But we weren't watched that closely, one-on-one basis.

But it would seem to me that walking across an open area with a pail of soup would be--

Well, it wasn't an open area. I was in the back of the kitchen.

Oh, OK. And it would go sort of from one hand, to one hand, to one hand.

And then towards the end, as I told you, then the food was so poor, in fact non-existent, I'd sustain myself with bark, bark from the trees, grass. On the march, we were eating grass.

So it was springtime.

It was summer.

Spring, summer-- that was at least a help.

No, well, no, it was springtime because the war ended in May. It was in April, beginning of April.

I would say that we're going to be out of tape in about 10 minutes. And I wonder if there was anything else that you'd like to share.

Well, I only like to say that it was a great disappointment to myself and to a lot of others that the world did nothing about it. We knew that something could have been done.

Was this something that you became more aware of in the years after the war?

No, I knew during the war. I knew during the war that, at one point, I was in Melk, in that camp, and I saw some-- there were air raid, and there was American planes. They could have done that, done something.

Bombed the camps.

Bombed-- but do something.

Did the scale on which you saw this extermination effort make it impossible for you to think that they didn't know? Did it seem-- what made you think they would know about this extermination effort, behind the German lines, in front of the Russian lines? You can only bomb something that you know exists.

Well, I assume that there was-- in the war, there's a certain amount of intelligence going on.

Let me preface this question by saying I agree with you. But I just-- I'm curious for your thoughts.

Well, that's what I felt. I mean, I was--

That the scale was so great, and there was so much of it going on.

So much of it and so many camps, because I was alone in this several.

Yeah, right.

In the different parts of Austria and Poland--

They were all over.

I meant that-- I was sure there were others.

Right. That you didn't even-- that you didn't have the privilege of seeing.

No, see? And we were the others. So if there's a mass destruction of people in that mass scale, somebody had to know.

Unfortunately, you're right. Unfortunately, it's not the most shining hour.

What do you remember about Mauthausen? Were you there for a long period of time?

No. Mauthausen, I wasn't there too long because that was just a central-- for us it was a-- for the people that got into Mauthausen from Plaszów, it was just a central booking station. Then we were taken to Melk because they needed the people to build these factories. I know it was-- there was crematorium. There was bones.

Do you remember seeing that?

Seeing bones-- and I knew that is was an extermination camp. And that's why the minute-- we knew that, that they-- the minute I saw that, I knew if they take me to work, as long as they need the work-- this was always my feeling. See, they need-- as long as they need me--

Maybe you'll stand a chance.

They'll keep me alive.

Did other people share your feelings? Was there differences of opinions that you remember in the camp, as you spoke to other men?

Well, people felt-- a lot of people feel the same way. But a lot of people, in my opinion, gave up hope.

It was not all--

Well, I was the one who really talked to a lot of people at all times, saying don't give up.

What are some of the things you used to talk about? Or let me ask you. Were you-- OK, I'll ask you that first.

Well, we used to-- we talked about that most of us will survive. We did not-- we never could have dreamed that civilized people throughout the world will let a whole people, let-- let it-- let-- let them to destroy a whole people.

When you were in camps, did you mostly find what you saw was Jews?

In Mauthausen, there were some non-Jews.

Were they separated from the Jews?

At some point. And then-- at some point, they were separated. And then, at different points, not.

Did you ever-- you never returned to your home in Poland to find out if anybody from your town--

No. I was in Kraków, as I told you.

Yeah, but that wasn't all the way back home.

No. There were only about three people from the whole town, three or four. And there's, I think, one or two in Israel. And there's about--

You did manage to find--

--a half a dozen.

You did manage to find out after the war who survived.

Yeah. About a half a dozen people from the whole town.

Was anybody with your parents when the ghetto was liquidated?

No.

You never had-- never were able to find any?

Some go in the Soviet Union. And some were with me in some of the camps.

Did you manage to stay with anyone from your original group?

In some camps, let's say in Melk, I was with a few people, with two people.

Was that a source of comfort to you, to have people?

Yes, it was. Definitely, to know somebody.

So in other words, loneliness was a very-- isolation.

Well, that was part of it. Besides you lost the family, you lost everybody else.

Anything that you knew, or anybody that you knew. And then on top of it, you were taken to strange places in the most-- and saw the most bizarre things.

I'll tell you, at this point, just thinking back, I myself can't believe.

Would it surprise you if I told you that, to a person, everyone has said the same thing? I think back, and I can't believe it was me who had that experience.

I can't believe that human-- that people can be that strong and survive somehow.

I think that it's appropriate for me to tell you, for whatever my opinion counts, that your strength is remarkable, and it's admirable, and what a great testament it is to your life that you did rebuild it. You came to this country, and you married. You have a family.

Grandchildren.

How old are your children?

Mine daughter-- as a matter of fact, I married the minute I got my citizen papers. And I-- my wife conceived soon. And my daughter is 34 years old. And my son is 32.

And you have grandchildren?

Grandchildren.

That must make you proud.

My grandson is nine years old and five.

Oh, heck, I have a nine-year-old and a five-year-old. That must make you very proud.

Yeah. They're beautiful.

What kind of feelings do you have when you look at them, that you survived so that they could be?

Well, it's a continuation, continuation of life, continuation of the Jewish people.

So Hitler didn't do what he set out to do, did he? He created a lot of sadness, a lot of havoc.

Yes, and he did not succeed.

Thank goodness for all of us. Is there anything you'd like to share in closing because I think we're going to be out of tape in about two minutes?

Well, we must-- Jews especially and other people in general have to be on guard that it is not-- that this does not repeat itself to no one.

I hope it's in man's potential to hear you.

I hope so. The most important thing that-- the most important-- the most important event to us is the establishment of state of Israel.

Why is that?

It's just like-- I feel that what-- because I feel it's a direct result of what I suffered, what we suffered in part. At least we got something back for our suffering.

A big something, a big something.

And people in general, and I don't know if everybody's aware-- I particularly am aware because I notice things, that not only we who survived go with the heads high, but the American Jewish people [PAUSES] walk straighter.

Well, knowing that-- I guess knowing that someone can come and take you from your bed--

And the most important thing, if there would be a state of Israel then, this would not happen. I strongly believe so.

I agree with you. Mr. Einhorn, have you spoken about your experiences before this or within recent time?

No. It's-- all the years, my kids don't-- I couldn't even talk to my kids about it to the extent I'm able to say now.

How do you feel about that?

But I'm very happy that I took both my kids here, out here.

It's a wonderful opportunity for you to share, for them to understand a little bit better.

It means a lot to them, and it means a lot to me.