

Your name.

My name is Mark Grunseid. I was born in a small town. The name is Podkamien. It's between Brody and Tarnopol, the district of Tarnopol, not far from Lvov. Well, when the war started in June 21, 1941, the Russians were occupied up from 1939 to 1941. And the Germans invaded our part of-- which was called Russia then. It was occupied by the Russians.

I remember vividly. I was a young boy. I was walking outside the town where I was living. When I came back around 12 o'clock, we heard that the war broke out between the Russians and the Germans. And in approximately 8 to 10 days later, the Germans were in our town.

I remember when they came into our town. I don't know exactly the day, but it was Tuesday or Wednesday. And the first thing, that night we could not sleep anymore. We expected something bad to happen. And we were up all night.

And we heard the rumors that they cut the beards of the people which have beards. And my grandpa was hiding under the table because we heard a knock in the door. It must have been early in the morning. A German soldier knocked on the door. The door was not closed. We were afraid to close the door. They came in, and they asked for a shirt. Somehow we were lucky. They walked away, and they did not do anything to us.

And slowly, slowly the soldiers started-- we were walking in the streets, catching kids, they should clean the tanks, cars, and trucks. I remember when a German soldier, he called me to clean his truck with other boys. And he told me to pick up something I never seen in my life. And later on I found out it was a hand grenade.

And they had a-- they dug a hole to throw in all the ammunition. And he told me to throw that in into the hole. Somehow I got suspicious because he ran away. So instead of me throwing in the hand grenade, I just put it in into the hole. I don't know whether it would have exploded or not, but I assume something bad might have happened.

A day later, on a Friday, was our first black day with the Germans. We were living near the old synagogues, in the yeshiva where I was learning. And on the little hill where a house was standing there, they started to throw stones, the local boys, the Ukrainian boys, started throwing stones into the windows of the shuls, synagogues. And then they started burning the synagogues.

The synagogue fire was intense. And being that we lived only three houses away, we were afraid. And our houses were mostly of wood and straw. I don't know exactly how it was built. We start packing up the belongings what we have, to take it outside.

Meantime, a couple of German soldiers came in, and they start looking. They wanted to rob the house. So the only thing they found what was good for them, my mother bought me a pair of new shoes. And I never wore these shoes. And they pulled out those two new shoes. Was very small shoes that would have never fit the soldier.

And they-- and I was standing there watching when they pull out the shoes. And they hit me. The was the first time I tasted the Germans, laying with all the stuff outside.

My mother had some kind of dealings with a Gentile Ukrainian. And she sold her some kind of small carpet, little. All of a sudden, she sent out the boys, that they should try to take back the carpets. Even though my mother paid for them. And we were afraid to start up with them. And we gave them the carpet, the paid-up carpets.

And this was the first few days under the German occupation.

How old were you then? How old were you then?

I must have been 16 or 17. And then what happened, they used to-- the soldiers used to grab anybody walking on the street, whether women or children, whoever was, cleaning, whether it's cleaning the street, cleaning the trucks, cleaning

the-- because this was a transit, this went further to occupy more of Russia all over the Ukraine.

So we went through this every day, these laws. And came out a law that no Jew after-- I don't remember exactly whether 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock-- cannot show himself on the street. And they said that every Jewish child, I guess, from the age of two or three, I don't know exactly but it must have been around that age, have to wear the white band with the Jewish star on it, which I wore and my sisters, my mother.

And these things went on, that they're not allowed-- that the Jews should have any dealings with the Gentiles. And we had to buy bread. We had to buy food. And everything had to be done secretly. And these things went on for a few months like that.

At that very moment, I cannot recall exactly, but this went through all of 19-- year 1941. And then 1942, in 1942 they started to catch boys, young boys, men, whoever was on the street. And mostly with the help of the Ukrainian police, which they were the main collaborators with the Germans because there wasn't, at that time, too many Germans around there. Most of them went to the front. And all the dirty work was done just by a few Ukrainian policemen, which followed the instructions of the Germans, everything, whatever they told them.

And the Ukrainian police used to grab people, pull them into the police department, beat them up. One time I was going to a farmer. I got some potatoes. And they took me up. They caught me walking there. And they took me up there. They took away my potatoes, and they threw me out from the police. And I was lucky I didn't get beat up.

That came, then I was afraid I shouldn't be sent away to a camp to work. And we made some kind of a hiding place for me. We had the-- a hole. We did not have no basements. It was a pit. It's covered with doors, which everybody had that, a place to keep the potatoes. We cleaned out the potatoes, and even though I was small, not developed as a working man and skinny and all these things, even though they caught anybody which was around.

And I was hiding, had my little sister. Used to go around to the streets and find out the news, find out when they come, when they're going to catch people and send them away. She used to bring me the news. So used to be a half hour on top in the room. And then they sent me down into the pit.

And I was laying there in the darkness. And the smell of the potatoes was terrible. And this went on day in, day out. I remember one day, this was [INAUDIBLE]. This was before Simchat Torah. They came from a camp, the Nazis, the sturmfuhrer. His name was Waetzig, which I later found out. And he came from the camp. They're trying to catch some people.

He had a certain quota of people, which he had to deliver to the-- it was called zwangsarbeitslager camp. This is like forced labor in English. And we found it out. I don't know exactly who told us. And I went down to that hole there, or whatever it was that was laying there. They put a bed on top of it and some dirt to cover these two doors, you shouldn't see. And I was laying there maybe for 15, 20 minutes.

I heard the noises on the street from the Germans. And they came into our house. And they caught my mother. She was sitting there. She figured that they only look for men. And they started hitting her so hard that I heard all the noises, all the yelling.

I was helpless. I couldn't do anything. I was laying there till an hour or two later. They left. They must have gotten their quota of people which they were looking for. In the meantime, they shot any living person which was laying in bed at that time. And older people, they killed.

The exact amount of people I don't know. It was a small town. But even though, I figured it was about 30 or 35 people, which they couldn't move. They couldn't hide. Or then they put on a truck some old people. They put them on the truck. And they took them to the lager or camp SasÅ³w, over there. Later on I found out they were all there shot on the spot. These were people in the 70s, in the 80 years old.

And this went on for months. Somehow I could not take it anymore. The Judenrat, which it was called at that time,

which they had to deliver people for the Germans, for the working people, should work in the camps, had to deliver a certain amount of people. I kept on hiding again. Now I had to hide for the Ukrainians and for the Jewish police same times.

And what they did, the Judenrat did, being they could not catch me because I had a hiding place, somewhere I was hiding, sometimes in the stable by somebody, some other places, they took my mother and sister instead. They figured if they take my mother and sister, eventually I would have to show up and take their place.

But actually, it came to a point like that I was about to give up. I think I jumped a little myself. I had-- so I want to add this, that before that I was caught by the mayor of this little small town, whatever you call him and hiding, and he didn't even know, in his stable in the straw. Policeman caught me. He stepped on me, and he caught me.

He stepped on the straw. Somebody must have squealed. And he took me out with some other people. And he hit me at that time. And he took me to the police. He put me in in prison, put me in in prison.

So I had an uncle who was in charge of buying eggs for the Germans. So he paid for the Judenrat, for the eldest of the Judenrat 10 kilo of sugar. It's hard sugar. And he got me out. My uncle got me out of the prison at that time.

And the second time-- I'm coming back what I was saying before. And the second time, when they caught my mother and sister and the things went down where they used to come and they catch for those camps. So I said I was in such a way that I'm giving up.

Now I'm going to go and let them free my mother and sister. And I came up from the hiding. And the Judenrat, some Jewish policemen came in. They found me on a Friday night. It was the Saturday after the Jewish holiday Sukkot and Simchat Torah. And they took me, and they let out my mother and sister. And they put me a prisoner.

And I couldn't take that night in the prison because the human litter nearly killed me. I wasn't used to something like that, was very sensitive. And I was glad already that take me out, and they take me wherever they want to take me. And they put us, some of my friends which were we were studying in yeshiva, on a horse and carriage. And they took us approximately maybe 30 or 40 kilometers to a camp.

It called zwangsarbeitslager. That means forced labor camp.

And your sister and mother were allowed to go home?

Yeah, at that time. And they brought us into the camp. I remember vividly, that place where we were must have been some kind of a place, either a church or something like that. It had steps. We came up the steps.

There were three signs, one in German, one in Polish, and one in Yiddish-- [NON-ENGLISH], work makes life sweet.

Oh, yeah. [LAUGHS] That was funny.

And then it started. I was there, and there was a lot of people from my hometown, a lot of boys there. We had to get up to work, must have been 5 o'clock in the morning I don't know.

It was already wintertime. It gets dark early. And it's dark in the morning too. And they got us up in the morning. In the morning was a terrible thing. They used to bring us down and keep on with the count, counting how many people there are, left us standing there. It was cold and hungry. And this went down day in and day out.

Did they give you a uniform at this camp?

No. No uniform.

You were allowed to keep your own clothes?

Whatever I had. And this was the-- most of the work was done, unfortunately, by Jewish policemen because this particular camp was under one sturmfuhrer, one SS man, which had his helpers there do the job for him. And the-- I had a pair of shoes with wooden soles, was never used to this type of shoes. And I never worked in my life. And I couldn't sleep at night.

There was 10 different reasons why not. We used to put one next to the other. People were dirty, lice around. People were moving, people were scratching, and some of them used to go down in the middle of the night, up in the middle of the night. Every time somebody couldn't sleep nights, they left the lights on.

And certain people used to wet at night. So on account of that they used to bring down everybody from the bed just to teach them a lesson, they shouldn't wet. And they keep them standing there a few hours in the middle of the night. And this the way they interrupted the sleep.

I do remember, I had next to me a boy from my hometown, sleeping. And I wasn't the cleanest, but he must have been worse than me. And could not sleep next to him, but I had no choice. And I used to notice during the day, he used to get his lunch in a pot. And I saw that in the middle of the night he was not going down.

Most of us did go down to the toilet. The toilet must have been quite a walk. Especially in our part, the winters are severe. And I found out that he is making-- he is urinating in the same pot which he eats during the day.

I had my own problems. I had my problems. It was a-- at that time was pretty hard, with the cold weather, to hold on, not to urinate in the middle of the night. And it was a problem. The snow was laying there, and it was very far to walk to the toilet facilities.

And I had a bottle, I remember, myself. I started out with the bottle. And the overflow, which I could not hold anymore in me-- I'll never forget that. And I was afraid and shouldn't go on the straw and the cover, which was on top of the straw, because underneath me was other people sleeping. And there was one case, which I remember, one boy did it. I think it was the boy which was next to me. I am not sure 100%, but I think it was.

And the commotion was terrible because I think must have hit his face or-- the leak through. And this went on. I was-- was my job. We were working in a group on the hill.

These were forests. The forests were hilly, hilly places. We had to cut the trees and then remove the trees, everything being removed, and then dig the earth, and then dig the stone out. The stone had to be dynamited, chopped, and put in, like, stacks to 40 meters-- I don't know how many meters wide and how many meters the length was. But a quota, weekly quota, eight men, a certain amount of quota.

Being that was very hard for me to do the dynamiting with the big hammer to break the stones, my job was to dig with a shovel and, with a carrier, carry away the dirt.

Dirt.

Dirt-- well, the worst part of it was by us it snows a lot or it rains a lot. In the beginning in the rainy days, I couldn't hold the shovel. It was slippery. And it was a Viennese old man in charge, a German, in charge. And he used to come to supervise us. He used to come an hour later every day.

And before he came up to the place where we all worked, he used to hide between the trees and catch whoever is not working. And one time, he must-- it was on a Saturday when I was working. He came in. It was a very nasty day. And I must have rested or something I didn't do.

And he caught me. He hit me over the head. He used to do like this. Whoever caught, whoever he saw, he hit. Whether he was right or wrong, he just was hitting him, hitting him. I fell down, and it took me quite a while till I woke up. I did not know what happened to me at that time.

He hit you in the head?

Yeah.

Yeah?

And then it came to when the winter was severe in month of January sometimes or beginning of February. They set-- the sturmfuhrer, the chief there, the German, said that whoever wants to leave the camp and go to the ghetto, which they had formed near my hometown a ghetto, those who are sick and those who are very young, they can go to the ghetto.

I somehow had to make a decision. Somehow I understood enough, and I knew enough that my decision might be life and death. But I figured, eventually they will kill us here and eventually they will liquidate the ghetto. So one day I said to myself, in the ghetto, I didn't know what's going on there. But I figured they probably don't go to work every day on these hilly things.

I could not take the work anymore. It was too much for me. I wasn't built for that. And I could not take it. A cousin of mine arranged it with a doctor, Jewish doctor there. And I had some money at that time. When I went to camp, my mother gave me some money. And I had that money with me. And I paid the doctor in zlotys, Polish money. I don't know exactly how much the amount was.

And the doctor, I heard he's alive, but he's still living here in the United States. He put me on the list as a sick person. And he took about another eight boys and put us on a Sleigh at that time and took us to the ghetto.

Coming into the ghetto, the ghetto commandant what they called him, the police chief, was a Jewish man. His name was Reuben, which I just this moment remind myself-- did not want to accept us. The sturmfuhrer came with us. He gave us over to him, but he did not want to accept it.

He says we send out worse-- people which are in worse shape than they are. So he started talking to him. And he was lying, the sturmfuhrer. He, himself, did not want to take us back. So he made up stories, that one is bleeding, and one is this, and one is that. So they kept us that long, till at night. At night they finally accepted us into the ghetto.

Was your family there?

I had-- yeah. My sister, my aunt-- two sisters and my aunt. My mother wasn't alive anyway.

She was not alive?

Anymore, no.

Had she died naturally?

She contracted typhus because they had the epidemic.

[INAUDIBLE] What about [INAUDIBLE]?

What had happened-- I wasn't there. I don't know what happened.

Did you know that before you returned to the ghetto?

No, I didn't know nothing.

Oh, so it was a shock-- came back to the ghetto and found out your mother was deceased.

Well,

[AUDIO OUT]

I did not know what's going on. But I, in the beginning, when I was in the camp, I heard from my sisters and my mother. And later on I did not hear. When I came in the ghetto, they evacuated them, I think, a little earlier than when I came to the ghetto. So I did not know what happened to them.

So when somebody notified my aunt and my sisters that I'm there, they came to the police department there, so-called. And they picked me up. And they-- I came in, in a dark room. I don't know how many people were there living at that time in a room. And they treated me as a guest. They gave me, I guess, they gave me their slice of bread away, as a guest.

And they kept me for one day in bed. I should relax a little from all these-- from the camp, from the whole thing. And they decided they have to move out. They couldn't live together anymore with all those people. We found a-- my aunt found a place by a rabbi, which when she was young she used to go and support him and give him money.

And they were taken away. Must have been taken to Belzec, so where the extermination camps there was empty, a room or something. They put us together with two women, one was off already. She didn't know what she was talking about. The other one, I don't remember what it was.

And then I had found out-- I wound up even worse then I had there because they used to coming in into the ghettos and grab in the same way, people for the camps. I used to hear screams. The Germans used to come in into the ghetto, catching women on the street, children, and hitting them with the--

Stick, with the stick?

No, they were there-- yeah, the club with all these things. And once in a while I used to go out and see a friend of mine. And I used to go over to the partition, where the ghetto was with the wire, wire partition. I was reading the signs there. The sign said anybody which was going to step out with-- over the barbed wire will be shot to death.

And my aunt used to take out whatever clothing they had left because they were robbed there in the ghetto. Some people robbed them when they came in-- that's a story for itself-- and they sell it through the holes, through the barbed wire, to the Gentiles, whatever they could get to buy bread and sustain ourselves.

And a few people made a hiding place again to hide against being caught, not to be caught, to be taken away to the camps. We heard a lot from these camps. There were killing in the camps, shooting at the camps, and all kinds of things went on there, hangings, which I saw in my own camp, which I did not mention here. I cannot everything itemize here.

And this went on till Passover. I saw that it's-- I can't stay there. So the reason, I saw that we're all starving to death. My hometown, which I come from Podkamien, somehow they arranged to make some kind of a camp, which wasn't as severe as the others. And they must have paid up the sturmfuhrer there, the SS men. And they didn't work as hard as they worked in the other camps.

And at night, they had a privilege to go out on the street, which was unusual. It must have been they bribed the SS men. When I found out about that, I figured, why should I stay here? Why can't I go to my hometown from the ghetto border? And this way I'll be able to go out, get some food, and send over to the ghetto.

The plan was good. But the problem is, I could not get out of the ghetto because you step out of the ghetto, they kill you. So happens that some of my friends went, those which were in that camp, which wasn't such a strict camp, came. And they had some kind of a paper, they're allowed to visit their parents into the camp.

They all had a yellow, a yellow badge and a-- back and the front. And I was-- and my sisters followed these boys, where they were exactly and when they're going back home to my hometown. And it was planned out that I should try to get

with them into the camp. The only thing is, we needed a yellow patch in the front and the back.

We were very religious. It was the Passover holiday. So we found-- my aunt found a piece of drape. And being that my sister, which she is here, thanks God, alive, she was-- being she was young-- I don't know exactly. I cannot figure out her age right now this moment-- eight years, nine years. I don't know. And so we figured that the child can do it. She cut out the two patches. She sewed them on my coat.

My aunt sewed in. We had some material to make ladies robes. She sewed in into the lining, into my coat. And she gave me \$10 in American dollars. She gave me a piece of-- she gave me some potatoes to take along. The only problem is I had no shoes.

So when my mother died, they had a pair of ladies shoes. So they gave me these shoes. Was low-heeled shoes.

So now was the problem to get out. They found out exactly where they're going to pass the-- where it's open, the barbed wire's cut where they were passing. And the moment they assembled there, where the barbed wire was loose, I came out and I joined them.

Naturally, nobody liked that I joined them because I was an illegal passenger. So I walked. They walked. I was walking. But they were strong. They weren't in the ghetto. They had better food there, and they had everything better. And they had the permission, so they felt more secure.

And I was walking. And we walked through the city border. When I saw myself outside the city, that nobody stopped us, I was quite relieved. But the danger was not over because I could have been shot on the spot, any Ukrainian policeman. I wasn't so much worried about the Germans, but the Ukrainians more than any because the Germans didn't have enough men to occupy every spot. It's only they did a good job, the Ukrainians for them. So they could depend on them.

And I came outside the city limits. And we walked. So I don't remember whether I walked barefoot or whether I walked with straw shoes, which straw doesn't last too long. It breaks right away. And then I put on for a while, my mother's shoes. But I wasn't used to lady's shoes to wear. And I would took them off, put them on.

The roads are bad. And I came-- must have come halfway to my hometown. The whole walk was 18 kilometers or 23 kilometers. I never walked in my life so much.

What is that in miles?

It will be 15, 17 miles. We walked. The more we walked, the more the boys moved away from me. And I was left over with one boy. That boy was across-the-street neighbor from my hometown. He was much younger than me. And I was scared.

I did not know that he has that permission with the names of all the people. And the [INAUDIBLE] was-- the Ukrainian police came. They saw Jews walking. The other guys they saw, they knew them from the hometown. And they knew their work, and they knew them by their names even. And they let them go through.

Us two, they stopped. They stopped. They start looking in my pockets. So I had the food. They didn't notice any of the material, which I had on my back because it was so in professional. It was a good job. My aunt did it.

And he says, show me your permit. So being it was written in German, he said, here is for the two of us. And they didn't know what they're looking in. And he saved me.

Then we came at night into the hometown and had some kind-- come in. I was not registered there. I was a complete stranger. They were like a closed-in camp. They had their own people, paid-up people, people which bribed the whole thing. And I was an outsider, naturally. And somebody in that camp took me into his room.

There must have been a few people in the same room. I don't remember exactly. I slept over. In the morning, I was sitting there. Yeah. I had a second cousin there. She was there. And somebody told her.

So she called me in. She gave me some food at that night. And that's what is. In the morning, I wasn't the kind which will go and ask for anything. So I was sitting in the-- not in the kitchen, in the dining room, where they're eating, all the workers.

And it was already 12 o'clock. I didn't eat. Nobody asked me, what, are you hungry? So one man came in, and I was sleeping. He came in. He saw me. He says-- it was the man which originally took me from the house and gave me over to the camp, they should take me away.

But anyway, he said, what are you sitting like that? I said, I'm hungry. He went and he got me food. And then in the evening, I got food again. And that day went by. And later on, as I have a set story, which I don't know whether I want to reveal it now but I mentioned about the material for the rope, which you had to pay in I don't want to mention no name because he has a son living. And I don't want to, if his son comes across and find out about his father.

But anyway this is not the important thing. I was accepted into the camp. But the-- and I was able to get out in the evening. I was able to go to the peasants and buy some potatoes, some bread. I send a couple packages, but these good things, to the ghetto for them. But they didn't-- these good things didn't last long.

And one day, my job was the same thing, cutting stones, but little stones. Was more normal than in the Sas³w. And we were standing. And everyday was people were hiding in that little town, which were supposed to be evacuated to the ghetto. And they didn't. They did not go. And the Ukrainian police found out, whether they cooked or whether they were hiding in their own houses. And one by one, whoever they caught in the house, they shot.

And one day I was standing. Somebody came over to me, and he said that the ghetto is being liquidated and fire's burning. Being it's such a short distance from us, practically could see the flames. And I knew I had left two sisters with an aunt.

So, yeah. Watching these things a couple of days, and we heard some people which were lucky. They were able to get out of the flames. Some of them already came into our hometown. There were people which were originally from our hometown.

And all these horror stories they told us. I was helpless. I couldn't do nothing. And I knew I must have lost then. Then-- and I gave up on them, naturally. Then there came an order in the month of June, that our camp has to be liquidated. In other words, it has to become judenrein, clean of Jews.

The towns, the cities, I mean, complete, no Jew is supposed to be alive or live or-- cleared. I had an uncle which was hiding in my hometown. He was supposed to be evacuated to the ghetto, but he did not. He was not a rich man, but a good-situated man. He was paying the--

Somebody told the uncle. Somebody told the uncle that I'm alive and that I'm in the town, that I'd like to see him. Came out. He came out. And he made an appointment. He met me in that camp. And he says to me, look, what do you want to do? Their liquidating ghetto.

I said, Uncle, they gave a choice, but it was priced, everything, that you could go anyplace you wanted. That means you can go in in hiding. Either you can go to the farm, which had never happened in no place like that. But this was-- actually everything, it was for the money, which was a thing-- or go to the camp, the previous camp where I was, Sas³w, which I told you in the beginning.

I knew the camp already. I says, nothing to it. I don't go back. I was there. So the uncle said, look, what's going to happen to me is going to happen to you. You want to come with me, you come. Made an arrangement. I said, Uncle, I have no shoes.

I was wearing straw shoes. And every day I needed a new pair because when I was cutting those stones with all these things, just cut to pieces every day. It's straw. And he got me a pair of shoes, also with wooden shoes, which I could not wear. But I wore them.

And one night, before the-- I think it was the 15th of June supposed to be liquidated, he came over with the horse and wagon, which he rented. And he put his wife and his daughter, and he put me on. And he had arranged a bunker, a underground-- a pit, whatever you call it. And we went there at night into the forest-- it's about four or five kilometers or three miles from my hometown-- into hiding.

And hiding is a story by itself, which is indescribable. But I don't think we can, in one hour, describe everything in detail. Maybe someday I'll write about it. But I came in there. My hometown and that forest must have been a hundred people. It was a small town, only had 1,200 or 1,300 Jewish people. And maybe 30%, 40%, they were able to get in into the forest.

They were not partisans. They had no-- nothing with what to fight. They weren't fighting people. They were families with small children, with all these kinds. They were laying there in that bunker. During the day we used to be on top of the bunker because we were afraid to stay inside. If they discover us-- if you're in a bunker, you'll never get out alive. If you're outside, whoever they catch the catch. Whoever can run runs away

I don't understand. What is a bunker?

Underground pit.

A pit? You built it? You people dug it?

They made-- he arranged it. He paid somebody.

What did you eat?

So what actually happened is this. My uncle had some things. And he was a businessman before, had some kind of arrangements. Every time he sent somebody, a Gentile, should pick up certain things and had it exchange for some food. And I had a problem at the beginning, being that I was from a yeshiva. I did not want to eat non-kosher. I was-- all right, that's--

But anyway, I stayed with him. I have seen people there going around naked. I saw a bank of-- a man which owned a bank in my hometown, he had no shirt. And just has a coat, walking around in barefoot. I've seen the rabbi barefoot, which saved himself from the ghetto with his family, and-- and all others.

Finally, in a-- where the forests are, they are not deep forests. All around in every-- on every side, there's villages. And to every village, the forest is only a few steps into the forest. So we started having problems with the youngsters, shepherds, with all these things. The cows used to run in into the forest, and they used to go after them.

There was a problem with cooking. You see the smoke. There was a problem with food. During the day you can't go. At night it's hard to go, hard to come in. Those which come in, they used to squeal, tell the Ukrainian police. Ukrainian police used to hide outside the forest. Whoever they saw coming out from the forest, automatically shot, which they shot a number of some people which were with us. When they used to go out, they never came back, quite a few.

And my uncle, in the beginning, would not let me go no place. He said, as long I have what it's right in, you stay with me. And if we're not going to have, then you have no choice. You'll do what we can. And that happened.

Finally, it exhausted the whatever he had. And I had to go out. I used to go at night. I had nothing. I just became a beggar. I used to go into the village. It was terrible thing because they put out, the Ukrainians and the Germans, put out a amount of money per head. In other words, if somebody catches a Jew, gets paid so much per head.

And I had-- had cases, where I was going or coming into a house, and I had to run out automatically when I took a look. By us they had those Ukrainian nationalists, which they called Banderas [NON-ENGLISH], which are just as bad as the SS and maybe sometimes worse than them.

And I was running. I was weak-- with wooden shoes in the snow. I don't know how I got the strength to run. And I had a couple of encounters with them. It came to a point they were throwing sticks. They tried, if I'm going to fall on that stick, this is the way they'll catch me.

And they used to come into a house. And I look outside. There were the Ukrainian, these nationalists, with the German. They wore the German uniforms, with guns and rifles and all these things. And it's only by a hair I-- but this was already an everyday thing.

And all these youngsters, which were my age, most of them, even the rabbi's daughter, they hanged on barbed wire with the son, the Ukrainians. And practically everybody-- I think we must have-- they must have killed, at that time already, 70% of the people in a short time because there is no-- you could not hide from a local. And not the Germans could tell the difference between a Ukrainian because we had Polish and Ukrainian and Jews. But they know exactly what.

How long did you have to be in the forest?

Yeah. This started out-- we went into the woods in June 1943. Yeah, 1943. Then we stayed till, yeah-- what happened? We're getting to that.

What happened, the Ukrainians used to point out the places where we were hiding. And they send in the German forest police, [GERMAN] they called them. Regular soldiers used to come in, and they show them where the bunkers are. They threw out hand grenades and killed the people. And whoever was outside and had a chance could run away.

That's why we didn't stay all the time in the bunker. But in a rainy day or on the other day, we mostly slept all the time outside. Our protection against rain was a blanket, which we made it with tension, stiff. If it rains it should-- the rain shouldn't stay on. They shouldn't-- the wetness shouldn't stay on.

And I had-- the bedding was definitely not a mattress. But it was leaves of the trees. And the-- the panic was terrible. They had in the small town, my hometown, they had a list, how many people they killed. They knew who was in the forest. And they were looking for the people.

And we had a problem with the peasants. The peasants were out for robbing the people. They didn't care. They knew if they catch it, they're going to get the clothing, the boots. You have where the boots is a big deal there, and with the whatever it is. And they figured--