

This is April the 13th, 1983, about 10:00 AM in the morning. And it's the American Gathering of the Holocaust Survivors. And the gentlemen who's being interviewed at this time is Mr. Irving Kider.

Kider, D.

K-I-D-E-R.

Right.

Mr. Kider, where were you born?

I was born Ostrog nad Volyn. That's Ostrog Volyn.

And what country is that?

This is Ukraine. It belongs now to the Russians.

What was the date of your birth?

My date of birth was 3/13/14, yeah, 3/13/14.

1914 you were born?

Yeah.

OK. And Mr. Kider, how big a city was Ostrog?

It was about 9,000 Jewish people.

9,000 Jewish people.

It was a population of 15,000, 16,000. But 9,000 was Jewish people.

And was there an active Jewish community?

Very active. And what sort of activities-- a synagogue?

Synagogues and it was organizations, halutz organizations. It was all kinds of organizations, Betarim and Revisionists, and all kinds of Zionist organizations was registered.

Did you have an opportunity to go to school when you were there?

Sure. Yeah, I went to school.

What kind of school did you go to?

I went to the Polish school, and graduate seven class, just like here high school.

And did you learn a trade?

You see, I came from not a rich family.

Yes.

And my father was a tailor. We was seven brothers, six brothers, one sister. My mother had made maybe 12, about seven were alive. And my father was only one man, was supposed to support our family. And he was a sick man too. But he managed to raise us kids in a nice way, and send them the best, what he could do it. But we couldn't afford it to go to the schools more than seven classes, because he couldn't afford to pay.

So when I got, when I was 13 years old, they took me to a place where I learned a trade, sheet metal work. Following that, about two, three years, and I learned the trade. I didn't get paid anything until I learned the trade. And just when I finished learning the trade, my father died.

He was very tired. And I was left, and two more, two more brothers and a sister. In the [INAUDIBLE], so the sister and the brother, the little brother, the baby brother, they give away to an orphans home. To a--

Orphans home.

Yeah, to the children's home. And at that time, it was Poland. And this one was supported by the American Joint Distribution. They used to get the money from America.

[CRYING]

I cannot remind myself of the times.

[CRYING]

From just when I could make a regular living, and started to work, the other brothers got married. And when I started to work, and I need to make to start to work in the trade, and now start to make money, the father died. So I worked, and I supported her, the mother, with we had one more brother. Because the sister and the little brother was in the orphanage home. So I had to support them.

And then I lived with this brother. And he was a fireman. You know a fireman?

Yes.

He was a fireman. But this was in Poland. But he wasn't a fireman by the Polish people yet. He was a clerk in a store. And then the Russians came in 1939. Then he became a fireman by the Russians.

And he was working there. And I worked in sheet metal work. This was in 1939, when the Russians came in to us.

Did they leave you alone?

The Russians?

Yes.

Yeah, the Russians didn't bother me at all. So then I lived with my brother together. And when the Russians came in, my trade wasn't so good anymore. The sheet metal, because I used to climb the roofs and fix roofs and make metal. But when the Russians came in, there was no metal, no material. So it was no good.

So I went to school to learn to be a driver. So I went in a bigger city already, Rovno. They sent me to Rovno, the Russians. And tell me to sign a paper, and I went to school for six months. I learned to drive three kinds of cars-- one car, a plain car, a regular car. And one a big truck, up of gas, a big truck, and one truck what burns wood. Wood.

So I went there for six months. And after the six months, I gave it a test. When I gave it a test, so they send me, you have to go where we're sending you. I said, why were you sending me? They said, because that's why you signed the

paper, when we gave you the paper. They didn't tell me that's where they're going to send me. But then they send me away, where [NON-ENGLISH] street, in that neighborhood, to take out the wood from the woods, to the train with a truck.

So I signed that. So I went there. So I went there. So I never forget. And while I was coming there, the war started in 1939. And this was already about 1940 when I went over there to this place to work.

So I went in a little town, Podbuz. So I'm Jewish. So I looked for Jewish people. So they're telling me, everybody, the Polish people there, there is no Jewish people no more. The Germans-- because this territory is supposed to take the Russians to belong. But the Germans came in first, because Hitler had a pact with the Russians. There's so much that she's going to want to take of Poland, and so much the Russians and the Ukraine. And this was still Galicia, where I went there. So it was supposed to the Russians.

But the Germans came in first. So when they came in first, so the first thing they took, they took out the Jewish. He says, they'll see their deal. So they are the Jewish people. They took out all the Jewish people, and they killed them over there.

But there was only one old man left here in this town, he said. So I went to that old man. And he gave me a room where to be there, because I was a stranger, and I didn't know. So I stayed there. And he told me what happened when the-- and that went out in my head. Because when I was working there, I was working. I was working by the Russians. It was this way. They always shortened everything. And while I was working there, if you remember the Russians had a war with Finland at that time.

So they didn't have no gas to give for the private industries. So when I worked there, there was no gas. So I came in there to the Communist Party and told them, what am I doing here? I've nothing to do, I have no work because no gas. So they let me to go back home and look for a job there in my own town. Till this everything turned on, the war came on, just the war. When I came back to my home, I was maybe a day. And they announced already in the radio that the war broke out.

So the Russians mobilized me right away. I should take a truck with ammunition, and in pull out from there. Because when the war broke out, in 1941, the 22nd of June. On the 25th, the 26th, the Germans was already in our town. They was so fast they came. And when I took the truck, I went to back, so I went in there in [INAUDIBLE], and I was stuck with the truck. So I couldn't. So I left the truck. And I tried to go home, back to [INAUDIBLE], near my city.

To go, so there was Russian soldiers. But they saw the Germans, and they took off the clothing, everything. And they was afraid to [INAUDIBLE] us. And I took my Jewish passport, because it was written in Jewish, so I throw it away, and I didn't want to-- and I went back into my city. And there was my sister. Yeah.

But when I went back with my truck, I passed by the fire, by the fire place where my brother was working. And he's outside already standing by this truck, with all the people. And they say they're escaping back to Russia. They're running back up here.

[CRYING]

He says to me, he was he was a blond boy, like a Polack. He didn't look like a Jew. He looked blond, blond hair and a red face. He looked like a Polack. And while I stayed with him and talked to him, he says, I forgot my passport at home. And by the Russians, you have to carry a passport always in the pocket, otherwise they arrest you. And he says, I'm going away with the passport. I said, you told him? He says, he gave me a paper that said I forgot the passport.

Then we kissed by each other. And he goes away. And I go away. I never saw him since then.

[CRYING]

I never saw, and he went away [? to this. ?] I came back in the house at home. And then the Germans was already next

day. Next day, was the Germans already. So they came in and told us to go out and clean the streets from the dead, you know, the things to clean up, every Jew. So began to clean it.

And we worked. They say we have to work. What can you do? But there was already no food coming in the city. And there was no eat more, you cannot buy nothing no more. So what can you do? You cannot escape. No more nowhere. The Germans are already far away. I had another brother, but he escaped. So the Germans caught him there and he had a chance to return back to the city, return him back, and that's why he couldn't escape no more.

So I was left by the Germans. We were working. While we're working, this was maybe even not a month, they came in 22nd of June. And the fourth day, the eighth month is July, right?

August.

They're already August. The 8th, the 4th and the 8th, this was the 4th day in the 8th month. We're sitting in the morning, Sunday by breakfast. And all of a sudden, came in the Germans with the tanks in the streets all of them. We heard a noise, a big noise. Out, out, out, on the street. Out, out, out. Don't take anything. Just out. So they chase us out. And they blocked up all the little streets what goes to the main streets. And all in the center street, the whole street, the center street in a city, like let's say New York, Broadway. They blocked up all the little streets with the tanks with the soldiers.

And they chased you out only in one line in the middle street. You shouldn't be able to escape. If you escape, the tanks with the Germans [INAUDIBLE]. Everybody, everybody, the kids, the wives. I had a grandmother of 93 years old, and everybody standing in the line, a line all along the city, a line three or four in our line, but all along. And you cannot escape nowhere if you want to.

In the meantime, we see the Ukrainians with shovels, carrying shovels. And they were going away. We're standing, staying facing the walk. And they going down there. And somebody says, see they going, they're going to make the graves. They're going to bury us. But you couldn't help it. There was nowhere to escape. We're already in the line, and the streets are blocked up.

If you just give a move, you were shot. So you had to wait. And then when they took out all the Jews, they took all the Jewish people, then they started to march to the woods. My house was in a new city. We had to cross a bridge. And then there was the woods. And by the woods was sand. So when we marched then, the Ukrainian with the shovels shoveled out a row, 300, 400 foot long, deep. And they took us down there.

When they took us down there, everybody there. And this German says, no, we're not going to kill you, the people they say. We're just we're going to send you for work. But we know already they're fooling us. But you could not-- we came there. Was all around tanks with the SS, and you cannot go nowhere. Nowhere, that's it. You're stuck. Excuse me, pregnant woman, they want to go on the toilet, you have to go by just there. You cannot go nowhere.

People want to eat, drink. This was such a hot day and nowhere, you have to stay there. Then the Germans came out and say like this, he says, we're going to send you to work, people. He said to they just want to screw you up to say, and they say like this. Sheet metal workers separate. Carpenters should go out separate and aside. Tailors separate. Businessmen separate.

In the meantime, we had a couple Jewish people in the business, big business. And there was a Ukrainian. But he was in the same business, and they used to compete all the time. And he became the chief police for the city by the Germans. The Germans made this Ukrainian, so he picked him out. He didn't have to ask even the Germans, pick out these people. There was a few brothers, picked them out and took them away to the woods somewhere. We didn't even see where they killed them there, took them away right away.

They were competitors?

They were competitors with this--

Ukrainian.

The Ukrainian competitor. He was competing all the years. They had the same business. So he took our advantage. And he took them away and killed them somewhere. In the meantime, everybody was in groups-- shoemakers separate, everybody. And they said we're going to go to work. And then they took people to the hospitals, where the sick Jewish people was in the hospitals, with blankets.

They had to go there to the city, and to bring them down to the woods, to us, in blankets sick, in the blanket. Bring them there to the grave. In the meantime, while we were standing in the sun, and nobody knows what's going to happen.

A German says, who is sick is going to go home, and who is healthy is going to go to work. So people, healthy people, made themselves sick. Some people tie their neck. Some people start to limp, some people. They didn't know what to do.

So what happened, soon they made a big, maybe a couple hundred or 500 people, they sick. So he came and took them right away and shot them first. I had a brother standing with me, he was a cripple. And he asked me, what do you think shall I do? I'm really sick. I'm a cripple. You see people making up. I said, what can I do? I cannot tell you anything. I should tell you to go. I cannot tell you. If you want to go, you go. If you don't want, you don't go.

If you really are crippled, [INAUDIBLE] maybe you'll be alive. I don't know. That's what they say. But who knows this is true. And he moved away from me. And that's finished. I never see him no more. I had another brother, the other one was really sick. So he was. I saw him and he went to the sick there. I couldn't even talk to him because he was far away. And I saw him no more.

Then I had an uncle's and a sister-in-laws and nephew's kids, all were there. And I was still standing there. And they killed and killed. They stand him up in a row. In one line, just in front of this, to face this grave. And from the back, like this. They wasn't even killed, and they fell in the grave. And then they covered them up. And the blood was coming out from them. They wasn't even killed over there.

And maybe about 3 o'clock, the commander from the city says, stop killing. Take them all back. Because we have to clean the city. We need some more workers. So they stopped this killing. And they took us back to the city. And where we came in-- in the home was nothing left. Everything was gone, the clothing, the dishes, the food. The Ukrainians robbed everything out. They took away everything. Nothing was left. Even the pillows, even everything what was there they take away. Nothing.

What can you do? Nothing to eat. Well, you have to suffer [INAUDIBLE].

[CRYING]

All right. This was once. Just one try to help the other one, a neighbor this. Maybe you have something. Maybe you have something. Nobody had anything, but whatever you can scrap together, this was going on like this a month, one month.

We had a mill, a mill what they cuts wood. In the meantime she makes flour too, from the grain, flour. And there was a fence around this mill. So this was a Sunday, just the first, the 9th. I remember the date. The Germans came in, in the house, the SS. And they say, your people, you have to go to work there in the mill. There is some work to do.

So we figure, if we work the mill, I know the mill. But maybe still there has to be work. There's a lot of work. Because you have to move the wood. You know, the trees or the cutting, you have to move, the work. You have to go to work.

So I take my sister. And we going away to this place. I came there. I saw a lot of people there, a lot of people. And they didn't chase you. The thing is this. You went there because they didn't came in and chase you out from the house. They just came in and says to you, go ahead, and work over there. There's to be work done. So you didn't want to-- the Germans says, we went. We went there.

So as soon we came there, the whole city, whoever hide himself, he didn't go there, they wasn't there. Soon when we were there, they closed up the whole thing all around, and came in with tanks, with SS all around the fence outside. And they come in again, and they say, all single girls separate. All single boys separate. Man and wife without children separate. Men and wife with kids, separate.

And again, they say they're going to send them to work. They took away a daughter from her mother. The mother says goodbye. I'll see you later. And she says they're going to work. They thought they're going to work. What they really did is they put them in the trucks, and eight miles from our city, eight miles, they digged a grave, and from the trucks they shot them and throw them in a the grave. But nobody knew about it. I find out this later.

So how did I became alive? There came in a truck, and took 50 people at the time out. Then came another truck, another 50, 50 boys. Another truck, 50 girls. Then another 50 couples. And they moved them out. And the people thought that they go to work. But they took him out outside eight miles in a little town, [NON-ENGLISH], the name of the town, and they killed him over there, in the trucks.

Now it was already about 12 o'clock, 12:00 or 1 o'clock. It was already late.

[SIDE CONVERSATION]

Just go head, Mr. Kider.

Yeah. It's about 12 o'clock, came [NON-ENGLISH]. He owned a factory where they made butter for the Germans. And he comes down there, and he says, you're taking away all the Jewish people. He says, all of them? He says, I need people to work there, because he wouldn't have butter tomorrow.

So he says, what do you need? He says, he needs sheet metal workers. So he asked him. What do you need? He points to me that he wants me out there to work. So I went out. I had a brother. He was a tailor. But I says to him, he's a sheet metal worker. And I took him out with me. And then I took out another friend, a sheet metal worker. And all of us, we made up our mind, let's say we got the wives. And let's take out a couple of girls. So everybody says this is the wife, this is the wife. And they took them, and let them out.

So and the rest, yeah, when they took the 50 people at that time, the girls, I told my sister lay me near me, didn't let me go. The last 50 girls, they came to you, and they take away from my hand. And they throw her in the truck.

Your sister?

My sister.

[CRYING]

She was a teacher.

[CRYING]

And then the rest, what they took me out a couple, what we went out, they let us go back home. We came home again, nothing you could find. Again, the Ukrainians took away everything [INAUDIBLE]. And then it was less now people. Only left is the people where they hide themselves. They didn't go there. Altogether, was maybe a couple hundred people.

And they did this in other towns too around us, there were other little towns. So when they saw there was no people, so they started to look around, where to find people. So they used to come in nighttime from towns, and together maybe come together, or again about a couple thousand people in the city. And after that the Germans made us a ghetto. There was a big shul there. Our city was a very religious city, [INAUDIBLE] city.

A matter of fact, I went to Israel. So I punched a computer there for my city. So they gave me the old history. How many times the Jewish was killed there with pogroms, everything. Tell me everything. I got it home.

And we went home. So were a couple that made us a ghetto. So we were in the ghetto. In the ghetto, and they put a wire around and you couldn't get out. But we had to go to work. And so they took us out to work, the Germans. But they used to beat us.

So one day I decided, it's not for me. They're going to kill me there. Yeah, and by the way, in the time when we was there, the first acts, the first when I told you, it says businessmen separate. A lot of businessmen was afraid they're going to be killed. They said they're mechanics. We are just mechanics. But when we were in the ghetto, the Germans called for mechanics. They was building by a station, where a train goes, a building.

They need sheet metal workers and they need bricklayers. They need carpenters. So they send into the kehilla, to the Jewish people, to give them the people to work there, right? So they just picked up the names what was the businessmen's names. And they didn't know what to do, how to do it. So then they came in to me. And says, they don't know how to do it. You have to go. I says, I'm not going to go because they kill you there on the job. You work there, and they're beating you out. So I didn't want to go.

I says, I didn't tell him to put in his name as a mechanic, I said. He put it in. They're calling him. Let him go. I said, I don't want to go there. One went away. The next day he escaped and come back with one eye, one eye they took him out there, a bricklayer. So I says, then we were already in the ghetto. And I didn't want to go. Every time I hide myself. I wouldn't go there. They're looking for me, the Jewish police. They're looking that I should go there, because they needed the mechanics, a mechanic, but they don't know mechanics. So I hide myself and this way we live in the ghetto.

I'll never forget. The farmers, the Ukrainians, used to bring some food, to sell you. To give him a shirt, give him a suit, to sell you some, through the gate, through the fence. So they came a woman. She had a kid and, she want to a little milk. And the Ukrainians used to watch this, and the Germans not to buy anything, not to. So as soon she gave the milk to the lady inside in the gate, the Ukrainian or the German, they shot that woman. She was laying with the milk like [INAUDIBLE].

But they gave me a permit I should go out to work every day, the Germans, to the streets. And then they find out I'm a sheet metal worker. And when there the roofs was shot, there was a gymnasium, where the people used to go gymnasium, a school was shot the roof. And the Germans lived there. So it was leaking in when it was rain. So they asked me I should break down the roof.

So you should see people, what I knew, rich people, I was with the poor people. They was with the rich. Begged me I should take him with me to help me work, because I need some help. So everybody jumped on me to take me, take me, take me. They never knew even how to hammer a nail, because it was very rich and famous people. So whoever I could, I took with me there to work.

One day the houses are a big church, a church. In that church is on a hill, on a big hill built. But the church is very high, like in New York, the empire state building, so high. And when they shot it, you know where they shot, the holes, and came in the water there. And the priest wanted somebody to-- even I was afraid to go up there so high. But he came and says, I'll go and I'll tie it. Instead of working with the Germans, I better build up in the high there, and do whatever I can.

So I took my brother, and took somebody else with me. And this priest, went away the Germans and look a permit. So every day they let me out from the ghetto to work in that church. So every day, the Ukrainians, because I'm fixing them the church, every night they're going to bring me food, something. And I go back to the ghetto, I'll bring it for the people with me something.

And this is the way it was going on until one day in 1942. This was the 10th month on a Sunday, I'll never forget. Get up in the morning, all the things, all in the ghetto, all on the ghetto is signs rein from Juden. I mean this is the finish for the Jews. In Germany, it says rein from Juden. That means to clean up the Jewish. Today, is the end of the Jews.

Then I run to the kehilla. A kehilla from Jewish people, that means a committee from the Jewish people, in a shul, communities to come together. I think I'll go over there and see what's going on here. In the meantime when I went there, already I saw already people killed in the streets, laying people killed in the streets. I see this is a no good number.

While we in the ghetto, they ask us every time for flour. They have to ask what you should give it to the Germans. Everything they can have something. So everybody who has something, everybody who has something have to give away. First we give clothing. We give away their clothing.

But one day the German, the head German in the city he says, he wants a pair of boots, nice boots. But he wants the Jewish people to find some leather somewhere, and make him a pair of boots. So by us there was one shoemaker left. And they find somebody who had a businessman from leather, still find somewhere something hiding a piece of leather for the boots. So we went to the shoemaker there, with the committee from the Jewish, the head from the committee. It was a druggist. He was a [NON-ENGLISH]. He was an intelligent man, a very educated man.

He was the head. So he takes the shoemaker with him and he goes up to this German there, take the measure from the shoes. Then he'll make him up a shoe, a pair of boots. So he made him a pair of boots. And he made him the boots. And when he put on the boots, they was a little tight. So he said that he did it-- he special did it. He made him tie the shoes. So he wants 10 people for tomorrow to be shot and including the head from the committee with the kehilla, even including, and the shoemaker including, and eight more people he wants for tomorrow to be shot because the shoes doesn't fit.

And they have no leather, no other leather in order to make it. So what happened? They come in. Who should we send out, eight people? Nobody wants to go, right? Everybody thinks maybe they're going to live because there was one rabbi left. They used to say that we're going to live. We're going to live. Every day he said we're going to live. So everybody just hoped.

So they says they're going to-- according up the siddur, and they say according to the alphabet, and pick the names. The people didn't want it either. So they made a meeting and they decided there was a crazy home, with crazy people. They decided they're going to take eight crazy people, and give them away. So the crazy people, they find out about it. And when they came to take them, there was nobody. They escaped. They find out and they escaped.

But there was a rabbi, a blind rabbi, a blind rabbi. And they says, let's go there and take this blind rabbi and give it to them. And with what? They took a horse and wagon, [NON-ENGLISH], this was an empty wagon just bought with a horse, and they put this rabbi in. And they're taking him to the-- before they take him there, he says, I want to tell you something. I know where you're taking me. You're taking me that I should be killed. The rabbi had a feeling. But I'm not going to be killed.

I have a feeling they want to kill all of us. And when he came there there, the commander or the German, had now are an order from higher somewhere that this in this day, everybody is going to be killed. So he tell them take him back. So they brought him back, this rabbi.

And we were going on, living in the ghetto. I had not too bad because I worked with this church. I came up there. If I do something, I don't do something, I spend a day there, not to be in the evening I got some food from the Gentiles, bring it in the ghetto, something for other people.

They pushed me in a place, there was maybe 8, 10 families in one house. And this house of ours was by the hand in-- in the city holding by the hand, where a pasture is. But that day when I told you that one day I get up. This was the 10th month in 1942. And I see all tanks all around. I see, it's no good. And I went to the kehilla. And I couldn't make it there, because I saw there is killed already. He is killed already. I see people crying and yelling.

So I see it's no good, so I went back. By me in the house, we had wooden floors. But in the bottom, it was no basement. It was empty. Just the ground was out, but empty. So I cut out the boards, and we made a little ladder down in case anything we should run down there and hide. And on top was standing the bed. All right.



As we go there, this was just before the last killing. The Germans went in the houses, and they looked on everything. Yeah, when they left, and they started to chase out everybody, everybody. And when they chased them out, they chased them out right where I lived is a pasture with cows going to pasture. There on the pasture, chased out the rest of the Jews, everybody, chased them out there.

They hold them there three days. And this was just before the holidays, raining, pouring, and these people staying there. I was hiding inside. We were 20 people there inside. And I used to come out and take a look in the evening outside in the pasture. And the people still there. And they told the people they said, if you want to live to all the people, then make up a committee of five Jewish people. And everybody should write it down, where you hide the gold, where all this false everything, and give it to this five Jewish people. And the Germans are going with them house to house.

And wherever was written they're hiding, they go in and they pack in. And ours was a big, big Jewish shul. So they took everything. They told the committee, five Jewish people, because they promised if they will take together everything, they will allow them home. They let them live. But this wasn't so. He took the five people all around, and they cleaned out everything, where everybody gave him where he hide it. Something they took out, and the Germans took it away.

And in the last minute, one German says-- the commander says to them, these five people must be shot right here. Because they're not going to be shot. All will want to know how we fooled the Jewish people, they took out from them everything. So they took the five people took them with the face to the wall to the shul. And they say, eins, zwei, drei and shoot. So one escaped. One started to run. He is an Israel. He lives in Israel.

He wrote a whole book, because he wrote every day the diary from our city. I got a book at home, everything from the city. Everything, what every day what happened in the ghetto, everything he write it. He lives in Israel, in Holon.

So they took away everything, the other four shot. And he escaped. He escaped in between the houses, empty and nobody there no more. And he hide himself, and then he went away to a farmer what his father used to do business. And the farmer hide him in a stable where the horses. He gave him food. And he was living there.

And while they was killing everything, we were there and this I find out later when he told me, when I met him in Israel. He told me the whole thing, when he was one of the five. When the Germans-- and we were laying there in the floor, about 30 people. One day, this was on a Thursday. Came in the Germans in the house. And they said this furniture should be taken away, the whole furniture in the house tomorrow. They took it out even the furniture when the people were--

So we knew already if they take away the furniture, the bed from there, they see already there is a hole there. So we went in to hide. So this night we all decided that we cannot stay there no more. We have to go out. We're going to be shot, shot. But we have to go on. And that's it.

So we went out. The other people, he took away, the gold, whatever. Soon he took away everything. He gave an order to take him up to the woods again, and they killed him all of them. And this night I escaped. I escaped, and I was escaped with another lady and a boy, and there was a lot of people. But we three kept together. Can you imagine? I was so thirsty, that we went through by a edge from a river there. There was a river.

So I took off my shoe. And I bent down and took with a shoe water, and we should drink. Because it was so thirsty we couldn't take it anymore. And we just went out to go somewhere to the woods. We didn't even know where to go. But we went to the woods. And over the woods is not too big woods, because this was the Polish side. Because the Polish side till 1939, and we came there in the woods.

On the way, I see two people running to me across. I didn't know who was running to us. Take a look, two Jewish people. They says, this is bad. They don't want to give us food. And they want to take us to the Germans because the Germans give them for every Jew they bring them, a pound of sugar or a pound of salt. Because there was no salt and no sugar. So every Ukrainian was looking for a Jew to catch, someone a Jew to bring him to the Germans, for a pounds of sugar or a pound of salt.

And so we went in the woods. When I went in the woods, I found that I had a couple of people there. A couple Jewish people that says, we escaped. And they digged out a hole in the ground. And they took the tree, and they covered up there, and with straw and covered up with ground, with dirt. And they just went in with two steps inside. So we were there.

So we were there. And winter time was bad. Because not the cold in the woods, but the bad winter when it's snow. You're starting out on foot. You can see that there is something. But we couldn't help it. There was nowhere to go no more. There was about 25 maybe 25 or 30 people. There was a family with kids.

And one day they came to look. And according to this sled, they find it. That time, this morning, I went to a farmer there. I had a farmer and he gave me a soup every morning. He made me a soup. So I brought him for us three, what we were there in this little-- we couldn't stand up there. We can't sit, not sit, not stand up because it was too hard to dig there. And the soup as well. I was went for the soup there.

Was running a little girl. She was 14 years old. She's today already a grandmother in Israel. And this what it was. Itzhak, They used to call me Itzhak. Where you're going? Forget, don't go back to there, because they find every grave there, where everybody is hiding, and they take out everybody, the Ukrainian and the Germans, she said. She says, finished. They took them away they find them. Who escaped, escaped. And they took them away.

So they took away these people from there. So we were left a few people. But we were left a few people. So we saw already that it's no good over there. So we started to we have to go in the Russian side. The Russian woods is bigger woods. The woods go for hundreds of miles and miles.

So one day, we decided, yeah, the meantime everything went through the winter. Till there came the summer already in the woods. I froze up my toes over here. And was already some, well, it come in the summer, and we're still in the woods.

Then the Germans promised the Ukrainian that they will make them a country. And then they changed their mind. And said they're going to keep it for themselves, this country. So the Ukrainians became mad. Ammunition, they had plenty ammunition. And they started, became partisans themselves, to kill the Jew, the German, the Russians, everybody to clean up.

So in the summer, it was already about May, almost June. The Ukrainians was already in the woods. We have to hide already for the Ukrainians. We couldn't do nothing. All of a sudden, we see we are in the woods there, in that big woods. But all around, we hear the noise that's the Ukrainian. And we cannot get out, because we get out, we did not eat for two weeks. We had the potatoes we used to peel up. So we took together all the skin from the potatoes. And we eat to survive.

And we stayed there, until it was already a good summer. Well, one day we heard it's quiet. That means they must go away somewhere. They didn't know that we're there in the woods. And they went away. So I took-- me and this girl, that I tell you she's in Israel, a grandmother, she had a brother. That brother, and me, and another friend, a sheet metal worker. And we say, we now we go out somewhere and we get some food from the Gentiles. Maybe we'll bring something to eat.

And when we went out we was walking down to the house. There was a farmer's one house, and the the other houses are very far away, a couple of acres. So we went away there. They build a house. A woman build a house. She burned down. So they build a house. And she had the metal to put up on the roof. But she didn't have [INAUDIBLE] to work the metal.

So when I escaped from my home, I didn't took anything with me, but I took a hammer and a shear and pliers. This I took always. I figured this can help me, because when you have something, a tool, and you have to make something for a farmer, he'll give you food. So I decided to take with me always.

Now, so one day we go out for food. And we walk in, and this woman says, if you know how to do this roof to put up, she said, I'll give you everything you want food. And this was a Friday night. We worked there till Wednesday, Thursday. We put up the roof, three people. And then I took flour. He took some fats, and one took some potatoes. And we going to the woods. We want to go to the woods. There was such a shooting that we couldn't go in the woods.

So we decided we'd go tomorrow morning. We'd go back to the Gentile there, and we sleep over. And tomorrow morning we go back there because we had maybe about 20, 25 people there, Jewish people. And we know they haven't got a lot of food. They didn't eat so long. In the morning I took [INAUDIBLE], and there we go to the woods.

While we were walking in the woods, the woods, to bring the food, there was a wagon passed by in the road. But we saw there was people in the back of the wagon. And they saw us walking. And they went into the woods. But we continued to go. They stopped in the woods. And this was the Ukrainian, the Ukrainian partisans. They stopped. And they saw when we thought this was a nice sunny day. And the grain was already so high.

Soon, we came in the road. They started to yell. Stay. Stay. And they shout stay, we know that there were Ukrainian because the Germans call it sty, sty.

And they say stay. So we know it's Ukrainian. We're going to be killed. So we started to run. So the two, I couldn't run good because my toe was frozen from the winter. So the two boys in front of me run. And they flatten out this grain, you know, and with the grain, the grain is flattened out. But I saw I cannot go after them so fast. So this was, let's say, I give you an example.

This was the road, the road. And in here was the places with the grain, with other things in there. When I came in after them with the grain, I took apart the grain like this, like this. Maybe a couple of feet there you know. And I bended down with my knees in the grain, like this in my knees and I was laying there. In the meantime, I hear a shot. A shot, they caught both boys. They took them out. And they're beating them, and beating them, and beating them. They should show where the rest of the Jewish people are.

And they took them away there in the woods. And I was laying there. And I heard. But I couldn't move. Because if I move up, they will see me. I was two foot away from them, but they couldn't see me. The grain was so high and I was laying down. Then I heard a shot, and came out 10 guys, the Ukrainians. And they say, we have to flatten out the whole thing. Because that third one is somewhere they're laying. They flatten out the whole thing. They went up with two foot from me, and they flatten out all the way down. They find the other two, but I was near the front over there laying. They couldn't find me.

And then they came back out. And the one guy says, let's flatten out the rest. And the other one says, no, this is enough. We ruin already for the farmer the whole thing, enough. And a guy, they says one guy, you stay here all day and watch. He's going to pick up himself somewhere. He's somewhere hiding. And I heard everything. So I was laying there till 11 o'clock at night.

11 o'clock at night, see already dark, good dark, summer time. Because the night was late where for dark. Then I pick up. I said, we had a farmer. A farmer what he used to help us. We used to pay him and he used to help us. So we used to tell him, whoever is going to be missing, we're going to tell him who is missing.

So I figure I'll go into the farmer nighttime. And I came there, the farmer walks me and kisses me. And he says, are you alive? I saw you. He says, I was the one going with the horses. They came in and they mobilized me. I should take them with the horse and buggy in the woods, the Ukrainian. He says, so I saw the old story what's going on. But I didn't believe you are alive.

So whoever was alive at that time, we went over to the Russian side, and the Russian woods, and we were there.

Yeah, in the meantime, when we were there in the woods, before this happened, there was two women and two kids, three years old kids. So one day, all these people that was even cousins to the woman, they made a meeting between them. They couldn't save their wives and their kids. And the kids are crying. If they're crying, somebody will hear. So

they're going to kill everybody. So they decided they will send the woman, and the kids out from the woods. Let them go for their own to survive.

So a good thing they send them out. Because when they send them out, they went to live in the grain, in the grain. They begged food by the farmers, and they lived in the grain, [INAUDIBLE] This was today, they went another woman, and what happened? This whole business, they killed. And we went there whatever was left, everybody went over to the other side, on the Russian side. But it wasn't so easy because here in [PLACE NAME], I had a farmer there. He helped me a little.

The woman, I used to lay in the grain barrel from [INAUDIBLE]. And she used to bring some food and put it by the grain. And I used to go there and pull it in the food. By night, I lay there in the grain. And I hear something is moving around something. Then I hear something that's talking Jewish. So I move according-- at nighttime you can hear very well because the echo. I move. I find out two Jewish people, two Jewish men from my city, hiding in the grain.

When I saw them, what happened? I said, how come you're here? He says, we didn't want to there, because all the Gentiles were hunting us in the woods, and we we're going to be killed. So we figured we'll be safer here. In the meantime, they say you know, let's go to the city. We're going to go over to the Russian side. In the other woods, maybe this is going to be better. And one says he's going to go home. There is the house living a Gentile. He'll tell him he'll give him the house, maybe he'll save him, let him hide himself in the house.

Yeah, he went there. But the Gentile buried him right away. He called the Germans and they killed him. And one went away somewhere. I don't know where he is. And I wanted to go over myself to the Russian side there. And I couldn't go on because, soon I go in near the city, the dogs barking so high that you couldn't go. For two, three days I tried to be there, to sneak over there. And I couldn't go over there.

So I went back to that lady that I was there. And she helped me with the food a little. And we had one Jew. He looked like a Gentile. And he had a passport, he is a Gentile. And one day he passed by there. And the lady says to me, you know, Pesse passed by. So you told him, I'm here? She says, no. I says, tell him, why didn't you tell him I'm here? Then she was waiting for him. When he passed by, and she says to him Itzhak is there by me. He's in the grain.

He says, so he came in the evening. And he took me over on the other side in the Russian side. And then we were already again 25 Jews together. Then we went in the woods there. It was this. I told you, my sheet metal tools saved all these people, all these 20 people. We went over to the Russian side over there. This was summer. Now there we took already over the woman with the kids over there already too.

By the way, we picked them up by the grain, and we put them over there. And there the boys wanted to make a meeting again. The woman shouldn't be with us with the kids. When they made a meeting, I said, I don't vote for that. I think maybe with them, maybe if they live, maybe we're going to live. I says, let them live. If we have to die, we're all going to die, I says. So they listened to me and they kept the woman with the two kids. And they lived through the war. One is in America here. And one is in Canada, the mother with the kid.

They both married. They had both children, big children these kids. So we're over there with the Russians.

Irving, when you went over to the Russian side, was that occupied by the Russian army, or was it still German soldiers there?

Soldiers all over, always Germany, always German.

But it was in Russia, but German troops.

Germans, German occupation. Germans, Germans, because they looked for us all the time in the woods. But when we came over there in the woods, and we didn't know what to do. But we went there to beg them for food. They helped us. They give us food. And it was still summer, so we used to go out in the nighttime and dig out potatoes from the potatoes. And we ate potatoes.

So we were by the Russians. Now, till this we were over there. So we survived food there. Water, we used to take puddles of water in the street, and take water and threw a handkerchief, we used to distill the water and drink it. Because we couldn't be so dry. And this is how we survived.

Then came later on when the Germans took the prisoners from the Russians, they beat them. They didn't give them food and everything. So then they decided they're going to escape. So they're going to escape, and they're going to organize a partisan by them. If he wouldn't do this, the Germans, they wouldn't be a partisan. When he do this, I remember he took 80,000 soldiers in Kyiv and he took them to Poland to work.

So when he came there, there was only 20 left. He killed him all away, he killed them all out. So they started to escape. So one prisoner, they escaped in the woods. So when they came into the woods, nighttime they used to organize. Daytime they went in the city, and they sneak around and see where the Germans are. And they used to see some people what they watching, like police watching a warehouse or watching something a place. They went out at nighttime with bare hands, they choked him to death, and they took away the ammunition.

So, somebody got one rifle. Next night they went away and killed another couple of Germans, they got a couple of rifles. And this already they started to organize the partisans. And when they organized already, they came to the woods. When they came to the woods, they find us, 25 people, two women with two kids, and people. And in the woods, we was in a hill always. Because we fear if we have to run, downhill is better to run than uphill.

And then one day, this was winter time, there was already organized a big, big partisan group, a couple thousand people, the Russians partisans. They came in and saw us. And they says, and this was that time exactly when they fought in the Warsaw ghetto. And they says to us, I never forget. You're saving yourself the life? Why don't you out and fight like the people in Warsaw fighting there? Because they knew everything what's going on.

I says, we haven't got what. He says, we didn't have it what either. We went out. We choked a couple Germans. And we got one rifle. Then we killed somebody. We got-- and this way we organized. Later on, the Russians used to drop already up some ammunition in the woods, but when they were organized already. By the meantime, they came there. They find us. So they said, we're going to take in a couple at a time from us.

They're going to send them to make-- so they send a couple away to burn down a mill in my city. And they burned down the mill during the night. And they came back. They saw the fire there burning. So they took him in. Now people left there, and they wouldn't take us in. So came the winter. And it was such a snow, cold, so cold the snow. They digged the trenches for themselves to hide, the partisans. They put in the straw and top, with the [INAUDIBLE] on the ground and the trees, but still cold inside.

So I told you, I'm a sheet metal worker. So I said to the commandeer, I says, I can help. He I says, what?

I'll make you an oven, this guy says, in this ground, an oven with a pipe out, wood, there's plenty in the woods. And you feel so warm and good. So I says, but I need metal. So they went to the [INAUDIBLE], inside the village. And they ripped off our roof with metal. They brought in the village. And I organized a couple of guys they should help me. And I made him the first oven, an oven with a door, to put in the wood and with a pipe through this.

And the commandeer says, what about they all came there, so every 10 people made a dig, so they want me to make them a oven. I said, all right. So for that, they let us stay with them. And they brought food every day. They brought even whiskey, because they stoles the magazines, and everybody was happy again.

They brought a cow. They killed a cow. They gave meat for everybody. They do everything. But they was happy because I gave him, as a matter of fact, I just was an Israel to see my friends what we went through the war in the woods. And my son went with me there. So they're telling him, he saved everybody's life with the ovens he made it.

And he says, I still remember my finger. And he tell me, hold me, and he hit me in my finger. He says, I still remember the guy. He's in Israel. So they let us be with them.

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