

This is an interview with Isadore Small on April 13, 1983. Mr. Small, please start by telling us where you were born and where you were raised, your recollections of childhood.

I was born in Kalnik. The town-- the name was Kalnik. Next to Munkacs was a little town, Kalnik, on September 10, 1922. And I had four brothers younger than me and one sister older than me.

What did your parents do? What did your father do?

He owned taxi company. He owned farmland. And my father was dealing with-- they call it cattle and was involved the same as with the farming.

As time goes on, in Europe, you go in cheder when you are six years old. Before that, you start to go in cheder. I was the oldest boy and used to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning, 5 o'clock, go to cheder 7:00, 7:30. And 8 o'clock, we had to go to public school till 5:00.

Come 5:00, you didn't go home. You then stayed to cheder again till 8 o'clock at night. That was the life over there, Almost all European boys.

Were there many Jews in your town?

About 60 families, about 60.

How big a town was that? Was that about half the population or--

No, it was-- I think there was about 1,000 families. And out of that, was about 60 Jewish ones.

And how far did you go in school? Were you still in school in 1938, when you were 16?

No. In Europe, you go to school to eight grades, compulsory-- public schools. You finish eighth grade. It's equal like the United States is 12 grades. You go to Gymnasium. Gymnasium they call it. Here we call it college. I went to yeshiva.

After the eighth grade?

Yeah, even before eighth grade. I finished in seven, in another town about 5 miles away. And I went to the yeshiva and public school. Finished the last year, too. Yeah, I've done that. And after that, I went further, for another year or two years, in a regular yeshiva.

Do you recall when the Germans first came through?

When the Germans come through, from where I was born, they come-- actually, they took over-- they used to call it Czechoslovakia, where I was born, at the time I was born till around 1938, or something like that. Then Hungarian took her over. As Germany was taking over countries, they gave a piece for Hungary, too, to take over that part. Start to call it Hungary.

So the Hungarians were there, not the Germans at first?

At first, no. The Hungarians took it over. But they worked with the Germans, too, together. They were working not as enemies. They were working, at the time, as partners, around 1939 or something.

And what was life like when the Hungarians ran--

First, it wasn't, but we knew what was going on in other parts. When they start out in Germany, even in '35, '33, they start out in Czechoslovakia in the Sudetenland, where the Germans moved in. That was around '36, '37, when they start

to take Jewish families away.

They don't have no crematoriums then yet where they took them away. But where they took them, at the time, they didn't know it. But they never come back. They either got rid of them, or they put them in war camps first and killed them later or whatever because Auschwitz wasn't in existing then. Auschwitz start to exist in the '40s, in '42, '43? '42 Auschwitz was.

So the Hungarians didn't take the Jews anywhere. You were able to continue living in your home in [PLACE NAME]?

But anymore, it was a different-- was just like every other-- not a Jewish man. I'm talking the Slovaks or anyone call you on the streets a very dirty Jew. It was nothing. It was already getting to be you were a second class citizen in a way, openly, wide open, you, in a way, could say. They didn't beat you up, but you were a second class citizen.

Was your father able to continue his businesses? Or were there difficulties for him?

You could do it, but as a second class citizen. But you could do it. But still, they don't took you in the ghettos. And they don't took you yet, as the final word was in '44-- my family was taken away.

So you continued to live, more or less--

Not for normal, but--

You were living in your own home and getting along until 1944?

Yeah. But you were always waiting till the day is going to come what they do to your neighbors. You wait. It's going to come the time. You hope not.

Well, you were a young man by that time.

Right.

What were you doing during those years?

Well, I went in the yeshiva at the time, all in the yeshivas. And actually, I wasn't--

You weren't working yet?

No.

You were more a student?

More a student, yes.

And then what happened in 1944, when the Germans came?

They took me away before they took them away.

Had the Germans taken over? Or was this the Hungarians?

The Hungarian government was working under the German supervision. You see what I mean? Like when there's anything, the Germans give the orders and Hungarian government had to fulfill it. That means, as they had Nazis in Germany doing for Hitler all on command, in Hungary, they formed Nyilas parties. They call it Nyilas. In Hungarian, name is equal the same as Nazis in Germany, with the black, these uniforms. And they got stronger and stronger and carried out orders more than regular police or anything because they got stronger, in a way.

You said that they took you first. Or did they take your family first?

No, they took me first.

They took you first. How did that happen? How did you know they were going to--

As you got an age, at the time, as the war was going on, you see, then the age get always lowered. 17, 18-year-old boys get called to the service. In normal times, usually around 20, 21, you go in the service. Used to be at one time, then after that, they lowered it.

As the Gentile boys were called into the service, we went through an examination. You know how they examine you to go into the service? But the Jewish boys, instead to give us guns-- the other one went in the front line fighting the war. The Jewish, the Hebrews, the Jewish, they took us and they formed slave camps. They call it war camps. And they put in 320, 280, 300 as a unit. They give a name for that unit.

Were there other boys from your town who were taken at the same time?

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

And were you all taken together?

No, I ended up with none of the boys from my town. Because when they called us in, when we had to go register in certain cities, certain place 1,000 miles away, [INAUDIBLE], they give you a free ticket to go there. But then, over there, you got mixed up-- you never know-- with the Romanian Jewish boys. But another part you never knew. They just form my unit. And they said, that is it and sign you up.

And then they take on the train and take you where you're going to stay first before. You went through a little training, same as the other ones, but with a shovel, not with a gun. A shovel and something else-- you had to work.

So you took the train to this place. And you were mixed up with other boys from Romania and--

Yes. They made units with us. They made thousands and thousands of kids when they took us. It was government-- like here, when they take you in boot camps. We don't have no boot camps. We weren't mixed between the Gentiles-- only the Jewish ones. They took them all over. And they gave us a name.

Then you were there a couple weeks. And then they formed, and they had so many-- not Nazis. They call them Nyilas where they assigned so many soldiers. Maybe we had around 300. We had about 30, 28. They were assigned to us. And they made you do the work. And they kept us in Romania for three months in one place. Then they took us to another place for around a couple months.

From there, they took us to the Carpathian. It used to be Czechoslovakia, but was Hungary-occupied then. And we were there from around-- when I got in the service was around September, around the Jewish holidays. And I was in Nagybánya. That was in Romania for two or four weeks. Then they took us to Siebenbrunn in Romania. We were there to around January, close to the 10th of December.

From there, we were working. I mean, we weren't there just for a visit. Every morning you got up and worked. Our work was, we had to dig for the mines what the Germans were putting against the enemies-- you know, the roads? They figured someday the Russians going to come in that way.

All them holes, deep in-- the Jewish boys, we had to. We don't lay the mines. They were in charge of the mines, but we had to prepare the rough stuff for them. I mean, other boys probably-- another unit done something else.

And then they took us to the Carpathian way, to the Polish border. But not by train, not by wagon, as the horses and the

trucks went, even by foot, every day about 40 kilometers, something like that. Nighttime, they let you sleep in schoolhouses or whatever it was.

Did they feed you?

They feed you. I mean, not overfeed you. They fed you enough not to starve. I mean, they needed you yet for the next day.

Was it a particularly brutal kind of a situation? Or were they treating you reasonably--

Actually, at that time, I don't mean brutal. They didn't took out nobody to shoot him or hit him because we knew what the story was. Most of the kids knew what it was. Better do it, if you are capable. And if not, at the most, fellows that, if they take you away on sick leave, I never saw a fellow went and sat there sick or really was sick never come back. Even then, whatever-- done. Then the story came around that once even you want to play sick, don't do it because you never saw nobody coming back to our unit. That means it was a bad sign for that, too.

And they kept us down there, by there, in the Carpathian, from around January to around May, end April or May. The Jewish families in them towns were still home in the same section where I was. My mother and father were still home.

Were you still in touch with them? Were you able to write to them?

No, no write.

You went home and--

I forgot to tell you one thing. Same as the regular soldiers, they usually leave them home either Christmas or New Year's for a couple days. When I was in Romania, they gave me a three-day pass to go home to visit the family. I couldn't remember if it was either Christmas time or between Christmas and New Year's. But they gave me a three-day pass. And I couldn't tell you if I had to pay for it or they gave me a pass and they paid for it. I don't remember now that.

But at that time, I was even afraid because when we went in for them to work in the Arbeitslager, we had to wear regular clothes but a yellow band. We always had the yellow band. And, you see, even in the towns before the families got taken away, orders were out that they had to wear-- that means any Gentile will know you are a Jew.

A yellow band they gave you to wear in town. You don't have to tell you any more that everybody knows you're a Jew. That means they call you names or whatever they do. It was nothing much law for you. It was against you.

They gave me three days. I took almost a day, by train, to come home, and the same-- I was home maybe 12 or 18 hours. And I had to go back. But at the time when I was in the train, there wasn't one of the Jewish boys with me at the time when I was traveling.

But the trip wasn't so pleasant because you were in fear. You had to sit in the corner. You couldn't take the yellow band off. If they catch you, they'll punish you otherwise. But this is the last time when I saw my family home, was in 1943, December, end of December sometimes. But I never thought that I'll never going to see them again.

I went back to my unit. They let me go back. This is the time in Romania when we had the walkway through the Carpatho-Rus right to the Polish border-- and do the same kind of work, building trenches for the Germans or a bridge was broken. We had to do all-- you never knew next week or next day what you're going to be assigned for because they assigned you maybe to-- they measured out maybe so many feet you had to dig. If you run into stone, you had to do it. That means some days you had this. They didn't give you no rest. You had to do it.

And the families down there were still home at that time. Yet I saw them. I was there when they took the Jewish families away. It was around Pesach time. Pesach usually comes out end of March or first part of April sometimes. Around May the 6th, they took us over to the Polish border already. I mean, the Germans occupied it because they were

fighting with the Russians. We were there.

This the first word we heard from the Nyilas. I call them the Nazis-- Hungarians. They had Hungarian guards around there. They said, don't forget. New law is no more here for you people. Here is what we want. You going to do it, Jew people. I mean, they let you know without asking them. Back home, maybe if you knew some politicians or somebody had someplace pulled, and Jewish families were still home, somebody someplace done something. There, no more.

We were there from around May to around June, July. End of July, the Russians started to chase them back. The Russians were chasing them even before back because Germany was almost very deep in Russia. But what the Russians were doing, the Russians were coming here and--

You'd better describe it, because the tape isn't going to pick up your drawing, I'm afraid. [LAUGHS]

The Russians tried to encircle the Germans. They wanted them to encircle into an angle and to catch so many prisoners. There wouldn't be as many German soldiers to fight them back.

And at that time, when we went to Poland, most of our job was in Poland. Where the tanks and the trucks couldn't go up in the hills, they used us, the Jewish boys. We had to carry about 160, 120 kilograms-- that's equal like 250 pounds-- in a bag, two people with a long wooden-- it shouldn't break. And most of them was either dynamite--

You had a pole between the two of you--

Right.

And it was suspended on the pole?

It was suspended on the pole and taken up. See, in the hills, when you go on a front line, then things couldn't make it in a lot of places, too close range. Horses, sometimes it's hard and couldn't make it. They used us for that. And if you went up down there, you could imagine how hard it this. They even gave you a rest so many hours the next day if you done a good job.

And as the planes were coming down, one thing they trained us. If you see them planes coming down, the enemies-- they used to come down. And it was Russian planes, special close to the front lines. When they saw soldiers moving, anybody, human body moving, they came down them planes. They're low and coming down.

But they trained us-- not because to save us, to save the ammunition. You had to lay. And you had to walk, when you go to the front line, so many feet apart from one another. They kill you, the other person shouldn't get killed or ammunition shouldn't be blown up.

And every time they took us out there, we ended up always nighttime on the front line. In the afternoon you went up. At midnight you got there. And then they brought you back through the mountains.

But one day, around-- that was from May 6 or 7 we were doing that, till end of July, first part of August. Around there, for two, three months we were doing that. All that time that I was in for them, working for them, I hardly ever slept in a house. [INAUDIBLE].

Where did you sleep?

Most of the time, we slept outside. They told us-- we lived in the forest-- to take leaves. Dig yourself in. You have the shovel. You shouldn't catch a cold under this. From trees, pieces of trees, where you call it hedges to make additional layer just on the ground. You should be higher off the ground. Make like a bedding and cover it over with some kind of what you can do, just like somebody camps. Never got a cold. I never, never got a cold.

But you had friends die.

I had friends die. I had friends with me, some of them, where the Nazis, Nyilas, gave them to eat lice, live lice.

To eat?

Yeah. Well, they always, somehow, picked a few out to do it, it seems like either to make an example or something. You see, when you see they do that to somebody else, you become a good boy. You watch it.

What did they do to these people?

What they done? They shot them on the end anyhow. They killed that kid. I mean, they killed him. One of them got frozen going up. It was so cold. He had to go to work. And they shot him. They made another boy dig the man's grave and cover you over. That's it. A few of them they killed, yes.

Did most of the boys in your group survive?

I couldn't say that most than survived because I'm not done with that story. When we were coming back, a few of them crossed over. Word was spreading around. In Poland, there used to be partisans. You ever hear that now? They were talking, the underground. Some Jewish-born in it, most of them not Jewish, fought against the Germans foreigners.

But if anybody wanted to go away, there were ways. They knew the-- they somehow-- so many boys, about 20 or 30 out of 320 got in touch with it. Through the night, how they got them out, we don't know if they made it. I didn't saw one of them alive who's supposed to have been going with them.

The 20 or 30 didn't go one as a unit at one time, but two, three. And they were spread around between the boys. They joined the partisans. I never find one of them yet who was living who I knew was with me. No, I didn't. Maybe some are in Israel. Maybe they did made it.

As we were coming back from Poland, they were chasing us. We were walking by foot. And this was maybe 1,000 miles or more-- not miles, it was kilometers. Kilometer's more than a mile. And usually 40, 50 kilometer a day they made you walk. But even soldiers were walking through because the trains are full of ammunition. And they were coming back. And they tried to fight them. And anybody who walked against the front line, tried to run away, or cross over to the Russian side, if you were, doesn't matter, a Jewish boy in the Arbeitslager or even a Gentile, a soldier, you tried to escape what's coming down, at the time when the war goes on because they didn't want to know what--

I tried to escape three times. First time, I got lost from my unit. Most of the time you get lost, usually we stay overnight in a schoolhouse. No, you don't wait till the morning to escape. You do it at night, if you can. You go for something. You don't come back.

But I was someplace fooling around two, three days. They called me in it. And they pushed me in with other units because a unit didn't mean nothing. When an enemy pushes you, units don't mean nothing from anyone. They form units. If it's 200, there's another one in it. Since you're a Jew, you go with it.

It was another 40 miles I was going. Tried to escape again. But at that time, too many boys tried to escape. And I couldn't get out of the building anymore, at the time, of that schoolhouse. It was guarded. I went to the 5th floor, someplace in an attic. And because too many of them tried to escape, they got us.

What did they do to you?

Beat me up. They told me they're going to court martial me. I knew they couldn't court martial. There was no court martial then. They could either shoot you in the side-- they had their own troubles. They could shoot you right then and there.

They said they're going to court martial me while they were walking with me for a mile. My unit was gone already,

couldn't push me in there either no more. Tried to tell them, why are you fighting? The Russians are here on you, too, pretty soon. Where do you want to go, to Germany? You're still in Hungary now. It was occupied. The place was Hungarian. Are you going to go away from your family? And what are you going to gain if you're going to kill me?

Somehow I persuade them. They let me go. They let me go. They beat me up first, and they let me go. They said that I could never mention nothing, that I was caught and somebody let me go.

Let you go back to your unit or--

No, no.

--back to the Arbeitslager?

Just let me go. It was on the street. They were walking with me for a mile. No, they let me go free. They said--

So you were escaping again?

Yeah, I was in no place. I was free again-- not free. I wasn't free. I was in German territory or in Hungarian territory, in between all-- I tried to escape again. I said to myself, it's no end. I figured out that the Russians are chasing the Germans. And they're going to encircle them.

10 miles away is the train station, goes out about 40 different lanes all over the country. It's like a main this. And I figured the Germans are going to stop there. They wouldn't give that up. And then, if they gave that up, they could give everything up because you couldn't have nothing going through on the rail.

And it happened the way I planned. That happened, so it was that way. I escaped. I went to one farmer. I said that I'm going to sleep in between the cows in the barn. Keep me overnight. I know the Russians are here the next day. He's like, I couldn't do it. They'll kill me. If they catch you here, I'll get killed.

I walked out again from him, walked a little bit more. And I knew I couldn't walk too far. I didn't want to cross over that rail, go further because they were taking us then already to Auschwitz, all Jewish kids who went that way because they couldn't need them anymore to work. They're losing the war.

Is that what would have happened to your unit if you had stayed with them?

You're right. And a lot of them that happened, never come back, yes, who went. And I figured I have to escape. And that's my chance. And if I get killed, I'll get killed here. And the place where I escaped was not far from where I was born, maybe 30, 40 kilometers from where I was born. The language I could talk between the Gentiles.

I walked into another farmer. He said, I couldn't keep you. Then he started talking to his wife Hungarian language. I said, don't leave me go. I'm from around here. And I won't-- I couldn't. I said, I'll go in in the hay. He has hay, where farmers part the hay. I said, I'll push myself inside. And I'll stay. I know tomorrow there are some. He said, no. Couldn't do it. Finally, another reckless soldier-- he was from around there. And he wanted to escape.

A regular--

Army man.

A German?

No, a Hungarian. But he spoke my language, too. But he was in the Hungarian Army. And he wanted to escape. It was not far for him either. He was only four miles away from there. And he didn't want to fight anymore.

He made a deal with me that he'll put his bayonet up, a knife on that-- when you carry the gun, you know a soldier's got-

- bayonet. You carry a bayonet, and I'll go in the front. I'm the prisoner. And he's taking me to court martial.

And if they catch us, they'll kill me. Or you don't know. Maybe both of us get killed. He figured maybe they'll kill me but he'll be free. You were willing to do any kind of ways.

And we had to cross over a German-- the Germans had on the railroad, and they were watching it too much, all ammunition, everything else, that nobody should come near it to blow it up. We figured out we crawl through the big grass-- you know, on the ground it's-- and we crossed the rail. We crossed the train.

We come into a farm in the woods. And the man said he wouldn't keep me there. He couldn't keep me. The Germans are only a half a mile away from here. And the Russians are only a mile away from here, he said. And the Germans are all over the woods and then I went in.

I threw off my yellow band then. When I was running away, I [INAUDIBLE] yellow band, no. I threw it away. Threw everything away. But a lot of people, even non-Jewish, were running then from the war, lost their parents some mixed up then.

He said he wouldn't keep me. But I didn't listen to it. I went outside in the barn, and I slept there anyhow. I stayed there. He didn't want to do it willingly. There come the next morning, around 9 o'clock, 10:00 o'clock, somebody come and said, you go.

[AUDIO OUT]

The farmer discovered you the next morning.

Discovered me the next morning. And he gave me to eat. He told me I have to leave because he's in jeopardy, his life. I went out. As I was walking out, in the backyard of his-- I don't know-- I heard two ladies saying, here, that man is a partisan. Them two ladies doesn't belong on that farm. He has to be here by himself.

Partisan is an underground man, you know. You don't know. Next, they could go and report you to the chairman. Chairman's only 10 feet. In a war time, the front line you find a lot of Germans.

Funny, as they were talking to me and walking away, somebody was hit. I saw a lot of cattle there. You know, cattle, steers on a farm? And there were two guys had maybe 50 head, or more, maybe 100. I don't know. I don't know. And I asked him-- it was maybe so many minutes later, they were going by-- if they need help. He said, yes. I said, OK.

I said, where are you going? They said, the German big shot told us to take the cattle to Hungary because the Russians are coming. And they were working on that big farm. They decided, why should they go with him? They'll come home. They'll take the cattle back home. They will drive them so long by foot. They told me they need help. I went with them because they accept me like a Gentile, not like a Jew.

As we walked through in that town, [PLACE NAME], we come through town. In the front line, there were Germans. And the line was there already where they're fighting. Houses were burning. Bombs were coming down. Shooting is going on.

One German soldier stopped us and said, don't go because you'll get shot, killed! He didn't know I was a Jew. I was with the cattle. He said, don't go because you'll get shot. Them Goyim, them Gentiles didn't listen. I didn't listen. We took the cattle, and we kept driving.

Alone I couldn't go. But with cattle-- to them, it seems like you live there. You're a farmer. And I drove over. 5 o'clock and I drove-- walked over, 5 o'clock in the afternoon, even when the Germans threatened me. I mean, not threatened-- warned me they're the Russians.

But to walk through that half a mile-- you see the foxholes, you know-- walk through a half a mile didn't bother me.



When I was walking, when you hear that whistle going next to the ear, that bullet passed you already. The bullet will hit you but you don't hear it. It's in the back. And when it whistles, it means so many bullets were shot near you going.

But it took us maybe-- I don't know. Cattle don't go fast. You could walk faster. It took maybe a half hour, the real danger. As I saw white, little horses running and soldiers, you are so scared. You don't know is it Germans or Russians because you don't-- before, I never saw a Russian soldier, actually, what their uniform was. I didn't see it. It was Russians.

But you still had to go because you were in between. They had foxholes on one side and here. You can walk through, all the way through, to the Russian side. I got lost. The farmers went away with the cattle. And I walked in with the soldiers down there, the Russian soldiers. Maybe took an hour, maybe longer, an hour maybe at least, to walk through with the cattle.

I met a Russian officer. And he had a lot of ranks. I didn't know he was Jewish or not. I don't know how he knew I was Jewish. But he started talking to me fluently Jewish, good Hebrew Jewish. He said to me, don't tell anybody who you are, you run away, because the Russians don't know any better. And they'll take you as a prisoner. They'll think that you were a collaborator with the Germans. They don't know the difference.

He kept me there for two days as the fighting was going on. And then he had to move on. There's units moving always. They gain a mile, he had to go with them. They didn't move the whole unit right away. But as they gained-- and you had to be up all night in case the Germans overnight come back. Front line goes back and forth. He kept me there for two days, and gave me to eat.

Then, two days later, I went to the city of Munkacs. City of Munkacs used to be one time-- I always thought it's 10,000 Jews. Now the Munkacs Jewish people tell me there was one time 20,000 Jews. See, I was born and raised about 15 kilometers from Munkacs.

I walked over to the city. From there, I had to walk about 25 miles. To walk, it's nothing. Once I was on the other side, I knew the Germans don't have me. They couldn't have me. Only now the Gentiles could kill me.

And when I come to Munkacs, you don't see one Jewish soul. Two days later, I find out we are eight boys living. Can you imagine what you are feeling? You have eight boys from that city at the time because from Germany, nobody came back yet. They're all in the camps and crematoriums in Auschwitz and all. Only boys like me who risked their lives were lucky enough, or I don't know what it was, who made it.

I mean, I was there maybe a couple days. You don't know where to stay. I went home to my town. Maybe it took a week. I was afraid to tell people or neighbors. As I walked through in town, a farmer lady asked me-- that look was on her to say-- [CRYING]

Was she someone that you knew?

Yeah.

A lady that you remembered from before?

Yeah, I was raised there.

Not Jewish?

No, no, not Jewish. To say--

What are you doing alive?

Yeah. But you came back? Yeah, I come back. Now, that gave me the indication that you couldn't stay home. I couldn't

stay at home. Was no home. You couldn't stay there. I went to town, just to see where I was born and because a year of war, I was still living there a year and a half before.

I told the neighbor that I'm going to stay one night. But I didn't stay there. I just said, I'll mistreat them. I was afraid of my life, even when I was free from the Germans. I don't know if I was free even from the people who thought that they, once they got rid of all the Jews-- and that lady told me, what you doing here? Where you come? And I knew the people. Go to show you that they thought they got rid of the Jews.

I was only there one day. And I wouldn't tell the people where I stay. I told one of them I stay there. But actually, I don't want to stay there. And from one to another then, but I didn't stay there. And I saw my father's tallis. And the neighbors made pillowcases out of it. And when you see all that kind of this, you figure, what you doing here?

Even I was free, was only September 22-- and I figure eight days later. It was end of September. Was around Jewish holidays. Was no Jewish holidays that much there because in my town, the only one who come back that way was a couple more. But they were hidden out through the war.

One of them lie I was there, but a week later said to the Gentiles that he'll pay back for everybody what they were doing to him or he'll take back all the farms and everything else. And they took Russian soldiers. They came in nighttime. They made him drunk. And they just took that Jewish boy.

The war was still on. Was maybe around September and October. And they dragged him out and killed him and threw him out. They were two brothers. Two other brothers jumped from the second floor out not to be killed.

When you see that coming-- not coming. I mean, you were afraid. You were free. And here you know the gas chambers are going in Germany. You couldn't do nothing about it.

And then I went to another town. And I met eight boys. And I met a cousin. I found a cousin there. And I didn't know he was living. And he took the same route what I escaped the third time, from the same farmer who wouldn't keep him. He kept him a night before.

We were freed in the same way, but maybe not at the same ground, maybe a mile apart we were free. He walked over to the Russians the same way as me, in the same farmer. I didn't know about him. Then I met him in town. He's in Israel now.

And did you learn from the people in the village what had happened to your parents, what had happened to the rest of the Jews in the town?

Yeah, I know what happened. Around Pesach time, in 1944, what they done to the whole town, orders come out. Here it's police, in the United States they call it. There, they call it gendarme, like France call it gendarme. That's who takes orders in town.

And they had all the names of the Jewish people. And they try to bring them in all together and brought them to Munkacs. They brought them in as ghettos to put them in, because the trains from Munkacs took them three days later. It took them about three days from all them towns to bring them in there like cattle, bring them in. Once you were there in Munkacs, you were surrounded already.

They give you-- even the people who lived in their own buildings, they took so many streets. And they took our place where they used to make bricks, had a fence around it. And they surrounded them all. And from there, after that, either 20 or 30 days where they took him to Auschwitz and over there.

But my mother and father ran away, what I hear. The Gentiles squealed on them and told them where they are. But the brother and sister-- the four brothers and one sister-- they took them away. They took them away that day.

They beat them up. They called the brother because they were looking for two more in the house, my mother and father.

What I heard, so many days later, either two weeks later, they got them. And they brought them to the Munkacs ghetto, from there to Auschwitz.

So none of your four brothers and sister or your parents survived?

No.

None of them?

No.

What did you do to get from your village to the United States? How did you get here?

My village to the United States-- as I saw, I always hoped the day that I'm going to find at least my brother next to me alive because when they took them to Germany, when they put there two lines, what I hear from people, one to death and one this way, one one way, one the other way. It means, one side was going to the gas chamber, the other one for the workforce or whatever it was.

And what I heard from people, too, after the war that my brother was alive, [INAUDIBLE] in Auschwitz. But then they never knew whatever happened to him, the one brother. What were you asking me?

I was asking you how you got to the United States.

When I was three already, the war was still on.

Wait. Tell him about when you were [INAUDIBLE].

When I met my cousin, I lived in that time in [PLACE NAME] with him for a while. Then I start traveling. Even I was in Budapest when Germany wasn't free yet. You buy and sell stuff to make a living because you had nothing, nothing at all.

And after the war was over, I knew I'm not going to stay down there. I pushed myself into Prague, to Czechoslovakia, that way, to look at the people coming back from the camps that maybe I'll meet somebody of my brothers and sisters. But took so long and I couldn't. I didn't find nobody.

And I knew I had relatives in the United States. But I didn't know the address for them. A lot of kids come out through the HIAS, through the Jewish this. I probably maybe would have. But I knew in what town my cousin's brother-in-law lived. And I went to look for them, if they are alive. But I found the wife was alive-- he never come back-- and a daughter and a son. They gave me the address for my cousins. And they're the one brought me up.

So when did you arrive in this country?

August 15, 1948.

OK. Have you told many of these stories of your experiences to your family before? No? Are there any experiences that you had that we didn't cover, any other things that happened that you'd want to remember so that no one would ever forget them?

You should tell something about your grandmother.

I don't have much what my grandmother maybe told me when I was six years old. See, my name was Smylowicz then. As a man gets older-- and my father didn't have time with his father that much, they called in the young kid six, seven years boxing the shoe because they don't see so good. He always said, I remember, my name wasn't all the time Smylowicz. His father's name was Iskovich.

And I said, why did you change from Iskovich to Smylowicz? He said, in the czar days-- many years. You figure when I was six, he was close to 90 then, 85. Many years back, he said, they had reasons for why. I never knew them, but some Jewish people had trouble even with the czar at one time or another.

But I found out later, from other people, there was. Some people had to change their name. And some people-- I don't know what it was in the czar days, years back. His name was Iskovich. Not his, his father's name.

And he changed it to avoid the czar's army?

Something, could be. I don't know why. He didn't tell me the last thing that he said was a reason for-- not him, his father. His father.

You said that when you returned to the town after the war, that you saw your father's tallis.

Right.

Tell me about that again.

I never said nothing. I looked, and I saw pillows or [? scraps. ?]

It was a pillowcase, did you say?

They made either a pillow case or a cover. No, it was a pillowcase. It was a pillowcase.

And was it distinctive? I mean, were you--

A tallis? If you can recognize-- you don't see a tallis material in the stores whatsoever. You don't see that, with the stripe, especially [CROSS TALK].

But you knew it was your father's?

This I don't know. It had to be my father's because so many doors very far away was no Jewish people. Was a half a block away, but certainly I don't think they went half a block away to take it. 90%.

See, in Europe then, people had more than one tallis. They had a yontif tallis. They had two sets of tefillins. I mean, it was a different kind of this then. Now you're lucky if your son, you're buying one pair tefillin. Maybe he know how to puts it on. But it was a different kind than this.

Are there any other experiences that you'd care to share that you'd care to put on the tape?

How about holidays or anything way back that were nice that you remember? Anything about the yeshiva or anything nice?

I was in the yeshiva when I was from around 14 to around 17, 18. I'm sure the young days were a bit different, Phyllis, as a childhood, as you were growing up. You're growing up in the yeshiva, it was a different kind of--

Did you-- anything you want to tell your children. They're going to keep that. And it's going to be there for maybe their children.

Stories that you may not feel like telling in just seeing them and talking to them, things that you don't want to be forgotten, recollections about your parents. What were your parents' like?

They kept-- [CRYING] See, over there in Europe, life was different then. You lived in a small town. And everybody

knew one another. Was no such a thing as Saturday not-- I need to go to work or whatever. Maybe I don't mean all over the world and Europe was that way, but that's actually near Munkacs [INAUDIBLE], it was that way. It was a closer knit.

It was a closer tie between the people, not just brother and sister, even the families. Nobody called each other by the name Mr. Smylowicz or Mr. This. You called [PERSONAL NAME]. I never had in my life call them another name.

And not just me-- most of the people who are here, visiting here in the Holocaust Center, will tell you that most of us were called by the Jewish name. When they find each other in here, in the Holocaust Center here, the first thing you hear, they call each other by the-- they remember their Yiddish, Jewish, Hebrew name.

And when the tsuris come up, when the troubles come up later, you had to learn and grow up fast because-- and fight for your life, fight for your survival. It was hard. But the spirit seems like, in me special. I-- I couldn't talk for other people. I always hoped that I'll live it through. Why, I don't know. But I always had that hope, that I'm going to make it and I'm going to [? be. ?]

If I wouldn't have done that, I probably would never have walked through a front line. The fear would be too strong in my mind not to do it. And if you get caught twice, you certainly won't try to do it a third time. But I always hoped. And this I always hoped, that I would find somebody from the family. But couldn't. So far, I never did. I didn't.

Then, when I come to the United States, I come out single. Should I don't talk? When I come to the United States, I come out single. My cousin brought me out. I was single. I figured I had to start to make a living, a different kind. You have to look for the future.

A lot of people tell me they have night dreams and night this. I keep myself maybe too busy, not to forget, but try to-- [CRYING]

Try not to spend too much time thinking about it.

Right.

You don't forget, but you try not to remember either.

Right.

So you came to this country single, and you worked hard.

A single, then three years, four years later, when I met her. [INAUDIBLE].

[INAUDIBLE]. You're aunt came.

Yeah, when I come in this country, I went to Cleveland to school, when I was single. I worked there a year, a year and a half. But I went to night school. I got my diploma from high school, just because I had a diploma from there, just to go over it in a different language.

And when I come back here, my uncle and cousin helped me. And I got into business. And since then, I always kept myself. And I met her. In '52, we got married. We have two children. Nice, very nice.

And you're going to ask me why I never give the story. I mean, not like on that day, but I never could put myself together to do that. I have a son. He asked me a few times. He said, Dad, you're going to die. Why didn't you leave me? [CRYING] I said, some day I will. I mean, he wanted that tape. He wanted--

Well, he wanted to know about your mother and your father and your aunt. After all, he's named for your dad. What did your father look like? Was he a tall man? A short man? Well, we want to know, you know?

I don't think things like that probably never going to happen in the world anymore, whatever happened to the Jews at the time. A lot of people ask me-- even she asked me-- why didn't they fought? Why didn't they run? I said, it's not America. Special kids, people from little towns, they come and take you.

In Poland, when they fought underground, it was hard, even they were fighting 28 days. Poland had but 4 million Jews who were around that time. Czechoslovakia maybe only had 400,000, spread out. It's a different-- but even there, they know they couldn't fight them off completely. They couldn't.

But they [INAUDIBLE].

In the whole world, nobody was willing to accept the Jews, nobody. Boats came in here, went to Cuba, around United States. Roosevelt wouldn't take them in. People who were born in other countries, they wouldn't give them permission to bring them in. And I think they knew what's going to happen. They had an idea what's going to happen to the Jews. But nobody wanted to be involved in it.

Like they said, Wiesel, what's his name, said, Hitler, everything what he was always doing slowly, he saw he could get away with it. No nation in the world ever come and protested against it, like to say, you're doing wrong or we'll fight you. Then you got-- but they knew it. What you're going to--

Yeah.

Mr. Wiesel, he was born not far where I was. Wiesel. What's his name? Wiesel.

Elie Wiesel.

Elie Wiesel. He was not far [INAUDIBLE].

Well, I think that everybody-- I always tell him that when he'll say, I'm looking, looking, maybe this brother. Maybe somehow we didn't find each other. But I think everybody, deep down, knew they would be-- they had that little bit in there, hoping, hoping that maybe people might. But I don't think. I hate to say that, but looking practicality, I don't think.

And then somebody said, at the Yad Vashem, a nephew by marriage-- my great-nephew's named for two uncles. And he says, my nephew by marriage says, they'll never be in Yad Vashem. I said, how come? Because there's no proof. You have to have some kind of proof that they exist. I said, they existed. You know they existed. They're your father's brothers. They existed. But you've got to have some of proof that their people lived.

Mr. Small, did you fill out the papers for the computer record? Have you registered all the--

Yeah, we went back and pressed.

Oh, yeah.

Nothing.

But you've at least entered the name in case someone else is looking?

Well, the lady saw a name from Philly. And she has a friend in Philadelphia.

Somebody told me today that is in the same [INAUDIBLE].

Well, she's going to call. But it could be a cousin, you know. Hey, it's nice to find somebody.

Sure.

Just like you know your school friends, he looks. He hunts. And he introduced some women to other women. You've got to give me your-- I'll tell these [NON-ENGLISH] that I know. Oh, you're not done.

Let's finish up this and then--

Oh, you're not done.

OK. I keep asking you if you have any further final thoughts. And we keep coming up with more stories.

And more stories.

We still have a little tape, so if you wanted to say some more.

You want to say anything about your brothers? You had nice brothers. Anything about them?

Yeah, my brother, when they took him away, he had to be around about 14, the oldest one, around that. I don't know. My sister was two years older than me. My brother was three years older, the oldest one. And the other ones-- I had four of them, all boys.

And I don't know. I couldn't say. I mean, I don't know. But I always thought one brother I'm going to find. It seems like-- you never give up hope. But you try to find it. And maybe my brother is looking for me. I don't know.

Well, I hope you find each other.

Did you have any other stories from way back in your early years or anything from home or anything?

The stories about connected with the--

After, the boys took over distillery, you did this, you did that.

Oh, to make a living after I got-- when I ran away from the Germans to the Russians, yeah, we start to make a living. I took over a distillery-- not me, me and four other boys in town of [NON-ENGLISH]. Used to be Jewish one time.

The Germans took the properties away when they took the Jews away. And to make a living, they left it open free. All the raw material was there. And we took it. And we were making in the distillery whiskey. Day and night we worked. It was day and night because you couldn't find no whiskey, no place to get.

You must have been doing very well. [LAUGHS]

At the time, what did the money-- count it. Oh, yeah. I don't mean that because you can never buy the whiskies in the towns in any amount. We made a deal with the Russian soldiers because there was no court at the time. You gave them so much out of it, half, and they let you work it.

It wasn't a little distillery. It was a distillery actually to put out big amount. I mean, it was everything there. And we worked there till we made quite a bit of money. Oh, yeah, we were there for ourselves because you didn't have to buy nothing, no material. Just if you come out with so many barrels, and every bottle was worth \$1-- a bottle, not a barrel. Especially in wartime, you couldn't get it.

But it was a fresh start, we four of us, four or five. Then as more boys came in, we shared them in. We wasn't stingy about it because they had to make a living, too. Whatever happened later I don't know to it.

But then, in '45, I left there because the kids, most of who was in Germany, in the lagers, coming home. And everybody was looking and trying to find somebody from their family. I was one of them who went to look, too-- I mean, see, too,

if I will find somebody who end up after that in Prague, in Czechoslovakia, to see if I find somebody. So was everybody else, looking, too. I mean, whoever you find.

I think we're just about at the end here. So thank you very much, Mr. Small.

You're welcome.

Thank you for doing that.

[AUDIO OUT]