

Today is April the 12th, 1983. And Mr. David Sochaczewski is being interviewed at American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Mr. Sochaczewski, David, where were you born?

I am born in Poland, in a small city the name, Sierpc.

And how do you spell that? S-O-C-H-A-C-Z-E-W-S-K-I.

That is your name. And how do you spell the name of your city?

Sierpc, Sierpc.

Spell it.

S-I-E-R-P-C.

And what was the date of your birth. 20th of January, 1920.

And how big a city was Sierpc?

Sierpc was a city of 10,000 inhabitants, and 5,000 were Jews.

And whereabouts in Poland is this? Where in Poland?

This is near the Vistula.

Vistula River.

Vistula River near Plock, with a P. [INAUDIBLE]

How big a family did you have?

I have one brother, a younger brother, one older sister, and one sister younger than me.

And what did your father do in--

Well, we were manufacturing in a store of fabric and clothing. And my father passed away when I was nine years old.

When the war broke out you were 19?

19 years, yes.

And before we get into the war, what sort of a community was Sierpc. Was there an organized Jewish--

An organized Jewish-- Orthodox, mostly Orthodox, like all the small cities in Europe. If somebody was not observant, he was-- he was--

Outside.

Outside. And very Hasidic, I was studying in a yeshiva up to the age of 16 years. There were several very Orthodox organizations I was belonging to, Young Agudath Israel, Pirchei Agudath Israel. That means the young flowers of Agudath Israel.

Was there a good deal of Zionist activity in--

Yes.

--in your community?

All Zionist-- all the Zionist organizations was very active in Sierpc.

Were there cultural Jewish, cultural activities there?

Definitely, yes. A complete organized life.

And did you have any interaction, or did the Jewish community have any interaction with the Gentile community?

Making business, having-- it was existing also Jewish banks, two Jewish banks in our city. And like almost cities where most of the people were making business and work, like shoemakers, and clothing makers, like most small Polish towns.

Did you have any Gentile friends at all?

No.

All your friends were Jewish? You went to the yeshiva, and you were--

Yes. And then a few years before, I started to work in a non-profit institution because the Joint was made it a special bank with the name [NON-ENGLISH]. We were borrowing money with no interest.

Free loan?

Free loan, and giving for all people for good conditions to pay. And I was in charge, working. It was two years, two, three years [INAUDIBLE]. Of course, I helped to expense the house.

When the war broke out in 1939, is the area where you lived, was that occupied by the Germans right away?

Yes. In the 5th of September, when this war started, two days before, the Polish government I was not in the age to go to the army. But in case of emergency, I would go to there, because I was 19 years old. They were telling everybody has to cross the river Bug. In that place, we make a resistance, it would be happened the same miracle, what happened in the time from former Polish King. We make a resistance.

And when we started to go over, and on the way we come up to Kopno. When we come to Kopno, Kopno is a city before coming to Russia, there German financed before we come to the-- this was Saturday, Shabbat shavua. They take us to the market. And say, everybody to lie down. And we finished-- they shot everybody. We were lying face down a few hours. And then a high officer come, he was saying now the [NON-ENGLISH] has to be free. Everybody has to go home, back and stay home.

This was September, in the beginning of September. We went back to my city. That was September, and it was up to November. In middle of the night, 11th of November, they wake us up, all the Jewish people, and taken out with no nothing, only what everybody was using. They took us to a railroad, taking out-- out the River Bug.

And saying that our path is an exit to the Reich, and no Jews is allowed to live there. But in another part, up to Warsaw, you are allowed to live. So I and my family went to Warsaw, not having a [NON-ENGLISH] others where to go. But we find some of our family. They took us in, in the apartment. And we were living in-- at the year, at the end 1939.

In '40, when the ghetto started to obligated everybody to go to work. So I started also to make, to find-- I was the man, the oldest in the family. I started to try to find something for to bring home to eat.

In the beginning, after the war finished, I started to manufacture some synthetic thing, like tee and other things, and we were sending this to Germany, to Polish policemen.

In change, they would bring us something to make a living. Later in 1940, the government, the German government are saying that nobody is entitled to have the right to live with no working. So everybody has to go started to work. And then he received some bonds, to have a title to it.

And everybody has to work for the German government. So I was trying to put it-- my mother in a shop from the German. The name was [NON-ENGLISH] worker in Warsaw. And my two sisters, the same. And I went to work. They obligate me to go to work in Warsaw in a factory which was before for trucks. They changed this for small tanks, 10 tons tank. We have to produce every day 10 pieces of tanks.

If something we didn't accomplish, it was sabotage. And there was sometimes shouting or hitting. It was a very hard time. And what the chance was, somebody was taking out to the war. On the way back, the man was, calling organizing, organizing was taking something in the pocket, like potatoes, like a piece of bread back home.

In 1941, they started to separate and close ghetto in Warsaw. And they started to form different kinds of ghettos, a big ghetto, a small ghetto, and free. Free means the people who didn't want, to subordinated to go to work for the German, they were in the part-- when the part when [NON-ENGLISH] was in the ghetto. And the bigger ghetto was the people who didn't agree to work for the Germans.

And that people wasn't entitled to have the bonuses for eat, because they were looking in the crazy people, because they didn't accept it to go work for the Germans. And my mother was working up to-- and my sister up to September '42 in the shop, Tebens. Before Yom Kippur, I was asking my mother not to go to the synagogue. We were religious, but mostly there was taking advantage from when the people was together to surround it and take out.

I was very afraid and was telling my mother not to go because it's very dangerous. But she went to the synagogue in the ghetto from Tebens. And I was in another ghetto. And my brother and sister, in other ghettos. They take out my mother from the synagogue. That synagogue was an underground, not a real open synagogue. And they take her-- I didn't know up today where, or to Treblinka, or what place. And I have no information.

A little later, they're taking my two sisters to a camp with the name Trawniki. And I and my brother was still-- I was working in Orfus, and my brother was staying in the big ghetto. He didn't want to work for the Germans. They were working a few weeks in Trawniki, and they sent me a letter. Why do you have to stay home alone? Come to us. We have to live, we have to eat, to sleep. It's better. Why are you staying alone in Warsaw? It was we know I was active in [NON-ENGLISH], and underground, and everything.

I know that was a lie. I didn't answer. I didn't answer. I didn't go. And now, in that moment, I was searching what has-- I know that one day in July '42, they opened a very big grave, and they shot out complete [NON-ENGLISH]. I don't know exactly the date. This is-- I was searching today. And a lady was telling me only one information can find this in Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

We are planning to go this year, to maybe find something out about my sisters. Then I was working all the time, and also we started to organize to bring in some dynamite to the ghetto, in very small portions for the underground. And even they know that we are bringing in some meat to eat. But if somebody was on the entrance, and he what he wanted was taking out some one worker, was telling you have something, and put in one-- in that moment, take out two potatoes, and shot them instantly to make fear all the people, not to bring in.

This was the complete year '42. When in July started a big sent out all the Jews from the ghetto in Warsaw, in July '42, push them out. And every day was selections coming to-- I was supposedly protected in a certain way, because I have a sign that I was working--

With the tanks.

In the tanks. That was certain protection, but not 100%. I didn't even trusted this. In any time when they come in, I was higher and higher I was working. Also was they were starting to go every Jew has to come out. I never went out. I went - we started to make some kind of bunkers [NON-ENGLISH].

In the basements.

In the basements. And we were watching out through the window when the Germans were coming in. Everybody was going to hide in some place. In all the underground started to give statements. Because in July, in '42, the Germans was putting that everybody who wants to go to work camps, to the East, be able to take his all instruments with a doctor, engineer, or somebody, and everybody's entitled to have two kilo of bread, and 1 kilo of marmalade.

Even some people was doubt this is true. But the people was telling, I want to eat once enough, and even I die tomorrow. And people went voluntary, in the hundreds and thousands. I was present. I was living in a main street, [NON-ENGLISH], in the ghetto. When they took Dr. Korczak, and the children to the Umschlagplatz. I saw the dead march from-- Dr. Korczak was in front, going with all the children to the Umschlagplatz.

And I was telling to my brother-- to my sister, I wasn't able more, because they were taken out from the places she was working. She was working also by Tebens. But not-- not let cheated the Germans. They're giving-- that they are taking out to work places. It's not true, because they were telling, you can go voluntary. And then it would be better.

And the underground started to give from time to time bulletins, people don't be foolish. Everybody is going to the crematorium.

The underground was a Jewish underground?

Jewish underground, yes. Jewish underground. And once I find a friend that they went-- they took him to the camp. But this wasn't a camp. He was to go to Treblinka. This was complete crematoriums. But by a miracle, he was under the clothing. He come back to the Warsaw, to the ghetto. He told me is not everything is going to the gas chambers.

So at that time, since July up to December, the underground started to alert all the people to prepare bunkers. The bunkers was made in the cellars, one level, sometimes two levels, sometimes three levels. The first level was simulated like somebody was living, but abandoned, abandoned. Then comes the-- the second. The second was looking also like everything's abandoned and away. Then the third was the railway bunker, sometimes different ways.

This I'm describing my bunker where I was. So everybody was preparing and asking everybody has to take as possible bread, water, in case of emergency, to be able to stay in bunker a few weeks. So we prepared everything. Also, I want to mention during the time in ghetto, in the worst time we formed a committee for charity. Because there was the from for living was one four buildings, then a patio, other four buildings, a patio, another four buildings.

In that way, a big population in one building. We're making some concerts for the poor people to collect money and support them. Because I was between the people, I just was working and bringing home something to eat for my family. It wasn't the biggest problem up to '42.

So when we started to organize the bunkers, so I was also made my bunker between the other people together. In January '43, the underground started to make the first uprising.

April?

No, in January in '43. But this was only a few days. After the few days, they stopped. And killed all the people. This was in January of '43. Since then, the underground started to urged everybody more be ready for-- something would be happened more drastically. This is not the end. And we are preparing a bigger uprising.

I was still working in the Orfus. But in April '43, the first night of Pesach, I went to visit my cousin, in the other ghetto.

That means in the ghetto where the people don't--

Working.

--working, because the wild ghetto. So I was in the evening, in the evening. The underground was telling that the ghetto is surrounded, and everybody has to go to the bunkers, and everybody who is entitled for defense, for everything has to be ready. because they are surrounded all the ghetto.

In the morning, and very early in the morning, I was trying to go to the corner where the German was. And I was showing that I am working and I want to go to the word back. What, a Jude work? You're not entitled to go out. I was lucky they didn't shoot me instantly.

So I went back to him. I was so naive. I was thinking I will be able to go out. So a few hours later, the SS, the ghetto was built I think is well known. The cut the street, in not in that way, it in the middle. Now they have the Gentile part and the Jewish part connected.

So all the main streets were narrow. It wasn't enough for a tank to come in and to make a turn. They went in. And I was in the corner, was the first position, the first attack against the Germans in the corner from [NON-ENGLISH]. They started the first shooting. In the first, when I was in the bunker in the first night, we were 30 some people, with only one pistol for all the people. So we were only watching all the people having inside.

And during the night, we were working, communicating with all the people what's going on. In the first hours it was a big victory for the resistance, because the first attack of several, maybe is now nobody knows exactly how many. But I think quite a number of Germans was killed in the beginning, because they didn't expect resistance. But in the afternoon, they come in, complete like with tanks, airplanes, with a complete army. And then started a real fight, fight in ghetto.

Because the ghetto was divided in different sections, I would say every-- I'm talking now the bigger, because I wasn't able to come back to mine.

To your own ghetto.

In the small ghetto, was a place. And every place somebody was working by [NON-ENGLISH]. It was a shop for brush workers in one ghetto, a brush for other workers. So every section started to fight by himself.

And I was very near, very near the bunker from [PLACE NAME], our bunker was very near. In the second night of Pesach, they started, attacked our bunker also. So we went out. And we were looking another place where to go in. And now in front of me, I saw a very famous and one of the biggest Jewish rabbis in Poland, Rabbi Menachem Ziemba. It was the biggest sage for my faith. And he's with his [NON-ENGLISH] from the Seder, it was [NON-ENGLISH].

In the night were made for him a grave in the garden. I was telling his-- it was a little part between one building and other, in the patio, a grave.

So my after a few weeks, I was listening that my brother, he was in the other ghetto, they catch them from the beginning, a few days. And they killed him instantly in the ghetto, in the other-- in the small ghetto. And I wasn't able to go, to communicate more with my brother from-- because there was every ghetto was separate, so no communication with one ghetto to the other.

We were fighting, resisting up to maybe 12th or 15th of May.

What were you fighting with, if you only had one pistol?

Yes. We were fighting in that way. We were making tunnels, communicating one bunker to the other, helping the people to go out, giving bread. We have a special, our bunker, it wasn't mine, but for--

You belonged to that one.

--with all and water, we make a pump, and bread. And they put me to watch to give a signal the Germans are coming, because the people are a little out of the bunker to have fresh air, fresh air.

So after the time of the fighting, The Germans decided this is the only way. They started to burn building by building, dynamiting from the first floor up to the roof. I was in the bunker at that time. Because most of the people who went out, because of the fire, they instantly they shot. Like a mouse going out from the mouse hole.

So I decided not to go out, better to stay in, die inside. But during the night in the beginning, in the beginning and all the time, they were afraid to stay in the night. When it was darkness, the Germans went out. And the night was the time we reorganized everything again. So in night, at night, they took them out from the bunker. I don't know half dead or half alive. And we started to find another bunker, because our bunker was complete-- completely destroyed and burning, still burning.

So we went to the other bunker to stay a certain time. And after a few days, during the night we went back to our bunker. We found out that the one man is not-- is not back. Because one man is not back. So we started to suspect that all the German kept him, because they want to catch somebody, and asking him, show me where all the bunkers.

So we were suspecting that maybe it could be that that person, so we started to close up the entrance what everybody was known. We were working during the night to open new ways. And in that day, there could be-- everything was burned out only with the skelett, from the skelett.

The skelett?

The skelett.

Only the frame--

Only the frame was still staying. Frame was staying.

I remember they put me-- they put me in a corner to watch at that time. There was not possibility to gave me, not eating, and nothing to drink during all the day. But I have some-- something. And so all the sweat what went out down to some [NON-ENGLISH], and I was drinking my sweat back, up to the evening. Because I have to the mission to watch and give signals. If something goes wrong around me.

So I was all the time up-- yeah, and we find out that that man really was the man, the man who the German caught. And they brought him to our place. They ask to show him where we are. But he didn't recognize, because we demolished, and there were a few, with grenades, opening a new entrance. And the caught all of us. When they take out us, they mentioned [AUDIO OUT]

When they find us out, and take us out, we find in the patio hundreds and hundreds of people killed. Because the feeling word is unbelievable that still some is surviving in that conditions. I didn't even know what was the reason they didn't kill us, or somebody, or Red Cross or something. Up today is a mystery what happened. They take us to the Umschlagplatz to make-- because we were very few people, no more.

And they started to make a bigger amount to be able to send to someplace. We are two days, two days and two nights on the Umschlagplatz. And then they formed-- put us in the railroad and started to run. In the way, we didn't know all we are going to Majdanek, or we're going to Treblinka. But Treblinka was completely the gas chambers. So we decided to jump from the railroad.

We're together three friends, I and a friend I met in the ghetto, and his sister. So we decided that first of all, the woman has to jump, because if something happened to us, even if somebody would be killed, the other would jump. But a woman, maybe she was afraid. So finally, we didn't-- nobody would jump. We arrived to Majdanek.

Could you have jumped if you wanted to?

No. We brought on the roof, was an SS man. What it was a railroad run for the cattles. We broke some window, and we have to jump out in throughout, maybe we were under the road or if somebody was jumping out, he-- the SS man from the roof was shooting. The chance was 99, 99. But was the same thing after surviving everything, that was the same thing.

We arrived to Majdanek. They take us out, next complete. And the put us in a place, not even on the floor, not even with a seat, with sleep, nothing.

Dirt floor.

Dirt floor. I was working to take me out to work in to take out the bed grass from the field with [NON-ENGLISH].

Hay?

Take out the not good grass, grass from the--

Weeds?

Yes. I was so hungry that I started to eat the grass, and they catched me, and they took me in the public place, and was giving me-- and they started to give me-- I didn't know how many. I was resisting, hitting-- hitting me.

After-- nothing was. Nothing was.

It was a stick, a whip?

Whip?

Whip, yes. After two or three weeks, I was in a position not to work more. I was working, on all fours. I wasn't able to stand up. So there was one day they called in the block, who wants to go to Auschwitz? We need some shoemakers, and we need some [NON-ENGLISH], dressmakers. Dressmakers. I told them, I'm a dressmaker. I didn't know nothing. But I want to change the place, everything, to have a chance maybe worse. But to go out from Majdanek. I wait.

They took me out. And I went-- they took me to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz, they put me in hospital, because I wasn't able to go to the work. They put me in the hospital. And from the hospital, they were taking out every day a certain amount of people to make the experiments, experiments [NON-ENGLISH]. And so far, one of the best-- when I arrived to Auschwitz, it was before several people from my city officials from before, from '42.

And hearing this, I am from the ghetto. At that time, he was in the meantime, my hero. So I started to [NON-ENGLISH] to give me up-- this is more brought to the window to the hospital. But the main thing was to have a little more to eat. The biggest fortune was to able to eat.

But thanks God. I was lucky. They didn't take me for their experiments. Because if they went in every day, let's say to the hospital, and asked for 20 people, or 10 people. They went [NON-ENGLISH], you, you, you. They are not looking for a special name. They need only a number of people. In that moment, I'll say I was in bathroom or other place. It was only a matter of luck, no special that I was clever or not clever.

So after a friend, he is also a survivor and later we come to that point. He was starting together with me in the yeshiva. And he is now living in England. He was in Auschwitz we are calling people, he was cleaning the boots of the [NON-ENGLISH]. So he was in a certain way privileged. And he started to try to take me out from hospital. It was the destiny, the destiny is-- there, I don't want to mention the name. They cussed at him twice, and even his boss, the [NON-ENGLISH] they wasn't able to prevent not to do.

But he took me out of hospital, and put me to work, in the cleaner, cleaner--

Laundry?

Laundry. The laundry was cleaning apart from the people who was arriving, the people that were arriving. And also a part from the soldiers, from the uniforms was coming that they were cleaning, and sending back together, sending back to the Russian front at that time. We were there, in '43, '44.

And in the half of '44, one night, I'm looking for that man also, very historical. He was in the underground. And here the caught him in same camp. We decided to kill the SS man at night, and run away, because we have all the uniforms. To put on uniforms, and we know little, not little, but German. And ran out from the camp. This was the time we were preparing, but we were working one shift, day, one week shift day, one shift night.

We decided that at night 12 o'clock, they were given half an hour for rest. And they took it out, the light. We have a Romanian man, SS man, he was talking, even Jewish. He maybe was a goyim some, mainly Jew.

He was a very short man. We decided to take a chance and to kill him, and then run away, in the night. Coincidentally in that time, a Czechoslovakian girl wants to run away from a Polish man, were in love with her, and he wants to take her out from the camp, and they caught her. So and they had there [NON-ENGLISH] in the camp. So at that moment, everything idea to go ahead, but my friend stopped.

So we were working all the time. I think it's too long all the details how the working camp was-- hunger, misery, everything. When Dr. Mengele was coming for a selection, it was strong selection. Everybody went out [NON-ENGLISH].

Naked.

Naked. And also in that moment is not coming in somebody he was clever or not clever. Only the finger decided who is. You didn't even know what side is the death side, what side is the other side. Because one side was young and strong men, like in the other side young and strong men and weak men. But this was only a matter of luck. Somebody-- I was running from one to the other.

But I was over in all the selections they didn't took me away. There was up to January '45, on 20th of January '45, they started one night, so everybody has to stand up and take what he's able to take with him. Because we are going to another camp, because the Russians were coming to the camp. We started over 100,000 people was in that time in Auschwitz. Imagine it was maybe-- a line for two miles. And every 2 meter, or 2 meters was a soldier with machine guns, and grenades, and everything.

At the end of the transport, after the two miles was commander. We are calling the liquidating commander. Let's say something was started to be weak. He has a chance from the beginning from the two miles up to the end of the two miles. When he was in the end, and weren't able to go ahead, then they shot him special, dum, dum. Dum, dum [INAUDIBLE], was they opened. Their body was exploded.

So I saw that all the way it was hundreds of thousands dead people. I decided. I took a chance. In telling, anyway, if I still am able to go more, but I don't believe we were able for a long time more to go ahead. So we organized a small group, three people. One is looking now here for him. He's living now in Dallas. The other is living in London. And the fourth was from Sosnowiec.

Because the question was, let's say if we run away, where to go? We are in Germany. We didn't know even where to go. You don't have an address where to go, no survivors, no family. That the man was telling us he was in the underground. If we succeed to run away, I have some Gentile in a city in Silesia. He will be able to take us, because I was also, he's giving me a chance, before they caught me two weeks to be with him.



If we succeed to do it this, would be our chance. So we decided to took the chance. We took out our uniforms, and because I was working in the--

Laundry.

Laundry. And the night before, I was taking out a civil dress, under my-- because before, everybody who was using civil-- was calling a [NON-ENGLISH]. That means you are trying to escape. Then they shot [INAUDIBLE]. Because even the hair was not allowed to have more than eight days. Every eight days you have to clean up the hairs. That means this was the law of [NON-ENGLISH]. That means you are a suspect. You are trying to escape. This was enough to kill.

But the last night, I took the chance. I put a civil--

Suit.

Suit, in over other my camp in stripes. So we three people who are going in between all the SS line. And then an SS man come to me and say, [NON-ENGLISH]. You dirty Jew, take my-- take my every soldier has a--

Knapsack.

Knapsack. Take my knapsack. you can take my-- OK, I take his knapsack. But it with so many hundred people, I disappeared with his-- with his package, sack. And we other two people decided in that way we go together.

But in the fifth way we saw, or left or links, something's gone, then we cross one, two, three. We go out. If they shot down, the same thing was no chance. And this happened. So it was a Sunday. We were working, and the Polish people was looking, they wondered how they taking the Jews, the Jewish people killed. The Polish people was staying and looking for-- they wonder.

So we run away. This was the 20th of January in Europe. That place, the snow was maybe 20 [NON-ENGLISH] high. We jumped down in some--

Ditch.

Ditch. And I am not able to say what happened. But the fact that they didn't kill me this time here, so we were sitting there up to night, up till dark.

And dark we started to look where to go. We didn't know where we are. So we saw that some hill, a-- [NON-ENGLISH].

A forest.

A forest, a forest. So we went into the forest. This is very curious. I was very curious. When I went into the forest, I find a piece of white bread. There wasn't even a sign that somebody was walking. Because everything was wild, there no sign there, but I took the bread, and I was telling the two friends, take a part this. I think this is from the heaven.

Manna.

Manna. If everybody will take this will survive. We went in, in the forest. And the end, we were looking. But nobody knows how to go. We were running half a night. And then we saw some light from far away. We decided, why we have to take a chance, three of us to go and look. Maybe it's a German who will kill us. We make a lottery, who has to go.

And if he succeeds, and then he has to give us a sign. And then we come also. Then the lottery falls on the man who is my friend from Dallas. He's in the [NON-ENGLISH]. He serve here in the [NON-ENGLISH]. His name was Leo. Leo, OK, we have to go. And everything will be smooth. And they give a sign. We come also. After a few hours, no sign-- no sign, no sign of us.

So we thinking he lost. We started to-- the sign was it has to be--

Whistle.

Whistle. No, no. [NON-ENGLISH] Yiddish.

No, no. No, this. So we are thinking, that they caught him, and they killed him. So both of my friend and I, we started to look another-- in that forest, we find two people more, also coincidentally from my own city. They're living also in Dallas. So we were to get five people. We started to see what is going on. But suddenly, we listened-- a whistle. So a whistle. We went, here, Leo. What happened?

I was so cold and hungry, and the lady give me something to eat, and put me in front of the home, I forgot that you were waiting for me.

German woman?

They our friend, no, this was [NON-ENGLISH]. This was Polish, but not--

A Gentile?

A Gentile Polish, but German descendant, an old lady. So we went in, all of us, and she gave us to stay overnight. The first question was, you are-- I'm sure you are from the transport. Here, no? You are Jews? No, no we are full Dutch. The Russian bombed our place, and now we're going back to Germany.

But she was listening. OK. Tomorrow morning, we have to leave. I don't want to deliver to the German. But tomorrow morning, you have to leave. So we have to leave. We went out, the three people. And at that time, we wore the civil dressing. And that man, who was from Sosnowiec, he was trying to come to Sosnowiec to find the Gentile people who promised him to give him a place.

So he was oriented more or less where we are. Because Auschwitz is near Sosnowiec and near--

Silesia.

Silesia. Silesia, yes. So we started to go on the way to that city. In the way to that city, we have to walk over a German patrol. And they was asking here, where you know now is time of war. Nobody is able to move from one city to the other. Where is your permission to go one city to the other? The same thing we are German Volksdeutsche. That means we are Polish, but descendant German. And we are going back. No, no, no, no. Now is not the time. They send us back.

This was in January. We crossed-- we took out our clothes. We crossed the river coming to the city, who he offered us to give--

This friend was there?

Yeah. We went in, in the city. And we starting to see that the Germans started to evacuate the city, because we went over Katowice, a big city. We saw all the books and all the offices, they start getting straight. We were going and singing in high voice German songs, three of us. They were giving us [NON-ENGLISH]. They giving us [NON-ENGLISH].

And then coming to search, because before Sosnowiec, we have to cross Katowice. Coming to Sosnowiec, we were waiting outside, and the men who knows the Gentile went in. The same sign, he was asking if he accepted to let you also in. Then he will send his son to advise you to come in. A few minutes later, maybe half an hour, the son of the Gentile comes and called us to come in, in his apartment. He opened his cellar. Then he give everybody in his room, have a cellar he put it his potatoes.

Root cellar.

Yeah, fruit cellar. Instead of fridge they did, but no fridge there at the time. He put us in the cellar during the day. And during the night, he was taking a choice, one hour to go back to warm up and then back.

One day, he comes we had a big problem. The German put it on the area--

The radio?

No. The-- [NON-ENGLISH] To shoot up planes.

Oh anti-aircraft.

Anti-aircraft. There near my home, in the soldiers has to sleep in my home. And I don't have other place, they have to sleep over your place. A view, or a spy ring, or something moving something, you and I, they will kill. Imagine what happened. But we were two, three nights under that pressure. And then they changed. Took out there, because the front was at one thing. He was with him up to the Russian comes in. This was in the half of February. In the half of February, I went back. I went back to my city, my bombed city.

And when I come back to my bombed city, and I was coming in to my home, I was living the Polish was surprised. She was thinking that I want to take back everything. I say, no. I want only a picture. Because I don't have no picture from my family. I want a picture. Let me see if I can find a picture.

She answered me, look. But for you, run away, it was just yesterday a Jew come back, they killed him. So I went out from my home. And I was living to see another old Polish friend. The other Polish friend was told me how is it possible that Hitler killed all the Jews. How you will survive? It's not true that Hitler killed all you Jews.

And the same story. Better for you to leave the city.

This was your friend?

Yeah. So I leave this. This is a friend. We have to get door by door our business, my grandfather over 100 years, he lived in Poland. This was the friend. So I left Poland. And I went with no direction.

So I was traveling to Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and then I went into a kibbutz in Bucharest Romania, on they way to go-- the way for go to Israel. I was seven months in kibbutz. [NON-ENGLISH], and I was the secretary of the kibbutz. And they decided to liquidate the kibbutz. And they sent all the people to Israel

I was asking a favor to my head from the kibbutz, telling, let me go back to Poland and see if some survive, maybe a sister, a brother, a mother. If somebody survived, he has to come to a certain place. So I went back and started to search out, and find out. Nobody was alive. So and that friend who lives now in London, we went together to Breslau, where there in Breslau during the end of '45 up to the beginning of '46.

In '46, I received permission to go to Mexico. And it come through three times the permission to go to Mexico. But I succeed to go to Mexico. And since then, I'm living-- this is short story. But I am living up today in Mexico. And thanks god I have two sons, four grandchilds, and things good. It was very hard what I want at the end is only a message, to leave a message.

I think the message would be repeated. But this is what I feel. That for me, for our generation, the gathering is not from the more important events. I was trying, and I convinced my son, and the others wasn't able because he has a child from two months, just born. And here my older son has children bigger and more age. I convinced him to come. And I was telling him, you are the option.

But only not the economic option. You are our--

Link?

Link?

Link in the chain.

No, no, no. He was morally responsible to not forget what happened to your responsibility, because to one you are the name from my mother, the other you are the name for my brother. Your children are named for my sisters. So you are the people who must take, if this is [NON-ENGLISH], this is [NON-ENGLISH] was between all things is giving him and making you responsible like all the children in the Jewish nation. I am very active in Jewish life. I was in Mexico.

[AUDIO OUT]