

--Taitz, capital T-A-I-T-Z, at the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Could you tell me your mother's maiden name, please, and could you spell her name? If you know.

Sena Pinkus-- S-E-N-A Pinkus-- P-I-N-K-U-S.

OK. And just your place-- where you were born.

In Konigsberg, Germany.

OK. Now you can just begin to say whatever you would like to say.

I do not know exactly where to start with this [INAUDIBLE].

Do you like to start perhaps with some of your prewar experiences?

Yes, I'll start close before the war. I was in my early 20s-- had my own business-- successful, in Kovno, suburb of Kovno-- Sanciai. I had a man working for me, a watchmaker, and his apprentice also.

Is it easier if I hold the microphone--

OK. Then came the Russians-- stayed for a while. When they came, I belonged to a second-degree citizen, because I had some money. I owned the store. A watchmaker worked for me as apprentice.

And it is a terrible feeling to be deprived of some rights. I wanted to be equal to-- with equals, with those who had all the rights. And I was speaking to some people, and they said if you would belong to a cooperative with the workers, you'll be equal with them. I put an ad in the paper-- directed the ad to other jewelers and workers, to gather in a certain place which I hired.

We met. I organized, and I created a cooperative of the watchmakers-- which, later, they made me as the leader of the group. And again I had all my rights. I felt so. And life went on normal. And again.

And one morning, the war started-- Germany, Russia. And it didn't take long. In a couple days had the Germans in. I stayed. There was some bombing. I hid myself together with the Gentile-- I lived in a Gentile neighborhood.

In Konigsberg.

No, that's all Lithuania. My business was in Lithuania. I lived in Lithuania most of my-- I was born there, but the life was in Lithuania. Except for a short time, which were driven by the Russian [INAUDIBLE] the first war. My father was killed in that time, and my mother and her three children-- sister, brother, and me-- survived the First World War. And then we came back. And later I established myself in this suburb.

While I was hiding, it didn't take long. It was over. And the Germans came in.

There was a feeling I could smell in the air. A Jew should not show his face outside. I had in some way by whispering of my good friends, the neighbors, the Lithuanians, it's better for me to stay home.

I had a motorcycle that was the nicest in the country-- Harley-Davidson, an American one. I belonged to a motorcycle club. When-- before the Germans took over, and before the day what I'm talking, the Lithuanians were in, and they were in some way ruling. That was the "partisans," they called themselves. And they took over the ruling over the Kovno.

And I later found out that they had full rights to do with a Jew whatever they wished. A dog with a tag had rights. A Jew, you could kill them. You could name them. You could rob them. There was nobody who would stop him or he would be responsible to.

And I heard Lithuanians came in to houses of Jews, drank their wine, raped their women, killed the men, and made themselves merry. The Lithuanians made themselves merry of the wonderful times which came for them-- to them.

One of those came to me. My motorcycle was staying outside. And he said, this motorcycle is requisite. I'm taking it away in the name of the law.

I said, what is the law? He showed me he's a member of this partisans. And I said, I need some paper to prove that you took it away. Maybe five minutes later, somebody else will come and ask it, and I will not be able to prove. He wrote me not that he's taking it.

I says, but you will-- did you ever drove such a machine? He says, I have a little, like, a bicycle. I said, this may kill you. This is a strong machine. Maybe I should drive you. That way, I'll be able-- I chose for myself to see what's outside, and he could have a chauffeur.

He says, all right. It's all right with me. Says, before I'm going-- and I don't know where I'm going, and I don't know what I'll encounter-- would you please go out to the neighbors. Ask them something about me. It will be maybe to my favor, if you know a little bit more about me, that you'll be able to tell to those which we will maybe encounter that you know something about me. Would you do me the favor?

He went out to the neighbors and came back and said, it's all right, let's go. I asked him to stop, while we were riding, to see some other jewelers which I know which were members of this cooperative. None of them was in. They ran away, I guess. They were maybe smarter or whatever.

He took me to the Kommandantur. It's a place with-- central place of those organized partisans. Says, wait here. Stay outside. I'll come down after a while.

And I says, if it is possible to get any little piece of paper to secure my rights, any kind of rights-- I should be able to open the door, go out outside-- I would be so grateful. He says, I'll talk about it. I'll be back after a while.

When he left, two friends of mine came with a motorcycle. Each had a rifle on his shoulder. We were members of the same motorcycle club.

One of them was in some accident-- wounded. I helped him. And on my motorcycle, he brought back to Kaunas. We were friends.

I'm glad you came, said one of them. His name was I think [PERSONAL NAME]. He said, glad you came. Because if we would catch you, we would have killed you on your motorcycle.

I am in charge of the all vehicles in Kovno. And I am taking away the all the Jews. Glad you came by yourself. Stay here. It's taken away.

I say, no, I have to stay here and wait for the man which told me to wait for him. I am his chauffeur. He said, you cannot go away? You stay and wait for me-- because this is requisite and taken away from you.

After a while came down the fellow whom I brought which came before him to take it away from me. And I told him, I cannot move. He says, it's all right. Let's go.

He took me-- I took him to the Seventh Fort. This was the center point from the partisans, where they brought the Jews to torture and kill. I did not know it, in this moment.

When I came there, partisan told me, are you hungry? Here, we have everything. It's the most wonderful place. There is food. There is drinks. There is anything you want.

Did you have your food? I'll bring it for you. I says, all I want is a little bit of paper or something to secure my rights of some kind.

He went away and came back with a very intelligent-looking fellow-- tall, slim. Are you his chauffeur? I said, yes. Is this your motorcycle? Yes.

Are you Jewish? I said yes. I speak a very-- I spoke very fluent Lithuanian. Some Lithuanian used to say they could recognize a Jew by his way of talking. Lithuanians quite often, when I would tell them I'm a Jew, they wouldn't believe me.

And after [INAUDIBLE] ask me, are you Jewish? I said yes. He said, then, the motorcycle is requisite. And you will stay here.

I said, why? He said, because you are Jewish. I says, is this enough reason to arrest me and leave my mother alone? What did I do wrong, and what did my mother do wrong?

He said don't you know the law? I said, what kind of law? I'm listening to the radio-- the papers. I don't get any.

I say, this [INAUDIBLE] here and everyone knows, and I don't have to tell you. You are under arrest, and you cannot move anymore.

And I believe in God. I believe God was with me. In some way, he had pity on me or some consideration for my mother.

He thought for a while and says, go home. I says, how can I go home? It is such a long way to go. And on the way I'll be arrested. How will I reach home?

And let me take your fellow whom I brought here, take him to my place, and then let me stay with my mother. He said, no, this machine will stay here.

And he called one of the fellows under his ordinance-- whatever. Get your rifle, and take him home. And I was taken home.

Later, some people told me they saw through the windows that a partisan was marching with me. They were sure I was taken to be killed.

When I came home, Mother was crying. The fellows which I met in the Kommandantur were there already. And they said to my mother, where is your son with the motorcycle? If I'll see him riding the motorcycle, he'll be dead, because we'll kill him while he's riding. And he's on the motorcycle.

It didn't take long they came. Where is your motorcycle? I says, aren't you ashamed? Weren't we friends? Scaring an old woman, for what?

The motorcycle is on the Seventh Fort. Here is the paper which I got. And the fellow took it. And this is his name, he is a member of your same organization.

He didn't waste much time. He says, I'm leaving right away, and I'll come back. Soon if one word is not true, be sure you'll not escape. I'll kill you. And that was the last time I saw him. That was my first encounter with the new regime.

After a couple days, a German came, a high officer. I heard later he was in charge of this suburb where I was living. He came with another Lithuanian from the same club.

The Lithuanian spoke a little bit German. And he told this high officer, he knows about a beautiful motorcycle. And the German came in, inside. Where is your motorcycle?

We showed him the paper. The Lithuanian read it, and he says, somebody, a man what we don't know, took it away, and he's gone. He says, may I correct it? What would you say?

I spoke in German. I said, a man of this partisan organization, in the name of the law, requisite it. And this is the paper, and I gave it under force. I wouldn't give it away to anyone. I paid for it. And this is the proof.

Where is he? I says, luckily, [PERSONAL NAME] was working not far from me, I thought. So I think he's working there.

He looked around. I had a beautiful radio. In those days, it was something new. When you press a button and the station would come-- Paris, Berlin, London, and so.

Take it out. I said, I paid for it. And that was the only way to get it-- by paying for it. I was still so stupid, I felt the man has his right to protect his belongings.

He looked at me and says, take it out. I said, it is mine. He had some kind what to drive horses with, a-- I don't know what you call it, a--

A whip?

A whip. And he hit me hard over my head. Said, Jew, take it out. My car is outside. It was enough for me to understand there is no time to hesitate. I took it out.

When I took it out, he says, where is the man you told me has the motorcycle? I told him, I think you were, there it was you had to pass through a gate and walking distance were five or eight minutes or so.

I told, I would like your man should go with me. Told him go. When we are going, the fellow says, you better run, because he killed a couple men already today. I'm afraid we can kill both of us.

We were running. We came to the place and asked, where is this fellow with this name written-- signed on the paper? He didn't come yet. He may come later-- was the answer.

We ran back. And the fellow reported, the man is not there. We don't know where he is. Says, may I correct it? What is it?

The man is not yet there. He didn't come yet. He may come a little later.

The home where I was living had a concrete wall, a pretty high one. He put me to the wall, put his hand on his gun, and said, where did you get this motorcycle we're talking about? Were you given by the communists because you are a member of the party? I says, I do not belong to any party.

Where did you get it? I says, I bought it. How did you get the money? I said, I had a jewelry store. Ah-- you had people working for you. You're a parasite, like all the Jews. People work for you, and you get yourself rich and have the luxuries.

No, I says, I'm a watchmaker, a master watchmaker. I had an apprentice and also a helper. We worked together. And this were part of my savings.

I don't know what happened. In some way, again, I say, God was by my side. He took off his hand of the gun, looked at me, and says, I'll give you a chance.

I am going in in the car. You will be running in front of my car. If you'll run fast enough, and if I'll feel not to kill you, you saved your life. If not, this is your last minutes of your life.

For all the time when he spoke with me, I didn't see anything. I saw him. When I raised my head, there was a crowd around.

Across the street was the fire department. All the firemen around, and maybe hundreds of people, a crowd, were watching. It was some theater, I guess. To me, it looked, that's the end. Doesn't matter, though.

I was pretty successful in my life. I didn't commit my-- I ran.

I ran. Naturally, I was younger than now. I was in my early 20s. I belonged to athletic club. I was a good skater. I ran--

I guess it pleased him, my running, in some way. Again, I'm repeating that must be God's help. God helped me in this moment.

We reached a corner. He waved to me to turn to the right. I ran again. It was around about a kilometer.

Then he waved me to the kaserne, the place where the soldiers-- you call it kasernes?

Mhm?

They used to stay, before, the Russian soldiers. Now they were gone. And German soldiers were there. Big buses-- trucks-- were there.

And I was taken right away to do work. My work was to pump, by hand, air in their wheels-- how you, the--

Tires.

--in their tires, which had to be inflated to certain pressure. After working for a while there, they called me inside assort and store munition-- guns. The pressure was a little bit lighter. Their approach was a humane one, inside.

While I was outside, one of the Germans took away my watch. I felt it was not right. Because I was still so stupid.

And I approached another German. I said, do I have a right to have a watch? He said yes. I said, but this German took away my watch.

The Germans had no uniforms, because it was a hot day and they were with their just shirts on. So they cannot do anything.

But when I was inside, I mentioned that, too, after a while, when the fellow saw that I worked so industrially and he liked me a little bit-- says could I get my watch back? He said [? all right ?], and took me out-- show me which one.

And I got scared. What will I do if he will deny the whole thing, and I, here I am accusing a German soldier? A Jew is accusing a German soldier of stealing [INAUDIBLE].

That fellow saw the way the German took away, and I wanted a witness, and here came the idea to me, and I asked one of the fellows-- I said, where is that fellow who took the watch from me? Here I'll have, in some way, a witness. He says, here he is.

We approached this one. And the officer which was inside, in charge of the munition guns, this give him back his watch. Did you take his watch-- says yeah. He took his watch from him-- called him in, inside.

We were ordered to get out. He was ordered to put on his jacket. He took away his. And they later took off his jacket. I think they arrested him. I got my watch.

Cruelty, discipline-- this is not my case, what I should talk about, but in some way that is just my-- they saw everything by order.

It's important.

It didn't take long. We used to come to work, a couple days later, and for this sorting till they didn't have to come anymore. Another order came, to put on yellow stars. And a Jew is forbidden to walk on the sidewalk.

I had to walk in the gutter, with a star. It is a terrible feeling. It sounds so simple, but it hurts so much. When you cannot step on the sidewalk, you must be like a duck and step on the sidewalk, but you're not. Because you are a Jew, in the gutter you must walk.

I was walking barefoot. My customers saw me and were crying. I saw them. There were good Lithuanians, and some of them were terrible. I know about it.

But they came, some of them, to me and approached me-- Simon, I never thought to see the moment, but what can we do?

It didn't take long, and another order came. We must leave everything-- leave our places-- not exactly leave everything; take with us to a certain ghetto place that was arranged for the Jews, which was surrounded by barbed wire. This was all done by Jews which-- by forced labor. And there were posts placed and guards with guns [INAUDIBLE] would watch.

And we were forced to be there by a certain date. If we'll not be in time, we'll be killed. Actually, in some way, it was a release, because to stay in the houses--

In my case, I felt like one of the people in-- I wouldn't say they were harsh to me. One fellow came-- one from the firemen, from across the street, came and took away a clock of mine. And his friends made him bring it back.

They were kinder to me. I felt, in some way secure-- not secure, but not so terribly, but while I am inside. But in different neighborhoods, they came in Jewish quarters where there were more Jews, and they know there are Jews. They didn't know that this man is also-- a man has a soul and is a kind man. To them, he's just a prey.

We hunt a deer. We go in season. We kill a deer. What the deer do? He didn't do anything wrong, but this is season. And that same way was the Jew that was free.

He could go and get rich. They were Lithuanians which went in Jewish houses, killed and robbed and raped, and took away everything that they could, and it was very dangerous. There was no law to protect them.

And in this ghetto, in some way, we felt we are in a place where, in some way, maybe, we will have some kind of right in this little place. On the other hand, there was no way out, because, to stay outside, we would be killed.

Now it started the procession marching to the ghetto. Jews usually didn't have horse and buggies-- didn't have cars and trucks. There were not too many. Where would you find this? And but still we tried to find as much as possible, these facilities to move whatever we had to the ghetto.

I remember, on the road there was-- the road was full with these buggies and pushcarts-- everyone-- the way he could push his belongings in one direction. We go to the ghetto.

Now, when we came to the ghetto, where can you put it in? You see, it was already figured out, there is so many square meters in each house, and so much is given for each soul to exist. I was only with my mother, and I'm entitled for so much place for a bed and maybe a chair and something next to it, and that's enough. And what's more, it's place for another also.

In the place which I hired for myself, I looked for a place and I found and I settled with a Lithuanian family. I paid them

to let me take it over, the place, when they'll move out. And I thought this will be mine, but it wasn't. So I had to--

We got one little room, which was a crowded a quarter to fitting for these two people, but we had to take in somebody else to give up, or they would put in some. But we had the choice.

And that was the beginning, when we started. And what we couldn't put in, we left outside or left it in our houses. For instance, there was nice furniture. Everyone tried to build his home.

I remember, I was very successful, and it was a time when money, we felt, will lose value when the Russians came and want watches. So their prices went up by the minute. In spite what the Russians took away a lot, I had still enough and bought beautiful things and all kinds of linens and dishes-- in case I need it, because money didn't mean much.

Everything was left. Mirrors-- some people say break it. I couldn't break it. I cannot break it. I don't have the heart to break. I-- I-- you have to had a feeling for it. The thing is to do me something wrong, and then I have to prove, why did he do it? And maybe they were right before I will destroy it.

And I left most of it. But that what we brought, in some way, we pushed together in. And a lot of things were left outside.

It didn't take long. The Germans started to come with trucks, and they went from house to house and pointed with their finger. And on anything they pointed their finger, Jews which they caught on the street had to take it out from the houses to the trucks and delivered certain places where the Germans took it. And later they sent it to Germany.

If anyone was foolish to take a piano or better furniture or conserve food in cans-- what anything could be of use to the Germans. Or if there were better clothing or linen-- everything was taken out.

I was also caught. And I was also delivering. And I remember the way I helped to take down a piano down the stairs to the truck, among other furnitures. And while I was delivering--

Some people took their dogs with them. And a dog was running, lost. And the German who watching us just aimed at a dog which was maybe 50 meters away-- shot at him, and the dog ran in among furrows of potatoes. The German told me, run-- tell me-- did I aim right? And I thought here will be the next target. Who knows-- he's going to kill me, too.

The dog was laying in the furrow. Through? His skin came out some-- I wouldn't say blood, but something came out. He lay dead.

I told him, I think you hit him. I pointed to my side. I must be in the heart. He was so happy.

After this day passed, I and a friend of mine-- I don't remember his name exactly now-- good fellow-- I had to carry him home, because it was too hard for him. He couldn't carry this thing so hard. And by the end of the day, he had some kind of attack or whatever. Barely, I didn't carry, but he was leaning on my shoulder. And I brought him to his home.

Next day, I went to some other work which I worked in the ghetto. While working-- my work in the ghetto was in a place they called Parama. This was a place which-- food was distributed from this. It was like a store, like you have a supermarket, in time of the Russians.

And this was a [? really ?] place with shelves, with everything to distribute food. You had to have good luck to get in in this place. But by chance, this Parama was in the same house where my room was with my mother. And just happened, the man in charge, the Lithuanian, was before it was taken over by the Jews, he went into [INAUDIBLE]. And we became friends and want to. And I said, could you help me to work in this place, before you leave? He says, I'll see that you should get a job.

And so I got a job-- what was an unbelievable chance. I thought, when I'll be there, I'll have at least a little piece of food for myself and my mother. But there was no more rationing for any employee, as for those who are outside.

We had a treat, the employees. The bread came in 2 kilos. When it was fresh, it weighed 2 kilos and 100 grams-- 2 kilos and 1/10. Next day, or in two days, when it dried, it became 2 kilos. When we gave out the rations, we would [AUDIO OUT]

--grams that will be this. I was weighing the bread but others giving out other food-- grains or whatever. They couldn't get anything, because everything was to the ground. The only place where you could get the extra was the loaf of bread.

But this 100 grams had to be distributed among everybody. I couldn't take anything to Mother. And if I would take it, it would be very little. I saw I had to look for something else.

And I put myself in a line by the gate, to wait-- somebody maybe will take me out to work. Now, about work.

Excuse me one moment.

They did not keep us just to feed us. They kept us because they had ideas they could use our work power. And there were some groups going out to work, to serve the SS, to serve those soldiers which stayed for a while for the go-ahead to construct something. After a while, they started to construct a big airfield.

In this time, it was smaller groups coming out. And there was a group going to serve the SS. I didn't care-- whatever-- I liked to get out. Maybe I'll go out. I'll be able to buy something, to get something.

And the group which I went, working for the SS, they were constructing-- building. And I mean, I am pretty young. Give me a hammer, and I'll work. And I was pretty good by the work.

But, with them, it was not enough to work. They had also little bit to show they are masters. For instance, I was sawing a board. By the normal way you saw, you pull up and down by close to a second would be ah, we'll take second up and the other second down. He would show me, that's the way to be sawing-- two, three movements to the second.

It is pretty hard. But when he's watching, you have to do it, because he doesn't joke. He wants to kill somebody now.

I passed the examination. I finished a board. I took the board, and I went to my work, what I had to carry it to the place that he went away. I don't remember if I had a chance to get out, to trade something. We had in our mind, maybe we'll have a chance to meet a Lithuanian, to give a shirt and get a piece of bread. I had somewhere under-- or maybe I put on two shirts or whatever. We still had something.

I don't remember if I brought something home, but I decided, this way, I don't want to find my bread, my piece of bread. I'll look for something else.

Now, when I spoke about work, I like to mention something. The fate of our ghetto was not just before-- because they liked us. We had to beg for survival. We knew already. They came reports-- people, leaders of this community, got their reports that, in smaller towns, they liquidated the Jews within two or three weeks.

There was an order, it should be Judenrein-- "clean of a Jew"-- some through by torturing before they limited, and some right away, some they made the men work for a while and keep the women separate. Some altogether driven in synagogue-- keep them there for several days without food and water and without letting them out, and then open the doors-- you stink, Jews. Get to the river. You have to be washed. And there was ready already the graves of some Jews who were taken out before and digged, and they would kill them there.

And so were eliminated the majority of our people in Lithuania. But the bigger towns-- Kovno, Shavl, Poniewiez-- still survived. There were a lot of us killed in the forts, in the houses, but still-- I don't can tell your numbers. I guess there is - if you look up there is recorded.

And these people, the leaders came, say don't destroy them. They could be useful for you. We have workers. We can do



any kind of work you can use.

We can sew. We are shoemakers. We are tailors. We are smiths. Whatever you have use for us, we'll do outside work, we'll say.

And they had an idea, they had to build a big airport, because they had to supply their armies, which were moving fast ahead. And this airport had to be built fast, and they needed thousands of laborers. And here we are, and they wanted to try us.

And this was in their mind-- to use us. And that's why they kept us-- let us stay and prepare the labor force. And it didn't take long, and they started to call out these labor forces. And we marched by the thousands to this airport, which, we worked 12-hour shifts-- day, night, man and woman.

And I went there. It was hard slave labor. I remember I am not-- I was not prepared for this work. But I learned fast, like all of us learned.

They put me to make cement. They by themselves were not prepared with their machinery yet, and we were mixing it by hand. There were some people pouring cement. Some were pouring this gravel, which were brought by other Jews. And I was put a can with water, and I was pouring the water.

And suddenly I felt a hit over my head with a stick-- stupid Jew! Don't you see it is too much water already? And in a moment, I became an expert, and I knew how much water I should do or not to do. And that's the way I started to be a cement mixer, together with the others.

Other people worked by leveling the plain-- because there were lower places, higher-- they would dig the higher, deliver it by wagons to the lower places, and fill it in. My wife was also working by those work. I tried whatever I could to get out of this work. And in some way, somebody who was working already in a [GERMAN]-- that was a house of tradesmen. They needed barbers, they needed shoemakers, they needed tailors, and maybe a watchmaker.

And a fellow approached me and said, I think I have a place for you. And I came there. And, being a good watchmaker, I worked for Omega. That was one of the best places in my country. This had a watchmaker. I worked there.

And I was called to the place. The man in charge liked me, and I was given the job. I had still my tools, and I started to work.

It didn't take long, and I took another watchmaker and another watchmaker. And I stayed there till they liquidated the [GERMAN]. And all of them had to go to other kind of work.

What were you told? What were you--

They didn't need to tell us anything. They just told us, you shouldn't come. I was-- when this was liquidated, [GERMAN] kerosene. This also is some miracle-- this fellow, I met--

One morning, I came a little late to work, because I had to look for a part for a watch which my other watchmaker, they had something. And I came late. And my group went out. They went with another group. And the other group was working very hard.

And in charge of this place was a fellow. They used to call him the [GERMAN], the "White Cap." And he was known-- a murderous fellow. He used to enjoy torture the people. And here he met this new fellow. And he taught me something to do, and I did it in normal places-- I want you should run.

And I felt that, some way, I have still some rights. I were working in this [GERMAN], I felt human and didn't run to the second. He gave me such hits with his-- always, he had a heavy stick in his hand, and he would hit.

By lunch, I left his place. I asked the man who-- the Jew who was in charge of the group, if I can go. I said, look, I'm going to my group. He says, go. But a fellow-- the German was not too happy with it, and reported in the ghetto that a Jew escaped. I should be punished.

And next day, a policeman came-- says, at night you'll come in jail. You'll have to sleep in jail, because you didn't come to work in the right place. That day, kerosene appeared with the watch. [? Hoerman ?] [GERMAN].

He needed a part for his watch. I says, for a part like yours I'll have to go to jail tonight. He said, why? I says, I didn't have the part, and I was looking for it early in the morning, because at night I cannot walk. It's curfew.

And while I was getting the part, I missed my group, and I wanted to go to work, because I have to work. And I thought they'll let me go to my destination, to my job, but he didn't let me go. By lunch, I asked permission by the man in charge of the workers. He let me. But the German reported I escaped.

He says, we are strict, but we are also orderly-- just. You don't deserve to be punished. And he brought it up to the men in charge of the whole airport. And by evening, I had a report that I should be released.

Now, this fellow used to come to me once in a while. And when I needed something, I would come to him. And again, there was some feelings.

And this fellow told me in conversations how he burned Jewish synagogues-- how he started to tear the Jewish prayer books and burn them, and then he put scrolls on them, and then they put some kerosene [INAUDIBLE] them and get out. This same person, when we didn't have light in ghetto, I approached him, he should give me carbide, you should put-- and there was some [INAUDIBLE]-- carbide and put water on it. By dropping the water, we'll get some gas, and the gas would create some light, and that.

He gave me carbide. When I needed winter wood, he wrote a special paper, that I should be given it this-- I should give in the ghetto, to the leaders of ghetto, in that is have, these people what have this paper entitled to get a truck-- a truck full of wood, to take to the ghetto.

After the war, I heard this paper supplied wood for the ghetto, this winter. This paper. Nothing told me that. Nothing was working in the Jewish community.

Now, this fellow, when he said that this [GERMAN] should be liquidated, he was in charge of-- I don't know how to call it. There was some kind an escape for him, I guess. There was [INAUDIBLE] a Polytechnicum. There were all kinds of machinery.

And usually, there were some French prisoners in this, and they would just waste their days working and playing, doing nothing. And he gave me a room, and I sat there with one of my watchmakers. And I would see that he should have his eggs and bacon-- what he needed, and food-- because-- through fixing watches, and I had my right to get out and see the gentiles. I would get him whatever he need. He had easier life, and I had a easier life, too.

And because of this, to stay in this place, I joined the group which was later Lager-- Gefangenenlager. With the time, things became harder and harder in ghetto, and they divided--

Excuse me. Was your mother with you, all that time?

All the time, the mother was me. She stayed home.

People were not too happy to go to the Gefangenenlager, because Gefangenenlager mean to work on this airport. And airport was hard slave labor. For me, it was different. I willingly joined it. And I went from there to work.

I remember, one day when we were taken not to this place-- not to the airport but in a different place. And we didn't do any work. The whole day, it was killing the day, and that was not usually with the Germans, they had always something

to do for you. And it suddenly came to my mind, there is something-- something wrong. And I remember, I wrote a song.

Do you remember it?

I have to think for a second. I wrote several songs in the ghetto. It was also sung in there.

Whichever way you can remember would be wonderful.

This song which I wrote in this moment, because we were led without knowing where we are led, and led like a blind-- when you don't know where you are led, you are all at the mercy of the leader. He will lead you according his wish, not according what you want. And you have to trust him. And we trusted and we are going to the airfield, and we were taken somewhere else.

[SINGING IN YIDDISH]

Night came, we were taken back to the camp. I have no words to describe what I saw. We came in. There were parents with children. And the first thing-- everyone ran to their child, but there was no child.

That was the day of the action. The old man and the children were taken away. And those parents-- I wouldn't say they were wild. They-- they were inhuman. They were beasts. They were running each other. They were running against the stairs-- the walls-- and hitting their head against the wall, crying, shouting, tearing their clothes, shouting, let's burn this-- that what's the use to postpone it? And don't you see, we'll be killed? What are we waiting for?

And the-- the-- the-- the shouts and cries and tears, and the mixture of altogether hell, if you can imagine. This was a--

You mine, you mine.

Which camp was that?

This was in Kovno Gefangenenlager. Have you seen sometimes, when you take away a chick from a chicken, or from any animal, it will fight for--

Its young.

--its young? We are now in the Yiddishe Momme. This is the symbol of goodness! A mother is ready to die for a child. And as we saw it in ghetto, when they took away the children from the mothers, mothers said, if the child goes, I go. It was no question he goes. And here mother comes home-- the child is not there.

And magnify it now in a bigger way. That will be enough for Kovno Ghetto. We are moving out. The Russians are coming closer.

[INAUDIBLE]

[INAUDIBLE]

I cooled off a little bit. I came to my senses a little bit.

You didn't lose your senses. [LAUGHS]

Maybe the sensitivities. Maybe it was the sensitivity. I don't remember in my life when I was-- there were moments in concentration camp, yes.

Now, when I wrote some songs there, and it was easy to write them, because when you are tense-- I think a human

being is like an instrument-- it vibrates your nerves, and you feel it. It touches you. You have to shout out, or it would hurt you.

And I remember the moment when we came in, in this Gefangenenlager. In charge of this was a German which used to train animals in circus. And he had his way of training Jews, too. It was the same system. Just be harsh, and they'll obey.

He also was told to keep a high spirit of the workers. If you want them to be healthy and be able to deliver work, they have to be in good spirit. Make concerts. Let them dance, let them sing, but order should be-- the women upstairs, the men downstairs, and any word you say must be obeyed.

We came in, in this Lager. There was less space. There were bunks. You had your little space where to lay your-- what belongings you had-- a little bag, and what in it, and that's all. And then was a straw sack and, under your head, a straw pillow.

You had your covers you brought with you. We had our covers. I think we had some clothes-- our clothes we had with us. We our coats. We could hide in the back of our pillow. And in some way, we felt we are home again.

And a fellow came out with a Mundharmonika and started to play. And some people started to dance. And by the door, a girl in the early teens, maybe even 12, 13-- I don't-- a young girl-- was watching this dancing and music. This fellow in charge of this camp because in labor place, noticed her and started to run after her. And he caught her and naturally gave her a hard for this crime, because she shouldn't be even by the door.

And this was the first song I wrote in this place. I wrote before, even, something. And I will sing. This is a very easy, simple, little song, that observation.

[SINGING IN YIDDISH]

That was the first song in this place.

I'm Sonia Taitz, Simon Taitz's daughter. And this is the translation, in English, of the song he just sang. The song is called "The Commandant Asked the Jews to Dance."

"Sing and dance, O Jews. Make your lives happy. It's not a joke, O brothers. This is what our rebbe wants. You should only be cheerful and happy as children play. Now, this is really nice. Now you understand.

A little girl stands by the door, straining her ear to hear. He casts her a glance. I think she'll have to pay too much.

She raises her legs and bounds away-- to bound away-- trying perhaps to save herself. But she has no luck. Her prayers do not help her.

Upstairs, a sad child cries. With tears, she asks her mother-- tell me, Mother, tell me my sin-- and all our sins, together."

Now, what was the crime of this girl? When we came, we just entered maybe an hour or two ago to this camp. I don't remember to be told that the women which were upstairs and the men downstairs-- that no men should enter the women's quarter or no woman should enter the men's quarter. In this case, the girl didn't even go inside. She was by the door.

But to scare us, to prove to us that he is strict-- a law is a law, even which we don't know about-- we have to obey. And this should be taught and understood by us, that anything what is said and even not said, we should feel. And that's why the girl was beaten up, when she stand by the door and was listening to this so-called entertainment. [INAUDIBLE].

To keep us in shape, according the German system or whatever, we had also be entertained. And they encouraged to make concerts. And at one of the concerts, this song was sung, which, I wrote it. The lyrics are by me. The melody is not mine-- music is not mine.

In those days, things started to change. The Russians were moving ahead, the Germans started to retreat-- and pretty noticeable. It was springtime.

We were behind windows which had their gates. And through the gates, the sun rays came through and hit the patches--

The yellow--

--the yellow patches on me. And here I am writing the song or telling about sunrise which hit the patch-- yellow patch, which were. And there is a hope that the spring will come and freedom will come. But I could not say it in a way that it should be interpreted by the Germans something revolting. A Jew would understand it his way; a German would see some-- just a song about spring.

[SINGING IN YIDDISH]

This is an English translation of the song. "The spring is coming on. The winter is falling from its throne. Reflected on yellow stars, through the iron bars, speaks a ray of sun.

The chill is fading away, and suffering has had its day. You will now avoid the suffering of the winter's torment. O you light, you ray, from a spring of sunlight, I want to beg you-- retreat. Leave me alone.

Look-- my door is heavily guarded, my sufferings infinite. My pride is downtrodden-- all forbidden. My garden is gravel and sand.

Go, and return, with real happiness-- not through bars, and not on yellow patches. Bring in freedom. Bring in peace. Bring light and rays which would make disappear destitution and tears."

I can hold it, if you like.

This is a moment in this Gefangenenlager, in this camp, which, after they counted us, they checked on us-- we are lined up and ready to march out to work-- by my side was a friend of mine, by the name Brenner.

What was his full name.

I don't remember his first name. I remember the second name. He had a wife and a little girl. She was maybe a year old maybe-- about so. And when he-- so was turning to me, he wiped of a tear off his face. Was said, that's tear of my daughter. She was crying when we parted.

This was enough to make me write this song. Stop for a moment.

We would start the day with a whistle. The men in charge, besides the German, [INAUDIBLE] what they call him. Was a nobody named Tomsha. And he would blow the whistle, and everybody would jump from his bed, get ready, and run out on the center of the-- how you call it-- a yard-- take his place to be counted and then march.

[SINGING IN YIDDISH]