Mr. Greenman, reel 5. You said they wanted you to work. What was the work?

Well, I found out what work. Any work I didn't want to do it. I didn't want no work at all. But they sent me the first day with a group of Dutch Jews, men, to outside Westerbork camp. And when we arrived there, we had to unload trucks of stones, bricks. What was happening, they were building a barrack for the SS. And I did this a few hours in my way. I thought to myself, I made up my mind. I'm not going to do this tomorrow.

So when that day was over, we marched back to the camp. And there was a kind of labor exchange, a bureau where you could ask about work and all that. And I spoke to the chief. I said, I'm not going to-- I'm not going out to camp tomorrow. I'm not going to work for the Germans. I'm British and I don't want to work.

He said, well, you got to work. Everybody works here. So I thought, well, if I don't work, what are my own mates next to me going to say? You're not working. We got to work. Whether it's inside the camp or outside the camp, you've got to work. I said, all right. They're going to make me [NON-ENGLISH], which means one who gets food for the-- I said [NON-ENGLISH] for the British barrack. I think it was barrack 69 or 68, 67.

That's all, right you do that. That meant that I got up in the morning, or someone woke me up. I usually go on myself, say about 4:00 to 5:00 to be in the kitchen to get milk for the children. So you went to the kitchen, and a metal container filled with milk, and you took it to the barrack. And you gave it there and they sorted it out for the kids.

Then about 8 o'clock, you went again and you came back with some tea or coffee and bread. Bread, it was very scarce. Bread must have been something else to eat. Then at midday, half past 12:00, you went again, and in the evening. The soup-- usually it was soup or goulash, or something like that, or cabbage. Food wasn't too bad. But there were too many people, so there was one or two occasions where there was not enough food.

On the whole, we could eat more. There wasn't enough. For instance, we had a chance to send GIRO forms to people who you left behind, in my case my neighbors. And you put on there, please send me that food or this, or repair batteries for the torch, or whatever it was. So I asked them to send me some food. So my neighbor used to send me glass jars with brown beans. It's nice like Heinz baked beans, but these are the Dutch ones. And more than once or twice, the packets arrived and the glass was broken, so we had to throw it away.

But if they did arrive, you sat on a table with eight, of wooden tables, and you share it out, even if you didn't know who it was. But you got to know them people and you share them out. I remember there were three brothers there who were later interned-- old friends of mine-- interned because by chance, they had their passports and the SS okayed that. So for the while being, they were in prison in Westerbork, but they went later on to be interned.

They came back. There was only two alive, I think now. And they had loaves of bread, small ones, and they're eating it. I'm blooming hungry, and the kid, and we haven't got enough. So I said, if you give me bread, I said, as soon as my passport comes in, you'll get it back. And they gave me a small loaf.

And as it happened, I had a niece in Amsterdam-- who also was sent away later on, didn't come back-- who sent me two long loaves of bread. Beautiful. And a loaf of bread you could buy the black market inside the camp. How they got it, I don't know. About 10 pounds at a time, more than that. So I opened the parcel and two of those loaves are out.

And everybody's looking. So I thought to myself, I'll keep my promise. They gave me bread. And they didn't have to have it, but I gave it to them and they accepted it all. So we had this loaf of bread, I remember. Well, time went by.

You were in barracks with other--

British.

British-Dutch--

British-Dutch, yes.

--people.

About how many would that have been?

Oh, about 100 or so. Yes.

And were you kept separate from the other people in the camp?

We were kept separate. We slept separate. The Dutch-Jews were in our barracks, but you could mix one another. But when nighttime came you went, you found your own barrack because you was registered at that barrack. So you had to do with the British-Dutch.

Was the camp crowded or did they only take as many people as there was room for?

Once or twice, Westerbork was overcrowded, I remember. Everybody was cursing and this and that. Sleep was bad. Rowing went on. My poor wife and kid suffered a lot through that. My wife wasn't there, not one of them. Yet some were rowing one another. Anyhow--

Because it was an English, British-Dutch barracks, did you speak English?

I spoke English. I even gave conversation English to about half a dozen or eight British-Dutch who didn't talk English, only were born in England, that went straight away to Holland like by myself. And the Berlitz Method, I was telling them how to pronounce it, in case the British come in. And they won't take long. Boy, a couple of months and the British come here. They know what to talk about. That's how we thought. And probably that went around, that this fellow is teaching English there. Probably I would not have done it, but I did.

So that went on for October right up to Christmas. In between, there was a little bit of variety now and then in the barracks, which I did not enjoy. My feelings in there were not for laughing and singing. My child became very ill. Went into the child's hospital barrack and became very skinny, very thin.

What was the problem?

He had something in the ear. We only could see him through the window. Little champ. They were so thin, his legs, like legs from a table. Must have had a temperature and all that. Anyhow, it probably saved us a few weeks from not being sent away sooner. In the meantime, my father was picked up in Rotterdam with 200 Dutch men and sent to Westerbork. I'd made myself a nuisance by speaking to Kurt Schlesinger. When are we going to be interned? We're British subjects. Didn't hear.

Can you tell me about Schlesinger? Who was he?

Schlesinger was a German-Jew. He was born in Gelsenkirchen in Germany. And he was the chief inside the camp. He was the Hitler inside the camp. He was the head that gave the orders, and of course, a few of the others surrounding him. He used to wear Wellingtons, walk through the camp.

And he was a nasty man, as one can read now-- with what I've said years ago, he was a bad man-- in the books coming out recently. For instance, my father was picked up with 200 men from Rotterdam and sent to Westerbork. I was awakened by one of the maids. Leon Greenman, there's 200 Rotterdam men coming this morning. They're in the barrack down there.

So I dressed and went. I thought to myself, my father might be there. Yes. I was not allowed to get in, so I climbed on to a window shelf, opened the light on the top, and shouted out, Barnard Greenman. And 200 men were there, talking and smoking and the noise. And they heard me, and my father came to the window. I said, Dad, don't leave the camp

tomorrow morning. Stay in. I'll come and get you and I'll take you to Dr. Neuberger. Dr. Neuberger was a German Jew, a lawyer. And professor Alfred Myers, a well-known law man in Holland, one of the biggest and best-- those two were trying to get my British papers. I said, they can do it for you. It never happened that way. They could not. They didn't succeed.

So I was standing there, talking to my father when somebody pulled my leg. And I heard, who is this up there? Another voice said, this is the Englishman. That's the Englander. That was the assistant of Schlesinger and Schlesinger was with him. He said, come down, Schlesinger, he said, or I'll send you to Poland. I said, you can't send me to Poland because I'm waiting for my British papers. I said, and why can't I talk to my father who has just come in? And then he walked away. Well, the next morning, I took my father to Dr. Neuberger and explained it to him--

Dr. Neuberger was presumably also an inmate, a prisoner at camp.

Yes, a prisoner like myself. All prisoners in there, all Jewish. So he took particulars on my father and we stayed there in the camp. My father had a barrack. I had a barrack, where I was with my wife and child. So we saw one another every day until the day came. Yes, while father was outside yet, before he was taken in, we had a solicitor in Rotterdam, who so-called was trying to get us out of Westerbork. He never succeeded. Later on, I found out that he was an anti-Zionist, so he didn't help me. Stevens, his name is. Lives in Rotterdam. Stevens and others wanted a lot of money to see to it. It seemed like a lot of corruption, you know.

So I did this in the camp, that type of work I did, getting the food for the people. And days went by. And so often a week, I went to find out if any of my papers had arrived. And I did see one letter, of which I got a copy, which says, so and so and so and so is to be held back and the question of agreement is under view. I was glad at last someone--

Who was this letter from and to?

From some authority out in Germany. Where from I don't know. I don't know exactly. But after that-- they told me that. After the war, I saw that letter and I had a copy made of it. I got a copy at home. But there was something ready for me. I had only a matter of time.

So my child came out of hospital. He was still very ill. And all of a sudden one morning, about 2:00 in the morning, the lights went on in the barrack-- of course in various barracks, but in my barrack. And there they called out a name. Some people had to be deported, Dutch-Jews, English-Dutch, everything. And it was Greenman, Leon; Greenman Barnard Van Dam; Esther Greenman, or Greenman Van Dam, Esther.

I was surprised. Said, what could we do? We could do nothing. There was a man on the table calling these things out. He didn't mean nothing to me and he couldn't do nothing. The only thing is I had to get to Neuberger. I got dressed and I went out to Neuberger's office. Woke him up and told him, look, I got to go. They called me up. He couldn't understand it. He was also flabbergasted. So I went back and got my wife and child and waited till about 8:30, when you were let out of the barrack.

Had other people been called the other night?

Yes. Yes.

Did you know where they were going?

To Auschwitz. That's the main word we heard, Auschwitz. Work. Work.

And what did Auschwitz mean to you?

Work. Work. I didn't think of people being killed, no. If you were healthy and strong, you could hold it. So half past 8:00 the next morning, we got out of the barrack. Everybody had to stay in otherwise. Only those that were called up had to walk to the gate and pass the gate into the trains.

When was this?

On the 17th or 18th, January 1943. I said to my wife, look. There's Schlesinger standing, talking to Hammeke. Hammeke was the SS commander outside the camp. We had to stay with the whole lot. But Schlesinger was his co-operative in camp. I said, there's Schlesinger talking to Hammeke. I says, Else, you walk on the side, the baby in your arm. I'll walk next to you.

And when we get to Schlesinger, we'll stop. And you have to say to him, Mr. Schlesinger, we need not go. We need not be deported because our papers are on the way. We did that. We stopped. My wife said that. He looked at us and he looked at Hammeke. He said, that's been refused in The Hague. They got to go. That was the last word. Pass through the gates into the train.

The doctors came by the trains and I showed my baby. Look, he's still ill, but he couldn't help me. Once in the train, you're finished. Right about half past, 10:00, quarter to 11:00, the train leaves over the border into Germany via Bremen. It's 36 hours journey to get into Birkenau.

Would you describe the train, please?

Train where we could still sit, covered. Not open trucks, but ordinary passengers train at that time yet. There were about eight of us in a compartment.

I just want to record on this, the train left and we were on our way to Auschwitz. I didn't hear then of Birkenau. Nobody knew of Birkenau. When I came back from the camp, I knew that Birkenau and Auschwitz were two different things next to one another. But the people outside didn't know about Birkenau. When I said Birkenau, they didn't know what-- so every time a question came up, I said Auschwitz. Auschwitz.

What did you have with you?

We each had a blanket and pillowcase with some medicines.

The same as before?

As before. And my wife had made for herself and the child a sick cape with a pointed hat covering the shoulders halfway. We had very heavy velvet curtains. And she had cut them up and made one for the child and one for herself.

What about food on the journey?

No. I don't remember. There was no water, no food for the kids, although they said a wagon has gone along with food, but we didn't get it. But I just want to trace back that when Schlesinger said, they got to go-- when he got back to his office, say 11 o'clock, and he opened his morning mail, he found papers in there that I, wife, and child should be-- what do you call it? I forgot the word now. What's the word?

Mean that you should be kept behind and not deported.

Not deported and that I would have been under Red Cross protection.

Interned.

Interned. How do I know that? Well, I was in Auschwitz, see-- February, March. January, February, March. March, April, May, June. June. Summer months I was in Auschwitz. A very warm day. The windows were open, the barrack where I was. I'd been shaving people, I think. And somebody outside called, hey, Leon, come outside. Somebody wants to meet you.

So I came outside and I met a man. And he introduced himself as Mr. Jacobson from Westerbork. He had been sent also to Auschwitz. But he had worked on the administration. And he said, Mr. Greenman, you're a very unlucky man. I said, why? What now? What have I done now? No, he says. Your train had left a quarter of an hour, 20 minutes-- your train had left a quarter of an hour, 20 minutes after that. Your name was paged all over the camp. Your papers for internment had arrived.

What could I do? So I hold Kurt Schlesinger responsible for not opening his mail before. If he would have, he would have held my family out; Eddy Hamel, an American Dutchman; Rostock and his wife, English-Dutch; and who knows how many more. Those people went under because of his badly performed work. So we arrived--

It sounds as if he didn't care because he missed--

He didn't care. He didn't care. I read--

Saving his own skin in collaboration with the SS.

Well, I don't think they would have ever sent him away. He was too much German first, and probably Jew the second category. If he wouldn't have been a Jew, he would have been a second Hitler.

Before you progress, do you have any other reminiscences about him in the camp, in Westerbork?

Only that he didn't like me, and what I just been saying, that he told me he'd send me to Auschwitz and he didn't care. He never listened to me. And everybody was afraid for him, kind of frightened of him. What he was saying was master. You do it and that's it. Lately, I can read in the books-- I always look in the books for his name. If they're there, then I'll read what kind of man he is. If the young girls agreed with what he said, they were allowed to stay longer. If they didn't, they weren't-- that type of man, not caring. They didn't expect any of us to come back and to tell them or to find them. I've been seeking for this man for years, and certainly on paper since '76, to the American Bureau of Criminal Investigation, war criminals. I've never had an answer. Gave them all the information, photograph. I still wait for an answer.

There is a book lately came out, in which Schlesinger is mentioned. And I wrote to this author in America, can you give me information about Schlesinger? And he wrote back, Schlesinger, I think, was living in Rotterdam and I've been looking for him in America. And he says presumably he's dead. Oh, if it's so, I missed him again. Recently in Rotterdam, in Amsterdam, I phoned the Department for Wartime Investigation and Documation.

I asked them-- because they sent me a letter about Schlesinger upon my inquiry, where he was. They couldn't tell me. I said, this man was apparently a criminal. He did this and do that. He said, it's none of our business. If you want to follow that up, you've got to go to the Minister of Justice in Holland. Well, that's a very big and difficult thing to do. They didn't care. I was arguing with him on the phone for over a half an hour. They didn't want to know. I say, you don't mind what people you had in the camp? You don't want to talk or write about it. I hope he's still alive and I may meet him one day. Anyhow, I was there. We arrived at Birkenau.

On the train journey, you said it was 36 hours.

About 36 hours, yes.

And no food?

No food. No drink.

Toilets?

I didn't leave. I didn't leave the compartment. I don't think the wife left.

What about sleeping?

Sleeping? Just sit and sleep. And in turn, we gave one another the baby. And I could sleep. One might sleep. You're thinking and dozing off and talking. And what I talked about was this-- if I don't come back, you may marry again. Find a good man who is good for the child. And she said, and if I don't come back, if I'm ill or something like that, you take a wife who is good for the child. That's how we were talking. We didn't know then what was going to happen to us. Only we knew it was a cold country. You could catch flu or influenza, whatever it was, and you could not come back. All the work was too heavy. We didn't know.

And how was your son behaving at this point?

Well, a bit sleeping through, you know. Sleeping through. More or less, he had a temperature and I think he was ill. He was ill. And I remember, there was an old couple there in the name of Van der Zandt. He was a photographer from The Hague, as we got a little bit in conversation. But I didn't hear of them anymore.

Anyhow, we went and it stopped again. The train went on and it stopped. And at last we arrived at a place, which we didn't know then what it was, but it was Birkenau. Birkenau is going to be the greatest extermination camp there is. They got the gas chambers there and the ovens. There were 800 people of us that were left at Westerbork that morning. It usually is more, usually 1,000, 1,200, all the [INAUDIBLE].

The train stopped. I got up and looked through the window and I saw heaps of snow. But have a good look, here and there. A corner of a suitcase is sticking out. I thought, that's funny, luggage. They said they're going to get it later on when the snow is gone. Then the bullying come. Get out, [GERMAN]. Leave everything behind. Leave everything behind? It's cold. Leave everything behind, [GERMAN], all what we had-- blankets, medicine. And we got out and we stood there empty-handed. Then they separated the women from the men.

Could you describe what it looked like, what you saw? There was a platform with the snowy heaps of suitcases.

Those were suitcases from people.

Mr. Greenman, reel 6.

You were describing the scene on arrival at Birkenau.

Yes. We were bullied out of the train and there we stood, waiting for things to come. It must have been about two hours, past 2:00 in the morning. It was dark. Only a blue light was shining on the platform. And I saw a few SS men walking up and down. And they separated the women from the men. So I stood, say, right in front of the men. And I could see my wife there with a child in her arm. She threw me a kiss and she showed the baby, like that. And then all of a sudden, one of the women ran away from where she was, towards her husband, hysterically. Probably she sensed something.

Halfway she was met by an SS officer, and he let a club come down on her head. She dropped to the ground and he kicked her in the belly. That was new to me and to all of us. And it went so quick that the shock wasn't over when he turned around and counted 50 men from the men standing there, by placing his hand on his shoulder-- you, you, you, boy's club. 50 men. And then one of the prisoners in striped uniform, who had been there already, commanded us to follow him.

Well, we turned to the left and we walked a little way. And we walked two or three minutes. A truck arrived, stopped almost near us, slowly. And on the truck, all men, all women, children, babies, and in the center my wife and child, standing up.

Those people supposed to have gone to the bathroom to have a bath, to eat, and to live. Instead, they had to undress and into the gas chambers. And two hours later-- and that's a long time-- two hours later, those people where ashes, included my wife and child. We didn't know that. We thought we'd see our wives every weekend. That was told us.

At this point, when you saw your wife and child for the last time, did they see you as well?

I doubted. I called out to her, but the engine was running and I didn't see her face turn below to look at me. No.

How could you tell it was she?

She and the baby had those pointed capes. And they stood up to the light, as if it was meant to be like that, that I could recognize them. Otherwise it would have been amongst probably people you wouldn't recognize it. And a picture, I'll never forget it. It's the very last thing I saw of my wife and child. So from the 800 people, 50 men were sorted out to work and to die. Of the women, about four or five good-looking young women were taken out, probably for Dr. Mengele.

What had you 50 in common who were taken?

What do you mean in common?

Why were you chosen?

Ah. Probably we stood in the front. I stood in the front. Probably physically, we weren't old.

Young and fit?

Yeah, so he must have been taken them.

Who was doing the sorting?

The putting the hand on the shoulder was the SS officer who had kicked that woman. Yeah. And you couldn't do nothing. In a normal way, you'd say he would have beaten you there, and then he would have-- because you were a witness. He didn't.

That woman on the platform was your first inkling.

Yes. That something was wrong, yes. Yes. Bodily, what I saw there. Yeah.

So then the 50 of you were taken off?

We marched away to another barrack. We marched inside a barrack. It wasn't a large barrack, small one. And as I got in, the floor was covered with envelopes, photographs, papers, heaps, and I couldn't understand what it was. Photographs, all people, all the people that were coming in probably and all the papers robbed from them, and God knows where they are now. Probably put to work or what.

I showed my birth certificate and my paper that I had to two men. They were not in uniform. They were a kind of kapos, I should say, in civilian clothes. Probably Polish or Russian. I don't know who they were. But they got all my papers, slung them to the floor, and wanted to slap my face. We were asked any watches we had on us or gold or tobacco. Well, none of us had none of this. We had done that already in Westerbork. They've taken everything we had.

So we were marched to another barrack. I had to undress. I had my thick winter coat on. All closing for a coal country. We had to undress, and there we stood. Then, in turn, we sat on a chair and our hair were clipped very short. Hair was taken away underneath the body and under the arms. Another one had a stick with a bit of rag on it, dipped it in a container with paraffin oil, paraffin, and dabbed us with paraffin, the so-called cleaning for lice, or something like that.

Then we went into another department from the barrack, the wooden barrack, and we had a hot shower. And we stood there until the water was turned off, and then we had to lay down on the wooden floor to dry and wait. So there we stood and laid, 50 men, 50 Dutchmen looking at one other, laughing because you look silly naked and short and long.

Then in comes a kapo, which we know now was a kapo. He passed by us. And some of us asked what happens with our wife and children. Where are they now? And he happened to be a Belgium kapo, as some of us said. I didn't hear it myself. But he did point up there, like that. So we said, he's mad. He must have been a long time here. He is mad. He wasn't mad. He meant through the chimney. Smoked, finished. And we didn't understand it.

Then we came into a barrack and we were given a vest or underpants. And at that time we still had somebody's civilian trousers and a jacket of people that have been killed, murdered. We didn't know that. You had no time to think it over. You know, you were as if you were a dreaming all the time.

Then we were chased outside a barrack, and there was barbed wire on the searchlight, electrified. There was a strip of ground covered with snow. And thousands of men were staying there that arrived before us. Of course, we all were bunches. Then came the drilling, the kapos. They said in German, [GERMAN], "with five of you." It meant five behind one another, and the next five.

Form up in groups of five?

Yes. And we didn't understand it. We didn't understand the German. So as we stood, tens or eights or 15s, or whatever it may be, we were kicked away after the fifth. You know, those were kicked away. So 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 were kicked away and had to form another one, and that went on until we knew what they meant. All of a sudden we heard a shot and we went quiet. And I saw two prisoners carrying a man who had tried to run away. He was shot by the SS.

And the word said that if you want to go ahead, you do it. We'll do the same to you. Well, we didn't want to be shot or killed. We didn't know what was going to happen yet. Then we were chased into a barrack. We had nothing to eat all that time. Then comes in containers with soup. We get into the bunks. Had no mattress. Some had hardly two or three wooden planks to lay on.

I found a bunk, a third bunk up with my American friend, Eddy Hamel, American-Dutch. He's no more. And we lay down on top, talking. It was cold. And he was a professional footballer formerly, as he told me. He was big. And he was very warm, and we sat back to back to get warm. And we talked about our miserable things, what we had seen up to that.

Then food comes in, containers with a black, dark-looking liquid with a lot of leaves in it. And I was hungry. I climbed down and I queued up and I got some. I acted. I was hungry. I didn't know what it was. But others said, we don't want that mud water. Anyhow, it went on.

What did it seem to be when you tasted it?

No taste. A kind of watery, a thicky water, and it looks like the leaves of cauliflower, I should say, something like that. I don't know what it was. I didn't care. I was getting something in me because I'm a good eater. You saw it.

[CHUCKLES]

So we're laying there in our bunk and all of a sudden a tumult went on. And we looked and there was a man, one of the prisoners who had been there before, probably a Pole or Russian, young fellow, about 20. And he's being beaten up by another. There's a bit of a kapo. First his face. Bum, bum, bum. Then he came like that. Then he kicked him.

He covered his face.

Covered his face so his body was bare. So he got kicked and hit, kicked between the bed. Then he went like that. Then his face was uncovered. Then he went back to the face. And it went on like cat and mice. That was also new to us. Anyhow, we let them go.

And then what I remember is I had to do nature's call. I climbed down. It was very quiet in the barrack. Everybody was

asleep, I dare say. And I walked outside and I did my duty outside. Of course, what was standing there was a wooden bucket on four wooden legs full of dirt. I could never have carried it by myself outside to empty it. So I did my duty outside, and I came back and I got up. Nobody had seen me.

Very lucky I was because half an hour later or so, they found a man outside doing the same thing that I done, brought him in, and beat him up. The rule was that if the bucket was full, you had to carry, two men, to carry it outside, empty it, and bring it back again. Those were the dirty conditions.

Then comes the day that we get our striped uniform, but that's much later. I want to go back a minute. There comes a day that we-- the next day we're going to have our numbers tattooed. We get into another barrack. We queue up. And your name is put down, say Greenman Leon, British by birth, London-born, Jewish.

Well, we were Jewish, but there was non-Jewish amongst us. Write number, so and so. So you get tattooed, 98 to 88. They go so quick that you can't think. You can't say nothing. You only think-- you feel like a rogue, a gangster. And your name is never mentioned again, only your number. Now, the man who tat--

You numbers on your left arm, lower arm, near the wrist.

Yes.

Were everyone's number done in the same way?

Yes. If you had three numbers, very early prisoners had bigger numbers, you see they're getting smaller. Now those with six numbers are still smaller than this. You had those numbers also on your uniform later on, the front of your chest, and the side of your leg, trousers. The little triangle here is a sign that you're a Jew.

Triangle below the number?

Yeah, below the number. I got this-- we got this-- later on. Of course, in the beginning, they gave everybody a number like that, Jew or non-Jew. And probably it caused somewhere discomfort or whatever in the administration. So we got this later on.

Were there other distinctions for other categories, socialist or communist, homosexuals, and so on?

Oh, yes. Yes. I'll come to that. They colored triangles on your uniform. But the man who had taken my name on the card, he could talk English when he saw London, England. He talked English to me. He was a Viennese Jew, young fellow. I said, what's going on here? Tell me, what-- how? Of course, I wanted to know so I could tell the fellows.

He said, there's three things I'll tell you. Do what I tell you to do or they'll beat you up and you'll have to do it. Don't come into the hospitals because you won't get much to eat. You'll die. And don't drink the water. The water is here bad and it gives you dysentery, which will land you in the hospital. Always remember that.

Was that true about the water?

Yeah. We didn't have a wash for three weeks. We had no face wash for three weeks. And when we did have it, washing the horse-- the barracks in Birkenau, made of wood, were former Polish cavalry barracks. Outside on the doors are red enamel placards, "Cavalry of the Polish Army." And they had rebuilt them and put wooden bunks in there where we could sleep. So the horses had to drink from long, kind of-- what do you call it?

Trough.

Troughs. And they were in another barrack. And the third week, we are all now going to get a wash, and we had to walk to it. And it was all gray, dirty water. And we sloshed. And I drank a little bit, just a little. It was lovely. Of course, there was no water. We didn't drink no water. It was not allowed. We scratched pieces of ice from the window or bits of grass.

You were a group of 50 who were separated out initially. Were you kept together with those 50 or were you mixed in with some other people?

In the beginning we kept together, 50 boys. 50 boys. And one of us said, boys, fellows, we're not going to talk about our wives and children anymore. They'll be all right. He was the first one-- he must have got a good hiding. I never got over it. He was the first one to die. And we had to carry him out on a morning. It was as thin as a sick rabbit, skin and bones.

And he had to be counted. If at morning everybody can be accounted, then you're written off. And the next day or the next evening, you recount it all. But you must carry it out. So he's laying out the barrack while we're all being counted. And they count the dead ones as well. He was the first one to go. He was a Hague fellow, hairdresser. Baruch [PERSONAL NAME] his name was. When he died, I said, boys, I'll take his boots. Got my shoes, given up. And it was 6 and 1/2 instead of 7. And I walked in them for days and then I had to put them off at the bath. I saw fit in them.

Were the shoes you were wearing shoes that had been allocated to you, someone else's shoes, or had you retained your own shoes?

In the beginning you retained your own shoes. If they were very good at this, they were taken away from you and somehow they gave you a pair of rotten ones. Because good clothes, such as the good pullover my wife had knitted for me, was taken away by one of the prisoners seeing to us. He put it inside his jacket. Of course, he could sell that for other things in the camp or outside the camps.

The boots we got were wooden, wooden clogs. Very bad for the heels. Mine, anyhow, which I had to wear later on, they gave me holes in my heels. There were no shoelaces. I fasted them with pieces of wire, which I found on the ground. But you asked me about the colors, the colors we had. We had a red triangle on our uniform, striped uniform.

At what point did you receive these uniforms?

After the third or fourth week. Then the civilian clothes were taken away, in my case anyhow, in our case, and we were given uniforms. But in those seven weeks I was-- seven or eight weeks-- at Birkenau, a lot of things happened. A lot of things.

Describe the uniform, please.

It's white and blue stripe uniform, which you sometimes see now in the cities. If I see a lady or a man with a shirt, blue/white stripe, it brings me snap-back to Auschwitz. As a matter of fact, this morning I saw something like this. For me it means Auschwitz. To the woman or man who are carrying, they don't know. Some of them were thin, some were thicker. That's what you had. And if you were lucky in the winter time-- the winters are very severe in Poland-- they gave you sometimes a coat who had belonged to a man that were killed off.

I remember getting one of those coats, a lovely coat. And I walked out with two days. The third day I had to stop in. You with your coat, come here. How come you walk out without a piece out of the back. We had to cut out all-- the tailor then, one of the prisoners, had to cut out a square piece and sew a white piece on the back. So in your work, wherever you walked, you were a prisoner because the SS could see the piece in your back. I remember that. And sometimes I didn't have a coat. I walked out just in jacket and trousers.

Why were the prison uniforms blue and white? Was there a significance to that?

I don't know why. But that was a usual thing, striped. Pajamas they called them, but they're not pajamas. I got mine. Mine is in the Wiener Library in London. I wore that in Buchenwald.

Can you tell about those colored triangles?

Yes. Political prisoners had a rare triangle. The Jews had a rare triangle with a yellow bar beneath. And sometimes there

was a kind of Star of David in it. That way, the political prisoners-- they call them political prisoners, anti-Nazis. Then come the green triangles. They were kapos who, in civilian life, had been swindlers, light criminals. Green. The black triangles, they were murderers, rapists, terrible men in civilian life. They were taken out of prisons, the sentence waved away, sent to Auschwitz, make them work, make the Jews work. They're not allowed to live, do anything with them. Those were the people that made our lives in the first moment a misery. Then you had the mauve-colored ones. I think they were the homosexuals. Mauve. What other colors were there?

What about Gypsies?

Gypsies.

Were they there?

They were there, 20,000 Gypsies. Beautiful women, beautiful men, beautiful children. I'll never forget. They came into our camp in Birkenau on the other side of the barbed wire, where our barrack was. A lot of them. And as a matter of fact, I remember they got half of our rations, and our rations were already little.

Of course, in my barrack in Birkenau were about 1,400 prisoners. But the 50 men stuck so good, as well, together. And in turn, because we didn't have a lot of potatoes, didn't have a lot to eat, the kapos had given it to the Gypsies. In turn, we crawled underneath the barbed wire. Got into the gypsy barrack on the quick. Looked around. And in the corner there was heaps of potato peelings, which Gypsies had to clean their potatoes. And we made our pockets full and our caps we had full, and we came back and shared the peeling out. That's how we lived, apart from Russians in Birkenau. I don't think I've seen bread in Birkenau. Small containers with a kind of-- it wasn't Quaker oats. It wasn't cornflakes. It wasn't rice. A thickened thing. Flour, probably. Sweet sometimes. That what your morning.

A sort of gruel?

Something like that. Then in the afternoon-- it was wintertime in the afternoon. Three hours, three or four hours, four-- you were chased into the barracks. It was getting dark. And you got in the three or four small potatoes in a jacket. Jacket potatoes. I can't remember anything else. Anyhow, a lot of us went thin and weak.

You had been mentioning the uniforms and the different-colored triangles.

Yes.

Were these people, the criminals, the green and black triangles, were they Polish?

German and Polish. They were taken from Poland and Germany. And you had some Dutch kapos. There was one Dutch kapo who had a very good name in camp. He was an Ex-Mariner, and he was a very good kapo for his commando of people.

What does that mean, to be a good kapo?

Well, you're not hitting. You're not chasing your people. You're not giving them a miserable life. I served one or two days under him and then I was taken out. I had to move into another commando.

Did he get in trouble for being lenient with the prisoners?

Yes. Well, so-called in trouble. I think this man was from royalty, Dutch royalty, so they kept him alive. There were two young boys in his commando who had done something wrong, trying to escape or something, and he didn't want to testify. Didn't want to know, this kapo. He didn't want to know. He said, I don't think it was like that. And I seen the two boys were severely punished. I think they be hung. And the man may still be alive. Then again, there were kapos-- I remember one kapo, [INAUDIBLE] man.

One arm he had, but when he hit you, you didn't get up again. And if he was around when you were unloading or loading the trains, whatever it was, the trucks, you better look out because he could kill you at one. Kapo Franz. Oh, a Muselmann. I don't think I met many kind kapos. If you thought he was kind, all of a sudden he could tear into a rage and then you had it wrong again.

You've said a bit about the kapos. What was the relationship amongst the non-kapo prisoners-- political prisoners, Jews, homosexuals, Gypsies?