

National Council of Jewish Women Sarasota-Manatee Section
Holocaust Oral History Project
Jack Brodman, Survivor
April 13, 1989
Sarasota, Florida

Q: Today is Thursday, April 13, 1989, and I am at the home of Jack Brodman in Sarasota, Florida. Mr. Brodman is a survivor of the Holocaust and he has graciously consented to record his experiences for the benefit of future generations and so that this should not happen again.

Mr. Brodman, I very much appreciate your partaking of this interview with us. So that we may understand you as a person and not just as a Holocaust survivor, will you tell us about your childhood? Where were you born and how large was your family?

A: I was born in Poland. The town was Grybow. We were five children...two sisters and three brothers.

Q: And which child...which order did you come in the family?

A: I came before the last.

Q: What did your father do for a living?

A: We had three lumber mills and we were exporting cut lumber to Holland for ship building.

Q: So it sounds as if he was pretty successful?

A: Yes.

Q: You had a good way of life?

A: We had a good way of life. We owned two cars. We had horses. We were all right.

Q: What kind of school did you go to?

A: I went to a public school...it was a regular public school. Then I went into business school and I started law.

Q: In a university?

A: University. But the war broke out.

Q: When were you born? I should have asked you that originally.

A: I was born in...April 24 was my birthday. April 24, 1920.

Q: Were your parents religious people?

A: They were orthodox, but in today's world you could say Conservative Orthodox. That time was not such a thing...Conservative Orthodox.

Q: Did they keep kosher?

A: They keep kosher. My late mother was...kept very kosher. Though we kept kosher but our Rabbi wouldn't eat in our home. No.

Q: I have not heard of the town in which you were born and brought up. Was it near a large city?

A: It was new Nowy Sacz. Not far away was Bukia Krakow. In Bukia I had...my grandfather had...how you call it...a estate...a big estate. It was like a palace surrounded...with walls around...big high walls. He was a very rich man. Had his own bank. We had the filleair by us too. My late father had it 'till then. "Till after...the First World War. Because after that he went to war and the bank had to close.

Q: Was...were there restrictions? Were you allowed to do banking business with non-Jews? Or only with Jews?

A: We had no restrictions. We could bank with anybody you wanted. Especially after the first World War.

Q: So, did you go to religious school as well as to public school?

A: I went to Cheder.

Q: Everyday?

A: Everyday. After school we went to Cheder and we stayed to Cheder 'til dark. And sometimes was late dark, especially in the winter time...six o'clock, seven o'clock, went home after school...after Cheder.

Q: You were Bar Mitzvah?

- A: I was Bar Mitzvah, sure.
- Q: Was there a large Jewish population in the town where you lived?
- A: Oh yeah, there was a very large Jewish population. I wouldn't remember the amount...five, six thousand Jews.
- Q: And how much...how many people in the whole town?
- A: We had three synagogues.
- Q: No. How many people were there, Jewish and non-Jewish were there?
- A: I can't...I don't know.
- Q: But five or six thousand Jewish people is a sizeable number?
- A: It was a sizeable number, yeah.
- Q: As you were growing up do you remember any anti-Semitic experiences that you had?
- A: Oh yeah the anti-Semetics in Poland was easier. As a matter of fact in school we had a group of Jewish boys with me always and if the kids used to call us Zidje, or...Zidje means Jew...or any other inflammable words against Jews...so we used to beat them up. And I used to get beaten for it later on from the Director of the school. They see me beating up other kids.
- Q: You got it both ways?
- A: Got it both ways.
- Q: Do you remember your father talking about anti-Semitic experiences connected with his business?
- A: No. Because we didn't...we did very little business with the Polish people. Only we bought from the Polish people like lumber, standing lumber, or cut lumber. Export was to Holland and we dealt only with the Dutch people.
- Q: I see.
- A: Very little with the Christian people. Matter of fact, one time right after the First World War, we had a partnership with the Christian...one family...very prominent family in the town...Christian. So we didn't feel so much anti-Semitism by us. But between the kids and the priests used to say the Jews killed Jesus and matter of fact I just heard over here in Bradenton is a priest what still says it.

Q: I hope somebody is talking to him.

A: Christian...Catholic.

Q: They don't give up easily so they?

A: No they don't.

Q: You said earlier that you had started law school and then you had to stop. What were the circumstances that made you stop?

A: The war broke out.

Q: And what happened then?

A: Then I couldn't go to school any more.

Q: And the Germans overran Poland?

A: Overran Poland, yea...1939. What was it August? August I think...end of August.

Q: Can you remember...can you tell me about that...what happened that day?

A: The Germans...First of all...before the Germans run over the Polish army, we had the lumber mills close to the Czechoslovakian border...so the Polish army took over...we had to get out and the Polish army took over our lumber mills and they settled there to protect Poland. They didn't stay too long. It was two weeks I think before...two weeks, or three weeks before the war broke out. So we stopped working at that time and I came home from the lumber mills. It was a tough day. We had two cars, so we...it was already sick soldiers and things like that...so I had a van from the city and my late father had a van from the city that we could go all over and transport the sick to the hospitals...army hospitals and things like that. So we used to travel by car. One car I drove and the other my late father did.

Q: Are you saying that they took over your father's business, they just took it away from you?

A: No, they didn't. The Polish army didn't take it away. They just came in and settled themselves there to protect. So no use to run the business any more because the soldiers around you and everything so you couldn't do it. There was a hundred workers and we had to let them go. So we used to run them and then when the war broke out for real, so we loaded up the cars and the horse with the big buggy with the whole family...my grandmother and other uncles from Nowy-Sacz came around and we traveled towards the Russian...Russian Hungarian

border. So because of my armband, I was driving the horse and buggy. I could always pass any post.

Q: Check post?

A: Check post...we could pass by any check post. They seen the band they didn't look anything, just "Go ahead, go head." So we came to Samber and the Germans run us over.

Q: The Germans what?

A: Run...caught...

Q: Overran you?

A: Overran us. And we stopped there and...and, we stopped there, we slept over two nights I think, and we started back home because there was no use to go further...because the Germans. We didn't know that the Russians would come there. If we would know, we wouldn't have moved.

Q: How far from home were you at that point?

A: Oh, this was far...I don't know...it was three hundred miles, something like that.

Q: Was there a lot of confusion, people?

A: There was confusion all over, all over. Right away, the next day, matter of fact, the Germans gave us...soon they came in they gave orders, all the Jews should report on the market, on the market place and they need to work and have brooms and shovels with them and things. We didn't go...the day after we started back with the cars and the horses and traveled back. We stopped over a couple days on the road. We settled in a couple places on the road.

Q: At that time, at that time can you remember whether people like yourselves were aware of what the Germans were planning to do with the Jews? Did you have any idea that they were going to kill all those Jews?

A: No. We had no idea. We had no idea. Matter of fact, the car was stopped on one corner and the German soldiers were going...an officer came over, "What are you doing? Whose car is it?" So he wanted to take away the car so he gave us a note, "You report there and then give the car." We we went...we packed up and we had the car for a day then we get the permission to go on further home with the car. So we got the permission from the Germans to go home. One German came by, an officer said, "You Jews are supposed to go to Palestine. Not over here. You will go to Palestine one day." That was the whole thing, right away...but nobody had any idea what they had in mind to do.

- Q: So you weren't too frightened going back in the direction of the Germans?
- A: We all were frightened. We were frightened. We didn't know what's going to be. But we went...we went home.
- Q: How long did it take you to get back home?
- A: About three days...we went home. We came home. Right away somebody told them...we hid the cars and somebody told them that we had one car. Then they wanted to take it so...we have an American Whippet, you wouldn't remember...so one wire from the battery was connected to the motor, we took away
- Q: So they couldn't drive it?
- A: The Germans couldn't drive it. The biggest mechanics, they looked at it, they couldn't get it to run...I wouldn't tell them. So they made holes in the cylinders...each cylinder...they killed the car and they gave it back to us. But we sold it for nothing, the cars later on. We got almost nothing for it...it was a wonderful car.
- Q: And what happened then?
- A: Then we start already...they always starving. You had to go to work...down the streets...sweep the streets and things like that. And they organized a Federation...a Jewish Federation, like the Jewish Federation. Was the Jewish "Judenrat." Judenrat means Jewish...like Jewish Federation.
- Q: But you were allowed to live in your own home?
- A: Yeah, meantime.
- Q: Was there enough food?
- A: We were living rather...we had a home in the back of the road. We were allowed all the way to live there. Other people had to move. When they were near, close to the main road or something, they had to get out from there and move somewhere else. After a certain time. What did you ask me?
- Q: Was there enough food?
- A: Not for everybody. We managed. We had a lot of acquaintances. And we still had...as a matter of fact, the first year...what was it...the first three quarters of a year I did run one lumber mill for the Germans. And because we get acquainted with the German, how you call it..."le schnitzen" how is it...forest...top forestman. How you call them over here?

Q: Forest ranger?

A: Forest ranger. Yes, ranger, but he was officer...high officer. And he brought in a company to cut the lumber and he got some...a lot of money from it, too...the forest ranger...the German. And we did the run, I did the run. I runned the mill. One day, I get a very good beating from that...I didn't cover some boards and things like that...it was snowing, the rain and it got wet.

Q: And he literally beat you?

A: He literally beat my guts out but I survived it.

Q: By this time it was 1940?

A: 1940, yeah. It was a very cold winter.

Q: And after the beating did you go back to the lumber mill?

A: The mill closed anyway after that and they took away the lumber from it. We closed up and we managed to take home about enough lumber to last us for two or three years. But we didn't use it all, we had to move. But we had enough lumber to use for firewood. Was no stove...electric stuff like that. Just some wood or coal you used to burn.

Q: Even in the good days you didn't have electricity?

A: No, no. Was not...didn't come yet to Poland so much.

Q: Electrification is a big project?

A: Big project, that's why. We had electricity at home, but they cut this off too after...the Germans came in they cut the electricity off every Jewish home. They didn't give it to us.

Q: And they could do that selectively?

A: Selectively, yeah.

Q: So it sounds like things started getting worse and worse?

A: Oh yeah, getting worse and worse. And there were selections to go with...pick on...young fellows...the young men to work other sections of the country and...and they vanished. These young fellows vanished always. If they went, they never came back.

Q: What did people think became of them?

A: We never knew. Never knew what happened. But one day my father...the Jewish community got the order for another fifteen young fellows, so my father took them to the...and he was acquainted with the "arbeits dienst fuhrer." Arbeits dienst fuhrer is the head of the...commander...working commander. The head of the working commander. And he got plenty of force and things like that for himself, so...

Q: Plenty of what?

A: Force, or different gifts...so my late father took the young boys, and it was a little shul what nobody knew it...somewhere close by, and my father took the boys to the shul there and said, 'Let me daven first,' and they prayed and he said, "You stay here and I will come back for you." And he went and brought the young fellows home. He didn't let them go to the work. And was a few times like that. He never let them loose...the fellows to go to the Germans. We had the lumber...standing lumber in another place. My younger brother was in the woods.

Q: Hiding in the woods?

A: No, no. He wasn't hiding. But there was a Jewish family living there. And he stayed there and he used to sell...he sold there, he demanded some lumber too for firewood...firewood. So he used to sell, like how you call it by...

Q: The Cord, Cord wood.

A: Cord wood. So he used to sell it and one folk deutsch came and he told that he bought it and later he said that he cheated him and they took him to jail. But my father, late father had some acquaintances in the "arbeits dienst fuhrer" and they pulled him out in a few days from the Gestapo. He was at the Gestapo and the Gestapo was a Haman.

Q: Say the word?

A: Haman. His name was Haman.

Q: Hayman?.

A: No not Hayman, Haman. The Bible. They call Haman.

Q: Spell it.

A: Haman, the biblical Haman you know...Esther.

Q: Oh, Haman.

- A: So...my late father somehow took him out from there. Was a tough thing, but he took him out...took him home.
- Q: Were your parents becoming alarmed? Were they thinking of maybe they should leave Poland?
- A: They couldn't.
- Q: They couldn't at that point?
- A: They couldn't. At that point you couldn't leave nowhere. We should have stayed in Sambor. And the Russians were coming. Then we could have gone to Russia. But we didn't know what's happened. We didn't know the Germans in 1941 would cross over to Russia. I mean that the Russians would come to Sambor. Because there was waterway. The Sun, and they stopped...they backed up...the Germans backed up to that waterway and the Russians came by. Matter of fact I wanted to cross over to the Russians...we couldn't. My younger brother and me in 1939 we went back there to cross over to Russia and we couldn't cross over. Was...the borders were very guarded. A lot of people were killed on that border. They wanted to run back to Russia. So we came home, too, later on. Our parents didn't know what happened to us. We were about two weeks away, and didn't know where we are. And they were glad to see us. That was 1940, and 1941 was another very hard winter and we couldn't manage anymore the lumber mill because they took it away from us. So what shall I tell you. In 1941...it will be a month, a little bit more than a month from now...
- Q: May of 1941?
- A: May, yeah. May of 1941...matter of fact before that the police, Polish police, was looking for my father. They wanted to stop him.
- Q: What was the reason?
- A: The reason was..officer from the Polish police and he was working with the Gestapo. And when were in the...we run away from the Germans, that police officer came to my father on the road, I don't how he found him and things like that. He said, "He has so many children, he has no bread, he has nothing." My father wouldn't help him. So he gave his half what we had, exactly half. We didn't have too much. I always managed to find somebody in every city we came...to find somebody to take me to the bakeries and sell it to me. We had bread, we had other things. We bought even gasoline for the cars on the black market. We bought it on the black market. Money was no objection. So he gave it to him. Because my late father was so kind to him...after that, he paid him back with that...he was looking for him...to...

Q: No sense of gratitude?

A: No sense of gratitude. Matter of fact, was another gratitude my late father did for another Polish gentleman. He supposedly, I don't know why...I can't remember now why he needed it...he said...he gave on to the records tax thing or something like that...that he bought from us lumber, just before the war and he sold it. He was a fine gentleman though...and my late father helped him out with it. He asked my father, but helping him out we went over books, records from our lumber mill and the lumber sales he tore up in pieces. He tore it up and burned it...shouldn't be any records. So the same guy from the lumber...the officer from the woods...how you call it, the forester, the officer came by and questioned and took him somewhere to the police and questioned him for hours. I don't know, I was in the lumber mill at that time and I don't know. I had to go home...and I walked, because we didn't have any transportation...I walked almost 20 kilometers. I walked home. And I came home was a police-S.S. man sitting with a gun watching the whole family and I had to sit and I found out that my father is interrogated by that officer. He made him black and blue. My father couldn't sit for three months. So he beat him up. Said he doesn't know, he hasn't got the records. He did sell him...he hasn't got the records...this is in the war, things got lost and things like that.

Q: And that's why they were beating him?

A: They were beating him up. He couldn't sit for three months.

Q: That's pretty bad. So things were gradually getting worse?

A: Much worse.

Q: And the selections were still going on?

A: Selections...from time to time, they picked up this guy, this guy, this guy...Jewish guys and Polish guys too. It was a terrible time.

Q: But there weren't any mass transports at this time?

A: No, no, not that point was no...we didn't know any of that mass transports. But the...May in 1941...mine...a few times my late father, as I said, he hid from the police, he knew. Somebody told him the police were looking for him. So he was hiding in the village somewhere by Jewish families and things like that. But that day they have ordered from the Jewish community. The Haman himself.

Q: His name was really Haman?

A: Haman. He said he will do better than Haman in the Bible.

Q: It's an incredible coincidence of names.

A: An incredible coincidence of names. And that was 27 days of Svirah that means counting the days from Pesach to Savuoth...it's 27 days. He came and he ordered, Haman ordered from my late father, not my late father, from the Jewish Council...the Jewish Council, 35 people, young people, and they should be sent to him to Nowy Sacz. So they couldn't collect...they collect some 10 people, 12 people and they send them. Couldn't collect all of them. So he came to town and ordered all...the whole Judenrat. The Judenrat mean the Federation, everybody to be at the office and he is coming. He came with three other guys. And selected ten people. Between them my father. And my father, before he left, he said...and we asked him not to go, we begged him not to go, to hide...he said, "If I not going, if I wouldn't go, the whole city will burn." So he said, "I have to go, or the whole city will burn. I have to go." But he told me, nearby where the Judenrat was, was a Jewish doctor and I was working as a helper to him, as an assistant by that Jewish doctor...and the windows from that office...it was near a park. That was the park over here, the Judenrat was here, the doctor was over here and I could look out to the park whenever I wanted. So I looked out and I see ten people walking in one row towards the park and between them my late father.

Q: What was your father's name?

A: Elias. And they start shooting...one after the other. My late father was the third man. I see him, he turned around, he said something. But later on came out, he said, "I will give you everything...whatever you want from the city, let the people live." Then Haman said...laughed and said, "I will take it myself," and shot him in the stomach first and then shot him in the head.

Q: And you saw this?

A: I saw this yeah. And was a friend of mine from school in the big business...all the prominent people, big businessmen...we have been as a matter of fact at the trial of that Haman. So I seen that and they left so I run out and my aunt was living in the back somewhere on the side of the street and my aunt was living...we were living over by here and my aunt was living here...and just to go around so I stepped in my aunt's and I said, "They killed him." Then I went with the back road home and we knew what's happened. So we knew that my late father was killed.

Q: Were you allowed to claim the bodies?

A: We claimed the bodies, yes. As a matter of fact, we didn't claim the bodies, they ordered it. That was...the guys, Jewish, like "droski" you know that means taxi drivers, not taxi drivers but horse and buggy. They ordered to take him up to the cemetery. Next day we went to cemetery and buried them. My late mother wouldn't go with me...women didn't go to the cemetery.

Q: Your older brothers and sisters weren't there?

A: My older brother was away, sisters were at home. But older brother was away that day. He runned away somewhere. He knew something happened. He runned away and came back a few days later. And we buried him. After that, the summer they said they are going to ship us out of the city.

Q: And they did?

A: They did. And by August, they shipped us out.

Q: Is this still 1941 or 1942?

A: Yeah, that was 1941. They shipped us out. And they were already starting the liquidation of Jews.

Q: Did you know that?

A: We didn't know. Just to go somewhere else to work.

Q: So describe what it was like when they took you?

A: See they ordered us in front in front of the Judenrat of the Jewish Federation. In front of it was a big street...as a matter of fact, they moved from that place, the Judenrat. We used to be near the park, they moved on the back street, was a big street there and they had to move, not to be near a main crossway. So they ordered us, everybody to line up in front of the streets and Haman came and ordered everybody should empty out their pockets, their money and everything. Any money, any jewelry, anything to put down in front of them, on the road. Then he collected everything. Thirty-six of us people stayed behind to work on the young people. And me and my two brothers, we stayed behind. There was a lumber mill about one-mile out of the city and to work there in the lumber mill.

Q: Did you decide this? Or did you volunteer for it? How did you get to stay behind?

A: We volunteered for it. See, they selected maybe somebody should be left in the city or something. We didn't know what to do, so the Jewish, the Judenrat made a list from people to...which stayed behind and we were included. So we stayed behind to work and then a few used to work in the lumber mill, about a dozen of us we used to go every day, every morning to the railroad station and load railroad cars...lumber on the railroad cars. So what could I say. One day we were working on the railroad track and the other, the rest of the people they took to Nowy Sacz and they were staying a few days on the outside. They didn't have where to live, just outside in the park, I don't know where they were...in the

Jewish section. They stayed outside and then they loaded up everybody in the cattle cars and took them away. But we were...I was working on the railroad station, all of a sudden I see the train coming and loaded with people. And one train, in one car, my late sister looked out through the window and screamed, "Help us, help us." They were choking, it was heat...hot, was nothing to drink, was nowhere...everything was done in the railroad car. You must know that, somebody must have told you.

Q: No bathroom facilities?

A: No bathroom facilities, nothing. "Help us, help us." I...my brothers and me, we decided...we had some money...hidden and somebody brought this to us to the work and we decided to send one guy, a Polish guy...to follow them where they went.

Q: To follow the train?

A: Follow the train. He followed the train to Belsen.

Q: How did he follow it?

A: How you follow it? He followed how the train went, he followed it right straight after that. He asked people, you know, how to come. They followed to Belsen. He went to Belsen. He couldn't go further. He went, was still a Judenrat there, in Belsen. He went into Judenrat and asked them, "What's happened to that train." He said, "Don't go in there and don't ask questions. Go home."

Q: Which was the first real clue that really bad things were happening?

A: Really bad things were happening. We couldn't do nothing more. We couldn't help. We didn't know what happened. Nobody, they didn't come back and said they were killed or something. That's gate nobody is allowed to come in there.

Q: How far was Belsen from where these people were, from where you were?

A: It was in east Poland. Belsen was east Poland and we were in west Poland.

Q: Quite a distance.

A: Quite a distance. Cost a nice amount of money to find this...and after a couple months working in the lumber mills, we went to Nowy Sacz and we cleaned up Nowy Sacz ghetto. The people...after the people left the train...everything. Everything went from over there. All the people from Nowy Sacz too, went. And they were all in one...one or two trains. I don't know exactly. And we worked there. We cleaned out, we tore down some houses that were shacks and things like that...Jewish section, poor neighborhoods and things like that. One day

Haman come in and picked ten people to meet him at the woods over there with, was a Jewish policeman with us. He told the Jewish policeman, "You meet me over there, there with these people." And we didn't know what for we going, what we are going for. And we went and they told them to...in the back was across the road was the woods and we had to stay in the woods until they would call us. But we have seen what's happening in there. Behind the road was about 12 or something people what they caught. Between them was one Jewish woman with a young child. They had to undress, nude. They had already the grave already. And they had to line up in front of the grave and they shot one after the other. The child run over to mother and grabbed her like that so they saved a bullet and shot the mother with the child with one bullet. And we had to bury them after that. Cover them with sand. It was terrible to watch...terrible. They were running like animals, faster, faster, faster, faster. And one wasn't so fast, so they buried him alive. We had to pour the sand over him, alive cause he didn't work so fast. It was my brother and me was there. From there we went to Tarnow, and Tarnow so... It was already 1942 in...

Q: What month in 1942? What time of the year?

A: It was in spring. And over there in Tarnow, every day was a killing. Five, six, seven people, ten people, fifteen people on the grounds of the Judenrat.

Q: You never knew when your turn might come?

A: Never knew nothing. We worked...we were in the...at the, in the working ghettos. Two ghettos, one for old people who couldn't work, one for the people what worked. And you couldn't go across always. Sometimes you could if you had a Jewish policeman friend staying the gate you could cross over. If you didn't have it, you couldn't cross over.

Q: The people in these ghettos were from all over Poland?

AL From all over Poland. From all around the town of Jaslov, the town of Krasow, all over, they brought them in there. End of 1942, they liquidated the ghetto and the, another few hundred stayed behind. We cleaned up...not all of it. We cleaned up a little bit up the ghetto. Clothes we had to sort it out, separate into separate...because the old clothes...another camp called Szebnia, that is not far from Jaslov, that's all eastern...not eastern, southern middle Poland.

Q: So that was really your first time in a camp?

A: Yeah, we had been in a camp before in the first city but later on, we weren't at home...we work...we were in a camp. In the first city when we were working for the lumber mill, we were in a camp. Szebnia was a camp with over there 20,000 Russian soldiers. And they were all killed, one by one and burned on the stake.

Q: The Russians were killed?

A: The Russians were killed and burned on the stake. The fire and smell of the human bodies, you could smell it for miles and miles...terrible. Stink.

Q: These were all people who were all prisoners?

A: Prisoners of war. They were prisoners of war. They killed them off. Now, when we came, half of us went to camp. The other half went to the woods, to the same place.

Q: What was the name of that camp?

A: Szebnia.

Q: Oh that was still Szebnia?

A: Szebnia. And they picked the young and strongest fifteen people between, I was there...to go to the woods with the people. We didn't know what, why we were going for. But they lined up all these people, nude. The half of the group, and were staying...we had to stay on the side...they shot them all. Who was shot, who wasn't and we had to throw them on the fire. Have you ever stayed near a fire, near a building what burns close by, you couldn't stay there...too hot. We had to go very close to throw two people, one by the legs, one by the arms and throw them over on the top. The fire was so high, 20 feet high, and we had to throw everybody. You had to work so fast, that's one thing...fast. We were crying and carrying, crying and carrying and throwing, we didn't know what to do. One guy didn't work fast enough, they three him up...alive. And we came back broken. It was such an experience, I don't wish to a dog.

Q: Something you can really never put out of your mind?

A: No. It's terrible. Just to stay in front of that fire and throw up people on top of the pile. People, children that didn't...

(Pause)

What I tell you, the name of the commander was Grzymek and his his partner was John. His first name was John. I don't know what the other name. And they used to kill like flies. And one young fellow, just...I don't know how it came out, if he told him something to work faster or something in the camp. So he said, "I will live to see you dead anyway," to that commander. So he went and hung him on his hands and the back and his hands and he was hanging all day until they went out of the...

A: Arms went out of the sockets?

- A: Arms went out of the sockets. The guy was screaming half a day, so that you have to stuff your ears with cotton to not to be able to hear. We couldn't do nothing. Nobody could help anything. And two days later, in the evening, he hanged him by the neck. And we all have to stay and watch it. The whole thing took till late at night. We had to stay and watch it. And two days later. He killed a woman with a young girl...I don't know if he wanted to rape that girl or what. And they were hugging each other and they killed them. I could tell you stories...I don't know...it is indescribable, you can't describe it.
- Q: I can see where just emotionally it would be very hard to survive. How did you survive physically? Were you given food or enough food?
- A: No, we weren't given food so much. We managed somehow. We ate...wasn't too much to eat anyway. Whatever they gave us was very little.
- Q: You lost a lot of weight?
- A: We lost weight, sure. And, then, in the fall, already it was cold, they shipped us to Auschwitz. We are traveling three days to Auschwitz in cattle cars. Same story, no food, no water, no nothing.
- Q: People died in the trains?
- A: Oh yeah. People breaking out from the trains. Knocking with their fists out with the boards and they jump from the trains and break their hands...their legs and hands...they used to...jumping out. Horrible stories...horrible to see it. We looked out through that hole he broke out and we seeing him screaming and broke and after that they shot him right from the train. They shot him. We came to Auschwitz on the railroad tracks. Mengele came around and all the...I don't know how many...forty, fifty S.S. men. And we had to jump from the car, "Fast, fast, fast. Jump from the car. In line. Five in line, five in line, five in line." So my two brothers and two other guys, young fellows, we got together in one line and we going right and the other left. Right and left, right and left. You twins, and you what. He was asking if you're twins and...
- Q: He was interested in those experiments?
- A: In those experiments. And we got to Birkenau...
- Q: You didn't stay in Auschwitz?
- A: Birkenau and Auschwitz is one camp. But Birkenau was a transit place. Auschwitz was permanent. Birkenau was the ovens. And Auschwitz, that was already standing, the people didn't work. And these people built the chimneys. People from Auschwitz built the chimneys, built the...

Q: Built their own crematorium?

A: Own crematorium. And matter of fact, they told us Himmler came a few times around to look how it's built. So, I got in and we were...first two days we didn't do nothing. Just...first of all we had to undress, nude. And go through entlausung...that's lice...to clean...

Q: Delousing.

A: Delousing, yeah. And shave the heads. They shaved our heads, and then they gave us striped suits. And they gave us barracks, where to stay. Then came around. They picked some, I don't know how many, 20, 30 people to work in the ovens...because these people worked before...were already tired. They were already dried out and they threw them into the ovens. So every time another transport...new peoples came in. So they picked me. But I was lucky. I had a friend, what knew me since childhood. He was there before me, in concentration camp from 1940. He got there in 1940. And he got in, through a...somehow he got into the bekliedungskammer. The bekliedungskammer is the...they had everything there for dressing people, or even for the officers, for the German officers and everything else. And he got acquainted with the officers and he got friendly with them. And I said, "You got to do something. I got to get out from the ovens." So he...I was working there two weeks...and he got arranged with a group going to Buna, not far away from Auschwitz. To Buna, a labors camp, over there so...he got me in that group with my older brother...to go to Buna. And my younger brother, somehow he didn't pass the inspection to go there. He stayed behind. They didn't let him go and later on they sent him to coal mines.

Q: Did he survive there?

A: He survived until the end of the war. Then he was killed. He couldn't walk anymore. That we will come to later...

So we got separated. But my older brother went with me. We got to Buna. In the beginning we worked on the...one officer used to take us, one or two would take us on the railroad tracks to shovel coal or shovel dirt or something like that. It was winter, January, cold. And one officer said, "Who knows how to repair gloves? How you call..."

Q: Mend them.

A: Mend them. I said, "I do." Never...but I've seen my late mother's sister used to do it. So he went...invited me to...I wasn't working for the outside, I was inside. So he invited me to inside and gave me thread and needle and I mended. And he gave me a bowl of his soup, noodles and everything. I got fatter, a little bit fatter. And I asked him, my brother was outside, said, "Could I give a little bit to my

brother?" Said, "Okay, go ahead. Give it to him." I gave it to my brother, a little bit...we got acquainted. You know, that little soup made the difference from day and night.

Q: Between living and dying. And then each day you would mend gloves?

A: A few days only. That wasn't...it didn't take too long, it wasn't too long because later on I got a different job as a carpenter...and the commando, carpenter commando and we put up scaffolds for workers to be able to stand to work, to...how you call it, to solder metals together, things like that. I forgot how you call it in English.

Q: Welding?

A: Welding, right. And so, but still...somebody found out, from the...there's a group what repaired for the soldiers, for the German soldiers. They repaired the stockings too, and...shirts and things like that or remodeling things...like a sewing commando. And they needed somebody to fix stockings. But I couldn't go in their commando. Only in...only in where I was staying...in the cabin. So they got me...they came to me, somebody told them, I do it. They got to me and every evening I got an extra...for the repairing the stockings...heavy noodle soup, that was my savior. And I had it until almost the end of the...staying in the...until 1945. But was very hard. The work was very dangerous. I had a group of five people. And I was the head of the group. And I would never let...a fellow, he was an acquaintance, I was...Automatically I knew what to do.

Q: You're talking about making the scaffolding was very dangerous?

A: The scaffolding was very dangerous. Some places you could fall 20, 30 feet down a hole and never get up. My back, my spine is still...from it. I have a spine problem.

Q: Was it difficult to keep clean? Were there ways to wash?

A: Let me tell you about cleaning. There was a big basin, in a big room, a big basin. And from each came a little water, all around was little faucets and very thinly coming water out. Cold water middle of winter. Summer was nothing, but middle the winter. But every day...in the morning, four o'clock in the morning...as soon as I wake up. I went out and washed myself in the cold water in the winter. And every evening when I came back from work I washed myself before going to sleep. I washed myself before going to bed. I didn't have one...they didn't find a one louse on me. My bed was clean. Others around me. I had to watch that they had louses, how you call it...

Q: Lice.

- A: Lice and what else. They had faces full with crust, pimples, crust, scabs. And, so what I did...I wash my face every day, not to get the scabs, with my urine.
- Q: With your urine?
- A: With urine. I washed...my late brother, my brother and me, we every day we washed with urine our faces, not to get the scabs. And that...
- Q: Uric Acid?
- A: Uric Acid killed it. And was lice...
- Q: How did you know to do that?
- A: Common sense. Survival...survival. a lot of things you did for survival. You knew...you had a feeling. I never thought I was going to be killed. I never thought of it, never. I knew I would live.
- Q: I was wondering what you were feeling emotionally during this time?
- A: You didn't have any emotions. You have no feelings.
- Q: That was the only way to survive?
- A: The feelings were dead. You had no feelings for anything. The feelings were dead.
- Q: Well you'd been faced with so many horrible things. In order to survive you had to suppress your emotions.
- A: You had to suppress...you didn't see somebody fall in the middle of walking. You walked, you didn't look at it. A lot of people walking to work were falling, walking to work. They couldn't get up. So they went to Auschwitz. Auschwitz was not far away. They load them on...every day was hundreds of people were on such a push carts loaded up until the truck will come, they load them up on the truck and ship them to Auschwitz.
- Q: Like garbage?
- A: Garbage.
- Q: And you said you stayed at Birkenau until almost the end of the war?
- A: Until 1945. Every day people were running away. If they caught them, they were hanged. Jewish people. They caught two Germans. They were in my group,

working on the I.G. Farben Industry. They were working with me together with the political...

Q: So did you...when the end of the war was coming near, did you realize it? Could you tell it by how the Germans were behaving?

A: Yeah, we realized that they are running away, but we couldn't do nothing. Every day was hangings. We had to stay on the field...on the court and watch everybody who was hanged. Two, three people were hanged. They hanged...almost every evening. They tried to run away cause from Buna, where we worked, that was...extra fence, but they could run away from there. Not from the camp itself. The camp itself was electrified. But Buna, the factory, was not electrified. And you would see sometimes in the morning two three people on the wires, hanging...electrified from...they wanted to run, to scream, they couldn't eat...they were hungry, hungry people.

Q: Did you know where your mother and sisters were during this time?

A: I told you. My mother and sisters went with the train. But my sister screamed and I sent a guy to investigate.

Q: But did they, did you know if they were still there, in Belsen?

A: No, I didn't know. We didn't know.

Q: Did they survive?

A: No.

Q: None of them?

A: No. Nobody survived. Just a few people survived.

Q: You survived...and your older brother, did he survive?

A: I survived. And my older brother survived. The younger didn't.

Q: Yes, you said?

A: So, watching this for...hungry, until sometimes ten, eleven o'clock at night...watching, seeing the people being hanged. And sometimes one person was missing. One prisoner, they didn't count properly. One person was missing, they didn't have the count. We stayed for hours, with the snow and rain, with the electric...thunder storms and everything. And you stayed on the field...winter and summer...counting the people. They had to count the...everybody has to be accounted for.

Q: The Germans were ridiculously accurate?

A: Ridiculously accurate. So, in 1944, in December, Christmas day, exactly Christmas day, they took out a whole bunch of people to work on Christmas day. And the American flyers came around with the silver wings and bombarded the I.G. Farben industry. We were there. Two people...there were bunkers there. Two people run out. They wouldn't let us in the bunkers. Jews not allowed.

Q: When you say a bunker, what do you mean by that, a trench?

A: Cement bunkers. Cement bunkers for to hide from bombs, shouldn't hit. Two people from our commando went and hid in a shed. The shed was open with three walls, and the pressure...a bomb fell nearby and the pressure from the bomb killed them.

Q: It made it cave in?

A: No, no. Just the pressure killed them. The pressure from the bomb was close by. And about fifty yards from me, when I was standing in a cabin-like in the door. And a bomb came down and broke out the door and threw me into the cabin and I fell inside the cabin. That's why my spine is terrible. And I saved. That is one in a million you save from a bomb like that. Blew me into the cabin, broke the windows from that cabin. The door broke out and I fell in and the door-like wood fell on me and hid me.

Q: Protected you?

A: Protected me.

Q: Was there a lot of bombings near where you were?

A: That time was bombing. Matter of fact, our own camp fell down. A couple bombs in our camp. I don't remember anyone was killed or what. But did come down a couple of bombs, maybe they made a mistake because it was close by. That was December, Christmas. January 18, they ordered us all to march. That was a death march. The snow was snowing. Two feet of snow, 18 inches on the ground...we had to walk.

Q: And you probably didn't have warm clothes or decent things for your feet?

A: Nothing. And the guns were popping. Who couldn't walk got killed. So you make yourself walk...doesn't matter how. You crawled and you walked. You walked to the railroad station, was named Gliwitz, about 20 kilometers. The whole night we walked. And early morning, they ringed around us, full of

soldiers, and we waited. For that they had railroad track...railroad cars. For their own soldiers they didn't have cars to move them. For us they had the cars.

Q: Hitler was crazy?

A: Was crazy. And what's his name...Eichmann was another crazy. And they moved us. They loaded us up. 18th, 19th or the 20th of January, they loaded us up in open cars. Open cars. People froze to death in these cars. Used to huddle together to keep warm, or we sat down on the dead people. We were sitting on the dead frozen people. Sometimes when we passed, we went...it took us eight days to go to Buchenwald. They went in a circle to miss the Russians or the others to be able to get to Buchenwald. We went through Czechoslovakia. From Poland going south to Czechoslovakia, then going west towards Germany. Instead to go straight to Germany, you had to circle...it took eight days. And sometimes you were lucky, the Czechoslovakian people were very nice, used to stay on the bridges from the railroad and and throw the rolls and the bread to the open cars. You were lucky, you caught the one roll. You unlucky, you unlucky. But we still divided between ourselves.

Q: Shared.

A: Shared one with the other. It was terrible. We came to Buchenwald. In Buchenwald was...I forgot her name. She used to make lampshades.

Q: From human skin?

A: From human skin with tattoos...anybody had...she looked everybody over. He has no tattoos. He had tattoos, he was dead. Jews didn't...

Q: In what camp did you get the numbers?

A: That's in Auschwitz, that's the only...only Auschwitz had the numbers over here. Other camps had the numbers on the pocket over here with the label. We had it on the pocket, but on the arm too.

Q: Only Auschwitz?

A: Only Auschwitz.

Q: I didn't know that. That's very interesting.

A: Only Auschwitz did. We came to Buchenwald...at Buchenwald the conditions were dirty, so dirty, so terrible is not to describe. We were working on carrying stones and we had to climb a steep hill to bring stones from the bottom up the hill.

Q: Was there a point to that, or was that just to give you something to do?

A: Just to give something to do, was no point to it at all. And there was no food, just a little slice of bread. Food amounted to four ounces of bread in the morning. In Auschwitz was the same thing. That's a quarter of a pound. A pound bread was sliced in four sections. And then who was lucky got the biggest, who was not lucky was the smallest section. We had to look at it how the bread comes out. And we had a small slice of salami, a very thin slice and a little thin slice of margarine. At noon, and a cup of coffee, black coffee with worms in everything what's there what the kettle didn't wash it off from the night before you had it in the coffee. But I drink too much coffee. My brother used to drink too much coffee and his legs swell up. But he was lucky too, he almost went to Auschwitz...shipped him there, almost. They were looking for...he was in the clinic with swollen legs. He couldn't walk. But he walked. And, so that was the food. It was terrible. And lunch time, was little water with something floating around in it and the same was in the evening, water and floating, something floating...

Q: The only real solid food you got was bread at breakfast?

A: The bread at breakfast, that's all. So after a couple weeks or three weeks, we been in Buchenwald, they shipped us to Ordruff.

Q: By this time it's February?

A: This is somewhere in February. In Ordruff, there was a camp and they were working on underground tunnels for airplanes to hide in the mountains. In case bombardment, the airplanes could hide in big holes. We used to work there...

Q: Tremendous holes?

A: Tremendous holes. And we used...we had to support it with lumber. With things. It was very heavy work. Sometimes we didn't walk out there. After eight days we walked out. On the eighth day we slept there on the ground. That was the life. They had to watch us all the time. And we had to work there. So, and one thing, fate...my younger brother was working the coal mines. He came to Ordruff and we met together in Ordruff.

Q: It must have been an incredible reunion?

A: Incredible. We were crying. And we were so lucky. But one day, he didn't go to work...with his commando. Because he stayed in another cabin and we stayed in another...barracks they called them. And he didn't go to work that day. They took him to another camp. We were separated again. But every morning he came to work the same place we have seen him coming to work.

Q: It must be hard to identify people wearing the uniforms, and looking so ill and so dirty and unkempt?

A: But we identified. We knew each other. And we had to wash. We washed every day. Every day in the morning, in evening, because otherwise the lice would eat you up...the lice was terrible. The lice would eat you us. And I, till the end (knock wood) I'm telling you, I didn't...we didn't have any. In Ordruff the food was less than we used to have. But I wanted to tell you about my brother first. The 29th of March my younger brother slipped us a note. Just passed by me and my brother. We were working on the ditches. And slipped us a note, "We will soon be liberated. Don't worry. We will soon be liberated." The unlucky thing was that he wasn't with us. He was at another camp. We couldn't find him again. Food was bad so we used to go out and catch frogs. We had a little stove and a little pot. We used to cook the frogs. Clean them up and we used to eat...bitter...as you could describe. Just to have a little bit something.

Q: Of meat?

A: Of meat. Frogs...where you don't eat, you eat especially the legs only...

Q: You ate everything?

A: We ate everything. And that was bitter. And this way we survived. We ate grass. We stayed near a little field. We run to the grass and pick the grass. We ate the grass. We knew which is good for you...to sustain you. Not every grass would sustain you, or poison you.

Q: Or make you sick...diarrhea?

A: So, I had not once diarrhea in Auschwitz.

Q: You did not have it?

A: I did have it, not once. It was terrible.

Q: More than once?

A: It was terrible. More than once. You were running with full pants to the camp from work. That's terrible. The feeling...you're falling...you're dying.

Q: It's so degrading?

A: Degrading. So April, the 3rd...I'm coming to that now. April the 3rd, we're marching again. That was the real death march. We got, everyone got one bread and something, I don't remember...salami or a little margarine. That one bread

was what most important...a whole bread. Each one who got to go march...that one bread...

Q: But you didn't know how long it has to last you?

A: We ate it right away. And we started march on the road...walking, the road. See here a car...bombed. Here a car shut up, burned. And we see the end is coming. We are five in a row. I was in the other end and we come near the woods. It is getting dark, so I said in Polish"(words missing in original transcription)" I pushed him out from the other end...they are running through the woods and I after them and the S.S. start to shoot but it was dark already and they couldn't hit anybody and we went, walked through the woods, we run through the woods. And they had dogs too. But they wouldn't go with the dogs through the woods. They were afraid to go to the woods.

Q: Thank God.

A: Thank God. So we are five of us then, we find another one and we were hiding in the woods for eight days. They had, in the woods, they had such bunkers to hide from planes and bombs...so we hid in these bunkers. We walked back to the place where we worked. Through it at night, only at night. In the meantime we found, in this place, there was a cabin...a suit, a jacket, a pair of pants and things. We changed, we put on. We found a pair of scissors. We cut through the middle, the hair...to be able...on the sides, they left us hair and in the middle, we didn't have any hair.

Q: So the people wouldn't know you were prisoners?

A: So cut the hair even...all even out and they start to grow back again. And we couldn't find any food, so we ate the grass around in the woods. We ate whatever we can. But we are hungry, we are hungry. On April 11th, early in the morning, we crawled out from the woods, we found a cabin, was potatoes and milk and was something else...I don't remember...was there rice or something. I said, "Fellows don't touch anything. You have sore stomachs...let me just cook a few potatoes and eat first the warm potatoes." We made a little chimney...the chimney was there, was a stove and the pots was there...everything. So we cook a few potatoes. And the S.S. Fernichtungstrupe noticed from the chimney, smoke...so they went to investigate and they caught us there. But we were already in civilian dresses...in suits...civilian dress. And two of our guys, we were six...two of our guys went to investigate somewhere else. And they were pretty far away. They caught us and the other guys were walking with the road towards us and the S.S. men noticed them, they called out...

TAPE TWO

Tape two does not continue the sentence, but does continue in context.

Q: But, I said...everybody didn't speak German...none of the guys didn't speak German...I said, "I will speak German---with a broken German." I spoke perfect German. And, I will tell them, "We were workers. People did...people left us, and they told us we should wait here. They will come back, and we are going to work again." I don't know. They believed us. But, they didn't leave us there. They took the milk. They took the potatoes. They took everything with them up the hill. Up a hill, there, was the village. We didn't go to the village. We went all around, but not to the village. So, we went to the village...they took us up to the village...in the same time, they caught another S.S. man, S.S. Fanichtungstruben...that is Liquidation Troop...caught a Russian guy in the striped suit, and they brought him up to the village. Right away, they shot him. We had to bury him. They say, "Now, it is our finish. We are finished." But, they let us sit. It was a village. In the middle of the village was a bar. We used to...bierhaus, they call it in German...a bar...a big...a big hall. That's a hall...like in...they used to...meetings there and things like that. And, was it...the sun was shining...southern side, and things like that. We were sitting...there was a bench—a long bench on that wall and we were sitting. That was from somewhere nine o'clock in the morning and we sit...ten and eleven...and thank God, they don't do nothing to us. Twelve. Twelve-thirty. All of a sudden we see a jeep coming up with American officer, with a priest—a German priest—dolmetscher—and they should give up the village. Otherwise, the village will be leveled. So, what they do, they...a few S.S. men—they were young fellows. I don't know if they were nineteen or twenty years old. They were young fellows. The few S.S. men took that jeep and the American and the priest and they run away with them, with the jeep. We have seen they are running away. We were still sitting. And, all of a sudden, I said, "Why don't we go across the street and see what is there in the house. What's there." I don't know, like something pulled me. I can't describe it. We should get away from that spot where we were sitting. A power...I don't know what the power was. And, we walked in near a door that is about...what...about twenty or thirty yards from us was that wall where we were sitting. Cannonball went straight on that spot where we were sitting.

Q: That's incredible.

A: That cannonball smashed the whole wall and we ran in the house. We opened up already the door and we ran in the house and we hid, because we weren't sure that somewhere...I don't know...was chickens, or were inside there in a little room...or garbage...I don't know where we hid there, but it didn't fall. Another cannonball didn't fall. And, we fell asleep there. All of a sudden, at night, we hear walking, walking soldiers. Some American, Americans are here, and then we were liberated. Forty-four years ago before yesterday.

Q: Thank God you survived. What was...did you celebrate? Was there...did you have...what did you do to celebrate?

- A: We were numb. We looked...I had family in Detroit, so we found a guy from Detroit, knew my family in Detroit. As a matter of fact, he worked for them.
- Q: Did you speak English also?
- A: No. No, he spoke Polish. A Polish guy. From Hamtramek.
- Q: I know where it is, yes. There is a whole Polish community.
- A: A whole Polish community. A Polish guy. Because my uncles had, in Hamtramek, stores, and they used to do business. So, they knew...he wrote right away to Detroit to get in touch with us. And, they got in touch with us, through Joint Jewish Committee Distribution.
- Q: Joint Distribution Committee.
- A: Joint Distribution Committee or somewhere, they got in touch with us, after we settled in a city in Mossbruck, in Germany. Mossbruck, yah. That's near Munich. Because, why Mossbruck? In Mossbruck was a camp there, too.
- Q: How did you get from where you were to that camp?
- A: Oh, just a second. We were in Ordruff. We went to city, Ordruff--we stayed in Ordruff. We met over there a whole Jewish group. CIC, they investigated all the soldiers.
- Q: What is this CIC?
- A: CIC. They were investigating all the soldiers in the camp.
- Q: This was an American agency?
- A: An American agency. That was in uniform...American uniform. They were like police, investigating the German soldiers. The German officers, soldiers, and everything. They had a big camp. They gave up. And that camp...no, that was in Mossbruck, already. In that camp was a lot of people what...they were banditen--were S.S.--all kinds.
- Q: They were what?
- A: They were S.S. Bandits.
- Q: Bandits.
- A: Bandits. They used to kill. And they found a lot of them.

- Q: And, the date that they came, and you were liberated was April?
- A: April 11, 1945. That's forty-four years ago.
- Q: How long before then--or, how long from then did you have to wait before you came to the United States?
- A: We came in June 1946.
- Q: And, what did you do in the meantime?
- A: Nothing.
- Q: You were just in a camp, waiting?
- A: No, no. Not in a camp. I never went in another camp. What I wanted to tell you. We met this group. We got acquainted with them. They were Jewish. So, we made a minion. We davened. And, we were so...we didn't know what happened in the world anyway. We didn't know what happened. We didn't realize yet, at that time, what happened to us. We didn't realize.
- Q: You were just part of a whole experience but you didn't realize.
- A: We didn't realize what happened to us, and we assumed...joined them together. Sometimes we went out and listened to some officers, what they said, what they did, and things like that. We were just sitting on, on hearings. Then, from Ordruff, the Russians came. They agreed in Potsdam--they agreed that Russia would take so much Germany, and America would take so much and England would take so much, and France would take so much. So, the Russians were coming to Ordruff--that was not far from Buchenwald, too. So, we went... I took away a car--we took a couple cars from the Germans--we acquired them. And, with American soldiers, too, helped us, to get the cars, and we followed this group back to Mossbruck. Because, to give up...we didn't want to stay with the Russians, so we went back to Munich--Mossbruck was 20...18 miles from Munich, and over there was another camp. In this camp, we found arbeitstrumfuehrer from Auschwitz. From Buna. You know what arbeitstrumfuehrer is?
- Q: You said it was a liquidation troop.
- A: No, no. Arbeitstrumfuehrer was..he was the head to divide the people to work. Arbeitstrumfuehrer. That was separate from the arbeitdienstfuehrer--in Nowy Sacz--it was different. But, arbeitstrumfuehrer was in Auschwitz. And, he used to walk. If somebody didn't walk straight, he was always...we had music walking out. Every morning, walking out, walking in, we had music. We had to walk to

the rhythm of the music. If somebody didn't walk straight, he used to go behind him and kick him.

Q: Sounds like a charming fellow.

A: Charming fellow. And, we found him. And we start to ask him, and talk to him, and talk to him. But, it was three or four hours. The same night, he hanged himself on the belt. On his own belt.

Q: Saved the government the expense of a trial.

A: The expense of a trial. So, it's a pity we didn't find more of them, but we found him, over there. So we lived in Mossbruck and first ship, we came here.

Q: To New York?

A: Second ship. Yes. Second boat what came with our people. I came with my wife.

Q: When was that?

A: June 192...1946. June 24.

Q: You met your wife in the meantime?

A: On the boat. We came together in one boat.

Q: But you didn't know her until you got on the boat?

A: No, we didn't know each other.

Q: That's very romantic. What was it like to come into New York?

A: I came...I went to Detroit.

Q: But you came into New York harbor. What was it like to see the Statue of Liberty?

A: You know, Statue of Liberty was nothing to us.

Q: It's a symbol.

A: A symbol. Was nothing. At that time was nothing. We were overwhelmed with our experience. We were overwhelmed with our...we already found out...you see, let me tell you something. When I was in Germany, I went twice to Czechoslovakia and Poland to look for the family and I have seen we have

nothing. Nobody was left. We came...I have seen my family. Family from Detroit came, picked me up.

Q: In New York?

A: In New York. The family was cold. Was nothing. Was no feelings. They didn't know what...though they come out from very good family, but they came here in 1922. They suffered themselves. They are working hard to build up a business. They were rich people. When I came already, they were very rich people. When Cadillacs were changing hands by the dozens.

Q: Me. Brodman, I can sit here and I can listen, and I can try to understand but you have to realize that nobody can understand who didn't experience what you did.

A: You try to tell them, but I stopped telling. I didn't tell. I locked myself in. I went back to New York. After, when was it—June, July, end of July, I went to New York.

Q: And, Anna was in New York?

A: And, erev Rosh Hashanah, I went to a landsman—a friend of my late father's, to wish him New Year wishes--and going back on the trolley, in New York--and my wife, gets in on the trolley, and we meet again.

Q: So, it started out as a Happy New Year?

A: Yes.

Q: How much feeling, or belief in God could you have after these terrible experiences?

A: I told you. Miracles. You have fear. A few miracles in my life. A long time, I didn't. Long time I didn't. My wife started. We got to believe you had miracle. You got to believe. You got to go to shul. And after a few years, I never opened up on shabbos. Never opened up on a holiday, the store. We went to shul every shabbos, every yom tov. And really, I realize the power--just that last moment--that last day of our liberation the power--something pulled me to live-

Q: That's right.

A: You got to believe something is there. It wasn't my own idea. That wasn't me--I, I didn't do it.

Q: I understand.

A: Something pulled us to live.

- Q: I can understand how you would feel that there would be a God, after that. What kind of work did you go into in this country?
- A: Interior decorating. I didn't have a trade. Lumber business. We had a big lumber business.
- Q: How did you get into interior decorating?
- A: I went to school.
- Q: I see.
- A: It was hard. It was very hard. My wife not once shut the door, and said, "From that you want to make a living?"
- Q: By this time you were about 35 years old?
- A: No. Let's see. I was in the late twenties.
- Q: Did you have a family? Children?
- A: We have a daughter.
- Q: Does she live here?
- A: She lives in L.A. We have two grandchildren. Kin Ein Ahorah. One finish Harvard, summa cum laude. And, he is a political correspondent...free lance political correspondent for the Los Angeles Times.
- Q: That's very good.
- A: And the other is six years younger, and he is in Stanford College in California. And he is top fencer for his age in the United States.
- Q: Wow. Did you move here to Sarasota after you retired, or did you work here?
- A: No, I was robbed many times and I have a bullet in my knee.
- Q: You were robbed many times?
- A: Yah. In New York. We had an antique store, too. Antique store. interior decorating and antiques. And, whatever you see, that's all my work.
- Q: New York is not a good place to live.

A: So, I said, that's enough. And, we used to come here to Warm Mineral Springs, because I used to...my spine...my back was hurting me, and no doctor could help me. No chiropractor, nothing. I used to go to Europe to mud baths, and things. They couldn't help me. So, I went here to Warm Mineral Springs in Sarasota--in Venice, and that helped me. So, we used to go to shul. Every Friday, I used to load up my car and go to the Temple over here. At that time was Konovitch the Rabbi and I liked it. The community was nice.

Q: Temple Beth Sholom?

A: Temple Beth Sholom, yeah. And, I liked it, and we decided--we had been out to L.A. too, because my daughter moved to L.A., the same--almost the same time--a year earlier. So, we decided on Sarasota, and Warm Mineral Springs helped my spine.

Q: So, it was logical to be here.

A: It was logical.

Q: Do you still go there?

A: I still go there, yeah.

Q: What is your daughter's name?

A: Sholn Rabin.

Q: Spell that.

A: Sholn. Lena is the original name, but Sholn she added. She wanted a little different--not Lena.

Q: How old is she now?

A: She is in the late...in the forties...late forties.

Q: So, I am glad that you...you wanted to add something that I think is very important.

A: Yeah.

Q: Please go ahead.

A: We were invited from Germany to come to the trial to Buchen, and we came. The trial was going on already months, and there were other fellows from the same city. Not from our city, from the second city, where Haman used to use them as

guinea pigs and they used to homosexually assault them. But, I was a witness, and he was sitting, he and others. He gave out another fourteen of his helpers. You see, how he found...they found him. When he was killing...that day when he killed my late father...he went to the other city, to Nowy Sacz, where it is written there. He went and he walked from one house to the other, killing people, with his staff. And, between his staff, was his brother-in-law. And, the brother-in-law said, "I don't want any more killings, and I don't want to go killing any more." He said, "You side with the Jews." He said, "I don't side with the Jews, but I don't want any more killings." So, he pulled out his gun and he killed him. Shot him. So, from that brother-in-law he had two nephews, and the nephews knew...he had a lot of money. You know, Jewish money. So, the nephews didn't have so much, because they killed the father, and they didn't have what to live so much, so they came to him, he should help them out with something that they should be able to live. So, he refused. So, the nephews went to the authorities, and told them, "That is Haman, and that is him over there." He was working as a mailman in a small town. Nobody knew what he was or what. He worked. So, they caught him. They put him in jail. Maybe, three or four times, he tried to knock his brains out against the wall, like he used to take the children by the head...by the feet and knock against the tree. So, he wanted to knock his brains out, too. But he couldn't. In the end, they covered with blankets the walls, he shouldn't be able to kill himself.

Q: They padded the cell.

A: They padded the walls. So, when I came to the trial...after the trial, he said he only killed Communists. So, after that trial, he got life imprisonment, and the others got three years, five years, six years, something like that.

Q: They didn't kill him?

A: No. They did not kill him. He got life in prison. So, he got life imprisonment. He killed himself. They helped him to kill himself. I presume they helped him, because otherwise how could he kill himself?

Q: He hanged...

A: He tried to hang himself. He tried everything. He couldn't...at that time, before the trial finished, he couldn't. After he got the judgement, so he killed himself. I don't know how he killed himself, but he did... we got notice from the government that Haman doesn't live any more. He is...he killed himself.

A: I am sure you were not unhappy to hear that.

A: No, but he tried many times to kill himself. So that was...

Q: You testified at the trial?

A: I testified at the trial.

Q: Thank you very much...

A: So many things...you know, you go over later...you remind yourself—you missed this, you missed that. My story is not just for two hours or for three hours.

Q: No, it was for years and years...

A: No, just to tell it, has to take days.

Q: I understand.

A: And, you can't tell it everything like you would like to.

A: Mr. Brodman, I think you have done an admirable job of telling your story very well in a brief period of time, and I want to thank you very much for your contribution to the National Council of Jewish Women's Holocaust Project.