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Interview with Mr. Ben Rosenzweig
By Bonnie Dickel
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Jewish Community Relations Council, Anti-Defamation League
of Minnesota and the Dakotas

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY TAPING PROJECT

Q: This is an interview with Ben Rosenzweig for the JCRC-ADL Holocaust Oral History Project by Bonnie Dickel at his home in St. Paul on June 29. 1982. First will you tell me where you were born?

A: Poland.

Q: And your parents were born there also?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And what did your parents do?

A: Well, they had some business -- they traded horses, clothes.

Q: What were your primary sources of information -- newspaper, radio? How did you get information on what was happening in the world when you were growing up?

A: When I was growing up, we didn't hear too much. At first we lived in a small town.

Q: Until you were how old?

A: I lived up till about 12 years and then I left my town. I went to a bigger town.

Q: And your family, everyone moved?

A: No. I myself.

Q: You moved by yourself at 12?

A: Well, to an uncle. And I lived and took my trade in the same town. A bigger town. I stayed with my uncle, my father's brother, and I took tailoring trade. I worked for three years and I moved up to a bigger city -- one of the biggest cities in Poland -- not Warsaw, but another one -- Katowice.

Q: And you were a tailor there also?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And you moved by yourself now.

A: Yeah.

Q: Where were you and what was happening to you when you first started to hear of trouble in Poland, and how did you hear about it, and what did you hear?

A: Well this was about three days before the war started, in the last part where I lived, I heard about it. So this next day, the guy -- I worked for him -- he went home and I left -- back to my home small town. This was like a Friday morning. I got home and I heard that the Germans declared war already with Poland. And Saturday, Sunday, most people took off -- ran away. We didn't have a chance to take off 'cause all the buses left already. There were no more buses. And then we run into the forest. We came there Sunday till Monday morning. Some Polish people came to us and told us that the Germans is in town. So in the afternoon we went home. Where we lived wasn't burned down. Three quarters of the town was destroyed. And the second day we got home they start already shooting again -- the Germans with the Polish army. And we got down to the river -- that wasn't far away where we lived -- and hundreds and hundreds of people were laying down there. And all of a sudden some Germans came down the next day. They said, "Everybody, hands up!" And they took us to town and we thought for sure we would be killed -- facing the walls everybody -- only the Jewish people. They only wanted the Jewish people. And somehow about four, five hours standing around, and they let us loose. We got home. For a beginning, wasn't so bad, because we could understand them. We spoke Yiddish in Europe. The German language is not the same, but we could understand each other. For the Poles it was much harder than for us. We went out to the Germans and we asked for some candies, they gave us candies, but the Polish people could stand around and say, " Oh, they are Jude! "Those are the Jews!" They didn't care much about that at the moment, because a lot of Germans wasn't the Gestapos. If it would be the Gestapos, it would be different. And it start getting worse as day by day went by and we had to go to work under the Germans. Very hard work. They didn't know what to do with us. As long as you paid them off with money, you still could stay in the city. The money started running out. We were home in '39, '40, '41, and July of '42 we worked on the freeway, and here the Germans came along the freeway and they picked us up and took us downtown -- not our brothers and sister -- I was with my brother all the time. We were at home seven children, father and mother. And so they took us to the outside.

Q: Just you and your older brother.

A: My younger brother. Not in the city outskirt, so nobody could go down see us. The ghetto was inside, and the outside, nobody could move around. Couldn't go out from the ghetto. Anyway, that is the life, and they came to see us, and in fact they brought us two breads, they give us. And they said we shouldn't worry by them. They're going to be fine. I said, "No. You're not going to be fine. We're going to be all right but you're not going to be all right." So. Your heart, everything, your whole body start getting already like numb and dead. For every person in Europe, already, because you don't know what's going to happen from one minute to the other, you lived by the second. You see? You want to live; when you see the Germans, you know you're dead. So they took us, me and my younger brother, I would say maybe about 200, 300 miles from where we lived, to a camp. It wasn't a concentration camp. In Poland was no concentration camps. So we worked there in an ammunition factory. I was lucky with my brother because it was like A-B-C. We got in ammunition factory "A". "A" wasn't bad, beside you were threatened with your life every second. Your working condition wasn't as hard as was "B". "C" was murder! Because the people, they worked by a powder that the whole body, face got yellow. Even if a prisoner wanted to escape, he couldn't, because when he escaped they saw he got a yellow face from where he comes from -- from what camp. So we worked there, very hard, too, but clean! Because we work with ammunition, bullets. And we did a lot of sabotage with them, too, because we didn't care much, anyway. Coming to work your life wasn't worth anything because you are afraid they're going to call you out from the line and they kill you. That's what they did. They didn't care who, what and when. Walking home, you are afraid whether you walk straight maybe it's too much, and they'll notice you. If you walk like this, crippled down, wasn't good, neither. So either way, it was just, shall we say like "luck" anyway, at that time, because a lot of them was called out.

And we were going to work like this. There was two shifts, dayshift and nightshift. We switched around. If we worked in day, when we went to work, whoever was left in the barracks, the Germans called everybody out and asked, " Are you the nightshift or the dayshift?" Because the nightshift was home, and the dayshift's supposed to be at work. That's what I say, we were like dead. You couldn't even say you're the nightshift, because you're afraid. So you had to say you were the dayshift, because you were sick. Now if you're sick, you don't have no rights to live! You have to die. So they could take out and kill off, kill the people, too.

In the factory, we worked with a lot of Polish people which they were coming in from outside working. We used to trade with them a lot of times. We got bread, we give them bread. Or we give them money we still had from home. And they trade with us something else they brought in from outside. But when coming in -- the Poles -- they've been searched. They brought in some bread for us, so they hung them. Like nothing. And we had to see this. Right now I can see it. I remember the whole thing.

And this was going on like this. And then there was a time at work during the day, one German got drunk. I remember like now, I can see it! And he called everybody out from the factory. He said, "The factory, let's stop the factory, everybody out." And as they walked around acting strong, he says, " You! Out! On this side. You out!" It happened my brother was there, too. So what are you going to do? What are you going to say? I had some good friends, too, there. And I asked them, " Could you give me a bread?" And I said, " Joe, here's a bread for you. Because I know where you're going. They put you on the trains. See if you can run away!" Maybe if God help me and you live through everything, maybe we will be able to see each other." So what happened is this; they took him out. Took all the people away. What they do, they connect with a city, and they take all the people and they send them away to die. And they took him in to the barracks and I was in another barracks.

Q: You were separated at that time.

A: At that time, because whoever they picked, they took them to another barrack. It just happened, I -- when I got to the camp -- I made myself friends right away. I made friends with the Jewish police. They were brutal, anyway, because they worked for the Germans. Because they didn't know what tomorrow is coming, they lived for the moment now. They knew everybody's dying anyway. So I went over to the police, and I said, " You know what? They took my brother, he's out in the other camp." He said, "Okay, let's take care of it. We're going to take care of it right away." We took a wagon and we -- four people -- two of them pulled the front, two of them pulled the back ---– like we deliver supper for one camp, from one barracks to the other one. And we just pretend so, by going out, from the camp so they count -- four people -- they don't care who you are, what you are, so long as you go out four people, four people got to return. Not five, not three. So we took four people over there. One of them left there.

Q: And your brother came back?

A: My brother came back -- four people. I had a good friend, a German Jew. There wasn't too many old people left. At that time, while we were working in the factory, he was there. And he knew the Germans, too. So the other one who got left came to work anyway, right? From the other barracks, because you count out -- 200 people go out, 200 people supposed to return. When he came to the factory, he started working, so the German Jew went over to the boss and was telling him he's a good worker, he should be here. How must be from God that that happened that way. But then this was going on like this. You weren't sure at the barracks. You weren't sure at work. Because every German had the power in their own hands. They could do whatever they wanted. I remember, there were days we were at home. You couldn't sleep in the barracks, you were afraid to sleep there, they're going to come, take you out. You try to lay down for a while and get out -- just to walk different directions. It wasn't a big camp anyways .The barracks wasn't big, because they didn't want to let you go too far away. So we

walked around. And one German, I remember was an old farmer, an older guy, and had a little pistol like this. He always used to say to a guy, " Hey, why don't you walk a little bit down, straight down?' So he starts walking. He takes out the pistol, like this. Boom, boom, boom. He's dead. For no reason! For nothing. And he didn't bother you, because like I said before, your body was dead in you. It was like cattle, you go into the slaughter house. That's how we were.

My son, the older one, he's going to be 20 in October 22. He says, " Why did you do this? Why didn't you fight back?" Hitler knew how to operate, you know, slowly. Well, this was going on, '42, '43, '44, we were there. We thought we're the only one left. They picked up maybe about fifty people and they told them they were gonna, with trucks, to go ahead to the Warsaw ghetto, to pick up the clothes. All them Jewish people -- most people -- got killed in Warsaw, that's what we heard, and the rest of them they took to different camps -- divided -- all over. They picked up the clothes and they brought it into our camp. We didn't even want to wear them, because they were nothing but blood! Everything was blood! And they said, "Look at it!" We were living just for seconds, not minutes. In our camp was one guy, a humped guy, a little guy like this. He was like half and half; he was half Pole and half German. And he was impossible! He could take out anybody and kill them. We were at that time 5,000 Jewish people in that camp. 5,000 men and ladies in that particular camp. This was going on like this, up till '44 -- I don't remember what month it was -- June, July.

I want to just go back. The year when we got into camp -- this Polish camp -- I just came in the munitions factory where the Poles were. And we worked for the Germans at that time. And the same year, on the High Holidays, the train went through our camp, and all our parents were on that train, going through to die.

Q: And you hadn't seen them because you were working on the outskirts of your city.

A: No. Since we left home, we hadn't seen them till now. So they took them all, everybody, evacuated out to the train. Whoever couldn't make it to the train was killed right away. And they took them to Treblinka. This was the biggest camp in there. How did I know this was the train? We used to write home to our neighbors -- to Polish neighbors. And they told us they took them away. On that day -- they always did -- on the High Holidays! -- You know, they know, the Nazis -- because they said, "Where's God?" They always used to say to us, "Where's God?' "If there would be a God," he says, the synagogues wouldn't be destroyed, and the churches wouldn't be destroyed. Everything was destroyed through them. They had that power! <u>They</u> were God! See, <u>they</u> were God! So an uncle of mine and his wife and children hid themselves out --after they took everybody out from home, took them up to the cemetery, they digged the holes, and they shot them all. I will just say what happened with me -- five, seven people gave our life for me and my brother. They were killed. Took them away. But you didn't know. We all had thought we were the only ones left, because the

Warsaw Ghetto it was destroyed. We didn't know anything about the Warsaw ghetto anyway; those people went over there to pick up the clothes and they told us.

Q: That was the only information you had from the outside of your work.

A: Oh, sure. There was nothing else. And from there they said they were going to take us to Germany. We thought they're going to kill us. But we had no choice. Because like I said, our hands, arms, were tied down. So we were traveling around on trains. When we came to a city, the Germans said we should not stick our head, because they were ashamed even for the German people to see what's going on. Going by to a city, we always had to lay down on the floor, not to look through. We wind up in Buchenwald.

Q: Your brother was still with you now at this time?

A: All the time. From the moment we left till now, slept in one bed, ate one piece of bread a day, sliced and a water-soup a day. And we were always together till the last minute. So we got to Buchenwald. We saw smoke coming out. And we seen so many people there, you know. All kind of nationality from the whole world. Gypsies and Germans and Poles - all kind of people were there. And then we got off the train and just like across the street, people stand and they say," Hey,' they said, " You got something you want to trade?' "You got a watch?" They thought we brought gold, this and that. "You want to trade? We'll give you some bread.' I said, " What the heck do I need the bread? We're going to die!" You see this is Germany. He said, " No." I said, " What do you say 'No!' Why do you say "No!' Because the smoke is going, day and night, twenty-four hours!" They told us, "It was doctors. Not long time ago they stopped. They stopped burning people over there. This was in '44. I would say the hardest days was August, maybe. I don't remember exactly. But I was with my brother and several friends. And we said to each other, " You know, we've got some bread. We've got some sugar. Let's eat the bread as much as we can, because we're dying anyway. To heck with it. Before we die, lets eat something." And we ate. And we said, " Let's be the last one." Why? Because we see people going and going in, but nobody comes out! But they had no choice! What can you do? There's nothing you can do. When we got to Buchenwald, we thought, " This is the only camp in the whole of Europe left." We didn't know about other camps. We thought for sure we're the only people left in Europe.

We went in. First they ask us a lot of questions. This was in a nicer way, maybe because they knew the American and British are close. And then they shaved our heads and we had to sign papers, who we are, where we come from, so-and-so. And all of a sudden, while we're walking, somebody comes along and throws a pail of water on us. I thought, " Oh, oh! Here already we're dead!"

Q: A pail of water?

A: "For sure," I thought, " maybe it's a gas!" How else could you think, besides this? Because that's what it was happened there. And finally we went out on the other side and we thought, okay, we're out on the other side. We couldn't recognize anybody because they give us Holland shoes, you know those Hollander shoes? Those clogs" --and shaved off the heads, and everything, and they put us on striped suits. Now we're in concentration camp.

Q: You had different clothing in the work camps.

A: In the work camps we wore whatever you got, civilian clothes. And here was already a concentration camp. I didn't have a number, because I wasn't in those camps. Because we had a number right here, with the stripes. And we were working for a while. So where we worked? I'll tell you where we worked. Did you see The Holocaust?

Q: On television? Yes.

A: Did you see Buchenwald?

Q: Where the artist lived -- the character who played the artist?

A: Yes. Right. Down the hill where they carried those big rocks? That's where we worked there. For a while. People had to pull out those big stones.

Q: Huge logs and large stones for wheels.

A: Yes. Did you see that? Yes! Out from there, and they had -- like with the horses.

Q: The harnesses.

A: If you didn't make it right there you were killed. Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill! A thousand dead! A thousand dead! This was the first concentration camp in Germany when Hitler came to power -- 1933. This was the first one, Buchenwald! There were people there for many, many years, from the time when he came to power. The most was gypsies -- German gypsies, because he didn't like them. He was the same to them -- Hitler was -- Jews and gypsies had to die. But at that time, when I got in, wasn't killing! They killed, the kapo -- they call like here is a manager, you know, or the foreman -- that they called kapo. In Poland and camp, there was a lot of Jewish kapos. And like I said to you before, Jewish police -- and kapos wasn't Jewish police -- they thought they were going to be fuhrers under Germans. They not going to be hurt or anything. But it's not true. When they got into Buchenwald, we all killed them. Because they were the same as Nazis, because the Nazis gave them the power. This was the same thing in Buchenwald. It was kapos. They took 2,000 people out from camp -- outside working -- they only could bring back 1,000 people. They killed off 1,000

people, a thousand came back. It was nothing but a slaughter house, slaughtering people. The Germans wouldn't want to use the bullet -- for anybody. Only they had to save, they said, for the Jews -- the bullet to kill.

In our town, if I go back again, right now I can remember. It was two boys. They went out to a farmer and they bought the cattle and they slaughtered it right downtown. They bought it and they sold it, secretly. They found out -- the Germans. I was downtown when they caught the two Jewish people. And two Germans took them in jail. The next day they started walking out with them from jail. They stopped in a liquor store -- and I was right there! I had an armband, but when I was out there, outside the ghetto, I took off my armband. Why I took it off, I don't know why. With the armband, I could never be there. If they would have caught me, probably, they could have sent me away or killed me. So I took it off, the armband, and walked around like nothing. So they were there, in the liquor store. Why did they go in the liquor store? They went in the liquor store to get drunk. Later I found out why. When they took them out of the ghetto -- outside, because nobody should see what's going on, what's going to happen. We didn't care. We just walked. They walked with the bicycles they had, those two Germans. And they told them to go down -- like on the freeway -- off the road. Took off their machine guns and killed them off. Then they came out and they stopped in the Jewish center, and they told them to go over, go and clean up the bodies. You went with two worlds. A lot of people ask me now, " How did you survive?' Well, you can say, some people gave lives for us. They died, everybody died. And if you couldn't help yourself in camps, you couldn't survive four weeks.

Q: What sorts of things did you do to help yourself?

A: Well, when I got into camp, in Polish camp, I was a tailor. I start making, in the barracks, a few hats. And I saw that my trade with the Polish people, I got bread for that. Then I said to those Jewish police, I say, " If you need anything, I sew on a button. You bring me thread with a needle and I fix you the button." "Fine!" They were in charge over the soup. And they give tickets, or passed out tickets. And they give you a ticket and you got a bowl of soup. There's times I had more than one soup and could have two, three soups. For a while! It wasn't all that good. But still! This was the whole thing! You couldn't die from not eating! I had the experience so many years. You could only die by killing . You can survive on a slice of bread and a bowl of soup. You get used to this. You live with this. So I'm talking to you, I can see myself back in 1942, '43 and '44 and '45. People survived. People could survive on one slice bread! They could. With water-soup. Bread was sliced thin. So you'd take a piece and eat. And hide it. You want it should last you for a long time! It's hard to believe now, that this could happen. So, I could have another extra ticket. Sometimes they give us cigarettes, I'd give him cigarettes. A lot of friends of mine would say, " For what are you giving him cigarettes?" Well, you know why? Because you had to make

yourselves friends. If you couldn't make yourselves friends, it wasn't good. Was hard for you. It was much harder.

Well, we got to Buchenwald. We went into another camp, too. All of a sudden, there was another foreman -- a kapo. He was a Budapest gypsy, and he could speak a little German. He could go into the kitchen and ask for his bowl of soup. He didn't ate the same soup as we had. He had a regular dish soup. He went in and got the dish and he ate. Then we went out working. We worked, and we worked by ammunition, too. And while we were working there, I said to him, " Hey, you look at those shoes. Do you want me to fix you shoes?' How can I fix them? But it's better than nothing. You have to speak up! You have to see to survive, somehow.

Q: What did you get for fixing his shoes?

A: What did I fix? How did I fix? I took the needle with the thread. How can you fix how good a shoe. Go through it once, twice. It's already loose anyway, but I got myself a friend. I said, " You bring me a needle. Go to the Gestapo. Get me a needle with a thread. I'll fix it." So every day, we got to work, I says, " You know what? Hey! Look at it! It came apart again!" So instead of working, I sat down. It came in the end he was the chief, to pass out soup. Everybody stood in the line. Pick up a bowl of soup. Pour us in a dish. And he didn't mix it. When it came to me, to my bowl, then he mixed it. So you got more. On the end was left, he called out, he said, "Rosenzweig?" He calls us by the name. He knows us. Otherwise, somebody else, he didn't call by the name, he called by the numbers. So he gave us from the end what was left over. And then, when he took his bowl of soup out from the kitchen, we ate. So it's like, "We have a little dog now." And when we eat supper, I see that he stays around, watching, now. He wants something. That's how we were -- around the table -when that kapo ate the soup. He didn't eat much, because he had enough. He wants to go in, he can have another bowl of soup, if he wants it. So he give me.

It's a lot to say. There isn't the words for five years! We were home to July '42. It isn't that we were home, because we went out working, almost every day, in the cold, without shoes.

Q: No shoes? No gloves.

A: Took a piece of rag over your feet. No gloves. And my mother had to risk her life to go out to the farmer, take off the armband and risk her life to go out about seven kilometer to trade -- pots and pans, she got flour. She bought some cheap and sold them, trays and she bought some flour, a little bread. A piece of bread from this farmer, and a piece of bread from this farmer. They were good. This I can say. The Polish people were not good to the Jewish people at all. Most of them were like the Nazis. But the farmers -- they were good to you. You went out there because they had a tough life, too. They were afraid of the Germans.

And they went into another farmer and brought home a slice of bread from this one, this one, this one, brought home for the kids. But she risked her life. And on one Sunday morning, I remember, somebody knocks on the door. He's knocking so hard at the door. And under the bed we made it like a cave, kind of. We kept potatoes there, because she used to being from the farm, saved up -- every day -- a little potatoes. And me and my brother hide ourselves underneath. And the other brothers and sisters were young. And they came, they said, " Hey! Where's everybody? Where's this and this and this?" My mother went down and opened the door, and if they would see us underneath, we could have been killed. Your life wasn't worth anything. Nothing at all. It was so brutal! So murder! I didn't see, but the way I heard! Right there! When they got in, the Germans to Poland, they took small kids, throw them to the walls! While we were in camp, we always said -- we're sitting there at night, because nine o'clock, there's no light any more -- "What's going on here? Are we ever going to be out from here or are we going to be dead?" Even if the Russian, they would have to crawl on their "tootsie," we used to say, they should be here. Or the American! That's all we could hear, you know what I mean? There was no communication. We didn't know from anybody at all. Cut off and everything. And then we said, ' I think God is in the United States! He doesn't want to see what's going on!" You know, over in Europe. "Because there would be a God," we said, "He wouldn't want it we should suffer so." You know that living was a suffering! There was nothing but suffering! One day I remember. I'll go back to the first camp -- to the big one -- the one my brother was taken there. A bunch came up -- maybe about ten, twenty trucks, and "Everybody out!" If you were like this, they didn't touch you!

Q: Strong.

A: Right. To show them that you're strong. The one who was weak, and they were sitting outside, like "crying.' Their feet was frost-bite. So many hundreds of people, they're sitting. I see them now. From God I can see them now! I'm standing right there!

Q: Tell me what you see!

A: Well, I'm standing right there. And then some Germans with the Ukraine – they were like worse than Nazis! They were murderers! They were under the Germans, they worked for the Germans. With machine guns, they told, "Up!" Put them on trucks. Kicked them with the machine guns! They took them out in a field. That's what they were doing all the time. Dumped them out like you dump out a truck of sand. And took the machine guns and went like this and killed them all. And this was going on day and night, all over, we found out. But here was two Jewish guys there -- of course I say "Jewish,' they all were Jewish guys -- in one camp we were there with Polish people, too, but most of them we were alone, just Jewish people. The only time we were with ladies was in Poland. But in Germany, you were already separated. The men was just in one camp, the ladies were in a different camp -- just ladies alone. So you went to work. With

that one, two piece pajama, the German stripe one. Nothing underneath. No underwear. And if you would only take from the barrack sometime, a quilt underneath, they stopped you going out. They could do anything to you. It just happened at that time in '44, the camp where we were, in another camp -- the small camp was there -- two old Germans, that they told us once in a while stories about the First World War. But they took away, underneath, and when we came the next day -- everybody had to go out -- they called out two numbers. Two Gestapo came out. At that time they didn't kill anybody. The only thing, you had to pull down the pants and they gave you about twenty-five rubber ones right there. I once had twelve! Took me in and I had to climb on a ladder and pull down the pants and give me twelve. He says, " What were you doing there?' For nothing, you know what I mean. For no reason! After that, I went in the washroom and while I was in the washroom, our boss comes in and comes to me and he says to me, "What happened?' If I could kill the guy, I would have killed him! He asked me, "What happened?' I says, " You know what he did to me!" He's laughing. You cannot stay long in a washroom, either. Why? Because you're not supposed to be in the washroom a long time. Because everybody likes to go in. But you have to watch the bosses. You had to go right out. If you didn't go out, he came right in with the rubber and again he start hitting everybody. Whether you worked or you didn't work, you had to pretend that you're working. You could work eight hours a day like a slave, but the second you stood like this, you were in trouble. So that you had to go circle around. Nothing but circle around. Circle around, circle around. Sometime I could get by with working, because when I had that gypsy one, he was good.

My brother, he didn't do anything! He worked, worked, and all of a sudden he thought of something, and he's looking up to the sky, and the boss comes behind him and he tells the gypsy to take him down to the basement. And you know, f he takes him down to the basement, what he's going to do to him. He's going to get him, right here. But he knew us. So he took him like this. And he told him to holler. And he took the rubber, and he start hitting on the table, and he told him to holler! He came back up.

Q: You didn't know this was happening. You didn't know he was hitting the table.

A: Well, I didn't know, but I had a feeling because we'd had cigarettes, everything, always, like two brothers.

Q: You were friends.

A: Well I mean is, it was very hard for a doctor. A doctor didn't live long -- couldn't survive. He couldn't hit the wood. An engineer, a doctor, a dentist. A doctor, let's face it, he was older. So that was a difference too. But he couldn't take it. He didn't live long. He couldn't survive. He got sick, stayed in the barrack. They could take him out and kill him. Nobody knew.

Q: How old are you now when you're talking about this incident with the gypsy and your brother in the basement? How old are you when all this is happening?

A: I didn't even know how old I was at that time. I was twenty. And my brother was seventeen. But I was grown up. By twelve I left home.

Q: But physically you were in good shape at that age.

A: I was never home in the barrack. A day when I worked I worked. If not I would be out or I wouldn't be living. You see what it was? If you would have a headache, you stay at home. In the barracks they take you out. You're not supposed to be "home." You're supposed to work. And if you can't work, you've got to die.

Q: So you worked.

A: It was lucky that nothing happened. I mean you had to know how to do it. It was hard. You were afraid for every second, that you're going to be dying. It was very hard. Very hard. There were around you, Gestapos -- with the dogs. I was scared to the dogs. I was so scared. You had to go in the washroom. Why did you go in the washroom? Just to get away for another two minutes. You didn't need to go in the washroom. You didn't eat anything to go in the washroom. We hardly drank. Because you haven't got what for, you didn't eat much to be thirsty. So you didn't drink water.

But to wash out a shirt, we washed it outside, and there were pipes outside, steam coming from the pipes, like you see a lot of times. Like if you go on downtown Minneapolis, steam a lot of times comes out on Nicollet. I'm ashamed to say now, but what we had, we had lice. And we tried to steam them off where that steam came out from the pipes.

But it's impossible to believe yet again we could survive. You could survive so long if they didn't kill you.

I was laying with one guy on the end almost, maybe three months before the liberation. At that time we knew every trick. You had, like I say, to be really strong to survive -- to make it. You couldn't be down. If you would be down, in two days you wouldn't be living. So, I said to my brother, " You know what? We're going out tonight to work." This is the first time in four years, I said to my brother, "I feel like to stay home tonight." At that moment, in that camp, that small camp we were in, there was not so much killing. And I said, "what I'm going to do -- I'm going to go out and pretend that I'm getting weak, and I'm falling down,' which I did. That gypsy?

Q: The one who gave you the soup and you traded cigarettes, who helped your brother?

A: Yes. I says, " I don't feel so good." I stood in the barracks. And all of a sudden, I didn't feel good. And from there on, I wind up in a hospital. When you went for the hospital, that was not a hospital. It was a name -- "hospital" -- a name! Was a room! And I was laying in lice. Tons! Right now I can see this, this was in 1944. And if it was100 people, everybody was laying like this. (Sigh) So I was laying there a day, and I said, " The heck! What the hell! I'm going to get out from here!" So they put me downstairs with another guy in one bed. He gave us a slice bread. I ate a slice. He had a slice bread. I talked to him. My brother came to see me. I felt it was so long I stood home a day. I wanted to rest up, maybe a few days. But if I would know where I wind up, I wouldn't do this! He had a slice bread. He put it under the cushion. Fall asleep. At night I say -- the truth is from God! I can see him now -- I said to him, ' why don't you move a little bit?" He was dead! I was laying all night with him! Didn't bother me. You know why? My body was dead. Every human body was dead.! Course, there was people that got sick. Most people could survive, as I said before . You can survive on a piece of bread and a bowl of soup. You didn't have anything else given to you. And this was going on for three years, for me. At home, we didn't have much to eat, either. When mother brought something.

Q: Potatoes…

A: Yes. Once some Germans came at home and says to me, " You know how to ride horses?" I said, "Sure I will!" If you say "no" then it's no good either. I said, ' Yes." So I went over there to the palace. We had a palace in our town. It wasn't good, because if would be burned down, there would be no Germans in our town. But still, in '42, everybody, they took everybody to the train. And they sent them out to die! This was all over in Europe! So I went out with the German and in the farms with him, and we talked to each other like friend while we were riding in the little coach. I had two horses and he was asking me questions. He said, " What do you think of these two horses? Should I trade in?" He says, " Which one do you think I should trade?" And I says, " The left one is fine. Maybe the right horse. Maybe we'll trade in." We're on the farm. He said, " Let's go in here. How you like this horse?' "Fine." We went in and traded. The farmers were so afraid. Stopped at a farm. Give us to eat -- the farmer -- and he gave us very much to eat, because first they thought I'm Polish, second they were afraid. They didn't know who I am. While I was going like this, riding a horse, I see some Jewish people working on the farm. I slowed down. I had a feeling if he would have stopped then, I probably wouldn't do them anything, because I would tell him. We got home. I said to him, what was his name, I can't remember -- "Herr 'What,' vieleich kann haben bisschen mehl?" So he said, " Sure!" I asked him for rye bread flour. Not for the good flour. I didn't want to show him that I wanted the best one. (Laughter)

Q: That you had good taste.

A: No. I said, " I'd like to have some to make some bread.' He said, " Sure!" Took about ten pounds. And the next day I said to my brother, " The next day, if I go again." He told me to go. So I told him I want to come to the other side village. You can go downtown with the armband. So he went to the other side -- all the way around -- and he met me and I said, "Vieleich kann haben bisschen mehl!" "White flour?" -- the good flour? So he gave me, " Sure, now take it." So while I was with him I felt kind of free with him. I don't know why. I think we were about 3,000,000 Jewish in Poland and everybody was killed off. They was killed off like nothing! Like nothing! You walked on the street. We as young boys, we used to wear hats -- everybody in Europe. It was the style here, too. Every time was the style -- we wore hats when we walk in the street. And we seen the Burgwemeister -- the mayor -- in town. He was half Polish and half German. And they were worse than the Nazis. They were much worse than the Nazis. And he had a brother-in-law.

Q: How can you be worse than a Nazi? (Laughs)

A: Well, you walk in the street. You take the hat off. He says, " What do you think, am I your friend?" Slap your face. You didn't take off your hat, he calls over, " Come on over. Come over here." He says, " Why didn't you took off your hat for me?" So there was no winner. An uncle of mine went, horses and wagon, to another town. You probably heard from that town -- Czestochowa? On the way, the Germans caught him. "Where you going?' Took away everything. Why" Because black market. They took some flour to another city. They make some money to be able to live. Because nobody supports you. Nobody gave you anything. You couldn't survive. Nobody said you have to have this and this. You had to do it on your own. If you couldn't do it on your own, it's too bad. They didn't tell you it's too bad. They just didn't do anything for you. So they took him to the police to the Gestapo police, and he starts slapping the face. He says, " Who hits you?" He says, " I don't know, I think the one guy was here. He had to make up a story that it wasn't him. They were so brutal! They were so brutal, we thought there was a time, if we ever survive, I think we are going to go out and slaughter every German -- we kill 'em all out! Because we would have such power! But we lived with that big "mistake." If you walk on the other side, it wasn't good.

B: At night, no light, that's fine, everybody had the same thing. Every day they call us out of town and they made like don't go to town, and then one day they said, " No Jewish person should get out from the house!" Because a general was driving by. When they came to our town, the synagogue and the church was destroyed because a Polish officer not far from town start shooting on the freeway, which a very famous general got killed. Then they went and the staff destroyed the whole town. Three quarters of our town was burned down. And a Polish guy was in the church, started shooting out from the church, and they destroyed the church, the biggest church. And the synagogue was destroyed, but it was left walls. So the mayor's brother-in-law called in all the people to the synagogue. They went in

with a tallis. They went in to the synagogue and he told them-- the old people -- to put it on. Because they believed in God. In the synagogue, when it was destroyed, we worked. We took apart bricks from the synagogue. And the Poles could come and take them and build them back homes with the bricks from the synagogue. They told them to pray. And he said, " Now can you tell me where God is?" Look at here! You're praying --" He took films. He made just fun. He took films so he can send home to his family to show them. Like now I can see it. And he said to them, " Look, where is God? Can you tell me there is a God? I am God!" He said. "Look at here. You pray to God. You been praying this for two thousand years. And how could God go and destroy this synagogue? Let me, I should destroy you. Look at." He takes out a pistol. He didn't kill anybody at that time. " Look at. See? If I take this, I got the power -- I'm God! I can kill anybody off here."

This was in '44 -- and the Germans and the Americans are coming closer. They took us out from camp and they put us on cattle trains.

Q: This happened shortly after you were in the basement of this hospital? That you were liberated?

A: Right! From the hospital, from that camp, they took us.

Q: What happened is that you were in the hospital and then you realized…

A: Yeah! All of a sudden, the guy who died, he got his bread put under his pillow there. And the next morning, my brother comes in. He says, " You know what? We're going to leave everybody!" And I went, I got out right away from there. And we stay in the line already the same day, and we go on the trains. They going to send us out from here. Where we go, we didn't know.

Q: You didn't know who was sending you, either.

A: Well, we thought they were going to send us out to die. Any time! When we left Poland to Germany, we didn't know neither. We thought we're going to die. Every time, we're going to die. We got in trains -- cattle trains -- and we were there for two weeks. The train was going slow. They didn't know where they're going with us. We didn't know where we're going. And every train there was two Germans. At that time I started getting weak already! Again, I started getting weak! It was hot! Here I'm sitting with some guys talking, all of a sudden -- while I'm talking to them -- they're already dead. Dead! So the Germans took them two people -- they should take them out and bury them any place. This was going on like this every day for two weeks. People already were dying off. It was too much already. The heat! The Germans didn't the hell know where they're going anyway. Later we found out they knew that the Americans were coming closer. They were mixed up, already. Then we stopped. There was only one German and they knew -- they were afraid for themselves, too. They

thought, " Maybe, any minute, American, if they come in." they come in trouble. Maybe he wants to be good to us. Their Gestapo got signs and everything. So he says, " Well, let's go out!" Took a few guys. One German's with us. One German went out to a small town there and went in the bakery, and stole all the bread and brought it back, and started passing out pieces of bread to everybody! And two guys start going -- walking away! Where would they go anyway? There was no place to go. Where you going to? Go hide yourself. Where? To a German? They give you out right away. So while they're walking away, the guy, he went and killed them. Gave us pieces of bread, and all of a sudden we start moving again. Slow motion. They start moving, and moving, and moving the train. All of a sudden, they stop the train, and there was Germans going out, and closing up! Outside, the machine guns were, because a lot of airplanes were. That was the last month. When they went, we could hear them going through – those bombers from America.

Q: Oh, that's the first time you knew the Americans were there.

A: The first time that we knew the Americans and then they told us, too. You could hear: V-v-v-v-v, the first time they went on Berlin! This was April already. And then we said to ourselves, " What the heck! What is this going outside with the machine guns? They're going to shoot us down! And destroy us!" Smart alecks. They came back in. They said, " You know what guys? I think that you are going to be liberated pretty soon!"

Q: Who said that?

A: That was the Gestapo. " You're going to be liberated pretty soon. And I tell you guys, I want you to do me a favor. Please." Took off the coats. He said, " Take off this from us." He didn't want to have the signs. Regular soldiers they wouldn't be doing anything to " It wasn't our fault. We didn't start the war." They start talking to us. "We didn't start the war. I'm the same human like you. I was given orders. I had to do the orders." Every German said, "It's not our fault! We only did the orders.' Everybody said the same thing. "And I think you're going to be liberated any day now! Maybe won't take longer than two days." Then we said to ourselves, " Oh my gosh! I wish we would be liberated!" To each other we were talking, slow motion. We would have killed 'em off, right there! So went by two days, three days, four days. Nothing happened.

Q: And you didn't take these off, or didn't you?

A: We took them off anyways! Yes, yes. And going on like this, finally we wind up in Czechoslovakia! And I was kind of a little weak. So many years! It wasn't normal. We didn't eat. There were days when you didn't eat anything, don't forget. Going out on cattle trains for two weeks! Where they going to get the bread for you? We didn't have anything to eat! It was days -- two, three, four, five days – we didn't eat anything! And my brother was kind of a little bit more

healthy and stronger than me. You should have seen me --- bones! Whole body. No meat. Just bones. All the bones! And they took us off the stretchers, and then there was people around. They said, " Oh, here is not dead. Here is not dead.' Because is the Czechoslovakia are taking care of. Czechoslovakia people was very good people. And they took us up in the hospital . You know what the hospital was? I think it was more than the one I was in the first one. Sostrichka we used to call them, because sostrichka, they wore -- like the nuns –

Q: You're free now! You're free now off this cattle train.

A: Free? No! Not yet!

Q: You say the nuns took you to the hospital.

A: No! No! Because that town was -- thousands of Jewish people were there – Theresienstadt! That's the name from that camp was.

Q: It's another camp!

A: Yeah. Actually this was not much working. It was only the Germans send away old people there. Like Czechoslovakia Jewish people. See what I mean? He still wanted to show from the war, he didn't kill them off. To give a little sample, if somebody's going to be left, they shouldn't say, " He killed them all off." And it was old people there. Czechoslovakia people most was there. And then they sent some from Germany, too. They used to have the Czechoslovakia military there. It was a big barracks. Big brick stones and everything. And they took us off there. And they talked to us. And they said we shouldn't worry. You're in good hands. We are in good hands there because there was Germans, but mostly Czechoslovakian, working there. And I was laying, it was on the attic, a house attic, but a big attic. Laying there. And they tried to help us as much as they could. Went by a week, I went down to the barracks. And my brother was in a different barrack. They call on this side, "hospital." So my brother was on the other side. And this was going on another four weeks, like this. And I was there, and I didn't see anything, but my brother seen more than me, because I was weak. The only way he could come in to me, he had to smuggle himself in a certain place, so he came to see me a couple of times.

Q: How did he do that?

A: He had a way to get in. And he came in and he see me and he went back. So, what happened, is, was May 7, '45. Outside, everyone started hollering and screaming and saying, " You know what? I think the Russians are close!" I think any minute, I think we're going to have the Russians!" Because the Czechoslovakians told the people -- a lot of people, too -- that it's like the Russians are this close. And there were a lot of Germans there too. They had an order in every camp, to destroy us the last minute! All of a sudden -- it was on a

Saturday night, I can't forget this -- I'm looking out the window, and a bunch of guys says, " Oh my gosh!" All of a sudden, lights is off. It's no good sign, they took away the lights. Then there's no water! They cut off everything -- the Germans! Then they supposed to take us out and kill us off. Everybody in every camp. They had an order. After we found out, but before we didn't know. Because we knew, there's no water, there's no nothing any more.
So I said to a bunch of friends, " To heck with that! I'm going to bed! Whatever's going to happen can happen!" Went to bed. Two o'clock I had to get up because there was so much noise. It was impossible. We look outside. We see people on tanks. The Russians are here. This was the next day -- May 8th. May 7th, May 8th -- can't forget those days. And a lot of people got killed for joy -- hammering on the tanks – they got killed for joy, they were so happy and everything. And I went downstairs and they opened up the gate. Like we were free. There were no Germans. The Germans took off. They were smart. They opened the gate and everybody started running out! And the tanks came. (Crying) I was too weak again. I went back to the house. My brother came in when they opened the gate. He says, " I'm going to go out now." He went out and a lot of them killed a lot of Germans. Took away everything, because they were riding on the wagons with horses. They stopped them, they kicked them off. They came in the homes and they said, "Take everything you want." And they brought back -- we all the time said, while we were in camp, " If God gives us to live -- to survive -- the first thing we're going to do is get a bread with a knife and slice the pieces, and eat up the whole bread," because we could never believe we ever going to be able to have a whole lot of bread on our own, because we didn't know that we're going to survive -- they brought in the food. My brother brought it in. And I started eating a lot .It wasn't good. I got sick. More sick. Thousands of people died. Diarrhea. I talked to a friend of mine from the same town. Went in the washroom. Dropped dead there. It was going on like this a week. Everybody got so sick. They ate and they ate.

Q: Your system can't take it.

A: I remember now, what I ate -- chocolate -- mixed up with all kinds of things that it's impossible to believe, because there was no control over you. Then my brother came up and started helping me. If it wouldn't have him I probably wouldn't have survived. All of a sudden, the Russians went and stopped everything. Closed the gate. They tried to take care of the people on this side hospital. Tried not to give you to eat. They gave you like a diet. If they would be starting out from the beginning, it would be good. So then I start feeling good. Then I went out and I met one Russian guy and he just happened to be Jewish. He was very mad at Germany --Gehr-many he called them. And I went out with a jeep with him. I couldn't speak his language, he couldn't speak my language, but somehow we could communicate with each other. The only thing I knew is, I asked him, "Ivrit?" "Ivrit" is "Jewish." So he says, "Ivrit." And I told him how many we were killed, and he said the same thing. He lost everybody. Everybody got killed off to the Germans and he was very mad. We had like eight days of

freedom -- after May 8th -- eight days freedom in which everybody could go out and do whatever they wanted, but not those who were in hospitals.

But there is so much to tell! Like I told you about Buchenwald where people worked there, so hard. You couldn't die for hard work but you had to pull up those trains on your shoulders, and if you couldn't pull, they killed you, right there. Because they didn't want so many people. There was so much killing, I'm telling you. It's impossible to believe how brutal they were. Everybody got their power in their own hand. They could do whatever they wanted. Taking children and kill them. Take off all the clothes and go in, take a bath. Take the rings off, gold and everything to leave, and go in. And gas. And the kids. First they put you on trains, which they had a certain chemical in the trains -- you couldn't survive getting down to be killed, because you died right in the train, inside. Packed! Cattle's not enough. They packed you, squeezed you in. And then we start making up Jewish songs in camp -- how the child says to the mother, and the child is crying -- for the Holocaust (reunion) in Israel, we went, and they sang, " Where should I go? There's no way to go. The whole world is closed for us." We went to the Holocaust [reunion]. I went with my wife. She's American, my wife. It was something to see that. Like somebody can say to me, " Do you like to watch that?" "Yea. I like to watch it!" Nobody should ever forget what happened. I like to see everything. I was right there. I work with people -- American -- and they'll be saying, " Oh, there's a German film, about the Holocaust. Do you like to watch it?" I said, " Sure I like to watch it, because I was right there.' Because we cannot forget. I wish my mother would come, in my dream. I haven't seen her since I left home. There was a lot of people in home. They said, " If you ever survive, and you see there's nobody left any more, would you go down to the stones and kiss the stone and ask the stones, Where are the people? Where is my mother, father, brother and sister? The stone would answer you. The reason they said that, they didn't believe that we'd be able to survive. If we can, the stone is going to talk. Isn't that something? Hitler didn't know that, the Jewish people, he thought, were going to be destroyed for good. But it isn't so. They're going to be living forever! So it was a very good experience; we went to Israel there, in the right time. But it's like when so-and-so said, "No, I don't know how you people could ever stay and look and do whatever you wanted and not say a word, to the German." "Whatever they wanted, they did it with you and you didn't say a word." Nobody helped us. The Polish people didn't helped us. The Polish people could sell a Jew for ten pounds of sugar. A German let out to the Polish people, " If you bring me a Jew…" This was after everybody was taken away, after '42. Then a lot of people started hiding out -- a lot of people got left. I'm not saying all Polish people were bad, but there should have been more good people in Poland. There wasn't. He told them, " For ten pounds sugar, if you can bring me Jew, then you have ten pound."

B: In our town, I was with one guy, he was in the same first camp in Poland, work camp -- and his parents were rich at home. One guy was a chauffeur -- a non-Jewish guy -- worked for this boy's father. So we were in camp. He escaped

from camp. Where is he going? He's going home. Home to whom? You've got to have somebody to take you in, right? Where would you go, if not to your own -- to the guy who worked for your father all the years -- supported you, gave you a home to live and everything, right?

Q: To the non-Jew who worked for his father.

A: You know what he did?

Q: Turned him in?

A: It's exactly what you said. He said to him, " You wait here. I'm going to go out. I'll be right back." He brought in a Nazi, took him out and killed him. I was back in Poland after the war for two months. I didn't go home. Everybody was afraid to go home to their hometown. Katowice was a town -- the biggest town, which in the First World War was a German town Poland took over -- I worked there as apprentice, too, in that town; where I lived was about seven kilometers -- I went to that town, Katowice. It was at the German border. When I got home, there was several places where Jewish found friends. To be going home you risked your life to these Poles. I don't care what it is. Any time I run into a Pole, I have a conversation, I tell him the same thing! I tell him, " You told us before the war we don't belong there! I was born there! That's my home!. But you said I don't belong there. I belong to Palestine!. They say, "Jew! -- You go to Palestine." They always used to tell us. I'm not saying the whole country. But they shouldn't have been like that. They shouldn't have. They should have helped us. I wish we could have gone1 We couldn't go! The British didn't let you in. They gave you only so many people from Poland can leave every year, because they didn't want to let you in anyway. In Czechoslovakia, when the Russians came, they said, " Okay. Polish people can go to Poland, if you want to. Where you from? From Romania? You want to go to Romania? You can go to Romania. You want to go to Poland? If you're from Poland, you're not going to go to Romania or to Hungary. The loudspeaker says, " Everybody can go home." So everybody starts, here is Czechoslovak, here is Romania, Austria here. So we went to the Polish side.

Q: You and your brother?

A: Yeah. And other people, in a train. We went home. It didn't take us long. It wasn't far. We got home. Got off. We're walking in the street. I found a cousin. I said, " Oh, you're Maryk?" "Hi." He said, " Oh hi. How are you?" He says, " You know who else is here? You got another cousin here, another cousin here. They're right over there." And we went over there. And we stood with them for a while. We slept there. And then we went in to the Jewish Community Center. In every big town there that's what they would have, and they had names. Like, if I came, I put down my name. And everybody put down their names. If somebody else came, they see, " Oh, look at that, I found my brother…" A lot of

people found brothers, sisters from these names. From there I was another town, not far from that big town and we were there for a while. All of a sudden, somebody came along and he says, " Hey! You're a tailor, would you like to go work for my cousin?" I say, " All right." So then I went back to the big town, Katowice, where I used to be before, and I knew the town and everything. And I was there two months. I took the train to sleep with my cousin -- seven kilometer -- and I went in the morning. At night I went home. It wasn't bad. But then there were a lot of people from our town. They went home because they had a lot of money coming back from farmers -- from Polish people they left when they left to camps during the war. So they came back. They thought they going to stretch out the arms and say, " I'm glad you came home! I got everything what you left for me. I give you back." And, "I'm so happy you're back." No. They were nice to them but you had to hide yourself. They had a lot of parties --– Polish people, young guys -- that they just looked for a Jew, to kill 'em. You couldn't believe your life! I couldn't believe that this would ever happen. So those guys, they could stay with one, with Polish people, they knew them very good, overnight. They used to come and knock at the door, " Have you got somebody here, so-and-so!" He said, " No!" During the day you could walk around. You weren't afraid. But at night, you could stay by one family, and to sleep, you had to go someplace else, that they shouldn't know that you been here. During the day you might sleep here too.

Q: You're constantly running, even then.

A: It was not far from my town -- pogrom. And this happened in 1945! People take the trains. They slide them out. They killed them! The name of the town is Kielce. They killed them off. A pogrom! Nobody went home to their town. Like I say, there wasn't too many left. Now if I were to go home, in our town, maybe, I could count them on my fingers. Maybe 15, 20 people. You wouldn't want to be in town if you knew everything is gone. The Jewish blood is there. There's nobody left. Whoever was from small towns all over Poland, they came to the biggest town. If they wanted to go, they could be in Warsaw and the town I was. Several towns, they could be in. Nobody touched you because it was more Jewish people already in there. They should have been much better to us. We didn't do anything to them harm. I was there about two months and all of a sudden I look out, I go out for lunch, I see that guy -- the boy who ran away and came to hide to that Polish guy who was the chauffeur, the one who worked for his father. I seen him walking there! And the Polish people told those guys, " You know who came back? This one came back, and he went over to this guy, and he…" They should have been good to us. They didn't suffer. Maybe 2%, probably suffered. They didn't kill them. (Sighs) You had no place to go, even if you would want to run away, to hide yourself.

Q: What did you do after those two months that you worked again as tailor in a large city?

A: I worked and we'd help somebody and try to be occupied.

Q: And your brother was still with you.

A: Yes. Because I came home every night, because it didn't take long. Seven kilometers was four and a half miles. Took a train. Two months, we got back, and all of a sudden somebody comes along and says, " You know who is over in Germany? Your cousin!" Which it was -- two sisters. I stood with one sister, a girl, in one room; there was a lot of them, boys and girls. And one cousin of hers left a day before I arrived in Poland from Czechoslovakia. Where did she go? She went back to Czechoslovakia because she worked there during the war with a Czech guy and they got married. She was here last year, second time. And she married him there and that's why she went back. She left her sister there in Germany. Then one guy came and says, " You know, her brother's in Germany," and he says, " Let's go back!" So a whole group start going back, taking the train, smuggled through. When we arrived in German, we missed each other. He left for Poland because his girlfriend was in Poland. He got there and he picked her up, and he came back with her. And he took that sister, and the other sister got left in Czechoslovakia, and that's how we were there in Germany up till '49. I was 27. In '49 we got brought over to the United States. There's people left for Canada, there's people left for Australia, all over. And we said, " Well, maybe we'll go to the United States." And that's how we wind up

Q: And did you and your brother come to the United States together?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you go to New York? Did you come right to Minneapolis?

A: Minneapolis.

Q: And that's where you met your wife?

A: No. To Minneapolis and I didn't stay long, stood six weeks, and I went right to work. (Laughs) See, when you have a trade, you go to work. I wish I wouldn't have a trade. I think it would be better. (Laughter) and somebody came along, " How about going to Fargo, North Dakota?" I said, "Well, what's the difference?' I didn't know Minneapolis, I didn't know Fargo. I might as well go to Fargo. So I go and tell my boss, " I'm going to leave." He said, " what do you mean, you're going to leave!" Almost fainted. He didn't pay me much, and he figured I'm a good worker and he thought he's going to keep me for a while! " How do you go?" he said. " I don't know." "What do you mean you don't know? You're a newcomer," he says, " You just came over, but you're not that dumb!" I said, " I don't know!' " Who told you?" " I don't know, some guy." " What do you mean, some guy!" (Laughter) The guy that I'm supposed to work for, he was a

German, American German. It was good, because I could talk to him. I got there to Fargo, and I had it very good in Fargo! Very good.

Q: What years did you live in Fargo?

A: In the 50s. I had it good. When I got to Fargo, he already arranged me in the Y.M.C.A., a few blocks off Broadway, a side street. And I went to his house first -- he picked me up from the bus depot -- and we ate there. I almost bust my stomach, I ate so much! And we were talking! This was a Sunday night. And then he took me over to the Y.M.C.A., and Monday morning I went to work already. I met a friend. He was from Norway and I could speak to him German, so he could speak. He worked for Goodman, a Goodman Jewelry on Broadway. Later I heard they closed up. And I had Fein, and he tried to introduce me to a lot of Jewish people across the street, to one German Jewish guy in there and then Strauss.

Q: Strauss clothing?

A: Strauss clothing. One of them was a vice president of a bank, too. From the bank right on the corner. (Laughs) He knew a lot of Jewish people too. That one I worked for -- the store name was Howards -- his name was Deniver. Two people, they didn't have any kids. He gave me, the same week, everything, a hat and a suit. I should pick out everything. He only wanted I should stay with him. Finally somebody found me, from the Mount Sinai Temple. It was on Broadway, upstairs, and the Rabbi who was in the Mount Sinai Temple, were two brothers -- one was in Mount Sinai Temple here in St. Paul and one of them was in Fargo -- and they both were German Jews. They came over. I think they left in 1938, a year before the war broke out. Every Friday night, they picked me up from the Y.M.C.A., me with another American boy -- he was from New York -- and we stayed at the Y.M.C.A. , and they picked us up and we went to eat in his house and then we went over to the synagogue, introduced to everybody, then they found out who I am. They wanted to know everything, how the past was. And almost twice a week some Jewish family picked me up. Oh, yes, Fargo - they were so nice to me. And they called me up, " Ben you wait and I pick you up and you come over to my house.' Every Friday night in a different house was a party. I like to eat. And everybody was sitting around. They wanted to hear my story, what happened to me in the past. And I was only talking in mostly Yiddish, and everybody understood. Not the young ones, but the middle aged, they understood. It was a very nice town and I was there about eight months. I came back to the city. I stayed a year. In 1955 I got married, and I got two lovely boys, and one, he'll be 22. He was already in real estate, and it didn't work out too good in real estate. And the other one is 19 and going on 20, so he's in the second year of college.

Q: So when they ask you how you survived, how do you answer them?

A: We had to. You could survive on a slice of bread and a bowl of soup. You could live for several years. You lived with that. You didn't do anything. You were hungry, but if you didn't have, you work, too. If you opened a Frigidaire and it's empty, for example, there's nothing to eat. What can you do? But if you open a Frigidaire and in the Frigidaire there's something, you're going to eat. And that's how it was going on, day by day. If we could have the peels from the potatoes, if we went down to the kitchen -- outside in the garbage -- and pick up some peels, this would be like gold to eat. But if you couldn't get those peels, neither, because they wouldn't want you to eat this -- not because they didn't want you to eat, you're going to get sick -- they didn't want you to have anything to eat except a slice of bread. But again, if you work all day hard and if you didn't know how to manage yourself with working you could get yourself more weak. And when every day id going on like this you get weak and then just pass out, like nothing.

Q: You've mentioned a number of times that you felt like your body was dead.

A: Everybody's body was dead.

Q: But something had to be alive -- your mind or your head.

A: Yes, yes. For example, we have a dog. I take him for a walk every time I come home from work. He's already used to that. He's waiting for me to take him for a walk. You get used to it. A couple years ago, he didn't feel good, his leg was something wrong. I felt so bad, I'd like to cry. I could not see anybody should get hurt. He cannot speak up what hurts him, so we took him to the doctor. He gave him something. He healed him up. There's times he walks around, I see he doesn't feel good. Everybody feels bad. The kids, terrible. They love. They get very pained. Very much! It's inherited. They know! It's not that they showing that it's like for me, but maybe it's a kind of hurt, like it comes from, like, if somebody takes out a pistol, a gun, to show me, I say, " No, no. Stay away, stay away.' Because I was burned already. I seen guns every minute. That's when I meant there's the body, dead. " Where should I go if the street is closed up?" -- you know, that's a Jewish song we made up during the time, and it's going on in Israel; it's in English, too, the song -- in other words, there was no way for us to go. That's why you got to be there, and you got to die there. And we seen them taking the men from that camp with a little pistol like this here. They used to carry it like this. At night you were laying with your clothes on, sleeping. How clean could you be? if you were laying in your clothes? People could get sick just from the stripes. Lay on the top, people in underneath. If somebody need to go out in the washroom they didn't go out, they did it right there, and the water was coming through. They were afraid to go out in the washroom; if you walk out they kill you. There was nowhere to go! Everything was closed up for us. You try to help yourself. Why should I go ask for it? To be killed? So that's why every body was closed, was dead. It wouldn't be dead, we would have to go out and fight for it. When they picked us up from the freeway, it happened it was maybe 20 kilometers from our house. I was out in the field. I had to go out in the

washroom in the field at that time. All of a sudden I look out there and I seen Germans! Everybody goes in the truck! I couldn't hide myself. Where am I going to hide? Where am I going to go from there? So I figured, " I'm going out. I'm going to walk out there. What happened to everybody is going to happen to me". Who is going to hide me? Where am I going to go? To a Pole, say, 'I want to hide myself?" They're going to say, " Oh, yes, you're a Jew." They're going to say, "I am afraid!" They find out, he's going to be killed, so why would he do this for me? He wouldn't do for me anything. So I went out. Like I said before, everybody's body, because they wouldn't be dead, we would fight back. We would kill Germans. We didn't do anything to them because we know this. If one Germans would be killed by a Jewish guy, in town, they would take the whole town out and kill them off. So your arms like locked up. And the body was dead. There was nothing. They said, "Come," we came. That's why mine older one says, " Why didn't you fight?' He says to me now, " I'm not going to be like that. I'm proud to be a Jew! I'm not going to be like that. If somebody's going to say to me bad, I'm going to tell him back. I'm not going to keep my mouth shut," he said. "I'm going to speak up for myself.

Q: And what do you say to him when he says that?

A: I don't say. If I don't say anything, means he's right. A lot of times I get scared. I can sit like this, somebody comes in, and I'll jump. This is my feeling. I've got to be occupied always. I would say most people is the same from what they went through.

Q: Do you relax? Do you just sit?

A: Hardly. And I like it this way. I can drive home in a car and sometimes it came in my mind, and the tears come, I start crying. They say sometimes it's better you cry. It's out. And you just cry because how could this ever happen, something like this? What's going on over there in Israel, it's like this: not everybody can be living there! Around the world there've got to be Jewish people, too. Not only over there. To see, to fight, for Israel to survive. I'm with Begin 100%, what he's doing. Because there isn't a thing that he doesn't do, because he comes from our home, where we were born -- this is in Poland -- in which the Poles said, " This is not your home! Your home is in Palestine!" Was very much anti-Semitism in Poland in my time, when I was 12 years old, after we lost our president. Somebody else came around and he wasn't so good. So we knew right away it's going to be a change. And that certain day, in the paper, right away it was no good. Begin, he's doing good. He knows what he's doing because he lived there! He ran away! Just happened he was lucky. He ran away from Poland. Wound up in Russia. He was in Russia imprisoned for a couple years. '44, he took off. Somehow they got in to Palestine in '44. He started fighting. A lot of people were fighting the British before -- that's 1933 -- as I was a child. I remember everybody went to pray to the synagogues, to God, they should be left. And they hanged them anyway. They caught them making sabotage for the British. He's

tough. He has to be tough. You got to survive. If you cannot do now on your own, then it's no good. No Israel! There isn't too many Jewish people left. The most, the majority, is here in the United States. It's not to say you got to be a Zionist to be going over to Israel to live there. You don't have to live. You only have to think about that. If they survive, the Jewish people can survive here. God forbid, if they cannot survive, Jewish people cannot survive. Because if we would have a state before the war, this wouldn't happen in Europe. Israel would know about it. Particularly what happened before the war. And people could have emigrated. And we have other countries too. The United States don't make anything if you want to leave; you leave. If you want to go to Israel, you can go. You can have two citizen papers. You can go over there and be a citizen, and be an American citizen, too. From other Old World countries, they can leave, too. As I say, if this would have happened like this before the war -- would be a State -- it wouldn't be. What they wanted, just to survive. Is only just 3,000,000 Jewish people living there. Why shouldn't they have their power? You've got to be tough to survive. If you're not going to fight for it, you're not going to survive. Then I'm going back to Germany again. They didn't do anything. It was no homeland. The German Jews said, before, " I'm German, never mind I'm a Jew.' They couldn't believe this going to happen. It can happen all over the world like this -- what happened in Germany. Can happen all over. Much worse! Why? Because everybody going here have the gun! People got to have somebody to fight! The Russian don't need the Jewish people in Russia. What do they need them for? They got plenty of people of their own. But they don't want to leave them out! Even to go to Israel! They leave them out little by little. But with whom are they going to fight? The Arab countries, they're fighting among each other. They wouldn't have Israel, they would fight more with each other. It is the truth. They've got to have something. What happened last year in Poland? Who'd they blame? Jewish people! You know what they said. 10,000 people. It's not true. It's a big lie. It's 500 people living there. That's all. The whole Poland. But the propaganda -- " The Jewish people. They the ones start it. They're the ones to blame!" Out of the 500, probably half are on the Polish side, anyway. Convert! There's no people. First people from Poland went out. Second time they went out, in '60, they told them, if they're not going to leave, they cannot leave any more. The only people that are left -- most of them -- is the Romanian. In Poland, the first thing, they have to blame. So who are they going to blame? " Jewish people," they say, " They're to blame." One person gets up and start talking. Then everybody is against them.

My mother -- I never seen her since I left. She came with my sisters and brothers, the youngest. The youngest at that time was a girl who was four years old. One brother, the older one, got killed in Brunshaven. I didn't come home till the war broke out. I came home Friday morning. Six o'clock in the morning! The cousin had a truck. Not everybody could afford to have this. The truck was going from where I worked in that town, to Warsaw, forth and back. And I hadn't seen her since. Then they took and draft him; he went in the army in '39. He was supposed to come home for a week. And he didn't want to come home. My

mother wrote and told me that he wants to come home six months later, for two weeks. He never came home. Mother was crying. She saw everybody's coming home, he's not coming.

B: I tell you it's hard to believe, a lot of people ask me, " How did you survive?' I can't believe it. I don't believe it myself! I was there! My memory is good. Names is no good. But to remember, I remember everything! I remember everything! The last day we went home from the factory, I said to my brother -- I have to swear it to you, because it is so true – "Joe! What're we gonna do now?" We're going home to the barracks. From that day we supposed to leave for Germany. We didn't know where we were going. We thought, we gonna die! They told us Germany. And somebody came back and said, " Oh, it's terrible to go home now! The guy with the hump in the back, he goes, Come on here! No reason! He calls you out and you going. And we didn't even know where. He probably took him in back, and he killed him off. For nothing!" So we go home. At that day they was taken away -- everybody. And they went to Treblinka. (Sigh) They took us that day out on the High Holiday. So we fast that day. We didn't eat. Boss comes over to us. He didn't wear the Nazi uniform, he was a civilian, because he worked in the factory. He was watching us. He was the boss in the factory. And he says to us, " How come you're not eating?' We says, " We're not eating today. We know what today is. We fast today. Today's our High Holiday." We didn't want to eat. We knew where they're going. I had friends -- a lot of Polish good people, too. In our town was one Jewish guy, a neighbor of ours, he hide himself. His five children they took away in '42. And he hide himself on a farm, which he did very big business with a farmer. And he went out there and hide himself, and he let himself grow a long beard, with a cane, and he used to come downtown, once a week. Most people didn't know who he was. He walked. Was about four-and-a-half miles, he came in town. And a few Polish people he knew, so he stooped over. They thought is a Polish guy. Nobody knew he is Jewish. But the one who he stopped, they knew he's Jewish because he was his best friend. Now there's more. Certain people, they couldn't go out and say, " Oh, here's a Jew," because something like this happens, that people could hide themselves with beards. There was places that they used to hide themselves -- in attics. Polish people used to hide Jewish people in attics. And if they caught them, they killed off the Polish people, too. I have one friend, he lives in Minneapolis. He was in Russia, and he got in the woods. He lived there for three years in the woods. They had the ammunition, and they had machine guns. He told me stories. They met some Russians. The Russians wanted to kill them off. They didn't know who they are. Partisan! And they had to eat, they went out to farmers, and they gave them everything, because they were afraid for their lives. They wouldn't dare say to Germans, " You know, some Jewish people came over here." Because if something would happen to one Jewish guy, the whole town would be up in the air. He was there about three years, living in the woods like this. And he saw his brother, his own brother was going in a place, and he saw the Germans kill him off. They killed a lot of

Germans in the woods. Took away the machine guns and practically everything from them.

There are times you feel so depressed. It comes to you, in the dark.

Q: Does that happen to you often?

A: No. I try not to let myself.

Q: What do you do so that doesn't happen, besides keep busy?

A: When I drive I start talking and I start thinking about way back. How can this ever happen to human life? I tell a lot of people here -- American people -- not the Jewish people. You get together. You make conversation. How could this ever happen! To say, " You have a right to live. I don't have a right to live." Why don't you have a right to live? Why don't I have the same right as you? That's what they told us. So I'm supposed to die. And everybody got the power in their own hand. They could do everything. That camp -- the one we left, when I was in the hospital. We were in the barracks. It's like I can see it right now. My brother ate up the slice bread. Right now I see it. It was in the evening, maybe eight o'clock. He took the slice bread and he finished. I always like to last longer. Then he asked me for another piece. You haven't got it, you open the Frigidaire. There isn't anything in there. There's nothing to eat. And then we go to bed. We both sleeping upstairs, and downstairs in two beds somebody else sleeping. All of a sudden I hear, " Boom!" The main thing, I was going to get to that piece of bread. I didn't care what the heck's going on! I want to find my piece of sliced bread! It's dark. Everything was shaking down, the bed and everything, and I say, " What's going on? What is it? A bomb they dropped?" It's dark, and I'm looking all over. Finally I found the slice bread. I put it in my pocket, and got my shoes. We slept in clothes anyway -- two piece pajamas, that's what it was! And we go out. " Oh my gosh! It's burning. The factory's burning." Did we have it tough! I wished this would not have happened. You don't know how tough we had it after that. American bombed the factory.

We had one guy there -- a German. He was "brute" side. We always used to say, " I wonder if he's not a spy." Like he would be more on the American side. He was " talking tough." They were all 'talking tough." The only thing we said, " If we have to die, we should know how it comes -- from where." So. Dropped the bomb, on the factory. We were the dayshift. We were home at night. We went out right away. And the Germans brought those dogs -- shepherd -- on the leash, and they start barking. They wanted we should be in one place. You don't fight them. They thought maybe we can escape! Five thousand people? We were 5,000 people in our camp. We were out in the field. All night. When it got daylight, we went down to the factory and we had to start cleaning up. One guy from our town comes out and he says, ' Ben! Take a look here!" (Cries) "I can't even peek. Why ask!" The arms were here. He recognized his brother. He

worked dayshift and the other, his brother, worked nightshift. He was in the factory. He was killed. His head was this way. I can see it now. And his arms was in a different place, and he recognized it. (Sighs) And then we had to start cleaning up. We had so tough at that time. Then you know whom they send out? The Hitler Jugend. Those are the brutalist Nazi -- the young -- the youth! They were the worst ones, because they trained them from that certain age to become Nazi, Gestapos. Did they give us a lecture! They're children -- 12, 13 years old -- and they were with the guns! " Come on!" Beat us up! When you worked in the fields! For no reason! We didn't need to do anything in the fields. Just to keep us occupied, we took some sand from here and put it over here, and we took some water and mixed it with the sand, and from this side we put it over. That's what we did. Just to keep you occupied. Shoveled sand. Picked up. Put on this side. Took some water. Made mud. Then take the mud. Put it on the other side again. To get you not to be free! Not to arise! To be a slave right away. And for no reason! And they give us a lecture! America! " Oh my gosh, we suffered." They wanted to help us? It's worse there for us!

Q: When was that? What year was that?

A: That was before we left. Six months before. We build up the factory right away, started work.

Q: So did you think that you would be liberated soon?

A: No. We didn't know anything. The only thing was going around with us just like rumors. But then we found out through the gypsy. He told us that the American bomb was dropped. He showed us. We saw the big hole. Really deep.

Q: This was before Czechoslovakia?

A: Yeah. Six months before, I would say. They build up the factory right away. First we worked outside. Four people work by one item. Three people couldn't handle it. Had to be four because you had to pick up bombs in a sort of thing that you have to lift. And if you did this all day, it wasn't so easy. I had it good for a while -- a good foreman. So when we came to work he said, " Ten people working here, ten people here, and ten people here." So nine couldn't work here anymore. Had to be ten people. There was a time I just walked away when I came.

Q: You have to know how to outsmart people.

A: The main thing that was important -- to count how many is. To go home. If you came in with 200, you have to bring 200 back to the barracks. So you start counting ," Ein, zwei, drei, vier, funf, sechs, sieben, acht, neun, zehn…" Then we had to walk to work with songs. We had to sing German songs. They taught us a

song. And you know what we sung? " We have you in Hell!" That's what we were singing in Jewish.

Q: They didn't understand what you were singing?

A: No. And we said, " We got them to Hell," not " They have us in Hell." We switched around the song.

Q: How did you manage to keep a sense of humor?

A: Well, we had to sing anyway. And we sung this way. They tried to make you so occupied you wouldn't have to know or think about anything. They trained you to be like in the army. First you move out your foot and you say, " Ein, zwei, drei," and "mitza dav." Take off the hat. Then you have to back up -- you have to put it back again. And then they let you stay out an hour and a half. Stay outside -- coldness.

Q: Standing, waiting to do this?

A: Sure. And then, " Turn around." If somebody didn't do it right -- back! Like the army. They make you occupied. All of a sudden they're going to make us soldiers for Nazis. Now I can laugh. We didn't laugh at that time, believe me. Like I say, now I can laugh, because at that time I couldn't laugh. Because it hurt us. Anyway, we start marching. We came to the end. We stopped, counting out. We got out. Went to work.

B: I'll tell you what happened one time. My brother – a German says, " You ride the wagon with the horses?" "Fine." "Get in." So he was riding the horses, one place to the other, at night. It wasn't much light anyway, because they wouldn't have too much light to look. They were afraid. They say don't shine the light for "the enemies!" for the Americans. Somehow they went to a cable, knocked off the lights. The whole factory went off. Can you imagine something like this? Is like sabotage. Finally, " Who did this?' I told you the one we thought, ' He's a spy.' They took my brother in to the police. So he says, ' I don't know! I just riding the horses. I don't know what happened!" They didn't do anything to him. They let him go.

B: You could have alarms at night, five, ten, fifteen, twenty times alarms. Wherever you were, you hide yourself. You lay down. You worked in the woods, you lay down. You worked in the factory, you lay down. One time we worked in the factory, that night there was an alarm, 7 o'clock, we were sitting and talking. There was a German working with us. I asked him, " Why do you here in the factory, working? Why aren't you in the Russian front?' He says, ' You know what? You see this beautiful apple here?' He had an apple. (Laughing) He says, " Look how red this is. Beautiful apple outside. But inside is rotten! I look good outside, but I'm rotten here. How do you think they would keep me here if I

would be good?" They wouldn't keep me." This way, he didn't have to go front. He was a nice guy! (Laughter)

B: Once happened with my brother again. Was alarm. He lay down in the woods. He fell asleep. Later we found out. Five o'clock in the morning we have to go home. Foreman starts counting out. He says, " Eins, zvei, drei, vier, funf -- hey -- Joe's not here!" We waited a whole hour. We were looking for him all over. I knew he's someplace. He probably fell asleep. I wasn't worried. And would you believe we found him? I think we found him sleeping still. The foreman start just making like, " Don't do this next time!" You cannot go home till you have all the people.

B: I was talking to one guy here one time about business. He made very well in the business. I said, " Well, lucky. You were lucky." He says, " No. it's no luck.' We used to say "luck" in Europe. For every little thing, you say, " we're lucky.' The same thing we said for every little thing we did in there, in camps. We were "lucky."

Q: What is he if he's not lucky?

A: That's what I mean. I don't know there's another word. He says, " No. I don't call this lucky. I struggled for it!" He did it himself. Means "lucky" to him, he might think " it came -- by itself." In Jewish we say, " Griklo." It's the same expression. I mean any little thing you risk for your life. We had the armband on, and you couldn't go a certain place. I went some place. Certain guys were picked up and they took him out, and they put them in jail, and after the jail they sent them away someplace else in another camp. Where are my brothers and sisters? But they died. They killed them off. And I would have been killed, the same thing. Somebody said, " How did you survive?' The only way to say is " Just for God."

Q: Where's your brother now? What happened?

A: He's here. He lives a few blocks from here.

Q: Your story and his story are so close together. I want to know what happened.

A: The same thing. We left the same time. I was in the woods. I came out. We left the same. I had nowhere to go. I told my son, he said, " Why wouldn't you hide in the wood? Where would I go? To whom would I go? If I go out in the street, Germans passing by, they kill me. They send out the dogs, they kill me. Was too far to go home. Is my home there? It's not my home. It's the Germans' home was out there. And we didn't say anything while we were home even. Because when we were home, at the time till we went to the labor camp, you were threatened every second with your life anyway. You didn't know whether you can survive. There was nothing to eat. It was hard, very hard. You didn't know

which way you should go. Eight o'clock, you couldn't be out anywhere. I remember, I went with my uncle to another town, with a horse and wagon. (Sigh) To transfer potatoes over there, from there we took coals back home. And we got home, the coals we sold it. Have it for yourself, and you sold. We burned with coal in Europe. After twelve o'clock you couldn't drive. Eight o'clock you couldn't go out. And while we're driving, two Germans stops us by a railroad, and they start talking to us. And we didn't pretend we aren't Jews. And right by the railroad was a Pole, watching the railroad there. And he says, to him, to tell us, "Zwolf Uhr!" "Twelve o'clock! They shouldn't drive. Have them drive over on the side and stay overnight and in the morning they go.' So he talks to the Poles. He start talking to us in Polish! Because he didn't know who we were. He thought we Polish people. He said, " I don't know what he said to me! He's talking to me in German. I don't understand in German what he says!" Then he says, " Did you tell him?" He says, " Du verfluchtes schweinhund." " You damn pig of a dog!" They called the Poles "swine, pig." So he comes over to us, the German. He says, " Go a little farther and drive and stay right there.' So we got there. It was raining, pouring. And we stood there maybe about half an hour. And slowly, slowly we took over this, our life. And we drove like this after that place. We drove home all night. It's lucky. All the way around were people who were lucky. I told you this before with my brother -- they picked him up to be killed. You remember when I told you before? The German got drunk!

It's like, you go out to the farmer. You want to buy fifty chickens, ten chickens. You see a bunch of chicken in a coop. You say, " Pick out this one." " Which one?" The one with the thin feather, the one with the white feather, this one." Just like that. You bring him over. Put him in and chop him off. That's what they did -- the same thing there.

Q: Do you feel differently about God than you did before this experience, and about people?

A: About God? No. The same. You don't always use the word with everything. I think most Jewish people use the word God in that song. The only thing we said while we were there, " How can God stay and look at that synagogue burning?" And German takes you away, and he says, " Put on the tallis. Put on everything, and go up there and make the service. And ask him, what did he do to the synagogue. Look at here. He destroyed you! How could he? Where is God? You know who God is? I'm the God," he says. Joking around with you, and to say that. And to take us. And to tell us, " Take apart all those bricks."

Q: And make Polish homes.

A: "And Polish people can come down. They can pick out the bricks and build homes for them." One Polish guy was there. He was very well known before the war. He was very religion. He was nothing but talking with God! " How can he

say," he says to us, " How can God look at that and see to destroy the Jewish people? How can he see? My God!"

I didn't tell you about we had at home at that time a good horse. Very good horse. It was a young horse. He's kind of wild. And one farmer came to us. We know him good, he's a good man. He had two good horses. In a certain time, you're supposed to go down on a field, and the Germans took away the horses from you, because they sent them over to Germany. They needed a lot of horses for the war. So they came, and the Pole says, " I got two good horses." We didn't register our horse. If we would have registered, ours they would have taken away, right away. it was a Jewish horse! But, I want to bring out here something about a Polish guy. I went over. My brother went over, and a sister and my mother went over there. The Polish farmer, he said to me, if he would take our horse and make weak, and don't feed him, one of his, they take away. Then he trades with us. Then he would buy ours later on, if we want to sell it. When they got down to the field, they called all the names. And ours wasn't. And I tell you, better let's take a chance the way it is. So what he did, he went down and weakened down His two horses, made them weak. He didn't feed them much, just for that purpose. He got them back, because they were too weak. But our horse, a nice horse! We didn't have registered. But we still were afraid. Everything, we were scared. If they say to us, " Lay down," we layed. We didn't stand up for us, we didn't fight -- till the Warsaw people found out what's going on. They said to them, " We will take you now away to a camp." They said, "We don't believe you any more. You took all the others out and they were destroyed there. Will you destroy us too.' But you see films. What you read about. Boys -- ten year old boys -- was swimming over there, with the hand grenade, what they could buy from the Polish people. And they were fighting the Germans. Kids and mothers were fighting because they knew they were gonna die anyway. That time they stood up.

let me go back to the horse. Even if we didn't have registered, we were afraid. We didn't have to go with the horse, but we were afraid, if we wouldn't bring over the horse, and someone find out, they would kill us. We took over the horse. They called out the names, and I says, ' They don't know about our horse." The mayor -- the German burgomeister -- was in charge. He was from the city. So he took a lot of horses out and he had asked this one Polish guy, who says, " Hey, here's a Jewish horse!?

Q: Your horse?

A: They took him away. My mother was crying. And the whole family. She cried so! Somebody else they took away the horse, they gave 'em another one. Not a good one. But they gave one back. She says, " Give me another one." It's like talking to the wall. They took away the horse. It was pretty, three, four years old. But it's why, when they came to the Warsaw ghetto, you see? We had big forests in Poland. They couldn't destroy all the forests, they need that. In Poland was

more than all over Europe, forests. Wherever you walked was forest. In our town, we walked away that Sunday, because we wanted to run away. we didn't have any buses. If we woulda run away it would be good, because we wind up in Russia. You could survive. It wasn't good, but at least in Russia they didn't kill you. Everybody ran away, when the Russian came close and you weren't a Russian, because you want to go home. You didn't know what's going on at home. Because we left in the good time! You didn't see a German! And now you are under the Russia. You have nothing to eat. You got to survive. To survive yourself. Because people did everything to survive -- if the war didn't kill you --– because when a lot of people used to come to Europe from Russia, '45, '46, '47, they said, " Oh yeah, we was in Siberia, here and there." But you survived. He didn't kill you. The Germans killed us. "He didn't kill you," I said, " But you left when the good time. You didn't see a German." They didn't kill them. But if you have it good and later on you haven't got good, then you don't remember the bad time. You always remember the good times." So when Russia took over, we couldn't make it any more, so we ran to the woods. I suppose if you would have start out right away fighting all over Europe, maybe he couldn't destroy us. If we would have enough power to help us! But the Polish people didn't help is. If they would have only help us, we could have gone to a lot of places. Auschwitz wasn't far from where we lived; Auschwitz was Poland. Maybe we could have destroyed Auschwitz before it started.

Q: But you had no help.

A: We didn't have any help. They just came in. Automatically, slow motion, they did it to you. Very slow. They didn't do it at one time. Gradually.

Q: What were some of the other signs? Before that truck actually came and picked you and your brother up? Loss of maybe some of your freedoms, or jobs? Were there any signs that something was happening? In the very beginning, when you were living at home with all your family?

A: Certainly. Yes. Already we heard -- and I seen it already -- that the Germans are sending out Polish, Jewish citizens from Germany. That's how it started. He sent out Polish citizens which weren't born in Germany. They were born in Poland, so he sent them out. He sent them out to the border and they only could take along so much with them. They have to leave. And the Polish government took them in. Because they claim they weren't born in Germany. So where did they wind up? They wound up in big synagogues. At that time I'm talking Katowice. Reform Temples was this. Those Temples were from Germany, because in the First World War, up till 1920, was German, that town. But Poland took over in 1920. So it was most Reform Temples. So people came back. They sent them back. We didn't think about it anymore. In fact, we didn't know what's going to happen to us. In 1938, even, Germany want a part from Poland back. And they said they're not going to give it to them. And they were ready to start a war at that time. This I remember. A lot of people got in the army then. They called

them in in the service. They called them in and mobilized the town and they already started to show this in 1938! They put in an alarm already. How, if it happened, with masks and everything. So finally it got quiet. "Cause Hitler was very dumb. He was smart in one way. There's a word for him. My boy told me. I said, " How could he be smart?' I called him not smart. He says, " No, he was very smart.'

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