

Interview with Max Schwartz  
By Don Bernstein  
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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 Max Schwartz for the JCRC-ADL Holocaust History Project by Dan Bernstein at 2040 Morgan Place in Saint Paul on September 11, 1982. Mr. Schwartz, could you please tell me your complete name, including your Jewish name if it's different?

A: At home my name was -- in Polish -- Manyek. And Hebrew name, Menachem. Now I came here, it became Max.

Q: When were you born?

A: January 16, 1918.

Q: And in what town and country were you born?

A: Pruszkowitz, Poland.

Q: Was your town known by any other name?

A: No.

Q: What were your parents' names, your grandparents' or great-grandparents'?

A: My father, his name was Alexander. My mother's name was Rivka. My grandparents' names, David Leib and Alienta. I got a sister and brother. The name for my brother was Yeshiahu. My sister was Zelda. And I have another brother -- he is living in Columbus, Ohio.

Q: What were your parents' occupations?

A: Working people. He had a store. He made like for winter, to make warm in the house, coal, he sold, and wood he'd make ready for the people, for the winter. Working and selling, it was.

Q: Were they born in the same town you were?

A: Yes.

Q: What languages were spoken at home?

A: Jewish.

Q: Was your family secular or fairly religious. Was religion practiced?

A: Religious. My father went every day to the temple. Three times a day, in the morning and the evening.

Q: Zionist or Hasidic?

A: Hasidic.

Q: Did you receive any formal Jewish education?

A: I went to the cheder.

Q: Could you describe it in more detail? How long did you go?

A: In the morning, I went public school -- a half a day. And a half a day I went to the cheder, where we learn chumash and everything.

Q: What events were you aware of from the mid-1930s to 1941 in terms of local, national, international?

A: I was born in 1918. 1930, '31, I belonged to the Zionist organization, Batar. I still went to public school 'til I finished seven class. "Til '34 I went to school. And later on I learned to be a tailor. And later I stopped being a tailor. I learned to be a carpenter, because I want to go to Israel.

Q: Was it like a vocational-technical school?

A: No. Private, an apprentice.

Q: Were you aware of any international events, or local or national occurrences, political or whatever during that time?

A: I belonged to Batar, the Zionist organization. After I grow up, I belonged to Herut.

Q: What were your primary sources of information, newspaper, radio, word of mouth?

- A: Read the newspapers. I learned Hebrew before the war.
- Q: In what setting did you have any contact with gentiles at all?
- A: Before the war? Neighbors, just neighbors. In our house where we lived, we was two Jewish landlords and the rest was everything gentile.
- Q: Did your family do business with gentiles?
- A: No.
- Q: Did you ever have any gentiles in your home?
- A: I cannot remember. Just the neighbors around.
- Q: Prior to the outbreak of the war, did you or your family experience any anti-Semitism at all?
- A: Before the war, was the big anti-Semitism already, in our town. After Hitler come to power in 1933, it start in Poland, too. This was not far from Poznan. There were a lot of German people not far from us.
- Q: What types of situations?
- A: They could stay before the stores and tell the gentile people not to go in and buy by the Jewish. They couldn't hit nobody, they could just stay and tell the people not to go in and buy by Jews.
- Q: Did you personally experience any anti-Semitism?
- A: Yeah. I got such an experience. One time, I remember, we got a Hanukah program in the Zionist organization. And we went someplace, I with one more friend of me. When we went back, the anti-Semites, they stopped us, asking where we were going. We told them, but they start to hit us. So we went to the police -- straight, running. And when we come to the police, they listened to us and they said to us, "Go down and we come right away." But when we come down, they start again to hit us! So the police come and they catch them. They went with us to the police, and they weren't afraid. They said, 'Just we want to hit them!'" (Laughter.) And that's what it was! They didn't do nothing, sent them home.
- Q: Any other incidents?
- A: No. That's what I remember to do with anti-Semitism. And this was in school the same thing already started, because when I finished school, it was '34, '35, and they start in '33. They start already the boys in school with us.

Q: Like what types of things?

A: "Jew! Jew!" That sort.

Q: How about your family? Did they experience any personal things that you recall off-hand?

A: No.

Q: Did relatives live outside of your community at all?

A: Before the war, most in the same town. I got one, Czetleń, a different town.

Q: Do you know what the population of that town was?

A: Would be 2,000 Jews.

Q: Do you know what happened to those particular relatives?

A: Nobody left, this I know. I got a big family. On my father's side was six kids and everyone was married and to everyone was children. My mother's side was still nine alive, and from everyone children. And nobody left! Left maybe from three, from my father's side, nobody! Just I with my brother. And from my mother's side, there's from three uncles, single cousins, two living now in Australia, one in Los Angeles.

Q: Did you ever serve in the military?

A: I was 21, I was already a soldier.

Q: What age were you at the outbreak of the war?

A: 21. The same year I stayed with the soldiers.

Q: How did you receive the news of the war? Do you recall that?

A: In the morning, this was a Friday, I remember, September the first, 1939. And when I start up in the morning, we hear a bombardment. Was not far from us. But we didn't know this is already a war! What they said, they making just maneuvers. (Laughter.) Nobody knew this is already a war! In the beginning they just arrest everybody what says there's a war. And then it started. The first bombs, September the 5<sup>th</sup>, maybe five o'clock, five-thirty in the morning was already bombs around our town.

Q: Where were you at the time? In town?

- A: It wasn't like the United States, traveling around. Everyone was in this town! (Laughter.) We lived with the parents, single boys, 21.
- Q: How many sisters and brothers did you have?
- A: I got two brothers and a sister. One brother is still alive. He lives in Columbus, Ohio.
- Q: And how old were your brothers and sisters?
- A: Well, I'm 21 brother was 18, what is in Columbus; the other fifteen, and the sister was twelve.
- Q: Can you recall what the reaction of the Jewish community in which you lived was? What did neighbors say? Were there any meetings held in the synagogue? Anything like that?
- A: The Jewish community -- like what could they do! They couldn't do nothing. Because they start with us right in the beginning when they come in, the Germans. Right in the first week. I remember like yesterday. Was September, right at the High Holidays. And the people went home from the synagogue. The Germans stay. They cut them down, the beards, and everything. And that's what it was. What could we do? Nothing. And right in the beginning, when they come in, they start to take every Jew 20 hours work -- each -- a week. The young people could go. Like I, I went for my father, I went for my grandfather, so I could work 60 hours. For me it wasn't so bad! But older men, they went and they shoveled snow. It was cold. They couldn't stand this. Was bad. (Pauses) You worked hard. Then right away, didn't took long, maybe four or five weeks, they took out all the Sefer Torahs from the temples, and they bring them home, on the front, from the synagogue.
- Q: The Germans?
- A: The Germans, right. They took us in the ghetto. Made everyone in the ghetto.
- Q: How did life change economically and socially after the outbreak of the war? Was there much difference?
- A: Till we went to ghetto? We sit and we see what is going on, wait, day-to-day. Life still went on.
- Q: You still worked.

- A: Yeah. 'Cause they took away, right away, the prisoners, slowly. Everyone was in one ghetto -- one street from town. All Jewish lived there. And they took us for work, just every day.
- Q: Were there any discussions about staying, or fleeing?
- A: My brother -- he went to Russia. But he come back because the Russians sent him back. They didn't let him go in, so he come home. So everybody was home.
- Q: When did the Nazi occupation occur in town?
- A: Maybe a week after the war broke out. It broke out, maybe a eight days wait that they come through our town. I remember like today. It was Rosh Hashanah.
- Q: Do you remember any specific events that happened?
- A: They cut the beard.
- Q: Can you recall any specific anti-Jewish measures or legislation by the occupation?
- A: Every Jew wore a Mogen David, you need to go on the street, not to go where everyone is going. They gave us all, "This and this you can do, and this and this you can't do it!"
- Q: Can you remember specific rules or orders?
- A: Just when we went to ghetto. You couldn't go out. You just need to be in ghetto. This was all. One street. So many there was no place for them.
- Q: Did you have any knowledge as far as what was happening on the outside world or any other ghettos, or about the mass killings or the concentration camps at that time?
- A: They start already, we know, not far from us, in Kudno. Was the same, was ghettoed. We know the day when the war break out with Russia. I remember on the radio we hear just the "king from the Jewish" died. It was 1940 when Jabotinsky died. I hear this; they come from Germany or from Russia. They said, "Jabotinsky die in New York, 1940."
- Q: How did you feel about that?
- A: We know that he got a heart attack, and that's what was. And I see him four weeks before the war. He was fifty kilometers from us, Boslovik.
- Q: Could you tell me what life was like in the ghetto? Everyday life, in general?

- A: In the morning, they took us to work, mostly young people. Then we come home afternoon. We didn't do not too much. We was tired. And the parents, they was all day at home. That's what was. You didn't do too much because you couldn't do nothing.
- Q: Was there any illness in your family at that time?
- A: No.
- Q: How long were you in the ghetto?
- A: Maybe a year. Until they took me to the concentration camps.
- Q: So what year were you sent to the camp?
- A: I went to the camp in '41.
- Q: Was there a name for your ghetto?
- A: No.
- Q: What street did you live on? Do you remember?
- A: In Polish, Kutnovska.
- Q: Were you transported to a labor camp or a concentration camp?
- A: In the beginning we went to a labor camp.
- Q: Which one?
- A: Poznan -- not far from Poznan. The name from the camp was Golda. From Golda to Kedj. From Kedj to Wannenheim. This was labor camps. From there they transferred me to Auschwitz. The number 141597.
- Q: Can you describe the transporting? How was it done?
- A: The beginning was we moved from one camp to the other, it was not far, so we went by foot. And if no, it's transportation by "transfer-outers." To Auschwitz, we went by the "Eisenbann" -- railroad. When we come to Auschwitz, they segregated us. They say we can work, separate. And other one, the older men separate. So I was just in Auschwitz not long, just maybe a week, four or five days. Second was Schweintochlowitz, another concentration camp. Later I was in Buna, to January, '45. January, '45 we went from Buna to Gliwice, and from Gliwice to Buchenwald. And from Buchenwald I went for a transport, maybe this took us one month, and end of March we come back to Buchenwald, by foot.

And April the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1945, I went out from Buchenwald and we marched until May the 4<sup>th</sup>, four weeks until the Americans liberate us. When we went out from Buchenwald, we were 2,000 "haftlinge" -- prisoners. When we came to the liberation place, we was 158! This was all that we was,.

Q: When you first went to Auschwitz, do you recall the approximate day and time and year of the arrival?

A: Not exactly the day. Maybe 1943, already. Maybe by the number they know exactly, because the most come at this time to Auschwitz.

Q: Do you remember the time of the year? The month?

A: I can't. It's already forty years.

Q: And how long were you in Auschwitz?

A: In Auschwitz I was a week. I went right away to Schweintochlowitz.

Q: Who were the people who accompanied you at your arrival?

A: S.S. Also people from the Sondercommando too. They worked on this place. They made clean. They wore guns when we went out. They took away our baggage (laughs) what we got still.

Q: Were you with family members when you arrived?

A: No. Myself. To Auschwitz I came by myself.

Q: You knew none of the people with you?

A: When we came to Auschwitz, maybe was 200 from our town -- that's all.

Q: You mentioned your tattoo. Could you explain how you were processed or registered in the camp?

A: When we come to Auschwitz, the first day they take us for a shower. Next day we stay on the right, and they give us numbers. We went to the barracks for a day, and we was waiting for transportation. That's all I remember.

Q: Which camp were you longest at? Was it Buchenwald?

A: Schweintochlowitz.

Q: Where was that?



A: This was in Poland.

Q: Were most of the camps similar, physically, or did they vary?

A: Auschwitz I couldn't see too much, because I just was a couple of days. When I come to Schweintochlowitz, this was a factory from ammunition. But I didn't work in the factory. I learned before the war carpenter, so I helped to put together wood houses for the heftlinge in the camp.

Q: And how long were you at that particular camp?

A: A year, maybe.

Q: Can you describe the size of the camp, the buildings, how many people were there?

A: Just maybe a thousand people. This was a big camp. We build, build and build. Bigger and bigger and bigger.

Q: What were the buildings like?

A: From wood. You put them together. They brought ready to put them just together.

Q: What were the living conditions like?

A: Wasn't too bad, the living conditions in the camps, because they keep clean. Because this was Germans too, what they come in connection with us, and they want to keep us clean. So, we got every day to wash and we had to take a shower. And everyone looked, kept clean. Wasn't enough food! Bread in the morning and a soup. Just to come through the day.

Q: So mainly the type of work you did was the carpentry, the building. What were the sleeping conditions like?

A: I think it was two stories.

Q: How many were in a barracks together?

A: Maybe 40.

Q: Do you remember any of your barracks mates --- who they were, and where they came from?

A: Some from my town and some from different towns, but I can just remember the names from my town.

- Q: What did you talk about when you were there?
- A: Everything. (Laughter.) If you got time. But there wasn't too many had the time to talk.
- Q: Can you describe the clothing, and the health and medical conditions?
- A: The clothing, like they are in the Depression. And medical? Wasn't good to be sick.
- Q: Did you ever get sick?
- A: I don't remember. (Laugh.) And if you were sick, you didn't went to a doctor anyway.
- Q: What type of medical conditions did they have?
- A: One barracks is there a doctor, and he says everything is okay. (Laughs.) Then you're back to work.
- Q: How much sleep did they let you have? How many hours?
- A: I don't remember how many. Six hours, maybe.
- Q: Were there any differences in the treatment of Jews from other groups that were in the camp?
- A: When I was in one camp, from Poland, the gentiles, they still received packages. They got from the parents. But we not. Nobody was in our town, already.
- Q: How about the physical treatment?
- A: Sometimes you get hit if you couldn't work, if you was slow in work. I got hit plenty times. Once, I remember. My father, the left hand he didn't get. Just one hand, the right. So, when I work in camp, I work with one hand, I say something. So the foreman asked me -- he was a German -- "What, your father, with one hand he did it?" I said, "Yes, my father with one hand." So he was thinking I was making a fool from him. In the evening -- we live in the same barrack -- so I told a friend to tell them, this is true, what I have told him. He didn't give in. He hit me.
- Q: Any other stories that you remember like that?
- A: When you was in the camp, if you could, you stay up in the night. We went out from the windows. Stealing what we can -- to have food! Sometimes they catch

you. If you are lucky, he didn't do anything to you. And if you wasn't too lucky, he hit you. (Laughs,)

Q: How often did you steal?

A: I was hungry! (Laughs.)

Q: Did you have encounters with any other types of groups? Gypsies, Jehovah's witnesses, homosexuals, baptized Jews, or Soviet prisoners of war?

A: No. In one camp, was Soviet prisoners, too, but I didn't have nothing to do with them. I didn't speak to them -- nothing.

Q: Did you have any contact with relatives or friends at that time?

A: No. when I come from Schweintochlowitz to Buna, this was already late in the evening. I supposed to stay there overnight, and in the morning, they supposed to transfer me to another camp. So mein friend was there in this camp -- he is living today in Milwaukee -- he recognized me, and he said, "You know your brother is here," the brother which is living now in Columbus, Ohio. So I told him, "Go fast and tell him that I am here and I want to see him, because tomorrow I go away from here." So the brother came and I see him the same evening. We came together to Buchenwald. Later, in the same camp was still two cousins of mine, too, maybe four months, five months.

Q: Did you witness, or were you aware of the systematic killings or fatalities?

A: When you was there, you see that they hang people in Buna. They hanged them because they caught them, they run away -- something. One time, five or six. We were forced to stay and see.

Q: How did they force you?

A: Every day they made an "appell" in the morning and in the evening. They count you, if everyone is here. If somebody run away or everyone not come home from work. They know exactly the amount from each barrack, how many, or from each commander.

Q: Were any of the people you lived with in the barracks killed that way?

A: No.

Q: What about anything involving the gas chambers at all. Did they have them at the particular camps you were at?

- A: In Auschwitz was the gas chamber. I didn't see, because I was there three days, four days, but I hear! These people what they took away in the side, they took to the gas chambers. And later what I see was in Buna when I come, the doctors checked us. They see if you can still work, they keep you. If no, they mark you down and you go to the chamber. And later, when we come to Buchenwald, was there, too.
- Q: Did you know any of the people that went to the gas chambers?
- A: My younger brother, he come from Auschwitz, from friends, some from home. Some was older people and some sick people. They took him right away to the gas chamber. (Pause.) I think my father and my grandfather went through the chamber, too. They took him from camp, from Poznan to Auschwitz. That's what I hear. I wasn't there. That's what they said.
- Q: Who told you?
- A: Friends.
- Q: So you never knew exactly.
- A: I know they took him to the camp. But it didn't took too long, they took him away from the camp. Something else was with the people from the ghetto. The people from the ghetto, like my mother and the sister, they took them into Chelmno. This was a place where they made a big bunker and they put them all in there. That's what the gentile people write us when we still was in the working camps.
- Q: Was there a means of communicating throughout the camps?
- A: Not for me, this wasn't. When I was in Buchenwald, I hear this was our "big" men there, like from French -- I forget the names, "big people -- they communicate, because Buchenwald, they got ammunition there underground. They got a big underground at Buchenwald
- Q: Were you aware at all of the on-going war effort?
- A: No. Nothing at all. In camp, no paper, no radio. Nothing.
- Q: What were the names of the major German personnel at the camps, such as commander and officers?
- A: I don't remember the names. By face I can recognize them! After the war I recognized them, they recognized me, but I don't know the names. We see each other in Munich after the war. Or in Israel later. I see them They see me. We know each other, but not by name.

- Q: What thoughts did you give to your survival at all?
- A: You just waiting 'til the war will get over. You want just to live and that's all. We know already in the camp there's nobody at home. After the war I didn't went back to my hometown, because I know I didn't have nothing to look there.
- Q: Did you ever have doubts if you would survive?
- A: When I was in camp, I never think about it, if I could survive. You just went on day-day, day-day. The last month, "March," they said. So we went, 2,000 haftlinge. We come to the end, 158! One more day, nobody would be! They didn't get more time to kill us. They just took every day some from the end -- in the woods -- and they killed them.
- Q: They shot them?
- A: They shot them! That's what we see, yeah. They shot 'em. Every day!
- Q: People you knew.
- A: I knew by number, the most, because you didn't get a name, you got a number.
- Q: If you were transferred to other camps, could you describe them and the circumstances which led to your transfer/
- A: From 1945, in January, the Russians already was close. They stay a long time before Falshaft. They didn't went in. So they got time to transport us. We went from Auschwitz to Gliwice. Took us, I think, a day. And there we was a couple of days. They took us by train to Buchenwald.
- Q: Was it the same type of situation each time?
- A: No. Sometimes by foot, sometimes by train. If you got a far, far to go, like we went from Gliwice to Buchenwald, it was by train. We went through Czechoslovakia this time, I think. And people, they went in the morning to work. They throw the packages, what we eat, all day, two rolls, they throw on our wagons.
- Q: Do you remember the train rides? What were they like?
- A: Oh, very bad. Open trains. In the winter, in snow, and this was open trains the most. I never went in closed trains, because in the closed trains was no good. In winter was snow, was cold, but still was better, in open trains. One close to the other, we sit so close.

Q: How long were you in the train?

A: Sometimes this took, I think, four days, five days.

Q: And you were in the open train all that time?

A: All the time, Yeah.

Q: Did you have blankets to cover yourselves?

A: Just blankets.

Q: Did people get sick and ill?

A: Oh, yeah. Old cars -- musty.

Q: What were the other camps like that you went to?

A: Every camp was bad. But each camp was different camp.

Q: How long were you in the last camp?

A: Buchenwald was the last camp, but I wasn't too long there, because when I came to Buchenwald the first time, I was there maybe a month and I went to a different camp. My brother went to another camp and I went to another camp. After a month was already time for transportation again, so we came back to Buchenwald. And from Buchenwald we went, April the 7<sup>th</sup> till May the 4<sup>th</sup>. We went to Bad Reichenhall, to the Alps, on the Germany-Austria border. For four weeks just running and running, because we could hear the bombardment from the Americans, so we just run with the Germans away so they could not catch us. When we come in, in the wood, we didn't know where we were going. We was thinking, "This is the last day, and we go in there, and they kill us all." But when we come in, this was a camp from just womans -- in the same camp. And this was twenty-four hours, maybe, before the Americans come in. They put us in empty barracks, everyone gets on his head a baseball stick. And we didn't know what was going on. The Germans run away. We didn't know that we didn't have nobody outside around us! If we'd know, couldn't do nothing. Everyone was sick anyway. But after twenty-four hours -- in the night -- come in American soldiers. They told us that we're free.

Q: So when were you liberated?

A: May the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

Q: Can you describe what happened on that day? Do you remember the day well?

- A: This day, when we went, I remember like now. We were already only 158 haftlinge. A gentile woman, we ask her just, "What time is?" And she told us, "In five minute." We didn't know what the "five minute" means. And in the five minute, we see. We go in woods there. And we were thinking, "This is the end!" But this was a camp. And this was the last day what they come in the night, and tell us American soldiers is coming. One was a Jew. And this happened! One Jew come with the soldiers. He was a Polish Jew with American passport! And he wasn't in concentration camp. American citizen! And when he come in, this comrade, what I lived together in transport, was his cousin! (Laughs.) But right away, they went away. Maybe this took an hour, two -- the soldier, with a jeep -- and they come right back with a lot of food. And the people start to eat. And they get sick. This was very bad, because they didn't eat so long, was a lot sick.
- Q: Why did they get sick?
- A: From the food. Was too fat, maybe. You ate from cans food, and package food, and if you didn't eat three, four years, you start to eat because you're hungry, it's no good. I remember I still was in good shape. Because when we come in the morning, they ask who can go down and make clean a little bed because everyone was sick.
- Q: What happened then?
- A: They took good care of us. Come doctors and they took away from us everything what somebody got. After a week, I got typhus. Doctors, they gave us good health.
- Q: What condition were you in? You had lost a lot of weight?
- A: Who is talking about weight! Everyone lost weight! (Laughs.) This is not the problem. This you overcome.
- Q: What did you do after you were liberated?
- A: For the first four weeks I was sick! A big thing. But later I started to look if somebody -- my brother -- is alive, because I see in the same year, in the beginning, we came together to Buchenwald from Buna, but I didn't know where he is, if he is alive or not. When I recuperated a little, I went to Bergen-Belsen. I stopped in every city and in every town in Germany and look, ask, but I couldn't find nothing! And I come back home to the same camp, to Bad Reichenhall. In the car was maybe three or four people. And they ask me where I go. And went by car. Was Jewish people in this car. They come in this camp. So I asking somebody if he know -- He asked my name. "Sure," he said, I know a Schwartz -- Avraham Schwartz. He is living there, not far from this town." And he gave me the address for my brother. My brother didn't know, I didn't know. But I was already tired, so my friend said, 'you know what? I go.' Because he know him,

too -- from Buchenwald. And he went and he told my brother that I am alive, so the brother came to visit me in the camp. So we was together -- after.

Q: Did you stay together?

A: Yeah. We stayed not far. We lived together 'til I went to Israel and he came to the United States.

Q: How long afterwards did you go to Israel?

A: 1949.

Q: Where were you between, in '45 through '49?

A: We live in a German town.

Q: Was there any question of choosing Palestine as opposed to coming to the United States?

A: I would want to go just to Palestine. Just to Israel at this time.

Q: How did you get to the United States, then?

A: Because of my brother and my wife's brother living here, too. But now, all my children, they're back in Israel. Our children there, and so my place is there again, to go back. I don't have nobody here. I have a son. He's in the army now, there, because he's born there.

Q: Did you meet your wife in Israel?

A: No. In Bergen-Belsen. We get married in Germany.

Q: This was after the war you met her?

A: After the war, in a camp, because all the years from the day what I left home till the last day when the Germans told me I am free, I didn't see not one woman! Three or four years in the camps I never see a woman in camp. Never. Not one girl. Nobody.

Q: So you were in a displaced persons camp after the war?

A: No. After the war I lived in a small city in Germany -- just two Jewish families. That's all, We took our food from the UNRRA. This was not far. We went every week, once a week, to pick up.

Q: So you never were in a displaced persons camp?



- A: We did. I went to camp in Bergen-Belsen. When I went to Israel, I left from Bergen-Belsen. I was married 1947. In 1948 my daughter was born. In end of 1948 we went to Bergen -Belsen. In 1949 we left for Israel.
- Q: And you were living in Israel how long?
- A: Eleven years.
- Q: Where did you live in Palestine?
- A: Not far from Haifa -- Kiryat.
- Q: I'm sort of back-tracking from time to time as the questions come up, but was there any particular organization that aided you during the time after the war?
- A: I belonged to the same organization what I belonged before the war, and that's that Zionist organization.
- Q: Did you do the same type of work that you did before the war?
- A: When I come to Israel, slowly, slowly I start to work.
- Q: When did you decide to come to the United States -- and particularly Minnesota?
- A: My brother and my wife's brother sent me the papers. So we came. But first I went to Columbus, Ohio. I lived there two years, in 1960 to '62. From '62 I am in Saint Paul.
- Q: How did you get to Saint Paul?
- A: Because my wife's brother living here.
- Q: Do you maintain contact with other survivors or any survivor organizations now?
- A: I have friends -- survivors, too -- living around.
- Q: How active are you with them?
- A: I see them every week, but not in form from organization, just sometime we talking.
- Q: You said you met your wife in Germany after the war. Was she in a concentration camp, too?
- A: Yes.

- Q: You didn't know of her beforehand?
- A: No. She is from Warsaw. She lost her mother, but her brother is alive. He's living here.
- Q: Has this been hard for you to talk about this?
- A: We're not talking too much, just what you read in the papers, read in a book. You going once a year, twice a year, they have like this year was the Holocaust Commemoration in Mount Zion Temple, sometimes in Jewish Center Temple of Aaron.
- Q: The films and books about the Holocaust, are they accurate?
- A: They couldn't too accurate, but sometime, yes, sometime, no. What can you do? Different films and different books and different writers. Like some writers, they said this wasn't a concentration camp, they didn't kill six million Jews. What can you say? (Laughs.)
- Q: What about that movie, I think it was on a year or two ago -- The Holocaust. Did you see that movie? How did that affect you when you saw that?
- A: It is very bad but what can you do? You watch it.
- Q: Was that fairly realistic, that movie?
- A: I see a lot of movies of this kind, but that's what I say, some, they exactly, and some not.
- Q: Can you tell me what it has meant for you to be a survivor?
- A: This means -- (laughter.) -- would be better when I wouldn't go through everything. But if you went through, you are a survivor.
- Q: Do you think about it a lot? Or do you try to block it?
- A: Sometime you thinking. Why not, because you see like people have parents, if you have a grandchild, they know that grandchild. But your kids, they don't have nobody. The kids they don't have uncles, too much they don't have grandparents like other kids, so they start to asking. They didn't ask questions when they were small, but now they know, everyone, what was. But what can you do? This is the life.
- Q: You mentioned that you came from a religious background. How about now? What is your general feeling about human nature or about being Jewish?

A: I belong to Conservative. I'm reading the Jewish paper. This is come from New York. The Jewish Forward. This is Ma'ariv in Hebrew. I read Hebrew before the war. Wasn't hard for me right after the war, to read Hebrew.

Q: Do you still consider yourself fairly religious?

A: No, I belong to Conservative. I was never religious. I was a Zionist. I didn't do nothing against what could help my father or my grandfather, but I went to the Zionist organization. He never told me that I am going. But Saturday in the morning, he wanted I go with him to the temple.

Q: Has your feeling about Judaism changed at all from your experiences?

A: No. Didn't change. I'm -- how to say -- I'm proud to be a Jew! And that's what I said every time and I'm saying this same today! I am proud what is Israel for me today, and this was my dream! Before the war! And that's it. After the war, nobody could send me no place, just to Israel. And that's what I did. Now I come back, but you can see all mine kids, they back there. I have two daughters, married, with children. And my son is there. So I am by myself now. When I retire, maybe, take a little bit and go back. You want to be together with the kids. This is what you have, that's all. That's your investment.

Q: What type of work do you do now, Max?

A: I am working a shipping clerk for Northern Cap.

Q: How long have you been doing that?

A: Twenty years since 1962. This is a factory from my wife's brother, so I am working there for shipping clerk.

Q: Do you have any feelings at all about non-Jews or Germans?

A: Not special. It's through. Didn't help me nothing, to say I hate them or I don't hate them. You can say this was a good goy and a bad goy. Didn't help me if I hate them today or not.

Q: So you don't have any bitter resentment?

A: Not special, after so many years.

Q: Do people ask you about your experiences from time to time?

- A: Yeah. In Germany, there we were in a town just two Jewish. They asked some times. I thought that some maybe know and some didn't know. What could you do? Nobody can give me back my parents. (Long pause.)
- Q: Has it been hard for you to talk about this experience with me today?
- A: No. It's good, sometimes, to talk over what it was, because I never was interviewed. You never can give out from you just what I went through. You went through so many things, that you want everything to write, it's not enough paper and not enough, everything what you went through, day-by-day.
- Q: Have you tried to write it at any point, or thought you might?
- A: No. I was talking with a friend, he writes a book. I find a lot from my town in the papers sometime. Every week you have in the Jewish paper somebody. I think, well, this will be, maybe, a little more, because the younger generation, they forget this anyway.
- Q: That's why we're doing this project, so they won't forget.
- A: Yeah. I know. We put a mezuzah from our town in Tel Aviv, in the cemetery. And we have one in Yad Vashem. You making every year a Yiskor. What can you do more? The kids -- some maybe still remember a little bit, but not too much.
- Q: They ask you from time to time?
- A: Yeah. They listen. They don't need to ask. They read now, by themselves. When you are small, maybe you ask. But now they have their kids, they have their problems. (Laughs) Let's say another generation, but the generation later, we'll be history. We'll be what we are writing now. Maybe a hundred years around come the children and read this, if this is true or not, like me, sometime talking about, "Could this be true. Could be this." We see Masada, other things.
- Q: Have you read any accounts by people you knew or people that had similar experiences at all?
- A: Well, I talked with one, he is living Canada, and he told me he is finishing a book. He send me the books. He remember every little piece from our town, so he is writing everything.
- Q: Has he interviewed you, too? Has he talked to you?
- A: Sometime he asks me just if I remember this and this. How good his memory is, but everyone forgot so many years. You can't remember everything.

Q: Does it bring back a lot of memories?

A: Yeah.

Q: They'd like to know if you have anything you might want to share for the purpose of the research or exhibition -- such as photos or mementoes, or anything at all?

A: From there, no. Nothing left.