

HOLOCAUST INTERVIEWS

Tom Grossman #1

(Interviewer) Okay...thank you. Please tell us your name and where and when you were born. (Grossman) My name is Thomas Grossman. (he spells it) Spelled in Hungarian....Groszman. I was born in Budapest, 1927, May 1st.

(Interviewer) Okay, did you live in Budapest your whole life? (Grossman) No. Actually, I haven't. I was born in Budapest because uh, uh, basically because uh, the facilities for birth and all that was much safer in a capital city than anywhere else. (Interviewer) Okay. Tell us about your parents and your early

family life. (Grossman) My father was a retired officer from the Royal Hungarian railroads and Army, which was actually a joint venture back in those days. The uh, railroads were controlled by the Government and the Army as such, indirectly, and uh, uh, my mother was staying at home mostly, rearing my two sisters and myself. (Interviewer) Okay. Tell us about your family life, uh when you were growing up. What was the Jewish community like?

(Grossman) Well, we lived in a small town uh, in the uh...(Tokaei?) area, which is famous for its wine production. My father, after retiring, from the railroads, after, shortly after World War I, Uh, went into uh, a business uh, of uh, wine production, and uh, and uh, wood business of various different kind. Mainly firewood production and also railroad ties. (Interviewer) Okay. Uh, tell

us about your, your, what type of school you went to, and did you live in an all Jewish environment? Or was it uh, uh....? (Grossman) It was not really such a thing as that uh. uh. in uh or cities or, or, religious towns. There was not strictly Jewish environment. It was pretty much assimilated at all times except maybe the super orthodox. they uh, sorta of lived for themselves. But even, even their children went to public schools, and, and, uh....and associated with uh, non-Jewish children. The uh balance of the community of course, the Jewish community was divided to more or less two parts. One...one was an orthodox community, and one was uh, super orthodox uh, which was (be-ta-mee-drush)...part..uh..that was very hasidic and quite religious uh. group uh. We were all known one another and living in a small town of a population of four-thousand. Everybody knew everybody. (Interviewer) About four-thousand? (Grossman) Right. (Interviewer) Uh hum. So, your school was attended by both Jewish children and Gentile children? (Grossman) Right. (Interviewer) Um hum. Was there any anti-semitism growing up? (Grossman) There are always anti-semitism in Hungary. That went with the territory so to speak. (Interviewer) How did...how did that impinge on your daily life? (Grossman) Well uh...unfortunately uh...uh..which was the wrong thing to do by our parents....to uh....tell us not to pay attention to it. Which uh...which is a worse thing to do. You do need to pay attention to it. (Interviewer) Um hum. For instance, what type of uh...uh...were there rules? Or...was it they..Jewish people just slighted by teachers or shopkeepers? What are...what are some?

(Grossman) Well teach...we were never slighted by teachers as such. You know uh...not openly. Not in front of a class or uh. anything like that. We were...if we were slighted...we were slighted by uh a classmates, or uh, some of our classmates' parents or something like that, but...not...not by our teachers. That wasn't the policy. We did have um, school prayers, which was mandatory in all Hungarian schools, but uh, uh, it was a uh, strangely enough a totally non-denominational prayer. Never uh, said anything about neither this religion's God and all the others. Never anything was mentioned except the uh, the catholic kids was making the uh, sign of the cross and uh, and the protestant kids were standing there with their hands uh...uh...held together and the Jewish kids were just standing straight...but saying the prayers. **(Interviewer)** So, the discrimination was more on a private level, rather than institutionalized totally.

(Grossman) At that time, yes. **(Interviewer)** Um hum. Uh, how did things change, or did things change in your town after the war broke out? **(Grossman)** Well, it, it was quite a bit of difference. In the first place, even before the war broke out officially, 1938, uh, under the regime of (Karl Mandarani) uh, we had the first so-called uh [Jewish Law], which was a pretty uh, I would say hefty but yet not comparing to other things, not too bad a discriminatory law. And yet, it was the beginning, because at that time, they already started out with uh, not granting uh, uh, business licenses, new business licenses to uh, new Jewish enterprises. Not uh, uh, letting Jewish students go to universities except in, in, what you call numerous classes, which entailed a certain

percentage. And uh, eh, which eventually followed into uh high schools and colleges. Uh, in addition to professional universities like engineering and, and colleges and other places. (Interviewer) Um hum. So, at one time, even Jewish children were prevented from entering high schools? (Grossman) That came later on. (Interviewer) Um hum. About when? Do you remember? (Grossman) That came actually in the uh, uh, mid, not mid, but the early '40's. (Interviewer) Um hum. (Grossman) By that time, we had uh, like uh, uh, the new uh, entry level was six-percent. (Interviewer) So, only six-percent of the students could be Jewish? (Grossman) Right. Up until it was twenty-percent, which was uh, absolutely no problem. Because uh, it was always less than twenty-percent who wanted to enter uh, high school. (Interviewer) Um hum. Uh, When did things begin to get worse? (Grossman) Things was gotten worst in the uh, uh...like '41 and '42 that uh, we had uh, different heads of states, uh, like prime ministers who was imposing stiffer laws and imposing uh, uh, work camps to uh Jews. They uh, Jewish men was uh expelled from the Hungarian Army and uh, sent to uh, what you call the labor camps instead of uh the Army. But still, that was not a concentration camp. It was a different level. It was like an Army but uh, strictly Jews and, and it had to wear a yellow armband. (Interviewer) Um hum. What type of laws were passed that restricted your own daily life as a child and with your family? (Grossman) Basically what restricted me was really none. I have not uh felt or wasn't affected by any of these laws, because of my father's position as a retired uh,

person from railroad and army and uh, uh, his deeds to the Hungarian Government, uh, various different things, that he was exempted from all the laws, uh, that was uh, discriminatory against uh, Jews. (Interviewer) did you have to carry special papers, showing that you exempt from these laws....? (Grossman) No, not really. (Interviewer) Or...how did...how did they know to enforce it with a family here, but not with your family? (Grossman) Well uh, basically uh, when you lived in a small town, uh, uh, everybody knew you, so nobody really bothered you as such, like from the police or from the town house officials or uh, uh, city hall or something like that. (Interviewer) When did things begin to change for your family also? (Grossman) Uh, it began to change, and it changed uh, like uh, overnight, in uh, 1944. And it was after the uh overrun of the Nazi Army of Hungary in 19...March 16, 1944. (Interviewer) And what were the changes that you remember? (Grossman) Oh, changes were devastating. (Interviewer) Tell us about it. (Grossman) I mean immediately uh, schools were closed, uh, all Jewish children were expelled from school. Uh, we had curfews to uh abide by. We could not go out in the streets. We uh, were told to wear a yellow star. Uh, it, it was in chronological order, so to speak. Okay uh, if 1944, March 16th, I was living in a town called (KOSHA) uh, it was formally part of Czechoslovakia, now, again, it's Czechoslovakian territory, the town, the city called (KORT-SCH-KA)(?) Uh, I was a high school student there, boarding. In the small towns in Hungary, there were no high schools. And high schools were somewhat higher level in,

in, academic achievements, and in academic requirements than high schools in this country. Uh, those schools were called (gymnasium) which is not the same as a gymnasium here. Uh, to uh, illustrate, you something, we uh, we had uh, uh, we started first class of uh, first year of gymnasium, and after first, after four years of public school, and uh, immediately had latin. We had eight years of latin. Uh, third years of school, we had uh two more foreign languages and Algebra. Pretty heavy. And the fourth grade of gymnasium, we already had uh, uh, second degree equation and calculus and, and, things of that nature on the mathematics level. And physics and so and so forth. So uh, it was a pretty heavy uh, uh, curriculum as such, but uh, you got used to it. That's the way the educational system worked. (Interviewer) Okay so when March 16th arrived, you were away at boarding school? (Grossman) Right. I was in (?) I attended my uh sixth grade of gymnasium. And uh, we were uh, the day before, we were celebrating, which was March 15th. We were celebrating the uh, March 15th revolution of uh, the uh, Hungarians against the Austrian uh, regime. Uh, that was, which was 1944. And the revolution took place in 1848. And everybody was happy and gay that we uh, achieved what we achieved. Hungary was free. And ironically enough, the next day, we were uh, SS tanks, and uh, (?) boots marching on the streets again. Of course, schools were immediately closed, and we were advised to uh, those of us who were not uh, uh, actually living in that town, to pack up and go home to respective parental homes, which I did. And uh, everything was relatively calm

and for two or three days, and then the different little uh, uh, things came about you know, like uh, we heard advertisement or told us, you know, that little town for instance, we had no radio or radio communication. They had a man come up with a drum and beat the drum and then uh, he was the town crier, what they called, and told everybody what the new laws are. And he was uh, telling everybody that uh, uh, all men and women of the Jewish faith now will have to display uh, uh, first not the yellow star, but they have to stay in their homes between six in the morning and six at night. We could not get out of our homes. Uh, of course there was a method to their madness because the stores didn't open until eight o'clock and they closed at 5:30 or six. So, after that, we could not go and do any kind of shopping. So, if we didn't have anything stored in our homes uh, food-wise uh, or any kind of reserves, then uh, we were in pretty bad trouble. Most of us, we lived in a little small town like that, you know, you had your own little vegetable gardens and, and, animals and so forth, so uh, you were really not in any kind of immediate uh danger of, of uh, starving, but there were some people, sick and old, that really started suffering hardship, and that was the bad part about it. Then uh, six or seven days later, came back to announcing every Jewish member of the town had to report to the uh, town hall, and uh, turn in their uh, (?) (vehicles?). Whether it was a bicycle, or a motorcycle or car, or, anything of that sort, including their jewelry or their rings, uh, uh, watches or whatever that entailed. The next thing was, two or three days later is that of us being

wearing the yellow star, at which point the curfew was lowered. We could go out during the day, by uh, uh, having the yellow star displayed. Uh, that lasted about a week. A week later, we were told that uh, we can expect some other changes. These changes were not told what it was, but uh, the following night, the Hungarian Military Police uh, knocked on our doors, about two or three o'clock in the morning, and at gunpoint, ordered us to uh, get two days of change of change, just put on what we have on. Get two days of change of underwear, and get out of your home. Uh, and uh, where upon my father, was, 'course you know was getting really indignant, and told the men to get the hell out of there. That's his home. And then the men told him..."You damn Jew, you don't have any home". "That's not yours anymore. Just get out. And we were herded into the uh, local synagogue, where we stayed for about uh, a little more than 48 hours. Everybody jammed up. The old, the sick, the uh infant, and uh, everybody else, because there were no facilities inside, in a synagogue in Hungary. First of all, it cannot, could not be done, because of not an orthodox synagogue. Uh, so, it had to be outside, but they did not let you go outside, so uh, you can imagine what took place. So, the place was totally desecrated, as a result. Like I said, 48 hours later, uh, well maybe a little bit more, I think we spent three nights, and two days....we were herded down into the uh, uh, railroad station, and uh, hurled into uh boxcars, and taken into provincial capital called uh, (sha-ta-ra-ohh-ye-hay) (?). There was makeshift ghettos set up. (Interviewer) Um hum. what was the train like on your way there?

(Grossman) Train wasn't...they were just box cars, you know, nothing too bad at that time, because uh, the whole ride wasn't more than about two and a half hours. So, it wasn't really bad, it wasn't really that crowded, if I remember correctly, maybe they hurried in about fifty..fifty-five or sixty people, in a box car. It should normally take more than forty-fourty five. When I tell you the story later on, it gets a whole lot worse. Uh, but I don't wanna get ahead of myself.

(Interviewer) Good. **(Grossman)** Uh, we finally arrived to this place, uh, their private homes were evacuated for the purpose of setting up a provincial ghetto, which was for the whole province of (Zamplain)...and (Zamplain) was like a uh state of...we can compare...like South Carolina. I mean there was a little bit different uh, structure and infrastructure and, and uh, set-up, but basically there was a governor and uh, ad lieutenant governor and so and so forth, and whereas different political entities that went into that. And uh, we stayed there for six weeks and uh, in about twelve by twelve little room. Hurled in about fifteen or sixteen people..person....in which we had to sleep and stay in this hole. And...towards the end of the sixth week...actually uh....let me correct this...about three weeks later...we started hearing the stories about..we will be taken out of the ghettos, and taken to uh..the Southern part of Hungary, where we going to be performing agricultural work to help the war effort of the glorious German/Hungarian Army, to win the war against the uh, horrible United States and England, and so and so forth. And uh, the transports had started. (pause) ...Three transport came off...and we were landing in the fourth. There were

different kind of efforts made to uh, get my family out of the transports, to being sent away. 'Cause, whoever handled the case to help us not to be sent...knew exactly where we were going...even though they wouldn't tell us. After we were taken out to the railroad station....and...and..hurled into boxcars again...my..one of my sisters were with us. My mother, father, and one of my sister...and my other sister were married at the time, in the same town where I was going to school, as a matter of fact..(kort-Sha-ZA)...uh....ad we were just pushed into these boxcars..about eighty people at this time...not fifty, and uh...all of a sudden my oldest sister reappeared. I mean...just appeared from nowhere. Uh...and uh....in the company of an SS soldier...and was put into the boxcar with us. And we were totally amazed because we couldn't understand where, where she come from and she explained to us that her husband were taken to uh, one of these labor camps and uh, the uh, soldier who was in an SS uniform was basically a friend of the family. He was a local boy, but of uh, German heritage, and uh, he joined the SS when the Nazis occupied Hungary. And uh, he was really helpful to uh her family. I don't know how much harm he done elsewhere. Uh, but nevertheless...she came and joined us, and then the uh thing that struck me, and I remarked to my father that uh, it's one thing that I don't understand that....if we going to Southern Hungary to uh perform agricultural work...how come the engines on the end of these trains are pointing North? It so happens that the provincial capital (sha-to-roy-yoo-hay) was also a border town to Czezhchoslovakia. And Czechoslovakia was North, and still is

North of Hungary. And...there was no doubt in our minds that we were are not going to southern Hungary but we're heading to Poland, which, indeed, it happened. Uh, in the meantime....uh, we were in the ghetto of course, you know, it was different uh, things happened..it was very frightening...they pulled out people to go to work to do this and that, and these men never returned. And uh, we have heard uh, occasional shots and uh, different things, uh, many of the people, young people, men, women, were badly beaten. And uh, it was a rather frightening experience. UH, I could spend a lot of time to talk about it, but I don't think we have too much time to do that. Next of course, and after....(Interviewer interrupts) Was...was your family personally mistreated in the Ghetto? (Grossman) No. (Interviewer) No, but you saw it around you? (Grossman) No, they uh, actually were never mistreated. It was one...we were...we were beaten a few times, when we were actually hurled up to the train at the sight of the provincial capital from the ghetto. But that was the only thing. You know, but it was not anything severe. But nevertheless, it was a beating. Uh, after uh, about three days...it took about 72 hours plus, train ride, to uh our destination. We arrived to uh, Auchswitz. And uh, and uh, how that was figured out and calculated is still beyond me, but that was calculated so that we, we get there, uh, right in the middle of the night, like three o'clock. It ws pitch dark, and it was actually more frightening and more dramatic to...to get out of a boxcar than uh, it would be at eight o'clock in the morning...or something like that. We had eighty people put into that car approximately, or

maybe more, we uh, we ha some people die during the...old people died and, and uh, during the trip, which was very unfortunate. Here again was, there were absolutely no facilities and uh, you had to take care of yourself as best you could. Uh, the cars were sealed. There was no way to even look out. When the cars rolled through stations, nobody knew what it was, because uh, uh, just a...sped through stations. Occasionally, we were pulled aside to let other trains pass us. You know, what's very strange, the other night I was listening to a program with uh, (^{Weisel}Ellie ~~Musei~~), and he was uh, making a statement that, the, toward the final solution days, they were so obsessed that uh, the let army trains pull aside to make trains go to uh, deportation trains go to ..faster to uh, the concentration camps, or places like Auchwitz or other places, but I uh, I did not experience that. I'm not saying that's not so, it could have been so, but at the time we were taken, we were pulled off to let other trains pass by, I know that for a fact. Uh, I uh, it could be so, I find it strange, hard to believe, basically, because I don't think uh, even uh for the Nazis was that important to uh, let Jews suffer in a boxcar, that they would let their specialist Army trains to uh, sit aside. So, that, that is, is somewhat uh, uh, but it could, uh, anything could happen, uh, I'm not saying that it didn't. Uh, when we arrived to Auchwitz, like I told you, that was, was a very frightening experience. There was this SS running around with ferocious looking German Shepherds and uh, dogs, and uh try to uh hurl off everybody from the boxcars and beating, they were beating us off of that car. they weren't

just asking us to come down and hurry up, but they were actually coming up that boxcar, and beating everybody as, as, well they could, well, uh, uh, reach 'em. That was unbelievable. The cruelty of these people are beyond human imagination. And anybody today, who makes a statement, that the Holocaust did not exist, and it's only an overactive imagination of Jewish people...anybody who makes the statement, ought to seek mental help, uh, uh, examination. Because, it did happen, I was there, and I do not have an overactive imagination. And, that person can come to me, and talk to me about it, and I'll tell 'em anytime what happen, and I tell 'em anytime where to go. (Interviewer) [chuckles] (Grossman) On top of it. I promise you, that person will never get lost in his life after that, because I'll direct him exactly where I want him to go. So much for that. Uh, the next thing is that uh, when we were finally hurled off of that car, those boxcars, you saw this humongous sign that said we was, when we actually thought that we were in Auchwitz, we were not in Auchwitz. We were outside of Auchwitz. There was a gate like the Arch Of Triumph...and was written over it (?) ...which means "labor makes you free". Yep. I don't wanna comment on it. But, at that gate, there stood a tall, SS Colonel...or he may have been captain, I don't ...I'm not uh, exactly sure. I wasn't too familiar at that time with the rank insignias. And he were standing up and pointing like this. And this man was Doctor Mengele. And he were pointing the old to...and the women...pregnant women, and young children, and mother with young children, and older people who he felt were unable to

work...to the left. And the able bodied...quote...unquote...to the right. And we were told...when we asked where we were going...those of us who spoke in German, which I did...We were told we were going to take some showers...and we'll be "de-liced". Uh, I asked..."why should we de-lice"? "We have no lice". Well I, I got a tremendous slap in the face when I made that statement. I was told to shut up and just go. We were standing in block of count of five, and ordered to march. We were going into some big uh, tremendous rooms with uh, pipes going all over the place with shower heads coming off the uh, pipes. And we were asked to uh, strip , leave our clothes there. There were some, and go, just step aside, and there were some uh, people who came with some, uh, hand uh, uh, shear, and, sheared us, all our hair off our bodies. Our head and everything. And, made us change into uh, we had, we could keep our underwear, but then, and our shirt, and some of us could keep our shoes. Those who were a little fortunate. Others had to take, their shoes were even taken. They were given some wooden shoes of some kind. And then we had to change into these stripe uh, stripe suits. And they gave us a cap, a, this stripe cap of sorts. So, it was like a prisoner's suit. Uh, and uh, after we were given these stuff, and we were told put, put these things down that we were given, we were given a little round uh, uh, piece of uh, it wasn't...it was a piece of hard paper what, what was framed with some light metal with a number in it, which was from there on, our prisoner number, that we had to memorize, we were told. And then we were go stepping into the shower. And, since I'm here, you

know that the shower was legitimate. Some of the others was not that fortunate. Some of the others who were hurled into the shower, were told they going be cleaned and bathed. They had cyclone gas coming out of the shower. And did the most horrible death that you can think of, and you can possible imagine. And the horrible part of it is that the uh cyclone gas specific weight is a good bit lighter than air. No, I'm sorry, heavier than air. And the fresh air was going up, and the gas was going down. Uh, as a result, everybody was...excuse me...everybody was climbing up on top of everybody else, to gasp for the fresh air, to be able to stay alive, until this hall actually ws filled up...with...totally with gas. And everybody was killed. (Interviewer) Um hum. did your whole family get sent to the right, or did some of them to the left? (Grossman) No, my whole family was sent to the right. (Interviewer) To the right. (Grossman) And uh, so my father and myself ended up in one place, and my mother and my two sisters ended up in another place. Uh, we have seen them briefly after the showers to march off one direction, and we were marched to another direction. So, we actually never went into Auchwitz, neither one of us. We stayed in Birkenau. Now Birkenau was uh, oh, a horrible place. It was one of these transient camps, and people were just there to uh, waiting for transports over to various different places. And so, my father and I were shipped from there to uh, a place in (Oberslazian) called, (ober-vis-ta-gis-dorf). It was a small mining town, that we were shipped to, and uh, we were working in a stone quarry. Actually inside of the mountain, we were building an airport, an air strip, a

landing strip, and also, take off (?) you know, obviously. And uh, We stayed there from uh, basically from uh, last of April of 1944 until uh, February 1945. During the time, of course, we were change to two different camps, but somehow or the other, we were ended back up into the same place again. Uh, uh, during the time, while we were in that camp, uh, various things happened of different atrocities of various different kind uh, but basically, this was a work camp, and uh, not much of the infamous killings or anything like that took place. Uh, a couple of people tried to escape. They hung 'em uh, with an open display, uh... I, one time uh, stepped outside the gate, purely as an accident, I was, so, some of them tried to pick...picked it up and uh, I was shot at..uh....fortunately, nothing happened. I wasn't hit. But nonetheless, I was shot at. Like in back. I was uh, severely reprimanded, and bodily uh, punished. 1945, February, we were uh, experiencing something very curious. Things you know, we have seen uh, some very interesting things happening. We have heard thunder and lightening, which was very peculiar in North Germany, Northeastern Germany, which was Northeastern Germany at the time, and uh, at that time of the year, that was beyond our imagination that we could hear thunder and lightening. And that was, of course, not any thunder and lightening. But uh, it was the uh heavy artillery of the uh, Russian Army....that we have seen. During the time, I like to mention this as well...while we were in these, in this labor camp, we had several selections, people who got rather skinny and, and undernourished, they were selected out and send to

Auchswitz. And that was the first time, actually we have really learned, when they found out if they're being sent back to Auchswitz... what was really taking place in Auchswitz. At the time tat we arrived, we had no idea what the, fantastic red sky meant. The flames and the stench....of burning flesh. We had no idea what that, what that come from. We'd never experienced anything like that. And, we have found out, as we were there, that some of the guards, who were old, and uh, talkative, and just tell us, you gonna behave, or you're gonna end up like your buddies, so what are you talking about? Well, they were sent back to Auchswitz and they're gonna be burned. "What do you mean burned"? Well, don't you know what's going on? I said no, well how would we know? Who would tell us? So, he actually told us. That these people would be sent back to Auchswitz, be gassed, and cremated. And so, when we arrived, and we saw all this, this uh, fantastic flames and the sky red and everything else, uh, that's what saw. (Interviewer) Were you still with your father at this point? (Grossman) Yes. So, February, 1945, like I told you we seen this artillery mirage, which we thought at first, was thunder and lightening. Uh, the Nazis decided they gonna have to occupy, uh, they have to evacuate the uh camp. And, everybody who was able to walk or march, will have to go. And my father, at this point, unfortunately, was not able to walk, so, he was left behind, in a uh, barrack for the uh, sick, and the rest of us were taken on a trip, on foot. And, this trip took two weeks. We were marching, seven hundred of us. Two weeks later, or maybe a little more or a little less, I'm not

a hundred percent sure, at this point, we arrived to a camp called (Flossenberg). Two hundred of us. The rest of 'em was, either, just died, on the roadside, or shot to death by the SS. If they could not walk, or they refused to walk because they were too tired, they just simply shot at the back of their neck, and that was the end of it. (Flossenberg) was an unbelievable concentration camp. It wasn't only a (fin-nis-ten-sla-ger), which means uh, a uh, total elimination camp, but also uh, set up to torture, to starve, to beat, to uh, reduce people to an absolute sub-human level. The slightest punishment for anything you have done, that was a crime in the Nazi's opinion, was hanging. When we were marched into this camp, we have to file by twelve people hanging. We had to look at it, for various different crimes. And then, we had to be called for (?), which was a normal occurrence in the concentration camps anyway, but uh, this was uh, uh, just unreal of any, any camp I've ever been to, because, we were called to a roll call for uh, five-thirty in the morning, and we stood outside rain or shine, or snow or sleet, or whatever, until about ten-o'clock in the morning, and then they let you go back to your barrack, and then they called out again for something else. This wasn't a work camp. They just, they just had you there to slowly kill you. One day I uh, volunteered for uh, work detail because I just couldn't stand uh, sitting in these barracks and everyday waking up, somebody dying next to me. Every morning I work up, I work up to a corpse next to me, or pretty much so, anyway. I uh, volunteered to work, so, they let me work to unload trucks of various different kind. Here

came a truck bringing food for the SS. They brought in big, uh, baskets, you know like uh, wash baskets, laundry baskets, full of bread. So, I took one. I knew if I get caught, I'd probably get killed, well, I didn't care. Well, I was so hungry, I haven't seen a piece of bread for I don't know how long. So, I just took one. And sure enough, I got caught, because, somebody saw me to take it, and uh, he wanted half of it, and I gave him half of it, and three others jumped, and uh, I ended up with nothing, but I was reported. So, I was sentenced to be hanged. Well, I was fortunate because a delegation from the Swiss Red Cross came in, and uh, all the, uh, over exaggerated punishment had to stop. But they shipped me out of that camp, next day, by train, with a bunch of other guys. And, we ended up in Dresden, Germany. It was a work camp. They gave us a little food, and they took us out everyday to work on the streets. The detail I worked with, we went to the uh, railroad station that was bombed to shreds by the American Air Force. You know it was a beautiful sight. I enjoyedI enjoyed cleaning up the rubble. I was just wishing they had done a little more than that. So, we were there for about uh, I think two or three weeks, something like this. During this time, while I was in Dresden, I had a very uh, curious experience. One day they wanted me to uh, come and peel potatoes, which I did, and there was a young SS guard was sitting there. And he was sitting there, across the yard from me, and peeling an apple. And he had a knife. And when I seen him to peel an apple, I just felt so craving for that apple, you know, I couldn't keep my eyes off of him. And I must have looked

kind of hateful at him, you know. He must have felt something that uh, uh, that it wasn't pleasant, coming from me, so, so he came over and says, and asked me what I'm looking at? I said, "I'm looking at you." He said...."don't look, I cut your eyes out, then he, he, actually took his knife that he had, and aimed it to my eye and I, I just bent my head down real quick, and he cut a piece of my (pauses) eye here, so I still have that...(interviewer) scar? (Grossman) scar. And then for some strange reason two days later, I was shipped out of there too and we ended up, well actually, at this point, we were, we weren't shipped out, we were really marching. Uh, partially uh, no, we, we'd taken a train from Dresden and then, then, taken off the train, and started marching. During the march, we had two air raids, and the we had a very uh, very bad episode one time. I had been together with a very dear friend of mine, who was also my classmate, and, I was kind of aiding him. And uh, one day while we were marching on the road, a horse drawn, flatbed wagon comes up with two SS men....and asked us, who is tired that wants to ride the flatbed. And my friend said, I'm going, I said...no you're not. "Yes I am, you don't be crazy, you come too". I said..." No, I'm not going." "I'm absolutely not going." "And you don't go either." "Oh, come on, don't be silly." So, he went, and so did twenty-five others. all around, sitting around those flatbed, and some in the middle of the flatbed, and then the two SS took off. And they took off the road, the horses started galloping, or trotting, whatever. Then they reared off to the left, I remember like it was today, into the woods, and all of a sudden I hear

the sub-machine gun going off. And these two bastards are coming back and asking, smiling, says..."anybody wants a buggy ride?" So, I kept on marching. About two days later we all arrived to a camp called (leit-ma-ritz).

It's in Czechoslovakia. Named today's (?) this was pretty well in the beginning of April, at this point. And uh, it was also one of these do-nothing camps, no work, nothing. We stayed there about three days, and uh, all of a sudden, one morning, uh, we have a roll call. An SS sergeant comes into the barracks with a whistle, and yells out that the uh, in German of course he says uh (?)...which means, all Jews come together, get out of the barracks and come to a roll call.

[END OF TOM GROSSMAN #1]

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TOM GROSSMAN #2

We went to the uh, railroad station that was bombed to shreds by the American Air Force. You know, it was a beautiful sight. I enjoyed, I enjoyed cleaning up the rubble. I was just wishing they had done a little more than that. So, we were there from about uh, I think two or three weeks, something like this.

During this time, while I was in Dresden, I had a very curious experience. One day, they wanted me to come and peel potatoes, which I did, and there was a young SS guard, was sitting there. And he was sitting there, across uh, the yard from me and peeling an apple. And, and he had a knife. And when I'd seen him to peel an apple, I just felt so craving for that apple, you know, I

couldn't keep my eyes off of him. And I must have looked kind of hateful at him, you know. He must have felt something that uh, uh, that it wasn't pleasant coming from me. So, so he came over and says, that, and asked me what I'm looking at? I said, I'm looking at you. He said, don't look, I cut your eyes out. and then he, he actually took his knife, that he had, and aimed it to my eye, and I, I just bent uh my head down real quick, and he cut a piece of my (pauses) eye here, so I still have the....(Interviewer) scar? (Grossman) scar. And then, for some strange reason, two days later, I was shipped out of there two. And we ended up, well actually at this point, we were, we weren't shipped out, we were really marching. Uh, partially uh, no, we'd taken a train from Dresden and then, then taken off the train, and started marching. During the march, we had two air raids and then we had a very uh, bad episode one time. I had been together with a, with a very dear friend of mine, who was also my classmate. And, I was kind of aiding him. And uh, one day while we were marching on the road, a horse drawn flatbed wagon comes up with two SS men, and asked us, who's tired that wants to ride the flatbed? And my friend said, I'm going. I said, no, you're not. Yes, I am, you don't be crazy, you come too. I said, no, I'm not going. I'm absolutely not going, and you don't go either. Oh, come on, don't be silly. So, he went, and so did twenty-five others. All around, sitting around those flatbed, and some in the middle of the flatbed, and then the two SS took off. Then they took off the road, the horses started running, you know, galloping or trotting, whatever. Then, they reared

off to the left, I remember like it was today, into the woods, and all of a sudden, I hear the sub-machine gun going off. And these two bastards are coming back, and asking, smiling, says..."anybody wants a buggy ride?" So, I kept on marching, about two days later, we all arrived to a camp called (leit-mah-ritz) It's in Czechoslazakia. Named today's (?) this was pretty well in beginning of April at this point, and uh, it was also one of these do nothing camps, no work, nothing. We stayed there about three days and uh, all of a sudden, one morning, uh, we have a roll call, an SS sergeant comes into the barracks with a whistle, and he yells out that uh, in German of course, he says (?) which means, all Jews come together. Get out of the barracks and come to a roll call. This camp, we had different various nationality of people. Uh, Poles, Czechs, some German criminals, and various different types. Uh, each had a little strip with a triangle on it. The color of the triangle of the insignia meant your nationality of race, and of course, the yellow was, yellow meant Jewish. Uh, and uh, we went out in the roll call, and uh, at that point they told us to uh take off our jackets, pile 'em up, leave our dish and spoon, thrown 'em in a pile, and start marching. And one fellow behind me, who I was pretty friendly with, a fellow named Bernstein. He said uh, you know where we are going? I say you know, I have a pretty good idea. This is the end you know, he says, you know, you know, this is the end. I said, you know, I know, you don't have to talk about it. there's not a thing we can do about it, unfortunately, because they have the machine gun, and we don't have anything. So, we went,

we marched to the gate again, it was in columns of fives. We marched to the main gate. At the main gate, we were given over to uh, these boys with their dog tag and uh, sub-machine gun, and started marching. And then half of the column, which we were about, I think about two-hundred or two-hundred and fifty of us, were passed through the main gate, we see a motorcycle coming, with a German soldier on it. I don't remember whether he was an SS or what he was, with a piece of paper, waving, you know, screaming his head off, and uh, "Halt! Halt! Halt!" And uh, okay, we stopped. And he handed over to the guy, the leader of the group, and uh, he read it. He let out a series of German curse words and herded us back again, back to the barracks. And the same thing happened the next morning, again. (?) And so on, what, they didn't ask for our jackets, and uh, they didn't ask for our plates or our spoons or anything. On the contrary. They gave us boiled potatoes and things, and uh, so Bernstein says uh, here we go again. I said 'eh, my friend, let me tell you something. I know I'm a good bit younger than you are, but if the Nazis want to kill you, they won't feed you first. I don't know what it is, but this must be a new trick. So, after they fed us, they, then they asked us to leave the uh dishes in a pile, and told us to march. And, we went to the main gate again, but at this time, at the main gate, uh, rather than having one of the uh SS boys with the dog tag coming uh, they had some real old guards with some real peculiar rifles. I mean, these darn rifles were about six foot tall you know, from World War I uh, with a bayonet attached to them. And these men was about uh,

everyone of 'em were about uh, uh, in their late seventies at least, if not older, at least that, it seemed that way to me at the time. And uh, I started marching and one was coming kind of close to me, and I ask him, hey, where are we going? At this point, my German was just about flawless. Uh, well he says, "You're free...you're gonna go." I said, what the hell are you talking about? He says, I mean that. You're going home. You're free. When? Oh, in about an hour, you'll be, you'll be free. So, we, we kept on marching. We marched about an hour, maybe, maybe two at the most. But, at this point, uh, we, we were marched into a, into a place, and the gates opened, and there was other uniforms standing there, and all of a sudden, I realized that these men who were standing outside, were not Germans. Not German uniforms. Not neither (ver-mach) nor uh, SS, nor any of the uh, uh, German Army insignia. They were Czech police. And were taken to (Ter-ra-zian-stach) [Terazin], and we were turned over to the Czech command, which was, that was to be exact 20th of March, I'm sorry, April, the 20th of April. And uh, we were placed in different places. I uh, was fortunate to get into a place, and I all of a sudden met some people who were from my home town, and I knew them, and I, I knew them, and, and, and eh, I was absolutely amazed 'cause then looked absolutely marvelous, fantastic. Well what was (ter-ra-zian-stacht)?

(Interviewer) We have only a couple of minutes left unfortunately. So, in the last couple of minutes, is there anything you'd like to uh, kind of rap this up

with? (Grossman) Yeah. (Ter-ra-zian-stacht) was a ghetto that's German, and

the Nazi's set up as a fake place. They brought in people and showed the world as if it was a showplace. That was no uh, concentration camps. It was only a ghetto. And look at (Ter-ra-zian-stacht) they have theaters and everything else. And they lead a beautiful life. And the people looked beautiful there, but basically what they did, they brought 'em in, and then took 'em out and took 'em to Auchwitz and killed 'em. But this is where I was liberated, April uh, 28th, no, actually, May 8th. The American Army camp in and took the camp over, and a day later, turned it over to the Russians. And uh, finally in July, 1945, I was permitted to leave. (Interviewer) Where did you go from there? (Grossman) Went back to Budapest. (Interviewer) How much of your family remained? (Grossman) Nobody was there at the time. I found two of my aunts....

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