

Interview with Abraham Bergman
March 1, 1992
Brooklyn, New York

A: You put an Abe because I prefer that I was Abe.

Q: Okay, no problem.

A: I never changed my name.

Q: Okay.

A: So I said my name is Abraham Bergman. I was born June 15, 1924 in Krasnik, K-r-a-s-n-i-k which is Poland, the district of Lublin.

Q: Lublin?

A: The district is Lublin, the country is Poland. When I was three years old, I was going, three years old, I was going to cheder, which is Jewish school

Q: Don't mind me. I'm just going to take notes so you can keep going ahead. Don't -- you don't have to worry about me.

A: By seven years old, I started public school. Public school which I was very good and I liked it. Unfortunately, 1938 when I finished public school I wanted to go further but till I decided, the war broke out, September 1, 1939.

Q: Okay. Let me slow down a little and let me ask you a few questions about your childhood. Is that okay/

A: Yeah.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your town? How big it was, the Jewish population...?

A: I don't know how much population was there. I think like about 10,000. It was a Jewish town.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your family? What your family was like?

A: My family, my mother, I didn't have since I was two years old. My father lately remarried to another town. I was brought up by my grandmother. The age I was a completely orphan.

Q: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

- A: No. I did not. I was the only child. But my father, when he remarried, probably there were two children, I think. But I never was together with them only vacation time, to the other grands and to my father for two weeks and that's all. Last time I saw my father was 1938. That's it, was in a different town. Since then, all kind of stories and the story is I never met him. He don't live and that's it.
- Q: Okay. What did your father do for a living?
- A: Tailor.
- Q: He was a tailor, right.
- A: They were all tailors.
- Q: He was a World War I veteran, you were telling me earlier, right?
- A: No, no. He wasn't a war veteran. No, no. That was when he was twenty years old and they grabbed him and they took him to Russia. It's not like a World War veteran.
- Q: So he never really fought in the war, he just got taken to --?
- A: Yes.
- Q: I see.
- A: That's all. That was in 1914.
- Q: Do you remember much about like the town and the kids you played with --?
- A: Oh, yeah, yeah.
- Q: --when you were younger? Did you play with, did you have lots of Jewish friends and also gentile friends?
- A: Mostly it was Jewish friends. As a matter of fact, we are here like six or seven boys and one girl which we went together to school. Which they survived, a lot of them did not survive. That girl, right, she's a grandmother, she lives in New Jersey. A few boys here, old friends, which we went together to cheder. We went from the first to the seventh class, we are together. I have a friend here, not far from here and we meet together. We have our -- everyone, that's since 1900's that emigrated here, they made societies, like our society, the Krasnik Society, which we meet every month and we do in charity everything and so on between us and for Israel and in general. Now, for instance, in the wintertime we don't

have because we all older people, so they are in Florida here and there. March, we start again, which we used to meet in Manhattan. Now, most live in Brooklyn so we meet here in _____ Heights Congregation. We make a party once a while; we have our own cemetery and so on. That's almost every hometown has but a lot, like the youth, don't go in so they give up. Which I'm trying now to take in my kids to it. Of course we had friends; we played together, we went to school together, yes, yes. Other than Jewish friends, very little. I especially had a few because, as I said, we lived in a street, one side was Jews and one side was non-Jews. But mostly like the little towns, most of it populated from the Jews. Like the surroundings around, like the farmers and this, they lived around the town. They called it in Jewish _____ the shtetl.

Q: Right.

A: I would say a big city for us a Lublin, that was different. But the little towns where I come from, that was --. The few Jews lived in the city and the surrounding around lived the non-Jews but we went together to school and everything. Naturally, the public school, not the cheder. The cheder, Jews. It was like a ghetto life. That time we didn't realize now. Now we realized, we live in a big city, all kinds of nationalities, we realized that it's a different life. But those days, was that kind of life.

Q: Do you remember any instances of anti-Semitism?

A: Oh, yes, plenty.

Q: Can you tell me about some of those?

A: See here two bones? That's still a memory. When it came, not that I'm going to be prejudiced whatsoever but I have to talk out the way it was then.

Q: Sure.

A: Yes. Like for instance, here we celebrate a Christmas altogether nice whether you believe or not, we celebrate together. I lived with neighbors, Italian; I am Jewish. It's Hanukkah, I put out the candles; they put out whatever it is. It's mutual. But there it wasn't unfortunately. I have to say the way it is whether you're Christian, whether you're believer or not. You do this, to say as it was. Very anti-Semitic. The Polaks, very stupid. They only know one thing. We Jews killed our God! That's what they knew. For instance, it came, let's say twice a year you have for two or three weeks, a holiday from the school. Once a year, vacation, two months. Let's say that twice a year like Christmas time or Easter, right? The two holidays is about Jesus Christ -- I wouldn't say us Jews. We knew a little bit more those days what's with Jesus and what's the story. They didn't know nothing; they only knew one thing. You killed our God! If he is a god, how can you kill him? Alright, now I am different than I was then. Tough on Judaism

also. Because I know more the reality; I am more educated and so on and so on. That time I was Jew 100%. Now I'm born Jew, I am Jew but I'm different. Not agreeing with everything -- so going, let's say it was the Christmas holiday, the last day of the holiday, the last day in school before the holiday. Then the action for two, three weeks. They came with strings and to the string attached weights, like a kilo weight, a half a kilo weight and that's the way. They knew that they were going out from the school. If it happened during the day, I go to the teacher and I put a report, something happens. Not too much, but something. But this time he knows in the afternoon, he's out from the school for three weeks -- kill that Jew, hit that Jew. So that's the way they were hitting. You came home bloodied, with blood, with faces like this. You killed our God! That was the only thing. That was Christmas time. It came ---.

Q: Go ahead.

A: It came before Easter, I remember, like today, when you went to school, how far was it? A mile? You went through the main street like they call it here Kasioska, there was the movie. As a matter of fact, from the movie was a Jew. At that time wasn't movies like today. There was outside all the pictures what the movie is. The movie was calling G____. Now, why, it's not Polish, maybe it was ---. That was all the story when Christ raises and so on and so on.

Q: Right.

A: When you pass there, it's the same thing, it's the same thing. Anti-Semitism was very big. Let's say Saturday afternoon, we were juvenile boys, we went out for a walk in the main street. As I said, the whole shtetl was Jews. Around -- so Polaks _____ when they came out. Unfortunately it happened to me this week I told you. When they came out, we were walking. Oh, you Jew! Bang! It happened to me this week, almost the same thing. Where I work on Seventh Avenue between 38th and 37th Street. I leave work at a quarter to six. You go out, it's a big traffic of people. I have to go this way to 42nd Street station but people, _____ they going en masse to the station, to the Penn station. One young fellow, taller than you -- it was raining. Alright, a short fellow like me with the umbrella, maybe I didn't have it down, the umbrella. Alright, while walking you walk this way, this walk that way. But one tall guy, a young fellow came towards me and like this with his rear almost to my face. What's the memory? I shouldn't say what. You son-of-a-bitch -- he could have gone and killed me. I was sorry after what I said but it remind me of the years in Poland. But alright, sometimes, as I said, you said excuse me, he didn't, alright. But this, a young fellow, so it remind me of this. Of course, there was anti-Semitic and so on and so on but I wouldn't let them think you heard, you Jew, you Jew. You killed our God, you Jew killed our God. I loved the school, I was going to the school. I loved it, I wanted to go further whether I could afford or not. But unfortunately, the anti-Semitism was very big. We had in our hometown, we had the gymnasium. It's like here,

college. Here gymnasium is like for the _____. But very seldom a Jew could go in, even if he could pay.

Q: Right.

A: Yes, anti-Semitism was very, very big. A Jew couldn't get too much of it. They say it is -- they say -- he couldn't get to a higher -- no. They felt it in the school, on the street; they felt it all over, all over. The Germans, they knew where to make the crematoriums. They didn't make too many in Czechoslovakia, different people. Same Catholics, different. But in Poland, all the crematoriums, all the camps were in Poland. I was in the camp in the beginning, near our hometown. I didn't have to run away. I could have walked away but where? You walk away and the Polak will give you for a kilo _____, for two pounds of sugar. If not for him, I would run, always on the run. He didn't let me. The last three months we were not together. This because they separated us whatever. But whenever I wanted to go, run --. One year we were on the camp near our hometown. I was going out from the camp. I was that time, I was a bricklayer. Bricklayer, cementing, this and that. You were looking for places that you should be inside. Because fighting with hunger is one fight but fighting with the weather and the cold, two fights was way too hard. You were looking for -- but looking; it's not you're given application. But I was a young fellow, I don't know. They tell me that I am smart and this and that. Fine, inside, going out for sand, for this. Let's say a village nearby and going out for lime, to dig lime, I could have gone away. That was in 1942, I had no guards over me. Only me and the polka with the horse and carriage. All of a sudden I hear a voice. What is the voice? Hey you, boy-fellow, how can I get into the camp? I saw he's a Jew. I says, who are you? He tells me the name. In the villages, very few Jews lived. The ones who lived, you knew his name even if you didn't know him. I am Zalek Division he said. I look at him. Why do you want to go into the camp? I haven't got place where to go. I gave them away everything -- all mine whatever, gone. I don't want to hear. I haven't got where to go. I'm sick and tired already. What'll happen, will happen, what we were told will be with me. I says don't do it. It's not so easy to get in because you got all -- they counting you, you come in, they counting you. It was not a question to run away. The question was, where will I hide? I see the German, the uniform, I run away from him. But I see a Polak, do I know which one is good and which one is no good? But I still wanted to run away. But he didn't let me. He was then -- he like 24 years difference from me. I was a young boy, 18, 19 years. Run, no. Besides this, if you going to run away, they take the next ten and they kill. Especially first was the family, it's the same name, you can't deny. So that was the story. We suffered in this hometown -- it was four kilometers from the hometown. When we got to work they came for this work with a horse and carriage to give a day's duty, performance, whatever. What did they do for us? They didn't have to do, just look away. yes, you gave them the good shirt from your body, they gave you a kilo bread. But we knew, for two pounds of sugar, the Germans gave a proclamation: If you bring one Jew a

family, two pounds of sugar, they did it. Isn't that a shame? Don't do for me good but don't do it for me either.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about when the Germans first got to your ---, when the war started and the Germans first come to your town?

A: Well, the war started September the 1st. Naturally, as the war is, bombs with everything, whatever. I didn't understand too much. I didn't know too much. Two weeks later, the Germans came into our hometown. It happened, it was the first, or the second day of Rosh Hashanah, the New Year's. Of course, we didn't believe it or not in the synagogue. It's not like the big town, every corner you had a synagogue. In the little towns, I don't know how it was in the big towns, the little town was a shul and a basm _____. That means one is the synagogue and one is like other than a synagogue. Let's say the synagogue every Saturday, the basm _____ was for every day, day and night, even to go in for a whole night, if you were cold, to warm up. So it's Rosh Hashanah, New Year's. Before New Year's people like leaders grabbed the scrolls, the Torah, which you probably know, the scroll and they brought them. Let's say, this one brought to his house and around the neighbors, we prayed there. Was the first day or the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we heard, of course, shooting and this and that. A week before, it was bombs, which people got killed already, in front of me. One woman got killed -- I run out with a cover to cover her and so on. The second day they came in so naturally, we all start praying, we were afraid. After the Germans start to go around, nothing will happen, everything is quiet, we should go out on the street normal. About two, three days later started the feelings of the German. First they took -- in Polish they call it _____, hostages. Let's say this one is a rich one, they went into the magistrate, to the _____ - and they got through the big Jews. They took this one, they took this one, they took this one. One they killed right away to show us what's all about it if we don't -- if we revolt against them or what. It started, they were there. Naturally -- and we didn't know. Now we know what the politics was between Stalin and Hitler. They made some kind of --.

Q: Pact?

A: Pact. We didn't know that. All of a sudden, we hear the Russians are a couple of kilometers from our town. The next day they came in a patrol; with a tank and the school square where I went to school. We all around to look; everybody looked. The Germans were laying down looking at the tank _____ and so on. I didn't understand Russian but it's almost similar. All the people understood. They said like they are twenty kilometers from us. It's more possibility that they're going to turn back till the Bok, the River. That's what happened, they turned back. A lot of people in those towns where they were, not far from us, they went along with them.

Q: They went with the Russians?

A: Yeah. Youth, mostly youth.

Q: Did you think about doing that?

A: That's what I want to bring out. My grandmother, she was my mother, she brought me up. She ways to me, Avul _____ that means my name, Avul _____ run, run. I said how can I leave you. The grandfather was laying in bed paralyzed. He couldn't move, he couldn't talk. It was naturally, seven years already. The only one because he and me, we were in the town. But he was a businessman with his wife and children and I was near my grandmother. So nobody understood it, only me. For instance, they bombed before they came in. I took him on my back, as little as I was, and I dragged him to a cellar whatever. He says I don't want to live no more. So nobody understood him, that's enough for me. My grandmother says, go run. I says, where I'm going to run? Leave you with the sick grandfather? No. Those days wasn't like today but I am today in this respect, I am today ess _____ in this respect, no time old fashioned like. I'm American, I'm modernized but in this respect, I don't want my pleasure I want my family to give _____. So I says no, that's all there is to it. After he run away with his wife and children to a village, people were running even before they came in. How could I, I wouldn't go nowhere. Then it started with the Germans. They were there -- people ran, people came back. Naturally youth people. I had friends, people came back; they got stuck. They couldn't go back, they went to concentration camps. They started, every day, you have to go work.

Q: What kind of work were they making people do?

A: All kind of work.

Q: Anything?

A: Even, God forbid, it was a bad winter with snow. The fellows they came with horse and carriages to the town, they were laughing like this. Hey Jew, hey Jews, you cleaning for us. Like this, all standing in the road, that was the memory it was. It was plenty snow; God gave us also plenty _____. Poland had also a pact with Hitler and Stalin. Besides this, they found a lot of work. The minute they came in, our hometown was an industrialized city. It was like in central Poland. My grandmother told me in the other war, they came in and they got out. So they, the Polaks, were building ammunition places and so on and so on. Lately they found it out that mostly the architects and everything, they were Germans and it was everything and they made big places around the city. There they took us to work. What was then to do? The Polaks, the farmers, they had to bring in the tags like. What was the tags? The grain and so on and so on. We were working there, shipping there on the wagons, it was all kinds of work to do. There was a big -- then the Germans started there to make, they figure out already that they're going to go in war with Russia. Now we know it. All of a sudden, there was a valley which it was filled from the Polaks. They took it away and they started to

build a -- in German, they call it _____. What does it mean? That means gasolines, with oils, with everything towards the war. On the ground, they took us, we had to go every day from the house to work which the Judenrat -- probably you heard of the Judenrat -- they send you -- every day off to work. If you didn't go, they came for you with the Jewish police and they arrested you. Let's say if I didn't have a few days' work for me, I went out on the square there; you came along, you gave me ten zlotys, I work for you. First I look to who has. Every day I was at work. Whether voluntarily or not, being home, they going to catch me just the same. I needed a couple zlotys to make a living. In the meantime, you were at work, the Polaks brought in potatoes and all kinds of vegetables.

Q: You'd steal them, yeah?

A: You steal something, you brought home and the grandmother cooked it and so on and so on. You worked there and we built a top that thing also. The rail was going and the _____ by the Polaks and they did that. Enough so that half a year later, they started the war so everything was from us. The first station to send them the work. Then they make a hanger _____, it's a big -- airplanes, they started. We didn't make them but we fixed them and everything and so on. Like in 1943, was the first aus _____ means to send away the people. They knocked it - - yes, before that, in spring, all of a sudden, that was '43, in the middle of the night, they came and says from Lublin to the Judenrat and they told them what they want them to do. We didn't know. They knocked at every door, every Jewish door, the Judenrat, the Jewish police, had to show them which is a Jewish home. They knocked on every door and they kicked them out on the square, on the school place there with Germans and Jewish police, Polish police around, to watch them who they took out. I lived in that house, as I said, on the other side was Polak. My grandfather died already. He died right in '40 which now, next month is the anniversary, 50 year, in 1940. He says 52. I, with the grandmother in our house. He lived at the end of the street with his in-laws. There was he and his wife, three children. There was a brother-in-law. He came back from Brussels in '38. Three years he couldn't stay, the war goes, he came back. When he came back from Marseille till German -- he had to go by train -- when he saw everything, he said, give me a little boat and I go back already. He saw everything. Him and his son and his wife, and another brother-in-law with a son, they all took out. There was the _____ that saved him, from seven o'clock until six in the morning. Six o'clock in the morning, they knocking on our door. My grandmother said, you don't go, I'll go to the door. You hide under the bed. She yells out, who is it, who is it? She says, mother-in-law in Jewish, schiga, it's Liah, open up. She's crying. She opens up, she comes in and cries. They took away everybody from their house, except the women, except her with the children. The sister, the son they took and the mother. They took everybody. We didn't know from nothing. They didn't act from under but she says it's going on -- renting people to go. I said, you go out and see what you can do and I go and change it. My grandmother, she should rest wherever she is, she says no. I says, look if they are going to take away him _____, we all going to die from hunger.

If I going to be away, he's going to be here. I was a child. They say what kind of business you make, you didn't make business. But what he had, from the tailoring, from the magazines, he sold something. I couldn't do it, I didn't know, I was a child. I said, Jetma, please let me go and see. Naturally it was going on like a stock market. Whoever gave money, got it. She didn't give money, I went to _____. She was running there and back. By four o'clock was a shooting and they took almost four kilometers to the station. They took them all to the station and from there they didn't know where. They started to find out, we find out where they are. They separate them into two camps. He was in a different camp, his brothers-in-law were in a different. It was near the Russian border which before the war was there. I would say, very big jails from the Polaks. They called it Ka_____. There they send away like spies or whoever didn't make right business or didn't pay taxes – there they land. Well, you start with some people with a horse and carriage, they went there. They started, after six weeks, naturally you have to give money. Me, and I have one fellow in Israel and one fellow here, we went to change them. They came to, hey, you little guy, you going to change? I said, I first paid. After six weeks, I changed him. This was like forced labor. He was writing if you not going to take me out, I'll die there. The water was straight out of the river, which is going a little river to the big river, the Bok, which was the border between Russia and Germany. The water was so – you went into the water, pieces of your foot fell out like.

Q: From the water?

A: From the waters -- something like. The air it was so light, you could have pulled down so much and I was working there. Came in November, instead to go home, we heard something going around. Every month, like say, came a horse and carriage with food for me for this, because they were home. Came in November instead to -- we thought we going to go home, we heard rumors that they were going to take us to the forest now to chop woods. He heard that, he paid off for me and I should come home. That was already November.

Q: This is now 1943?

A: Yeah. Then I don't remember exactly the date; they knocked at the doors on a Sunday and all out on the market. I don't remember whether this was -- no, this was after. It was like in April, May, no, no. This wasn't 1943. This was '41, the story what I told you.

Q: The one you just told me was in '41?

A: Forty-one.

Q: Was that before – that was right after the war with the Soviet Union started?

A: No, that was 1940.

- Q: Forty. She left before they invaded the Soviet Union, the Germans did?
- A: Right, right. That was '40. Because they came in September, 1939. This was in 1940. Grandfather died the beginning of 1940. This was 1940, Easter time. We came home in 1940, the end of 1940. Then in 1941 --.
- Q: Can I ask a question real quick? Was there a ghetto -- when they came in, the Germans came in to your town -- did they set up a ghetto immediately?
- A: Not yet.
- Q: Not yet? Okay.
- A: I will come to it, not yet. This was 1940. In 1941, in March, April, they knocked at every door, it was on a Sunday, I think. They took us out on the market. Everybody. What can you take with you? My grandmother she had to take -- whatever she took with her, how you call it when you die? A shroud, that's what she had with her because she wasn't as committed and that's what she had with her. They took us out and we're standing in the market; it's full. Here, over this goes on a stock market, a bazaar. The Judenrat, was sitting there an old ____ with beard, came over the Judenrat to him and they wanted to take him out. He said no. What, what nobody knew. After an hour or two standing in the market, five by five, five by five, to the railroad station which I mentioned is four kilometers. We came to the railroad station and standing there by the railroad station and they start sorteeing, sort-like. There was the arbeitzan, the guy from the labor department from the Germans. We called him -- by everyone and usually in the little town, you had a nickname. You didn't know very many except in school. But in order for the Germans not to know what we are saying, so we call here such a chin, so we call him the ____ which in Polish -- Jewish ----. It was a German but in civil. Every morning when you went to place yourself to go to work, first by the Judenrat, then by the arbeiten the Germans and the Judenrat and they saw that you were there, you were there, you were here. They were only interested in staying and taking you. So naturally I was there almost every day. He knew me very well. All of a sudden, he says to me in German, hey _____, hey young fellow, what are you doing here? Where is your family. I had my grandmother Ria. Over there, people were separate. I hear yelling, Avum ____ Avum ____, that's me. Abraham, Avumeral, a little one is Avumeral, a big one is Ava. David, Davidol. His wife and she is yelling. Her sister with her husband --.
- Q: Your uncle's wife you mean?
- A: Yeah. Avumeral, I look she is yelling. Even now, fire, water, I don't care, I go. To save someone, I go. My grandmother says where are you going? I says to Tante _____. They hit me, go back. Her sister and the husband what I mentioned

and the other brother with a son and the mother, they pulling Liah, come, come, we'll have a good place on the train. They were standing cattle and she, the minute, she had a feeling she didn't want to go, to have a good place. When she saw me, then more of it. This going back to that labor department, that guy, he pulls me out. Where is your family? My grandmother, next to me, and he pulls me standing people like by the building where the station is. We standing there and the police with guns, they push them to the wagons and us, they turning back to go home. While we were going home, they were waiting horse and carriage, they prepared. They call it the _____ from the Polaks. They took people on back but me with my grandmother till what, there was no. So we were walking. As we were walking the four kilometers, we found plenty dead people; all the people which we knew them very well. Probably they couldn't walk, they shoot them. We go about three kilometers, almost our town. Our town was on hills but the main town was in a valley. But it was a lot of hill down. When you're standing on this side of the town, you could see the whole town until over the other hill. We come and already they call it the w_____ b_____, the wide mountain. You go into the town, comes along a Polak on his horse and carriage and he says to my grandmother which he knew her when probably they came to buy suits, he says to her, Altaruver that means my grandfather was alta, she is Altaruver, die son Herschek is home. What did he say? I says, Grandma, you heard what he said. What, is he joking? They didn't do enough to us? The Polaks_____. As we come on the top of the hill to go down to the town, we see lights in his house. I say grandmother; she says probably the Polaks they already plundering, stealing. It was like half an hour ago, maybe took ten minutes. We come into the house. He is there with his wife and with his children and crying over._____ the name of her sister to have a good place. When I saw you, she says, I didn't want to go. What was the reason? Now, we knew the reason after, when we came back. When that arbeit_____, it means the labor department, a German, he looked around, it was like to send away half a town. The Judenrat knew it but we didn't know it. When he looked around, everybody looked for himself, especially the Germans. The German like this, if he wouldn't have that function, where will he go? in the war. Nobody wanted to go in the war, no matter how patriotic they were, how good it went for them. He had a function in this city, it's good. He looked around, he saw that there is more than a half gone and who remained? Older people, he wants to have the labor he needs. So he run to the station and he took out the people. Of course we came into his house. Then he says right away, go home to our house. Because in our house, was everything so we went there. That was 1941. Every day, to work, we saw already what the Germans are and so on and so on. There wasn't a family that people wasn't missing. After we found out, they took them to Belzec. There, nothing more to hear. What can I say how the turn was black, like in Jewish they say, Schwarz. Every day goes on work in this and that. I worked in the shop. Before they took away, as soon as the Germans came in, they took away 21 youths, I show you in the book, our hometown. The nicest youth, 21, 22, they took them away in the middle of the night after they ---. So every day to work, it comes for the two. In 1941, broke out the war with Russia.

Q: In June?

A: June 4, June 21st I think, I remember it good because in our town, all the machinery, all the Germans, military and everything that the people said look at the road -- it's lower down almost a meter. Such a _____ and everything. You never saw anything like it and it started the war. When it started the war, it stayed in our place where we worked, was a whole, everything to fixing. There came one soldier with 30, 40 tanks to repair. He begged us, he gave us to eat; slow down, nonsense, slow down, slow down. Because otherwise, as soon as it finished, have to go back. I don't want to go back. I want to stay with you there. Every day in the morning we went to work. You walked like five, six kilometers every day and in the evening you came home. Sometimes they gave a truck, sometimes no. This went on in that place, this went on in that part and we all went to work till they didn't pay us. They didn't ask us where you make a living from and so on and so on. We did some military work especially the youth. A youth like me, they took me, they came in, _____ that means _____, that means biggest craft mobilization. They came in a train. In the train, all of a sudden, they gave us to do. In the train, staying on the rails, (End of Side A)

But they were not finished so I was a bricklayer, murer, they call it and I finished inside with the meisters, the way you would describe in Germany. They used to live there. Next to those block, the empty ground, we made a camp. They said it's for Italian prisoners. This is the blocks, nice blocks. Here, for instance, in a camp, they're working. Is in Israel but I wanted to show you those 21 boys, there are some pictures of them. Here it is a picture, they builded a home, our own home in Israel. It's right by the beach. Whoever comes, we get together; we pray there and one is empty wall. All the names they -- is honored. Cost us plenty money, we paid for it and we made it. This is like, this is the synagogue from our hometown. We want it in English because the second generation. They didn't agree with us and now it's a lot of money and this and that. This is like a street in Krasnik. I'm looking for those, ah, memories, memories. See, this is the synagogue. See what they had there, horses.

Q: Put horses in the synagogue?

A: When the Germans came in, yeah. Then it was the ghetto and this is -- inside so beautiful, painted and everything. Twenty-one boys. While we were going, one tree, there was a lot of forest around. There were partisans, if you read the story maybe, or you're familiar with the Monuk, Trawniki?

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: That Trawniki wasn't far from us.

Q: Oh, really? Okay.

A: Our region. Trawniki pointed us to _____. There is a big story to tell about that. We wanted to go home already. There were partisans around in the big forest. We had a few incidents. All of a sudden there is a shooting and the bushes are burning. It's an unusual thing. We ran into the camp, there was no appeal, nothing, that caused a panic. Every night when we came home, counting, an appeal; somebody had to be punished or whatsoever. We read the story, good, good, he will forget. That SOB didn't forget. The next day, yeah, where is that swine that he ran away from me? Anyway, we were discussing, me and uncle and some friends around, if he calls you, no. We decided, if he calls you, first of all when he calls you, _____. Whatever he say, yessir, yessir, yessir. Don't say nothing else. I wanted to go for him. He says no, I go. He went out, stood like this, _____ Jew swine, you dog. No, first he says, where were you? He says and we made up with that meister, with that German in case he asks to say the same thing. He gave him a deal, so you should say that I was calling you and you didn't hear him. In case they ask me, I will say the same thing. They were civilians from Yugoslav; they were like Germans, they brought them and they were our masters. We worked together and so on and so on. But they were on the free; they had living conditions and so we made up like this. When he went off and--- Where were you? So he said, _____ you know the title. I'm sorry I didn't hear you, my master called me -- that means the meister -- he always had that machine carbine and a whip with end, a weight. You swine, he says, when I am calling you, nobody's g--d-- business, you have to come to me. Everybody was looking in his hands, what he's taking, either the machine, carbine or the whip. He took the whip. Give him like this over the head. _____ that means disappear. He had here, after the war in Germany, when liberated, a German big doctor told him to remove it because that might take cancer. I have here also, you see?

Q: Yeah.

A: But I was tested, it's nothing. That is an appeal. That's a story that _____.

Q:P That happened in '43, though?

A: Yeah.

Q: That happened in '43? That happened in Krasnik?

A: No, that happened already in the camp because 1942 was Judenrein, that means clean. Nobody's under free and that happened in the _____. Here, also, they're fixing the fence in Krasnik camp. Where they got those pictures, I don't know. Here, you see a horse and wagon and the dead people they put in there and _____

Q: 1942, do you remember when in 1942?

A: Around September, yes.

Q: What happened?

A: It happened like this. We were at work. The women and the children were like in the ghetto. The ghetto was around the synagogue. It wasn't fenced, you can call it a ghetto.

Q: Was there some sort of barrier? So you couldn't get out or---?

A: No, you could get out but where could you go? If you go outside the ghetto, the Polak will catch you and bring you to the Gestapo. Then they going to shoot you because you did something wrong. So there were the children, the women and the non-working people. Otherwise, everybody was, whether in this place working; they were in three places working, which after that they were camps. Naturally, you ask me question, how did we live, from what? We had counts for provision. One evening I come home from work -- yes, so they going to give Judenkarde, that means a "J". A J that means Juden. Whoever get the J card is legal. Who will get those J cards? My mother-in-law if I would have it, only a wife and thst's it. So whether it belonged to my grandmother, nowhere. We were hiding her, in a basement. We brought her down to eat, within the ghetto. One evening I come home for work, I says to my aunt, to uncle's wife, give me the soup, I'll go down to Grandmother and give it. She says I gave her already. What do you mean, you gave her. I want to go and see her. Don't go. I says no. Then she revealed to me, they took her away. All those that they didn't have the J-card, that means the work-card, they took them away. Where they took them away, there is a town, 20 kilometers, a little, little town. So they took them there. There is less publicity and from there the station four kilometers, and from there, it's gone. But in the same time, when they took them, something was with the partisans, a shooting and a lot in the middle of the road. What's the difference, this way or the other way, they got killed or something, bombing, gone. Now remains all the legalized people and all the working people and we are working. From Friday morning, it was Friday morning, yeah I think. Friday morning, that all those up that have the Jew card, they legalized; they have to go to the public bath. The public bath was a Jewish bath, for religious purposes, forv cleaning purposes, the bude, the bath. The Jewish, they have to, it was for all kind of purposes. Usually it is a Friday. was working because for the Saturday; all those people have to go that have the Jew card and clean themselves and so on and there they will get the real card and legalize.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was the Jewish commandant of the town, his name was Piza____. He knew everything before. Like if he knew something before, he gave a signal to his family and so it spread a little bit. He, even didn't know. Friday morning, they took them all to the bath. The minute they took them to the bath, after they were inside, they supplied horse and wagons, they called it a _____. When they came

out from bath _____ comes around and says, they put him and also _____ out of that town. We came home Friday from work, nobody's there. That means it's Judenrein, that means clean of Jews. That was 1942 in September. From there it started. My uncle they took to Budzyn, me they took to that _____ what I said and that's it. If you remained in the city, that means the shtet came, the shtetl came.

Q: So you went to this camp now?

A: They took me to that camp.

Q: How far from the city was it?

A: That was like, I would say, two kilometers. That camp where uncle was, Budzyn, was like four kilometers. After two weeks like or three weeks, they took thirty-five people which I was in the 35 and they brought me to Budzyn, to Uncle. They made a selection themselves. When I came into that camp, was a happy day, a black day. 105 people that day, the minute they went out to work, they selected and there was the grave. What I tell you they took from the -- they shoot 105 people by the grave --that day I came to Budzyn. My uncle saw me and ---. Since then, '42, they were in Budzyn. So I would like to say we went to the camp, to the camp was -- from the barracks, the camp, to the werk which they called in German, the werk, that mean the place where we working, all those men and everything was like four kilometers. But in the colony where you see those buildings, where those Yugoslavia-German lived, there, all of a sudden I became a bricklayer. So life fiest what was the fiest on those blocks. The kitchen wasn't like here, it was a brick. They came from Yugoslavia and they lived there. We went ahead _____ and we lived there. That was like ten minutes to the camp which I told you the story with those bushes were burning. We were there and the Ukrainian were our guards. It was hell.

Q: Can you describe the town for me a little -- not the town, I'm sorry, the camp for me a little bit?

A: Budzyn.

Q: Yeah. What it looked like? Was it fenced in or ---?

A: It was like those barracks, you saw those barracks. No windows, nothing. You saw more or less ---.

Q: Was the camp fenced in?

A: Fenced, double-fenced, with an electric fence.

Q: It had an electric wire?

A: Electric wire and guards around day and night. Whoever didn't want to live no more, he went to the wire. Either the wire killed him or the guard killed him. The Ukrainians were the guards but beside the Ukrainians was the lagerfuhrer, the SS man, that Fiess and he has his helper and a few officers but they were with the guards. Those Ukrainian guards, they were not allowed to go in the camp. They were allowed their duty, not in the camp. You ask me a question, what did they have a business to go in the camp? there was a lot of business. For instance, you came home -- we had a stock market, as I told you, we had bargain of this. They didn't have too much to eat so they, from the guard, they came in, not all of them, whoever was duty-free and they was looking by us. Or sometimes, when we came in by the gate, counting so they can pull you out. In the boot, this they were allowed and to strip you and to look. Sometimes you find money also. Anything you were not allowed you could find, otherwise, we were not able to survive and so on and so on. In 1943, when it was the Warsaw uprising and the rest of the people, they brought to Treblinka. Why I mentioned this? it's a connection. From Treblinka, 800 people, they brought to us, to Budzyn in that camp. Eight hundred people, well-dressed,_____ they brought them to us, 800. When they brought them to us, so the Ukrainian_____ I'm an old calhoon but those arte the new ones and they knew, the Germans didn't know so much as the Ukrainians, they knew that they have money and so on and so on. Going in from work,_____, that's a new one, a Ukrainian pulled him out, stripped him --they stripped once my uncle also. They came in, in the barracks. Once, if the lagerfuhrer, that Fiess or his helper, adjutant, came in and saw in the guard. And the guard said, this one, where are they? Right away you guard, you are not allowed to do that -- shoot him. So they were sleeping, those var_____ people and this and that. Many came over to me, they say this all the time, I'm an honest guy and so on. Abie, do me a favor. Here's 5, 600 zlotys, hide them. Where did you hide them? At wotrck. If tomorrow you didn't go there, -- I had a young fellow, a Yugoslavian. He was a year older than I am. I remember his name, German, which he was my master, I worked for him. I had to_____. I had a hiding_____, he knew. I didn't tell him exactly and I had the key. There were no honest people, listen, when it comes to a piece of bread, it's a different story. But they saw the honesty in me, this one gave me 800 zlotys, this one gave me 500, to hide it every time. They give me and I had it on the top, on the attic in the sand. Once I came there and it was dry there, nothing there. Somebody looked, they see what I'm doing, can't say a word, you got to keep your mouth shut because --. That's the way when the Russian people came to us and they were_____. They told us stories from Treblinka and so on and so on. Then they decided to liquidate that camp. Before that liquidation of the camp, all of a sudden, there was typhus. There was no water. That was, I think, in '43. There is typhus. Are you surprised? Whoever was sick, there were both -- the stomach typhuses and there is a planastic like a rash from. I had both. Whoever sick, they took one barrack and there they put the people. Every morning that Fiess came in before breakfast. We called his machine gun, this hunsagle. What is a hunsagle, we always called it, he shouldn't understand because a lot of Jewish is like German. Hunsagle means like hands-up

and that carbine, machine carbine looked like it. He's going already with the --. Every morning he came in and he took us people, he rush them off from the barrack and running. Besides this, there wasn't those blocks, those blocks you saw. Was block 2, outside from the fence, right across the street. There was that block and in that block was a lazarett. It means a hospital. If you was sick, they took you there. It was like, it was -- in camp was tailor place, shoemaker place, it was for us. But in that block was for the SS. Some people were there and there was a lazarett also. Other times, he took out and he shoot. He was already in the typhus. But listen, he was a man of 35 at that time, 38, a strong guy. He could make it. I was a little kid 18 years old. But we didn't go that far, we worked in the colony so it was like ten minutes from the camp. Every day I want to work. I went to work. I dsat down, I sit. I couldn't do nothing. That guy, Brumula, what is the hell the matter with you? I said, keep your mouth shut. I was returned like this. He only pray to God he should be an SS man and I should be in his camp. I said you shouldn't live to that. His father was one foot shorter and he wass in the werk there and he was an SOB. He brought me to eat from his house. If he should know that, he should spend with me again. It was -- (female voice: it was life or death every minute). So you go into a story. I could not survive to stay in camp, it's the death. If I would have to go the three, four kilometers to the barrack, but here ---. We had the obermeister, that was the head supervisor from the milers. He was so short, Schultz, a German from Ostowiec. He had here an STP National Organization with the H____. He was a good guy, they were good_____. Not from the Lithuanians, Ukrainians but from the Germans, but fortunately I have to say the truth. He comes in, hey Morris to him. What is with your son Brumula. If he's sick, he has tp. He said to me, meister Schultz, sh --, sh --. No he has to stay in the lazarett. That means the hospital. Comes over to me, how you feel? I feel all right. You don't be ask me, you don't feel right. You got to stay in the hospital. You were not allowed to tell outside what is going on inside. If they found out, so you know what is the result, what the verdict is. But whoever wanted to find out something, he found out. One day he comes over to me, tell you that time I was as tall as him. I know already what's going on here. I keep my mouth shut. You're afraid to go because Fiess every time he shoots, you're dead. I don't say a word. That's an interesting story. I know already what to do. I don't answer nothing. What is he going to do but ---. I says I'm going, kill, kill me, what's the difference? He went over to that Fiess and he told me,_____ and Heil Hitler, you know, break bodice. Hey, listen, I have by me such a good faulker and so on and so on but he's thinking he needs a lazarett. So let him go in. He says sh, sh. I won't guarantee, not in that barrack. I want him in the lazarett. That's the way he told me the story. I didn't hear. You stay tomorrow in lager and you will go to the lazarett and don't be afraid of nothing. Tomorrow they took me into that block 2, to that lazarett. Than that block 2 in lazarett in this bed was laying a man probably I have in the picture, that his sister, like that Stochman was from the men, the leader, his sister was from the women. Her brother was laying in one bed with something I sign here. They put me next to his bed and they also put me in something like 00 I don't remember what it was, a sign. He, as he went to that camp in, how far was it? Across the street

from his location to run around to those people. Then he went to him to the lazarett in block 2 also. He comes in, he looks around and he goes away. he wanted, usually from there, they didn't take out. One day, I don't know that but that's what they told me, I was in the high fever. You have high fever, you shouldn't know from it, and you don't know where you stand. Let's say every morning he came in high bush, v_____ how you feelo? Went away. He saw him going away already, thank God, but I was in very high fever. He came in and he asked something. Instead to say something, I swing with my arm. I don't know, till today I don't believe it but the next door man, when he get out, he said to my Uncle Morris, you know what your Brumula did? I don't know of nothing. When I swung like this, of course I didn't hit him, he said (female voice: he was delirious) in German, like the gendarme in German, du_____, that means you dog, a swine is like a pig, you had luck. If not for this, I don't know of nothing. I can't say nothing. I don't want even to put in the record because ----.

Q: You don't remember it?

A: (He was delirious, he had periodic delirium) That's what they said. You get out from the sickness, they give you three, four weeks, you can stay in the camp. A big deal, you can stay in the camp. Everybody wants to get out from the camp. The next day I'm going to work. He sees me, he yells at me. I didn't answer. He went through 14 days with it. I stood and I worked, that's all. The same story, when it came that typhus and everything, Trawniki, what I mentioned, there is Pl_____ another camp like this. We worked for Henklewerk. Henklewerk is a big air/space ----.

Q: German company, right?

A: They, I don't know for who they worked. One Sunday, and we heard about Pl_____, Trawniki, that they burned the camp because of the typhus, to the ground. One Sunday, that was in '43, yeah, one Sunday, we are not going out to work. The guards like double or tripled who knows. There is standing already little pumps with gasoline to do us the same thing. People want already to jump on the wires. They say I rather get killed from the wire that he should kill me. All of a sudden, stop. What is the stop? That Fiess, that lagerfuhrer, he didn't want to lose his post. As I mentioned, because where is he going to go. In the front, nobody want to go – all patriots up front. He's something, had a conversation with Lublin with Henklewerk there and Henklewerk stopped it. They called to Germany, to the headquarters whatever that is. I don't know the Story goes. The story ends that they stopped, they took away everything and they didn't burn us.

Q: When was this, do you remember?

A: Forty-three, I think, '43.

Q: Late '43, do you remember?

A: I wouldn't remember.

Q: Sometime in '43?

A: Sometime in '43. They didn't and the next day as usual, as before, whoever is sick stays in the barracks, whoever is good goes to work, thanks to Henklewerk and that SOB Fiess. Then in '43, things changed it. That was camp, things changed. We were building the camp in the barrack because to say what will have to go. There is no_____. They probably were afraid of the partisans because when we walked to work, a lot of times disappeared and so on and so on. They had to cross the main road and this and that. They brought in a little town what they were still in that town; they brought them in. so they started to disappear so they figured different. Why here, be there. They build another camp. It became, instead of camp, became KZ. That means concentration camp. A lot of them have the KZ. Instead I have the number. In that time, from civil we changed, if it's concentration camp, we had to change to the stripes.

Q: You had civilian clothes on, up to this point?

A: In Budzyn, yes. Some civilian clothes was here marked a KZ. It was something and we came to the verrick which you're familiar with what I mean the verrick. In the same time, no more Ukrainians but SS replaced the guard, no more Ukrainians. You can imagine SS and we were there. We were there and when it started more with the war and so on and so on and Germany is squeezed so they started little by little to liquidate that camp. Because they figured and so on and so on. As I said what they did there, they brought_____tanks, one soldier, we had to fix in the tanks from the Ukrainians' Russia, they were pigs, dead ones._____which we had a_____by that and so on and so on. Then from that KZ camp which it was in the veld, every time we start fight from that people to send some_____.

Q: Oh, you started sending 500 people out from camp?

A: Every time, every time.

Q: Did they know where they were going? Did anyone say where they were going?

A: Yes, yes. One was going to another shtetl, one was going to another shtetl, where it was a camp like this. Finally, we are almost the last ones. They were sending to M_____, V_____ which there is also Henklewerk and there is salt, where you taking out salt from the ground. There they got the KZ. It remains like the last groups. My uncle knew a little bit that Stochland so he always begged him; written in camp, was like a Jewish shtetl let's say. We had our police, we had our leaders. Let's say I had a complaint from you. I went in and I

complained to _____. In the nice Jewish way that ultimately they should know from it. So my uncle talked with that Stochland; I would like to go where you go. Besides this, if not, I would like you should not separate us, you should know it's a father and son. It came before the last group to go where? To Majdanek. He said to my Uncle Morris, I can't help no more. I wish I knew where I am going. So far, I don't know. You see, even _____ which they are here, from one family, the mother, the husband and wife and two little boys; they survived all. How, if you want to know the story, they survived with my Uncle Morris. The boys married, children. He was – that girl that he was going with in the camp was his wife's a cousin. They are now in Minneapolis, wherever. So he says to me, you see, even them, not all of them, but few I'm sending this _____, I can't help myself.

Q: So now they sent you to Majdanek?

A: To Majdanek. That was in 1944, I think. Yeah, in '44.

Q: Early '44?

A: Early '44.

Q: Did they send you on trains?

A: No. Was close ---.

Q: It was close-by, it wasn't that far away?

A: It was like 50 kilometers. It was like, you know, those trucks, open trucks and with wires around and the guards standing that you shouldn't jump around. They brought us to Majdanek. We saw Majdanek, we didn't see yet. All those guards and all those fields. Majdanek, if they didn't ten fields in a crematorium, they didn't have nothing. They brought us in to field one. That was a camp set for every field was a different field. In that camp, they took us out to work within the camp. Nobody was there. Across the wires, in another field we saw fellows, one without an arm, one without a leg, one saw. We didn't know who they were but they started rumors, they are Russians from the front. They are prisoners, whatever.

Q: POW's, prisoners of war?

A: Yes. But no one, very seldom one was a full guy. Next day they take us on that appellplatz and they started. My uncle, he had broken a leg in Budzyn like two, three months before. He was working by the kitchen because they gave him a break but that time when we went to the work, there was no more on the calendar to work. His foot wasn't so – so we get out on that appell. It was healed, he wasn't in the hospital at camp, he was healed. They go and they take us to

Majdanek out the next day and to separate us where to go to work. They call schneiders, tailors. Tailors, till he got with me, so many, he's behind. I didn't want, I stepped out, want to be together. I didn't know it's in the place, I thought maybe they send away. The policy was to look that you should be inside. As I said, ine fight with the hunger, with the weather, with the cold was ---. But you tried, you push yourself. He is behind. I stepped out. They call shoemakers, he says where you going? I said my uncle there. Not his father, the other guy was a shoemaker and a shoemaker, he is behind. Finally that was for the SS working, finally they call us in. I got in with him together because it wasn't too many people. Shoemaker, shoemaker.

Q: So he became a shoemaker then?

A: I and him became a shoemaker, ten people. Ten people, they brought us in a barrack. That's outside the fields. It's Majdanek the camp, but Majdanek had about ten fields. Each field was a camp. But this was also a field where the whole administrations are. The magazines with the _____ and so on. Comes over a guy, here with a red triangle, red triangle is politicians. Green is like us. He was with a high vake. My name is Franz, I'm an arrister. I am from this magazine but I am a prisoner just like you, he said. Arrister. He tells me, I was not in touch with Hitler, you know what that means? To kill him, politic. He is from – there is a few guys, you will see them, political, German, Austrian. There is little tables like shoemakers' tables, ten people. Eight by a table there, me with my uncle, he gives to the other table, four and across sitting four, those fellows. Those one with one arm. one --- and I know already who they are and another table there. He comes over to me, what is your name? He says I call you Brumula. It seems to me by the German, Abraham is Brumula, Brumula, fine. Who is he? I says, this is my father. You be the kapo he says, you know what means kapo. I am the kapo but you're going to be like the foreman of over those ten peoples. Say yes. Yes. I didn't like it. Then he calls me in in his magazine, whole magazine, shoes, clothing and everything. He has the two Russians; they standing with picks and picking these things. You see what they doing? I see. You know why they doing, he tells me. You going to pick like this and the picker don't go in, either bring it to me, whether it's a shoe or whether it's a garment or rip it and see what's there. Chances are there is gold. Do the same thing. I do, I do. I don't find nothing. He took me by the collar and threw me out. Go back to your place there. He brought in bread, this and that every morning, from where he got that bread or whatever, I don't know. Across the street was the magazine, there was an undersh_____, a German and another Ss man and there were three, four Polish guys, intellectuals from the colleges which they were also like prisoners but in a different way. They were working and this and that. They kept records and everything. Every morning, he took a wagon, those German wagons and he packed himself in. You could, you wouldn't recognize whether he has in the bag that thing or in the front with food with everything. He put clothing, dirty clothing and like horses,us, and we went to the vasherei to the washroom where the women worked. Our women there from our townspeople. He gave them

bread, water, marmalade this and that enough. Every day like this. I was the -- he said take a few guys. Anyway, one day he comes over to me. He gives me a boot and my uncle one boot. He says Brumula be careful, your father too. I need the upper soft -- the bottom, never mind. But you can look maybe. I start to pinch, it don't go. I'm getting_____. Those Russians they were already experts. They saw already what -- and my uncle does it the same thing; happens to him the same thing. He don't know what I am doing. When he took out, there is a piece where they were laying in it. He took the pieces but this part of the shoe where it was inside, he threw it on the floor. Those Russians, they were so smarter, they were longer than us there; he picked it up. It was their foreman like I was by the Jew. He had one arm like this; he called him over and he shows him that and he says_____ that means 14, 14 pieces. I saw this, I didn't know what to do. I get up from my chair and I go into the magazine and I says to him Frank, I found something here. How much/ I took out, not all of them. I kept by me three pieced and I give it to him. How about your father? I says I don't know. Before I says I don't know and I got back to my seat, that foreman from the Russian, he took down my number, it wasn't numbers yet, this is in Auschwitz but we had here a number and the uncle, he took down those numbers and went into the magazine and told the over_____ there. He was a Polish-German, he spoke Polish what happened here. The minute he comes in and he calls my uncle's name, number, there was no names. Called him and an SS man behind him and they're taking him across the street in their office. I running to the magazine and says Frank, look what happened here. Don't be afraid. When they called him in, he took everything out and he put it on the table. You have no more? No. Those Polaks, those students back and they call him in. They call him in and that Frank, don't be afraid. He didn't ask me if I have something or I don't have something, nothing. I

(End of Tape 1)

NOTE; Tape Ii has no audible conversation -- cannot be dubbed or transcribed.