OK, we're on again.

Yeah?

Yeah.

I was not given any help in the sick bay. I was merely assigned to a sort of rest barrack, where I met also the people that I hadn't seen several years. They were all prisoners from Birkenau. And within a day or two, the orders came for evacuation of that [? Mildorf ?], of that camp. And that was the last transport that we were on.

We traveled several days. No food, of course. It was the first time in all my travails that I have decided that I'm going to risk and eat a raw potato. I had it cut, or dissembled, or whatever.

And then I've heard a commotion outside. We were sitting in the cattle cars. And we opened-- someone opened the door. And we were stopped at the station, upper Bavaria, called Poing. And you hear people going crazy, they're dancing on the platform. And some of them are so overjoyed that they've embraced the guards.

There were some guards that were, in that particular transport, they weren't SS, they were remnants of beat-up Wehrmacht divisions that they have conscripted and put into work of some sort.

What's going on? I never ate the potato. There war is over. The war is over. It was the leader of the transport, a captain or whatever, some German officer, Wehrmacht, obviously. He wasn't an SS man.

Went inside the station master's office on the platform. He stopped the train there on the station because he realized he doesn't have enough provisions for several thousand people. Being a military, he was not-- he had no idea of the way the SS operates camps and the transports.

Being a military, he detached the locomotive, sent the guards with a car back to Munich, to Dachau, in order to get provisions for this transport. I mean, he couldn't get a loaf of bread in Dachau most likely. But he thought that he's going to send a locomotive and enough cars to bring provisions.

He came in. He came out of the station. He said, he heard the radio announcement the war was over. It was a false alarm.

What happened is, on that day, there was an uprising in Munich. It really took place. Was an uprising by German-- some military, and some civilians, and some military then participated, they've sympathized with them. They declared the city open. And they didn't want to have Munich destroyed. So they wanted to surrender to the Allies.

But the next day, there was-- it's a whole story. In fact, I read the details of the story only a couple of weeks ago in a book called 100 Days by John Toland. He was an American journalist following the Allied troops into Germany in 1945. If you ever seen it in a library, it's a very interesting book, called 100 Days.

And he describes this particular uprising. And I remember it because that was the 27th-- it took place on 27th. We were stopped there on 28th of April. And he says, you're free, the guard, the German commander of the transport.

What happened is the Ukrainian guards ran away, of course. They were afraid. Some SS men ran away. Only the few Wehrmacht guards were still with us. And hundreds and hundreds of people took off. They just ran, helter-skelter. They ran to the nearest village or town.

And I said to my friend, Isaac, who was with me-- we were together the whole time-- I says, if the war is over, it's over here as well as there. So we don't have to run. First thing, let's go and find where the cupboard with the provisions are.

And we got up. It was difficult to climb up for us. And I took a loaf of bread. There was still enough. But it wasn't

enough for thousands of people. It was enough for a few souls like me, who didn't rush to freedom.

Because I realized there's no point. If it's over, what difference does it make where you are? Why risk? Then it turns out, we got a loaf of bread and some-- whatever it was, margarine, or some salami, or whatever. And I ate myself full after three months of starvation.

And I sat leaning against the wheels of the rail car. And soon enough, you hear rounds of ammunition. And whole groups of prisoners coming back to the train, running for their life. The Volkssturm in the village or town, whatever-- I never inquired where it was-- saw prisoners, they rounded them up and began shooting. And many, many paid with their lives.

So we came back. And obviously, the fiasco of the news from Munich was no more than that. And the transports saw that, they knew for another day. And on the way, we already began to see that-- yeah, I remember.

A train passed us by. And there were French people looking out at the cars. And I understood a few words of French. I didn't speak it, but I asked them in French whether the war is finished. Like yes, [FRENCH]. They said, [FRENCH]. They didn't know anything about it. I said, they are civilians, they should know.

Well, the next day, we stopped in many places. And German women came out, and brought food and drink, coffee, and so on. We knew with the end is near. And at night, we stopped at some sighting. It was in a German village in the Alps, Tutzing, and I went to sleep on the floor. In the middle of the night, you hear a commotion.

And the doors of the cars opened up. All freight cars. And there were some people, civilian, military, I didn't know. I was so tired. And they told us, you're free. We are from the International Red Cross. Pretty soon, there will be someone here who will take care of you.

And I fell asleep. I didn't even penetrate my consciousness. I just couldn't believe it anymore. And I got up in the morning, was about 8:00, and it was April 30th. And we looked out. And all the remaining SS have gone.

No one except the Wehrmacht soldiers, the few, remained there with us. And nothing happened to them. In fact, the prisoners talked to them, they gave them cigarettes.

And we looked down the embankment. And we saw troops and vehicles moving. I didn't know it, I saw stars. I thought, there's a Russian, so how did I know whether they're Americans. I didn't realize the American military have all stars as the emblem.

It was the units of the 100th Division of the Third Army coming there. They didn't come to liberate us. They just passed by the road. And they saw emaciated people coming down the embankment close to them. And they threw various things-- cigarettes and chocolate.

And pretty soon, someone began to organize. Lieutenant Smith, I remember his name, from the 100th Division, came. He got the function of organizing the first DP center in Feldafing, which was four kilometers from there. We stayed there two nights.

And in the cars, before they had involve the town's folk, the townspeople to come and clean out, and put bedding, mattresses, and linen, and whatnot, and the former Hitler Youth school, which became the DP center, Feldafing. And we were put in there.

Two days later, the train brought us in there the four kilometers. Before we entered, we had to take off all of our clothes, burn it, everything. And for the next six weeks or so, I was in a pair of pajamas. That's all I had. A pair of pajamas. And I traveled to Garmisch-Partenkirchen in a pair of hospital pajamas. That's all we had.

The Greek fellows that were with us broke out the clothing stores of the Hitler Youth school. And they got out Hitler Youth uniforms. And that's what we wore. T-shirts. And it looked like a circus. And we were on our own how to

organize the clothes.

I finally found a pair of shorts that must have come from a very young kid. They were very short and very tight on me. I found one pair of moccasins, slippers. With luck, a couple of days later, I found the other one, the matching, in some other room. So that was my first for the next two months or so. That's all I had-- a pair of pajamas and a pair of shorts. And from there on, for one more year, I had.

Yeah, I expected my brother to be somewhere because he was evacuated. And one day, I was in the DP center in Landsberg playing ping pong. And a young fellow comes over to me, says hello. And I didn't know him. He seemed to have acted as if he knows me.

And I says, where from? Usually at that time, where from meant where have you been? In Auschwitz, have you been in here, have you been there? Have you? Do you know me from Birkenau? He says, no. Flossenburg. I said, I was in Flossenburg, I left in such and such time. He says, no.

He meant my brother. I looked very much like him, my oldest brother. He was 10 years older, but I look very much like him. And he was with him. And it was the 23rd of April. They arrived from some commander from Buchenwald, some satellite camp, to Flossenburg, and they were evacuated.

And obviously, that was the time, when during the evacuation of Flossenburg, in the last week of the war, where he perished somewhere. Either killed in the death marches or died of starvation. Even some of our transports-- my own transport was bombed by-- we were in closed cars with SS guarding heavy machine guns on top against us.

But they used-- the bastards used it against the aircraft. When an air raid sound became audible, they closed our cars from the outside. They locked our cars. And they themselves ran into the woods.

And now, the airmen didn't know who was in those cars. It could have been them or troops being moved. Anything that moved was bombed. Though our luck was that they didn't throw a bomb. Because many, many people were killed from Allied air raids. Prisoners on the move in closed cars, they machine gunned. There were people wounded in my car. That was the last.

It could well be that my brother fell victim to that sort of thing. I don't know. But there's no way. He was together with my cousin in the same camp, the doctor. So he took him into his sick bay in the place where he was after evacuating from Birkenau. But during the evacuation, my cousin and my brother came to Buchenwald together.

But my cousin was able to submerge into the French community, the French prisoners. But my brother couldn't do that into the Polish community. There was just no way. So he had to go on transport. And that was his end.

And here I was, 23 years old. The day I realized I was free, I walked along the rail track for a couple hundred yards. And I couldn't believe it. I looked behind me to see whether someone's following me.

And only then did it dawn on me, what then? I mean, what happened? I mean, you're alone in the world. I mean, the chances of my brother surviving in the Arctic, as well as us, as my own survival, were almost nil. Either one of us could. But I didn't know what happened to him.

But then about a couple of months later, in the fall, he moved to Stuttgart, when I-- we lived in an apartment there. And the DP sent the apartment buildings. We occupied one room, several of us, and our former neighbors from back home occupied-- the four sisters occupied the two other rooms. One of them was married.

The youngest of them came, just came back from Poland. She has been in Poland and came to West Germany. And she said she met my cousin. My first cousin, one of those three who survived, who came to Radom. And she has heard that I am alive somewhere. So she asked to give the message that she received a letter from my brother in the Soviet Union that came to the Jewish community in Radom.

There was an office there. A few survivors established some kind of office. The letter. And she answered that she knows that I am alive, that my older brother most likely is alive. So that was the first that I've heard that my brother is alive.

But I didn't expect that they'll let him out. Because I knew it from experience, my own father's brother in the First World War came. In order to help my father get back to Poland, he came there, and got stuck, and could never leave. And he perished in the Ukraine. So I left for the United States. My mother's only brother lived here.

And shortly after my arrival here-- I went with my uncle to the country for a couple of weeks' vacation-- I came back. There was a letter from one of the girls who lived with us in the same apartment. And she said someone came from Stettin-- that's the German city occupied by Poland now-- and who told her that my brother is there.

He had just gotten out in 1946 when the first transports from the Soviet Union were exchanged and allowed to get back. And he settled in Stettin. And that was the beginning, that's how I hooked up with him. I sent him a parcel immediately.

He never got it because by the time the parcel got there, the pogrom in Kielce interfered. And all those who were in Stettin and other areas in Western Poland got out to Western Germany. And he came to Berlin from there on a truck. His wife was pregnant with the first son.

What compelled him to settle in Germany?

Nothing compelled him. He was there, he got a place, he opened pretty soon a little business, and his children were born there. It was difficult first to come, and eventually it was-- he made his life there. And that's it. He had no regrets. I have been there many times, almost every second year, I used to go there, about 20 times now.

Yeah. His son went to the University of Jerusalem, and graduated there, and then studied in Amsterdam and Belgium. And he works for the Common Market Commission. He has a very good job and leads a very good life in Belgium and Brussels. I was just there. His daughter finished law school in Berlin. And she lives in Luxembourg. Her husband works for the European Parliament, also a lawyer.

And there were 6,000 Jews in Berlin. And they had a viable community. It's a nice place to live. It's an interesting city. He is now shocked. His wife died three years ago. They were married in the Soviet Union.

And when I got there, I went to work for my uncle who was working in the garment industry. And his boss gave him a chance to train me, a machine across from him. So he trained me as a dressmaker. And it's a skill that I acquired. I worked. But I've never cared for to remain there for life, for a lifetime. I had different plans.

And I started to go, too. I didn't speak English when I arrived here. But I went to school for one year just to learn English at night. And then I graduated. They gave me a diploma from elementary school. I came down to a high school. New York City had high schools at night. There were two high schools. One was downtown. It was a very good one, excellent teachers.

I started just to take English and history. But after a year or so, I realized that if I want to get a high school diploma, I better buckle down. And I began to go five nights a week, four hours a night. And it was hard, every night traveling home for an hour and then doing some homework, reading a newspaper, and then getting up in the morning, going to work. Weekends doing homework.

When I graduated after a couple of years from high school, I took the test at City College. I was accepted. And I entered as a full-time student. I didn't want any more work and study. That was not possible at the time. And I graduated in 3 and 1/2 years in City College and applied to graduate school at Columbia and London School of Economics. I was accepted to both and I decided to go to Columbia.

And after I finished at Columbia, I took an entrance test for the federal service. They had just done. I don't know why I did it. But I did it. And I was called. A few weeks later, I was called by the Department of Labor office whether I'll be interested in a job in the Bureau of Labor Statistics. And that was my beginning with the Department of Labor.

I had an interesting job for the first few years. I traveled a lot throughout the country. And then I married two years after I worked. And I met my wife through some friends of mine.

And she was a brilliant young girl. Born here. Father was Russian-born, her mother was Czechoslovakian, I believe. She graduated from Hunter College at 20 and got a PhD at 23 and died at 25.

Aw, goodness.

So after 3 and 1/2 years of marriage, she was dead. Kidney failure. At that time, there was not much you could do with kidney dialysis and that sort of thing. A very accomplished, brilliant girl. She had a PhD in economics, too.

So you married her, though, after you started working for the government?

Yeah. And she died at the end of 1961. And in '62, I took a leave of absence for six months. And I traveled in Europe, and went to Israel. And they were very good to me. I could do what I wanted there. And they realized that I need time away. So they didn't mind giving me half a year off.

And I got back, I got assigned to Cleveland to help a friend of mine setting up an office in Cleveland from the Department. And it was about a three months' assignment or so. And I went overnight to stay with friends of mine. We went to school together in college.

She introduced me to Jeanne, who is my current wife, in the school. And we knew each other for many years. But I married someone else, and she eventually went down the University of Michigan to get a PhD in psychology.

At the time, she was finishing her dissertation. So she lived in Chicago and worked in a hospital as a psychologist. So I got in touch with her when I was in Cleveland.

And for a holiday weekend, my buddy, who came to Cleveland, really was stationed in Chicago. So we went to Chicago and we met with Jeanne. And that was the beginning of our involvement and 1 and 1/2 years later, we married. And we married in '64.

But I had known her for 10 years before that. And then we had two sons. After 1967, I had enough of travel, and said I wanted to go to Washington to settle instead of-- in the region, you travel a lot. And that's how we came here. And we've been here since 19-- it's now. In May was 25 years, we arrived here. That's the story.

That's a very involved story. Would you like to talk a little bit about your parents now? Or would you like to stop? That would be up to you.

Well, my father was, as I said before, was one of six in his family.

Can you tell me his name, and do you know his birth name?

Yeah. Mendel. I said before, Mendel Goldstein, born September 15, 1884. He married about age of 25, as far as I can reconstitute the marriage. My mother was 21. She was one of eight, one of eight children in their house.

I didn't know my father's parents. They were dead long before I was born. My mother's father was dead long before. I only knew my maternal grandmother. She died in 1934.

Were they are from Radom?

All were from Radom there. I don't know how far back they go, but they were all from Radom. My father had two sisters and a brother in Radom. One brother lived in the Ukraine and he perished in Dnipropetrovsk in the Holocaust.

And one youngest brother, a single man, lived in Paris. And he came to Birkenau in 1942. I met him. He lived about two weeks. The same name as my brother, Yechiel. He was about-- at that time, he was about 40. 41, perhaps.

My mother had two sisters and five brothers. Only one of them lived abroad. One of her younger brothers lived in New York. And he is the uncle to whom I came in 1946. He sent me the affidavit.

And he was exceedingly helpful to me. He treated me like a father, helped me. Without him, I would not have been able to get an education, or support myself, and so on. So he was exceedingly well-disposed towards me. I was the only one of his entire family that was alive except for my brother. And so he was-- he had an affinity, a very close relationship with me.

Do you know about your parents' education.

No, this much I can not go back, except that in those days, there was no Polish education. You studied Russian, or you studied Hebrew, or Yiddish. I don't know how far to the parochial school, my father-- how far he went in a parochial school. But he was literate in Yiddish, and Russian, and some Polish.

The Russian-- his ability to speak or have a command of Russian was helped by the fact that he, in 1913, at the beginning of 1913, he and the family left Radom and went to settle in Yekaterinoslav, this was in the Ukraine. He was sitting on his suitcases, waiting for a passage card from my mother's aunt who lived in New York.

But this never arrived, and the times were difficult in Poland. There was an economic boycott against Jews at the time. Jewish was tradesmen, and crafts, and so on. And his brother had just finished serving the Tsar's Army. And he settled in Yekaterinoslav, he wrote him, come here, it's a much better life than in Poland. So he went there.

And I believe it was the best years of their life that they have spent there. Unfortunately, the war intervened, and later, the revolution, and the Civil War, and pogroms. And by 1921, they were able to exchange, come back with the Nansen exchange. Which was Nansen was a Norwegian humanitarian diplomat, who arranged the Nansen passports for stateless people.

And so they came back as war refugees, who were driven out to Russia and came back after the war. And the end of 1921, they came back with no place to-- it was very difficult to get apartments.

And moved in with my grandmother, a family of four children. And my grandmother has several of her own still living there, all living in one room. That was unbelievable. And then I was born. A couple of months later, I was born. And we moved into-- finally got a place in which I grew up. And we lived there for--

This is an apartment?

Yeah, yeah, most people lived in apartments there.

Was it large?

No, it was a two-room apartment. Large apartments were very few and far in between. Only wealthy people or upper-middle class people. You couldn't. There was a very strict rent control in the country, hence there was very little construction, housing construction.

And those who lived in a house will never move. Generations would pass on the apartment. People lived there 20, 30, 40 years in one apartment. It was much, much-- there wasn't much to go around.

And just a little bit before the war, some construction started. But it was expensive and people usually lived in less than desirable housing conditions by our standards. By existing standards there, it wasn't bad at all.

Right.

We weren't-- by existing standards, I would consider ourselves middle class. By our standards, we should have been considered deprived. But I never thought of myself deprived. And that's it all.

You said you and your siblings were involved in the Zionist movement. Were your parents also inclined Zionistically? Or did they have any other?

No, no, both. But they were inclined to. I can't recall, really. But the Zionist movement was usually a movement for the young. And the elderly, I mean, middle-aged people, some were, who started there young. But my father was very young. There was hardly anything going on, certainly not in a provincial city, like Radom.

Right. So would he have been just sent off to apprentice with a tailor at a young age?

I'm sure he must have started very young. 12, maybe even younger. I know that's the age of that time. People started to get apprentice at an early age. You had a few years of schooling.

But still, my father was very literate in Jewish and cognate learning. He was able to take the role of the one leading the congregation in prayer, for instance, during the Shabbat morning, for Shacharit or sometimes Mussaf.

But he was not a Hasid, he wasn't dressed like a Hasid. There were very few Hasidim in our town. Our life was utterly secular.

Your mother, then, was she educated as well?

She had to be because she was able to read and write. And so she had. I don't know whether she went to school or she had private education. I don't know. Her grandfather, after whom I'm named, was a Hebrew teacher. Another Melamed, meaning a--

Instructor of Hebrew, [BOTH TALKING].

[? Cheder ?], yeah. I'm named after him because my mother dreamed that-- when she was pregnant with me, still in Russia-- that she saw him in her dreams. She didn't. Of course, he was alive in Radom, but she always used it as a story to tell. That was a time when he really died. He died in Radom.

Oh, my.

Just before we came back. That's why I was named after him. He was called Fischel Melamed. That was his sobriquet. Because all the other grandfathers had already namesakes. And they had to fill in the gaps.

But you said, then, your mother married by about age 21 or so?

Yeah. From other people that I've talked to, I understand that if a girl-- she must have done something in that time. Would you know?

Yeah, in fact, that may be the reason why she didn't marry at 18. That's a good point. Her father died a few years before she married. And she, her father, my grandfather was dealing in produce and game, nuts and eggs.

And she would-- I remember stories as a child, she would always tell about her going to various fairs and marketplaces to buy. And she had contacts with recipients, or the wholesalers, or whatever in bigger cities.

So she was involved in maintaining. She was the oldest in the house. There was a brood of seven to feed. And so she and my grandmother were involved in that sort of business until she married. But once she got married, I don't believe she was involved in any occupation.

What about your father's parents? Do you know what--

No, my father's father was a furrier. In fact, if you spoke about fur in Radom, it was a Goldstein. There was so many from different branches of the family were furriers. My two grand uncles and my grandfather's one, two, three brothers. They were all furriers. And they had children who were furriers.

Oh, wow.

And one of the three had no sons, he had daughters. And they all three of them lived in Toronto. They all came here before the First World War. And I used to see them all very often. These were my father's first cousins. My father's older brother was initially a furrier, but he, of course, as long as I remember, he was a fur merchant, a very wealthy man. The one whose son became the doctor and I met in Auschwitz. He had eight children. But he didn't do fur work but he had the big store of furs, the biggest in the city. All gone.

Can I assume that your family life, like for example, the Sabbath was a family time, and you had meals together, and things like that?

Oh, meals together was-- in the West, if your family has meals together, it's--

Rare.

--somewhat of a phenomenon. But all our meals, no matter how meager, no matter how festive, they were all together. Namely the dinner, which was usually during the--

At midday, right.

--afternoon, now, at midday. And the evening stuff, there was usually some cold cuts or whatever, depending on the season. But the main meal was always together. And the Sabbath, the Friday night, and Sabbath noon was usually big meals. And they were always together with all the trimmings.

My mother was an exceptionally gifted cook and baker. I mean, she could concoct things that were out of this world. She learned a lot in Russia when she was there. So her baked-- she was always in--

You had a separate kitchen in these two rooms?

Yeah, no, one of the rooms was a kitchen. Yeah. As well as my father's shop.

Oh, my gosh.

Workshop, yeah.

So where did the kids sleep? In that room also?

At night, that was the room, was several kids slept and the other kids slept. It was crowded. But it's amazing that we didn't know about it. And now, it would be a formidable task just to assign places to sleep. But at the time, relatively, we were well-off.

Right, right.

Others had larger families and less space. And we managed. We managed to be well-dressed. Particularly, my father was a tailor. So we were all custom then. We managed to be clean.

And educated, that's--

And you were less rowdy than American boys are brought up to be.

And I finished school. My brothers finished school and we all had a great inclination to read. My brother, the one who was in Shema Yisrael, was fluent in Hebrew, which was rare for us. We were not. He left, he led the correspondence for the organization with the central office in Warsaw, all in Hebrew. And he also knew the Russian alphabet. He was a very gifted fellow. He was an unusually gifted guy.

He was there a short period in the army and he got the private first class, one bar. Very few Jews had made even a private first class. It was usually a GI. He became the company writer, I mean, the company clerk, I should say. He was able to fix electricity if it went bad. If they needed invitations for various balls and parties, they sent him to Radom.

He came to Radom almost every month on leave for a day to do the printing. Since he could set type, he was a printing apprentice. So he took time off. And he did the printing and went back. And he did anything.

He didn't go on maneuvers. He was always excused. So he had 16 months of easy service because he was very capable of doing things.

What about-- is there anything else that you can tell me about your parents before the war started? What about their personalities? What were they like? That you could remember.

My father was a man who had a exceedingly high sense of honor about him. His word was his-- what do you say? His word was his-- there's an English term. I forgot. Just escaped me.

He had a renown that if he-- for instance, people would come to him to cosign. If he had a signature on someone's loan, the people would get a loan. And sometimes he would be stuck with it.

But I could go to any store in town to buy there supplies. And all I had to put it down. And then wouldn't have to pay anything. After months, they'll come up, and the accounts will be settled.

And he would give a-- not a check, we had a system then of [? texel. ?] When you put an IOU which is due in three months or two months. And at that time, it would be submitted to the bank, and you get a bank order to pay. And you had to come in and pay. And if you didn't, it would go to bankruptcy proceedings or something like that. His signature was like the Bank of England.

The exceedingly honest person and subdued, not very aggressive. My mother had a very strong personality. She was very daring in the things she did while she was in Russia.

My father was conscripted in the Tsarist army during the war in 1916. And he served in the regiment in town, in Yekaterinoslav. And he would come home at night with his corporal, a sergeant, for food and they ate there. The time came they will be shipped out to the front, the Romanian front.

My mother insisted that he desert because the whole echelon, as they called it, the whole transport that went there, came back frozen. They were all-- the entire transport, regiment, was killed and frozen to death.

He did skip town the last day. The sergeant-- on the way, when the regiment was marching to the rail, to the rail station, dropped by, and he left his pack and his carbine. He says, if he has submitted, if he surrender right now, he still has time. He wanted him to join so he doesn't get to trouble. But my father was already in Kiev at the time.

My mother claimed that the regiment lost him. I mean, my mother had enough guts to go up to the Ministry of War office, whatever was, in Yekaterinoslav, and claim that she is a-- if not a widow, she is a woman with children whose husband disappeared in the service. And she got a pension. While for the couple of months until the revolution broke out. It was only about three or four months.

He was in Kiev. And then of course, there was an amnesty, and he came back to Yekaterinoslav. He had to report to the

regiment. And after a few weeks, they let him go because he was already not the youngest.

But she was that type. She could. She was very daring. It was in contrast to my father, who would never even dream. He wouldn't have the chutzpah to do that sort of thing.

What about in terms of their relationship with the kids?

My mother was closer to the children. My father was a bit not detached, really, but not forthcoming. That's all I can remember. It's amazing how little kids observe about their parents until they grow up. But I never had a chance. I never had a chance to observe them as a grown up.

When I was a kid, the parents were they. My life was with my peers. And since my brothers were not my peers, the next in line was 5 and 1/2 years older. It was a break between this brother and myself. The others were very close to each other. But the revolution, the civil war and the fiat, when I was born, it was a long distance from 1960.

I'd like to hear about, then, what happened, what you know about what happened to your family during the war, if that's OK.

Which war?

World War II, sorry.

Oh, World War II.

I'm going to flip the tape again though. OK.

We we're able to manage during the war for several reasons. My sister had first-- my sister had a dressmaking establishment. It was very good. She designed, and cut, and did the whole work herself. It started with one or two German civilian employees who were assigned to the occupation government came up.

And I suppose that they didn't have a chance to get custom tailoring, custom dressmaking back home, wherever they came from, industrial cities. It was to them a great achievement. And pretty soon, whole flocks of German young women who were in the occupation government from the offices came to do their work dresses, whatever, skirts, blouses.

And the money wasn't of much value. Food was. And food to them was-- they obtained in the PX, or whatever German equivalents. And they brought a pack of sugar, or flour, or butter, or something else, or ersatz coffee, or whatnot.

It meant a great deal to us. It meant very little to them. They obtained a dress. They had made a custom dress for the equivalent of about $0.50 or something like that. But it was to our mutual advantage.

And so we were able until the ghetto formed. When the ghetto closed in March of 1941, that stopped to some extent. Although it didn't-- some of them had permission to come in.

My father couldn't deal with the German customers, those civilian workers. One only came, and he was very upset about it. He was almost frightened. He was a decent sort of guy. There were many there who weren't involved in the persecution process. But he was shaking when they came in. And he didn't.

And this guy, when he had the work finished, my brother took the garment to his place where he lived, and he was able to come back with a sled and a whole sack of potatoes, which was a lot to us. But to him it wasn't anything. And my brother worked in the stores. He got permission.

There was a Jewish welfare committee, which was a part of the overall Polish welfare committee. It operated in the ghetto. And they supplied the kitchen for the home of the elderly, and for the orphanage, and homeless, and whatnot.

And he was able to go out. He got an official permission to be out of the ghetto and go to smaller towns to bring provisions. And as such, he was able to help himself, and buy up something, and smuggle in, and bring in. So we usually got enough.

He brought coal, which was unobtainable, plain coal in the ghetto. We kept it like diamonds. We kept it under the bed. There's no place to keep it because the basement that we had as part of the apartment setup was out front.

The entrance was out front. And the ghetto happened to be divided right in the middle of our courtyard. There was a fence set up. The front was outside the ghetto, the inside within the courtyard was within the ghetto, and the basement entrance was there. So we had no place to put coal or wood.

We used to use it in the winter to put away potatoes and all kinds of vegetable that kept, like onions, and carrots, and beets, and whatnot. And keep cold in the summer. There was no refrigeration. You kept your butter there, your milk, and what. That was out so we kept-- I remember we kept the coal under the beds. Because without the coal, you'll freeze. And it was a very rare thing to have coal.

We would have managed to survive the war unless they would have tightened the screws. At the end, shortly before I was taken in the early spring of '42, they cut off the electricity from the ghetto. So we were left without electricity.

We had to use carbide lamps. It was a stinking outfit. That equipment that created an enormous unpleasant smell in the house. But that was the only thing that-- luckily, it was the spring and the summer, and in northern Europe, the days are very long. You had daylight up to 10 o'clock almost. 9:30, 10 o'clock.

And we couldn't use the electric hot plate, a quiet one, during the war. Before the war, electricity was so expensive, you can't even believe. Just having a couple of bulbs in the house, you had to pay almost as much as 50% of your rent. Just for a couple of bulbs. It was a monopoly, electricity. And it was one of the largest expenses was to be able to pay the utility.

During the war, the same price prevailed. So you were able to use. And we got the chance to get a hot plate, I remember. And we were able to use to boil water, which was quick, instead of having coal to stoke a fire.

But it stopped in the spring of '42, just shortly before I was taken. And what happened from there on, I really have no way of knowing.

You don't know where they were deported, when they were deported, or where? Yeah, together with the Jews of the town. And to [? too serious ?] there. My mother and sister when first, during the first. That was in the middle of, end of July.

I don't know how my father got separated. But he lived-- my cousin told me he lived with her family, with his older brother, until the next and the final deportation took place two weeks later, in early August of 1942. I don't know.

Do you know where they were taken?

Treblinka.

They were taken to, OK.

Most of the Polish general government provinces were, also Radom and all the big cities around, went to Treblinka. People from the eastern provinces of the general government went to Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec. People from Krakow, Lemberg, and Lwow went to these places. But the rest-- not many Polish transports came to Auschwitz.

And the 42 people came from various provinces that were incorporated into the Reich. But Auschwitz, most of Polish Jewry was annihilated in Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor, Majdanek. Radom and all the environment went to Treblinka.

Would you like to talk about your brothers as well? The ones that you have pictures of here? Anything about-- you mentioned the one that was in the military. Was that Moshe?

Yeah.

Did you have a similar education?

I had a similar education to the two, these two. They were close to each other. They graduated grade school. That was seven years of compulsory education. That was it. This is Yechiel. And this is Moshe. They were about close to two years apart, a year and 10 months or so. They were both born in Russia, Yekaterinoslav.

This man here was a friend of my father who served in the Tsarist army in the Caucasus. Shulman, his name. And this lady is his wife. She is from Tbilisi, Georgia.

Oh, really?

Yeah.

Interesting.

She was some woman. When she came to Poland, she didn't know Polish because she was Russian. She learned. She had to learn Polish. She spoke Yiddish, she picked it up, but her Russian was perfect.

But he served in the Caucasus, and he met her, and they married. They lived together with my parents in Yekaterinoslav. And they came back about the same period, in 1921.

Which one are your parents? Your parents.

This is my father, my mother, my sister, my brother, my oldest brother. And these are the younger brothers. I mean, older than me. I'm the youngest.

Right.

And I have heard that she wasn't deported. She was assigned to work in an ammunition factory in Pionki and escaped. And she was shot while escaping. Rebecca was her name. She must have-- this must have been in '42, '43. She must have been a lady in her 50s, well into the 50s. She had the courage to escape. She was a beautiful woman and she was quite a lady.

This lady was-- my uncle who lived in America, who lived here in New York, came for a visit to Radom in 1935. He stayed six months. And he got engaged to this lady. But something-- somehow, something happened, and she never came here, and she perished. She married someone else in the war.

Is there anything about Moshe or Yechiel in terms of their-- well, we've heard a lot about Moshe, I guess, already. But about Yechiel. Were you all different in temperament very much?

Very much, very much different. The two of us don't look alike and we are completely different. He is very excitable, temperamental. I am more reflective. He is very outgoing. He, no matter where he comes, he will immediately make contacts. And very energetic.

And you wouldn't believe it. I mean, look at him. And he is 75 years old. And the way he keeps his house and he runs a business. And he worked in the gulag. He couldn't swim. Very few people in our town swam. We didn't have any rivers, and there were no swimming pools.

He was assigned to be a logger in the forest, in the north, in Archangel. And you know what a logger does. You have to jam, you know the logs get jammed up. You would have to manipulate. Walk from one log to another in order to unjam the-- and he couldn't swim.

And they even gave him special rations because he was a Stakhanovite. He was a good worker. If he is assigned to do something, he'll work.

I mean, no matter what it is, he can't stand still. That's him. And you can tell in his house. It's like a gym. And he does everything. He's able to. He washes, he irons, he cooks, he cleans, and he decorates. He can do anything.

Send him over to my house.

Yeah.

And he was a good business manager. He was able to run a store.

And how about Azriel? Did you want to talk a little bit about him?

This was as little I remember. He was a very sociable guy. He was an excellent dancer and very graceful.

What type of dancing? Ballroom dancing?

Yeah, sure.

Yeah.

Waltz, tangos, foxtrot, all these things.

Was that popular?

Oh, yes.

You would go dancing?

Not our crowd, no. These crowds were popular. The hora, the kind you dance.

The Zionist.

Yeah. But he was-- he had a different crowd, a different group of people. I have the pictures of him with his friends. Six of them. They were very devoted to each other. And they were always going dancing, and parties, and whatnot.

So all of your brothers, you all received a cheder education and basically then a public school?

Yeah, yeah. So not a Gymnasium.

Because public school, you begin when you're seven. Even now, it's still at seven. Cheder, you begin at any time, three, four.

Right.

That's why you were you were literate in Yiddish or Hebrew long before you become literate. When I started to study Polish when I was in the private, Jewish private school. I didn't go to public school until I was 10. Just told me, tomorrow, you bring a pencil and paper. We're beginning to study Polish.

Now, I don't know how old I was. Six, maybe seven, I don't remember. I came home, I cried, I'll never learn it. I won't be able. How can I learn it? It's a complete-- Polish was something that was outside our life.

The Jewish community, Jewish life in Poland was almost like a nation within a nation. We had our own culture, our own civilization. There was no mingling, there was no mixing. Socially, very little.

We had our own daily press, our periodicals, a very rich literature, theater, films, libraries, concerts. We had more Yiddish-language newspapers in the country than Polish.

Did your parents go in any of the directions of the-- I know they all had an ideological bent.

No, no. My father was middle of the road. Middle class. He wasn't politically-oriented at all. Nor was my older brother. Just the youngest, the younger three had definite ideas.

So your older brother wasn't involved in the Hashomer Hatzair?

No, no, no.

Do you know what he did?

He went to work early because there was a problem. When he came back from Russia, he was already nine going on 10, and it was a conversion from one language to another in schooling. And there was no schooling in Russia during the revolution, and civil war, and all that. So there was a problem.

I have to take a break. I have to go to the men's room.

At a very early age-- you on?

Yeah.

She became skilled as a dressmaker. And very early on, started out herself with a group of girlfriends as partners. And then by herself. And she had a good clientele and was able to help herself, as well as to, in some way, also help the family.

But she lived in there? She was like what--

Yeah.

--10 years older than you or 12? 12 years older than you?

She is 11 years older than I am. Yeah.

So how is your relationship with her?

She was in some way-- I don't remember that, but I was of course informed, I was told, anecdotally as well as properly, that she took care of me when I was very young since my mother had her hands full with the other three boys. But she was the oldest. And she liked me. And I suppose she carried me around.

I also liked it when we sometimes went out in the summer to-- we had a cottage in a nearby resort place. You would normally share that. Go for a couple of weeks and then go home, and the others would come out. Excuse me. I always liked to be with her because she would spoil me. She would. She cooked well and she wouldn't be stingy with ingredients. She was really nice to be with.

Did she have a lot of friends? Did she a group of friends that she would hang around with?

Yeah, sure. Yeah, yeah. One of her friends is in one of those pictures. They're all gone. We had a houseful. There was a small house, but there was all-- we were always with her friends and my brother's friends, and the house was always-- and my father's and mother's relatives and friends there.

We lived in the very center of town. And it was always full of people dropping in. I mean, there was no telephone. You didn't make appointments, you just walked in. The door was always open. There were always people in the house.

Your sister, I assume, I assume, had also a public school education?

The same as the older brother. I don't know exactly when she finished because she came back from this from Russia. She was 11 years old and that was a problem that interrupted education. Compulsory education ended at 14.

Very few people could afford to go to Gymnasium because Jewish children were not accepted to the state Gymnasiums, except for very few. You had to be the best. You had to be someone with the highest grades available to be admitted and to get a place. And the academic or even academic gymnasium, or the technical gymnasium, or the commercial gym.

There were three in our town, with a separate middle school. Not middle school, but what is it called? Secondary schooling for technical-- people who from there on would go to the polytechnical and become engineers. The academic one with very high standards. And the commercial one, where you become accountants, auditors, and so on. Very few Jews there. It was inexpensive. But very few Jews.

There was one Jewish Gymnasium in town. The pay was 75 zloty a month. To give you an idea what I meant is that there were millions of families who didn't earn that much to support themselves. To pay 75 a month for a child or for more than one, is something that only the very wealthy could afford.

And besides, the idea of secondary higher education wasn't as prevailing concept of life and expectations of life as here. How many Americans went to, let's say, just about to expect how many-- they go to college.

Even when I went to college, you were always told by our betters, you are you are one only of about 4% or 5% of the population that goes to college. That was in 1951. How many did go to college before the war? Very few.

Even I wouldn't be surprised that not more than half ever finished high school before the war. They had to go to work before. And as far as that country was, and at that time, at 14 was the time to start an apprenticeship or to do something or other. You couldn't well hang around the house. Life wasn't that easy.

Oh, hi.

That's it. As young people in pre-war Poland, we never associated, at least within our environment, we never associated our future with Poland.

Either you had enough gumption to get up, and smuggle your way across, and go to France, which had a very heavy population of young Polish Jews who came through to France and worked there. Or you hedged your future to the Zionist wagon, as my brother would have, and gone to Palestine as a kibbutznik.

OK. The fate, then, of your older brother and your sister-- were they deported with your parents, to your knowledge?

My sister was.

Yes.

My older brother, I told you, was killed in the last week of the war somewhere, I don't know where. I saw him for a couple, for about two months in Birkenau. I was communicating with him but I only saw him twice. And then when he left. That is my greatest disappointment, that he didn't survive. He made it so far to the end and didn't survive.

Goodness.

Now, if these are the pictures that-- this represents my family, my entire family. Just you would like to become a part of it. I don't know whether you would like to go with the rest of it. And would you like to have that as the way I--