

Unauthenticated

Interview with Gerald Grossman
March 28, 1992
Bayside, New York

Q: Today is March 29, 1992, I am Anthony DiOrio and I am at the home of Mr. Gerald Grossman, Bayside, New York. I am here on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to interview Mr. Grossman about his experiences during the Holocaust. Good morning, Mr. Grossman.

A: Good morning.

Q: Perhaps we could begin by your telling us when you were born and where you were born.

A: I was born in Rovno, Poland at the time, it's part of the Ukraine, December 20, 1923.

Q: When it was part of Poland?

A: Yes.

Q: Could you tell us about your parents.

A: My parents were of Jewish religion and my father was born in 1900, worked as a tailor all his life, my mother was a housewife and was born in 1902 in Rovno.

Q: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: I had three brothers, excuse me, and a sister. We were five children all told

Q: Were you the oldest?

A: I was the oldest of the five.

Q: What was it like growing up in Rovno?

A: Well, I thought it was O.K.. As a child I went to school and my father worked always very hard. Sometimes day and night to support the whole family because he was the only one working in the family to provide. My life was, I would say, normal, according to the circumstances in that particular town during the Polish occupation.

Q: For example, your father as a tailor, did he have his own shop?

A: Well, at certain times he did have a shop for himself but most of the time he worked in a small town which is eight kilometers from the city of Rovno, it's called Abarrov (?) and he worked there as a custom tailor for the people of commerce that lived in that town and he was always hired by them by the week to work and he used to move into their homes while he was sewing for the whole family.

- Q: And was he originally from that town?
- A: No, he was from Rovno but he used to go away for the whole week and come back to the house on Friday nights for the weekend, like for Shabbat.
- Q: How did he come and go?
- A: Most of the time he would walk the eight kilometers to come home or he used to take a train. That was only about twenty minute's ride by train.
- Q: You mentioned going to school. What kind of school did you go to?
- A: I went to all kinds of schools. As a child, and I can give you exactly the, before I went to public school, I must have been six, five or six, I used to go to Cheder. Like to a rabbi to learn Yiddish. I used to go to a small Talmud Torah also before, and then I went to public school, which was compulsory at the time, when I was seven years old, in Polish public schools. And after I finished, I went to a special school, specialized school sponsored by ORT, American ORT, for three years to learn how to become an inspector for tailors which was only about twenty boys. Specialized for the Polish government to spread them all over Poland to become inspectors.
- Q: Is this what you wanted to be?
- A: Yes. Each tailor that opened up a shop had to have a diploma, a master's diploma, before he could open up and he had to get it from this kind of inspectors to see if they are good tailors or not.
- Q: So, conceivably you may have become your father's inspector?
- A: My father would have been probably too old by then.
- Q: So you went to Cheder until you were 12 or 13?
- A: No, I went to Cheder in the evenings after school and the rest of the time I spent in public school.
- Q: Until what age did you finish public school?
- A: 1936 and then I switched over to that specialized school, ORT, which happened to be that we were supposed to graduate just 100 days before the war started. No, the 100 days before graduation the war started and that interrupted the whole thing.
- Q: And this was in 1939?
- A: 1939, yes.
- Q: So that was a public government school as well?
- A: It was, no, it was a private school sponsored by ORT.

Q: The government didn't subsidize it?

A: No.

Q: Your brothers and sister, did they follow you in going to public school?

A: Well, my, yes. My second brother and third brother were going to public schools and the little ones were not of school age yet.

Q: What languages were spoken at home?

A: In my house we spoke Yiddish. Outside we spoke Ukrainian and Polish.

Q: How were relations between Jews and non-Jews in Rovno?

A: Well, the city of Rovno itself there was, I would say, eighty-five to ninety percent Jewish and so we used the Polish language and Yiddish and we had very little to do with other nationalities except school where we used to get together. There was anti-Semitism but we were used to it and that was part of life, sorta. So we accepted it as it is.

Q: Do you recall any specific instances of anti-Semitism?

A: Well, yes, there was plenty. I, myself, before the war, my looks are not, typical sort of Jewish. I have blue eyes and not a typical. I used to be able to walk on the other side where the church was standing, the Polish church. It was called Koschua (?) in Rovno where I observed and read the literature put out in front of the church against the Jews and anything that was possible to print and make hatred. So I used to relay this information to others because it was a little dangerous to walk on the other side of the street. And that's the only kind of a thing. I came across, myself, before the war, certain episodes like, when I used to walk to visit my father in Abarrov. I had to pass a little section where only Polish people live and as I was walking some youngsters would attack Jewish guys. The episode was that as I was walking on the street, one was screaming in Polish, "Der is Yid, der is Yid _____". That means, "is a Jew, catch him." When the other friend of his came and said are you a Jew, I said where, where is the Jew? And somehow because of that asking the question where is the Jew, he was puzzled. He didn't know I was Jewish and he let me go. This is the kind of things as youngsters we knew. There was anti-Semitism.

Q: Were any of your brothers accosted in similar ways?

A: No, my brothers they were younger and they didn't do out of the house that much. They didn't travel outside the city of Rovno so they didn't have any experiences like that, except going to school.

Q: How about your teachers at public school and private school?

A: Well, I personally didn't have any problems with teachers. The only thing I did have a problem was because I was Jewish, they transferred me from the school that was next to my house to two kilometers further, which was Degrabnik all the way in the back of the town. I had to walk

every day to go to school, two kilometers each way, yet there was a school next door to me.

Q: Did you live in the center of Rovno?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it a Jewish neighborhood?

A: Yes.

Q: How about relations between your father and his customers? Earlier you mentioned that he provided customized tailoring for farmers and so forth.

A: Yes. He had good relations with them. There was no problem at that time, among the Ukrainian people, and my father that worked for them. He used to stay in their houses, they treated him like their own.

Q: When he walked, he wasn't approached the way that you were approached?

A: No.

Q: You mentioned that school wasn't the big problem, but I am just wondering whether after the 1935, after 1936 with the death of Pilsudski, whether you saw any changes either in the school, or in the town?

A: Yes. Right after the death of Pilsudski, which the Jewish people liked, there was another Marshall, I think his name was Rydz-Smigly and his government looks like change. Because as a youngster I realized that we had a lot of trouble. The first thing, I think that the government was infiltrated with German people and they made new laws, especially for the Jews. Where they made them eat non-kosher foods, they didn't allow them to kill like the Jewish way of kosher, and I think the woman was called Madame Priestaroba that was in charge of all this business. Just to give the Jews a little problem.

Q: Did this affect you in anyway in school, for example?

A: Personally, in school it didn't affect us but I remember there was a lot of problems among the Jews for that problem about Kashrut. They didn't eat meat because they wouldn't eat non-kosher meat.

Q: Did these changes affect your father in any way?

A: I couldn't tell at the time, I was too young to understand. All I knew there was no kosher food for a long time and there was a strike against the government and the Jews didn't eat any meat.

Q: Were you a good student?

A: Fairly good student. Yes.

Q: Did you pay any attention to politics?

- A: Somewhat. I did not get into it although I had a friend whose father was a communist and was in jail for five years for communism and he was a good friend of mine and we used to talk about other ways of life. I was only studying this but I didn't belong to this kind of group at that time.
- Q: What was the political orientation of your parents?
- A: Well, mainly Zionist orientated. Talking about Israel all the time. Judaism. We had organizations, Zionist organizations all kinds. There was _____ there was Agudas Yisroel, there was a lot of different Zionist organizations and I belonged to some of them.
- Q: Which ones did you belong to?
- A: I belonged to once Agudas Yisroel, which is the religious Zionist organization, I also belonged to a Socialist sort of organization, I also belonged to a Socialist sort of organization like _____. So I used to walk from one place to the other.
- Q: Did anybody in your family, extended family go to Palestine?
- A: One of my cousins, which is my father's sister's son, left for Israel in 1935 and he just recently died in Israel. He was one of the first Halutzim they called them, that volunteered to go to build Israel. It was in 1935 and I met him for the first time after the war in 1968.
- Q: Do you recall any discussions during these years about Hitler and the Nazis in Germany?
- A: Yes. When Hitler took over, I think it was in 1933, after that on the radio people used to get together and listen to the speeches and all the propaganda they used to put out against Jews and other things. I remember as a child, as a youngster, that people were very upset.
- Q: Did you recall your father speaking about Hitler and Nazism?
- A: My most of the time was out of the house, which I told you before, and we didn't have a chance to talk politics with my father.
- Q: How about your mother?
- A: My mother did not get involved with politics. She was a plain ordinary housewife taking care of her children and times were not good, economic times were pretty bad before the war and she did not get involved in politics.
- Q: Did you live in an apartment?
- A: We lived in an apartment, yes, we didn't have our own house. The house that my mother had when she got married, my grandmother came back from the United States and sold the house and made them move out because one of her brothers had to go to Argentina and they needed the money and that was it for the house.
- Q: So you had family members who had been to America?

A: Yes.

Q: Was there any thought of leaving Poland, or Rovno, at any point for economic reasons or for other reasons?

A: No. There was no thought. We didn't have the means to move out and the family was too big and, I guess, that was the aim to stay in Rovno.

Q: Did you know, in describing the differences between Jews and non-Jews, any differences between the Poles and the Ukrainians in the way in which they were treated you or treated each other?

A: No. We didn't have, I personally as I said before, we used to walk to that village Abarrov where my father used to work and we had very good relations with the Ukrainian people. We never heard any anti-Semitic things against the Jews, and I used to have friends that used to play with Ukrainians.

Q: Did you have Ukrainian friends?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you also have Polish friends?

A: Yes, we had Polish friends in school.

Q: When the war begins did it come as a complete surprise?

A: No. It didn't come as a complete surprise because, as I said, the propaganda and the talk on the radio and all the preparation that the Polish government made before the war like digging, in Polish they call it _____ ditches against bombs, places to hide. It was prepared before September 1939.

Q: How much before?

A: I would say about a year. Everyplace in Rovno we dug ditches to hide against bomb, shelters.

Q: From Germany?

A: From Germany.

Q: So the German attack was expected?

A: It was expected, yes.

Q: And how about the Soviet Union? What was expected of the Soviet Union?

A: Well the Soviet Union was not expected. That was a surprise. That was called a blitzkrieg, sort of, against the Russians. That's what happened in 1941, June the 22, 1941.

- Q: The German attack on the Soviet Union. I mean the Soviet Union marching in Poland?
- A: Oh, excuse me. The Soviet Union, that was a surprise, yes. The Soviet Union the way we know made an agreement with Germany to split Poland in half. I guess the river Bulg was the borderline where they had the border, Poland was divided at the Bulg. My part of the territory fell into the Russian side.
- Q: Did you see any Russian soldiers in 1939?
- A: Just Russians.
- Q: Just Russians. At the time that the Russians came in, I was in that town of Abarro because we thought we had a lot of friends in that town. In order to hide from the war. My father took the whole family to that town of Abarro. And some of the families took us in...
- Q: Ukrainian families?
- A: Ukrainian families took us in and when the Russians were approaching the Ukrainians were not so happy about that. They would have rather had the Germans come in than the Russians. Somehow I assume that the relations between the communist Russians and the Ukrainians were not so good and they were afraid for the Russians. And as the Russians came in they asked us to leave their house and go back to our house which we did.
- Q: The Ukrainians asked you to leave?
- A: `Yes, the Ukrainians. They didn't want to keep us. So the whole family was walking from that town, eight kilometers, already with some Polish soldiers that gave themselves up to the Russian military, and we also walked back and as we came to the city of Rovno, there was a guard checking everyone who came back into the town.
- Q: Did they give you any trouble?
- A: No. They just looked at us, checked us out and see, they wanted to see if we are not bourgeois capitalist, and they let us in.
- Q: So they decided you were not bourgeois?
- A: That's right, thy decided that we didn't look like bourgeois.
- Q: So your father was afraid that his family would be in danger. Was he afraid that there would be bombings?
- A: Yes, they were afraid that there may be bombings or maybe attacks on Jews, so he was safer in that little town with his friends that he knew all the time than he was in the city of Rovno. That's why he took the whole family out.
- Q: Was there any destruction or attacks on Jews in Rovno?
- A: Not at the time when the Russians occupied. The Russians just walked in the city of Rovno.

They were attacked by the Polish army and by the Polish police in the city of Rovno.

Q: Who was attacked?

A: The Russians.

Q: So there was Polish resistance?

A: There was Polish resistance in both parts of the main streets of _____ it was called at the time in Rovno, I remember there was a military church where they were hiding, the Polish police was hiding and as the Russian soldiers with their equipment were coming in they were shooting at them from behind the buildings and some of them got killed and then they killed all the police that were shooting at them. Because the next day, as I walked out, when the Russians were there already, I walked out and I saw a lot of them killed, police lying on the ground.

Q: How did you feel when you saw this?

A: Well, I didn't feel so good to see that people, it was not an interesting sight.

Q: Seeing the Russians come in and take over from the Poles, is this something to their credit?

A: Well, for us as, I would consider ourselves poor family, the Russian people that came into Rovno was better for us. We accepted them, the whole city was not so bad off when the Russians were there because of the city wasn't that rich and for my personal family, it was good. The economic times got better for us as a poor family.

Q: So the Russian occupation was not necessarily a bad thing?

A: No, it wasn't bad in comparison to the Polish government.

Q: Were there any changes in particular under Russian rule?

A: Yes, all the rules changed. There was a change in the system. It was a communist system and everything, they had propaganda and telling all the people that it's a very good system and they'll like it and it's going to be better for everybody.

Q: How about walking back and forth, the eight kilometers, that your father walked so often. Was that safer or less dangerous?

A: It was not dangerous because most of the Polish army that was walking on that same road with us, were giving themselves up to the Russian people.

Q: How about the Ukrainian farmers that your father knew so well, did they lose their farms or suffer in any way?

A: In the beginning they still kept their farms but, I understand that later on they had to give up their farms to the Russian government and work with them as co-hosts whatever they established at that point. But personally when the Russians came in I was going to school and then I transferred to a Russian controlled school where they taught us Russian language and

continued education.

Q: So you had been going to that private school to become an inspector, you went to a different school under the Russians?

A: Yes, that was not necessary anymore because the Russian government didn't have the same system as the Polish government so I gave up the whole education that I had for that purpose. I went to a Russian public school for a short time, and after awhile I read an announcement that they are looking for students for a specialized school and I signed up. This specialized school had to do with railroad working, on the railroad, which was located in Zdobuniv, twelve kilometers from the city of Rovno. The school was very nicely organized, we had dormitories where we stayed all the time and we were learning Russian and also specialty in locomotive work, locomotive engineering, building cars, railroad cars, and after that to work on the railroad.

Q: So you were preparing to be a machinist?

A: Yes, I graduated to become a locomotive engineer, driving a locomotive which I liked very much, and after I graduated they sent me to a place to work, which was called Kamionka Strumilowa located about twenty five kilometers from Lubov, the city of Lubov. It was also located on the German border, very close to the German new border, which was in Poland.

Q: When did you graduate?

A: I graduated in 1941.

Q: And that's when you went to the city?

A: That's when I went to work. A few months maybe three or four months before the war started.

Q: Meanwhile your family. Now you separated several hundred miles.

A: Now, I separated for about 200 to, I would say about 300 kilometers from the city of Rovno, and I was already on my own just in touch by writing letters and that's all. I was already grown up at that time.

Q: How was your family doing during these years?

A: My family, my father was still working as a tailor and there was not much different than it was before.

Q: Your brothers and sister were growing up?

A: My brothers and sister were growing up and I was not in touch with them.

Q: You don't remember anything special happening to them?

A: During the time that I was gone, nothing especially happened to my family, they were growing up and I was there until the war started..

Q: Were you thinking of getting married?

S: No.

Q: Just trying to get your first real job?.

A: Just getting myself established. I always wanted to grow up, my aim was to grow up and to help my family. Because I was the oldest one and I saw how much they were suffering economically, I felt that with the education that I got I would be able to help them, and that was on my mind at all times.

Q: Who was paying when you went to the private school and then to the Russian school, who was paying for your education?

A: I was always sponsored. My parents did not have the means to pay for my education, so I was sponsored by the ORT organization. Then when the Russians came in there was no charge.

Q: So you were here in Lobov when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union?

A: Yes, I was in _____ and that's when the real business started, right there.

Q: What did you see?

A: On June, would you like to tell me the whole episode?

A:” Sure. One June the 22nd, early in the morning about 4 o'clock in the morning, being that I was on the border and working on the railroad at that particular town _____, in the morning I saw airplanes overhead fighting with Russian airplanes. That was the start of the war. Already I saw one airplane shot down by the German airplanes and that pilot landed not far from us. He parachuted out. I saw the Germans were flying around him while he was being parachuted and they were shooting at him flying down. They made a few holes in the parachute, but they didn't get him and he safely landed. That's how we knew that something was going on between the Germans and the Russians. At 12 o'clock that day, the, Molotov at the time, announced that there was war and attack on Russia and there was war between Russia and Germany. The first few hours while I was there, the railroad lines between _____ and Lutzk was cut. So, we already were paralyzed on the railroad because the Germans bombarded the railroad and no trains were coming into our station. My chief of the station knew about that, that we were paralyzed. He was upset, he had his whole family, he was a Russian. He was the chief of that station, and I worked under his command. And, he said to me that you stay over here I will take my family with the children and take them out to the city of Lubov. I saw that there was no reason for me to stay at the station because there was no communication and there was no connection between the stations already, because we were cut off, and I was upset about staying all by myself in that station. I knew the Germans were close by, so I said why do I have to stay here, there is nothing to do anyway now, why won't I go with you and help you to evacuate your family to Lubov and then we will together come back to the station to work. Well, he agreed and it was my luck, we camouflaged, it was the only locomotive left on the station. We camouflaged one of the cars traveling to Lubov. We never made it back, because the Germans occupied that part and from there on we did not stop in Lubov, but we got connected to another

transport and we traveled towards the Russian territory in the east, by train, and we had, I remember, a open platform train, where old cars were open like platforms and we took that train and we traveled to Rovno which took us a couple of days. I would say about three days to travel from Lubov to Rovno because of the bombardments from the air by the Germans. Every time we heard airplanes we had to stop the trains, run off to the sides, hide because they were shooting, they were flying very low and shooting at us with the automatic machine guns from the airplanes. When they were gone, we continued until I came to _____ where I was still assigned to the railroad and this _____, which I mentioned before was twelve kilometers from Rovno. I think it was June the 25th. Being that _____ was only twelve kilometers from Rovno and my family lived in Rovno, and I didn't see them for a long time, I decided to go to Rovno to see my family. I was assigned to a post to be back at 10 o'clock at night, to watch a certain part of the main terminal of _____ and I was free until 10 o'clock that evening. So I went to Rovno and met my family.

Q: They didn't know you were coming?

A: They didn't know I was coming, they were very happy to see me, they thought I was already dead, maybe, or whatever, and I decided at that time, there were bombardments while I was in Rovno. During the day the German airplanes used to fly in and bombard sections of the city. In order for my family to be safer, I told them to move to a section which was called Kapkaz that was the other part of the city, like one section is towards east of the city like facing the Russians and we had an uncle who was the keeper of the synagogue.

Tape 1, Side 1

A: To bring them over to that part of the town was already late and I had to go back to _____ where I was assigned to be there at 10 o'clock. Because about 7:30 or 8'clock, I left my family, I said goodbye to my father, my whole family and (a portion of tape is blank).

A: I am going to repeat a few sentences. When I brought my family over to Kafkaz it was late in the day and I had to go back to Slobonov where I was assigned. We didn't know at the time that the Germans are going to take over most of the territory. We figured it's just a temporary thing and the Russians are going to be able to fight back the Germans and life is going to go on normal. I was responsible for my job where I was in Slobonov so I had to leave my family. My mother did not want me to go back. She insisted I should stay with the family, in that synagogue. I spoke to my father, he was more like sort of reasonable, and he said to me, I remember and I'll never forget it, he said, my son, you are a grown man, you have to make your own decisions what to do. If you think that it is important for you to go back, then you have to go back. So I had no problems with my father, but my mother was insisting I should stay with them. I made up my mind to go back because I felt that if I don't, I will be responsible for the job I'm supposed to do on the railroad in Slobonov because it is a major depot place where soldiers and with the Russian soldiers and they had to be transported from one place to the other and it was important for me to be there. So, I said to my parents that I'm going to be there tonight. After I finish my job in the morning I'll see you back. I'll come back to the city and see you again. On the way to Slobonov walking, I walked out about six kilometers, about half way, from the city of Rovno to Slobonov there was an attack. It was sort of getting dark that day, already late in the day, and I was walking with the road of the railroad, that's how I came to Slobonov and a lot of planes were coming towards us and there were another few people and everyone was hiding and I was also hiding from the airplanes. We didn't know they were going

to attack us, they were flying very low and I saw them go towards Rovno, towards the city of Rovno. A few minutes later I looked out, all the airplanes they spread like sort of in one line and they attacked the city of Rovno from one end to the other. And a few minutes later I saw the whole city burning. I was six kilometers out of the city. It was very hard for me to make a decision what to do now. I didn't know whether my family was killed at the time or not, because the city was on fire from one end to the other. I made a decision to go to work because I figured like that. If I don't go to work and nothing happened to my family I would be a deserter, because I was sort of mobilized already by the Russian army to be on the railroad, and then they will kill me as a deserter, the Russian government. If my family is dead, I won't see them anyhow. So I decided that in the morning when I finish my work, I will run back to the city. Being that I came back to Slobonov I was on my place of work, watching the cars on the outside. I was assigned to that, we had a few attacks in the middle, like already dark later on, we had attacks by the German airplanes on the railroad, on the station.

Q: On your station?

A: On the station that I was working. A whole group of people started to run out of the station because they aimed at the depot, at the station where I was working. And I ran out to the outskirts of Slobonov. We went into a house a few kilometers from the depot, from the Slobonov station and I walked into the house and I said I have to stay here, I have to rest until this thing is over and I'll have to rest here in your house and the woman did not disagree, she let us in, there were a few men already sleeping on the floor, and she said I have no room, the only place I have is on the floor. If you want to accept it, it's O.K. I asked her, I said please, if I fall asleep, wake me up, but early, early in the morning. Being that I was tired and I didn't sleep for a few days, traveling from Lubov to Rovno, I was very tired so I fell asleep on the floor. I was so tired that the woman just couldn't get me up early in the morning and she let me sleep. She didn't know the reason why I had to be up early. About 8 o'clock, sort of, in the morning I got up. I said, why didn't you wake me up, I was supposed to be on the station working. Well, I walked out of the house and I ran towards the station where I was supposed to be working. As I came close to the rails, I saw German tank facing a column of Russian soldiers with their gun from the tank pointing at them and all the Russians with their hands up were standing in front of their building from that column. And I couldn't figure it out that the Germans were there already because I didn't see Germans until that point, that was the first tank I ever saw German except in the air, the bombardment. So I walked around behind the tank.

Q: You didn't have a uniform on?

A: I had a uniform, I had a railroad uniform on but not a Russian soldier uniform and behind the tank I just passed, they didn't mind me they only wanted the soldiers and they didn't do anything to me. So I walked right up. It was an uphill, I walked up to the railroad and I went into the station and I took a look. During the night most of the trains and locomotives were evacuated going east while I was asleep and I didn't see anybody on the station. Everybody was evacuated. It was empty. It was a very foolish, stupid episode that if you're interested I'll tell you that I carried a little suitcase, I had some underwear, clothes that I had and I put it in a warehouse when I came down with the train from Slobonov originally, and it was in that warehouse. I figured if I have to run I got to have my suitcase so I ran to that warehouse and there was still an old woman closing up to run away too. I said to her, I have my suitcase with my clothes in it, I would like to get it. There were hundreds of suitcases lying there, I was looking for my personal suitcase which didn't have much to look at and I found my suitcase and

with the suitcase I ran towards the smoke that I saw going east from the chimney. The smoke was coming out of the locomotives, they were going one after the other probably about two kilometers away from the station already.

Q: To the east?

A: To the east. I decided to go as fast as I can towards those locomotives and they were going very slow because they couldn't, looks like ahead of them they had some problems, so they were traveling very slow and I could catch up with them, and the last locomotive was a friend of mine that also was operating that locomotive. When he saw me run he slowed down and he picked me up. And on that locomotive I was until we got into Russia. Never had a chance to go back to Rovno to see if my family was alive or dead. And this was the last time I ever saw my family.

Q: June 25?

A: About June 26th.

Q: Your mother was afraid for you or afraid for herself and family?

A: I think my mother was, she wanted to keep the family together. Being I was the only one out working, so she wanted me to be with them.

Q: Did you ever find out what happened to them?

A: Well, after I was working, I was on the railroad traveling around for six months, I was assigned in Russia to be on a group of railroad people, a special transport that would be kept in case they need us for work with the military. So as the Russians, which most of the time they were retreating, the Russian army, we were like sort of behind the lines traveling back and forth in case the government would need a transport for some reason. So I was on the railroad for six months, just living in cars with a whole group, hundreds of people, of railroad people, that worked on the railroad for the purpose of restoring the railroad if it was bombarded, for transporting military back and forth. So my job at the time was just to travel. That's why I lived and as the Russians were retreating so did we with the transport we were retreating. Where we got up to a town further away from Harkov. I don't remember that town that we stayed. As I was working on the station over there we actually parked at that place and we worked at the station and I used to go out to see all the transports that were coming by this station going east towards Russia and they called them _____, people that run away from the occupied areas of Germany, people that were running away from the front. Whoever could evacuate themselves, they were passing by our station and I was checking every car to look for relatives, friends from the city of Rovno. Whether they were passing by too. And I looked into every car as they were coming by. I met one guy and he was a son of one of our landlords and he knew my family very well. He met me and he told me that my family, my father, met him on the station in Harkov, that's a city in Russia.

Q: Far away?

A: It was in the Ukraine. It wasn't, I don't know exactly the mileage how far it was from Rovno, but it was still the Ukraine. He said to me that my father approached me and asked him whether

he saw me. And at that time, nobody saw me, and he said to my father, no. Well, he repeated those words to me when he met me. He said my father asked if I saw you, but I did not see you until now. He knew that, he said to me that the whole family and my father were in a school in Harkov, and they were waiting for evacuation further, or something. He continued and I decided to go to Harkov, which was already evacuated.

Q: When was this now?

A: This was in 1941.

Q: Months later?

A: No, not that much later. I would say maybe a month. Sometimes, I would say, in July. I don't remember the date. But I decided to run and take the first transport that goes there and being I worked on the railroad, I could travel and I traveled towards Harkov. I walked on the streets, which were deserted. There were no people in Harkov anymore. I tried to find somebody to direct me to a certain school, I came to that school and nobody was there. I came back to the same city I worked and did not meet anybody in Harkov. The whole city was deserted and evacuated. That was the only information that I ever had about my family. Whether they remained in the city, whether they were evacuated someplace, whether they walked out, I will never know.

Q: This person that you described, he's the last person you know.

A: He was the only one that I ever met.

Q: That was July?

A: It was sometime in July in Harkov. And that's it. Since then...

Q: And after the war you never found out.

A: After the war, I'm going to jump a little bit. After the war I managed to get out of Russia, I traveled, they told us that we will go to Poland. Rovno the city of Rovno remained under the Russian government after the war, because this was part of the Ukraine and never changed hands back to Poland. On the way back I managed to get out of Russia and we were supposed to travel towards Kovid, it's a city, Kovid, and my transport got diverted instead of going to Kovid, went towards Rovno. Overnight was traveling and in the morning I get up and I walk out on the station and when I opened up the doors, we stopped at that station, and as I opened up the door I see a church, the one I mentioned before, a Polish church, which I recognized, I figured that every city in Poland, I knew I was in Poland but I didn't know which town, I figured in my mind that every city in Poland has a church like that. So I say this must be Poland already, because I see the church is just like the one we had in Rovno. The rest of the town was completely bombarded, it was leveled. So as I walk out of the station, I didn't recognize the station, it was also bombarded, demolished, and I asked one man that was passing by, I asked him, I say what city is this? He says to me this is Rovno. Can you imagine the guy telling me, I was born in Rovno, I knew the whole city and I didn't recognize it. Only recognized the church that was sticking out. It looked like they never aimed at churches or big synagogues because that survived in the city in Rovno.

Q: Synagogues survived too?

A: One big synagogue which looked like a church. The main synagogue in the city of Rovno survived, and I visited Russia recently and I saw that synagogue. I was in there.

Q: How about the one in which your family was hiding in?

A: No, that didn't survived. Most of the houses were demolished. I couldn't even recognize the area where my family was. It was completely rebuilt. The whole city was rebuilt. It had only happened a few years ago when I was there. When I saw this in Rovno, I wasn't able to remain because my transport was going toward Kovid and Krakow and I had to stay on the transport that was taking me out of Russia until I came to the borders of Poland, and we entered Poland somewhere near Krakow. When I first got off, on the first station as we entered Poland in 1946, we saw the Polish officers, checking us out and we immediately noticed the anti-Semitism right away was worse than it was in Russia. They greeted us with hatred and you can understand what kind of feeling I had and I thought I made a mistake coming back to Poland. I came back to Poland only to have freedom, but I didn't find it in the behavior of the Polish people. So I traveled from there to a town which was Bittem. It was somewhere, I think it was _____, the town of Bittem. It used to be a German, a lot of German people used to live there before the war. When I came to the town a group of Zionist, young people, came to the transport and asked all the young Jewish people that came from Russia to join the Zionist organization and from there go to Israel. Being that I was single and I didn't find my family, I knew I was all alone and young, I decided to join this organization which I was with them for quite a while and working with the organization in Bittem. If it was of interest to you, this whole organization was trying to snuggle into Israel. It was Palestine at the time, under the British occupation and the situation at that time before the Jewish State was established, was controlled by the British and they didn't allow any Jewish people to settle, they took them all to Cypress and other camps where they caught them on the open seas. But, nevertheless, we all tried very hard to get there one way or the other, because Poland was no more a place for Jews. During the time I was in that particular place, I was assigned from the organization to go on the market and buy out all the soap, which was called Rif, in Germany it was called _____, it was made out of Jewish people and openly the German people on the market were selling that particular soap in bags. It looks like it must have been with the help of the Israeli government or the Jewish government, we used to buy that soap out of the markets, wherever we saw it being sold and eventually, I understand it, that soap went to Israel, it was buried because it was made out of Jewish people's fat. So this was one of my jobs in that particular organization in Bittem. We also tried to find children, Jewish children that were kept in some Christian homes and we tried to buy them out from the Christian people to be able to go back to Israel. And we managed to find a lot of Jewish children through certain ways and investigations who had children like that. Some Christian, Polish families took in very, very young Jewish children and they kept them as their own. Which was very nice. Some Christian families did not want to give up their children. But a lot of them decided to allow them to go back to Israel where they belong and we paid, the Jewish government, the Israeli government paid a certain amount for them as a price for the good deeds that they did. Later on, I am not going to go into details about what happened when Poland attacked, the Polish government attacked our house.

Q: The building...

A: The building where the Jewish organization was we had ninety people in this building and in the middle of the night they tried to attack, the Polish army tried to attack us, which we resisted. We had some guns with us but they decided and not get into that building. That building was closed, it had a gate, pretty strong gate and they didn't break the gate. Somehow they went away and this what happened over there. This was in Bitem, and we called on the telephone the Russian military which was stationed in that town, and the Russian military told us on the telephone that they don't interfere with the Polish government. S they didn't want to help us.

Q: When did this incident take place?

A: This incident took place, 1946. There came an order from, it looks like, you know we were involved with the _____ and other organizations that worked underground from Israel to bring the people, the Jewish people into Israel at the time. An order came for us to depart Bitem, start going towards sort of Italy and we had to go to another town which was called Katowice and from Katowice we had special papers made for us like new names and the names were given to all the ninety people, more than ninety because families of these youngsters that lived outside of this particular building were also taken at the same time so all of us were given Greek names, each one had a Greek name sort of, that we were not Jews but Greeks escaping, going to Greece and we got false documents with Polish stamps that we were Greeks and in the middle of the night, one night, we smuggled the border from Poland to Czechoslovakia. We had a special guide in the middle of the night. Old and young, were walking through the woods in the dark and people were falling and it was raining that night, and was mud on our feet, but we had to go as fast as possible because the guide he knew the way and he was going fast. So the whole length of that echelon, all the people that were going in one line sort of, it stretched for a long way, we managed to get in to Czechoslovakia. And we had an assigned building that was waiting for us. They took us to that particular house. We came in all muddy with shoes full of mud and wet. We had to wash ourselves outside in the middle of the night and from there we had to go, the woman from the house took care of us, and we had something to eat and early in the morning they brought a truck, a flat truck sort of, maybe about two feet high, flatbed not covered, they took all the older people and the children, the young children, on that truck, and it traveled to Bratislava. Lying down on the truck like from _____, that was the town that we started, right on the border to Bratislava, the older people were lying and they were covered with a canvas, and that's how they traveled all the way to Bratislava to a hotel where they had in Bratislava for the refugees. The younger people were assigned to go by train so being that _____ is a tiny little town, didn't see too many people, slowly two by two, a boy and a girl, walked towards the train station and we wanted to buy tickets. As we went to the station, two by two, not in a group, the station manager, whoever was there, noticed that so many people are here. He never had that many people going by train to Bratislava that he called the police, the Czechoslovakian police, the police came and arrested us. Naturally we had documents that we were Greeks so we had to, Greek we did not know how to speak, so we spoke whatever we knew in the Seder, in the praying book, so sort of this kind of language sort of we spoke. We didn't understand each other, but we made believe that we speak Greek. They arrested us, the whole group. A Jewish organization in Bratislava found out that we were arrested by the Czechoslovakian police, they worked very hard and they got us out and they transferred us to Bratislava into that hotel where we were going to leave Czechoslovakia. They didn't want us there. So we were lucky that they didn't send us back to Poland because we really smuggled out of that country with false papers. When we got to Bratislava they organized a group of, about 200 people, to go to the border to come to Vienna. The leadership that was in charge of that group had a permission to take out twenty people out of

Czechoslovakia on the border crossing. They made 200 out of that twenty, they added another zero and they took 200 people on that particular document. When we came to the border, they gave the Czechoslovakian guard on the border a couple of cartons of American cigarettes. So we crossed the border and now we are in no-man's land. We came to the Russian side which was part of Vienna.

Q: The Russian occupation zone?

A: The Russian occupation zone of Vienna. They gave them a couple of bottles of vodka and they let us through. So we boarded a streetcar in Vienna and with the streetcar we went to the American side of Vienna and we stayed in the Rothschild Hospital in Vienna. That was like sort of a place, we organized that hospital as a transition place, a place for refugees until it was time to go further towards Italy. My uncle Menachim was with me at certain times. He found me in Russia. That was my mother's youngest brother. He was in the Russian army and then he was bombarded and shot. He wound up in certain parts of Russia where he found me accidentally and I was with him at certain places. Which, if you are interested, later on I will go into it. He volunteered during Russia he volunteered to the army and we separated again in Russia. He was in Czechoslovakia until the end of the war even after the war, fighting Germans and somehow he survived and he wound up in _____, in a camp, displaced persons camp, where he was in sort of citizens police, in camp police, as a policeman. All the Zionist organizations had a conference in this camp and through one person at the conference he found out that I was in Vienna on the American side in Rothschild Hospital. That person at the conference took a message to me telling me about my uncle that he is living in _____, which at that time I did not know where it was, and I should pick myself up and travel with the next transport that passes by Linz and he'll wait for me. Well, I excused myself from this organization because I was with the Zionist organization going towards Israel all this time, and I said my uncle was there and if you don't mind I want to travel to meet him. That was the first relative I ever found since the war started. And, as I was traveling, they gave me permission and I was traveling towards Linz. He was waiting for me, he didn't know which transport, but he was waiting for one transport to the other until he found me on the transport. But the transport was not supposed to stop in Linz, only stop there for refueling or something, water. That transport was going towards Italy with Jewish people that were going to Israel. And as I came to Linz I knew that somebody was going to wait for me at the station. I looked out the window and he spotted me and he was in sort of a Jewish with a Star of David on his sleeve, with a whistle on his neck over here with a uniform Jewish Police, with a hat. So somehow the Austrian police at the station allowed him to get me off that transport and take me with him. And that's how I was able to get into this particular camp or displaced persons camp. He signed me into that camp which was a little hard because this particular camp _____ did not allow new people to sign into that camp. The only ones that they allowed was brothers, sisters, relatives that were there and if they found them they allowed them to take into the same room they had in the camp. Because there was no room in this camp for newcomers. He managed to do that by saying that I was his brother, not a nephew and I was able to get into this camp under the name of Grossman, which was his name too, my name was changed a few times before that, so I accepted the name Grossman. He accepted the name Grossman because he knew that in America his brothers names were Grossman, so he didn't want to make complications, so he marked the name Grossman and I became a Grossman which I was a few times before when I met him, and that's how I am a Grossman all this time it would be too hard to explain to anybody why I am not Tannenbaum, but Grossman. So under Grossman I live in the United States since I came here.

Q: What year?

A: 1948. That's after the present.

Q: Now earlier we left you...

Tape 2, Side 1. (Something is missing in going from tape 1 to tape 2)

A: We're in Zagorsk and we built that...; it was called in Russian _____, in Russian. And that's the railroad that will protect Moscow because Stalin decided, and we did. We did and we ran it around Moscow and when Hitler came close to Moscow, about twelve kilometers, from one part of this railroad, he probably saw it and he saw Moscow already through his binoculars. But he never crossed that railroad and the railroad many times was bombarded and destroyed and rebuilt and stuff like that. There was an order by the Russian government to take all these railroad people that were working, hundreds, maybe thousands that were all around Russia, around Moscow, excuse me, to ship them, and they were getting ready in Stalingrad and this must, I don't remember the time.

Q: Would this be after the winter?

A: I don't, I can't recall the time when Stalingrad made the _____. Maybe in 1942 or the beginning of '42, something like that.

Q: You passed the winter near Moscow?

A: Yes. When I found out that this transport is going to Stalingrad and I figure they are pushing, according to the information I got, I knew that I am going to have to fight for Stalingrad and probably get killed like everybody else did. But I decided to go deeper into Russia. And I took a group of four guys, four railroad people that I knew; they were from Kovid, from my area. I told them, I said, now we're not going to work on the railroad anymore, looks like we're going into some kind of a different uniform and we're going to have to fight or shoot or something like that, because the whole transport is going towards Stalingrad. If you want, I say we should do another thing and go someplace else. Being that we didn't know where to go, but we decided, all the five of us, decided to escape from that place because we are not needed anymore, in the middle of the night we went from that place. We were not arrested or kept under special supervision, but if somebody would see us go away from that transport they would be suspicious. So in the middle of the night we decided to go to the railroad station that was not far from Zagorsch and go wherever it is possible to go deeper to Russia, deeper in Russia because the Germans were very close. We found, I particular noticed a transport that was assembled with cars from the Moscow Metro and they were already stationed, they were on platforms, platform beds on the railroad cars and those cars were hooked up next to these particular platform station. I said to my friends, I say, look, I don't know where, but when I was in Moscow I saw these particular cars in the metro, in the underground, in the subway. I think that these trains are being evacuated because they are valuable trains, they were very nice and if they are evacuated they are not going to the front they are probably going toward deep into Russia. If we manage to get on this particular train we will probably go towards Russia, because we did not get information where the transport is going. So that train took off and went to a town of Gorki, which was north and east. It was, now I remember, it was wintertime, it was

cold, so it must have been between '41 and '42, because I froze my hands someplace near Gorki. We went into certain, there were cars, on flatbeds, there were also trucks standing on the platforms so we managed to get into a door into the trucks and we were traveling in that particular truck in the cabins all the way to Gorki in the cold. When we got to Gorki, we found out it was Gorki, we really didn't know that we're going to come to Gorki. We came to Gorki we saw a whole transport of wounded soldiers. We were still in the uniform of the railroad. We had our uniforms on. We went in to speak to, there were passenger train, a lot of refugees were there in Gorki and they didn't allow anybody to hook on to this train because there were wounded soldiers from the front sort of going deep. Being that they were wounded soldiers, I didn't think that these soldiers are going towards the front, they were going to deep into Russia for treatment. So we decided as railroad people to go with them, but they didn't allow us to go into the inside of the train to the compartments because they were soldiers and we were railroad people, but they allowed us to stay in between the cars on the outside and travel till the next station, maybe we'll find another transport someplace else. We traveled for a while. I know when I came off I was all frozen, my hands were frozen and all the other guys were all frozen traveling in between the trains and we got out of Gorki. We managed to hook onto some refugee trains later on in the cattle cars. When we got into some cars there were also refugees from Europe, from Russia, from all different towns and we managed to get in there with them, travel to Quebishov, there's a town Quebishov and from Quebishov they took us to Tashkent, we got off in Tashkent, that's Asia already. On the way we had a lot of trouble because the sanitary ways were very bad and we had lice and sicknesses and typhoid and all kinds of sicknesses among the people, but we managed, I managed to get to Tashkent. In Tashkent as a railroad guy and as a student for a certain school in Russia in _____, I made an appointment with the chief of the railroad from the Tashkent. I was lucky enough that he made an appointment for me to see him and when I got up there, he was an old man, he was the chief, the Kamisar, they call it, and I told him that, I told him a little lie, that we were bombarded o the road as I was traveling and my transport that I was with disappeared and I managed to come here and I am looking for a place to live and to stay and to work on the railroad. Well he gave us a place, he told me O.K., you as a machinist, you know mechanics, we'll give you a job on a machine on a certain machine to work, but the other four I don't have any place except for a place in Tashkent to work on the same machine that was cutting railroad ties for the railroad. They would be pushing the trees up to the machine by hand and that will be their job. He gave us a place to live in Tashkent, a dorm. They took us into places where we could clean ourselves up and delouse ourselves and we lived there. I lived in Tashkent for about nine months working on that machine, which even though there was hunger and not enough food, but I survived in that place. Before I got the job, I was sleeping in Tashkent on the railway station where every morning hundreds of people died, they took out, they found in the morning. They used to clean up the station, they found dead people from typhoid that they used to pick him up and just throw him on the wagon. These were all refugees, and I couldn't live like that, that's why I went to look for that job, and I was lucky enough to be able to get that job and signed in to Tashkent under the name of Gedale Tenenboim. And I worked there for nine months with the machine in this factory until my uncle, Menachim came down to the station. He passed through Tashkent, he was on his way to the Polish army with a group. He was dismissed from the Russian army, he was wounded in his thigh and his mouth, but the Russians did not trust the Polish people to be in the Russian army so they dismissed all the Ukrainian Polish citizens, so that before the Russians took over. They told them that if you want to go and join you can join the _____ army in Russia which was forming up there. When he stopped on the way to Guzar which was near the Afghanistan border, that's where the Polish army made, accepted their recruits. He stopped in Taskent and he found a friend from the city of Rovno and he asked

him what, who are the people that he knows that are from Rovno. Maybe there are some people. He mentioned to him that I know there is one guy Gedale Tennenboim that comes here every morning, I used to work nights on the machine. In the morning I used to go to the station to look for relatives, whoever passes by or who stops maybe I'll find some relatives of my mother or father or brothers or sister. He met me and he said, he used to meet me all the time and we used to talk to each other. When he saw my uncle he didn't know that he was my uncle; he only mentioned my name as there is one guy Gedale Tennenboim that works here in Tashkent. He said Gedale Tennenboim, that's my sister's son. To make it short, he went to the _____ bureau in Russia, in Tashkent, where everybody that works in the city, not as a refugee, but if he works there has to be signed to the city, signed up as a citizen of the city. I was signed in the books where I work and my name was right there. He looked it up and they told him where I am, he came to the place where I was working and I'm not going to go into the details how we met. It was quite a scene and he told me that now that I have found you, you have to go with me. I said I can't leave the machine. I'm working at night, night is my time when I have to be at the machine. There are forty people working on this particular machine. If I don't show up they can't work. And he says never mind, he says, you're going with me. He had a list of about fifteen people that was in a group that was going with him. A lot of them disappeared on the road so the list got smaller and smaller. One of the names from that particular list I took. I don't remember the name and I decided to go with him. Naturally, I deserted my job and I was shaking pretty badly because if the Russian _____, or the KGB would find me, they would probably hang me. The next morning I was already back on the station with all of the refugees and the way I came to Tashkent and the next morning there was a train going to this particular spot of Guzar _____ near the Afghanistan _____ border where the Polish were recruiting members to go to England from Russia. And I went with him and took one of the names on that list that he had. And on the way there was, they call it an ablava the Russian _____ were checking all the people on that station and checking their passports, their names. All my passports, all my documents, all the pictures that I had with me I had to destroy at that particular station. I went into the toilet, threw out all my pictures of my family, of my brothers, whatever I had with me, my parents, all documents under the name of Tenenboim, all my passports, and my documents that I had and I had to destroy because I was sort of a deserter from this particular work place and that was the end of my name Tenenboim. From there on I took the name what was on that paper, I don't remember the name because it was a very short time and we went to Cuzar. And when I came to Cuzar with my uncle to sign up to the Polish army to fight the Germans from the English side. It was supposed to take all the Polish people. Bring them to sort of Palestine, from Palestine they took them back to England and fight from maybe down there. I don't know what the English were going to do with them, but help the English people fight Germany. And we wanted to sign up. When they took me for a medical examination, which they undressed us completely. At that particular point in Cuzar I was rejected because they found out that I was circumcised and I am Jewish, not Polish even though I spoke Polish and my uncle spoke Polish and we were born in Poland, but because we were Jewish they didn't accept us. And they gave me a document, in Polish it was written _____. They gave me a document under the name of Grisorus which was the original name of my uncle, and I said I am Grisorus and they accepted it, they made me Grisorus and since then I was Grisorus. And I had to leave. They didn't accept me or my uncle. From that point on the Russians had to go back to Russia, stay in Russia and they, because I was a Polish born person, they took me to different places of work, camp. They called it _____. That was work, it was an army sort of, out of civilians that were not labor, that were not taken to the Russian army because we were Polish citizens and they only took us from one camp to another camp and they shipped us to places of work like farms where they needed

workers and all kind of different places, from one place to the other. The last place that I was, because I can't go into that certain. I have to skip over that.

Q: You were all over the place?

A: I was all over the place and they worked me very hard. The last place we were was Danscoya. In Danscoya I was with my uncle. He decided to volunteer to the army and he escaped from that particular town into the recruiting place of the Russian army. He wanted to volunteer to fight the Germans and anybody that volunteered over there to the Russian army they took, 'cause they needed people to fight, and he was accepted. He left me behind in this particular place, this was Khazikstan and not far from _____, the place was called Danscoya _____. The place was a place where they were digging ore mines and also had political prisoners. It was 200 kilometers from _____. It was very hard to escape from there because the wilderness was all around the place of Danscoya. You couldn't escape. Even the prisoners couldn't escape. It was 200 kilometers to walk in the wilderness some wolf or they had wild animals on the road, they would eat you up. So nobody could escape from that place and this is the last place I was. When the war ended I tried to sign up as a Polish citizen to go back to Poland. I had to provide certain documents, which I didn't have under the name of Grisaurus. I showed a picture with epaulets that I kept. That particular picture I didn't destroy because there was nothing written, but was only written something in Polish with a stamp on the corner from the school that I went to in Poland in Rovno. And that particular picture I kept with me. I still have it today, a copy of it in my album and because of the epaulets, it was from a Zionist organization, so we had those in Poland and the corner of it was written in Polish from a Polish school. It wasn't written Rovno because that part of Rovno was not on the picture, like a corner of the picture was showing but it was written in Polish so they could read it. They accepted me as a Polish citizen only because of that picture and I was able to get documents to get out of Russia under this picture, under this document. That's how I came back to Poland where I met my first anti-Semites near Krakow.

Q: That was some experience. In your work I know you worked in private research, you were never able to find out what happened to the rest of your family? Either through your uncle.

A: Yes I have applications with the Red Cross who are looking into it now. It will probably take a year, but I don't believe they will ever find it. My father would be today, if he was alive, he would have been 92 years old and my mother would have been 90. My younger brothers recently. My younger brothers I can't find them, but I'm looking for them for the last fifty years. I have documents over here that I wrote every place you could think of to look for my family. I was under the impression because of the information that I got from that friend of mine in Harkov that told me that he met my father, that maybe they are alive in Russia someplace. And I did everything. I wrote to Moscow, I wrote to HIAS, I wrote to Yad Vashem in Israel, any organization that is available, private organizations, that are searching for people and I never was able to get any information whether they are alive or dead. I was under the impression for many years that they are alive. I was hoping, and even today I still hope, that maybe they are alive. But I have doubt. Just recently the last year I gave up and I decided, no, they are not alive. I went to see the graves three and a half years ago to the city where I was born, Rovno. I took my wife and my daughter, who was born in the United States, and we went there for a visit to the place where 17,500 Jews of that city was shot, murdered by the Germans with the help of the Ukrainian police over there in the place of Susneke, the woods, which I knew before the war very well and they were all shot. They assembled all the Jews, most of the

Jews, and they were shot there between November 6 and 7, 1941, right after the Germans occupied the city. A few months later they destroyed all the Jews. Whatever was left later on, they had another 5,000 Jews and they kept them in ghettos and they were killed also. And another place, which was called Bially Street, I visited that particular place. I am under the impression that my whole family was killed over there and the information I got was false.

Q: You mean the friend of yours who saw them?

A: I don't believe it. Because I did all the years, I did all I could to look for them and I can't find anybody.

Q: Did you recognize some of the names on the monument that you saw?

A: The monument, I put in my family's name on the monument down there now, because in 1990, the end of October 1990, I visited Rovno again to the opening of a big monument that the Russian government put up in place where the Jews were killed. Because up till now there was no mention that Jews were killed over there. Only sort of Russian citizens. But now they have a big tremendous monument with plates all around that particular monument. I have a picture of it, I'll show you a picture of that particular spot, it's tremendous, it's very big. Seventy plates with 4,000 names of people that sort of got killed in this place are written. And I also registered my family there.

Q: Did you recognize other names there?

A: The names I didn't see, I only know that after we left Rovno in 1990 where I visited, the plates were written. The other writing was in Yiddish, Hebrew and Ukrainian on the monument for the first time in Russia that they allowed things written in Yiddish in places like that. Because the other towns, every town in the Ukraine has a massacre place _____ has one, Ludsk has one, Kiev, Kovid has one _____ has one. All these towns, every town there was a massacre place where they killed the Jews. At that time they didn't think of sending them to concentration camps. Therefore I don't believe I'll get any knowledge from, any information from _____, Germany because they did not take names of the people that they were killing in the towns. They just surrounded them, they told them to come and they just killed them. The information that I got from Rovno where I met people, Jewish people are still living in Rovno, they told me the whole story of what happened and how it happened. I met a woman in Rovno that survived, which I have on video. She survived the graves, she crawled out of the graves because that night she was not hit by bullet. She survived and crawled out nude and she ran to a Christian, a Ukrainian or Polish I don't remember what she said, and they kept her and helped her to get dress and wash and she is one of the survivors. I met her in Rovno, she is there today, she is an older woman and she is one of the survivors.

Q: Did any of the survivors know your family?

A: Down here in New York I have some people that knew my family. The people in Rovno that are there today did not know my family.

Q: So your last image of your family is that in the synagogue on the 26th of June 1941?

A: Right.

Q: And you were going back to work?

A: That was the last time I saw them, yes. In 1941, I was probably--.

Q: Eighteen.

A: Eighteen years old? Yeah.

Q: Starting out_____.

A: That's right. Five years of my youth was just destroyed.

Q: Do you recall saying goodbye to your brothers?

A: Oh, yes. There is a picture in my mind at all times. It never leaves, that picture. I will never forget because I remember when I said goodbye, my father took me around and hugged me and kissed me. My mother was crying and she was practically, like sort of hysterical, like she would know that I'll never see her again. When I left her, I tried to be like a grown person because I had tears in my eyes. At the time, the tears are coming back to me right now as I'm talking to you, I didn't want to show her that I'm like sort of a sissy that I'm crying and I didn't turn my head back.

Q: Your brothers and sister?

A: They were youngsters, they were kids and they didn't understand much.

Q: Any further observations?

A I am working now with Holocaust Search for the same purpose. That I know so many people are looking for relatives and I don't think there is a better person than I am and dedicated more to that cause because I, myself, have the feeling and I know what it means to lose family and not to be able to see them again.

Q: Thank you Mr. Grossman.

A: You're welcome.