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A: To start out with, uh I was born as a ...by the Romanian country but my parents are Hungarians. And uh.. we were five brothers, and from the beginning... we were in the high middle class. I was a young child, I had a ... a tutor, not a, actually not a tutor a, a study called, a Jewish... call it Cheder, it's a, I had a tutor in the house teaching me Hebrew and Jewish...teaching but unfortunately, uh...later on, I was about uh...eight years old, we had a, a ...we were robbed in the business. And my parents were very light headed, they, they kept in the, the business the money and the, the everything whatever they had they kept it in the business.

Q: What kind of business did they have?

A: My parents had a bazaar, what do you call it over here...a, its not a bazaar but, what a... we had all kind of threads, needles, toys, uh...uh hamanees [ph] , uh, they play with them - (interviewer - "harmonica"-) harmonica, and thing like that and uh then, we had two business, we had also uh, uh ...um cigarettes, tabacco too, what do you call it, uh...the Hungarian call it "Traffik." So uh...that must have been in...`26, uh `26, uh...1926 or 1928, something like that.

Q: Somebody robbed your father's store?

A: Yeah... robbed and uh...so my fath, my parent's had to go to the bank for money, and uh...to rebuild the store and from there on...out, ...link [incomprehensible] besides uh...in what they break, they stole also, my father had.. uh, uh...in two manach [ph]...in two factories which they uh, they uh made brushes, we had stock in uh.. those two factores went broke and they lost their money there too. So from there on, we had...had hardship uh...with our lives. So, anyway, uh...uh...from there on I was...from that time that they...lost their money in the stock, I was already twelve - thirteen years old.

Q: Were you one of the younger brothers?

A: I was the youngest...

Q: Youngest.

A: Yeah, I was the youngest... uh.. in the family.

Q: Could you tell us before we go on where you were born?

A: I was born in uh...Maramure_-Sighet...

Q: In...which country?

A: Romania.

Q: Romania.

A: Romania.

Q: And your name...your Hungarian name?

A: Onti.

Q: Onti?

A: Onti.

Q: Onti Lazar?

A: Lazar.

Q: And your parents were...?

A: My father's name was David.

Q: David?

A: And my mother's name was Sarah...

Q: Sarah

A: Sarah Katz...

Q: Jewish household?

A: Jewish house...no, my mother was in the business...my mother was together with my father in the business...she wasn't in the household...we had a, uh...maid.

Q: Uh huh. No, I meant the household was jewish in the sense that you observed all the high holy days?

A: Oh oh yeah. They were orthodox, my parents, orthodox...

Q: Orthodox.

A: Yeah...orthodox jews.

Q: And what languages were spoken, you mentioned...

A: No, we spoke Hungarian.

Q: Hungarian speaking.

A: Yeah...

Q: And you were uh...brought up to learn Hebrew as well?

A: Yeah - no, no.

Q: No?

A: No.

Q: You had a tutor...

A: I had a tutor just to learn....uh.. the Jewish religion... Jewish readings and things like that... but no, no Hebrew speaking.

Q: O.K. so you were brought up as Hungarian speaking?

A: Yeah, Hungarian speaking...but I...I went to Romanian school...

Q: Romanian school, public?

A: Public Romanian school. So uh...from there...from there on when my parents lost uh...everything, yeah well uh... went to a very hard time... and uh...we had a hard time to...my parents was doing all kinds of business...uh, but... looked like nothing could pick up loss. And uh...uh.... in 1940... uh.... I gotta go ahead of time because... uh... between that we had hardship up to uh... 1940's when the Hungarian...uh... but after the 1940`s, my father still had uh...the..thefor to sell cigarettes...tabacco... he had to have lisenche for that. After the 1940's my father had the

liscence. When the Hungarians came back which my father...was a Hungarian soldier in the ... Hungarian army.

Q: What war?

A: Yes...and he lost an eye in the...war, he was eighty-five percent...uh...

Q: Blind?

A: Not blind, he lost one eye completely... but he was eighty-five percent...how do you call it...uh... (Wife interjects: "disabled") - disabled.

Q: Yeah, disabled.

A: Yeah disabled, and then the Hungarian came in... uh... by the Romanian my father had a pension. And when the Hungarian came in... the Hungarian took the pension away from him... because he was a Jew.

Q: Now this is interesting, your father fought in World War I ...

A: World War I, by the Hungarians and the Romanians...

Q: The Romanians gave him the pension...

A: The Romanians gave him the pension and when the Hungarians came back they took away the pension... they took away the pension and took away... the liscence uh... the liscence for the cigarettes ...

Q: Because he was a Jew?

A: Because he was a Jew.

Q: And this was in 1940?

A: 1940, that's correct.

Q: Now was living under the Romanians, was it difficult or...?

A: No. No..

Q: No... So your recollections of the Romanian rule were.. on the whole positive?

A: On the whole it was... positive. But we had one day... which I forgot to mention ... we had one day in 1937 I believe...what was it...and probably you heard of it Cuza, the black shirts.

Q: Yeah, Cuza.

A: Yeah, probably you heard of it. We had one day...a bad day. The Cuza party came up for one day and get permission to...uh rob and kill Jews.

Q: In your town?

A: In my town, yes.

Q: And they got the permission from whom?

A: From the, the Cuza party...`cause they lasted one day... the party.

Q: Who was in power then? So they came into power...

A: Yeah, the Cuza came into the power and uh...after that one day... that one day we have miserably ... everything... and we what we hear also that in Bucharest ... that one day they were killing Jews and they were and uh... the butcher shops ... in the window.

Q: Were there people killed in Maramures? You were in Maramures?

A: No, we just had fights. [in Maramures]

Q: Fights?

A: Yeah, no... no uh...killings.

Q: Did your family get affected?

A: No...no my family did not...but in the towns all the Jews were robbed. And beaten. Not in our city. So anyway, after that ... was...whatever I'm coming up now to the 1940`s...when the Hungarians came in ... so uh...1940, I was drafted as uh...in the army. "Army" speaking, `cause in Hungarian calls it Munkaszolgálat [Hungarian Labor Service System]. That's "working commando." But...we were trained as the army but without uh...uh... without any...

Q: Weapons?

A: No, without any uh...machine guns or things like that. We had for the...the rifles, we had uh...uh shovels, picks, brooms, things like that. That was our weapon. We were taken out everyday to the..uh the field, to uh...uh... to march and uh...somedays when the officer didn't have a good time...they... they uh...when we went home...we wen't home we were climbing on ...uh...our stomach all the way from the field to the place where we were uh...located.

Q: This was a few miles from your home?

A: Oh, yeah...oh yeah... we were on our stomachs, we went to it. And...uh...sometimes when we ate...our lunch, we ate our lunch uh...kneeling- not kneeling - bending down. How do you call that? - Like this... we ate our lunch. All the time...when uh.. the officer's didn't have a good day...

Q: They took it out on you.

A: They took it out on us.

Q: So the members of these units, they were all Jewish, or was it a mixed...

A: No, no, just Jews.

Q: Just Jews, just for Jews, because the officers were not Jewish?

A: No, the officer's were Hungarian regular army, uh...people. Now in 1941, they took us to Russia...they took us by train to Poland...and from Poland we marched by foot. We went every day thirty...thirty-five kilometers. Uh...if you march through the woods, you saw... many, many uh... people dead. And uh... the first time we saw it... we didn't know who they are but uh... the next day we were told that they are partisans. We saw many woods like that, but finally we came to Duraho ... that's five kilometer from Stalingrad. We were stationed...

Q: This is when now?

A: This is in uh... 1941.

Q: Stalingrad? Are you sure?

A: Uh...1942 was it? 1942 I'm sorry...1942.

Q: So throughout this time, you were in Russia, you had been through a summer...winter, doing what?

A: We were eighteen months in Russia.

Q: Yes, and what were you doing?

A: What we were doing...we had a job to do... you know there the routes, the streets... wasn't paved, it was uh...sand. And whenever a transport passed by... `cause all day long, trucks, edged up to the to a...one machine and two uh...uh..two trailers was hitched up. You could see every day, passing to the front but...back, never came back. But just to the front and whenever a transport passed by, our job was to straighten out the sand. In winter time, we were one winter there, in winter time, we had to shovel the snow up the road.

Q: I would imagine the worst time would have been the muddy season, I could imagine that the roads would get muddy and..

A: No, but a...actually...actually we had just one... in the winter time we had a rain. But we didn't have...in the summer time we didn't have any rain at all. If I remember, but, no...

Once we had a rain, right, one we had a rain we couldn't eh...couldn't get out at all. But otherwise wasn't so bad but at winter time, when it rained, rained felled maybe ten, fifteen minutes but everybody was stiff 'cause was -we were iced in -couldn't move. So it was so bad, we hardly... we hardly got back to the place where we were staying. So anyway, then in nineteen uh...uh nineteen...uh

Q: These corpses, I just wanted to get back a little bit, you saw almost from the beginning that you would see these corpses, these "partisans" as they told you - what did they look like? Did they look like partisans to you?

A: Yeah - yeah.

Q: So they were armed?

A: They had weapons, they...matter of fact, some... in the wagons, they were eating.. eh... eating, and they were shot in the wagons...eating. You saw some of them with the fork in the mouth.

They had weapons and everything.

Q: This was in Russia...

A: No, that was in Ukraine.

Q: Ukraine.

A: Ukraine. Not in Russia.

Q: Well at the time it was still one country.

A: So in nineteen...uh uh when was that...when the Russians hit back? The ninth...the Russians hit back, 1943 in April right?

Q: Well, the first time would be December `41, the winter. There is a winter counter offensive. Your in Russia in the winter of `41 ...`42?

A:`42, but in 1943 when...when the Russian hit back already, for good - in April, that was in April.

Q: Yeah, in April and then July.

A: Uh...from the Stalingrad, that was the last fight, that was the last fight in Stalingrad when they hit back. When I was there.

Q: You were at Stalingrad? O.K, now we're in the Summer of 1942.

A: No, that was Winter time...when they uh...when they hit back.

But it was `43 or was `44, it was...forty...

Q: `42, is when the Germans reached Stalingrad...

A: Yeah, that was fighting back and forth.

Q: Right, and then uh...

A: Then 1943, right?

Q: Yeah, early.

A: No, that was...

Q: Yeah, early, winter.

A: No, that was winter time.

Q: Yeah, winter 1943.

A: Yeah, 1943 winter time when the Russians hit back for good

So that was the time when all uh...all the nations who fought...who fought with the Germans were coming back without weapons. They were running like crazy. That time, we runned eve...day and night. The worst thing was, the "katusha" -you know - the weapon kaytushah. The Russians did'nt have too many katushas, they carried the ketushas from one front to the other. But one good weapon that the Russians did have -an aeoroplane - a white aeroplane, before they hit the targets, you couldn't hear them, they shut the motor, they flew without the motor. How do I know that? One day, we worked outside where we were living... We didn't hear anything... then all of a sudden "Booom", bombs coming down. We looked up - we did see the white - that's all we saw - white, but no uh...no noises from the engige, no nothing. Just a white thing passing by. So, those two items: the kaytusha and that aeroplane - they had the most fear. When uh...when anybody uh the Russians...no I mean the Germans or the Hungarians or the Italian or the French, who ever heard that...uh uh...that machine, that kaytusha -they run like crazy. So that's what, the, when we head back, all the time we heard that katusha. And we came...we came back to all the way...to uh, to Poland. And uh...we was stationed ...uh before I do that...When we left Hungary toto Poland, we were four Kommandos, from the same place. And three kommandos was completely, completely wiped out. They was sent to the Russian front, uh as...mine sweepers.

Q: Human mine sweepers.

A: Human mine sweepers.

Q: So instead of doing road repair work they became human mine sweepers?

A: Our company, had a very good officer gentleman. He was a real gentleman but we had a couple killers in our officers. But the high commander in that group he said, "as long I am the commander over here, you people will go home alive."

Q: So your Kommando was not used as mine sweepers?

A: No. So anyway, let me go back, where we were already...so back we came to Poland and we came to a rest place where we were resting and uh...we, all of sudden, we became sick and Flecktyphus [Fleckfieber], you know what Flecktyphus is, -typhus-, typhus that was from lice, you get it from lice. If you want to ask me for ...??[256] thousands of them. So everyday, every day, was dying people on one side, then the other side - Every morning, I mean you get up, there's people dying like... But we were lucky with this to, because not far away was a placeuh, it was a...how do you call it? -a building where they kept hay? (interviewer -"a barn?")

A barn, a big one, a tremendous one. And uh...they kept over there those people, those sick people, other...because we weren't only one around there. There were other groups too. And uh...

Q: You mean non-Hungarians?

A: No -Hungarians.

Q: Oh - Hungarians?

A: Oh - Hungarians but Jews.

Q: Jews?

A: Jews and uh...

Q: Still with the regular officers?

A: Yeah, and one day...the officers from our place, they want to take all the sick people in there, so that the commander from our group said "no, they are not going there, they are staying here." The next day, we heard that they...(sighs) they put the barn on fire and they surrounded...the soldiers was surrounded the barn and if...anybody want to get out - they shoot `em right there.

Q: And who did this?

A: The Hungarians.

Q: The Hungarians?

A; Yeah, the Hungarians.

Q: The Hungarian troops.

A: Yeah... so uh...we were there about two weeks and after the two weeks, they took us out - they put us on train and they brought us back to Hungary.

Q: Why did they kill these soldiers in the barn? Was there any reason?

A: Because they were Jews, sick and Jews.

Q: So they were just sick...

A: Sick and Jewish.

Q: And that was enough.

A: That was enough for them. They uh... probably you see, the most of them who worked with the uh...Munkaszolgalat, they all officers, and they all...the soldiers they were in the "Wachtgarde", they call it - you heard of it? The Wachtgarde...

Q: Those are uh...gaurd...

A: It's like ...it's like S.S. It's like the S.S. but they called it "Wachtgarde".

Q: O.k., and who were in these units?

A: Those are...probably they were...

Q: Hungarians?

A: Hungarian...

Q: Hungarian fascists.

A: Yeah, so uh...like I said uh...after two weeks they put us on train and they brought us back to Hungary. In Hungary, they took us to the place...to uh recuperate...We was staying there a week, and then they took us back to the place from where we left, where we were all stationed - the Kommando station.

Q: And this was near Marumures?

A: No, no, that was uh...Munkacs, that's in Hungary.

Q: So you are near Munkacs?

A: Munkacs, not near...that's in Munkacs. And we were there for maybe another two weeks and then they uh give us release, they let us go home. Alright? Now...

Q: This is still in 1943?

A: No, that's `44.

Q: `44?

A: That's `44 already.

Q: Summer?

A: Yeah, now we coming ho...back home, and uh...when I came home already it was talking that they were going to make ghettos. That time we didn't have no ghetto yet. And uh...about two or three weeks later, they start to make ghettos. I told you that my father was eight-five percent...(interviewer: "disabled") -disabled. And he...right from the beginning my father had a privilege, not to carry the star. O.k? And I didn't have to carry the star, I could walk the streets, I could go into the ghetto and in from the ghetto, I used to go in everyday, to in and out of the ghetto without a ... I walked all over without a star. What had happened, later on, they through the government down from... the mayor...down from our city and they put another one. And this mayor..uh gave out an order that there's no uh...any pleasure for the disabled, everybody is joining the same priviledges as the other jews.

Q: No exceptions?

A: No exceptions...and the last transport was - before the last transport was from our city, for the Jews to take them to Auschwitz - we were picked up.

Q: The last transport?

A: The last transport.

Q: Now the ghettos - they were established by the Hungarians.

A: By the Hungarians, yes.

Q: And how was it established, was it written orders, was it at gun point, was it changes in laws?

A: The changes in laws, there was uh... actually there was uh...uh, signs all over the streets that all the jews has to leave their homes and has to go to so and so adress, to the ghetto.

Q: Was your home in the ghetto area.

A: No, no.

Q: So you were...

A: I was living like a normally any other, like any other time.

I was living outside the ghetto.

Q: How big of a town was Maramures? Aproximately.

A: Believe me...believe me I don't know.

Q: I am trying to get an idea of how large the Jewish population was. How big of a Jewish population did you have?

A: If I am going to give you a number, I might have an explaining to do with that.

Q: But there was a large Jewish...

A: Oh yes. Very large population `cause we had a ...five big Rabbis in the city. So we had a lot of Jews. See, in our city, when it uh...came Saturday, it was dead. The whole city was dead. The whole city, no stores, no nothing was open. But uh...it's not like any other place, Sunday was also closed. There was no such a thing as Sunday to be open.

Q: Were the non-Jews of Maramures, were they mostly Hungarian or mostly Romanian. Or mixed?

A: Mixed, yes. We had peasants, they were Romanians.

Q: The Romanians were mostly peasants?

A: Peasants, yes.

Q: Did you notice any difference in the way in which the Romanians and Hungarians behaved toward the ghetto and towards the Jews?

A: We didn't have Romanians when the ghetto started.

Q: So when the Hungarians came in, what happened to the Romanians? Did they...

A: They left...

Q: They went to Romania?

A: The people... the really Romanian people, not the peasants, the second, you know...the majority who ... they were well off, they not were poor people... the peasants...uh - they left, but the peasants did not live in the city, they lived outside the city.

Q: They were still there?

A: They remained there. But uh...the middle class, and the rich they left.

Q: So the Hungarians...

A: The Hungarians, they were staying.

Q: They were in control?

A: Yeah. But otherwise, I don't think so...no, they were also Hungarian. I was thinking we had... a very good friend of mine and the father was um...uh...in the high court, how do you call it? High...s...high court?

Q: Kind of the equivalent of the Supreme Court?

A: Yeah. How do you call it? The person who is responsible for the high court?

Q: Cheif justice?

A: Chief justice. He was a very good friend of mine, we lived door by door. So, I thought he's Romanian but he wasn't Romanian either - he was Hungarian.

Q: So you were forced to move into the ghetto?

A: No, we didn't go to the ghetto. They took us...um...they gathered people whom they took out to the train, they gathered in a synagougue. `Cause we had a big, a huge um uh...place...where the synagougue was. So they took us there.

Q: So they ordered you to assemble...

A: In the synagouge.

Q: Did they tell you where you were going?

A: No! You kidding me?

Q: You didn't know where to?

A: Never, when they took us in there...

Q: Did you have anything with you?

A: Yeah sure. Just the belongings - that's all.

Q: So they gave you what? - twenty-four hours notice?

A: No, no, they came with a buggy, a horse and buggy and ... they told us "Take a few things with you, and come with us."

Q: And these are Hungarians?

A: Yeah Hungarians.

Q: Still Hungarians?

A: And uh, uh...when we got there, to the temple, they uh...ofcourse they registered you that you are leaving and you had to give up everything, gold, money and everything. So my father was beaten, because he didn't have no gold. But he had...he had a couple of rings - things like that but they thought my father so rich that he had...who knows what he would have.

Q: So this is your entire family, together? Your father...

A: Yeah, it was my mother, my father and myself.

Q: O.k. so three...

A: The three of us.

Q: In the meantime, where had your other brothers gone? You had four other brothers?

A: The other brothers, they were in the Mukas... "Munkaszolgalat", that's the Arbeit - the working...

Q: Just like you?

A: Yeah. Just like me.

Q: So all four..

A: All four, they weren't home.

Q: So all five brothers were drafted into...

A: Yes.

Q: The same time that you were?

A: I was the...uh, I was the first who was drafted...because the others, they were older. So drafting was uh...just when they needed them.

Q: Do you know where they served? Were they in Russia as well? Uh, one of my brother died in Russia. My brother Akton [ph] 445, before me. He died in Russia. He froze to death with the prisoners. And one brother...and after that brother, they...killed them in Hungary someplace. I don't know where. Otherwise, three of us..(interviewer: "survived") survived.

A: They did not return to Maramures?

Q: Yes, oh yeah, they were home.

A: With you?

Q: No, not with me. Together. They got home before me. Yes. I went home in 1946.

A: No, I don't mean then, I am talking now in the ghetto.

Q: No, no.

A: They are not home in the ghetto.

Q: They were not home in the ghetto?

A: No, they were not home, they were uh...still in the service.

Q: So, you, your mother and your father, in the synagouge, personal belongings.

A: Yeah, belongings...and they took us to the train. And uh... we got to Auschwitz.

Q: O.k, so you have this train. Again, you don't know where your'e going?

A: No, ofcourse not.

Q: Have the Germans appeared yet or is it still the Hungarians?

A: No, still the Hungarians, because in our place, I didn't see any...any Ger...oh we did have Germans but they didn't have anything to do with us, we did have German soldiers there but they didn't have nothing to do with us. So anyway, they took us to Auschwitz, and as we got to Auschwitz, disembarked from the... there were...there were people from our people by the station. By Aushwitz, telling us to unbark adn leave everything in the wagons -"don't take nothing with you, because you don't need it".

Q: So people you knew who were already there were telling you?

A: Yeah. So uh...as we stood in the line, the German...doctor...what's his name? Anyway, it makes no differene the name - selected us. " You go to the left - you go to the right." My father and mother went to the left. Next day, I didn't have no parents. But...

Q: So you were allowed to work?

A: When I went to the right, they took me into the uh...uh..the camp, they took us to a barrack, to undress, leave everything, completly naked. Then they took us to another place, where it was a cabin, a...a swimming pool,like a swimming pool. Where they...uh..divided, which you go... on one side you go in, they divided that you should go in under the water, that the...uh..how do you call it? (Interviewer: "disinfection?") -disinfection. We get out there, that when you get out, that was - mind you - that was in April.

Q: So this was in April 1944?

A: 1944. And, the...when we went through that, we had to go outside completely naked in April, completely naked. We were standing there for a while, then all of a sudden, after us, women- they got into the water and they came out naked- completly naked. And when I...when I saw the women, I recongnized my cousin, was also there - Ella.

Q: Was she in the same train as you?

A: Yes. So after that, they took us to a barrack, and they gave us the "uniform", so called, the stripes ?/524 uniforms. And uh... I wasn't used to this treatment because I wasn't in the ghetto. And, the Kapo - that means- you know what the "Kapo" is,...

Q: -the word "boss"?

A: Yeah...came in [the kapo] says everyone to go into the Preach [ph] 531, you know the Preach, that's where we were sleeping, they called it Preach. And...I wasn't used to that kind of stuff. I was standing in the corner, leaning against it, you know I didn't see whose coming from behind me. The Kapo came behind me with a stick like that and he hit me over my head - I got right away a double head.

Q: With a stick? He hit you with a stick?

A: Yeah.

Q: The Kappo, do you know who he was? Was he German? Polish...

A: No, not a German, that's for sure. He was Jewish. Yeah.

Q: But not...

A: Most of them, they was Jewish.

Q: But he wasn't Hungarian?

A: No, no. So, anyway, right there, I said to myself, "if I cannot get out of here, then I will kill myself." - Just like that. Next day, I heard that they taking out mechanics...from Aushwitz. Sure enough, after breakfast the Kapo comes in and says "every mechanics to... go outside" so I went out and many others we were in Barrack eight...

Q: So you decided to be a mechanic?

A: Oh, I was a mechanic.

Q: You were a mechanic. O.k., that was your trade?

A: No, my trade was a glazier, a picture framer.

Q: Ok, that is something that we didn't discuss earlier.

A: No, we didn't.

Q: So you volunteered as a mechanic?

A: Yes, that was Barrack eight so we went into Barrack ten, and then when we were inside, two officers came in and they asked for all kind of mechanics except glazers here they wanted to get away, they wanted to get out already and I wanna run in to ask that if the glazers they don't need, so I had uh my friends there who said "Are you crazy?" I said "no,... how 'bout glaziers?" so he says "I didn't ask?" I said "no, glaziers." So, I went in, and sure enough in the afternoon...no next day, third day. Next day, in the morning, they took us, they called us out, "stay in the line", "line up in four", and they took us to the train. By the train, they give us a big loaf of bread, butter, salami and toilet paper.

Q: Toilet paper? That's a luxury.

A: I said to myself, "what the heck is that, what the heck is this? They give us all these goodies before our death?" So anyway, then they took us twenty people to a wagon.

Q: Just twenty people?

A: To a...to a cattle wagon, yes twenty to a wagon.

Q: Per waggon, what kind of -

A: Cattle.

Q: Cattle car. Now when you went to Auschwitz, how many were in the wagon?

A: Oh, eighty-five...ninety. You couldn't stand, you were like herrings. So anyway, before I went into the wagon, it looks like a transport came in before...before we got to the train. And was laying bread, was laying on the ground. So, it didn't matter to me anymore. I walked over to the soldier, to the German soldier and

asked if I can go and get the bread. So he says "Go ahead." So I picked up two, two big loaf bread, brought them into the wagon and distributed to ever...to everybody. So, we were fat, because we didn't have nothing... have almost nothing to eat in Aushwitz

in the three days. So anyway, the train starts to go, we asked ourselves, "Where are we going?" (end of tape side)

Q: So you're in the cattle car looking out?

A: Through window, and all of a sudden I see uh.. coal mines. So I said to these people, (I had a couple of friends there too with me), I said to them "My god, we are going to coal mines."

Q: Mechanics in coal mines?

A: We are going to coal mines, and we were going all day long and all night, and there was nothing else you could see just coal mines.

Q: And you had no idea where you were?

A: No, how would I know? So, second day - train stops. They tell us to get out from the cars, stay in the line and an officer came along and count us - how many we are - march! We marched to the town, and we are in the town, all of a sudden we stop by a building - a big building.

Q: What kind of people in this town? Was this a German town, a Polish town?

A: This was Niederschlesien [on side two], ...

Q: Lower Silesia, ok.

A: Yeah, and we uh... stopped by that building and then they took us...again they stand us in front of the building and they counted us again, and then they tell us to go into the building and you will find stra...zacs...uh...sacks, which you make this from straw, uh mattress, you know like a mattress from straw? And also uh.. you find uh..for the pillow...it was filling with straws. What...its uh ???024, like we're going to sleep on...

Q: Too good to be true?

A: So anyway, we went into the building, filled it up and then they said, "Bring it upstairs and everybody has a bunk bed, two stories." ...Beautiful, with the straws again, then they call us down, they call us down and they give us blankets and they give us sheets. Can you imagine that? So, when we did that, they call us down for supper. First, they dis...distributed us a spoon, a fork and knife and a plate and a cup for the coffee.

Q: You must be very important people, what was your job?

A: Wait, I'll get to it. So anyway, we go to get the supper, it was...was a supper! It was meat and potatos, not potatos and meat - meat and potatos. And a big piece of bread.

Q: Who were your hosts? Who were these people? These are...

A: Germans.

Q: German civilians, German soldiers...

A: No, no, not civilians.

Q: SS, these are SS?

A: Yeah, SS people.

Q: And you thought they were bad?

A: So we finished our supper, they count us up..."Go in, lie down." After not sleeping so many nights, to sleep so good...we slept all night. In the morning we got up, we had a place where to go wash up, a beautiful place. Actually, what that place was, was a factory for fabrics, they made fabrics for suits.

Q: Textile factory. So you were living, you slept in the textile factory?

A: Yeah, in the textile factory. So anyway, the next morning they wake us up, they counted us and they give us breakfast and again in the line and the commander from that place asked again for the mechanics. They asked for shoemakers, cabinetmakers, uh...uh to make the suit uh a Schneider...

Q: Tailors.

A: Tailors. Then he asked uh...locksmiths. Nobody answers. Then he asks again - "Locksmiths." Nobody answers. The third time when he asked, I raised my hand, "I'm a locksmith." So he says, "Go into that place." My...mein brother was a locksmith, so I saw what he was doing but everything by hand. When I came into that place, everything was electric. Everything. So, after me came another one, when he came in I said to him, "What are you by trade?" He says, "I'm teaching Hebrew." A teacher.

Q: And he volunteered to be a locksmith?

A: Well, I said "How...." - "I was livingclose by a locksmith and I saw...." then a third one come's in. "What are you?" - "Well, I know a little bit." So after everything was over, the fuhrer [ph] 71

from the...from the place comes in to the machine shop. He says to me, he goes to me, "Locksmith, come on." He says to me, "You see this door, I want on this door, I want a strap, a hind strap and in the middle with a lock. The strap has to go into the wall. O.K?" What will I say to him? "I don't know what you're talking about" ? So I go into the shop and I said to the boys, "Boys, we have this and this and this to do." Still we had enough. I mean I, we had enough. So we started to make the fire, the fire was also electric. Not like blowing with your hand. So I make the fire finally, and put a piece of iron into the fire, made it hot, and we start to handle it that way. Make one set, go up, its no good. So what it did, give us an idea of what we had to do. First we chopped holes in the wall, because it was uh...brick walls. We chopped holes on both ends of the jam and then I measured to the half of the door, and tried uh...to bend it...made a hole by the bend for the lock to go in. Made holes for the screw to go into the door and I go out...try it. It worked! Like a miracle. Like people who doesn't know what to do, he did it without any common sense - but by luck he did it. So when I finished it, I went to the uh...officer who was in charge and I said uh.... " I finished the job." So he comes out with me, looked at it, tried it, "Sehr gut." So then he says to me, shows me all the doors, there were about five doors, has to be made the same way. - We finished that, then the place was full with machines because that was a factory. It was still full of machines...

Q: Were people working or was it empty by now?

A: Pardon me?

Q: Were people operating the machines?

A; No, a lot of people that didn't work there anymore.

Q: So, it was still an abandoned textile factory?

A: Yeah, so he calls me, he says to me " I want these machines all out, all the machines out of here." I says "Jawohl". SO he says to me, " How many men you need?" "Oh," I said, "Ten men." And "How long will it take you?" " Five days." O.k., so I selected ten people, we were three, another seven and I finished it in three days.

Q: Ten people - three days?

A: Three days. I went to... to the officer who's in charge, I reported it, that it's done. Then he came out, to see it. He was very satisfied and he took me in to the kitchen chef, who was cooking the meals. He says to him, "The locksmiths, the three locksmiths gets double food. Before the food..is uh.. given to everybody the three locksmiths gets double food." Double food? We were like...enough to eat...

Q: More than you need.

A: More than I need. But I had friends of mine, from home yet. And I helped them out. Not that I... I didn't eat the whole thing because I couldn't eat the whole thing. So I held it. And then one day, I was in the kitchen, and it was filled with smoke, the kitchen. `Cause they had the kessles where they were cooking the meal. I went over to the kitchen chef and I said, "How can you stand?" He says, "What can I do, I can't get mechanics to." So I said, "You know what, I'll do it for you. I'll fix it for you." So he says, "You can do it?" - "Yes!" So, I said, "Don't cook in one kessle [kettle], and I'll do it for you." So, he didn't cook that day, I took the whole thing apart, I cleaned it out - the chimney and everything and I put it back together and I said to him, "Do you have a piece of paper?" - He gave me a piece of paper. "How 'bout a match?" - a match. I lighted it, put it in and it sucked it out like anything! So I said, now you can go and cook. He started the fire -beautiful everything was. So next day, he shut up the other one and I cleaned it all..he had...three Kessels there. I cleaned all three Kessels for him and for this, he give me every day, a quarter kessle with food. Everyday. No no, not for me, I didn't need it. But I had ten people from my city whom I knew.

Q:... Who were with you at this textile factory?

A: So, I fed them.

Q: And what were they doing during this time? What were the other people doing?

A: The other people, they were out working on the...on fields and also on some kinda factory. I never asked them what they doing but I knew wher..where they going.

Q: Did you ever wonder why you were supposed to make these locks? Here you have this abandoned factory?

A: Uh..this place wasn't fenced in, it wasn't fenced in. 'Til it was fenced in...about two months later they start to fence it in.

Then they didn't need it anymore. Know what I mean?

Q: Yeah.

A: So anyway, it was uh, um...an officer, not a Wehrmacht, not a, how do you call it - the other...?

Q: Volksturm?

A: Volksturm. He lived right by the Lager and he had a similar thing, he had smoke in the house. He knew what I did here so he asked me if I would do him a favor. So, I said, "why not?" So I did it for him. He couldn't do...he didn't know what to do for me,

what I did for him. So he used to give me all sorts of stuff. Now to go back, we had a...a carpenter, master, a German. A German. A German who came in every day because he had a contract in this place. Don't you think so that I gave him bread every day?

Q: You gave him bread?

A: I gave him bread. Every day. He was so happy with me.

Q: Did he know you were Jewish?

A: Oh, of course. Of course. So, I...I didn't know any bad things but my friends, they had...they had trouble. Matter of fact - see not everybody ... they are between Jewish people -bad people. We had a couple in our place. He was a terrible person, matter of fact he was from my city too.

Q: You weren't bringing food for him?

A: No, no. Oh no. He was a Kapo, he had enough food. So, anyway, I was there about four months then this civil master says to me, "You know, we gonna build a new place in Schutterrecht [can't be found] its about five kilometer, five or six kilometer from this place."

Q: Schutter...?

A: Schutrecht.

Q: And the textile factory? What was that called? That town?

A: Doernhau

Q: And you still don't know what they are going to do with this textile factory?

A: No, that was our place.

Q: Yeah, that's where you lived?

A: Yeah, that was our place where we lived.

Q: So, they were making something at Shuter-

A: No, that was an empty peice of property. So he says, " I want you to come with me there, we gonna build a barracks." I said to him, "What do you want me there for? You see - over here I'm o.k, I don't know what I'm gonna have there." "Don't worry about it - you'll be alright." So, I let myself talk into it. So I'm coming there, there's no material yet. What they had...they had a...a how do you call it? When you go camping...?

Q: Tents?

A: Camping tents. So he says that it's just for a couple days. In the meantime, the next day - came a rain. It rained so hard, that in the tents, we had two inches of water. That was unbearable. But, they took out people from there.. we had uh...we had about..oh three hundred people in that place without barracks - just in tents. What they didn't have the material there for me to do something so in the meantime, there was a railroad station about a mile...two miles - a mile away; and they took

us there to the railroad station to work. We had to unload cement bags. And those were hundred kilos a bag, and you had to take two bags at a time.

Q: Each person had to carry two hundred kilos?

A: Two hundred kilos, two bags at a time. Then I cursed this guy. The second day he shows up, I run over to him, I said, "You son of a so and so, what did you do to me?" He says, "Don't worry, tomorrow you'll have the mater...the barracks here." And sure enough, next day shows up the barracks. And he says, "When you put up the first one, you gonna get the first barracks to stay in it." Sure enough, we set up one barrack - here we go- the first one we got into it. We finished about twelve barracks. After we finished the barracks, we still... I still have to do something. I don't want to go out with the transport, I mean with the guys to work outside someplace.

Q: How's the food here. Not so good?

A: What not so good? Like any other concentration camps.

Q: No, I mean, you lost out on the food?

A: I lost everything out. So anyway, what I was lucky that I had already where to sleep. So anyway, we finished out the barracks, so I went over to him and said, "What's now?" He says, "Don't worry about it, we uh...have some painting to do." - I was a painter -. Finished the painting and "What's now?" "Well", he says, " we have to build a toilet for the people." Right? We dug a big ditch and he says, "This ditch has to be built up with bricks, the walls shouldn't cave in." So I became a brick layer. So I finished that. I don't know how it came that it was Winter time already, I went in...I don't why I had to go in to a...to the officer's headquarters, where the commander lived. And it was cold, it was Winter time. I don't know from where I got the guts to say to the commander, " How come it's so cold?" He says, "Because of the walls, the walls are just uh.. uh plain boards." I still uh...didn't think over that something might.. he could do to me whatsoever. I says to him, " How come we can't ...how come you not let us stop all the walls?" He says, " I would like to but I don't have the material." I says to him, "You have plenty of material by the station." "Yeah, but I'm not allowed to do that." Yeah, so I says, "Give me a soldier, and give me two men, and I will bring you enough material over here. You should have enough." "No,no, no, if they catch.." - What catch? So he let me talk him into it. And I got two guys with the soldier, went back and forth brought enough material. So, before I started to do the job, he says to me, "Remember one thing - its my trade. Stucco, that's my trade he says."

Q: This is the commander?

A: My commander.

Q: He's telling you, his vocation...?

A: He's saying, "Watch yourself, that's my trade." Do you think I knew anything what to do? I...I worked...I made the brick work. I knew how to handle the trow. So, I said, "Jawohl."

So I start to mix the stucco and everything and I start to work. First I put the boards on it, then I start to work. He was standing there, he says "Don't rush, don't rush." Because I was going like crazy. Then around ten o'clock, it must have been ten o'clock, he called.. you know every officer had one of the haflings. We were called haflings. They had...every officer had one of those guys to clean for him, to wash for him things...like

clean the room. He calls him in, he says "instead of one sandwich, bring me two sandwiches and two coffees." I didn't bother with him. When he brings in the two sandwich, the two coffees, he takes away from him, gives me a coffee, gives me a sandwich! [sound of surprise] what's that? So, I was standing - he says, "sit down." I sat down, I finished my coffee mit my sandwich. Then, I wanna go back to work, he takes out a cigarette. He gives me a cigarette. Then he takes a cigarette for himself then he lights my cigarette!

[voice gets loud] This is a guy who killed everyday a man!.... I didn't know what to say. So, I finished the cigarette, I ran back to work. And uh..by the end of the day, I'm coming for the...for the dinner...the people who gives out the dinner - he says, "you getting...you get two meals. Two portions. Here I am - I have food again. So, I finished...I finished his job. I stuccoed then I painted his place. Everything was finished. Uh, I'm thinking, what am I gonna do now? So, I ran over, I said, "I am finished with the job. Do you have anything else for me?" He says, "Don't worry about it. You go into the Lage, you go in and look around. If there is anything to do, you do. If its not, you just stay in your room. You don't have to come even to the `Appell'. - Do you know what the `Appell' is?

Q: Roll call.

A: Roll call.

Q: Yeah. So this is a concentration camp?

A: Yeah, sure. And the first day, the Kapo who takes care of these, he didn't know about all those things what I had...what a...with the "Lager Fuhler". So, in the morning I'm not going down to the Appell, to the roll call. He knew me, he comes in. I'm still laying in bed. "What the heck you doing there?" [asks the Kapo] "What's your business what I'm doing there. You don't like it - go and report me to the Lager Fuhler." Just like that.- So, they were counting the people and I was missing. So he says, "So and so and so is missing." So he says to him, "Don't worry about him."

Eh, so anyway, this...all that went through. Then all of a sudden, the Russian is not far away. So they had to liquidate the place. Well, here I am, thinking to stay in the place or go in the transport. I was so close to this guy, to the Lagerführer [that] I went over to the Lagerführer. I asked him should give me the opinion what to do. To stay or go with him. I think you're better off to go with me, because I don't know what's going to happen in the Lager if you stay. So I went with him. Where did we line up? In Flossenbürg..

Q: Not so good.

A: We got to Flossenbürg -

Q: How did you get to Flossenbürg?

A: By train.

Q: By train? Cattle car again?

A: Yeah, cattle car.

Q: Cattle car. And this is when?

A: This was approximately in January.

Q: `45?

A: Yeah `45. -No, no `44. `44.

Q: You sure?

A: Positive. Because 1945 in April, we were liberated.

Q: Right, right. Because in `44, you were in Hungary being deported to Auschwitz.

A: Yeah, but I was in Auschwitz just three days.

Q: Right. But that was in...I think you said that was in April of `44.

A: Pardon me?

Q: Earlier, you said that in April of `44, you were sent from Hungary to Auschwitz.

A: O.k., wait. Alright, alright. You're right. It was uh...it must have been...it must have been in August. July or August. Either one. July or August. - So anyway, we came to Flossenbürg. In Flossenbürg, they put us in Quarantine. You know what Quarantine is?

Q: Yes.

A: And where we were in the Quarantine, it was the...the latrine, the toilet. And on the left side. The first time, when I went to the toilet there, on the right side was a whole mountain with dead people.

Q: So this is your first day there and you see this mountain of dead people.

A: Mountain of dead people.

Q: Could you tell who they were?

A: No. They were our Jewish people.

Q: Jewish people.

A: Of course. So, we were there about...

Q: This Kommando, the one who advised you, he's not with you anymore?

A: He's not with us anymore. Now, we were there about five days - five or six days. And then again, a master comes in and he's asking for "Mortar" [Maurer]. You know what Mortar is? Bricklayers.

Q: Bricklayers.

A: He asked, "Mortars? Mortars?" Once, twice, the third time... [slaps his chest]

Q: That's you. You volunteered.

A: And I was together with a friend of mine a long time. Where I went he went, where I went he went...

Q: Someone from Maramures?

A: No no, no. He is from Lodz.

Q: O.k. And where did you meet him?

A: I met him in the uh...in Doernhau.

Q: In the textile...

A: Yeah. In the textile factory. So, anyway, when I raised my hand - he raised his hand and they took us out. They took us out, they brought us down to a..a basement. They took our clothes away to disin...disinf....

Q: Disinfection.

A: Disinfection (I have a hard time with it.) And we were staying there all night. Cold. Shivering. First we took a bath and in the morning they brought us the clothes back. They tell us to get dressed, to go in Barrack... what was it? Barrack five. And, "point yourself to the Lager Alteste. And we did that. Then, we had breakfast. He says that we had to go down to the `Appellplatz'. That's the uh...where you...

Q: Roll call.

A: Roll call. We coming down there, we don't where to go...and uh...they took us - somebody took us and said, "Go in this place." We went there, they count us up. Took us out of the Lager there and they brought us in a...in a woods. In a wood. Not nearby in a wood. And what was there? There was a stone... a stone mine.

Q: A quarry.

A: Quarry. What we did there? We carried big chunk of stones, they made monuments and things like that there. From the stones. Four guys, we carried one stone. As we do that, the Kapo, who was taking care of watching us, saw that I had some of shawl on my neck. He comes over, he pulls it out and as he pulls it out he sees that I have two jackets. First, he beat me up. Then, he tells me that I have to carry one stone by myself. So...when this happened..

Q: This was another Jewish Kapo?

A: Yeah. So, when this happened, I said to my friend, "If I can't get outta here- then I'll kill myself." So, next morning, next morning when we got up and went the Appellplatz, I heard "Bricklayers. Over here!" I said to my friend, "Let's go!" Standing in the line, the Kapo counts off. He says, "I have two people too many. Who are they? What are you doing here? [directed at speaker]" "The master selected us for brick layers." -

"O.k. [Kapo speaking]." They took us out of there and also into the woods. And what was my work there? There was in the mountains, a hole for the Bunker. What my job was...to lay the wall out with stone, around that it shouldn't cave in. So, uh, he give us two guys who brought stones and mixed the uh...the mortar and everything. What we had to do - take the stone from here and put it on..where it belongs. We had about four stones layed down by twelve o'clock. The master comes in, looks at it, [and says:] " Weitermachen. Sehr Gut! Weitermachen." -That [means] `Very Good."

Q: [it means] " Proceed."

A: Proceed. And when I hear that..! Night comes...we ran back to the Barrack at night and as we march, I see people bringing wood, wood into the Barrack. I asked the guy, "What's that? What's that for?" He says, "We bring wood for the Lager Fuhrer. He gives us soup for it." Ooh, so the next day, we start to do the same thing. We getted it some wood - and you couldn't bring it openly, you had to hide it under...under what ever you had on...on yourself. So, this way, we had a portion of soup everyday. Anyway, `bout...I think it was about March - the Americans were close again. So they took us again out of there, to the train. As we are, as the train starts to go, the American airplanes start to shoot the train. But, they knew who was in the train. They shoot just the machine..

Q: The locomotive.

A: THE locomotive. And we went out to the field.

Q: So they bombed it before it could leave?

A: Yes, but they didn't do too much damage because in an hour later we left.

Q: You got on. Cattle cars again?

A: Cattle cars, yes. And we didn't go too far. Maybe by next day. Next day we were stopped by a station `cause the station was completely bombed. So, from there on, we went by foot.

Q: And where were you? This station, do you remember where?

A: Noo. Somewhere in Germany. So anyway, we marched like I said before to you, it was about...over two thousand people was in that march. And wherever we came into a wood, two hundred fifty people went, they shot to death. So, finally we came into a town...

Q: Did you see this people get shot to death or you just...?

A: No, but uh..

Q: They marched away and then you heard the shots?

A: Oh yeah. Then you never saw them again. So anyway, we came into a town which was a farming town I believe, because it was a big place and was cows and things like that and they put us into that bar again and uh..no food, no nothing. And next morning we start to march without food, no water, no nothing. And, we came to a field - an open field, to rest. And I remember as it would be now..it was still grassy, and it was some flowers. And I ate the flowers - from the grass- the flowers I ate. And, next it came night and we got into a town again. And uh...we had at that time, we had women soldiers too. S.S. women. And where we were staying, I saw a wagon with two wheels, with a Platte [a platform board] on the top. I said to my friend, "You know what? We can get some food. We take that wagon, we tell the women soldiers to put their loop sacks on the wagon, we might get some food from them." He says, "Yeah, ok." So we were standing to the last, we took the wagon. We said to the women soldiers, "Put your bags on it." "Oh no,no,no!" - "Put your bags on it." - So they put their bags on it, but we didn't get nothing from it. But at least, we had a little...we were the last ones in the whole group, -just in case. Finally, we came into a town called Neunburg am Wald [Neunburg vorm Wald]. Neunburg vorm Wald and... [end of first tape].

Q: So you are in Neunburg vorm Wald?

A: Neunburg vorm Wald. Well, German people, from the second story building they throw potatoes and bread. And the German soldiers, don't you think so they shoot up to these people? Not to throw the bread down?

Q: So, German civilians are throwing food to you prisoners marching through? And German soldiers shooting -

A: German soldiers shooting up to the German people not to throw the bread out.

Q: And what kind of soldiers were these? S.S.?

A: S.S. of course. Now...

Q: Did they kill any of these people?

A: No.

Q: So, it was just to drive them away from the window?

A: Yeah. That's right. Now, meantime, in this place, all of a sudden it became so dark that you couldn't see from here to there. And in this place in time, meantime, we went into a..uh.. how do you call it? A.. breeze.., no not a breeze way, you could call it a breeze way. Otherwise, you go into one door and you come out to another door. It's a breeze way, isn't it? As we go into the breeze way to get some potatoes, they give us some potatoes there - as we standing in the line, I said to my friend (his name is Morris, in yiddish - Moishe)...

Q: The one from Lodz?

A: Yeah. I said, "Moishe, look, over here we can "entlaufen", over here we can run away. 'Cause it was so dark you couldn't see from here to there. As soon as I said the word, he wasn't there anymore. He was gone. So, I went after him and otherwise we left the group and we went into a..a..was a place where coops - chicken coops and hay and uh.. in the top. We went in and as I'm going in, it's dark - you can't see. I wanna go up the steps, it was wood, was chopped for firewood.

And somehow or other I touched it and it caved. It made noise like, we got so scared, we ran upstairs into the hay and about ten, fifteen minutes later somebody else comes in and this person who came in couldn't catch his breath. You could hear his heart pumping and we told him that if "you don't stop what you're doing we kill you." So finally, he calmed down - and we were hidden. Next day - night - we went downstairs..

Q: So you had hid all day long?

A: Yeah, all day long. Next night, we went downstairs and we found the kessle where they cooked the.. the potatos for the cows, for the porks. We filled ouselves up with potatos and we went upstairs again. We stayed there; we were there three days. And on the third day - night- day, at night, we heard people talking Polish, talking French and uh..some other languages. We talked to each other, "What the heck is this? Who are these people?" SO my freind says, "I'm going to see what's going on." I said to him, "You crazy!?" As he walks out, and you couldn't see but he said in Polish, `cause someone was talking in Polish, he says, "What's happening." So he says, "You don't know? We've been liberated already two days."

Q: So you found out about the liberation two days later?

A: Right.

Q: Do you remember the day?

A: That was in April. I don't remember the day... but it was in April.

Q: Was it a nice day? Did you see the sun?

A: Yeah, yeah. So anyway, uh..they told us we were liberated and then he says, "You know, the American soldiers - they are staying in this building. Go down and see what they can help you." So, as I'm going - we going downstairs, I didn't have no shoes. I forgot to tell you what it was - As we marching, right, who ever couldn't march - they were shot to death. As I was pulling the two wheeler, the wheel went on my foot and I couldn't walk. And I said, "Moishe, that's it. I am not going anyplace anymore." He says, " You will go!" And ten minutes later, a poor guy couldn't walk anymore and a German soldier went over and shoot him in his head and that was the end of

that. And he was wearing sandals. My friend Moishe run over and took his sandal off and give it to me.

Q: You didn't have a shoe before and now you have a sandal?

A: No, I have shoes but I couldn't wear it because the wagon ran on my foot. So - with the sandal I was safe.

Q: So you had one shoe and one sandal?

A: No, no, I had both shoes - both sandals.

Q: Ok, both sandals. So you put the sandal on?

A: So, uh..as we were marching, like I said before, two hundred and fifty men were shot in every walk. Like I showed you the picture before, in Neunburg vorm Wald, the two hundreded fifty people were shot in Neunburg vorm Wald. Were shot, two hundred and fifty people were shot there. And like I said before, after the war, we reported to the American authority and the American authority put out notice to the German people to assemble there and there and there; and they took them out to the place where two hundred people were shot - to dig them out and to have a real burial in a cemetary. That's what I have that picture of.

Q: Of the two thousand that began the march, how many survived?

A: About five hundred. I don't know after we run away - [before] there were still about five hundred. But what happened after we run away I don't know. So uh..from there on, we were staying on this place where we run away and were liberated. And I knew which window was where they threw to us the bread. So we went upstairs to give thanks tp those German people for the bread. There was a woman with two children - her husband was in the war. She says to us, "Do you have where to stay?" So we say, "no." So she says, "Here, I'll give you a room to stay." So, we went into that room..

Q: You and Moishe?

A: Yeah. We went into that room and uh...she says," would you like to take a bath?" So we said, "Yes." So she says, "Here's the bathtub." And we took a bath. Food, she didn't have. But she give

us something to eat. But then after we took a bath, we were very tired, we layed down. After we got relaxed, we went to the American authority and we said that we are so-and so and so and that we don't have any food. Of course, they give us and we brought it into the place where we lived and we give it to the German woman. We says, "Here's food. And you cook us whatever there is." And later on, was established - because all of a sudden there were at least about fifty of us in that place - in that little town. So, we went to the American authority again to establish the refugee camp. There was a refugge camp so we could get food - as a refugee camp. So, we were there for about, oh I would say after the war - about two months or three, maybe. Then we.. we got up to look for relatives in the concentration camps. Where did we go? We went to Bergen Belsen. Bergen Belsen is on the English side. So we came to Bergen Belsen, I find my cousin there. And he didn't find nobody but he found himself a girl there. And he married this girl, he made a wedding there. - I went outside to organize some food, liquer and things like that and as I'm coming with all these goodies into the camp - there were English soldiers who were watching the camp. As I'm coming in with the goodies, what do you think the English soldiers did? They confiscated everything that I had. Can you imagine that?

Q: No reason?

A: No reason. Confiscated everything what I had: salami, bread, and liquer and everything what I had. Because, for cigarettes and coffee you could get anything you wanted after the war. So now, I don't have again for the wedding - nothing. So, were three of us -no- four of us, but that Moishe was staying with a girl and three of us, we went back again to the city. Again with coffee and with cigarettes and chocolates, we organized again. This time, we didn't go through the main gate. We cut a hole through the fence and that's how we got in. And we made him a wedding, a beautiful wedding. Then, I organized a...`bout thirty people to go home - to Romania. That time it was again Romania. So, as we... I organized everything, we went to the train and we got a wagon and everything and as we go to Czechoslovakia the train stops and, what do you think? It's Russian soldiers. They come to the train, and they want to rape the girls. As I know a few words in Russian, so I don't know, by luck or what - they went away. I had with me Hungarians and Romanians. The Hungarians were from Budapest, I had people from Budapest and I had people from Romania, which we went home.

Q: So you did get home?

A: Yeah. So, here I'm coming home - that's 1946 - I'm coming home and I find my brother - my older brother - and next to my older brother, the other one. I brought with me from Germany some materials - some linen. I sold that for good money. First I made myself the boots that you saw in the picture - good boots, and many other things. And in the morning, I got up, one morning and I

heard that this guy was killed. And the next morning - this guy was killed. The third night - that guy was killed. I said to myself, "uh uh."

Q: What happened? Were the Germans back?

A: No, the Russians. The Russian soldiers.

Q: The Russian soldiers were killing..?

A: Yeah. They robbed and then they killed them.

Q: Who ever they wanted?

A: Yeah. Matter of fact, one day, I walking in the street in the daytime, and there were many invalids - Russian invalids [and] they want to fight me. They wanted to fight me, on the street. Daylight. I said to myself, "uh uh. That's no good for me." I was altogether, I think, about six days. Then I took off. I went to the Hungarian border at night. I paid somebody to take me there. And also, somebody told me - salt - for salt you can get anything you want. So I dragged with me twenty pounds of salt to Hungary. So, as I came in to a town in Hungary, I went into a house and I said, "I would like to trade salt for a ...a, what do you call it?"

Q: For a sausage?

A: No, not sausage. The fat - the fat.

Q: Lard?

A: What ever you call it. He says "ok, how much you want for it?" Did I know? So I just mentioned a number. "Sure", - they give me and they told me that for this in Budapest you can get a lot of money. So, I went to Budapest, I sold that, but now I'm in Budapest. So, in Budapest, they had Aliyah - you know what Aliyah is? Immigration to Israel. I launched myself to that Aliyah - but my heart wasn't to go to Israel.

Q: Where did you want to go?

A: I wanted to go back to Germany.

Q: To Germany?

A: Yeah. From Germany to the United State.

Q: So, you wanted to go to the U.S.?

A: Yeah, because I had two uncles here. So anyway, the Aliyah went to Italy. I went with them to Italy, I was there with them for a couple of days in Italy then they said we going to a camp and from there you going to Israel. But I didn't want to go to Israel. So as we went to the station, I just walked away from the group and I walked into another train which went to Germany and I went to Germany.

Q: And when did you arrive in the U.S.?

A: 1950. I was living on the English soil.

Q: And you eventually became a construction contractor?

A: Yes. Then I came to the United State in 1950, with a year old child, [Dormine] ? p225

Q: With a wife?

A: With my wife, yes. And I was, the Hias kept me for two weeks and finding my friend, took me to a construction job and I was working as a carpenter - supposedly a carpenter - but they used me as a laborer. After a days work, when I came home, I didn't need no food, no nothing - just to lay down. They worked you so terribly that I couldn't stand on my feet. But I didn't give it up, the next day I went back to work. And it went so-on. Then one day -(and I wear heavy boots - working boots), one day, I don't know how - I stepped on a spike. And it went through my shoe and through

my..between..it went through and through my foot. As a greenhorn, I was afraid that I was going to lose my job so I pulled the nail out, I wrapped around with a handkercheif my foot, and I went back to work.

Q: You didn't know about tetanus?

A: Tetanus? How would I know about it?

Q: You had never heard of that word.

A: How would I know anything about anything? I told the guys there and they didn't say nothing. Well, I was lucky - nothing happened. It healed, and nothing happened. Later on, I heard that I could go on compensation.

Q: Also, you could have died. I mean tetanus is...

A: Yeah, I know. But I was lucky that it was a brand new nail.

So, anyway, I worked like that for three years and after the three years I became a contractor. How did I become a contractor? We had a place where every sunday called, "Husbunk [ph 260]

Q: You explained this to me before.

A: Yeah, I just wanted to try and..

Q: Though if we could, I'd prefer that we go back to when you were a kid because you kind of jumped ahead at the beginning of the tape to 1940 and I thought it would be good to get some of your experiences as a kid.

A: Alright. It's very important too. But I didn't ... you said you had to leave at seven o'clock and I didn't want to go in to this. Alright, I'll give you the story from the beginning.

When I was thirteen, like I said, we had very bad times. I had to go to work. I went to work..I worked for one year for..

Q: So you finished school at age 13?

A: Yes. Up to the sixth grade. Uh...I was working as a uh..a grocery uh...clerk. Well, I didn't like it. Then, I...what I did like, I couldn't afford. What I did like - I liked to be a watch maker. And I was..first I was tested by the person who had the watch making place and he liked me. But he said that I had to pay him to teach me. And my parents couldn't afford it, so that was that. Then, I became a glazier. A glazier and picture framer. And also by us, a glazier place and a picture framing place is not just that. We had all kinds of glass, porcelains and all kind of figures. So, uh..

Q: So, how old were you when you became a glazier?

A: I was 15, when I became a glazier. I was a glazier `til they uh...`til they took me to uh..

Q: The Hungarians.

A: The Hungarians. And from there on, you have the story.

Q: Yeah. And you didn't have any bad experiences with the Romanians?

A: No. Not in school, not in ..

Q: And if you had had the oppurtunity, you would have been happy being a glazier in Maramures for the rest of your life.

A: Ofcourse. Of course. I didn't know any better.

Q: School, did you like school? Did you have...

A: No, no, I wasn't so crazy about school. No, not to crazy about school.

Q: Being of Hungarian origin in the Romanian school, did you have any problems with the teachers?

A: No, no. Because the teachers themselves were Hungarian, they were Hungarians but they taught in Romanian schools.

Q: So teachers were Hungarians. So you were free to be a Hungarian and you were free to be a Jew?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: In the 1920's and 1930's.

A: Yes.

Q: And there was no fear of anti-semitism or of the Nazis?

A: Not as far as I know.

Q: Hitler didn't make an impression on you in 1933, 1935?

A: By that time, we had already [anti-semitism] here and there. By that time, we did have already. But `til that point, Germany...

Q: So your brother's were happy there too? There was no thought of leaving, leaving Romania to go...

A: No, no! My older brother, he wasn't home altogether. He was in Bessarabia always, but when it happened that the Hungarians took over again, he came home. That was his biggest mistake that he made.

Q: When the Hungarians first came in, how did your father feel. Did he expect..

A: Oh, he was happy. He thought, now I am really going to be lively. But what had happened, it backfired on him.

Q: So the Hungarians were welcomed and yet almost immediately things went down hill.

A: Yeah, that's right.

Q: If you had to look back and think of the worst possible moment - the worst possible experience that you can remember from these years, through the war - what would it be?

A: Uh.. my worst possible - the first thing that it was, was when Cuza came to power. That was my first, worst thing at home that I had. That was a terrible thing. `Cause, for when a person lives normally, a normal life and without fears - and all of a sudden, during the night, something like this to happen, you give the peasants the right to kill or to rob or to beat up.

Q: So that was your first occasion to begin fear. Before that, you had not known fear or danger?

A: No, no fear. I was friendly with all the gentiles and my parents the same way, because we lived always between gentiles.

Q: And then with Cuza out of power almost immediately, what was the feeling?

A: It came back normal.

Q: Normal. Relief, you were safe?

A: Until the Hungarians came in again.

Q: So, not until the Hungarians actually came in, you didn't begin to worry? You didn't worry about the Germans?

A: We didn't know nothing about the Germans `til after the Hungarians came in. But the only thing.. where..where it started, when the Hungarians came in.. they, uh, uh..dislocated all the Polish Jews from our neighborhood. And that's when it started. That's the time when it started. Yes.

Q: Do you have any things that you forgot to say? We are almost done with the tape but I think we covered quite a few experiences.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, thank you.

A: You're quite welcome.

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