Interview with Leon Merrick
April, 1992
Rockville, Maryland

A: My name is Leon Merrick. I was born in Zgierz, Poland. Spelled Z-g-i-e-r-z. It's near Lodz, about four miles from Lodz. I was born January 8, 1926. I had my mother and father who were living in the same city as Zgierz. I had a younger brother, his name was Motl. He was three younger. I was attending school in Zgierz when the war broke out September 1, 1939. I think I was 13 years old.

Q: Can I ask -- let me stop you for just a second and ask you a little bit about your early life; before the war? And about -- can you tell me some things about the town? Was it a large town?

A: Okay. Zgierz was a town, excuse me a minute you're going to edit it later, right? Is that what it is?

Q: No, we won't edit it. It'll be just like this.

A: All right. The town was, Zgierz, I think it was about, 129,000 people, was about 5,000 Jews. Was mostly textile, the people were engaged in textile.

Q: Was that area of Poland a big textile area?

A: Yes, because Lodz was the biggest textile area in Poland. Zgierz was only about eleven kilometers away. This is roughly about five, six miles.

Q: When did you start going to school?

A: I think I started school in 1932.

Q: So you would have been, how old? Seven or eight years old?

A: I think seven years old. This is when primary school started.

Q: Was it a public or a private school?

A: It was a public school.

Q: Did you also go to like a Hebrew school or a Jewish school?

A: Yes, I was going to a Jewish school in the afternoons because the public school was up to, let's say about one, two o'clock. After this about once a week, or twice a week we had to go to Hebrew and learn about Hebrew. We also had one hour of religious school in the public school.

Q: Oh, so you had one hour of religious training in the public school?

A: In public school, right.

Q: What exactly, do you remember the things that you studied in the Jewish school??

A: Basic religion, you know, it was a basic course, about the holiday and things like that.

Q: Was it very far from the public school or---?

A: No, it was in the same class.

Q: Oh, it was in the same class?

A: It was in the same school. We just had I think, all Jewish pupils, boys and girls. But we had a sprinkling of gentiles, they excused themselves. So the same thing, it was a Catholic class. The Catholics had one hour of public school too. So they excused the Jewish kids.

Q: Do you remember any instances of anti-Semitism when you were growing up?

A: Well, like I just mentioned, most of the teachers were Jewish. A few of them were Poles. The head of the school, he was a Pole. As a matter of fact, he had the same last name like I have and he was a Pole. I just remember one Catholic boy was going to our school, to our class because he was persecuted in the old gentile school because his father was a communist and things like this. So he couldn't attend school over there, he came to our school.

Q: Do you remember like any instances of kids getting beat up because they were Jewish?

A: Sure, all the time. As a matter of fact, it happened to me too. On my street, there were not many Jews living so when I came home from school or from any other place, I saw a couple of roughnecks in the street, I know they going to be after me, I was waiting for a grown up person who was going to pass by my house or maybe to the same apartment building so I can go with him. I would be protected, more or less.

Q: This happened often or---?

A: Yes, quite often.

Q: Do you remember which street you lived on, the name of the street when you were young?

A: Yes. It's a long name, I could spell it. The name of the street is named after a city nearby because it led like--Rockville Pike to Rockville. The name of the city was Konstatynowska, K-o-n-s-t-a-t-y-n-o-w-s-k-a, no. 15. I t was a wooden frame house. There were four families living in the same house. We were living like on the courtyard. The European houses have courtyards., I mean apartment buildings have courtyards.

Q: Tell me, what did your father do for a living?

A: My father worked, he was---he worked in a factory. Like I mentioned, there was a textile center. He was--sometimes he was going on a truck. They had a truck and they also had horses and carts. They were going to the nearby city of Lodz and they were picking out raw materials from the factories that came out from the machines. He worked in a finishing factory. They brought it back to the factory and they dyed the material and they took out all this floss and they prepared it for the stores -- to be ready to go to the stores and to work. Here you go in, you buy

a ready-made suit. But in Europe ,especially 50 years ago, you went to a store first and you bought the material. Then you had to look for a tailor. So when they finished the material, the material went to the stores. The people went in and said I need material for a suit. Man rolled it open, says, how much do you need? He brought the measurements to the tailor. The tailor told him how much he's going to need. He took the scissors, he cut it off, he took it to the tailor and he made the suit.

Q: That's what your father did, getting the finishing of the textiles?

A: Yes. He bought the material. He didn't finish it by himself. He just collected all the materials from the nearby city.

Q: Did he have a buyer or something?

A: No, it wasn't a buyer because he wasn't buying it. He was collecting it for the factory like you buy a salesman. He brings in the material to be finished up.

Q: Your mother, she was a housewife?

A: My mother was a housewife. In the younger years, she worked but like we were getting older, we were growing up, she took additional work. She was working with wool in a factory too, spinning wool for the material. It was a textile center, everybody was working in the factory.

Q: Were there any -- like Jewish or any youth organizations?

A: Yes, many.

Q: Were you involved in any of them?

A: Yeah, I was still young. At that age, I really didn't know exactly what organizations means. I was 13 years old when the war broke out but I belonged to a couple of organizations, just to get together to meet people.

Q: What did you do in these organizations?

A: We sing Hebrew songs, talking about Palestine at that time. Everybody was dreaming of going to Palestine one day because Jews were always at the mercy of the Poles. They always felt like second -class citizens. In this country we refer like 'we'. In Poland you refer 'they'. You felt like an outsider, like you were not part of the process and things like that. So it's different. They had a quota, they had a quota in school, they had a quota in the military. A Jew couldn't be a high official in the government. Maybe from the Jewish district, he was elected, a representative, but that's about--he couldn't be a high official, appointed. He couldn't--they didn't take any Jews.

Q: Why don't you tell me a little bit about when the war broke out?

A: Okay, I remember exactly when the war broke out, September 1, 1939. I remember it was a Friday. I think my mother went to the market. Friday was market day, especially with the Jewish people. They went to buy the stuff for the Sabbath. There wasn't like a grocery store.

You went to open market and you came back in the morning. It was eight, nine o'clock; the weather was crisp; everybody was talking about the war. I looked up the sky and I saw these planes with the top that time because the war hysteria was going already a week or two weeks before mobilization, talk about the Germans and things like this. On Friday, nothing happened to our city. The planes flew over in the morning. They were just like birds up in the sky, the sun was shining. Saturday, the planes came back again and the Poles were shooting up. You could see the tracer bullets, you don't know if you hit them or not. The planes flew right over, flew higher, nothing reached them. But Sunday, they flew very low. They came very low over the city and you could even see the pilot inside, very, very low. The city was in a panic. Everybody was going towards Warsaw. The Poles appealed to the populations, to able- bodied men, to go toward Warsaw. We're going make a defense line over there, a stand. My father left too. I remember we marched all night, 54 left Zgierz, we left for the city. We went to a nearby village. I don't remember how many miles, maybe ten miles, 15 was a village. Everybody was just like -- refugees. We took a few possessions, a little bit of bread. At night, we got very scared because the Poles opened all the prisons and they let out all the inmates. I don't know if they were political inmates or criminal inmates but you see a lot of people, they look like hoodlums with shaved heads. That night, my father left. He went toward Warsaw.

Q: So all of you left together to go to the next town?

A: To the next village. We went there overnight. But the next morning, my father left -- he was just -- toward Warsaw -- I don't know. Because the Poles --. At that time, everything was disorganized already. It didn't take long for the Poles to get disorganized already. It didn't take long for the Poles to get disorganized. They didn't send you a summons, you have to report. They just broadcast, by word of mouth that all able bodied men who had served in the Polish army at one time or another had to report towards Warsaw. They named the city Lovitz or something, we're going to make there a defense. Me and my brother and my mother were left alone. We figured well, we cannot defend ourselves. We have no clothes, nothing; we just left in a hurry. We went back towards Zgierz, our city. On the way, we encountered the Polish army coming back, disorganized, disheveled with horses with wagons, some on foot. I didn't see any mechanized unit, none whatsoever. We came back to our home and the neighbors said they were glad to see us back, even though they were Poles. They gave us milk and bread and things like that. I wasn't there maybe one hour or two, I heard shooting. My neighbor who was a man, he didn't run away because he owned a farm nearby. He said the Germans are coming. He probably got wind of it before. We were into like a shelter. I don't know if it was a shelter or maybe an empty cellar, I don't know. We were there for a few hours, we heard shooting, then we came out and the Germans were here. The next morning, we went outside and we saw strange uniforms, not like the Polish army. We saw a lot of looting, knocking off the stores, everything was in disarray. We see whole columns of Germans going towards Warsaw. They were passing our town because Warsaw was north of where we were living

Q: Were there any --? Let's see, you said that this would have happened the first time you saw the Germans, like Tuesday or Wednesday?

A: I don't have any perception of time but it was January the 8th, I mean September the 1st, the war broke out. I think this was about January 6th. Now I'm reading the stories where the Germans came into Lodz and I see January 6. Being we were just about four kilometers four or five away from Lodz, this was about six days or so. It didn't take long to come up north.

Q: Were there any -- when the Germans came did they --? You said, you talked about the looting, the looting of the stores and things like that? Did they also loot houses?

A: I don't remember. I don't see any houses, mostly I see, I'm saying about Germans looting houses. The populations looting houses.

Q: The Poles also?

A: I have to correct myself. The Poles were looting houses.

Q: So the Germans weren't doing it?

A: I didn't see any Germans looting houses. They were looting houses and stores, we're talking about.

Q: Did the Germans impose any restrictions on Jews?

A: Well, okay, I'm going to get to this right now. I'm at this part.

Q: I'm sorry, okay.

A: So after a day or so, after occupation, my father came back. He didn't go to Warsaw, he didn't go to Warsaw.

Q: He never made it up there?

A: He never made it up there. He decided to come back. He decided to come back so after a couple of days he was home, he decided to go back to the factory where he was. He went back to the factory. The factory was not in operation. They put a German commissar in the factory because it was a Jewish enterprise, was owned by Jews but only Poles were working except my father and my grandfather. They were the only two people working in the factory. He was there maybe for a week or so.

Q: They were allowed to work as they were before?

A: No, well, the factory wasn't in production, don't forget. They were just sorting things out. Nobody came to work. They were just straightening materials out and things like this. No payroll, nothing. He just wanted to hold on to it because there was nothing else to do. He went back to the factory. I don't think he even got paid for it. They had a German commissar and the German commissar moved; he was a local German, he moved into the quarters where the former people who worked in the office used to live. They kicked them out. After a week or so, they dismissed him because he was a Jew. He wasn't allowed to work. Then one day, I don't have a perception of time, maybe it was three weeks or four weeks, according to the book that I read now, it didn't take long, maybe mostly five, six weeks, they said all the Jews have to report to the market square.

Q: This is the same market where your mom used to shop?

A: Yeah. So we all reported to the market square and we were all Jews. I remember we debating

to take my younger brother with us or not. I don't think we took him, we left him with our neighbors, they were Poles. We went to the market square and maybe we stood there for three, four hours. Anyway, somebody came out and made an announcement, talking about the Germans if I say somebody. They gave us three days to leave the city. A lot of people were living up north towards Warsaw, a lot of people -- we left for Lodz to live, for L-o-d-z because my mother had a sister that was there.

Q: So it was just you and your mother and your father?

A: And my brother.

Q: Your brother was coming too?

A: Yeah, we left him with the Poles when we went to the market square but then they let us go. They gave us three days to leave the city. So we assembled everything and we left to Lodz. At that time, we know already they're going to have a ghetto in Lodz. This was in September. It wasn't before. The Germans came in in September and maybe we left in October, November, I don't remember. Wasn't even snow on the ground yet because we rented a horse and buggy. It was only about 10, 11 kilometers away. We piled up our few possessions, we took our furniture, we took it into our neighbors, to the gentiles because we figure if the war is going to be over -- everybody was talking about England and France going to join the war, the war's not going to last long.

Q: Is that the perception that most people had?

A: That's right. Maybe three, four weeks, five weeks the most. The British, the war's going to be over. We can go back and claim our furniture and our possessions. We took it in for safekeeping. We knew there's going to be a ghetto. We moved in with my aunt, with a few possessions. We were there maybe a week or two weeks but my father was working with somebody -- he was in the office. When I mentioned it that there were two Jews working in the factory, I was talking about two Jews like working people. But in the office, there were a few more Jewish people working over there. One of the Jews, he was really from Lodz, he worked at Zgierz and he was commuting because he came with the tramway every morning. We find out that he has a lot of-- he knew a lot of people, he's got a lot of pull. My father went to him and asked him if he can help us out; we need some quarters where to live. He sure did. We got that room because apartments were very scarce. They put in the Jews from the city of Lodz itself, from all the environs. They put them in a small section and it was the worst section, the most dilapidated section in the city. They assigned us a Jewish quarter. We had one room, just one room. It served as a kitchen and everything, just one room for four people. Then -- that was in -- yeah, also for the refugees who came from the environs, they opened public kitchens. This was all in the fall of 1939. I even remember the next Passover which was the next spring like April now, was still the public kitchens, we eat in the public kitchens because we were refugees. Then they close the ghetto. May 1st they close the Lodz ghetto.

Q: In 1940?

A: In 1940.

Q: Let me ask you, can we go back a little bit? When you left for Lodz, I know that in the middle

of September, the Soviets and the Germans split Poland. You were on the German side?

A: I was on the German side.

Q: Was there any -- did you know people who tried to run to the Russian side?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Did your parents ever think about trying to do that?

A: My parents were thinking like that. My father had a younger brother. He was a shoemaker by trade and he was much younger. He was unmarried and he went to the Russian side. We also heard tales that people came back from the Russian side. My wife, she was living on the Russian side. We heard that people have no place to live and they slept in synagogues and there were hungers going around. A lot got caught by the Germans. A lot of people did come back but I guess my parents didn't have the guts, we didn't have the nerve and we didn't have the money. You had to bribe a lot, it cost money for transportation to go even there too. We didn't go but my uncle did go.

Q: Because he was unattached?

A: He was unattached, he was single. We never heard from him, we never heard from again. I never know what happened, if he vanished, if he survived the war or not. Now, being as you brought my memory back, my father had a younger brother. Also he had another brother, he went towards Warsaw. When they said all able-bodied men had to come and he got killed near Warsaw. He did join a unit in the fighting and we never heard from him again. Somebody seen him and he says he got killed. His widow was living in the ghetto.

Q: What was his name, do you remember?

A: I think Schomik, Schomolos, something like that.

Q: Your father's younger brother?

A: Yeah, but he was married.

Q: Let me ask you, you talked about the ghetto and you said that it was closed in May 1, 1940?

A: May 1, 1940.

Q: You said it was in a dilapidated area of the city. Can you tell me, describe it a little bit, how big it was? Was it surrounded by a wall?

A: Okay. They closed the ghetto. My father got a job because we had to live. I mean nobody gave anything for nothing. Like I mentioned, this guy, he worked before, he helped us with the apartment, he also became head of one of the hospitals. They had three hospitals -- first of all when they closed the ghetto, they had 160,000 Jews. That's a lot of people. The ghetto was composed of two sections. In other words, through the main street, the tramway was going. The tramway was going through the ghetto and they had a bridge. The Jews had to cross the

bridge.

Q: Yes, I've seen a picture of the ghetto.

A: If I want to go from one side of the ghetto to the other side, I couldn't go directly, I couldn't cross the road. They also had a few gates where the horse and buggy traffic went through. Pedestrians could go through too. The Germans guards there and they open the gate like five minutes or so. Let's say 25 people assembled, 50 people and there were no more traffic coming to the main street because there was barbed wire on both sides; they let the people through. I'm going to give you, I have the book and a picture. I'm going to give you a clear picture of what this thing looked like. I had to go on the other side. My father got a job in the hospital.

Q: Which was on the other side?

A: It was on one side, it was on the main side. My aunt was living on the other side. Some of us was commuting, I had friends. At that time in 1940, it wasn't so bad. They still got-- you still couldn't go out. They were sentries posted shoot to kill; there was barbed wire around day and night and nobody could get in. One section of the ghetto, the cemetery was adjoining it. There was a lot of black market going on and you still could buy food but then times were getting bad. Then the Germans requested people for a settlement; it was getting crowded. They brought more people in from the surrounding vicinities from smaller towns. They were liquidating the ghetto and then they were coming into the Lodz ghetto. As soon as the ghetto got crowded, now I'm reading the books, I know how it was. At that time they were opening the camp in Kaldum, Humhof, the extermination camp. They had to feed the camp, the factories. Ostensibly, they were taking -- they were taking some people out for work too, on road crews, healthy men. But they were also taking out people who were sick. They sent to different camps.

Q: You were talking about passing from one part of the ghetto to the other. Did you need a pass to do that or just ---?

A: No, no. They had a bridge, we didn't need a -- we just claimed a bridge. I didn't go outside the ghetto, we just crossed the bridge. If I didn't want to cross to the bridge, I could wait near the gate. Like I mentioned, when no traffic, after 25, 30 people assembled and people assembled other side; there are two guards. The German guards now, they open the gates and you were let through, pedestrian traffic basically. But I think they only had about two or three bridges for crossing, I'm going to show you the picture later on. I gave a map of the ghetto too.

Q: You do?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it – can you tell me like approximately what size the ghetto was? Like maybe four or five square blocks or something like that?

A: No, it was more that that, more than that.

Q: More than that?

A: It was -- if you want to stop this, I can go get the book, maybe they have a scale there. Could you stop there for a minute, I'll be right back. Was in Lynoska N-l-y and Dolna, D-o-l-n-a. This is the relationship, this is the city of Lodz. See here. This is how the ghetto was in relationship to the city. Here was the Jewish cemetery, see it? Now, here is the tramway was going up. It says Zgierz, it was named. This is the Zgierz where I was born. Here was barbed wire, just a tramway which is coming through. Here is a picture -- I'm going to show you a picture what the bridge looked like. Here it is, it's a wooden bridge. Here the tram is coming, we went on the bridge to one side to the other.

Q: That's just so that the Jews, according to the Germans, wouldn't associate with the Aryan groups? Is that what it was?

A: That's right, right, right. This was a wooden bridge. They had three bridges like that in different sections. They had the tramway where we went by. When the tramway came through, the windows were closed. They know with the doors and the windows were locked. I mean the Germans locked them in. It didn't take long to go through the ghetto, maybe in one or two minutes. It was very small, they just whizzed by. Now I'm going to show you the Gypsy camp too. I have a book. I remember this. I remember this guy, a German. A Gypsy camp red, maybe the_____no, it was very -- dying like fish and Rita says English were dying. Was very few – Take a look, this is excrement they were carrying. Fifty years ago in Poland the worst section of town. They had no toilets or flushing water or things like that.

Q: All Jews were made to wear the yellow star too

A: Right, right. Here was the eldest of the Jews, this guy. Well, you read the books, the Jews were – 160,000 Jews and some of them got_____ and then they brought in some Jews from Germany, from Austria, from Luxembourg. That's what the guy looks like. He was visiting the Warsaw ghetto. I guess they went from one place to another. Here's what they do with the settlements. Are you familiar with all this pictures, aren't you?

Q: I've seen some of them, yes. These are the gates of the ghetto here?

A: That's right. That's the gate, that's the gate. Assembled here and then they let you through. In some places, they had a bridge. When they had a bridge, there's no gate. There were not many. Here the sign says that Jews' living quarters, no entry, thing like that.

Q: Was it relatively -- did people go out of the ghetto illegally sometimes?

A: Yes, they did.

Q: People trying to get food and things like that?

A: Yeah, people got killed too there, shot too. Yeah, I remember, sure they got -- but not many. The Lodz ghetto wasn't like the Warsaw ghetto. It was not smuggling going on. Warsaw was a bigger city and a lot of Jews, not a lot, some Jews were living on the Aryan side but not in the Lodz ghetto because the population was so small. There's no way you're going to run. There was nobody on the other side waiting for you, to receive you or to guide you or to take you some place and hide you. You couldn't go no place.

Q: I've interviewed other people who said that they were more frightened of the Poles than they were of the Germans because they said --.

A: Yeah, the Poles because you have no chance.

Q: They said that the Germans only knew from propaganda who was a Jew. Whereas the Poles had lived with them and knew exactly who they were. So they were more frightened.

A: Even the bread lines before they closed the ghetto. Like if you find out like a Polish baker bread, we went in line, the Poles spotted a Jew, they pointed out to the Germans and throw him out. They said yes, there'll going to one Jew less in the line, they're going to get an extra loaf of bread. This is why all the concentration camps -- I should correct myself -- the extermination camps were in Polish and the Slavic soil like in the Ukraine, in Russia and Poland. Because the local population was hostile and they couldn't do it. They couldn't do this in France and Belgium or Holland because enough of the population would help us, or at least there would be an outcry about it and things like that

Q: Let's see. They closed the ghetto in May of '40.

A: Nineteen forty, right. May the 1st.

Q: What was your father doing? You said he was working?

A: He was working in the hospital.

Q: He worked in the hospital?

A: He worked in the hospital.

Q: Did you work or were you not working?

A: Yeah, I was working too.

Q: What did you do?

A: Well, I tell you, it's like that. Everybody had to work. I was young like I said when the war broke out, I was thirteen. When I went into the ghetto, I was fourteen, maybe fourteen and a half. What can a young boy like me do? There was no schooling ,nothing. But I noticed that they had a lot in the ghetto. Like I said, the ghetto was self- administered. They had more or less autonomy. From the beginning, the Germans didn't mix in, they just outside. They figured why should a German mix in if the Jews themselves can do the job for them? I seen a lot of boys. They were like mailmen. They were -- not mailmen -- like they were carrying mail from one department to another.

Q: Like couriers or something?

A: Yeah, they were highly organized in the ghetto. They had the statistical offices and they had marriage bureaus. They had archives, they had three, four hospitals, they had orphanages.

Now, I'm talking from the beginning, I'm talking about 1940. I told my father if he can find out if I can get a job like this. He knew somebody and we wrote a letter like a petition. He gave it to somebody and then I got a response. I got a response for an interview. I came to the office and there was a young girl over there and she asked me if I have the strong feet. I says yes so I got the job. The job was good. I don't remember if I got paid or not but I remember that I got two soups a day. At that time, you only worked for the food, you didn't work for pay. I might have got some money too, I don't remember.

Q: So you were one of the se couriers?

A: Yeah, I was one of the couriers. I was attached to the post office, the main office. From the beginning, then I mentioned, from the beginning before the hostilities between Germany and Russia, I'm talking 1940, a lot of Jews in the ghetto were still receiving packages from relatives from the Russian side. At that time, everything was nice and dandy. We had a post office, we had packages, everything was functioning normally, like this. The Germans, at that time, in 1940, beginning of '41, they didn't quite decide to exterminate the Jews yet. They put them in ghettos, they concentrate them in centers but I think the Wannsee started a little bit later on, in 1942. So that time we still received packages and mail and Jews came from Prague, from Germany. They had relatives; there were mixed marriages and mixed partners maybe who didn't come to the ghetto and they sent packages. It was like a post office, everything was functioning normally, it wasn't quite bad. You still could get a lot of stuff on the black market, like food and things like that.

Q: Were people, at this point early on, were they apprehensive, were they scared that --? Obviously the people who left the ghetto or were probably shot, they were frightened by that, did people realize what it was pointing toward? That maybe they might be exterminated? You know what I mean?

A: Well, I tell you, I'm going to give this now. I don't remember exactly when but it was quite early, maybe 1942, we heard a rumor that the Lodz ghetto was sealed. Some newspapers were getting through. You could hear some undergrounds, maybe German newspapers, some were getting through. Because don't forget maybe they throwing through the gate, houses adjoining, just like the wall in Berlin. One side was west, one side was east. Somehow news filtered through. Don't ask me why, I was young, I was fourteen, fifteen years old but I heard early on, maybe 1942, there's such a thing that the Germans said they're going in the shower and instead of water, gas comes in. We heard that but nobody believed but we heard it down.

Q: Is there anything else that you remember that was striking about the ghetto?

A: From the beginning when somebody died, they had a regular hearse. They didn't have a motor hearse like here but they had horses but then the situation got bad. People were dying from hunger and there were too many of them; they just had flatbeds with horses. There were too many, they just piled them up. Like I said, I was like a courier, I was in touch with the post office and everything comes in the mail. Especially they have people, the people, you suffered more than the local, the people who got settled into ghetto like from Germany, from Prague, from Vienna. The Jews from the west, they didn't come from a ghetto, they came straight from their homes. They took just a few belongings, they came to the ghetto, they put them into a hostile environment. They had nothing in common with the eastern Jews, with the locals and was wintertime. There was no heating, no fuels, when you came to the houses, you knock on

the door, like you had something, a summons for them to report for a settlement or something, you had to go they were all laying in the beds -- were hunger -- they were dying with hunger, very bad. Then we heard about the Gypsies, they were building a Gypsy camp, I remember very well.

Q: About what time was that when the Gypsies came, do you remember?

A: I don't remember the exact date but maybe it was in the book here. But I have no perception of time, don't forget, it's been fifty years. But I remember exactly where the place was and they didn't last long. I could see, in other words, they get_____. The ghetto wasn't getting much food from the Germans outside. But the Gypsies were getting the food from the ghetto. Can you imagine how the situation was? There was the Germans -- the German criminal police was in the ghetto. They had a building in the ghetto. They dealt mostly with the Jews were informed by other Jews where was hidden wealth and things like that. Sometimes it was true and sometimes it was untrue. They saw them then, they thought maybe -- valuables outside the ghetto, they had to show them where it was, maybe in the ghetto. They killed them, they tortured them, they couldn't get anything out of them because the man didn't have it.

Q: What was your mother and your younger brother doing?

A: Well, my mother, like later on everybody had to work so she was working in a kitchen, a communal kitchen, peeling potatoes and things like this. My younger brother, he was three years younger that I was so if I was fourteen, fifteen, he was only twelve and a half, thirteen. I think he worked in a metal factory. I don't know exactly what he was doing but everybody had to be employed.

Q: They were employed mostly like you said, it was easier to get food that way?

A: Yes, because you get food on your job, that's it. Because the rations were not enough. Like I had two soups a day and maybe he got a soup a day. Everybody got a meager ration, had a ration card but everybody got a bowl of soup by the place of work.

Q: You talked about ration cards. To what did the ration cards entitle you to?

A: Very, very little.

Q: A piece of bread or something?

A: A piece of bread, maybe two kilograms of potatoes. That sometimes have to last you for a week and sometimes have to. Sometimes they have to last you for three, four weeks. You could see that the food came in the main gate. They had like an enclave. They had Germans working, Jews working,_____ and all the food came into this enclave, they processed it through. They came in with horses and buggies with Polish drivers. Then the Jewish drivers took over. They took it into the ghetto. They unload the material and they brought the wagon with the horses back. While they were going from the enclave out to the distribution corners to take it, they had, they were guarded with Jewish police. They just had armbands, they didn't have any guns. They were standing on the planks or going behind the wagon if a potato fell off, they picked it up and put it back in the wagon and things like that. Potatoes came in and flour came in and beets came and flour came. Don't forget, after all they had 160,000 Jews. The

Jews baked their own bread but to work in the bakery was a privilege. You had to know somebody, because you were allowed to eat in the baker, your bellyful, all you can eat. If you work in the kitchen, you could eat all you want. It was a privilege to work in the kitchen or to work in a bakery.

Q: So people were better off?

A: Were better off because you had your regular rations plus you ate on the job.

Q: You said something earlier about the underground, getting information about these possible things from the underground. Was there pretty extensive underground?

A: I don't know underground but I know from the beginning, in 1940, I mean the ghetto was really closed but people had connections. Maybe they came through tunnels or maybe they came through the wires underneath or maybe Jews, they took out Jews for work from the ghetto every day from the beginning. They were demolishing houses around the ghetto because the Germans want to build a no-man's-land around the ghetto. This was near the Jewish quarter and they figure maybe the Jews have a lot of valuables hidden there. They just knocking down whole blocks of houses. Maybe outside, maybe they came in contact with Poles or something like that. Maybe some news filtered through. I remembered you went to a barbershop or something, the latest gossip was exchanged there. Somehow the news filtered through.

Q: How long were you in the ghetto?

A: I was in the ghetto since they closed it off. I left the ghetto in March 10, 1944.

Q: You were there from 1940 or you were there from 1939?

A: The ghetto wasn't a ghetto then. There was this section but the ghetto was closed in 1940. I left the ghetto in 1944 and my parents were still there. From the beginning I didn't want to go but they said the Germans need people to work for the settlements. I was hiding and then they threatened they going to take the ration cards away from my parents --.

Q: If you didn't go?

A: If I didn't go so eventually I had to report. We had to report --.

Q: Had there been deportations before?

A: Oh, yes, constantly.

Q: Regularly?

A: Back in 1942, the Germans put a curfew for one week, nobody could go out or in. The Germans are, they didn't left it up to the Jews then. The Germans themselves, they went to --.

(End of Side A, Tape 1)

They took them to a central place ,a center point. From there they came in to trucks and now we know what happens. They took them to the train station, put them on trucks and the Kelna, the extermination was only 35 kilometers away. They took them right n and the trucks came

back right away with curfew. One day, like I said my father worked in the hospital; the Germans came, they surrounded the hospital, took all the patients out.

Q: Okay so you said that your father worked in a hospital and they came and took some of the patients, or all of them?

A: All of them, all of them. They surrounded the hospital. I t was early in the morning, maybe four o'clock in the morning, they took all the patients out. Then they emptied, on the same day, they emptied all the hospitals, three hospitals. There was a hospital for the insane, they emptied that. They emptied orphanages and took all the kids out. I forgot to mention as my memory comes back, my mother worked in the building, she worked in the orphanage. After this, once they emptied the orphanage, she had no -- then she start working in the kitchen, got a job in the kitchen, public kitchen.

Q: So they took these people away?

A: Yeah, but nobody knew exactly where they took them. Then where the hospital was, the Germans made like a factory, a tailor shop or something.

Q: Did they take them away in trains? Is that how they deported them, they just marched them out --?

A: No, they came by with trucks. At that time – now reading the books, we know that that was the Einsatzgruppen, the mobile killing units. At that time, they calling the road commander, they were on wheels on big trucks, the road commanders, they come out and they took them by trucks. When I mentioned it, the Germans put a curfew for a week, they took in, from block to block, they took in with the wagons. They took them to an assembly point and then the Germans came and took them with trucks or they marched to the train station. Also I want to mention that near the cemetery is a section called Marishna near the ghetto, there was a sidetrack, a railroad track. They took them all to the settlements, went to this station.

Q: By the cemetery?

A: By the cemetery, was a big station nearby. The trains were there and they took them on the flatcars. That's where I left, from that station too.

Q: You said that these things happened often? That there were deportations all the time?

A: Constantly, constantly. Because they were bringing in new people, they were taking out and bringing in new people. Otherwise the ghetto would be a quarter of a million people. This way they always emptied it, always empty it. From the beginning, it was up to the local administration who should go. Because the Germans really didn't care. They said we need 7,000 people for the settlement, we need 900,000, 50 hundred people so if some people came from Germany,, from Austria and they were strangers; they were not even resettled yet, they were just living in a building, they just took them. They just need people, they just needed numbers.

Q: So they weren't concerned_____.

A: Weren't concerned, right.

Q: Did you ever hear of anybody who escaped or got away from some of these transports and came back and told what was going on or --?

A: Well, I tell you. I didn't know any person that did escape but like I mentioned before, we knew in 1942, early on, that the people -- they take out a few from the ghetto and they tell you like you're going to a shower and they give you soap and a towel. Instead of water, gas comes out. Somebody must have escaped, don't forget I was very young then and your mind didn't believe. I was fourteen, fifteen years old but I don't know who said it, but the news filtered through.

Q: When you were deported, you had to leave your family?

A: My family was there.

Q: It was just you that was deported?

A: Okay. The Jews --.

Q: I'm sorry. I know what I was going to ask. When people were deported, when people were taken out of the ghetto, were they told where they were going or were they just told that they were going to be resettled in the east?

A: They told them they would settle in the east. The ghetto, like I said, was quite a large area and they had like a central prison, the Jews. The people had assembled there, like I said, but some people, they really went for work outside the ghetto. Because they had to go to a commission; they had German doctors and they really needed them to work. But if they took everybody, whole families, you know they didn't take these people to work. They just said you have to be resettled in the east. Like I said, I was hiding; then one day after maybe a week's time or so, I had to report. So I was there for three, four days in the central prison. I remember my father came the last days towards the barbed wire. I remember the picture just like vividly. I remember what he looked like. In Europe he was wearing boots and I remember his face like --. So we march, the next morning we march to the train station, we marched, all young people, no adult with us. Youngsters, I was there maybe sixteen, seventeen already. They put us in an open cart, put us in one of the good wagons, cattle cars and they closed up. We were riding for two, three hours. All of a sudden, they open the door. There was a truck waiting there and the Germans waiting there. I don't remember how many people, maybe 50 people from our wagon, whatever it was. Maybe 50, maybe 60, I didn't count them; they took us to a labor camp. It was in Kielce. It was in southern Poland. It's spelled K-i-e-l-c-e. I don't know if you heard of it before. They took us over there and we asked how -- I seen them loading up our clothes, our baggage. We had on the truck and then -- they had already a labor camp. That camp still had Jews already from the surrounding vicinities. The camp was adjoining a factory. The factory was called Hasac. It was a Polish munitions factory before the war or maybe it was just a metal factory, I don't know. The Germans converted this to a munitions factory. Over there, in comparison to the ghetto, was good because I had plenty food, as much as I want. The only this, you came in contact with the Poles. You work in the factory besides with the Poles. So we went to the barracks after finish the work but they went to their homes. They promised us that they going to give us the clothes, I seen them loading the truck. We ask them, where is the clothes, we never got the clothes. I only had what I had on me.

Q: What you came in?

A: What I came on. I don't know who; I was told later on that the people who run the camp, the Jews, they bartered away our clothes. This is what I was told, I never seen them.

Q: The clothes that you're talking about were clothes that you had brought with you and they made you give up when you got there?

A: Yeah, I didn't have -- that's right. I seen them loading the truck but when I got to the camp, I never see anything. I had an extra sweater, maybe an extra pants, an extra pair shoes. We were all probably gone for labor work so everybody took a little bit clothes. They never gave it to us. This was good clothes because we took nothing but the best. I could barter this if I had it. I remember I just had one sweater, some I give it away and the Pole, the next day, brought me a loaf of bread or something like that. But food was relatively good because the locals, they were locals in the adjoining cities and they probably came with all the clothes. They were bartering all the time so they didn't eat in the commune kitchen. Was always a lot of food. Then at night, I could go to the Polish kitchen if they had food left over, they gave us if I worked the night shift. In comparison to the ghetto, as far as food was concerned, was gold. I was always worried about what happened to my parents, everything seemed unreal. I got up in the morning, everything strange. I worked in the factory; I was making bullets. We put in steel and the machines, if you're working steel with the machines, had to have oil, constant to the oil. Like I said, I don't have any clothes to exchange nothing so_____ got all over me and I developed all blisters. I had all blisters on my knee, on my feet. Because I had no apron, just plain clothes and I had nothing to change. Don't forget I mentioned that I had left in March, 1944 but then the weather was getting colder. I went out in the morning to work. They marched us from the assembling, we had to march to factory. We didn't have to march too far, just like from here to the light because the camp was attached to the factory. But a cold day, it hit my flesh and it was hurting because I had blisters. When I was in that labor camp in Kielce, I heard about the invasion, the Normandy invasion in June 6. I heard that. But that time, I really didn't know where Normandy was; I just heard that the Americans and the British was there, I don't have any perception of time; maybe the camp, maybe two, three months. It was the summer and then one morning, this camp, we were guarded by the Ukrainians. A Ukrainian auxiliary this camp. You mentioned if somebody escaped from the ghetto and I told you I didn't know of anybody. But from the camp, I did heard that they escaped, from the labor camp. But they caught him and then they brought him back and then they shot him. It was a different part of the country, they did escape and they brought him back. This was still in the summertime, after the Normandy invasion. It was in June, maybe July or maybe August, one morning they lined us all up and they say they have to evacuate because the Russian made the offensive. They were coming westward so they evacuated us and they put us in open flatcars. We were riding maybe a day or two and then they let us out in an open field. They gave us food; the Germans were debating where they should take us. They didn't know what to do with us -- all the people from the labor camp. Was not a big camp, maybe six, seven hundred people. As I mentioned before, only about 50, 60 people. They had the whole wagons left over but they dropped them off in different camps. This camp only attached this car, maybe away to another couple cities, attached like a_____ camp. They didn't know where to take us, we said why can't we go back -- we still in Poland -- we said why can't you take us back to the Lodz ghetto? There's a lot of Jews over there. One of the guys told us, the Lodz ghetto is being evacuated, dismantled now. Right now, we in the field, it was still warm, must have been in August. Now

according to the books that I read, that was when the ghetto was being liquidated, in July and August. After a couple of days, we decided and they took us to a place, Shedbush. We still in Poland, I find it on the map, wasn't far away, maybe 25 miles away. Anyway it was all youngsters and we were digging ditches, anti-tank ditches. The organization Todd was in charge, T-o-double-d. It was named after a German, it was a labor battalion or something like that. We came, in the morning, in the daytime we went to dig the ditches and at night we were sleeping in barns, in farmers' barns. But at night, we heard shooting. In the morning we got up and we ask the German what is all the shooting? We heard the partisans, they were attacking the German units or something like this in the countryside. So after we dig the ditches, I don't know, maybe for a week or so, they took us away to Chintzerhau_____. The Chintz_____ is a -- I think it's near Upper Silesia -- it's a very well known Polish city. The Polish Madonna -- Chintz_____ is on the Polish-German border not far away in Upper Silesia. The same factory with the same work that I did in Kielce that I did in Chintz_____. Over there, I met my friend. I met my friend which I still keep up to now; he is in New York.

Q: What's his name?

A: His name is -- well he changed his name. His name is now Herbert Lewis. He's got a better recollection than I have. He remembers more than I do. Somehow my memory fades but he's got a very good recollection and I met him. I remember the day; he was wearing boots. Over there maybe you worked about maybe for a month or two, was all_____, 1944, remember. We went in the morning --. He wasn't in Kielce with Gara; he was in a different camp. He was in Scarzilsco. By then, when the Germans came, they evacuated everybody and every able-bodied men they put in --. He came in Chintz_____ and I met him. We were working in the same factory. I don't know if we worked there for a month or six weeks. Anyway, it was still the same year; the Germans came one morning, rounded us up and marched us to the train station. They put us on cattle cars and I could see that the local population, they were running. We heard distant shooting. I don't know, rumors spread in our ranks that the Russians are entering the city on the other side but it wasn't true yet. I could see the Germans were loading the big guns on the trains, the German army. Anyway they put us on cattle cars. We were gone for three or four days and we wind up in Germany. We find out that they took us – we went to Buchenwald in the concentration camp. Over there they opened up, we came to Buchenwald and everybody was eating up whatever they had in the food packages with them. They were discarding the Polish money and the German Reich marks. After two, three hours, we went to sit in barracks. They had -- Buchenwald was a big camp, was about 60,000 inmates at that time. It was established early in 1933. Right now, I know it was a political camp. In Buchenwald heather on the ground. But that time I didn't realize, I didn't realize that. Anyway we registered and all the inmates did all the work. They ask us where we come from, your mother's name, your father's name and all this stuff. After registration, we went to a big hall. We had to take all the clothes that we wear and before I left Poland, I mentioned that before I left the ghetto, my mother told me that you have an aunt in Paris which I did have, her sister. She says you have a cousin in Belgium and she gave me addressed envelopes and things like that and says maybe you don't know where you're going. Maybe you're going to need it one day. But when I went to Buchenwald and I had family pictures, my mother, my younger brother, I had to put everything on the table. All the clothes, everything on the table and I only remember one German. A black uniformed German came in, we all had to o to commission. He looked at my legs because like I said, from the dirty oil, I don't know what I blubbered up in German. He says, he just looked at me and was thinking, thinking. He just motioned at a line so I went over there. We had to go in first to a shower. I remember we just looking is water

coming in or gas coming out. Water was coming out and then we had to all to go in. They had a big disinfection tube, was maybe like this room. Had to jump in, oh I had all scabs over here -- was burning and burning. Before this, I forgot, after I took all the clothes off and everything, we went to a different room. The inmates were all, the inmates had clippers. They clipping the head, clipping hair, clipping hair, all over there. Then we were all clipped up. We had to jump into this tub, this disinfect thing. Oh, it was burning something terrible. Then we jumped out. This was January, was already January. _____knows, January 18, according to the record, I got there, January 18. We went up from this tube, oh yeah, after we got up from the tube, I remember going up a flight of stairs. They gave me clothes. They gave me a pair boots, shoes, no socks. They gave me pants but no underwear. They gave me a jacket but no shirt. I didn't have the striped jacket, just because, don't forget, it was January and it was already chaos in all those camps. They had so many people come from Germany, I didn't even have a tattoo. I just had an assigned number. They gave me all these clothes. Then we went out to the other end of the barracks where we stand for two, three hours until we assigned a barrack. Here it's January, it's cold.

Q: You're wet?

A: You're wet, you're unshaved and all this stuff. Then they assigned us a barrack. In the barracks, then I lost my friend. He got assigned a different barracks. You had to slide in and you had to slide out. You couldn't go in. At night, if you had to go someplace, to the bathroom, you were afraid to go if you leave your place. Because if you're placed in, nobody's going to let you back in.

Q: Oh, you mean, to slide back into the bunks?

A: You couldn't slide in, whatever you had to do, you had to make it on the spot. There was only straw there, there was no --. You had no blanket, they don't give you a blanket, we use straw. To be exact, they were looking like shelves, like bins. Like you see the pictures, you slide in and slide out. I was in this barracks and then later on -- when I was in the barracks, I met my friend. But first of all, they had kapos in the barracks. I didn't know what the word kapo means but I know people came to us and he says you people are newcomers? I says yes. I says who is your leader. We called, one was a Jewish policemen in the labor camp was this. They want to find out how we are treated .If we told him; we are treated by our own people, they kill him on the spot. Because they say we want to do an example, in case they take your people out for labor for a day or two to the city and somebody is going to inform on you, your own people;_____ when he comes back, he's going to have the same thing. He says we're organizing the thing. I remember one guy, he was the head of the camp. He came to us and says, don't say anything bad. Because we always thought maybe we came from the ghetto from Lodz, they didn't give us our clothes, we could have lived better. Buy different food, but I don't know what happened to him. Maybe somebody else squealed on him, maybe not, I don't know. I was in that camp and then I met my friend, it was nice. The first day, when I assigned my rations, I put it in my pocket. I figure I'm going to eat it later on. You get one day of rations, a piece of bread and a bowl of soup so I figure I'm going to eat the bread at night. So at night, I went to eat, the bread was gone. Somebody slipped it out and I didn't feel it. I figured out, don't ask me know but I don't know. I remember one thing, I sewed up my pockets. Don't ask me where I got the needle and where I got the thread. Somebody must have had it. I punched a hole in the jacket through here and I was slitting out to here. While I was in this barrack, they took out people for work, the kapos. They had people in the barracks, they had

people -- Germans, they had Russians who preceded us to Buchenwald. Some people who came maybe in 1939, in 1940, in 1938, they were in charge of the barracks, they were in charge. The kapos, they had to go to a special appellplatz, the main camp where they counted them. We had to go to a different spot too. Sometimes, we stayed for two, three hours in the snow, don't forget it was January. The snowflakes they were falling; he counted us up, then dismissed. Then dismisses, you went into a cold barrack. If you had a piece of bread left over in the morning, you ate it. If not, nothing. In daytime, in the morning, we heard a whistle blowing. They took us for work, from the barracks, just to drag wood because you have to remember that Buchenwald was carved out from a forest. I don't know if you're familiar or not. It's ten miles away from Weimar. It's a lot of birch trees and forest. Maybe they need the wood, maybe they didn't need it. They just make you work. They don't let you just stay around idle. They were taking us out for work every day.

Q: You were just cutting wood, is that what you were doing?

A: No, I remember I was dragging wood. I don't remember where I was dragging it, maybe putting it in one pile, taking to the other pile, everybody had to work. Over there -- I was doing this maybe for a month or for two months. Then all of a sudden, one day, they announce they --. Then we heard, like I told you, the kapos had a separate room in the barracks. Have you ever been to service in the army?

Q: No.

A: No. In the barracks itself, they had a couple rooms, in the barracks carved out for the kapos. They weren't exactly mean, they were kapos, they were in charge of the barracks, know what I mean?

Q: Were the kapos, were they Jewish, or were they --?

A: No, well in this instance they happened to be --. I knew a couple of them were Russians, two, three Russians. One of them was German. Maybe they were ex-prisoners of war. Or maybe they were just taken to Germany for labor and somehow they wind up in a conservation camp. I didn't ask any specific. I know one was -- a couple were German. One was a green triangle, means he was a criminal prisoner. One had a red triangle, means he was a political. Outside the barracks, they had detached, like a small cottage. They were only German, kapos. They were not kapos but I don't know what they were doing. They were prisoners, they were dressed nicely, they had red triangles and they were in boots, they were nice. They didn't take --they had connections in the camp but they were prisoners, you know what I mean?

Q: So the prisoners were treated differently depending on what kind of prisoner you were? Like if you were a political prisoner, you were treated better than say a Jewish person?

A: I don't know whether they were treated better than --. But if somebody had to do manual labor, they were in charge of the auto workmen. If somebody had to drag woods, he didn't have to drag the woods.

Q: So there was definitely a differentiation between --?

A: Sure. We have the kapos differently But if he was a_____maybe he wasn't abused to other

prisoners but you had to do it. But they had to go to the appells too. So all of a sudden, one day they announce they evacuated Buchenwald. I heard the kapos talking, they bombed, the Americans are already in Erfut. Erfut spelled E-e-f-u-t. You ever heard of the word, Erftut? It's not far from Weimar. Buchenwald was near Weimar, ten miles away. They would be here soon so they took the Jews. They're taking the Jews.

Q: Do you remember what time this was? It was in /45, do you remember the month?

A: That must be in February because it was still cold. Was a very short span. I was only three months in Buchenwald so I can go back, was in February. So they say`, they going to evacuate, they going to take the Jews. All the Jews have to report. I knew if they take the Jews, I know what's going to happen.

Q: They only took the Jews at this point?

A: To report. They were all mixed in this camp, mixed Jews and non-Jews,_____and Frenchmen. They said all the Jews have to report, evacuated. So the way they did that, they says, they emptied all the barracks in a big place, in a big square and they says everybody on this side. Then they have this kapo, lined up, like I said, Russians, Germans, and you had to approach. If they recognize a Jew, you're on this side in there. I passed by, they knew me but they let me through.

Q: They let you on the political side?

A They let me on the other side . I didn't go in the Jewish transport. I don't know. Maybe they didn't recognize me, I didn't ask any questions. He just send me so I didn't go with the Jewish transport. Then another day, they did the same thing. I hid underneath the barracks. Some kapos came in and they pull us out from underneath the benches. I remember somebody gave me a kick and my back was hurting maybe for a week or so. Then I met my friend. He was hiding too, he was in a different barracks. Finally they says, everybody has to go. So everybody has to go, alright. So we line all up and we went to the main camp to Buchenwald. They kept us there in a big hall. Don't ask me what kind, I remember it was a big hall, they kept us overnight and the next day too. Towards dusk, they says, now we're going to go to the train station. They let us out from the big, looked like a factory type building. I would recognize it now. Now you have to describe, they had the German SA, youngsters, one side. They had big bat and we had to this and they were beating you.

Q: Like a gauntlet or something?

A: Like a gauntlet right. I want to say like a gangplank but I don't want to use the word, a gangplank is like a ramp. You know like a gangplank. I don't remember if I received a blow, if I didn't receive the blow.

Q: They just hit you?

A: Yeah, they had three, four on this on this side; three or four on this side. Then the other side, they lined us up; they lined us up.

Q: They had like clubs, is that what you mean?

A: Clubs, or bats or truncheons. Maybe they had plain stakes. Who remembers? You see all these things lie down, they beating the things, you don't pay attention what it was. Who knows what it was, I don't remember. Anyway after you went through this gauntlet, they lined us up and it was already dusk like I said and we marched to Weimar. The Germans marched us to Weimar. I remember they had big dogs on the sides, big German shepherds. They came to the train station, I think it was really dark. They put us in open flatcars, was already dark, maybe ten, eleven o'clock at night. I don't have any perception of time. The trains start moving. So the trains start moving; we moved overnight and then in the daytime, planes came and shot up,

Q" They shot up at the train".

A: At the train. Somebody asked what is the name of this place? I heard them say Zeis. I don't know, someplace in Germany, Zeis, Z-e-i-s. I think right now, I'm not so sure but I heard Zeis where they make optical equipment over there. You heard of that thing?

Q: Yeah.

A: It says we in Zeis or something like that. Maybe where -- then the Germans assembled another locomotive after the planes left and we were riding again. Then the planes came and shot up again. So they assembled us all in columns I don't know, maybe 5,000 people. Don't forget they say they empty Buchenwald, not all of them. They marched us to Flossenburg. This is another camp. I don't know how you spell Flossenburg, it's near Weiden. Right now I'm reading all the books. I'm interested because I lived this period; I know that right now from history was a criminal camp. One of the German, Admiral Kanaris, he was head of the German Upfeur, German intelligence. He got hung up over there. In the middle of the story or not. Over there, was even worse than Buchenwald because we were sleeping --. I was with my friend there from New York and we sleeping that camp maybe for a week or so. Then they say they evacuated Flossenburg. Thy marched us out from Flossenburg to the train. That was in the morning, maybe eleven o'clock. I think it was on a Sunday, I don't know why I remember Sunday but I have stuck in my head, Sunday. I know the sun was shining high and the train station was right outside of the camp and they loading us in open boxcars, listen to that. The trains didn't even start moving yet. All of a sudden, I see planes from far away. Big planes in the sky and the sun shines on them, I think that was the jet age coming out. In a second, they were right over the train -- shot everything up. All of a sudden, I heard something hit my face. I asked my friend, do I have blood on my face? He just looked, he says no. But I looked up and I see that we were not moving yet. They had a big sign, crossing written down in German, made out of wood. A crossing sign, you know, maybe one of the splinters, some bullet too, hit me in the face. But nothing was bleeding, it was nothing, something hit me. When the planes shot up the train, everybody jumped off the train so I jumped off the train too. The Germans were running to the farmhouses, to the nearby houses. I run after them too. I heard them, run into German, must have been a German house or something, I wasn't the only one, maybe there were dozens of legs, we run with the guards.

Q: Everybody was running?

A: We were running. The guard says, I heard him, I understood this much German. He says, the Americans must have a base nearby because the plane left already. They going to be coming

back. But then after everything was over, the guards came back. We came back to the train too. But not everybody went with the guards.

Q: People ran away?

A: No, some of them stayed with the -- on the wagons. They were going through the packages, the Germans' knapsacks.

Q: Stealing the food and stuff?

A: Just with them open. They took out the cigarettes, they took out the food. When the Germans came and they saw what's going on, they lined everybody up. They searched everybody. They found food on them and cigarettes and lined them up and killed them on the spot. After a while, they assembled us all and the train start moving again, whoever was left. The ones who was killed, I don't know if they buried them or left them on the side or took them back to camp. The camp was maybe a few miles outside. We didn't even left -----_____. We were riding again, maybe for a day or two. Planes used to come, the Americans and British were already nearby. They didn't have far to go. They were already in France. They shooting at the planes. The guard says, some of them just flew over and they didn't come down low so the guard says over there they're your friends. If they come over, you wave to them, so we waved, we had no choice, we waved. Some just flew over, they didn't do anything. Sometimes they came down low. When they came down low, the guards run out. Some of us were packed in the station. When the planes came over, I could see the tracer bullets. I could see them just like rains, hard rains you can see them. I jumped off the train. I hid underneath the wagon where the planks are.

Q: Where the tracks are?

A: Where the tracks are. I just lay there and I could see the guards, were all on the train. After this, after it was all over, we went back. I remember it was British planes. Why do I know it's British? Because I could see the wheel, the mark with the red.

Q: Like a bull's eye?

A: That's right, like a bull's eye. They came very low. I could see the markings then. Then they shot up the locomotive. Then we left another day and the same thing happen. Here they come again.

Q: So they would come every day to shoot up?

A: Every day, sometimes twice a day. I don't know if you've ever been in Bavaria or Germany; they have thick_____tunnels over there, you know_____tunnels. As soon as they heard the air drone or something like this, the locomotive detached itself and it went for the nearest tunnel. After the ride was over, if the locomotive was intact, it wasn't shot up, they could use it. It came back and they pull off again. But if the locomotive didn't have time, they had to get something else. But anyway, they shot up a locomotive the last time and they couldn't get anybody so a big fat German says, everybody line up. Whoever cannot -- we going to march from now on. Whoever cannot march doesn't have to worry, we going to provide transportation. I know what transportation means. I was the first in line. Now I can see how

lucky I am because, don't forget, I was in this labor camp, like I mentioned before the food was relatively good. I could barter, the locals, so it was more food left for me. I was in the kitchen at night and it was food and the camp was only for about three months so I was in relative good health. I was in the first line over there. We marched all night, me and my friend from New York. Then at night, we wind up near the roadside and we took a little bit leaves and they says you're going to spend the night over there. The next night the same thing. But the third night, was raining bad. I got soaked all through, all wet. Whoever fell out of line, if you read the story about Bataan or Corregidor, the same thing. I was ready, my friend was ready, I was ready to go the roadside but my friend who lives in New York, he says, come on.

Q: He wouldn't let you go?

A: He pulled me, yeah. I was tripping over wires because they were shooting. The planes were coming down, two, three times a day. All the wires were down, it was dark. I was ready to give up; he says, he grabs me he says you got to keep ---. So towards -- that was at night. We were marching all night, all wet, you couldn't walk, soaked through. Towards morning, it was already daybreak, we stopped on a farm and they put us in barns. They says you're going to rest here, the guards. All of a sudden, decide to take us all out for punishment because somehow, somebody, they were messing up the barns. There were no toilets there. They were lining everybody up. They going to take us to a march or maybe, who knows. The Germans had a tendency. If somebody did any infractions, they lined everybody up and they picked people at random. They lined them up and they says I'm going to pick every third man, or every tenth man. They just pull them out and they just shot them just for no reason at all. So maybe they tried to do the same thing this time. When they were getting ready, everybody lined up, we heard shooting. So the German says everybody back inside the barn. Then the shooting intensified. Like I mentioned, it's a barn. A barn has slits so some of the inmates looked --. Before I mention that, for some reason an egg fell down, a chicken egg fell down and my friend was nearby. We took the egg and we split it in half, a fresh egg. While we were sitting in the barn, like I mentioned before, it was raining all night and the barn is warm near the hay and the straw, our clothes is steaming. We heard the shooting and we looked out. Some of the inmates says, the Russians are here. They saw the stars. At that time, we didn't know the American tanks have stars too. We know the Russians have stars. Then we notice in the front of the barn the guards taking white handkerchiefs, or white rags or whatever it was white and put on the front of their rifles. You know what I am talking about?

Q: Yeah.

A: I was one of the last ones to get out of the barn. I got out of the barn just like you see in a movie picture. Everything burns around you. You're a farmhouse; a farmhouse burns here; a barn burns here. All the inmates in the thousands, all running wild. All uniforms, all kind of uniforms. Don't forget they evacuated the camp like Buchenwald in the thousands. The Germans had the transport too with them. They had the carts and the horses and some motor transports. All of a sudden you see the inmates they robbing the wagons and all the stuff. I went to a wagon too, seeing some German boots. I had no shoes, I put on a pair of boots. I had no size, just pulled them on. Like I mentioned before, don't forget, I said I sewed up the pockets. I go over there and I see a big German woman. She has a big country bread all around. She cut slices and here the inmates stay and everybody gets a big slice of bread. Take a big, line the lines, she gives me a slice of bread too. Then I go to the next house and I see raw potatoes outside. I take these raw potatoes and I start packing them inside. I'm all weighed

down, heavy. I go the next farmhouse, somebody preceded me already. They all Russian inmates, Russian- speaking inmtes.

Q: They ate all the food?

A: They already killed the chicken. They already picking the feathers off. Somebody very quick, they were right there. Maybe they got liberated 15, 20 minutes before, who knows. Then we saw tanks rumbling by and they throwing down cigarettes. Then we go to a clearing and we saw tanks parked and we go over to somebody. Somebody ask what language you speak. We said, well we from Poland. We find a Polish-American. He speaks in broken Polish. He goes to the truck and brings the care rations up. Now I know they care rations, the cheese and the candy was there. Somebody gets us cigarettes and I start to smoke. I'm all dizzy. So I go to the next village. The village not far away, maybe three miles. Don't forget there are thousands of people in the villages. I see a German stays outside. I says food, essen. He says, yah, yah, come inside. I thought I'm going to be the only one. I think I went with somebody too. Somebody was besides me there. I go in and the place is full. They're already sleeping on the bed and under the table. Here's coffee. I says coffee and he says yah, coffee, coffee, eggs, eggs, milk. Anyway I ate eggs and the next day my stomach was sick. I'm sick and in the meantime they catching -- don't forget next day after the war, they bringing Germans back to recognize a guard here and some beaten to death, some all bloodied up. They picking German up from the house, inmates all over, in the thousands, Russians, ex-prisoners, they're stronger than I am. I'm young, I'm 16, they're stronger than I am. I'm young, I'm 16, they're in 30's, 35. They entered the war, they know all about it. That was the liberation day.

Q: Do you remember what day you were liberated on?

A: Yeah. It's going to be this week, this 23rd of April. I always thought the 24th and I call my friend in New York. He says the 23rd of April. As a matter of fact, because the paper I just show you from the tracing bureau, it doesn't say when I was liberated but it (End of Tape 1)

Q: Go ahead.

A: I went to Schwandorf and I heard the Jews were assembled, all the ex-prisoners over there. They made a_____and the women ex-prisoners, they went nuts on the kitchen. I don't know if I should say it on tape, that's the first time I saw a black person. All of a sudden, I see an American army transport pulls up; I saw the blacks of the transportation department. At that time the army thing was still segregated then. A guy opens the tailgate and I take a look and I see black hands. I just looked -- the first time . That's the first time I've seen one, I didn't see it, that's it. Okay so I was in that home and I didn't have much clothes. Some of them, like I said, some of the ex-inmates were smarter and wiser than I am, some of them went to German homes and who was an ex-Nazi. They says, listen, you were a Nazi or you were the buegermeister, give me some clothes, give me that. So they came with clothes, with sweaters and jackets. I was young, I was 17, 18, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I want to go back to Poland. Don't forget, this happened in April and I left home in March, the ghetto, about a year I think since I left home. I still was homesick, I was thinking about Poland and my brother and my sister. At that time, don't forget the first week, we didn't know the extent, what happened with Auschwitz and all the sick, Kelman and all this concentration camp. I still wanted to go back to Poland. I was in this home. All of a sudden, American soldiers came, one or two, I don't remember. He was a Jewish American soldier. He says we are in tents here on the outskirts of

the city in Scheondorf. We are in camp, we need about three, four volunteers who wants to go to work. Like washing pots and pans in the kitchen. I says, I volunteer to go. I went and another couple boys and maybe two, three boys. We had a ball, all the oranges we want to eat and had a couple of -- I had an Italian cook, an American cook, Italian. _____from Chicago, a few Polish words and he made spaghetti and it was good. Oh the spaghetti, anything, I didn't mind to wash the pots and pans. All of a sudden, chewing gum and candy; they were living in tents on the outskirts of the city. In the evening, they brought us back to that house where we sleeping over there. The next morning, he said would you like to come back tomorrow, I says yes. The truck came like 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, I don't remember.

Q: To pick you up?

A: Picks us up, the three or four boys went out to camp. This lasted about for three weeks. Then, he said well, we have to leave, we have assignments. We have to pull down the tent, we're going to Nuremberg. I remember it was a big tall guy, an American, don't ask me the name, I forget. I don't know if he was a sergeant or not and he says we're going to Nuremberg. He said but we going to come back and get you boys. I didn't think anything of it. He's leaving, he's leaving. After maybe two, three weeks, this guy shows up. He shows up and he says you want to go to Nuremberg? I says sure. I had no relatives, nothing attached. I didn't have to pack because I had nothing, maybe I acquired an additional sweater or maybe an additional pair pants, I don't remember. There's nothing to speak of, I just took it and he picked us up and went to Nuremberg. In Nuremberg, there were tents too. I don't remember what the name of the engineer or Battalion of Engineering or something like that. Then, the same thing, all the food and all the --.

Q: You were working for them? Doing odd jobs?

A: Yeah, no, no money, nothing. Maybe whatever it is, they gave us clothing, they gave us shoes, army fatigues, army boots, whatever you need – a shirt, underwear, green underwear. Then they said, all of a sudden, they had to leave too, after two, three months. By that time, I was working over there, I also find out that the size of this was Nuremsbek. There is a sizeable Jewish community in Furt. Furt, it's Bavaria too. It's spelled F-u-r-t. We took the streetcar from Nuremberg and you went to Furt. They had Jewish community there and they were all newcomers and had a home too. Just like a house but I was not living in this house. I think we all had a tent to ourselves, was handy there. At that time came to go too. So they said they're going back to the United States but before they say, they pack for their vacation. They going to leave from Marseilles, France. So they had two choices. We can either leave you in Germany and find you another job with the American army or we can give you back to France. At that time France was right after post-war in '45, they could bring across the border. You know in '45, is everything chaos still. He says -- we figure, well if they going to dump us off in France, we're on our own, don't know anybody. Here I find up, the community of Furt and things like that. I felt already a little bond. So he says why don't you find us a job here? Next to the where they had the tents, was the American hospital. I have letters from the hospital. They give letters of recommendation, 381st Evacuation Hospital or something like this. We decide to work over there and they give us quarters and they give us food. Like I said, we had all the clothes, we had a room. Inside, was no tents, already in the hospital, had separate rooms, three, four boys. In the morning, we just went to work in the kitchen. We were not cooking; they had army cooks. You know what we were in charge? We were lighting the stoves. You remember the field army stoves, are you familiar with that?

Q: Yeah, I've seen those before, yeah.

A: You pump gas and you clean them and you repair them. Over there, I don't know. I work for the hospital for three, four years. I think later on and I got paid for that too --but it's so long ago. I think later on they transfer because they had German civilians working too. We went in the German economy. Then, like I said, my friend, the one I spend the war with, he found himself a job too. He found himself a job in the adjoining city with the American army too. He told me he heard -- heard a lot of the people who are liberated, they go to America. They have relatives but I didn't have anybody so nothing to claim. Then he told me that if you go to Munich, Congress passed a law, he told me the American government -- I didn't know the difference between Congress and no Congress that some displaced person they can register with the Joint. He went first and he came back, he says yes, you can register. I went there too and I registered and I had a very easy time because after the war I worked. I had recommendations from the army, had a good police record. Then I registered and I was -- oh yes, then I think that I went to be on my own. I still worked for the hospital, I worked for a while but I didn't want to live over there. Because in the evening I want to be free. I want to be with my own people and I put an ad in the paper. I'm looking for a room. Rooms are very hard to get in Germany after the war. But I mentioned, I want to mention that a lot of German Jews came back, German Jews after the war. They were liberated or some maybe were never in a camp; they were mixed marriages and maybe the Germans didn't touch them. Anyway I went once to a service in Nuremberg, Jewish service. There were a lot of German Jews there who came back from Theresienstadt and things like that. I find out that they had very high positions in the post-war government in Germany right after the war. I want to live on my own. I talked to them and one told me he works in this ministry, the other in the other ministry. So I put an ad in the paper, I want to be on my own for a room. I got a response like in a post office box. I went to look at the room and the room was right near the Palace of Justice, near the military tribunal, where they tried the Nazis. As a matter of fact, the building was right across the street, I seen the Soviets on the balcony. They were living there too. The people who were attached to the Justice, to the Russian delegation. Anyway I looked at the room and the lady asked me what I do. I told her I am working at the hospital. She says yeah? I says I'm Jewish. She says oh, yeah. After the war, everybody had a Jewish relative. She says you know what, I registered this room, she says, with the government because I don't want them to assign me a newcomer from -- an ethnic German from the displaced, from Schlis____ or something like this. If you can get it, if somehow you can bring a certificate that you want the room. I made contact with this German ministry. I tell him, listen I have a room but I need assignment. No problem, he gave me an assignment, I was living over there. Then my papers came through. They call me to the council. I had to give the birth certificate. I don't have a birth certificate, if you come from Europe, everything was taken away. That was relatively easy, you find people from your hometown. They know I'm from Poland so I had this witnesses where I was born, where I'm from and I assembled different papers. We get them translated into English. I went for the interview. Finally I got to America.

Q: When did you come to America?

A: I came August 31, 1949. Before I came to America, I was in a camp, in a transit camp. N the transit camp, they give you orientation, what to expect in America. They gave you a booklet, what you should expect. They gave you a booklet in your own language, whatever you read the best. I took a book in Polish because I understood this language the best. They say, the booklet

is from -- it say Washington, D.C. is the seat of the government and New York is a big city and things like that. So I read all about it. I came on the ship_____. It took us eight days. I didn't get sick on the boat, a lot of people sick around me. The boat came to New York harbor like in the evening. All of a sudden when you come from Europe, from post-war Europe and we were outside in the harbor, we didn't go into New York harbor. We just stayed there overnight but you could see the cars moving, they looked like, it's a sight when you come from Europe and you don't see all the streets and the lights and fire way over --. Everything is alive, you see New York City. Especially when you see from far away. Maybe it was five miles away, out to the harbor. We stayed overnight on the boat. When the mist start lifting in the morning, I don't know whether it was August, it got daylight maybe 5 o'clock, maybe 5:30 , I don't know, it was already mist. I went outside. We couldn't sleep already all night, passed the Statue of Liberty. I read of the Statue of Liberty in the book so I knew the Statue of Liberty. We passed it and the boat anchored. Then immigration came on the board. We had papers and everything. I became legitimate. We didn't go to Ellis Island. They put a pin on my lapel. I came through the Joint distribution. Somebody sponsored me but I don't know who did. It came t5he group but somebody must have did it. They had different nationalities. They always had to have Catholics, they came to Catholic organizations, they had Jewish, they came to a Jewish organization. Maybe they had Quakers through a different organization. Anyway, these different organization, my pin, they came towards me. I didn't know this people but they could tell.

Q: They approached you?

A: They approached me. They said, yeah. Well, I spoke a little bit English but they assign people like to speak in --.

Q: Translators, yes.

A: Translators, they spoke like Yiddish, Americans who spoke Yiddish. They took us over there. My luggage consisted of an old valise, lock-top and springs, they had no problem. He still had to go through customs. Now I know they're customs, they open up and they're looking. They assign you right there. You go on the other side and you get doughnuts and coffee. Doughnuts and coffee and then I saw a Yiddish-speaking woman comes to me. Remember that I had nothing to carry. I didn't need a porter. She says you come with me. I remember riding escalators. It must have been Penn Station or something, I don't know. I remember going to taxi, another taxi, maybe it was. I remember riding escalators and taking with the gate. There were a lot of people outside the gate0. She says, she gives me two tickets and she says, you going to Washington D.C. When the gate opens up, there will be a train there. When the people go down, she didn't even wait until the gate opens up, when the people go down, you go down the stairs and you get on the train with the other people and you get off in Washington D.C.

Q: Was there any reason that you went to Washington? They just sent you there?

A: Well, I tell you. Right now, I cannot think of any reason because I put in my papers that I worked in the American army in the kitchen. Maybe they figured there's a lot of hotels in Washington, D.C., maybe he can find a job in a -- I don't know. They sent me to Washington, D.C.. They just send me there, I don't know. I'm going to Washington, D.C. and they gave me three dollars. She gave me three dollars, three American dollars and says, you buy lunch on the train. She says in Washington, D.C. you wear this pin and somebody is going to approach you.

Okay, so the gate opens up and everybody goes down. The doors slide open and I go inside. Everyone sits down and I sit down too. Now I'm ready – I says I got to go to Washington, D.C. They said how about I miss it, but I read Philadelphia in the book. They told you about the Liberty Bell – they have all these things written down in the book. All of a sudden I spot American Legionnaires and they had Washington, D.C. on Legionnaires' cups. So I thought to myself when they get off, I'm going to get off too. I had doughnuts and I had the coffee and I had the three dollars in my pocket. I said I'm not going to spend the three dollars to buy lunch because I don't know when I'm going to get an American dollar next. I will not go in and have no_____. What I'm going to do, I don't know. I didn't spend the lunch and didn't buy anything. I'm getting off in Washington, D.C.. Everybody is getting off the train. At that time the train wasn't yet the jet industry developed. The train was already a_____, if somebody traveled by train especially in 1949, Union Station was crowded. Everybody getting off, I'm getting off. I'm getting off waiting the main concourse, the main hall. I'm just waiting there. I have the valise. I have my best clothes from Germany after the war. I have a suit on and lapel. The hall empties and nobody is approaching me. Nobody. I wait and wait. If you wait for somebody and you wait for ten minutes, it sounds like an hour especially when you're in a strange country.

Q: You don't know anybody there?

A: Know anybody. I walk a little bit around. I remember I wrote the book and I wrote about the Travel Aid Society. I look in. What's it called, Travel Agent? No.

Q: Travel ,Agency or --?

A: No, not a travel bureau, usually military men go inside too like they help out.

Q: I know what you're talking about.

A: It's a travel-aid. They just do volunteer work for people who are stranded. It's not a regular travel agency where you pay money. I says maybe I should go in here and tell them that I'm lost. I go by and I look in and I see a sailor sitting there talking to somebody so I hesitated. I says no I'm going to wait another five minutes and the concourse is already empty. Then all of a sudden I see a couple or women. They coming towards me. They must have spot me the way I'm dressed. They coming towards me and I had to see the boat. They had a car, they all volunteers. To me they probably wait. Maybe they couldn't find any volunteer, were late. We walk out Union Station and the first thing you see is the Capitol. I says this is the White House? No, they correct me, that is the Capitol. It never made any difference to me why is the Capitol so white. It all depends on which angle you look at the White House, at the portico, it looks like Capitol too. Anyway we got in their car and they took me to 18th Street, near the zoo over there. It was a boarding house and they says you going to be here. They told me the next day, leave it to the Jewish Social Service Agency. They wrote down the address. The Jewish Social Service Agency at that time was on Spring Road which is right at 14th Street. There was no suburbs then and being I was Columbia Road, right near the zoo which is Adams-Morgan now and Spring Street is not --. They gave me the address, I can take the bus. Over there, I was --- the lady she had lot a -- the Jewish Social Service paid her money. She put newcomers up with food. She gave me a room, she had a rooming house. She says you're going to be here until we find out what we going to do with you. The next day I went to the Jewish Social Service Agency and I had an interview with a Mr. Pixner. I think he just retired from the Jewish Social

Service Agency. He asked me what I did and the war, where I'm from, relatives, no relatives. He gave me $20 in my pocket. So I had $3 plus $20; I had $23. With $23, they says here's $20 and you will sightsee. They want me to go to the city, transportation because they put me up with food so I didn't need any food. I went back to the house and this lady, she packed my lunch. She says, I'm a stranger in the city. I was afraid to venture too far out. She says well you can go to the zoo. The zoo was nearby. I could walk over there, Adams-Morgan. She gave me the lunch so she says it's a big zoo. Big zoo, I'm afraid I might be lost in the zoo. So the first bench I approached I sat down and I ate my lunch up. I finished for the day. The next day I ventured out and I went to 14th Street. That time 14th Street was all white and you could walk. It wasn't like after_____ before the riots. I looked in different stores. I saw a cleaning store and I see somebody reading a Jewish newspaper, I recognized it. I says maybe should go inside and ask him if he can find me a job. But I hesitated, I didn't go in. The following day, don't forget, I still had food, I went downtown. I think Lafayette Park or some place. I just sat down and men were sitting there. I struck up a conversation with him. He asked me where I'm from and everything. I told him where I come from. He says he's an ex-Navy man. He was in the Seabees. He says he lives on 14th Street with his wife. He lives in the Cavalier Apartments on 14th Street. I was still living far away like I told you, near the zoo which is all in walking distance. He says why don't you come and I want my wife to meet you. Okay, so maybe the next day, I went and met his wife. He says you know we have to find you a room where you can stay. I told him I don't like where I stay. We could find you a job. I think he gave me dinner and he said would you like to -- so he says we find a job first. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to find a room. How you going to pay? He asked me what I did. I says I don't know. I worked for the American army, he kitchens. They going to find you a job in People's Drug Store. In the commissary at night. Are you familiar with Washington? They had counters with food and all this stuff. He took me to the Personnel and they find a job. So I work at night. He says well, we got to get you a room. I didn't like my job. I didn't like ay nights sleeping in the daytime, work at night. I cannot meet nobody. I was working there maybe for a week or for two weeks. Then he says now we go into the People's Drug Stores, 14th and Park Road was a drug store and they have notices, who rents for rooms. Inside of a day, he saw a room for rent right around the corner where he lives. We went over there and we talked to the man. They were refugees too. They were German Jewish refugees but they arrived there before the war. But they were still refugees. He recognized my accent. Where you from, from Poland? I told him. He says where do you work? I says I just got a job at People's overnight. I don't like this job and the work at night. He says you know what, he says. I got a cousin; he's got a restaurant. Let me call up; if he needs somebody. He calls him up and this cousin live around the neighborhood. He was living Arkansas Avenue, in walking distance too. He says I have a young man, he's from Poland, he works at night. Do you think you can use him? He says bring him over. He says, you work the same evening. We walk over the same evening come over, how you doing, like with wine. All right, a little bit of wine, Manischievez. He says I have a place downtown near Thomas Circle. He says come over there. If you like it, you take the job. If you don't like it, it's fine too. The next day I go over there. It's a daytime job. He says, so you spend a day, what do you have to lose. You're off in the daytime, you work at night. I stayed there and I says I like it. He paid me a dollar an hour, 40- hour week. I took home $36 but I figured I have a room already. I paid $40 for my room, nice people, German people, nice and clean. I have a room, I'm single so I don't have to go out for food. I have a daytime job. I have my friend, a newly acquired friend, Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown he was very nice. Once in a while Sally went over there and she ate and she says you learn English. How do you spoke, transportation. Very nice people, interested in them. You ask about school.. I enrolled in Americanization school. The Americanization school was then on 18th and Columbia Road on

California Street. I went to school and then I make all -- people from Poland and some from Lodz and some from different. Some from boys, some came to an uncle, some came to an aunt, some came just like me. That was in the evening. I had to be there seven o'clock. I went there seven o'clock. I learned about the poems Captain my Captain. You recite poems and sing. Don't forget we're all older people. Then I make friends. On the weekend I have where to go. I have already friends and I have a daytime job. I ask them what do you do for a living. One worked for an uncle, one worked in a tailor shop, one works here, one is giving a party. Then I met my wife because I didn't. I met some guy, he says we're going to have a party this weekend. Could you come along. He took me along and my wife, she came to her uncle. They were living off -- they had already a nice house. Uncle was in business. You know who lives in the house? Fauntleroy.

Q: Oh, really?

A: The former delegate, well to do.. I had already friends and then after Americanization School, I enrolled in Central High School and take --. Right now, it's Cardoza, it's 13th and 15th Streets. I took a few courses over there at night. Then I had already dates with my wife and had parties and we picnic, the American way. We went to beaches and I still had my job. Then I had to register for the draft and then I got married.

Q: When did you get married?

A: I got married January 6, 1952. I came in '49. I got married in 1952. Listen to that. I came back from my honeymoon, I had greetings from Uncle Sam to go to the army. I says I just came from -- I don't want to sound like a_____. I want to go in the army but I just came from a camp and all of a sudden, I got to go away. I'm acquiring a family now with a wife, with relatives. I don't have anybody, now I got to go away. All right but I have to go. The induction center I had to report on New York Avenue. I go down there and the first time I must have been late. Because we were living northwest and I didn't know the bus connections. I was late and the bus left me_____. The clerk over there, it was a legitimate excuse, I was just late. She says well you come back next week. She put it down on my paper. The next week I was there a little bit earlier. I came back next week and we took us down to Alexandria. I think it's Cameron (?) Station. You're familiar with it? We went through the whole process tests and everything. Then we had to go for interview. I went for interview. The captain calls me in because I couldn't speak -- broken English and probably didn't make out too good in my tests. I didn't understand some questions. He find out that I was in Buchenwald. He says, I liberated Buchenwald. He says I'm going to give you a postponement for one year until you are a little more familiarized yourself with the country. We put you 4F now. In one year, they called me back. At that time, I was already more organized and they called me back. I had to report to Ft. Meade. I was drafted, I was two years. I came in -- I went in as a private, I came out as a sergeant. I took my basic training with the 101st Airborne in Kentucky and then I got assigned to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina which was good for me because I was stationed there.

Q: Wasn't too far away?

A: Wasn't too far away and I was in charge of the mess hall because I knew it already the same that you cook in baking school. I came out top of the class. I have all the best recommendations. I show you later on after the interview is finished. I let you read about it. I came up top of the class. They gave me a set of knives and everything. Then I got discharged from the service. I

was looking for a job so I got a job from the Giant maybe for a year or two. Then I worked for my wife's Uncle Ben here, a liquor store. Then I went back to the guy, the restaurant who gave me the first job. Over there, I met somebody who is a salesman. He says I know of a place but you know the work, he tells me and I know who wants to sell it, so maybe you can take me as a partner. He says I'm going to draw less than you do because I have a job. But I just going to be -- I'm going to pull up the money just like you. But you live in the house and I figure that that's a terrific idea for me. He knows the place so I went to look at the place. I bought the place and now I'm already 19 years over there. I'm going on 20 years. It's a very nice place. It's the United States Secret Service is over there. I know everybody over there and I have a good business. Now I'm ready to retire and don't forget, I came to America with $3 I got in New York. That's my story.

Q: It's a very good story.

A: Now I'm going to go upstairs and I'm going to show you the letters of my recommendation, okay?

Q: Okay. Can I ask you a question before we stop?

A: Okay.

Q: I know you said you left your family in the ghetto in Lodz. Did you ever find out what happened to them?

A: Well, I tell you. I didn't find out. I want to go back to Poland right after when I mentioned it because I was barely one year over. Then I got back to work for the American army and this like this. Then the pogroms set in in Poland. In Kielce when I was there. I heard different stories that the people who came back from the camp, who came back to the hometowns, and the Poles made sarcastic remark. So many of you still survive! I thought you all dead and things like that. Then as things became known, when they liquidated the ghetto, the most of them went to Kelna and then they went to Auschwitz. Then I considered, I looked at the picture, my father was already 40 years old. He was born in 1900. He was 44 years, it's not old but the Germans done that and you don't have much food to eat, you look like an old man. My mother, one year younger. Then I had a younger brother. He was at that time, he was born in 1929 so that makes him in 1945, 12, 13, so it's a very slim chance to survive. But I did, I was writing letters to friends because I know I had some friends. As a matter of fact, right after the war I came in contact with some people from France. They were in the French army but they were touched in Nuremberg. Somehow I got to know them. They tried to help but I didn't get any response. I wrote to the French government, to different organizations and -- but then after right now with the Clarks_____affair and -- things like this, I obtained a letter from the Clarks_____and I notice that my aunt was on the transport on the list. I have the list upstairs too so it's a very slim chance to survive. I didn't hear anything. Besides I registered in Jerusalem and I registered in Germany. They have all my records from the date of inception. I figured if a younger brother is looking for me, he could find me easily so I never knew. I wondered many times but --.

Q: Did you ever think about going to Israel?

A: I wanted to go to --. America was the last thing on my mind because I didn't think of going to

America in the first few couple of years after the war, only America had the strict quota. They took in people who were sponsored by somebody who guaranteed the highest, highest, highest. But then somehow, I think Truman, they passed a law, Congress passed a law, they got to admit 200 or 250 thousand refugees. I wasn't the first one to believe in it so my friend, he is the first one who entered Munch. But he brought me back to prove that he registered, he didn't have anybody. I went after that too. From that time, I knew I'm going to have it easy because I didn't engage in smuggling, black markets. I had a legitimate job and all the recommendations so I know if that's the date, I be coming here. That's my story.

Q: Okay, I think we're done if you want to say anything else before --.

A: I was just saying --. What I want to say, now things are differently. At that time in 1944, if people could help one another but they didn't. A lot of people kept silent. I wouldn't condemn the whole race or the whole nation but a lot of people could've survived. The populations was very hostile in Europe, in Eastern Europe especially. In Western Europe it was a different story but in Eastern Europe, the Jews were always second-class citizens. Even right now, I'm reading the stories like after cleaning of the Warsaw ghetto, they brought the people from Auschwitz to clean the Warsaw ghetto. When the Poles made a revolt, they freed some of the inmates. The revolt didn't last long but just for six weeks or so. They freed some of the inmates, they cleaning the Warsaw ghetto. They said we want to free Poland with our Jews. Some of them got killed after the war so that what it is. That's man inhumanity to man. Right now if you see something wrong, you stand up and get to be counted. That's exactly what it means -- man's inhumanity to man. It's an old poem, I don't know if you read. It's not a poem, it was in the paper. A German priest writes. He says when Hitler came into power in 1933, he said, they start persecuting the Jews. He says, I wasn't a Jew, I didn't spoke up. Then they take the homosexuals put them in concentration camp -- I don't know if you're familiar with it -- I wasn't a homosexual, I didn't speak up. Then they took the clergy, the Protestants, I wasn't a Protestant, I didn't spoke up. It came to the Catholic, I wasn't a Catholic, I didn't spoke up. It came to me, there was nobody else to speak up for me. That's the way it is. That's what it is.

Q: Thank you.

A: Okay, thank you. I don't know how I'm going to sound.

Q: Nope, sounds good.

A: Let me see. I'm going to show you what I have upstairs.

Q: Good, good.