

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:01,260

2
00:00:01,260 --> 00:00:04,019
Today's day is--

3
00:00:04,019 --> 00:00:09,133
Today is July 12, 1992.

4
00:00:09,133 --> 00:00:10,050
And your name, please?

5
00:00:10,050 --> 00:00:18,420
And my name is Moses
Rechnitz, R-E-C-H-N-I-T-Z.

6
00:00:18,420 --> 00:00:25,290
I was born in Poland
on June 3, 1923,

7
00:00:25,290 --> 00:00:34,830
in a town called Katowice,
K-A-T-O-W-I-C-E. Originally,

8
00:00:34,830 --> 00:00:41,850
my family lived in a town
called Bedzin, B-E-D-Z-I-N,

9
00:00:41,850 --> 00:00:46,590
which was about 15
miles from Katowice,

10
00:00:46,590 --> 00:00:51,000
a major population of Jews and
a smaller population of Poles.

11
00:00:51,000 --> 00:00:53,970

12
00:00:53,970 --> 00:01:04,310
It was-- by Polish standards,

it was a pretty good sized city.

13
00:01:04,310 --> 00:01:09,260
It had streetcars, it had
stores, it had a main street.

14
00:01:09,260 --> 00:01:13,520
It had, I believe, a
couple of movie houses.

15
00:01:13,520 --> 00:01:17,780
It had an old castle
that belonged somewhere

16
00:01:17,780 --> 00:01:20,390
in the Polish history.

17
00:01:20,390 --> 00:01:22,430
Where is Bedzin near?

18
00:01:22,430 --> 00:01:29,090
Bedzin is in the southwestern
part of Poland, not--

19
00:01:29,090 --> 00:01:37,160
about 10 miles from Katowice,
K-A-T-O-W-I-C-E, in Silesia,

20
00:01:37,160 --> 00:01:42,860
which is predominantly the
coal region of Poland--

21
00:01:42,860 --> 00:01:45,230
coal and steel works.

22
00:01:45,230 --> 00:01:54,110
It is also, I think, about
50 or 60 miles from Kraków,

23
00:01:54,110 --> 00:01:58,160
which is one of the oldest
cities in Poland and is known

24

00:01:58,160 --> 00:02:03,170

as the University
City of Poland.

25

00:02:03,170 --> 00:02:05,480

Did you live with your
mother and father?

26

00:02:05,480 --> 00:02:07,550

I lived with my
mother and father

27

00:02:07,550 --> 00:02:14,640

on the third or fourth
floor of a building.

28

00:02:14,640 --> 00:02:19,490

And I remember the water system
was on top of the building,

29

00:02:19,490 --> 00:02:24,860

and we were getting the
water in our sinks or toilets

30

00:02:24,860 --> 00:02:26,900

by gravity.

31

00:02:26,900 --> 00:02:29,660

Seemed like it was pumped
up into the cistern

32

00:02:29,660 --> 00:02:32,750

on the top of the building.

33

00:02:32,750 --> 00:02:35,090

When did you move from Bedzin?

34

00:02:35,090 --> 00:02:38,540

I moved from-- my
family moved from Bedzin

35

00:02:38,540 --> 00:02:43,040

to Katowice where my father
had a wholesale leather

36
00:02:43,040 --> 00:02:50,480
store in about 1930, I believe.

37
00:02:50,480 --> 00:02:53,300
And it was a
relatively short trip

38
00:02:53,300 --> 00:02:55,940
between Bedzin and
Katowice, which

39
00:02:55,940 --> 00:03:00,020
one could take a
train to and from,

40
00:03:00,020 --> 00:03:03,890
which took about 20 minutes
or 25 minutes of a ride.

41
00:03:03,890 --> 00:03:09,540
And the town in between
Bedzin and Katowice

42
00:03:09,540 --> 00:03:14,490
was Sosnowiec, another
town that was also

43
00:03:14,490 --> 00:03:16,410
populated by a lot of Jews.

44
00:03:16,410 --> 00:03:19,210

45
00:03:19,210 --> 00:03:21,160
What was your father's name?

46
00:03:21,160 --> 00:03:25,290
My father's name was
Bernard, and he--

47

00:03:25,290 --> 00:03:28,080
they used to call him Berek.

48

00:03:28,080 --> 00:03:32,140
And what was your father's--

49

00:03:32,140 --> 00:03:35,500
well, did your father's mother
and father, your grandparents,

50

00:03:35,500 --> 00:03:36,580
live in Bedzin, as well?

51

00:03:36,580 --> 00:03:37,150
Yes.

52

00:03:37,150 --> 00:03:38,620
Yes, they did.

53

00:03:38,620 --> 00:03:43,750
And I remember visiting
them almost every Saturday

54

00:03:43,750 --> 00:03:45,430
with the rest of my family.

55

00:03:45,430 --> 00:03:47,000
Do you remember their names?

56

00:03:47,000 --> 00:03:49,190
No, I do not
remember their names.

57

00:03:49,190 --> 00:03:51,640
Do you remember the--

58

00:03:51,640 --> 00:03:56,800
your grandmother's on your
father's side's maiden name?

59

00:03:56,800 --> 00:03:58,650

No, I do not.

60
00:03:58,650 --> 00:03:59,420
OK.

61
00:03:59,420 --> 00:04:02,900
On your mother's side, what
was your mother's name?

62
00:04:02,900 --> 00:04:08,500
My mother's name was
Rachel, R-A-C-H-E-L,

63
00:04:08,500 --> 00:04:13,660
and she was called
Ruchla, R-U-C-H-L-A,

64
00:04:13,660 --> 00:04:16,120
and her maiden name
was Lejzerowitz,

65
00:04:16,120 --> 00:04:22,960
L-E-J-Z-E-R-O-W-I-T-Z.

66
00:04:22,960 --> 00:04:24,820
And what about her parents?

67
00:04:24,820 --> 00:04:31,540
I only remember her father,
which was my grandfather,

68
00:04:31,540 --> 00:04:35,920
and his name was
Abraham Lejzerowitz.

69
00:04:35,920 --> 00:04:38,770
I don't remember my
grandmother on that side,

70
00:04:38,770 --> 00:04:43,570
because I understand that
originally my mother's mother

71

00:04:43,570 --> 00:04:46,030
died and he remarried again.

72

00:04:46,030 --> 00:04:49,090
And I do not
remember her second--

73

00:04:49,090 --> 00:04:51,850
his second wife's name.

74

00:04:51,850 --> 00:04:55,807
Did your-- now, we're talking
about your mother's side

75

00:04:55,807 --> 00:04:56,390
of the family.

76

00:04:56,390 --> 00:04:56,890
Right.

77

00:04:56,890 --> 00:04:59,620
Were there relatives
of your mother's,

78

00:04:59,620 --> 00:05:02,050
also, in Bedzin or
in that Bedzin area?

79

00:05:02,050 --> 00:05:05,200
Yes, there were relatives
in Bedzin, in that area,

80

00:05:05,200 --> 00:05:06,350
on my mother's side.

81

00:05:06,350 --> 00:05:11,260
She had a brother,
who had two children.

82

00:05:11,260 --> 00:05:14,080
I do not remember his name.

83

00:05:14,080 --> 00:05:18,430

And my grandfather
on my mother's side,

84

00:05:18,430 --> 00:05:24,710

after he got remarried, had a
child whose name was FisieK,

85

00:05:24,710 --> 00:05:30,940

F-I-S-I-E-K, and he
was about my age.

86

00:05:30,940 --> 00:05:35,470

And I always joked because
everybody was telling me

87

00:05:35,470 --> 00:05:39,190

that FisieK is my uncle, and
he was really my own age.

88

00:05:39,190 --> 00:05:42,760

I could never accept the
fact that he was my uncle.

89

00:05:42,760 --> 00:05:45,700

What about-- did your
mother have sisters?

90

00:05:45,700 --> 00:05:50,950

She-- yes, my mother had a
sister by the name of Pola,

91

00:05:50,950 --> 00:05:58,930

P-O-L-A. She was
married to my uncle,

92

00:05:58,930 --> 00:06:08,560

whose name was Max Bolimowski,
B-O-L-I-M-O-W-S-K-I.

93

00:06:08,560 --> 00:06:12,430

And I know they
had two children--

94
00:06:12,430 --> 00:06:15,370
one boy and one girl.

95
00:06:15,370 --> 00:06:21,040
And the boy's name was Ziggy,
and the girl's name was Lusia,

96
00:06:21,040 --> 00:06:24,880
L-U-S-I-A.

97
00:06:24,880 --> 00:06:29,320
Well did your mother
have any other sisters?

98
00:06:29,320 --> 00:06:32,830
My mother, I do not
remember whether she

99
00:06:32,830 --> 00:06:34,510
had any other sisters, no.

100
00:06:34,510 --> 00:06:37,990
So far, we know that your
mother had one brother

101
00:06:37,990 --> 00:06:40,010
and a sister named Pola.

102
00:06:40,010 --> 00:06:40,510
Right.

103
00:06:40,510 --> 00:06:42,640
And you don't remember
the brother's name.

104
00:06:42,640 --> 00:06:46,780
No, but if I remember,
I may bring it up again.

105
00:06:46,780 --> 00:06:50,800
What-- so far as you

know, what became

106
00:06:50,800 --> 00:06:53,860
of your mother's sister--

107
00:06:53,860 --> 00:06:56,350
sister and brother,
and their children?

108
00:06:56,350 --> 00:07:00,290
As far as I remember,
during the war--

109
00:07:00,290 --> 00:07:07,540
before the war, my uncle,
who is my mother's brother,

110
00:07:07,540 --> 00:07:15,090
divorced or separated from
his wife, and he had two sons.

111
00:07:15,090 --> 00:07:18,630
One son's name was Wowik.

112
00:07:18,630 --> 00:07:20,890
And the other's was Idek.

113
00:07:20,890 --> 00:07:23,490
Idek was the older of the sons.

114
00:07:23,490 --> 00:07:27,630
And before the war
started, he was

115
00:07:27,630 --> 00:07:30,420
forced to join the Polish army.

116
00:07:30,420 --> 00:07:33,930
Wowik was a few years
younger, and because

117
00:07:33,930 --> 00:07:36,840

of the problem
within the family,

118
00:07:36,840 --> 00:07:41,250
Wowik came to live with us for
a couple of years in Katowice,

119
00:07:41,250 --> 00:07:45,360
when we moved to
Katowice about 1930.

120
00:07:45,360 --> 00:07:47,925
Now, Wowik's last name
was Lejzerowitz, right?

121
00:07:47,925 --> 00:07:50,610
Wowik's last name
was Lejzerowitz,

122
00:07:50,610 --> 00:07:54,640
and he was a couple of
years older than I was.

123
00:07:54,640 --> 00:07:55,990
And we got very well--

124
00:07:55,990 --> 00:08:02,610
we got along very well when he
was living with us in Katowice.

125
00:08:02,610 --> 00:08:07,680
What eventually became of
Wowik to your knowledge?

126
00:08:07,680 --> 00:08:11,760
Wowik survived the
Second World War,

127
00:08:11,760 --> 00:08:15,240
and I met him a couple of
times after the World War.

128
00:08:15,240 --> 00:08:20,910

He lived in Konstanz, Germany
when I became that he was--

129
00:08:20,910 --> 00:08:22,920
when I became aware
that he was alive,

130
00:08:22,920 --> 00:08:25,620
and I made a point
to go and visit him.

131
00:08:25,620 --> 00:08:30,420
He eventually
emigrated to Australia,

132
00:08:30,420 --> 00:08:34,650
and he married a girl
in Germany still,

133
00:08:34,650 --> 00:08:38,640
who also survived the
war, and whose name--

134
00:08:38,640 --> 00:08:40,470
first name was Mirka.

135
00:08:40,470 --> 00:08:42,750
I don't remember the last name.

136
00:08:42,750 --> 00:08:46,270
Now, Wowik's brother, do
you know what became of him?

137
00:08:46,270 --> 00:08:49,590
Wowik's brother never
surfaced after the end

138
00:08:49,590 --> 00:08:50,970
of the Second World War.

139
00:08:50,970 --> 00:08:52,110
What was his name?

140

00:08:52,110 --> 00:08:53,130

Edek.

141

00:08:53,130 --> 00:08:56,850

And I believe that
he must have--

142

00:08:56,850 --> 00:09:00,540

the rumor, or what
people were saying,

143

00:09:00,540 --> 00:09:03,540

is that he died
somewhere in Russia

144

00:09:03,540 --> 00:09:05,880

during the period of
the Second World War,

145

00:09:05,880 --> 00:09:08,230

and nobody heard from him again.

146

00:09:08,230 --> 00:09:10,020

And the same goes for Fisiek.

147

00:09:10,020 --> 00:09:15,790

Fisiek ran away-- when the
Germans were advancing,

148

00:09:15,790 --> 00:09:18,800

he ran away towards
the Russian border.

149

00:09:18,800 --> 00:09:24,100

And we heard from him a couple
of times through the mail

150

00:09:24,100 --> 00:09:27,850

during the early part
of the Second World War,

151

00:09:27,850 --> 00:09:31,390

but then we never heard
anything about him again.

152
00:09:31,390 --> 00:09:34,180
And I do not know
what happened to him.

153
00:09:34,180 --> 00:09:34,750
OK.

154
00:09:34,750 --> 00:09:39,280
Let's talk about your--

155
00:09:39,280 --> 00:09:42,250
if that is the end of your
mother's side of the family

156
00:09:42,250 --> 00:09:46,480
as best that you can remember,
what about your father's

157
00:09:46,480 --> 00:09:47,540
side of the family?

158
00:09:47,540 --> 00:09:49,990
How many brothers and
sisters did your father have?

159
00:09:49,990 --> 00:09:53,410
I don't remember how many
brothers or sisters my father

160
00:09:53,410 --> 00:10:00,160
had, but I can think about
one sister and one brother.

161
00:10:00,160 --> 00:10:04,750
One brother was a
furrier in Bedzin.

162
00:10:04,750 --> 00:10:11,350
And the sister's name was
Sala, and she was probably

163
00:10:11,350 --> 00:10:18,100
in her late 30s or early
40s when a matchmaker

164
00:10:18,100 --> 00:10:20,780
found a husband for her.

165
00:10:20,780 --> 00:10:24,910
And I remember as
a child of 10 or 12

166
00:10:24,910 --> 00:10:31,900
that the wedding took place
in our apartment in Katowice.

167
00:10:31,900 --> 00:10:37,310
I also remember that
when the war broke out,

168
00:10:37,310 --> 00:10:43,400
she was pregnant, and
she did have a baby.

169
00:10:43,400 --> 00:10:47,780
And after that,
because of whatever

170
00:10:47,780 --> 00:10:50,780
happened during
that period of time,

171
00:10:50,780 --> 00:10:53,330
she vanished and I never heard--

172
00:10:53,330 --> 00:10:55,280
and I don't know
what happened to her.

173
00:10:55,280 --> 00:10:59,210
But I'm pretty sure that
she died during the war,

174

00:10:59,210 --> 00:11:01,070

as did her husband.

175

00:11:01,070 --> 00:11:04,400

So her name was Sala

Rechnitz, and you don't

176

00:11:04,400 --> 00:11:05,810

remember her married name.

177

00:11:05,810 --> 00:11:07,190

No, I do not.

178

00:11:07,190 --> 00:11:10,470

What about your

father had a brother.

179

00:11:10,470 --> 00:11:14,060

You don't remember his name?

180

00:11:14,060 --> 00:11:15,860

I don't remember, no.

181

00:11:15,860 --> 00:11:21,932

And any other cousins and

nephews and nieces and things

182

00:11:21,932 --> 00:11:23,140

from that side of the family?

183

00:11:23,140 --> 00:11:27,030

184

00:11:27,030 --> 00:11:31,240

There was a-- there was a sis--

185

00:11:31,240 --> 00:11:31,990

OK.

186

00:11:31,990 --> 00:11:35,810

My father had this sister.

187
00:11:35,810 --> 00:11:38,080
I don't remember
what her name was.

188
00:11:38,080 --> 00:11:46,920
She was married to an
intelligent Jew who--

189
00:11:46,920 --> 00:11:49,830
and she lived in Sosnowiec.

190
00:11:49,830 --> 00:11:54,540
And her mai-- her married
name was Wiederman,

191
00:11:54,540 --> 00:12:03,220
W-I-E-D-E-R-M-A-N. He was the
director of a high school,

192
00:12:03,220 --> 00:12:04,070
which was attended--

193
00:12:04,070 --> 00:12:04,570
He?

194
00:12:04,570 --> 00:12:06,090
Who's he, her husband?

195
00:12:06,090 --> 00:12:07,953
Yes.

196
00:12:07,953 --> 00:12:08,810
What was his--

197
00:12:08,810 --> 00:12:09,310
Max.

198
00:12:09,310 --> 00:12:12,060
No, no, no, there
was Max Bolimowski.

199

00:12:12,060 --> 00:12:12,880

Febek--

200

00:12:12,880 --> 00:12:13,380

Febek.

201

00:12:13,380 --> 00:12:19,860

F-E-B-E-K, Wiederman, was
a director of a high school

202

00:12:19,860 --> 00:12:22,160

in Sosnowiec, which was predom--

203

00:12:22,160 --> 00:12:26,190

which was really attended
only by Jewish children.

204

00:12:26,190 --> 00:12:29,100

They also had two children.

205

00:12:29,100 --> 00:12:33,780

One, whose name was Olek, and
I don't remember the other one.

206

00:12:33,780 --> 00:12:38,130

And I know that all of them
perished during the war,

207

00:12:38,130 --> 00:12:49,800

except my Uncle Febek, who
wrote a book about the period

208

00:12:49,800 --> 00:12:52,320

during the war in Sosnowiec.

209

00:12:52,320 --> 00:12:56,670

He was hidden for a number
of years in Sosnowiec

210

00:12:56,670 --> 00:13:01,620

by a janitor of the high school.

211

00:13:01,620 --> 00:13:07,650

And he survived the war,
and then came to America

212

00:13:07,650 --> 00:13:08,910

and wrote the book.

213

00:13:08,910 --> 00:13:13,650

I understand that the book
is in the Library of Congress

214

00:13:13,650 --> 00:13:15,060

in the United States.

215

00:13:15,060 --> 00:13:18,270

What about all the
grandparents, do you

216

00:13:18,270 --> 00:13:19,590

know what happened to them?

217

00:13:19,590 --> 00:13:21,870

Did they die natural deaths?

218

00:13:21,870 --> 00:13:24,570

Did they die in the war or what?

219

00:13:24,570 --> 00:13:28,890

I do not remember much
of the grandparents.

220

00:13:28,890 --> 00:13:34,780

I remem-- no, my mother's
father died before the war.

221

00:13:34,780 --> 00:13:39,660

And my father's father lived
with us at the beginning

222

00:13:39,660 --> 00:13:45,300

of the war in Kraków
where we moved to at the--

223
00:13:45,300 --> 00:13:47,670
before the very
beginning of the war.

224
00:13:47,670 --> 00:13:49,950
And he died a natural death.

225
00:13:49,950 --> 00:13:52,860
The rest of them, I
have absolutely no idea.

226
00:13:52,860 --> 00:13:53,670
OK.

227
00:13:53,670 --> 00:13:55,800
Let's talk about your mother.

228
00:13:55,800 --> 00:13:59,370
Your mother's maiden name
was Rachel Lejzerowitz.

229
00:13:59,370 --> 00:14:01,440
What was your mother like?

230
00:14:01,440 --> 00:14:06,930
My mother was very,
very progressive woman,

231
00:14:06,930 --> 00:14:11,790
from what I could judge
now, and even then.

232
00:14:11,790 --> 00:14:15,810
She was very active in
Jewish organizations,

233
00:14:15,810 --> 00:14:20,580
like the Hadassah in
Poland, and WIZO in Poland.

234
00:14:20,580 --> 00:14:21,150

She--

235
00:14:21,150 --> 00:14:21,730
--community--

236
00:14:21,730 --> 00:14:24,540
--she was very socially active.

237
00:14:24,540 --> 00:14:29,130
She belonged to a lot of
philanthropic organizations

238
00:14:29,130 --> 00:14:32,100
and social organizations.

239
00:14:32,100 --> 00:14:40,410
And she was really,
in my opinion,

240
00:14:40,410 --> 00:14:44,930
very advanced in her
thinking for that age.

241
00:14:44,930 --> 00:14:48,200
Didn't you-- didn't
you say something

242
00:14:48,200 --> 00:14:52,710
about your mother going to
the World's Fair in 1939?

243
00:14:52,710 --> 00:14:53,210
Yes.

244
00:14:53,210 --> 00:15:00,290
In 1939, I believe, my mother
went to the World's Fair

245
00:15:00,290 --> 00:15:02,570
in New York.

246
00:15:02,570 --> 00:15:07,760

And after the trip to New
York, she came back to Poland,

247
00:15:07,760 --> 00:15:10,430
and we were making
plans to emigrate

248
00:15:10,430 --> 00:15:12,290
to Israel at that time.

249
00:15:12,290 --> 00:15:18,920
My father was in the wholesale
leather business in Katowice,

250
00:15:18,920 --> 00:15:23,820
and he was doing
financially very well.

251
00:15:23,820 --> 00:15:29,150
And he was very respected
in the community

252
00:15:29,150 --> 00:15:31,520
and contributed money.

253
00:15:31,520 --> 00:15:34,010
And here and there,
he found himself

254
00:15:34,010 --> 00:15:36,620
in a position of
having to help out some

255
00:15:36,620 --> 00:15:39,710
of the members of the family.

256
00:15:39,710 --> 00:15:44,630
I became aware a couple of times
that when he was walking home

257
00:15:44,630 --> 00:15:50,370
from his business, he got
accosted by some Polish youth.

258

00:15:50,370 --> 00:15:53,180

And on a couple of occasions, he either

259

00:15:53,180 --> 00:15:56,700

got beaten up or chased already, or something like that.

260

00:15:56,700 --> 00:15:59,540

And I believe that that experience prompted

261

00:15:59,540 --> 00:16:03,830

him to start making arrangements to leave Poland and emigrate

262

00:16:03,830 --> 00:16:06,020

to Israel.

263

00:16:06,020 --> 00:16:08,640

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

264

00:16:08,640 --> 00:16:18,890

I have one sister who has gone to Israel in 1936.

265

00:16:18,890 --> 00:16:23,420

She was five-- she is five years older than I am.

266

00:16:23,420 --> 00:16:24,020

And--

267

00:16:24,020 --> 00:16:24,660

Her name?

268

00:16:24,660 --> 00:16:31,130

--her name is Genia, G-E-N-I-A. And she was at the last stages

269

00:16:31,130 --> 00:16:34,790
of getting her musical
education on piano,

270
00:16:34,790 --> 00:16:38,840
and she attended the
Conservatory in Tel Aviv.

271
00:16:38,840 --> 00:16:43,310
And lucky that she did,
because of the fact

272
00:16:43,310 --> 00:16:48,290
that she lived in Israel,
she was really not caught up

273
00:16:48,290 --> 00:16:50,420
in the Second World War.

274
00:16:50,420 --> 00:16:52,820
And what was your
childhood like?

275
00:16:52,820 --> 00:16:56,810
What-- where did you go to
school and things like that?

276
00:16:56,810 --> 00:17:02,630
My childhood seemed like a
very trouble-free childhood.

277
00:17:02,630 --> 00:17:11,849
I was a very normal,
pretty strong kid

278
00:17:11,849 --> 00:17:16,500
who managed to
survive by himself,

279
00:17:16,500 --> 00:17:19,920
although there was no
big question of survival

280

00:17:19,920 --> 00:17:21,510
in the early years.

281
00:17:21,510 --> 00:17:24,670
But I mixed very well
with everybody else.

282
00:17:24,670 --> 00:17:31,830
And after attending a Polish
grammar school, and also

283
00:17:31,830 --> 00:17:36,690
a Jewish cheder in
Katowice, I started

284
00:17:36,690 --> 00:17:40,830
attending a Polish high school
in which there were only

285
00:17:40,830 --> 00:17:45,000
like three or five
Jewish pupils.

286
00:17:45,000 --> 00:17:49,920
I became aware of antisemitism
at the early stage

287
00:17:49,920 --> 00:17:53,760
when one of my teachers
started making fun of me

288
00:17:53,760 --> 00:18:00,270
because I had the same last name
as another man who was building

289
00:18:00,270 --> 00:18:03,120
a huge building in Katowice.

290
00:18:03,120 --> 00:18:07,080
And he was also
always deriding me

291
00:18:07,080 --> 00:18:13,410

and trying to poke fun at me
because of that relationship.

292
00:18:13,410 --> 00:18:17,870

293
00:18:17,870 --> 00:18:22,130
I was really a rebel at
heart, because I wouldn't

294
00:18:22,130 --> 00:18:26,150
take any pressure from
anybody, and neither

295
00:18:26,150 --> 00:18:27,950
from the Polish kids.

296
00:18:27,950 --> 00:18:32,270
And I was involved in quite
a few fights in school,

297
00:18:32,270 --> 00:18:35,450
but eventually, they
started respecting me

298
00:18:35,450 --> 00:18:38,060
and I got along
very well with them.

299
00:18:38,060 --> 00:18:40,190
Although, the teachers
didn't like me

300
00:18:40,190 --> 00:18:42,470
and didn't like
the idea that there

301
00:18:42,470 --> 00:18:46,110
was a Jewish boy who
fended for himself.

302
00:18:46,110 --> 00:18:49,220
And I remember that at

the end of the year,

303

00:18:49,220 --> 00:18:52,160
they called my mother
in and told her

304

00:18:52,160 --> 00:18:56,810
that unless she makes sure that
I go to another high school,

305

00:18:56,810 --> 00:18:59,840
they will not pass
me to the next grade,

306

00:18:59,840 --> 00:19:02,990
and I would be forced
to repeat the same grade

307

00:19:02,990 --> 00:19:06,210
in that high school in Katowice.

308

00:19:06,210 --> 00:19:09,440
Why do you think
that they did that?

309

00:19:09,440 --> 00:19:12,590
Because of the fact
that I was Jewish,

310

00:19:12,590 --> 00:19:15,210
and they were going
to cause trouble.

311

00:19:15,210 --> 00:19:17,810
Well, tell me a little
bit about the fact

312

00:19:17,810 --> 00:19:21,200
that you mentioned
that you're basically

313

00:19:21,200 --> 00:19:25,550
taller and stronger and the

business about your father

314
00:19:25,550 --> 00:19:28,545
letting you be an apprentice
for mechanical things.

315
00:19:28,545 --> 00:19:29,045
OK.

316
00:19:29,045 --> 00:19:30,110
That's very interesting.

317
00:19:30,110 --> 00:19:33,890
Before I go to that,
I just want to mention

318
00:19:33,890 --> 00:19:38,490
that as a result of the
pressure being put on my mother

319
00:19:38,490 --> 00:19:40,290
to take me out of
that high school,

320
00:19:40,290 --> 00:19:44,700
I ended up commuting to the
high school in Sosnowiec

321
00:19:44,700 --> 00:19:50,490
where my uncle was the
Director of the high school.

322
00:19:50,490 --> 00:19:53,190
And I did very well
in that high school.

323
00:19:53,190 --> 00:19:56,940
My grades were good,
and the only problem

324
00:19:56,940 --> 00:20:02,760
was that I had to commute
by train to Sosnowiec

325
00:20:02,760 --> 00:20:07,980
and back, which of course,
took quite a bit more time.

326
00:20:07,980 --> 00:20:13,620
During the summers, my father
always made arrangements for us

327
00:20:13,620 --> 00:20:17,520
to go on a vacation somewhere
in the southern part of Poland

328
00:20:17,520 --> 00:20:19,450
in the mountains.

329
00:20:19,450 --> 00:20:25,170
And till I was about 14
years old, or 13 years old,

330
00:20:25,170 --> 00:20:30,780
I did that, and I had a lot of
fun because being on vacation,

331
00:20:30,780 --> 00:20:34,440
doing things in the
countryside of the mountains

332
00:20:34,440 --> 00:20:36,660
that you couldn't
do in the city,

333
00:20:36,660 --> 00:20:38,090
obviously, appealed to me.

334
00:20:38,090 --> 00:20:44,610
But when I got to be about
14 or 15, I kind of was--

335
00:20:44,610 --> 00:20:48,690
it didn't appeal to me
anymore, and I talked my father

336

00:20:48,690 --> 00:20:53,880
into letting me work for
a garage in Katowice,

337

00:20:53,880 --> 00:20:56,700
because I was always
interested in mechanics.

338

00:20:56,700 --> 00:20:59,640
And he made the
arrangement with a German

339

00:20:59,640 --> 00:21:02,160
who owned the garage
in Katowice for me

340

00:21:02,160 --> 00:21:04,980
to work there as an apprentice.

341

00:21:04,980 --> 00:21:11,640
And my father had to pay the
German owner money for me

342

00:21:11,640 --> 00:21:13,380
to be an apprentice.

343

00:21:13,380 --> 00:21:17,490
And I enjoyed it very much,
and I didn't miss my vacations

344

00:21:17,490 --> 00:21:18,780
at all.

345

00:21:18,780 --> 00:21:20,940
And I felt that
I'm doing something

346

00:21:20,940 --> 00:21:23,370
that I really liked doing.

347

00:21:23,370 --> 00:21:26,490
Among other things,

I learned how

348
00:21:26,490 --> 00:21:30,880
to drive a car at
a very early age,

349
00:21:30,880 --> 00:21:36,340
and I was very proud
of myself when I was 15

350
00:21:36,340 --> 00:21:38,300
and could drive a car.

351
00:21:38,300 --> 00:21:41,650
So you grew up,
essentially, in Katowice.

352
00:21:41,650 --> 00:21:43,750
What was it like there?

353
00:21:43,750 --> 00:21:45,070
Were you in the city?

354
00:21:45,070 --> 00:21:46,180
Did you live in the city?

355
00:21:46,180 --> 00:21:49,030
We lived in the city
in a nice apartment

356
00:21:49,030 --> 00:21:52,360
house that had three bedrooms.

357
00:21:52,360 --> 00:21:57,310
And it was a stone
building in the area

358
00:21:57,310 --> 00:22:03,340
of the town which was considered
upper class, so to speak.

359
00:22:03,340 --> 00:22:05,170

Wasn't that Jordana Street?

360
00:22:05,170 --> 00:22:07,390
That was-- right, that--

361
00:22:07,390 --> 00:22:14,180
the street's name was
Jordana, J-O-R-D-A-N-A.

362
00:22:14,180 --> 00:22:16,610
And I believe the number was 17.

363
00:22:16,610 --> 00:22:17,110
Right.

364
00:22:17,110 --> 00:22:19,910

365
00:22:19,910 --> 00:22:22,400
And then how did you happen to--

366
00:22:22,400 --> 00:22:26,810
under what circumstances
did you leave that location?

367
00:22:26,810 --> 00:22:29,600

368
00:22:29,600 --> 00:22:34,820
Before the war started while my
father was making arrangements

369
00:22:34,820 --> 00:22:44,350
to go to Israel, he sold his
wholesale store and we moved

370
00:22:44,350 --> 00:22:46,570
to Kraków.

371
00:22:46,570 --> 00:22:50,650
Matter of fact, my mother and
I already lived in Kraków while

372
00:22:50,650 --> 00:22:55,540
my father was still active in
Katowice trying to wind up his

373
00:22:55,540 --> 00:22:57,010
business deals.

374
00:22:57,010 --> 00:23:01,540
He also-- we also packed
all our belongings

375
00:23:01,540 --> 00:23:03,820
to be shipped to Israel.

376
00:23:03,820 --> 00:23:10,690
And when the war broke out on
the 1st of September of 1939,

377
00:23:10,690 --> 00:23:13,210
most of our belongings
were already

378
00:23:13,210 --> 00:23:16,540
at the railroad
station in Katowice

379
00:23:16,540 --> 00:23:19,400
on the way to being
shipped to Israel.

380
00:23:19,400 --> 00:23:23,420
Why did you move from
Katowice to Kraków?

381
00:23:23,420 --> 00:23:27,940
I really do not know,
except it was supposed

382
00:23:27,940 --> 00:23:32,220
to be a very short term move.

383

00:23:32,220 --> 00:23:35,470
And when the war
started, we obviously

384
00:23:35,470 --> 00:23:37,340
were caught in Katowice--

385
00:23:37,340 --> 00:23:39,100
in the Kraków.

386
00:23:39,100 --> 00:23:40,210
I see.

387
00:23:40,210 --> 00:23:42,970
What was it like
being in Kraków?

388
00:23:42,970 --> 00:23:44,890
So you didn't-- so when
you lived in Kraków,

389
00:23:44,890 --> 00:23:46,730
you really didn't
know anybody there.

390
00:23:46,730 --> 00:23:50,710
I didn't know Kraków at all
because I lived there very

391
00:23:50,710 --> 00:23:51,210
shortly.

392
00:23:51,210 --> 00:23:54,700
Although, as a kid, I roamed
around the city, and I thought

393
00:23:54,700 --> 00:23:59,050
it was a very interesting city
from a lot of perspectives.

394
00:23:59,050 --> 00:24:04,900
And for a boy of 16, with all
the castles and all the history

395

00:24:04,900 --> 00:24:08,110

and all the walls and
everything, stone walls

396

00:24:08,110 --> 00:24:11,300

and everything else, I thought
it was very interesting.

397

00:24:11,300 --> 00:24:15,910

I did not have any friends
in Kraków because of the very

398

00:24:15,910 --> 00:24:18,895

short amount of time
that I spent there.

399

00:24:18,895 --> 00:24:22,900

And of course, I never started
school or anything else

400

00:24:22,900 --> 00:24:25,210

in Kraków because we
were ready to move.

401

00:24:25,210 --> 00:24:27,590

And the war broke
out in September,

402

00:24:27,590 --> 00:24:32,350

which was before the
school year started.

403

00:24:32,350 --> 00:24:37,990

When the Germans moved in, and
we lived in a pretty well-to-do

404

00:24:37,990 --> 00:24:41,920

section of Kraków, about two
months or three months later,

405

00:24:41,920 --> 00:24:46,270

they took over the whole

neighborhood for their military

406
00:24:46,270 --> 00:24:51,340
or military families,
personnel, and forced us out

407
00:24:51,340 --> 00:24:53,680
of our apartment.

408
00:24:53,680 --> 00:24:58,720
And as a result of that, my
father found a place for us

409
00:24:58,720 --> 00:25:08,890
in Wieliczka, W-I-E-L-I-C-Z-K-A,
which was known all across

410
00:25:08,890 --> 00:25:14,830
Poland as the salt
mine town of Poland.

411
00:25:14,830 --> 00:25:17,350
And we found an
apartment in Wieliczka,

412
00:25:17,350 --> 00:25:21,280
which was just about 300
feet from the entrance

413
00:25:21,280 --> 00:25:23,320
to the salt mines.

414
00:25:23,320 --> 00:25:32,530
That's where I spent the first
year, or first year and a half,

415
00:25:32,530 --> 00:25:34,840
of the war.

416
00:25:34,840 --> 00:25:37,240
At that stage already,
we were forced

417

00:25:37,240 --> 00:25:43,900

to do forced labor for
the Germans in many ways.

418

00:25:43,900 --> 00:25:54,910

And in order to keep out of the
German control, so to speak,

419

00:25:54,910 --> 00:26:01,790

I joined a group of people that
commuted to work near Kraków.

420

00:26:01,790 --> 00:26:09,070

And it was a project whereby
the Germans were building

421

00:26:09,070 --> 00:26:15,010

a railroad spur to
bypass Kraków itself.

422

00:26:15,010 --> 00:26:18,550

And the spur was bypassing
Kraków heading towards

423

00:26:18,550 --> 00:26:20,730

the eastern front, towards
the Russian border.

424

00:26:20,730 --> 00:26:25,040

425

00:26:25,040 --> 00:26:31,400

I was taking the train to a
place called Krakówianka which

426

00:26:31,400 --> 00:26:35,230

was just on the
outskirts of Kraków.

427

00:26:35,230 --> 00:26:40,900

And it was forced labor,
but I did it voluntarily

428

00:26:40,900 --> 00:26:45,610

because somehow, the arrangement
was, as long as you worked

429

00:26:45,610 --> 00:26:48,910

for a German company,
or for a German project,

430

00:26:48,910 --> 00:26:51,560

the Germans left you alone.

431

00:26:51,560 --> 00:26:55,530

My father and mother
left the village

432

00:26:55,530 --> 00:27:00,050

because they had nothing to
do, no work or anything else.

433

00:27:00,050 --> 00:27:04,060

And the way we survived,
or tried to survive,

434

00:27:04,060 --> 00:27:07,060

is by selling off
gradually everything

435

00:27:07,060 --> 00:27:10,900

that we had in order
to be able to get

436

00:27:10,900 --> 00:27:15,010

cheese, and butter, and bread,
or anything else like that.

437

00:27:15,010 --> 00:27:19,990

Of course, whatever we
owned, it was very little

438

00:27:19,990 --> 00:27:24,100

and things were really
getting pretty tight.

439

00:27:24,100 --> 00:27:27,370

At one point, the
Germans decided

440

00:27:27,370 --> 00:27:31,950

that they don't need any
more Jews in Wieliczka,

441

00:27:31,950 --> 00:27:34,260

or they don't want any
more Jews in Wieliczka,

442

00:27:34,260 --> 00:27:36,960

and surrounded
the town, and they

443

00:27:36,960 --> 00:27:43,470

were going to evacuate all the
Jewish population in Wieliczka.

444

00:27:43,470 --> 00:27:47,070

Because of my work
that I commuted to,

445

00:27:47,070 --> 00:27:50,040

and because I got along
very well with one

446

00:27:50,040 --> 00:27:56,160

of the German foremen, I asked
a Polish woman to go to him

447

00:27:56,160 --> 00:27:59,180

and tell him that the town
was surrounded and would

448

00:27:59,180 --> 00:28:03,930

he please try to get
me out of that town.

449

00:28:03,930 --> 00:28:10,770

As a result of that, he
sent a truck to Wieliczka,

450

00:28:10,770 --> 00:28:14,400
and I managed to get my
mother, and my father,

451

00:28:14,400 --> 00:28:18,660
and myself, and about 30
other people on the truck,

452

00:28:18,660 --> 00:28:24,020
and we drove out from
Wieliczka, and we ended up

453

00:28:24,020 --> 00:28:28,250
on the working project itself.

454

00:28:28,250 --> 00:28:36,000
And somehow we made our home
in a brick factory or a kiln.

455

00:28:36,000 --> 00:28:41,810
And I remember we spent the
first few weeks, practically,

456

00:28:41,810 --> 00:28:46,530
in that kiln all on our own.

457

00:28:46,530 --> 00:28:50,120
There was no question about
running away or doing anything

458

00:28:50,120 --> 00:28:54,290
else, because it was
almost impossible because

459

00:28:54,290 --> 00:28:57,530
of the attitude of
the Polish population

460

00:28:57,530 --> 00:29:00,410
that we would get any
support at all, even

461

00:29:00,410 --> 00:29:03,680
if we tried to run away.

462

00:29:03,680 --> 00:29:11,240
In order to keep the Jews
working on that spur project,

463

00:29:11,240 --> 00:29:14,990
the Germans started
erecting barracks.

464

00:29:14,990 --> 00:29:20,840
And as a result, my father,
my mother, and myself

465

00:29:20,840 --> 00:29:23,880
eventually moved to
one of the barracks

466

00:29:23,880 --> 00:29:30,440
and were working for the
Germans in different capacities.

467

00:29:30,440 --> 00:29:34,040
I, because of my
mechanical background,

468

00:29:34,040 --> 00:29:39,740
got a job driving a
narrow gauge locomotive

469

00:29:39,740 --> 00:29:42,470
with wagons that
was bringing up dirt

470

00:29:42,470 --> 00:29:46,160
to build up the railroad spur.

471

00:29:46,160 --> 00:29:49,550
I don't remember what my
mother or father were doing,

472

00:29:49,550 --> 00:29:53,300
but I know they were
also doing physical work.

473
00:29:53,300 --> 00:29:58,960
At one point in that camp, I
understand I got very sick,

474
00:29:58,960 --> 00:30:03,480
and I believe it was diphtheria.

475
00:30:03,480 --> 00:30:08,930
And my arm was very,
very swollen, and I--

476
00:30:08,930 --> 00:30:11,610
I had drains in my
arm, although, there

477
00:30:11,610 --> 00:30:14,850
was no medical care of
any kind to speak of.

478
00:30:14,850 --> 00:30:18,330
Somehow, I had drains
in my arm, and I

479
00:30:18,330 --> 00:30:22,140
was delirious for
quite a few weeks

480
00:30:22,140 --> 00:30:24,900
before I started recuperating.

481
00:30:24,900 --> 00:30:29,400
I was very lucky in the
sense that I grew up

482
00:30:29,400 --> 00:30:33,960
with both Polish
and German, and I

483
00:30:33,960 --> 00:30:38,940

seemed to be liked by some of
the German foremen, which made

484
00:30:38,940 --> 00:30:40,630
life a hell of a lot easier.

485
00:30:40,630 --> 00:30:44,550
And I attribute that to the fact
that despite the fact that I

486
00:30:44,550 --> 00:30:47,590
was sick, somehow I
survived that ordeal.

487
00:30:47,590 --> 00:30:50,650

488
00:30:50,650 --> 00:30:54,760
For a period of
time myself, there

489
00:30:54,760 --> 00:30:58,690
was a small quarters
on the location where--

490
00:30:58,690 --> 00:31:01,000
on the location of the job.

491
00:31:01,000 --> 00:31:07,900
And I had the privilege of
sleeping over in those quarters

492
00:31:07,900 --> 00:31:13,600
with my father and
mother, unfortunately.

493
00:31:13,600 --> 00:31:17,470
And there were like
another 40 people

494
00:31:17,470 --> 00:31:19,540
doing the same
thing, which means

495
00:31:19,540 --> 00:31:22,690
we did not have to go
back to camp every night

496
00:31:22,690 --> 00:31:25,120
and come back in the
morning to do the job.

497
00:31:25,120 --> 00:31:32,740
However, there was an
accident, and the barn

498
00:31:32,740 --> 00:31:37,480
where the locomotives were
stored were kept overnight,

499
00:31:37,480 --> 00:31:41,800
it caught fire, and
of course, everybody

500
00:31:41,800 --> 00:31:46,080
started running and doing
whatever they could.

501
00:31:46,080 --> 00:31:50,260
And I jumped into one of
the diesel locomotives

502
00:31:50,260 --> 00:31:54,400
and got it out of the barn
before it burned down.

503
00:31:54,400 --> 00:32:00,250
But as a result of that in the
morning, a contingent of SS men

504
00:32:00,250 --> 00:32:06,450
came, and they decided
that it wasn't an accident,

505
00:32:06,450 --> 00:32:07,710
that it was sabotage.

506
00:32:07,710 --> 00:32:10,770

507
00:32:10,770 --> 00:32:16,410
They lined up everybody,
and they starting--

508
00:32:16,410 --> 00:32:21,720
they started pulling
out people to be killed.

509
00:32:21,720 --> 00:32:24,210
I remember that when I got--

510
00:32:24,210 --> 00:32:32,130
when the SS men got to me, that
the German foreman intervined

511
00:32:32,130 --> 00:32:33,360
and said, leave him alone.

512
00:32:33,360 --> 00:32:34,770
That's one of my best men.

513
00:32:34,770 --> 00:32:38,310
And that's really
why I think, also,

514
00:32:38,310 --> 00:32:42,480
one of the few things
during the war, that

515
00:32:42,480 --> 00:32:44,790
resulted in me
surviving that war,

516
00:32:44,790 --> 00:32:47,400
because there were a lot
of accidents or incidents

517
00:32:47,400 --> 00:32:51,570

that, for all practical reasons,
I should have been dead.

518
00:32:51,570 --> 00:32:53,040
Where exactly was this?

519
00:32:53,040 --> 00:32:58,080
That was in
KrakÅ³wianka on the job.

520
00:32:58,080 --> 00:33:07,830
They locked about 10 or 12 of us
survivors in a shed overnight.

521
00:33:07,830 --> 00:33:11,630
And of course, before
they locked us up,

522
00:33:11,630 --> 00:33:17,270
we watched the SS to shoot all
the people that they pulled out

523
00:33:17,270 --> 00:33:20,790
of the lineup.

524
00:33:20,790 --> 00:33:23,150
And we were convinced
that come morning,

525
00:33:23,150 --> 00:33:26,540
that we'll probably
be shot just as well.

526
00:33:26,540 --> 00:33:32,120
In the morning, they
made us load the bodies

527
00:33:32,120 --> 00:33:38,870
into the lorries that were used
on the narrow railroad spur

528
00:33:38,870 --> 00:33:43,100
and bring them out to

a location where they

529

00:33:43,100 --> 00:33:47,000

going to be bringing in fill.

530

00:33:47,000 --> 00:33:53,860

And we dumped those

bodies in that location,

531

00:33:53,860 --> 00:33:58,480

and I can still

remember that there

532

00:33:58,480 --> 00:34:03,700

must have been at least one

person who was still alive

533

00:34:03,700 --> 00:34:08,500

because his hand was coming--

534

00:34:08,500 --> 00:34:11,830

was being raised

out of the sand.

535

00:34:11,830 --> 00:34:15,460

But of course, there was nothing

that anybody could have done.

536

00:34:15,460 --> 00:34:21,060

And we had to go back to

the original work place.

537

00:34:21,060 --> 00:34:24,830

I'm sure that those

bodies are still there,

538

00:34:24,830 --> 00:34:30,610

and nobody will ever know

who those people were,

539

00:34:30,610 --> 00:34:32,380

or what those people were.

540

00:34:32,380 --> 00:34:35,590

The only incident that
I vividly remember

541

00:34:35,590 --> 00:34:40,719

is there happened to be a couple
of young children in that war

542

00:34:40,719 --> 00:34:45,400

camp that stayed overnight also
with me, with their parents.

543

00:34:45,400 --> 00:34:49,270

And because the kids were
relatively young, eight

544

00:34:49,270 --> 00:34:53,710

or 10 years old, they
didn't have anything to do.

545

00:34:53,710 --> 00:34:57,280

So they were riding with
me in the locomotive

546

00:34:57,280 --> 00:34:59,540

that I was driving.

547

00:34:59,540 --> 00:35:06,370

And during the lineup, the
SS pulled those two children,

548

00:35:06,370 --> 00:35:12,400

and the father and the
mother went absolutely crazy.

549

00:35:12,400 --> 00:35:18,780

And they were told by the SS
men, if they don't keep quiet,

550

00:35:18,780 --> 00:35:19,890

he'll shoot them, too.

551

00:35:19,890 --> 00:35:22,360

And of course, they
didn't, and as a result,

552

00:35:22,360 --> 00:35:24,750

the mother, the father
and the two children

553

00:35:24,750 --> 00:35:28,350

were shot right in front of me.

554

00:35:28,350 --> 00:35:30,130

What happened next?

555

00:35:30,130 --> 00:35:34,170

Next, after the fire, of
course, then there wasn't--

556

00:35:34,170 --> 00:35:38,880

there was nobody that could stay
on the job, or on the premises

557

00:35:38,880 --> 00:35:42,780

where the job activity
was taking place

558

00:35:42,780 --> 00:35:44,790

except by coming in
the morning, going back

559

00:35:44,790 --> 00:35:51,270

at night to the barracks,
to the barrack base.

560

00:35:51,270 --> 00:35:55,750

And just life went
on from day to day,

561

00:35:55,750 --> 00:35:59,310

hoping that the Germans will
start losing, eventually,

562

00:35:59,310 --> 00:36:03,150

and maybe that'll be the
end of our misery there.

563
00:36:03,150 --> 00:36:07,710
But unfortunately, lasted
and went on and on and on.

564
00:36:07,710 --> 00:36:13,170
Across the street, across
the road going from Kraków

565
00:36:13,170 --> 00:36:20,840
to Wieliczka, there was another
camp called Jerusalimska.

566
00:36:20,840 --> 00:36:27,970
And in that camp, there was
another large group of Jews.

567
00:36:27,970 --> 00:36:30,670
It used-- Jerusalimska
used to be

568
00:36:30,670 --> 00:36:33,550
a cemetery, a Jewish cemetery.

569
00:36:33,550 --> 00:36:38,260
And the function of
those Jews living

570
00:36:38,260 --> 00:36:41,080
on the other side of
the highway in the camp

571
00:36:41,080 --> 00:36:45,490
called Jerusalimska was
to dig up the corpses

572
00:36:45,490 --> 00:36:49,210
and retrieve the gold,
whether it's teeth, rings,

573
00:36:49,210 --> 00:36:52,750

or any other kind of jewelry,
from the corpses that

574
00:36:52,750 --> 00:36:56,590
were buried there already
for quite a long time.

575
00:36:56,590 --> 00:36:59,620
That's the only thing I
remember about Jerusalimska.

576
00:36:59,620 --> 00:37:02,020
I have never been there.

577
00:37:02,020 --> 00:37:04,180
But you could see
it from our camp

578
00:37:04,180 --> 00:37:07,030
because it was on
a hill going up,

579
00:37:07,030 --> 00:37:09,850
and you could
observe it at times

580
00:37:09,850 --> 00:37:13,770
as far as activity going there.

581
00:37:13,770 --> 00:37:21,510
After building the
spur around Krak³w, we,

582
00:37:21,510 --> 00:37:28,070
as a group of people
forced to work,

583
00:37:28,070 --> 00:37:32,450
were moved to
Skarzysko-Kamienne,

584
00:37:32,450 --> 00:37:44,120
S K A R Z Y S K O

dash K A M I E N N E.

585

00:37:44,120 --> 00:37:52,490

It was a place where the Germans
took over a munitions factory,

586

00:37:52,490 --> 00:37:55,790

and they were adding to the
capacity of the munitions

587

00:37:55,790 --> 00:37:58,380

factory.

588

00:37:58,380 --> 00:38:05,070

When they unloaded us
at Skarzysko-Kamienne,

589

00:38:05,070 --> 00:38:10,320

there were three camps
already in existence--

590

00:38:10,320 --> 00:38:14,360

Camp A, Camp B, and Camp C.

591

00:38:14,360 --> 00:38:18,440

Camp C was considered, after a
short time after they unloaded

592

00:38:18,440 --> 00:38:20,495

us from the train, we--

593

00:38:20,495 --> 00:38:22,820

I understood that
Camp C was the worst

594

00:38:22,820 --> 00:38:25,910

camp of all the three of them.

595

00:38:25,910 --> 00:38:27,740

And it was the
worst because that

596

00:38:27,740 --> 00:38:33,230
was the facility where
the artillery shells were

597
00:38:33,230 --> 00:38:38,200
being filled with the powder.

598
00:38:38,200 --> 00:38:42,130
And it was a yellow powder,
and somehow the people

599
00:38:42,130 --> 00:38:45,760
must have absorbed the
powder through their skin,

600
00:38:45,760 --> 00:38:49,120
because at the beginning,
it was really weird

601
00:38:49,120 --> 00:38:52,110
because their color was yellow.

602
00:38:52,110 --> 00:38:57,750
And of course, it was a
chemical reaction that

603
00:38:57,750 --> 00:39:01,110
made those people look yellow.

604
00:39:01,110 --> 00:39:04,260
And I understood that
their lifespan was really

605
00:39:04,260 --> 00:39:06,360
shortened by very much.

606
00:39:06,360 --> 00:39:10,380
And so when they
lined us up after they

607
00:39:10,380 --> 00:39:14,430
unloaded us from the train,
they started sorting us out,

608

00:39:14,430 --> 00:39:18,600

and they started asking for
people who are electricians,

609

00:39:18,600 --> 00:39:22,260

people that are mechanics,
and different professions.

610

00:39:22,260 --> 00:39:24,990

And the minute I
heard anybody asking

611

00:39:24,990 --> 00:39:28,560

for an electrician or a
mechanic, I raised my hand,

612

00:39:28,560 --> 00:39:36,130

and I was selected to be
moved to the other camp.

613

00:39:36,130 --> 00:39:38,950

I didn't know which one, A
or B, but it ended up being,

614

00:39:38,950 --> 00:39:46,180

I believe, A. My father
and mother, unfortunately,

615

00:39:46,180 --> 00:39:49,540

got stuck in Camp C.

616

00:39:49,540 --> 00:39:53,875

And while we were being led
out by a German guard from Camp

617

00:39:53,875 --> 00:39:57,820

C on the way to Camp
A, which was only

618

00:39:57,820 --> 00:40:00,880

a couple of miles,
or three miles away,

619
00:40:00,880 --> 00:40:04,300
the comment by the
German guard was, well,

620
00:40:04,300 --> 00:40:08,650
you got yourself another
extension of your life

621
00:40:08,650 --> 00:40:15,430
by leaving the Camp C.
I arrived at Camp A,

622
00:40:15,430 --> 00:40:18,880
and I was-- we were get--
we are put into barracks,

623
00:40:18,880 --> 00:40:25,540
and our job was to help
building a new facility

624
00:40:25,540 --> 00:40:32,500
where munitions are
going to be produced.

625
00:40:32,500 --> 00:40:36,220
I lost track of my
father and mother,

626
00:40:36,220 --> 00:40:39,220
with the exception that
once a month, there

627
00:40:39,220 --> 00:40:42,910
was a delousing
facility in our camp,

628
00:40:42,910 --> 00:40:47,800
and different groups of people
were coming in to be deloused.

629
00:40:47,800 --> 00:40:52,150
And so once a month or so,

my father, or my mother,

630
00:40:52,150 --> 00:40:55,180
came to our camp to be deloused.

631
00:40:55,180 --> 00:40:56,860
And because I knew
when they're coming,

632
00:40:56,860 --> 00:41:01,780
I always made sure that I have
the opportunity to see them.

633
00:41:01,780 --> 00:41:05,890

634
00:41:05,890 --> 00:41:09,760
This experience kind
of splits into two.

635
00:41:09,760 --> 00:41:12,580
Because of the fact
that there wasn't

636
00:41:12,580 --> 00:41:19,340
enough food to satisfy
the people's hunger,

637
00:41:19,340 --> 00:41:21,360
and because of the
fact that we had

638
00:41:21,360 --> 00:41:28,430
the number of Polish employees
working at the factory, also,

639
00:41:28,430 --> 00:41:32,630
there was already producing
artillery shells, just

640
00:41:32,630 --> 00:41:34,820
the casings.

641

00:41:34,820 --> 00:41:37,730

I found that it gives
me a good opportunity

642

00:41:37,730 --> 00:41:42,920

to put maybe a few extra hours
for a Pole, and as a result,

643

00:41:42,920 --> 00:41:46,370

he'll give me bread or
anything else to eat.

644

00:41:46,370 --> 00:41:49,010

And all of that worked
fine till I realized

645

00:41:49,010 --> 00:41:51,800

that with all the
additional food

646

00:41:51,800 --> 00:41:55,880

and working all those
additional hours physically,

647

00:41:55,880 --> 00:41:58,470

I wasn't gaining anything,
that matter of fact,

648

00:41:58,470 --> 00:41:59,840

I was getting weaker.

649

00:41:59,840 --> 00:42:02,660

And I came to the
conclusion that that idea

650

00:42:02,660 --> 00:42:04,670

wasn't such a bright idea.

651

00:42:04,670 --> 00:42:11,960

So I gave up trying to work an
evening shift besides working

652

00:42:11,960 --> 00:42:14,520
myself during the day.

653
00:42:14,520 --> 00:42:20,390
My job during the day was
hooking up different cement

654
00:42:20,390 --> 00:42:23,660
machines to the electric wires.

655
00:42:23,660 --> 00:42:29,220
And I don't know how or why, but
I became very proficient at it.

656
00:42:29,220 --> 00:42:31,580
And as a result at
the later stages,

657
00:42:31,580 --> 00:42:33,620
I was getting
extra food so there

658
00:42:33,620 --> 00:42:41,510
was no need for me to work
for a Pole or anybody else

659
00:42:41,510 --> 00:42:43,620
to try to get extra food.

660
00:42:43,620 --> 00:42:48,560
The second part of it is that
my mother and father were

661
00:42:48,560 --> 00:42:52,790
obviously stuck in
Camp C, and suddenly, I

662
00:42:52,790 --> 00:43:00,060
realized that the people that
I was friendly with kind of

663
00:43:00,060 --> 00:43:04,010
didn't communicate with

me as they used to before.

664

00:43:04,010 --> 00:43:07,110

And before long, I realized
that something happened.

665

00:43:07,110 --> 00:43:10,760

And I found out
that my mother got

666

00:43:10,760 --> 00:43:17,120

hurt, because one of the
people working in Camp C

667

00:43:17,120 --> 00:43:21,770

dropped a loaded
artillery shell,

668

00:43:21,770 --> 00:43:26,150

and the shell exploded, and
quite a number of people

669

00:43:26,150 --> 00:43:30,020

got injured, among
them, my mother.

670

00:43:30,020 --> 00:43:35,330

Because there was absolutely
no medical care at all,

671

00:43:35,330 --> 00:43:39,530

although, her injuries today
would have not been considered

672

00:43:39,530 --> 00:43:41,390

very serious, or
she would have had

673

00:43:41,390 --> 00:43:45,680

a very good chance of survival,
because of no medical care

674

00:43:45,680 --> 00:43:50,910

or attention, she was
having a very hard time.

675
00:43:50,910 --> 00:43:57,140
And my father, in
order to be as helpful,

676
00:43:57,140 --> 00:44:01,100
or do whatever he
could for my mother,

677
00:44:01,100 --> 00:44:07,340
went to the extreme of having
his gold teeth extracted

678
00:44:07,340 --> 00:44:11,300
so he can sell the
gold and buy my mother

679
00:44:11,300 --> 00:44:13,160
the proper nourishment.

680
00:44:13,160 --> 00:44:19,420
All of that did no good, and
eventually, my mother died.

681
00:44:19,420 --> 00:44:21,230
And that location,
again, was where?

682
00:44:21,230 --> 00:44:24,980
That location was
Skarzysko-Kamienne.

683
00:44:24,980 --> 00:44:27,860
I know my mother died
in Skarzysko-Kamienne.

684
00:44:27,860 --> 00:44:31,880
I have-- I know she was
buried in a mass grave.

685
00:44:31,880 --> 00:44:37,940

I really have no idea
where or what or how, but I

686
00:44:37,940 --> 00:44:43,610
guess she's one of the six
million Jews that vanished

687
00:44:43,610 --> 00:44:48,620
and that died during the
war, and nobody will ever

688
00:44:48,620 --> 00:44:50,390
know where she is.

689
00:44:50,390 --> 00:44:55,190
I am glad that I know as
much as I know about it,

690
00:44:55,190 --> 00:44:57,860
because my father survived.

691
00:44:57,860 --> 00:45:01,910
And it's from him that I
learned all the details

692
00:45:01,910 --> 00:45:06,320
about what my mother went
through before she died.

693
00:45:06,320 --> 00:45:08,840
I don't remember
precisely how long

694
00:45:08,840 --> 00:45:12,670
I have stayed in that camp.

695
00:45:12,670 --> 00:45:19,160
I know that, eventually, the
Russians started advancing,

696
00:45:19,160 --> 00:45:22,160
and the Germans really
got worried about it.

697

00:45:22,160 --> 00:45:25,580

So they shipped all
of us out, which

698

00:45:25,580 --> 00:45:32,780

was quite a number of people,
to the eastern part of Poland.

699

00:45:32,780 --> 00:45:36,770

And I know it was
like early fall,

700

00:45:36,770 --> 00:45:42,540

or late summer, to dig
ditches in a form of a V.

701

00:45:42,540 --> 00:45:47,570

They were quite deep in order
to prevent the Russian tanks

702

00:45:47,570 --> 00:45:51,560

from being able to come across.

703

00:45:51,560 --> 00:46:00,650

We were living very primitively,
and we had relatively very poor

704

00:46:00,650 --> 00:46:03,590

shelter for the climate.

705

00:46:03,590 --> 00:46:07,520

And I was lucky that it was
late summer or early fall that

706

00:46:07,520 --> 00:46:11,060

were-- otherwise, it
would have been horrible.

707

00:46:11,060 --> 00:46:20,230

We-- when they were happy having
the kind of tank traps that we

708

00:46:20,230 --> 00:46:25,300

built, they moved us from
there to Czestochowa,

709

00:46:25,300 --> 00:46:34,720

C-Z-E-S-T-O-C-H-O-W-A,
which also--

710

00:46:34,720 --> 00:46:39,250

they also had a munitions
factory in Czestochowa,

711

00:46:39,250 --> 00:46:41,590

and they also had two camps.

712

00:46:41,590 --> 00:46:45,760

And I ended up in one facility,
and my father ended up

713

00:46:45,760 --> 00:46:47,740

at the second facility.

714

00:46:47,740 --> 00:46:51,580

By comparison to
Skarzysko, Czestochowa

715

00:46:51,580 --> 00:46:54,280

wasn't that bad at all.

716

00:46:54,280 --> 00:46:57,760

I was active, and I was--

717

00:46:57,760 --> 00:47:03,430

I joined a group that was
rebuilding the engines

718

00:47:03,430 --> 00:47:06,740

for the German Tiger tanks.

719

00:47:06,740 --> 00:47:07,240

And--

720

00:47:07,240 --> 00:47:12,880

721

00:47:12,880 --> 00:47:18,280

Back from the eastern
front that broke down

722

00:47:18,280 --> 00:47:20,330

or needed rebuilding.

723

00:47:20,330 --> 00:47:23,770

And I was assigned to
a group of Germans that

724

00:47:23,770 --> 00:47:28,270

were in charge of testing the
engines after they were being

725

00:47:28,270 --> 00:47:32,590

rebuilt. The system was
that the whole engine was

726

00:47:32,590 --> 00:47:36,430

taken totally apart, and
every part was measured.

727

00:47:36,430 --> 00:47:40,000

And only the good parts were
going to go into the engine,

728

00:47:40,000 --> 00:47:42,310

or replace the new parts.

729

00:47:42,310 --> 00:47:44,260

The rest of it was thrown out.

730

00:47:44,260 --> 00:47:49,420

Because I was working with
a couple of German soldiers,

731

00:47:49,420 --> 00:47:51,790

they were kind of

taking care of me.

732

00:47:51,790 --> 00:47:54,460

I got along with them
very good, and they

733

00:47:54,460 --> 00:47:56,590

were bringing me sandwiches.

734

00:47:56,590 --> 00:48:01,120

And I even enjoyed
what I was doing.

735

00:48:01,120 --> 00:48:04,360

So as a result of that, I
had absolutely no complaints

736

00:48:04,360 --> 00:48:06,490

about that period of time.

737

00:48:06,490 --> 00:48:09,160

And contrary to a
lot of other people,

738

00:48:09,160 --> 00:48:16,080

I looked like a very well
managed member of the camp.

739

00:48:16,080 --> 00:48:18,940

740

00:48:18,940 --> 00:48:23,260

My father happened to
be in an adjoining camp,

741

00:48:23,260 --> 00:48:27,250

also in Czestochowa,
working also

742

00:48:27,250 --> 00:48:30,130

in some kind of a
munitions factory.

743

00:48:30,130 --> 00:48:35,560
And occasionally, he had a
chance to come over to the camp

744

00:48:35,560 --> 00:48:43,400
where I was living, and we had
a chance to see each other.

745

00:48:43,400 --> 00:48:48,040
He seemed to be dealing pretty
good with the overall situation

746

00:48:48,040 --> 00:48:50,380
at that time.

747

00:48:50,380 --> 00:48:56,780
Some time at the end of
1944 and beginning of 1945,

748

00:48:56,780 --> 00:49:01,180
the Russians were
advancing from the east.

749

00:49:01,180 --> 00:49:05,650
And in January of
1945, they were

750

00:49:05,650 --> 00:49:09,970
getting pretty
close to our area,

751

00:49:09,970 --> 00:49:14,120
and the Germans
decided to evacuate us.

752

00:49:14,120 --> 00:49:21,100
And one day, they just
made everybody walk out

753

00:49:21,100 --> 00:49:29,500
to the railroad spur and loaded
us on the freight wagons,

754
00:49:29,500 --> 00:49:32,500
and we started moving west.

755
00:49:32,500 --> 00:49:37,270
They emptied completely
the camp in Czestochowa.

756
00:49:37,270 --> 00:49:42,820
While we were traveling through
the night towards the west

757
00:49:42,820 --> 00:49:48,770
from Czestochowa, it was almost
ironic that at one point,

758
00:49:48,770 --> 00:49:53,950
I realized that we were
passing the town of Katowice

759
00:49:53,950 --> 00:49:57,010
where I was born.

760
00:49:57,010 --> 00:50:03,910
And of course, that brought
up an awful lot of emotions

761
00:50:03,910 --> 00:50:07,240
that I went through that period.

762
00:50:07,240 --> 00:50:11,740
We ended up in Buchenwald
after a few days.

763
00:50:11,740 --> 00:50:16,570
And Buchenwald was a
huge concentration camp

764
00:50:16,570 --> 00:50:20,830
that was in existence already,
from what I understand,

765
00:50:20,830 --> 00:50:24,220

before the beginning of
the Second World War.

766
00:50:24,220 --> 00:50:28,480
And there were rows and
rows and rows of barracks,

767
00:50:28,480 --> 00:50:32,110
and we were marched
into the camp

768
00:50:32,110 --> 00:50:38,350
and were allocated into a
wooden structure of a barrack.

769
00:50:38,350 --> 00:50:46,600
And we lived on straw
mattresses and two meals a day--

770
00:50:46,600 --> 00:50:49,960
in the morning and
in the evening.

771
00:50:49,960 --> 00:50:53,650
And we realized that the war
isn't going to last too long,

772
00:50:53,650 --> 00:50:57,310
so everybody's
hope, obviously, was

773
00:50:57,310 --> 00:51:01,810
that the Germans
will get conquered

774
00:51:01,810 --> 00:51:04,720
and we will be liberated.

775
00:51:04,720 --> 00:51:06,160
What did you eat?

776
00:51:06,160 --> 00:51:08,500
Well, we had the--

777

00:51:08,500 --> 00:51:14,080
mostly we ate soup and
1/4 of a European type

778

00:51:14,080 --> 00:51:18,070
bread, the German type
of military bread.

779

00:51:18,070 --> 00:51:21,550
However, fortunately
during that period,

780

00:51:21,550 --> 00:51:23,950
either the Americans
or the British were--

781

00:51:23,950 --> 00:51:29,320
bombed Weimar, which is a city
not too far from Buchenwald,

782

00:51:29,320 --> 00:51:32,170
and have done an
awful lot of damage

783

00:51:32,170 --> 00:51:34,850
in the residential areas.

784

00:51:34,850 --> 00:51:41,620
So the Germans took us
out to the town of Weimar,

785

00:51:41,620 --> 00:51:47,350
W-E-I-M-A-R, in order to help
clean up the damage that was

786

00:51:47,350 --> 00:51:50,170
caused by the bombardment.

787

00:51:50,170 --> 00:51:56,320
We were also-- we were
going to Weimar by train

788

00:51:56,320 --> 00:51:58,750
and coming back to
the camp by train.

789

00:51:58,750 --> 00:52:01,540
But being outside
the camp gave us

790

00:52:01,540 --> 00:52:07,210
an opportunity to get some
extra food that traditionally

791

00:52:07,210 --> 00:52:11,410
the Germans were storing in
the cellars, like potatoes,

792

00:52:11,410 --> 00:52:13,490
and jams, and some
things, maybe even

793

00:52:13,490 --> 00:52:17,840
a piece of bacon, which
obviously helped everybody

794

00:52:17,840 --> 00:52:22,640
to get more nourishment than
they were getting in the camp.

795

00:52:22,640 --> 00:52:26,450
My father also ended
up at Buchenwald

796

00:52:26,450 --> 00:52:31,040
in an adjoining
barrack, which was

797

00:52:31,040 --> 00:52:35,780
separated from ours by a fence.

798

00:52:35,780 --> 00:52:40,550
And because I was getting
enough food during the day

799

00:52:40,550 --> 00:52:44,930

while I was working in
cleaning up the destruction,

800

00:52:44,930 --> 00:52:49,610

I was able to give him some
of the food that was allocated

801

00:52:49,610 --> 00:52:54,560

to me in the evening when I
came back from work, because not

802

00:52:54,560 --> 00:53:00,350

everybody was able to
go to work in the city

803

00:53:00,350 --> 00:53:01,700

to try to clean it up.

804

00:53:01,700 --> 00:53:04,490

There were a lot of
inmates of Buchenwald

805

00:53:04,490 --> 00:53:09,930

that did not have a
chance to get extra food.

806

00:53:09,930 --> 00:53:14,900

And I was aware that there are
a lot of times the stronger

807

00:53:14,900 --> 00:53:19,700

inmates were trying to take away
the food from the weaker ones.

808

00:53:19,700 --> 00:53:23,690

And it was like a death
sentence, because the weaker

809

00:53:23,690 --> 00:53:25,610

ones could not
defend themselves,

810

00:53:25,610 --> 00:53:30,590

or could not have enough
food in order to survive.

811

00:53:30,590 --> 00:53:34,010

I definitely was a
witness to the fact

812

00:53:34,010 --> 00:53:38,090

that every day there
were a number of corpses

813

00:53:38,090 --> 00:53:43,790

that were taken out of the
area of people that did not

814

00:53:43,790 --> 00:53:48,140

have enough strength,
or who could not survive

815

00:53:48,140 --> 00:53:52,010

under those circumstances.

816

00:53:52,010 --> 00:53:54,800

The Russians still
kept advancing.

817

00:53:54,800 --> 00:53:58,550

And at one point,
the Germans decided

818

00:53:58,550 --> 00:54:03,260

to evacuate all the
Jews from Buchenwald.

819

00:54:03,260 --> 00:54:07,490

At that point, I
decided that being a Jew

820

00:54:07,490 --> 00:54:11,300

will probably be more
dangerous than not being a Jew.

821

00:54:11,300 --> 00:54:16,490

As a result, I managed
to take an armband that

822

00:54:16,490 --> 00:54:20,270

belonged to a Frenchman who
happened to be in Buchenwald

823

00:54:20,270 --> 00:54:21,770

who was dead.

824

00:54:21,770 --> 00:54:25,250

And I took his armband
and put it on my arm,

825

00:54:25,250 --> 00:54:31,730

and I got rid of my armband
which designated me as a Jew.

826

00:54:31,730 --> 00:54:36,590

And I tried to blend
in with the rest

827

00:54:36,590 --> 00:54:39,650

of the different
nationalities that

828

00:54:39,650 --> 00:54:44,720

were left in Buchenwald after
the Jews were evacuated.

829

00:54:44,720 --> 00:54:47,330

Two days, or three
days, after the Jews

830

00:54:47,330 --> 00:54:49,970

were evacuated from
Buchenwald, the Germans

831

00:54:49,970 --> 00:54:54,530

decided to evacuate
the whole camp again.

832

00:54:54,530 --> 00:54:58,250

They loaded us on freight cars, and they happened

833

00:54:58,250 --> 00:55:00,980

to be open freight cars.

834

00:55:00,980 --> 00:55:05,900

And on every freight car on top were sitting

835

00:55:05,900 --> 00:55:09,030

on each end a German soldier.

836

00:55:09,030 --> 00:55:12,590

I'm stressing this particular point,

837

00:55:12,590 --> 00:55:16,940

because three or four days out of Buchenwald

838

00:55:16,940 --> 00:55:21,770

going towards the Czech border, we

839

00:55:21,770 --> 00:55:28,220

were attacked by British airplanes on a huge railroad

840

00:55:28,220 --> 00:55:30,470

spur.

841

00:55:30,470 --> 00:55:39,970

And the train contained like 4,000 or 5,000 people

842

00:55:39,970 --> 00:55:41,980

from the Buchenwald camp.

843

00:55:41,980 --> 00:55:47,380

And I understood later that

apparently the British pilots,

844

00:55:47,380 --> 00:55:51,220

seeing those soldiers sitting
on top of those freight cars,

845

00:55:51,220 --> 00:55:55,190

thought that that was a
convoy of German soldiers

846

00:55:55,190 --> 00:56:01,450

and they strafed us with machine
guns and small bombs that

847

00:56:01,450 --> 00:56:05,730

also disrupted the railroad
system at that point.

848

00:56:05,730 --> 00:56:11,800

A lot of the people that
were in those trains

849

00:56:11,800 --> 00:56:16,120

got killed as a result
of that incident.

850

00:56:16,120 --> 00:56:20,380

And after everything
quieted down,

851

00:56:20,380 --> 00:56:27,700

we were forced to put the
bodies of all the people

852

00:56:27,700 --> 00:56:35,590

that got killed into the last
three or four railroad cars.

853

00:56:35,590 --> 00:56:44,140

And there was really just bodies
piled one on top of another.

854

00:56:44,140 --> 00:56:47,890

And the rest of
it-- the rest of us

855
00:56:47,890 --> 00:56:52,070
got into the rest
of the railroad cars

856
00:56:52,070 --> 00:56:57,640
and we continued on our
trip towards another camp

857
00:56:57,640 --> 00:57:01,750
in Czechoslovakia, I'm sure.

858
00:57:01,750 --> 00:57:06,070
I don't remember the
name of that camp,

859
00:57:06,070 --> 00:57:13,270
but it was on the
German Bavarian border.

860
00:57:13,270 --> 00:57:16,900
And we were there for a
few weeks, and then again,

861
00:57:16,900 --> 00:57:21,520
just before the end of the war,
which was the beginning of--

862
00:57:21,520 --> 00:57:24,280
the end of April,
really, the Germans

863
00:57:24,280 --> 00:57:29,530
decided to march us
out towards Dachau.

864
00:57:29,530 --> 00:57:35,380
We marched during
the night, and we

865
00:57:35,380 --> 00:57:38,320

rested during the day
hidden in the woods

866
00:57:38,320 --> 00:57:43,570
so we will not be
spotted by any airplanes.

867
00:57:43,570 --> 00:57:50,680
It was spring, and the rain was
pouring, and it was very cold.

868
00:57:50,680 --> 00:57:56,740
And a lot of people could
not keep up with it.

869
00:57:56,740 --> 00:58:00,700
And every so often, I
heard shots in the back

870
00:58:00,700 --> 00:58:05,530
and the Germans were killing the
people that could not keep up,

871
00:58:05,530 --> 00:58:09,220
or fell down and could
not walk anymore.

872
00:58:09,220 --> 00:58:14,510
I was determined that I'll
do the best to survive.

873
00:58:14,510 --> 00:58:16,600
And I always as
a result of that,

874
00:58:16,600 --> 00:58:19,630
tried to stay up
front of the column.

875
00:58:19,630 --> 00:58:24,250
The column was a long
column of the prisoners

876

00:58:24,250 --> 00:58:28,095
from the camp on
the Czech border.

877
00:58:28,095 --> 00:58:29,350
How old were you by--

878
00:58:29,350 --> 00:58:34,090
At that time frame,
I was 22 years old,

879
00:58:34,090 --> 00:58:40,780
and I could feel that the
end of the war is near.

880
00:58:40,780 --> 00:58:44,200
I-- my father, who
was in Buchenwald,

881
00:58:44,200 --> 00:58:47,620
and they had no choice, or
didn't think of a better

882
00:58:47,620 --> 00:58:51,820
solution, was evacuated
with the Jewish group

883
00:58:51,820 --> 00:58:55,060
a few days before
myself, and the rest

884
00:58:55,060 --> 00:58:59,920
of the camp in Buchenwald
was emptied out.

885
00:58:59,920 --> 00:59:09,940
On one of those nights on
the march towards Buchenwald,

886
00:59:09,940 --> 00:59:13,090
we were supposed to
rest during the day.

887

00:59:13,090 --> 00:59:18,790
But the Germans apparently
knew that there was--

888
00:59:18,790 --> 00:59:21,490
that they were
being advanced on,

889
00:59:21,490 --> 00:59:24,430
so they got us out of
the woods and put us

890
00:59:24,430 --> 00:59:28,660
on the road to march towards
Dachau during the day, which

891
00:59:28,660 --> 00:59:35,630
was totally out of style
for the last few days.

892
00:59:35,630 --> 00:59:38,740
We were marching for about an
hour and a half or two hours,

893
00:59:38,740 --> 00:59:42,130
and suddenly, I
realized that there

894
00:59:42,130 --> 00:59:46,270
was some kind of a commotion
in the back of the column.

895
00:59:46,270 --> 00:59:50,860
And I saw the column
was kind of splitting

896
00:59:50,860 --> 00:59:55,090
and a tank appeared on the rise.

897
00:59:55,090 --> 00:59:58,900
And the tank had a
star, white star on it.

898

00:59:58,900 --> 01:00:03,040
In the beginning, I thought
it must be the Russians,

899
01:00:03,040 --> 01:00:07,090
but then I realized it was
an American tank, and then

900
01:00:07,090 --> 01:00:09,100
the second, third, and so on.

901
01:00:09,100 --> 01:00:14,380
The guards that were walking
alongside on both sides of us

902
01:00:14,380 --> 01:00:17,080
started taking
off for the woods.

903
01:00:17,080 --> 01:00:21,190
And the tanks were
shooting at them,

904
01:00:21,190 --> 01:00:23,890
and you could see
the tracer bullets

905
01:00:23,890 --> 01:00:26,860
trying to get them
before they managed

906
01:00:26,860 --> 01:00:29,770
to disappear in the woods.

907
01:00:29,770 --> 01:00:33,180
At that point, of
course, everybody

908
01:00:33,180 --> 01:00:39,100
realized that this is the
moment that we waited for years.

909
01:00:39,100 --> 01:00:44,880

And although there was not
a spontaneous rejoicing,

910
01:00:44,880 --> 01:00:49,980
because everybody
was really very weak.

911
01:00:49,980 --> 01:00:52,260
We were not fed
during that march

912
01:00:52,260 --> 01:00:56,160
except getting a
cup full of grain.

913
01:00:56,160 --> 01:01:01,200
Otherwise, there was no bread,
and no drink except water.

914
01:01:01,200 --> 01:01:08,010
So when that finally happened,
the only thing I can recall now

915
01:01:08,010 --> 01:01:12,660
is that a lot of the Russians
and people that were really

916
01:01:12,660 --> 01:01:18,270
in good physical form took
off after the Germans,

917
01:01:18,270 --> 01:01:24,930
and immediately the revenge
for all that suffering

918
01:01:24,930 --> 01:01:29,950
and all those years of
misery came to the surface.

919
01:01:29,950 --> 01:01:35,880
The first and second tank
was shooting at the Germans.

920

01:01:35,880 --> 01:01:42,880
The third tank was taking
pictures of what was happening.

921
01:01:42,880 --> 01:01:46,590
And then the rest of the
tanks were throwing out

922
01:01:46,590 --> 01:01:49,950
army rations, K rations,
or C rations, which

923
01:01:49,950 --> 01:01:55,080
were packages of food that
were very well preserved

924
01:01:55,080 --> 01:01:57,300
and could last a long time.

925
01:01:57,300 --> 01:02:01,980
Obviously, everybody
pounced on the rations

926
01:02:01,980 --> 01:02:06,270
that were being thrown out by
the American crew of the tanks,

927
01:02:06,270 --> 01:02:10,630
because everybody was really
starving at that point.

928
01:02:10,630 --> 01:02:17,200
And people were just sitting
on the sides in the ditches,

929
01:02:17,200 --> 01:02:22,260
and most of them were totally
exhausted-- a lot of them

930
01:02:22,260 --> 01:02:23,880
were crying.

931
01:02:23,880 --> 01:02:30,630

And of course, if
you had the appetite

932
01:02:30,630 --> 01:02:34,290
to eat at this
stage of the game,

933
01:02:34,290 --> 01:02:37,830
you started opening
up the package

934
01:02:37,830 --> 01:02:41,310
and started eating some
of the food that was

935
01:02:41,310 --> 01:02:43,680
contained in those packages.

936
01:02:43,680 --> 01:02:48,630
It was like scrambled eggs,
little cans of scrambled eggs,

937
01:02:48,630 --> 01:02:52,080
little cans of
Spam, some crackers.

938
01:02:52,080 --> 01:02:56,520
And I remember there was a
package of four cigarettes

939
01:02:56,520 --> 01:02:59,220
as part of that whole package.

940
01:02:59,220 --> 01:03:02,010
I tried to light
up one cigarette,

941
01:03:02,010 --> 01:03:06,270
and I almost fainted because I
haven't smoked for a few years,

942
01:03:06,270 --> 01:03:08,580
and those cigarettes

were very strong

943

01:03:08,580 --> 01:03:12,010
and they almost knocked me out.

944

01:03:12,010 --> 01:03:16,350
It was midday by the time
everybody really realized

945

01:03:16,350 --> 01:03:21,030
that we are free, and we
started looking around

946

01:03:21,030 --> 01:03:26,580
as to what to do with ourselves
the first day of being free.

947

01:03:26,580 --> 01:03:32,220
We were not too far
from a small village,

948

01:03:32,220 --> 01:03:41,310
so a number of guys, and myself,
and a couple of other people

949

01:03:41,310 --> 01:03:46,170
that were kind of hanging
on to me for survival

950

01:03:46,170 --> 01:03:50,130
during the last
couple of weeks, we

951

01:03:50,130 --> 01:03:54,070
decided to occupy
a German farmhouse.

952

01:03:54,070 --> 01:03:58,570
And we-- the German disappeared.

953

01:03:58,570 --> 01:03:59,970
There was nobody in the house.

954

01:03:59,970 --> 01:04:01,710

It was a farmhouse
with animals--

955

01:04:01,710 --> 01:04:04,800

pigs, chickens, and
stuff like that.

956

01:04:04,800 --> 01:04:07,800

So we organized
ourselves and we decided

957

01:04:07,800 --> 01:04:12,900

that's what we're going to
stay overnight, and decide what

958

01:04:12,900 --> 01:04:14,730

we're going to do after that.

959

01:04:14,730 --> 01:04:19,770

960

01:04:19,770 --> 01:04:23,310

The-- and a few of
the Polish people

961

01:04:23,310 --> 01:04:28,530

that joined us used to
be cooks in the camp.

962

01:04:28,530 --> 01:04:32,220

And they said, don't
worry, tomorrow we

963

01:04:32,220 --> 01:04:34,440

are going to eat sausages.

964

01:04:34,440 --> 01:04:39,960

And they caught a pig, and
all I know is the next day,

965

01:04:39,960 --> 01:04:43,140

we were having sausages
from the pig that they

966
01:04:43,140 --> 01:04:46,230
managed to kill overnight.

967
01:04:46,230 --> 01:04:51,060
And it seemed like we were
going to have a feast.

968
01:04:51,060 --> 01:04:56,370
And one of the main things that
I remember is that they put--

969
01:04:56,370 --> 01:05:02,040
took a pan, a frying pan,
threw in a piece of lard or fat

970
01:05:02,040 --> 01:05:05,670
from the pig into the frying
pan, and when it got hot,

971
01:05:05,670 --> 01:05:09,180
they started putting
eggs into it.

972
01:05:09,180 --> 01:05:14,070
And the eggs, of course,
were boiling in that fat,

973
01:05:14,070 --> 01:05:18,460
and everybody thought it's
wonderful, including myself.

974
01:05:18,460 --> 01:05:23,550
And I-- of course, those
eggs were really fat,

975
01:05:23,550 --> 01:05:25,780
because they were
practically fried in fat.

976
01:05:25,780 --> 01:05:27,720

So I had-- I don't
know how many I had,

977
01:05:27,720 --> 01:05:30,600
but I had a few of those
eggs for breakfast.

978
01:05:30,600 --> 01:05:34,980
And as a result of that, I had
the worst diarrhea in my life

979
01:05:34,980 --> 01:05:40,350
that lasted about five or six
days because my stomach was not

980
01:05:40,350 --> 01:05:44,310
used to that kind
of food at the time.

981
01:05:44,310 --> 01:05:48,960
We stayed at the farm house
for about five or six days

982
01:05:48,960 --> 01:05:53,760
and tried to recoup
some of our strength.

983
01:05:53,760 --> 01:05:58,200
And it was very nice to have
finally a roof over your head

984
01:05:58,200 --> 01:06:01,800
and be free to do
whatever we wanted to do.

985
01:06:01,800 --> 01:06:06,250
But then the decision came as
to where do we go from here?

986
01:06:06,250 --> 01:06:08,790
Because obviously, we're not
going to stay at the farm house

987

01:06:08,790 --> 01:06:10,950
forever.

988
01:06:10,950 --> 01:06:17,780
We started on a trek to a
small town in Bavaria called

989
01:06:17,780 --> 01:06:27,600
Schwandorf, S-C-H-W-A-N-D-O-R-F.
And in Schwandorf,

990
01:06:27,600 --> 01:06:32,320
because a lot of the Germans
were either absent or ran away

991
01:06:32,320 --> 01:06:36,540
or whatever it was, we
found also an empty house

992
01:06:36,540 --> 01:06:39,750
on the outskirts of that town.

993
01:06:39,750 --> 01:06:42,690
And we kind of
organized ourselves

994
01:06:42,690 --> 01:06:51,420
and tried to shed our
concentration camp closing

995
01:06:51,420 --> 01:06:54,120
by trying to find
whatever we could

996
01:06:54,120 --> 01:06:59,340
find that would not identify
us as a concentration camp

997
01:06:59,340 --> 01:07:00,630
inmates.

998
01:07:00,630 --> 01:07:05,970
We basically tried to

join the civilian life,

999

01:07:05,970 --> 01:07:10,230
and tried to normalize our life.

1000

01:07:10,230 --> 01:07:17,160
During-- in that town, in
Schwandorf, the military police

1001

01:07:17,160 --> 01:07:19,470
established a headquarters.

1002

01:07:19,470 --> 01:07:26,730
And because I studied English
in high school in Poland,

1003

01:07:26,730 --> 01:07:29,070
I kind of struck
up a conversation

1004

01:07:29,070 --> 01:07:31,440
with some of the MPs.

1005

01:07:31,440 --> 01:07:36,540
And also a unit of the
Counter Intelligence Corps

1006

01:07:36,540 --> 01:07:40,470
had headquarters in
that City of Schwandorf.

1007

01:07:40,470 --> 01:07:43,020

1008

01:07:43,020 --> 01:07:49,590
I eventually joined the CIC,
because I spoke German, Polish

1009

01:07:49,590 --> 01:07:51,540
and English.

1010

01:07:51,540 --> 01:08:00,620

And they incorporated
me into their group,

1011
01:08:00,620 --> 01:08:05,810
gave me an army
uniform, a PX card,

1012
01:08:05,810 --> 01:08:10,490
and all kinds of identification
that I was part of the group--

1013
01:08:10,490 --> 01:08:13,080
that I was part of that group.

1014
01:08:13,080 --> 01:08:19,520
The function of this unit was
to try to find the Germans that

1015
01:08:19,520 --> 01:08:30,950
were active in Poland during
the war and were in charge

1016
01:08:30,950 --> 01:08:37,580
of the concentration camps, or
in charge of the forced labor

1017
01:08:37,580 --> 01:08:44,180
camps, and particularly, the
ones that were really abusing

1018
01:08:44,180 --> 01:08:47,960
their power vis-a--

1019
01:08:47,960 --> 01:08:55,819
the prisoners, or the people
in the concentration camps.

1020
01:08:55,819 --> 01:09:00,710
Because a lot of the
construction companies that

1021
01:09:00,710 --> 01:09:06,470
were working in Poland

originated in Bavaria,

1022

01:09:06,470 --> 01:09:11,090
we ended up going to the offices
of the different companies

1023

01:09:11,090 --> 01:09:14,330
and found the
names and addresses

1024

01:09:14,330 --> 01:09:20,630
of the particular people that
were really taking advantage

1025

01:09:20,630 --> 01:09:23,029
of the power that they
had during the war

1026

01:09:23,029 --> 01:09:29,930
in terms of persecuting and
killing some of the prisoners.

1027

01:09:29,930 --> 01:09:35,420
As a result of that
activity, a number of them

1028

01:09:35,420 --> 01:09:41,180
were found and were returned
to Poland for trial.

1029

01:09:41,180 --> 01:09:45,350
And I understood that
quite a number of them

1030

01:09:45,350 --> 01:09:49,640
were found guilty and were
given the death sentence

1031

01:09:49,640 --> 01:09:57,620
and executed in Poland
during 1946 and '47.

1032

01:09:57,620 --> 01:10:05,900

During my activity
in Schwandorf,

1033
01:10:05,900 --> 01:10:10,460
my father managed to
realize that I was alive

1034
01:10:10,460 --> 01:10:12,600
and I was in Schwandorf.

1035
01:10:12,600 --> 01:10:15,320
And at the same
time, I also realized

1036
01:10:15,320 --> 01:10:18,740
that he survived the war.

1037
01:10:18,740 --> 01:10:24,770
We-- a lot of lists were
published all over Germany

1038
01:10:24,770 --> 01:10:28,040
of the names of the
survivors, and this

1039
01:10:28,040 --> 01:10:33,500
is how I found him and he
found me on one of the lists.

1040
01:10:33,500 --> 01:10:38,750
We were reunited about two
months, or three months,

1041
01:10:38,750 --> 01:10:40,820
after the end of the war.

1042
01:10:40,820 --> 01:10:47,090
And needless to say, it was
a very, very joyous occasion.

1043
01:10:47,090 --> 01:10:50,840
The only sad part
of that whole period

1044
01:10:50,840 --> 01:10:56,570
was that my mother did
not survive the war.

1045
01:10:56,570 --> 01:11:03,170
My sister which spent her time,
which was in Israel during all

1046
01:11:03,170 --> 01:11:06,650
of that period,
obviously did not

1047
01:11:06,650 --> 01:11:13,340
suffer as a result of the war,
except she was mentally very

1048
01:11:13,340 --> 01:11:16,400
distressed because
she did not hear

1049
01:11:16,400 --> 01:11:20,000
of her parents or her
brother, being me,

1050
01:11:20,000 --> 01:11:24,860
and she suffered terribly
because of what she knew

1051
01:11:24,860 --> 01:11:27,950
the people in
Europe are suffering

1052
01:11:27,950 --> 01:11:32,930
while she was living in
Palestine during those years.

1053
01:11:32,930 --> 01:11:38,480
After working with the
CIC for close to a year,

1054
01:11:38,480 --> 01:11:45,110
I was employed by the United

Nations Rehabilitation

1055

01:11:45,110 --> 01:11:49,790

Organization, which was
very active in Germany.

1056

01:11:49,790 --> 01:12:06,110

And I moved to Regensburg,
R-E-G-E-N-S-B-U-R-G. And part--

1057

01:12:06,110 --> 01:12:09,520

the unit that I was active
at the United Nations

1058

01:12:09,520 --> 01:12:13,340

Rehabilitation
Organization was the part

1059

01:12:13,340 --> 01:12:17,270

of the United Joint Appeal.

1060

01:12:17,270 --> 01:12:21,020

And I was very active
in Jewish causes

1061

01:12:21,020 --> 01:12:26,480

going from displaced persons
camp to displaced persons camp.

1062

01:12:26,480 --> 01:12:32,690

I worked originally with
a fellow from the States

1063

01:12:32,690 --> 01:12:37,730

by the name of Joe
Levine, who lives now

1064

01:12:37,730 --> 01:12:44,120

in Fort Wayne, Indiana,
and is also very active

1065

01:12:44,120 --> 01:12:47,570

getting all the facts

during the war together.

1066
01:12:47,570 --> 01:12:50,960
He's active in the
Jewish Historical Society

1067
01:12:50,960 --> 01:12:53,300
in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

1068
01:12:53,300 --> 01:12:58,650
Eventually, towards
the end of 1947,

1069
01:12:58,650 --> 01:13:03,450
my father emigrated to
Israel through an underground

1070
01:13:03,450 --> 01:13:11,670
organization, and I followed,
myself, at the end of 1948

1071
01:13:11,670 --> 01:13:12,870
to Israel.

1072
01:13:12,870 --> 01:13:19,110
And I lived in Israel five years
before I came to the States.

1073
01:13:19,110 --> 01:13:22,920
As far as I know,
before the war,

1074
01:13:22,920 --> 01:13:27,480
there were about 40 members
of our immediate family.

1075
01:13:27,480 --> 01:13:34,560
That means uncles, aunts,
cousins, and the only ones

1076
01:13:34,560 --> 01:13:38,520
that I am aware
that survived was

1077

01:13:38,520 --> 01:13:43,470

Max Bolimowski, my uncle
on my mother's side,

1078

01:13:43,470 --> 01:13:50,670

and Febek Wiederman, whom
I mentioned before, who

1079

01:13:50,670 --> 01:13:55,590

was my father's brother-in-law.

1080

01:13:55,590 --> 01:14:00,030

To fill in some
of the details, I

1081

01:14:00,030 --> 01:14:04,380

belong to the HaNoar
organization in Poland

1082

01:14:04,380 --> 01:14:07,530

when I was a young kid.

1083

01:14:07,530 --> 01:14:12,000

And that organization
was active in all kinds

1084

01:14:12,000 --> 01:14:16,680

of Zionist activities,
including collections of money

1085

01:14:16,680 --> 01:14:20,490

to buy land from the Arabs
in Palestine at that time.

1086

01:14:20,490 --> 01:14:24,990

There was also another
organization called Betar

1087

01:14:24,990 --> 01:14:26,520

to which I did not belong.

1088

01:14:26,520 --> 01:14:29,100

1089

01:14:29,100 --> 01:14:34,230

During my growing up in
Katowice, and the time that

1090

01:14:34,230 --> 01:14:35,820

I attended the cheyder.

1091

01:14:35,820 --> 01:14:41,220

I spoke Polish, German, I
took English in high school,

1092

01:14:41,220 --> 01:14:43,680

and I also spoke Yiddish.

1093

01:14:43,680 --> 01:14:49,750

And of course, I learned
to read and write Hebrew.

1094

01:14:49,750 --> 01:14:52,870

You didn't mention much about
your hobbies growing up.

1095

01:14:52,870 --> 01:14:53,590

Why don't you--

1096

01:14:53,590 --> 01:14:56,170

My hobbies when I
was growing up was

1097

01:14:56,170 --> 01:14:59,030

a lot of different
types of sports,

1098

01:14:59,030 --> 01:15:04,570

including ice skating,
skiing, bicycling,

1099

01:15:04,570 --> 01:15:09,970

and one of the other activities
was boxing, which I ended up

1100
01:15:09,970 --> 01:15:13,490
with a broken nose.

1101
01:15:13,490 --> 01:15:17,000
You didn't mention-- you
wanted to mention something

1102
01:15:17,000 --> 01:15:24,480
about the UJA shipping packages.

1103
01:15:24,480 --> 01:15:27,790
After the war while I joined
the United Jewish Appeal

1104
01:15:27,790 --> 01:15:35,470
organization, and I was
working with a representative

1105
01:15:35,470 --> 01:15:40,360
from the United States,
Joe Levine and Abe Cohen

1106
01:15:40,360 --> 01:15:45,440
from Detroit, who took Joe
Levine's place, eventually,

1107
01:15:45,440 --> 01:15:48,920
we used to receive an
enormous amount of packages

1108
01:15:48,920 --> 01:15:51,170
from the Jews in America.

1109
01:15:51,170 --> 01:15:54,440
The packages included
all kinds of clothing,

1110
01:15:54,440 --> 01:15:58,070
which was definitely needed
because the people that

1111

01:15:58,070 --> 01:16:01,580
were liberated from camps
had absolutely nothing that

1112
01:16:01,580 --> 01:16:03,620
belonged to them in
terms of clothing

1113
01:16:03,620 --> 01:16:07,730
or any other possessions.

1114
01:16:07,730 --> 01:16:10,400
The other thing that you wanted
to make sure and fill in here

1115
01:16:10,400 --> 01:16:15,800
was the whole connection of the
musical talent in your family,

1116
01:16:15,800 --> 01:16:17,963
where it began, and how it has--

1117
01:16:17,963 --> 01:16:18,830
That's right.

1118
01:16:18,830 --> 01:16:24,060
The musical talent in my family
originated with my mother,

1119
01:16:24,060 --> 01:16:26,180
who was also a pianist.

1120
01:16:26,180 --> 01:16:31,700
And because of her, my sister
was attending the Conservatory

1121
01:16:31,700 --> 01:16:34,110
learning the piano in Poland.

1122
01:16:34,110 --> 01:16:38,150
And that's why she
ended up in Israel

1123

01:16:38,150 --> 01:16:41,960
to finish her studies in the
Conservatory of Tel Aviv.

1124

01:16:41,960 --> 01:16:48,020
As a result of her background,
her son now, whose name

1125

01:16:48,020 --> 01:16:49,730
is Rami Bar-Niv.

1126

01:16:49,730 --> 01:16:53,180
He's a famous pianist who
travels around the world giving

1127

01:16:53,180 --> 01:16:55,805
concerts in classical music.

1128

01:16:55,805 --> 01:16:59,450

1129

01:16:59,450 --> 01:17:05,810
This is all that I have to say
for now about my early life,

1130

01:17:05,810 --> 01:17:08,510
and the years during the war.

1131

01:17:08,510 --> 01:17:13,700
Even though it sounds very
cut and dry during narration,

1132

01:17:13,700 --> 01:17:19,160
I must admit it is a very
unnerving, emotional experience

1133

01:17:19,160 --> 01:17:22,650
to recount those days in detail.

1134

01:17:22,650 --> 01:17:29,030
I hope this tape will be of good
use to the Holocaust Museum.

1135
01:17:29,030 --> 01:17:31,890
Thank you.

1136
01:17:31,890 --> 01:17:33,760
Thank you.

1137
01:17:33,760 --> 01:34:28,000