

INTERVIEW WITH HARRY TABRYS

JULY 27, 1992

POTOMAC, MARYLAND

The date is July 27, 1992 and we are speaking with Mr. Harry Tabrys in Potomac, Maryland. Mr. Tabrys, could you please tell me your name, your name during the war, your date of birth, your place of birth and then anything you possibly can about your childhood and growing up in your town; and where you went to school and about your family, and--, okay?

My name is Harry Tabrys. I was born in Vilna, Poland in 1924. The exact day would be March 4. We were a family of six children and my parents, of course, were a family; I mean a larger family of aunts and uncles and grandparents. I myself was the second one after my older brother. I went to school in Vilna. Actually I went to three schools. I started out with a Hebrew school, then I went to a Jewish school and then switched to a public school.

Could you tell me the difference between a Hebrew school and a Jewish school?

Hebrew was a cheder--was strictly a cheder. Jewish school was mostly Jewish language plus the Polish language. The public school was strictly, everything was taught in Polish. The reason was financially because public school was supported by the government and didn't cost you as much whereas the others you had to pay for it. In other words, like you go to private schools here in the United States.

Was the Jewish school run by a particular organization or was it private Tarbut (24) schools or something like that or--?

I actually don't remember. As far as I know, you used to pay monthly. You used to have pay monthly because it was privately. By what kind of an organization it was run, I don't remember.

Also, were you called Harry in Poland?

In Poland my name was Aaron.

Aaron. Then you were called Aaron by your family?

Aaron. In fact, the town where I come from, you know. They didn't call me Aaron. My name as it is written in Polish is written Aron but they called me Arke (30).

Arke?

Yeah.

How would you spell that in English?

In English, A-r-k-e. Because in the town, everybody by whatever name you had, had the end of the name was always k-e, always k-e. My childhood, of course, I mean in a family where there's six kids and the sole provider was my father, was not easy. As the time progressed and it came closer and closer towards 1939, the anti-semitism was growing and the Jewish worker was losing more and more as far as his source of support. The situation, the economic situation got worse and worse and worse.

What was your father's occupation?

My father's occupation was, actually he was a chimney sweep. Besides that he used to do all kinds of masonry. He made a living I mean as far as I can remember. When my older brother got of age, for instance, I would say about the age of 14, he was already helping out with my father. I was still going to school. Life, I mean, as far as social life was very, very interesting. Vilna was known as town most progressive in Jewish and Hebrew education. It was renowned for the Yivo (53), they call it. Also that--one of the biggest rabbis comes to Vilna, they call it Vilna Golan (55). We enjoyed ourselves amongst the Jewish population I'm talking about, enjoyed ourselves spiritually and intellectually very, very much.

Was your family observant?

No, the fact of the matter is that my grandfather, the one that I do remember, my mother's father and mother, they were very observant. They forced us, in other words the boys, my brother and myself,

they forced us to go to temple with them until about the age about 12 or 13, if I remember correctly. But my father and mother, they were not too observant.

You didn't keep Shabbos?

Yes. There's no question about it. Was a kosher home.

Oh, it was?

But they were not too observant. By that I mean they didn't go to temple as a lot of them did in--especially when it came Friday and Saturday. But our parents, they forced us to go with them. Till it came to the age when we seen a lot of others started to belong to organizations which were more or less freethinkers. We stopped to go, rebelled and started to go around in groups and join for instance, some of them joined Hahomer Hatzair; some of them joined Betar, some of them joined the Bund.

Were you involved in any one of --?

Yes, I belonged to the organization, the underground organization supposedly that a lot of them thought because of the Polish anti- semitism and Russia right there next to, bordering Poland--they thought it was best to belong to the communist organization. What did I know much in--as far as life in Russia, at age 12 or 13. So you used to get together, illegally supposedly because the communist organization was in Poland, they were underground. In other words, they were not allowed to be open.

What was this organization called?

I don't remember the name of it but there was always around a little older, an instructor we used together for a couple of years before the war started. We didn't do any special activities, just indoctrinated us. Then again as the time went further and much closer, it was 1939, things happened in our household. Rather it was already in 1939 when the war started and Germany occupied half of Poland and Russia occupied the part where I was born. The time of the occupation occurred, I've heard my older brother, because of the economic situation, my older brother started to go and organize some food. Went to the Russian side and one day was caught crossing the border. He was arrested and he was sent away. Because of it, me, being the second one in the household,

the oldest one, at that time, my father had an accident, you know. He lost the sight almost, in both eyes. Because he was unable to provide for the family, I was the one to take over it. I was the sole provider. You can imagine the next two years, me a fourteen year old boy providing for the family with the rest of the family. It happened that my father, thank God, he had an operation. Both retinas were detached--he had an operation and somehow he regained most of his sight. But still he wasn't able to do much because he can't; in an operation like that you're not supposed to lift, or strain yourself or anything like it. It was very, very rough. Then it came the time, all of a sudden in 1941 when Germany started a war against Russia and the whole thing turned upside down.

How was it though during the occupation, the early occupation? You were allowed to work? It was, I mean, the Russians didn't persecute you?

The fact of the matter is that while the Russians were there, they formed what they call--like unions. Each trade--they formed a union of each trade and each trade--and I mean there was foremen and stuff like that. Me, being already the age of 15, almost 16, I started to belong to the same trade organization, all these that are chimney sweeps for instance, Poles or Jews, all belonged to this trade organization. They took away private enterprise. For instance, people that had stores, they confiscated it. Any trade, you had to belong to one group, like you call a union here. Being that I started to belong to these organization, our situation a little bit improved because of the fact that they didn't discriminate. Somehow, we managed a little bit better because we didn't have this anti-semitism that used to be before the Russian came in. Then, in between the government changed. Russians gave the town to the Lithuanians; Lithuanians were there nine months. After that were kicked out and Russians took it back until the moment when the war between Germany and Russia broke out. Everything went haywire, everything.

Can I ask you, can I back up for a minute?

Go ahead.

What language did you speak at home?

Mostly Jewish, Yiddish.

When the Russians came, did you know Russian or--?

I started to learn by myself. As a matter of fact is I have learned to a point. Didn't go to school, didn't have the time because I had to support, had to work. But they brought in Russian films, Russian literature and everything. By myself, I learned the language, learned to speak because the Slavic language, Polish and Russian are little bit, you might say, more or less, related. I even learned how to write by myself in those two years. But I've since forgotten. I still hear when somebody speaks to me Russian, I understand what they're saying. Lithuanian language, I never learned. There wasn't much time for it. They were only there about nine months. The main language that we spoke in our family was Yiddish which was the main language of all the Jewish population in Wilna. Then, like I said, again when the war broke out at that time, I happened to be-- there was an epidemic, typhoid epidemic in town. I got sick a few weeks before. I was laid up in hospital and when the war broke out, I was in the hospital. But still and all and as much as I could, I got together the few friends because we knew already what was going on in Germany all these years before the Germans occupied half of Poland, especially after they occupied, we knew what was going on, we heard a lot. If your friends started to run away as much as you could toward the Russian side. Problem was because of my previous illness and without any proper transportation, we couldn't go too far. The Germans in the blitzkrieg, went so far ahead, way ahead of us. We had no choice but to return home. When we came back at home all the decrees started, every single day a new decree started. Little by little, first it started out by grabbing the young or the middle-aged man, they started to grab for work. Some of them never came back. Then, all of a sudden, they changed their policy and we thought that they're going to grab the men and the young boys so we started to hide out. One of these days, they reversed the policy. Instead of taking the young men and the grown-ups, they took all the women, the elderly and the children. The first time they did that, I remember there's more intent housing or something like that. They gathered them together and about six kilometers out of town was a place called Ponari (189). That's where they killed them all. We didn't know at the time but that's what it happened.

This was the Issacs group then?

There was the Issacson group (194) together with the Lithuania. That time already they forced, not they forced, they volunteered. They, Lithuanian a lot of them, volunteered in the SS and they did it together with them. There was a place that had some dug, some big trenches for oil storage, the Russian did that. That's where the first killing started. As a matter of fact, over the years, they killed half, at least half of the population, the Jewish population were killed down there. This how it happened that my mother and the youngest four children, they took them; it was six weeks after the occupation. I remained with my father. My older brother was in Russia and about a week or two later, they formed the ghetto. At first they formed two ghettos. We were lucky in a sense in the beginning that one of the ghettos that they formed, we lived right on the premises. We didn't have to move. The rest of the family, for instance, my father's brother and his family, my uncle; my father's sister, my aunt; the grandparents were already--they were killed also in the first massacre. They were forced and could take whatever belongings they could and they were brought into the ghetto. After a couple of weeks, they decide to liquidate one of the ghettos in which I was and they

transported, some of them transported, the more able, the younger ones, transported to the bigger ghetto which was only, you might say, just across the street. The first one, the smaller ghetto, they liquidated it. Whoever was again according to them, too young, too old, mothers with children, they sent to Ponari. In the beginning, nobody knew exactly where they went but it didn't take long. Later on we found that out. This is how life started in the ghetto and the ghetto there was only about six streets. The six streets and the six streets they squeezed together in the beginning, they squeezed together about 50 or 60 thousand people. Little by little, the ghetto took about two years. Every now and then they came and they cleaned out as they say, they pulled out a certain amount of people. They requested, let's say the Jewish police, they should help them out.

What did you do, did you work while you were in the ghetto?

I did the same thing.

Oh you did.

I did the same thing. I was fortunate while I was in ghetto, I was fortunate enough to be able to go out on the outside by myself because according to my occupation, I was--. They divided the town into nine zones and I was given one of the zones. I was given with three Polish workers in the same occupation. I had to join them every morning and go to work with them. This way, I was fortunate that I could go by myself without a guard and come back by myself without a guard. Of course, you weren't allowed to walk on the sidewalk. You had to wear the yellow star on both sides but most of the people that went out to work on the outside of the ghetto, they had to go with a guard to work and back home to the ghetto, My father remained working in the ghetto and I was going on the outside. On the outside you had opportunities; you meet people, I mean the Polish population, of course. You had opportunities to somehow organize as far as food was concerned. You bartered clothing for food whatever you could and you smuggled food into the ghetto. Of course, it was life-threatening. If you got caught, you could be shot. In fact, the same group that was working on the outside the same trade, we formed a group, we organized it so we could smuggle in as much food as we could. We couldn't say that we starved for hunger as far as food is concerned. But we lived in always you lived in ghetto without knowing what the next day is going to bring. Because every couple of days, every couple of weeks we had different rules and different--how should I say? they came out with--in Yiddish they call it gzetzin (284)--

Ordinances?

Ordinances. Every day and everything was designed so to make you feel more secure. It was always the opposite what you thought is going to be. Little by little as the time went on, they were taking out more and more people and the ghetto is getting less and less and less. Still in the ghetto, while we were there, surprisingly enough, the ghetto was organized with a lot of self-help. We had should I say, clinics, for instance. There was a hospital there in the ghetto. Everything was manned by the Jewish. There was kitchens, people couldn't afford meals. There was even the organized concerts, within ourselves. Of course, it was illegal. Was a little library that you could go in and to read something.

Where did you live in the ghetto?

In the ghetto, wherever there's left, I mean, from the six streets. Five story houses mostly. All five story houses and they squeezed us in, you might say, in a room, you could have three or four families. It was--the sanitary conditions was horrible because you didn't have no running water. Electricity, they had. Some of them had, for instance, a toilet but it was a general toilet for the whole--could have been in this house, it's a big house, could have been fifty or sixty apartments. Imagine each apartment was about God knows how many families. There was one toilet in the whole house, all the way down. Sanitary conditions is much to be desired. Was going on like that, you know, for almost two years until it came, I suppose, the order to liquidate the ghetto. When the order came to liquidate the ghetto, by that time already we knew where the rest of the families went. Before that already our resistance formed in the ghetto. Resistance consisted of people that belonged to organizations before the ones I mentioned previously. They tried to organize, to some armaments, like guns, ammunition. In fact many times, me being able to go out by myself, they required my help by bringing in guns that were bought on the outside. I helped them with that. Most of the people that belonged to the organizations were in their twenties and they somehow contacted Warsaw and they heard what was going on in Warsaw, how they organized themselves. They wanted to do the same thing there but it didn't work out that way. Not too long before the liquidation of the ghetto, the Germans knew exactly what was going on. I suppose because there was a lot of people, especially in the Jewish police, they hoped that they're going to survive and they squealed. They knew where they were and one day they came in in the ghetto---. One day they came in the Germans, the SS and they knew exactly where the underground people were hiding. They put dynamite in one of the buildings and they blew it up. With that, the resistance collapsed and whoever could, run out of the ghetto through the underground tunnels, the water, the sewers and they disappeared. Most of them went to the forest where they organized themselves as partisans. The rest of us remained until the last minute until the liquidation of the ghetto.

So you remained in the ghetto?

I remained in the ghetto until about two weeks before the complete liquidation I was caught and I was shipped away to Estonia. In Estonia I was there for about a year. In Estonia they call it working camps, it's not liquidation camps, I mean. There were numerous working camps in Estonia. I happened to be in seven of them. I was shipped around from one to the other. Then I mean the situation in the camps was not the same like in the ghetto.

Was this between 1942 or '43?. Is that right?

That was between 1943 and '44. The liquidation of the ghetto was in '43. The year I was there was from 1943 to '44. Like I mentioned before, I was in seven different camps. What I went through there and everybody with me, it's undescrivable because--just to give you a for instance--. When it came first to one of the camps, was a transition camp. There a couple of weeks and they send us out another camp. It started out to be colder at that time, winter was approaching. We were given, for the first time we were given the stripes, jacket and the striped pants. The shoes were wooden shoes. The winter started out with snow and the snow accumulated on the shoes, you couldn't walk. It was from one camp to the other and one camp became--we went out in the morning, we came back at night, the camp burned down completely. There was nowheres to go. Now this camps, I contacted typhoid again. How I survived almost three hundred--I think a tenth, ten percent survived. I remember like today, it was on New Year's Even, took the ten percent of us and they transported us from this camp to another. One of the camps we came, we were there the longest; we were about six months that was better already because each day when they took us to work, I used to escape and rifle information and went to work and scrounged whatever I could in order to survive. Then before they came in, I mean came back to the ghetto, to the camp, I used to smuggle in and went to the ghetto with them. In the end, we were as far away as Narva (423) which is a town not too far from Finland. Then the Russians started to come closer and closer. As they came closer, they took a lot of us and transported us back to Germany. In fact, they took a transport, if I remember correctly, for about four or five thousand and put us on a ship and transported us all the way to the Baltic Sea to Stuthof (432) which was concentration camp. There were Germans, if I remember correctly, there were Germans standing there right on the dock. They were begging army they should take them because they felt that the Russians were right there behind them. They let them stay and they took us instead. Why, I never could figure out. They brought us back to Stuthof. We were there in Stuthof, it was a big concentration camp; we were there for about six weeks. They had us formed again brooks and send us into Germany, somewheres in Bavaria, a place called Daumer____-(44). A thousand people. This was the worst of them all. How I survived, I can't imagine to this day. There wasn't a thing I didn't do in order to get something extra to eat. There you couldn't go out, you couldn't scrounge, you couldn't beg, you had to work. Sanitary conditions were unbearable. The place was just full of mud. If anybody was, let's say, a little bit weak and had to walk through the mud especially now when it got a little bit colder and the mud froze a little bit on top. If anybody had to walk there, to the latrine what they call it, a toilet, outside toilet and they sunk into the mud, they couldn't get out. They died there on the spot. There were deaths every single day and every single night. They had the latrine in a barrack. The barrack consisted, they

used to bring you later on more and more people, the barrack consisted of a thousand people approximately. There were a lot of nationalities brought in, Poles, Russians, people were dying there like flies. So in order to survive, there was a latrine, it was like a wheelbarrow except without wheels, just with handles. The front handles in the back. People with all kinds of diseases used to go to the latrine and they had to have a couple of volunteers to get it out this here on the outside and dump it. I volunteered for an extra piece of bread. This is somehow how I survived. To tell you about the sanitary conditions, there were operations being performed and I mean by Jewish doctors, people had gangrene and all that stuff, with real butcher knives. Didn't have no instruments, didn't have anesthesia. The lice are crawling all around us. They had one stove, a big stove, a pot-belly stove in the middle of the barrack. Talking about a barrack, it looked like a hanger and from both sides, it was a-- slept three rows, we slept on straw, bunks. I used to go at night, used to go down there to the stove, the pot-belly stove because they had to use a lot of coal. The stove was red hot, take off my clothes and by the stove, try to kill the lice. I'm shivering while I'm talking about it because if I remind myself, it's no wonder.

We'll stop and turn the tape over.

Okay. (End of Side A, Tape I) In this camp I was talking about, last point out when I was there for about nine months. One day, a few months before we were shipped out of there, all of a sudden the conditions started to improve. We couldn't figure out why. We found it out after we were liberated; we found it out what was happening. Turns out Himmler was negotiating with some Jewish organization or with the Red Cross about a certain amount, to spare a certain amount of Jewish, mostly kids for a certain amount of money. Because they already knew, they figured that the Third Reich is not going to last too long. They were willing to show the Red Cross the conditions in certain camps how they are, not as bad as the whole world was talking about. So they started to improve the conditions. First of all, what they did is, they cleaned it up. For instance, in our camp like I told you, there was mud mostly so they made sidewalks out of planks that you could walk on. They changed everybody's ____ (18); they changed the clothes and they send us, they bathed us and unloused us, what they call it. In other words, got rid of the lice; improved the rations a little bit. That itself was a little bit help. Nobody came, nobody looked into it, until it came the time they shipped us out from there and the main reason they shipped us out is because the war was closing in. They tried to save themselves; they tried to--hoped to take a certain amount of the, what they call the heflinger, which were us, the prisoners, together with them. They were talking about that in the Alps they had some tunnels in the mountains there and they would survive there. They needed some ____ (29) to work for them. They transported us--first they brought us into Dachau. In Dachau, I was there for about three weeks. As the Americans was coming closer from the west and the south and the Russians from the east, little by little, it got more and more dangerous for them and they transported us from Dachau. In Dachau we were there we weren't doing a thing. We weren't given anything to eat practically and we weren't doing--we were unable because we didn't have no strength. They transported us by cattle cars of course, along towards the Alps. In May, it was April 30, 1945, May 1st, I remember like the day--. It was a very, very cold and snowy day. It

was coming down, snow was coming down, wet snow was coming down from April 30th at night to May 1st. American planes was coming overhead. We woke up on May 1st, we didn't find no more SS guards, they disappeared. We were left in our own. It was a little town and the-- nearby was where the train stopped. We were all started to walk towards it and tried to get some clothing, some food, whatever we could from the German population there. The town was called Stathga (49). Everybody more or less in groups, I was in a group with another four guys. We found a place where to sleep and we organized some food and didn't take too long, the Americans, the army, they came--the kitchens with food. With special, in other words, to delouse us again, to clean us with, like showers and stuff like that; with powders to clean us up and stuff like that. Some of the people dispersed themselves in private houses and took over where the Germans lived. They were more able to do, stronger. Some of them, like me, I didn't have the strength to stand on my feet. If I weighed 90 pounds, it was a lot. They give us food and the food was very, very greasy, a lot of pork and stuff like that. People being hungry ate anything in sight. They got diarrhea a lot of them, died from it. How I survived, I got diarrhea too, how I survived, I still don't know. I remember one thing--about two nights before we were liberated, the Red Cross dispersed for all these--for each one of us, a care package. The care package if I remember correctly--there was a can of ham, piece of chocolate and a pack of cigarettes, Camels. I used to smoke before. I saw the Camel cigarettes; I started to smoke. I thought I'm going to die. I mean there was--too strong for me, too overpowering. Anyhow, after this, after the food and everything else, we were there for about six weeks. They gathered us and they brought us, all of us, to a DP camp called Wel_____ (78). It's not far from Munich and it used to be; there it used to be a Hitler Youth. They had their, not headquarters, I would say, their barracks and stuff like that. It was nicely built and they brought us back there and from other parts, they brought us together. Quite a few thousand people. In this DP camp we started to get together back our lives, little by little. I was there for four years, from 1945, I would say, June 1945 until about April 1949. In this camp, people started to court, a lot of them started to get married. We did get married in 1946 and started to live more or less a normal life. By normal, I mean they used to give us rations there. The rations weren't sufficient so we tried to do some black-marketeering, as they call it, in order to have something more to eat. But we enjoyed ourselves there, the couple of years we were there. We decided, my wife and I decided, we shouldn't have any children on the German soil and I went to a school there and tried to learn a trade. She was working there in a, what you call it, a sewing place where they made various things for--I don't know what for, honestly, but she was occupied. It was a carefree life you might say, for three or four years. But we tried, from the first moment on, we tried to get out of there. We tried to emigrate. At that time, it started out with the illegal immigration to Israel and a lot of people decided to go to Israel. In fact, we had friends that we lived together and they decided to go to Israel in 1947 that they went. They went with the Exodus and they were sent back to Cyprus and all that stuff. Being that my wife had here family, and family from before the war. She had a few uncles, her mother's brothers and she also had family in Argentina. We tried to get from them papers sent to us so we can immigrate there. In Argentina, Argentina didn't allow anything, any immigration, so they got us papers to immigrate to Paraguay. We weren't too anxious about it. Then her uncles tried to get us papers to immigrate to the United States. Finally it came Truman and passed a law and Congress where everyone from the survivors, from the DP camps, as long as it wasn't a underworld person or something like it, you didn't commit any crime or anything like it,

was allowed according to the new immigration laws, was allowed to immigrate to the United States. This is--

Have you located any members of your family? You have tried to, I assume.

Members of my family, while we were there, in W_____ DP camp, there was always lists right from the first moment on. There were lists circulating among all the DP camps because there was a lot of DP camps all over Germany. People that were liberated in Poland or any other parts of--Romania, Czechoslovakia or any other parts--these lists circulated. When the circulated people were looking for the relatives who have survived--stuff like that. In my case, for instance, I had my brother was in Russia; he was sent away in Russia, in Siberia. Because he was a Polish citizen, you might say, in Poland became a communist country so they allowed all the Polish citizen to go back to Poland. Of course, he registered himself right away and he came back. Where did he come back? to Wilna, not knowing what happened. When he came back in Wilna, he found my father's brother, my uncle, he was there. Once he found him, he already stuck with him together. Then they closed the border and they made Wilna part of Lithuania, a republic with Lithuania but also a republic of Russia. Before they closed the border, they let him go back to Poland. Where they came, they came to the town of Lodz. There my uncle, he lost his family before, he lost in the same time that my mother and all the other children perished, he lost his whole family too, he found someone in Wilna, he remarried. The three of them looked and they found the names of me, that I was in a camp in Germany, a DP camp. My father, again, he was also liberated in one of the concentration camps, I think it was Mauthausen. He went back to Poland. Over there he found out that I was liberated in Germany. A group, a couple of the women or men, I don't know exactly how many, they tried to go, at that time already, the borders were formed, they tried to go from one border to the other. From Poland to Austria, from Austria. I think, to Italy, from Italy somehow they got here to Germany. Because they knew I was there. He came and then my brother came. My uncle decided to stay in Lodz. He was there, in fact he was up to 1960 until he, legally, my father brought him in, brought him back. This is how we got together--my father, my older brother and me--we got together in a DP camp in Germany. Then in 1949, I was the first one, my wife and I, were the first ones to emigrate to the United States. Then they came afterwards in 1950. My wife, again, she was with her younger sister. They were the only two survivors in the family; she was with her in all the camps together, never separated. They got liberated together. They came together in the same camp that I was, they brought them there. That's how we got acquainted. We got married in 1946 and we came back here in 1949.

You came to New York?

At first, we came to Boston and from Boston we came by train to New York. In New York, my wife's family, her uncles, they awaited us at the station and took us to their, one of the uncles'

homes. We were there in the uncle's home for about four to six weeks, that's all. Right away, it didn't take too long, we started to look for occupation. Eight days after we arrived here, one of her uncles found her a job and she went to work immediately without knowing the language, without knowing how to travel. Me, I found myself a job in three weeks. We stayed by one of her uncles. We couldn't stay too long, her aunt was too religious, we couldn't take it. We rented a room in the Bronx, we lived in the Bronx at that time. We rented a room by a Jewish couple there, and we lived there for about a year. A year later, we purchased an apartment, paid money for it, purchased an apartment up in the Bronx, in New York. We were there and there were the kids, our daughters were born, in the first apartment in the Bronx. In 19--when was Helen born--in '51 was the older born, and in 1955, Susan was born. She stopped working after a while and I was the sole provider. Little by little, I worked nearby--

What did you do?

I worked in a supermarket. I worked nearby and always was thinking of how to go into business for myself. After seven years of working for somebody else, got together with a partner. We purchased a little superette in a poor, not-so-hot neighborhood in New York. We were there for a couple of years until we sold it. We went to a better neighborhood, a little bit. Then we split up, the partnership didn't work out and we went, my wife and I went together. That was in the Bronx, we moved to Brooklyn, from Brooklyn to Long Island. From Long Island I purchased, what you call a candy store. At that time it was a candy store and a luncheonette. We were there, we worked in that store for 14, almost 15 years hand in hand, my wife and I. It was long hours, six in the morning until eleven at night. Used to close one day, on a Monday in a town called Valley Stream in Long Island, New York. We paid off mortgages and we worked very, very hard; accumulated a little money and we purchased a house nearby. It was a hard struggle, the kids grew up, the kids went to school there. The kids helped us in the store; they worked with us. The older one went to college; then the younger one started to go, went to college, went to ____ (238) State. One by one, first the older one found a boy in college. They got married and then the younger one got married with a boy from the same town. Thank God, they married very nice boys and they have their families of their own. The older one has two girls, the younger one, two boys. We happy that it turned out, the family turned out fine, decent, in other words, a real Jewish family and we are very thankful, thank God for that. We visit, we visit them especially now with the younger one who is here in Potomac, Maryland. We visit quite often, she visits us. I, myself, sold the business in 1978. I retired at 54 and not long after we purchased a condo in Florida and since then we go back and forth. For the time we're down there, every time we're up in New York, we have friends, mostly friends who were more or less either in concentration camp or in Russia. We enjoy our lives more or less as much as we can. We only hope and pray to God for help.

I want to thank you very much. Before we end your--talking with you, are there any specific incidents or episodes from, during the war period or from before the war period, that stand out in

your mind, that you might not have mentioned? Any images or things that happened that you didn't talk about, that you might want to add to the tape for the sake of _____(266)?

Well, there are so many incidents, it is impossible to mention them all. The main incident that stands out in my mind is the time when they took my mother and the rest of the children. When they rounded them up and sent away. We didn't even see them sent away because we were hidden but in our minds, there remained to this day it will never be erased. All the rest of the incidents that happened personally to me or to my father, for instance, I mean the incident that happened to every one of us. Each one has a particular story to tell. This is the main incident that I can never erase it from my mind, knowing especially where they are buried. Imagine till about a year or two ago, there was no mention especially from the Russians, that so many Jewish were buried there and especially from the Lithuanians. A couple of years ago, a year or two ago, they erected a monument on the site. For the first time, they recognized that so many, I think it's about 60 thousand, they were shot and buried there. Then eventually it came to the point where the Russians were closing in so they got Jewish prisoners who dug them out, all these bones and they buried them in piles that nothing should remain there. In other words, there shouldn't be anything to accuse them of or something like that. It's more or less the same story like Babi Yar.

Have you been back there?

I always wanted to, never had the opportunity. It's either in the beginning we didn't have the means and later on we were so occupied, we didn't have the opportunity. Afterwards, after we got out of there, for some reason or other, we didn't have the heart. Some people did, some people did that. A lot of people go now back to Auschwitz especially to organize, I mean the March of Life, the youngsters which commend very because the youngsters, especially the younger generation, should know what happened and they should know the history. I hope and pray to God that they should learn from history because history has a tendency to repeat itself.

I want to thank you very much for telling your story.

You're quite welcome.

It's very important to the Museum (?). Is there anything else?

Well, there's more or less, in short, what I can tell you if I had the time, if I had the means, I would start down, I would write a book. I don't think one of them would be enough. But I guess everybody else could do the same thing. I thank you for the interview. I appreciate it very much.

It's quite all right.