

Were you required to perform work at Gross-Rosen?

I don't recall any work being required of us. Maybe not all of us. I personally don't recall doing any work. It was kind of idleness, sitting, and the situation began to look very desperate. We forgot about Oskar Schindler, or at least I was unaware of anything what's happening with Oskar Schindler which was still in the back of our mind when we traveled in the cars. But at this point, it looked desperate.

And also one other thing that I noticed was that the 700 of us that were in this barrack were no longer the same group of people with whom I worked back in Poland at the enamel works. It looked like a total stranger group. Some of the people that I knew were still there, but most of the people were missing from this original group. In fact, some of the friends that were with me at that time in Krakow were no longer here in Gross-Rosen.

So somehow, it looked like a different mix of people except for a smaller group of us that worked for Schindler and were still here. So I did not know of what is happening to us, and I did not know what the future is bringing. One occasion, I recall, I could not find myself a place. Somehow arrived late in the barrack, and everybody was already sitting in one another's lap. Walking in, I just couldn't find a place. So the guard, Ukrainian guard with a nightstick and his hand, went after me to find myself a place.

I couldn't because everybody was sitting tight. So I recall jumping over people running to escape from him, and he running with that nightstick and just hitting whatever came along. And on the way of chasing me, he probably hit many people. I eventually found a place to collapse into, and the chase was over.

After a number of nights and days of this terror-ridden concentration camp, we were sitting assembled as I described before in one another's lap. Somehow the guard came in with a list and began to read names. Where this was leading to, I didn't know, but everybody was hoping to somehow be on that list. Whatever this was turning out to be, it seemed like getting out of here someplace or doing something else was a relief.

So everybody was extremely anxious to hear his name. I recall being extremely anxious because my name starts with a U, and so this reading of names seemed like a whole night process, and my name just was not coming up. Eventually, it did get to my name, and after all the names were called out.

And up to this point in time-- it was 1992 in Flemington-- I have absolutely no idea where these names came from. The only thing I can suspect is that somehow when we left the Krakow Plaszow concentration camp, somebody submitted a list of names to some German authorities, and the [GERMAN] of the German authorities somehow led them to forward this list of people that are evidently destined to go into Oskar Schindler's factory again.

I don't know. I can't tell it for sure, but I do know that in Gross-Rosen there was a list from which the Ukrainian guards were reading. And as I said before probably, since 1941 or even since the beginning of the war, I don't ever recall having to give anybody my name. I don't recall. Maybe in the ghetto, when we arrived in the ghetto, we would have given names. But other than that, we became totally nameless people. I don't recall anybody ever requiring of me to give them my name. But nevertheless, in Gross-Rosen, in the concentration camp there, that particular night, all the names were called.

As I said before also, most of the names were not familiar to me. They were people simply that came from the Krakow-Plaszow ghetto, and were no longer the same people that were working with me in the enameled works at the Oskar Schindler in Krakow. My name was eventually called. Eventually, all the names were called, and we were loaded into carloads. Railway cars again, and shipped to somewhere.

Of the few people that you remember from the enamel factory who were still with you, were they also on this list?

Yes, those few people that I recognized, that I knew, were from the list of-- were from those people that worked for Oskar Schindler before. But the bulk of them was not. The bulk of them simply came to this Gross-Rosen camp by some knowledge that this was going to be a shipment to Oskar Schindler's concentration camp where the survival chances

were the greatest. I was totally unaware of it, being the youngster. I was simply probably amongst this group because of my stepping forward at one time into Oskar Schindler and where Oskar Schindler placed me in the end group that would eventually survive.

When were you transferred out of Gross-Rosen?

Gross-Rosen, we were transferred after a weeks stay. we were shipped out of by railroad cars again and I think that this time the railroad cars again traveled seven eight nights eight days into a place that in Czechoslovakia. Deep in Czechoslovakia. The name of the town was Brunnlitz.

We were marched from the railroad cars to a factory someplace in the vicinity. I don't recall the distance of that march. But at this time, we were 700 of us that left Gross-Rosen, and 700 of us males only. I don't recall any women in Gross-Rosen also. They could have been there in a different barracks, but in our situation, I only recall males.

We were, when we arrived, 700 of us were marched into this factory, which looked like a olfactory that-- what's it called? Materials were made.

You mean a warehouse?

No. Where they make materials. Linen.

Oh, a textile.

Which looked like a textile factory. And we were marched into that thing. And if I recall correctly, we were greeted by Schindler when we arrived on that site. It didn't look like a concentration camp. It simply looked like a textile factory. The building was textile machinery.

But it was fairly obvious at that time that Oskar Schindler received this factory, again, as a gift, and he was going to convert this textile factory into some kind of a armament factory. How this was to be done I don't know. None of us had any training. None of us was skilled workers, at least that I was aware of, in that area.

But Oskar Schindler evidently received permission to build a concentration camp. Barbed wires went up. Watchtowers went up. And the German contingent of escorts to watch as was in place. If I recall, this was not an extremely large group of SS guards. If I had to place a number of them on them, would have been 50 or 60 SS guards being housed in one barrack. And we were being housed in the upper floor of this textile factory.

Were all the SS Germans?

It looked at that time like those were-- all the SS were Germans. And also, one additional factor that I noticed at that time were that these SS Germans were older people. They were no longer the younger, full of spic and span and polish. They were tired, old people that were in the SS uniforms watching us.

This factory began to take shape, and some work is being done and disassembling the old textile factory. Shortly after we arrived in this camp, a group of 300 women that evidently underwent exactly the same thing in Auschwitz when we were being transported from Krakow-Plaszow to Gross-Rosen-- evidently, these women were shipped to Auschwitz.

And it was fairly obvious that this group of people was somehow also arrived in Auschwitz with a list, and somehow, by name, were called out from Auschwitz and set on a March from Auschwitz to Brunnlitz. So 300 women arrived in Brunnlitz in a much worse situation that we did because this was-- could have been October or November of 1944, and they were set on a march, marching from Auschwitz to Brunnlitz, and being guarded by Polish, Ukrainian convicts that are set in charge of those women to march them towards the camp.

From what I heard from the women that arrived in our camp, these official guards were brutal during the road to those women on the march from Auschwitz to Brunnlitz. But eventually, they arrived in Brunnlitz, and a small section of this

housing or the textile factory was surrounded by barbed wire, and the 300 women lived in the same complex with us but being separated from the men by barbed wire.

The productivity in this particular camp was not of great value as it appeared to me. It was dismantling, shifting around, building of offices for Oskar Schindler and his staff that evidently was meant to appear as if he was going to do great things for the German effort. I wound up working in one of the buildings that was renovated into a offices for Oskar Schindler. I remember doing pine paneling, and since there was a shortage of materials, we used a torch to sort of burn lightly the pine materials that would appear like a finished material. But actually, it was simply scorched from the flame of the torch.

And we eventually wound up constructing some offices for a Schindler that was very impressive looking. The factory, I don't ever remember doing any work that would have been close to what the Germans were hoping for, but we were kept busy. Some woodworking shop was in existence. Everything on the inside looked rather peaceful. The SS guards were somehow led to believe and understand that their duty is only to keep us from escaping. And I don't recall any torture or anything that these SS guards would inflict on us.

There were occasional shipments that were arriving in the camp of Jews that were evidently rounded up as escapees someplace or potentially from liquidating small groups of inmates. Those who were arriving at our doors or in our camp in horrible, desperate situation. We occasionally had to go to the railroad cars and open them up. Pry them open to get to the people.

On the inside, we would occasionally find dead people. People with frozen bodies to the railroad cars. Torn pieces of flesh from the frost bites. There were not great numbers that were arriving, but those that were arriving from some other sources were in desperate situation. Many of the people were buried there on the inside of that camp.

I, along with another friend of mine who was also a woodworker like myself, we were assigned now to renovate a villa that was given to Oskar Schindler as his residence. The villa was outside of the camp or maybe some distance away. Maybe a 15, 20 minute walk to that villa.

The villa was located on the inside of a mill. And I recall also it was behind a canal with water and a bridge leading up to his villa. But from this villa, you could walk out to the mill and be inside the mill. It was obvious that this villa once belonged to the owner of the mill, a rather large complex of a mill where there was flour and oatmeal and stuff like that.

Schindler's villa appeared like a unoccupied building. Also, once in a great while, we would notice Mrs. Schindler being there. I don't ever recall him being there, but our assignment was to polish his furniture, clean up the villa, do whatever we thought the two of us inmates from the concentration camp thought that can be done to improve Mr. Schindler's residence.

The two of us were marched daily out of the concentration camp on the textile grounds, textile factory grounds were, marched out daily by two SS guards to that villa. On occasion, also, one SS card would lead us out. And if things seemed rather normal and there was no great fear of escaping and the SS guards, as I mentioned, were older people.

And somehow, it just began to feel like something is coming to an end. There's no longer that fear of some kind of concentration camps that I was in before that somehow had the appearance of a more relaxed situation. In fact, the SS guard or the SS-- the two SS guards would come in to the villa and would sit down on a sofa, and the two of us were pretty much free to do whatever we thought we should do. Polishing, making believe that we're polishing.

Occasionally working on some radio where we will turn it on and hear BBC talking about the tremendous losses that the Germans are undergoing, and we would be able to bring that news back to the camp. The reason we were able to hear this occasionally, listen to the radio occasionally, was that the SS guards who came in to watch us, either one or two of them, would sit down on the sofa with their carbine or bayonet between their legs, and they would doze off and went into deep sleep. And we were able to simply roam around that building and do what we thought should be done.

On numerous occasions, I would even be able to jump out of the window of that villa-- as I described, it was located

inside of a mill-- and somehow make my way into one of the mill buildings where lots of stuff was being-- was laying around. I was able to go in these buildings, these warehouses, and by that time, I learned the trick of tying my pants at the bottom, whatever pants I had at that time, and filling up my pant, pant leg, with some stuff like oatmeal, cornmeal, or something like that.

With that, I came back into the villa. Acted as if I was nowhere. Did not get out of the building. And the SS guard didn't even know the difference. That material that I stole from the mill, I, on occasion, I would walk with those pant legs tied at the bottom with stuff in them. Or by that time, I had a tool box which I managed to build a fake tarp, whereby on the tarp, I had some tools laid out. And on the inside of the box was a rather large box would hold all that material that I stole from the mill. And with that, I was able to pass through the guards when we were marched back to the campsite.

In the campsite, I was able to give out all that stuff that I stole. I became quite good at it. I was able to hand this out, and there were many occasions where people would, the inmates there, some of the inmates became aware of it that I am in this enviable position. Was having all this food stuff. And some people would approach me because of the illness of a particular inmate or a relative, and I became a person much in demand by giving out that food to other inmates.

On many occasions, I also stole other things. It somehow appears that I became an important inmate because of my employment in Oskar Schindler's villa. So I was somehow treated and was able to on occasion steal things from cartloads that were passing by or arriving. And I would also be able to hand out these things, as I said, to friends. But on many occasions, I was able to sneak these food materials, foodstuffs, into the women's barracks, which was simply a way-- the way I got that into the women's barracks and by throwing it over those barbed wires. I somehow had the freedom-- so did my friend who worked with me at the villa-- to do that.

On one of those occasions, I was discovered that I'm bringing in food stuff from the outside and that somebody threw over some food into the women's barracks. I recall at the gathering at the appelplatz this case was held. The gathering of all the inmates for accounting purposes and all that was held inside of this factory building.

In one of those inspections, the head of the SS guards, whose name I don't recall is the moment, came to the appelplatz and yelled out, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. That means, where are those people that were inside the women's barracks? Evidently, a woman SS guard who watched the women's quarters noticed us, and we were reported, the two of us were reported that we were actually at one time inside the woman's quarters.

And as I said before, on many occasions, I would do that. I would somehow make my way into the woman's barracks, either throwing it over or getting in there and getting away. All that food stuff that I had, I have never received anything from anyone for the stuff that I gave out. It was simply a very enjoyable moment for me to be able to do it. I had never asked, never received, never knew of any things that I could have asked or could have received.

So at this appelplatz, this SS guard, head of the SS unit, is yelling, [SPEAKING GERMAN]. Out of fear, I did not step out first. Neither did my friend. But eventually, it appeared very serious that somebody could pay for it if we didn't step out. We did step out finally. We said, we were the ones that were in the women's barracks.

And as it turned out to be, he did not possess, this SS guard did not possess enough authority to punish or hang us or punish us in any way. All he wanted to know is who permitted us-- who let us into the woman's barracks. These were reactions that we had to rely on, both my friend and myself. And our reaction was to simply point to two SS guards, women, that they were at the door, and they saw us going in.

And at that point, if there was any punishment unleashed, it was on the two SS guard women opposed to us. We were permitted to join our ranks back. And we were not punished at all for this violation.

Not even for stealing food?

We were not punished for anything.

Now, as I said before, this was 1945 already. It was-- somehow, the air was filled with something going on. There were

many demonstrations of that already. I recall one day when we were all told to stay in our barracks not to step out. I remember looking out of the barracks where Schindler was ordered to appear to some authorities outside of the camp, obviously, to some authorities in Prague or outside of Prague.

And we can only go by stories that were circling in amongst us is that Schindler was called in to explain how it is that the inmates inside the camp receive some food while the population outside is now being starved. The free Czechoslovaks that were free, supposedly, did not have as much food arriving into their homes as we were getting into the camp.

And I recall distinctly being in the barracks. Nobody went out to work any place. And eventually, after many hours, Schindler arrived back from that appearance before some authorities in a total drunk state. He had the engineer with him that he was-- as I said, we were inside the barracks looking out looking for some signs of what is going on. Nobody bothering us inside the camp at all. The SS guards being outside.

Schindler arrives with this engineer of his. And we hear him distinctly pointing at the end of the camp ordering this engineer to build a fence, a very high fence, with corrugated metal solid so the outside the residents would not be able to look inside to see that we have food in the camp where they don't have any food. And that fence actually went up. He ordered the engineer to do that, and that fence eventually went up.

Where in time this was, I don't know. But weather wise that I would remember, it could have been maybe already April of 1945 that this was happening. And it appeared that the SS guards were totally under control of Oskar Schindler.

So the defense went up, and there was peace. And also, the rumors began to circulate that all this food and sometimes carloads of kohlrabis or other foodstuffs, bread, would arrive in large numbers into the camp. And the rumor had it that Oskar Schindler was stealing those at the railroad station and was able to commandeer things to bring them into the camp.

There was total chaos amongst the Germans, and he appeared as the highest ranking officer when he put on his SA uniform. And he had a bunch of decorations on him that he obviously appeared like the man in charge. And when he went to the railroad stations and ordered things to be loaded on cars and shipped to his camp or wherever he ordered them. He somehow succeeded in that. And it is also my understanding that on occasion, he would unseal some railroad cars that had some armaments or parts of armaments that he was unable-- he was able to unseal those and put his own seal and his own name on them as if he produced those things and ship them on to the German hierarchy.

All this was going on inside the camp. Things were bearable. I continued my work at the villa, bringing back news that the things for the Germans are turning bad. The BBC talking about the Americans, the English successess. And eventually, on May 8, Schindler called together all this all his inmates. I have to correct that. On May 7, Schindler called all his inmates together into this what used to be the appelpplatz inside the factory building.

When we were all assembled, he pointed to his open door in his own office inside the factory, and he said, I have assembled 30 revolvers in that they were all on the table in his office. And for those of you who know how to use them, you should distribute them amongst yourselves and begin protecting yourselves because all the SS guards from the camp are gone. Rumor later on had it that Schindler faked an order for them to leave the barracks and immediately report to the SS units in Prague. So that he announced to us that we are no longer being watched by SS guards.

But there is the potential of stray German units coming through this area that could still hurt us unless we begin to protect ourselves. And additionally, he said, I have to leave this camp, I have to leave this factory immediately. Because if I stay here, this is deep in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovaks would treat him as a German authority, and he could potentially face--

Prisoner of war?

Yeah. And he could potentially face trouble because since his original contributions to the Germans took place inside Czechoslovakia. So he was in danger of his life. And here, he asked that some of our inmates volunteer to help him get

across into some American or English zone. And some of our inmates, whether there were two or three that stepped forth to help him get them across into the English zone or American zone. It did take place. Schindler left. We were left inside that concentration camp, inside that factory.

Until the next day or on that appelpplatz, he also announced to us that the Germans will be signing a surrender tomorrow. This was on the 7th. And he told us that by tomorrow, the Germans will be signing surrender, and the war will be over. He announced those words to us.

The cries, the laughs, the outburst that went up from our people is still vivid in my memory till today. It was just a scene of unbelievable confusion, happiness, unhappiness, everything mixed together. As this developed, and the next day, as Schindler promised, we did not hear about any announcement of surrender. But we did see a Russian soldier, a single Russian soldier that looked like he was 20 foot tall on a horse that was extremely small. At least, that's how it appeared to me at the time. Marched into our camp and declared that the Germans are no longer here. That the Russians have marched into here, and we are free people.

We remained in there because we had no guidance from anyone inside the camp other than to protect ourselves. We really did not know what and when-- some of our people were sick, weak. And we did not know the next step immediately.

Some of the older inmates knew that amongst us are some of those Ukrainian Polish guards that brought the women from Auschwitz to our camp, and these inmates of ours wanted to know from the Russians what we do with that because now, we-- evidently, they had an eye on them and took them as prisoners. And they wanted to know from the Russians what we do with them.

And the Russians evidently gave our inmates permission to deal with them as we see appropriate. So some of those inmates that were now held by the former prisoners were actually hung on the factory pipes right after the war.

We eventually were freed. And when Schindler was leaving, he also pointed to us, pointed out to us, that he has warehouses full of stuff. As I spoke about this, he was able to organize those by going to the train stations and ordering things to be shipped wherever he desired.

In this, he had warehouses full of stuff. Full of liquors, full of foodstuffs. He had materials. He had clothing. He had house shoes, as I recall, in all those. And he told us on in his parting message that all this should be divided amongst the inmates. And we should do it as fast as we can because the Russians are marching in here, and there is a good chance that they would take this because they needed probably almost as much as we did.

So some of our inmates took charge immediately of those revolvers, of the ammunition that was available. And we were obviously protected. No one was harmed by stray German units. Schindler has left, and we were now being dispensed all those materials that were in warehouses and that factory.

I recall receiving some shoes, some house shoes, some materials that I eventually could make a suit and some other stuff, which I don't recall at the moment. But eventually, we were free. And it also appears that everybody was totally on his own. There was no authority. No Russian authority directing us any place. No Czechoslovakian authority directing us anyplace. We just had to follow what our own imaginations would guide us to do.

I joined a group of 17 people. That is 13 men, 4 women, that evidently selected Krakow was our destination. And we would begin a march towards Krakow. We simply left the camp under no one's guidance, under-- with lack of knowledge of what we are going to have to pass through. Whether there was still some fighting going on in place.

We nonetheless left the camp, 17 of us. We were able to round up a horse and wagon. The horses at that time were simply roaming the fields, some of them being injured from the war and some of them simply left by fleeing German units. They were simply roaming the fields, so we were able to take a horse or two and a wagon, load up on this wagon whatever materials we just received from the warehouses of Oskar Schindler, take those with us.

And those of us that were stronger would march behind the wagon. Those that were weaker were on the wagon. And we would exchange those that were riding and those were walking. And we did that for the next seven days. The horses would not last that long because they were injured horses. So during that March of the seven or so days, we would have to exchange these injured horses for other injured horses to pull our wagon to help us get to our destination of Krakow.

We never reached Krakow itself. We went as far as Wroclaw, which was a former city of Breslau, a German city. When we got to Wroclaw, there was some semblance of normality already existing there. There were already residents trying to rebuild the city.

All the outskirts and railroad cars and the city itself of Breslau was totally destroyed during the war from bombardments. I recall buildings that were totally destroyed with just one room still functioning or something. And we were accommodated in those bombed-out buildings.

And eventually, from Wroclaw, or Breslau, I would have to think that I was able to eventually get on a train and go from there to Poland and eventually wind up in Krakow. Potentially. Three or four weeks after the May 8, of end of the war, I arrived in Krakow.

And what did you find there?

But somehow, within the next few days, we all went out on our own in search of families, whether family members of ours. As I mentioned, all of our group, all the 17 people, went out on their own. I traveled back to Borek FaÅ,Ä™cki immediately and inquired of neighbors, of my former employer, whether he has seen any one of my family members. No one was able to shed any light on that.

The situation was very difficult for me to remain in Borek FaÅ,Ä™cki because it's just seemed like it was unsafe yet because of the anti-Semitism, which didn't somehow disappear with the war. And from word that we got from other Jewish members who traveled to different locations of their homes, and they felt extremely unsafe, based on that, I also felt unsafe and returned back to Krakow.

By that time, I discovered that some of the people from the 17 people that I returned with have found some relatives, either close ones or distant ones. And in fact, I discovered that I was the only one of the group of 17 that so far did not find anyone, distant relative or a close relative. Eventually, one of the 17 people I was able to find a place for me to stay with them in a one-room situation where it seemed like maybe 20 or 30 people that had no place to go were accommodated by this one person in Krakow.

In Krakow, the organization's, Jewish organizations, UNRRA, other organizations, became active and sent out calls for people to begin to look for lists at certain places of people who survived and returned so that we will be able to look whether any of our relatives returned from the war. This was my daily function to go to those places and look for lists up and down. I did not find any names of my family on any of those lists. Eventually, I was assigned some housing in Krakow itself where myself with three other people lived in one room, which was formerly a student's building in Krakow.

On one of those daily trips to these schools or gathering places where they were bringing in some inmates from some concentration camps like Mauthausen, other Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, I, by that time, I already gave up or did not have any hope anymore that any one of my family members is alive. This was already going on a few weeks into post-war, and no one was appearing. And I practically gave up hope.

But on one of those trips, I found a bunch of returnees from Mauthausen, and I somehow had knowledge that one of my close friends, a fellow by the name of Adam Mundell, was in Mauthausen. When we were separated once before in Krakow-Plaszow, we were close friends, and I somehow understood that he went to Mauthausen.

And so in this transport of people that arrived from the Mauthausen, those that survived-- and they were all very ill. When I arrived in this school building where those survivors arrived, they were all sitting or laying on the floors. Very poor shape. Very bad health wise. I already have eaten, and I already had closing by that time. But those people were in

horrible shape. Some of them not even remembering their names.

So I, along with another friend of mine, began walking through those survivors of Mauthausen and shouting Adam Mundell loudly. Was it this friend of ours would be amongst those survivors? Because no one was recognizable, really. We couldn't recognize anyone. Poorly clothed, poorly fed, and in real bad shape. So the only way we could discover whether anyone that we know was there was to yell their name, and maybe somebody would respond.

And sure enough, on one of those trips, I was there was a friend of mine yelling Adam Mundell. And a fellow answered to that name. Stood up, unfolded from the floor and stood up, and that was my friend of Adam Mundell. This was about the closest that I came to seeing any one of my friends. My relatives were not found by that time, and no one was ever found from my relatives, but this was the closest friend that I found and the only close friend that I found that I knew from before-- Adam Mundell. Took him with me out of this waiting room in the school and he began living together with us in that building, in that students building in Krakow.

As far as you can tell, your family was killed during that liquidation of March?

March 13.

March 1943.

Yes. As far as I can ascertain at this point from reading different materials, from talking to former residents of the Krakow ghetto, very few people from there went anywhere else but to Krakow-Plaszow. Some few only went to Krakow-Plaszow. And only us, the ones that worked at the Oskar Schindler factory and held overnight, those were the only ones survived, that survived that camp.

And to the best of my knowledge, at this point, no one left from there to any other camp simply was killed in the ghetto itself. All the shooting and all the killing was done inside the ghetto. Those transports never left any place at all.

So I have never found anyone from my family, not even from distant relatives. And to this point, I always look through books and lists, but at this point in 1992, I still have not found any close relative of mine that survived the war. I'm the only one that survived.

You're the only survivor of the Urbach.

Of the Urbach or any Bolinger family from that area.

When did you realize that the Oskar Schindler episode would become famous?

After my settling in Krakow, the situation became clearer to me that no one survived. It also became clear to me that Poland was no place to remain, number 1, because of my previous knowledge of anti-Semitism. Number 2, the Russians were there now, and we already began to understand the Russians were not only the liberators but they also have a totalitarian state. And certainly, Poland was no place to remain. And I began to look towards traveling out of Poland into the American or English zone to somehow get away from communism.

For a while, I traveled to Usti nad Labem or the German name for it would have been Aussig, and hoped to settle in Czechoslovakia because I was, when the war ended and from my experience and knowledge of the Czechoslovak people, they were the friendliest people I have ever come across. And my own thinking led me to believe that maybe, somehow, settling in Czechoslovakia would be the place.

And three of us made that decision to somehow escape from Poland and travel to Czechoslovakia and settle in the city of Aussig. I don't remember at this moment how we have to pick Aussig, but that's where we were heading for.

But when we got to Aussig and we already had some living quarters there, we were not in touch with any Jewish organizations that would provide us more definite instructions or more definite help as to where and what. We were

somehow on our own. And we began to recognize that the Russians or the communists are there, too. And this was no place to stay.

So we began to look, the three of us began to look to escaping from Czechoslovakia into the American or English zone. And that's what we eventually did. But before we escaped from Czechoslovakia, we also discovered that we acquired all of a sudden the skill of being able to cross the Polish-Czechoslov border fairly efficiently and without being caught by the Russians or Poles or Czechoslovaks.

So for a while, I acted as a courier in trying to help some people that wanted to get out of Poland and help them smuggle them out of Poland into Czechoslovakia and eventually into West Germany. I was able to smuggle out at least two people out of the Krakow to Czechoslovakia and from Czechoslovakia to help them get into the American zone, and eventually wound up settling in Bamberg, Germany.

Oskar Schindler re-entered into my knowledge that he, in fact, survived, and he lived in Munich. And I went to see him in Munich. He somehow had the knowledge to recognize me. And he called me by the name of Romick. Romick somehow was given to me. The name Romick was given to me somehow in the process of the war because at one time, I was called Schlomick, but that became an awkward name, so somebody popped out Romick. And the name Romick stuck. And evidently, Schindler remember that name, and so he still remembered Romick.

Later on in years, I became aware of it that Schindler was, in fact, a recognized Christian for helping Jews. And it became common knowledge that he was a guest of the Israeli government and that he frequently traveled to Israel, where he was celebrated as a hero by the former inmates of the concentration camps and especially those that he helped survive.

In one of those trips, on my trips that I went to Israel in 1973, I was aware of it that Schindler was in the country at that time and found the address of Oskar Schindler. And I, together with my family at that time, my wife, my children, we went to visit Oskar Schindler in Tel Aviv. And when I walked in, he was already a man after a slight stroke, but he did recognize me. And he yelled out, Romick. He called my name again. He still remembered my name at that time. We spoke briefly. And we parted. And he eventually died the same year and was buried on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem.

He didn't know your last name, then. So the mystery of the list.

The mystery of the list continues, right. There was only, as I speculated already, that was one chance that some German official in the Krakow-Plaszow ghetto was handed a list of who is going to Schindler. It was unbeknown to me, but there is a good chance that there are some people who would have known how this list was created. It certainly was not born in Gross-Rosen.

As you know, there's been a literature grown regarding his factory and his lists. I'm sure you're familiar with some of them. What can you tell us regarding how the system really operated and how were people saved by Schindler?

Schindler managed to befriend the head of the SS guards of Krakow-Plaszow, Amon Goth. He somehow managed to befriend him. And from what it appeared at that time and it was confirmed later on, this brutal murderer, Amon Goth, looked to Schindler and believed that Schindler is a capable individual and that he would somehow help them accumulate wealth and well-being. And so somehow, a extreme friendship developed with those two people.

And there is also the slight chance that Schindler was able to hand a list later on also. I have no knowledge of this because someplace along the line, at that particular time of confusion when we were being transferred from one camp to another, Oskar Schindler, as well as Amon Goth, wound up in German jail.

This was not the first time that they wound up in German jail or that Oskar Schindler wound up in German jail. And he wound up in German jail, as rumor would have it at that time, because German authorities became aware of his ability to accumulate wealth and having warehouses of materials, even back in Poland. That something was fishy. But Oskar Schindler never stayed long enough in jail because some of his cohorts and good friends from Berlin would set him free again, and he went back to doing exactly what he was doing before after he came out from jail.

I recall that Oskar Schindler was just came out of jail not long before we came to Brunnlitz. And when we were already in Brunnlitz, this Amon Goth who conducted all these hangings and shootings and murders acts in Krakow-Plaszow also appeared in Brunnlitz. At one time, I remember seeing him.

But this Amon Goth was no longer the Amon Goth of the SS guard with the almighty power, but somehow, they stripped him of all his ranks while he was in jail because he was in jail at that time, as rumor would have it, for stealing the transfers of foods that would arrive into the concentration camp from some Jewish organizations abroad or Red Cross or so on.

He was stealing those, and he was turning them into gold and diamonds and other things. So when he appeared in Brunnlitz, he looked like a former inmate. The clothes that he once wore and looked so tall and big and fat-- it was not the same man anymore. He looked like he went through hell in the German jail.

This Amon Goth eventually traveled back to Poland because evidently, that's where he was assigned. He did not-- he came to Brunnlitz only because of his friendship with Oskar Schindler. So he evidently came to visit Oskar Schindler. But it also appears that Oskar Schindler didn't return the friendship and did not help him stay with him in Czechoslovakia.

But from what I discovered later on, Amon Goth returned to Poland, to Krakow. And in fact, when the Russians marched in, Amon Goth was captured by the Poles in that city of Krakow, where he conducted this horribly brutal camp and eventually was sentenced to death by hanging. And he was hung in Krakow by the Polish authorities.

Oskar Schindler also had great influence from what I have observed. While the criminal acts of Amon Goth were going on inside the camp-- hangings, lynchings, shootings, beatings, the whole catastrophe-- it was also known to us at that time that if Oskar Schindler entered the Krakow-Plaszow of camp on a visit to Amon Goth, Krakow-Plaszow Amon would suspend all the activities of hangings and killings because he somehow didn't want Amon-- he didn't want Schindler to know that he is conducting such a affairs. So in that way, many of the Jews were spared from hangings and killings and beatings were simply spared by Oskar Schindler appearing in this killing camp.

Now, how did people get on lists? I imagine that over a period of time, it was obvious this was not a bad place to be, working for Mr. Schindler. And I suspect that there were people who were trying to get put on these lists. Did you have any inside knowledge about this either during the time you were there, after the fact, after the war?

Yes. As I stated before probably, towards the end of the war, it became fairly obvious that if anyone will survive this nightmare, it would be through the help somehow of this character, Oskar Schindler. That being with him, he would somehow protect us, whether we knew it fully or not. I personally can't say I know it, but instinct would lead me to believe all the time that was a better place than any place else.

in Krakow-Plaszow, when we return to Krakow-Plaszow because Oskar Schindler's camp was closed, it became common knowledge that Oskar Schindler is still searching for a place someplace that he would be able to move his people to that place maybe further away from the front. That somehow became common knowledge.

Also, at this particular time, being maybe one of the younger members of the inmates, being one of the lesser known inmates, I did not personally know that. But it was fairly obvious that some of the Jewish leaders in connection with some of the Germans, the SS guards, were aware of this in Krakow-Plaszow that Oskar Schindler is out there someplace deeper into the country of Czechoslovakia, maybe, or Germany, escaping further away from the Russians. And that he would create, again, a concentration camp, and it would be desirable for anyone from the Krakow-Plaszow camp to get to Oskar Schindler.

And somehow, some of the Jewish authorities knew all that. And some of the, in the process, some of the former inmates or workers for Oskar Schindler would be shipped out to Mauthausen and--

[PHONE RINGING]

OK. So as I explained before, but to clarify, it would have appeared that the 1,000 people that survived in Oskar Schindler's camp in Brunnlitz, which was composed of 700 men and 300 women approximately, were no longer the same 1,000 people that were at one time in the Krakow concentration camp near Oskar Schindler's factory

But, in fact, were those that were placed in the process of shipments leaving Krakow-Plaszow to uncertain destinies in camps like Mauthausen. Those former workers of that factory were shipped to those camps and replaced by other people from the Krakow-Plaszow camp. And those people essentially spent in Brunnlitz the last six months of the war and survive that way.

So you would say that some people were bumped from the original list and then other names were added?

It would appear at this point that some people that were originally destined to go into Oskar Schindler's camp were bumped in the process at Krakow-Plaszow and were replaced by others.

Now, Mr. Schindler, apparently he made a lot of money during these years. On the other hand, he saved people. He saved lives. In your opinion, based on your knowledge of the man, which was the more important for him?

It would appear to me that the Oskar Schindler of the earlier days of the war was a opportunist looking upon the war as a great opportunity for him to enrich himself. And certainly, being given that Jewish factor in Poland led them to believe that the future is his and that he was going to make a lot of money.

But someplace along the line, he began to feel that his ideas of making money, being a industrialist in Poland and accumulating wealth, were not exactly what the German Reich would eventually lead into. And that is that the Jews would eventually be killed, and he would have to either stand on the side of Germans, or else he would have problems.

So he probably someplace along that line began to figure out things that unless he appears as an extremely loyal German, he will not be able to conduct his business, and he will not be able to save anyone. And there is no doubt in my mind that he began to look upon the potential of ending the war. And unless he had friends on both sides, he wasn't going to make it. And so the rest of the war he spent appearing extremely loyal to Germans, and at the same time, appearing and acting as a friend of the Jews and inmates of the concentration camp.

Now, your story, we left you in Bamberg in 1945. How did you get to America?

I arrived in Bamberg, Germany on March 13th, which happens to coincide with the date of the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto in 1943. And I arrived in Bamberg in March 13, 1949.

In Bamberg?

In Bamberg. And where I settled and began to continue my education, which I interrupted in 1939. And the way I had done that has by private tutoring from a German professor of a university who undertook to meet with me and continue my education. This continued education eventually led me to apply to a engineering school in Nuremberg, where I was eventually rejected as not either being well prepared enough or not having enough room to accommodate everyone. I also, at the same time, had to support myself. And I began work at the UNRRA, for UNRRA, in warehouses, where we were distributing food to other DPs.

In 1946. Ada Burnbaum with he family of Edith, Fred, Ann Burnbaum, Joe Burnbaum, arrived in Bamberg, Germany. At that time, I met Ada and her family, And We established a friendship, a courtship. I established a friendship and courtship with Ada Burnbaum.

I continued my education and working for the UNRRA in Germany, and I also began working in a radio phonograph repair shop, where I learned the trade of repairing small appliances. All through this time, I kept company with Ada Burnbaum,

In 1949, I left Germany for the United States. I traveled by a former troop transport ship, United States jumper, that were arriving in the United States in 1949. Ada Burnbaum and her family arrived in the United States about three months later in June of 1949.

In 1950, we were married in New York and lived a while till 1951 in New York City. I continued working in woodworking shops and furniture shops, and Ada began work as a seamstress in the garment center in New York.

Eventually, in 1951, Ada's parents bought a farm in Flemington New Jersey where they moved to. And since our roots were not very deep in New York, making a living was difficult. In fact, both Ada and myself decided to move to Flemington, New Jersey, where her parents were already settled to a chicken farm. And I began work as a carpenter in the Flemington area. I became a Union member, a Carpenters Union member, and was able, in fact, to make a decent living in Flemington.

Our first child was born in 1952. That is David. Our second child was born in 1955. That is Barbara. And the third child was born and also in Flemington in 1963, and that is Henry. I continued my work as a carpenter for a while. In 1953, I established a construction business which began operating as the firm of [? Reemer ?] and Urbach. And that business or that partnership lasted till 1959. And from 1959 on, I began operating the business, the same building construction business, as Urbach and Urbach in Flemington.

The oldest son is married to Zipporah Kohane, and they have three children-- Rebecca, Simone, Jonathan. They now reside in Cape Cod, Falmouth, Cape Cod, where David is a cardiologist at the hospital and has a private practice of a group of five.

Barbara is married to Michael Listener, now residing in [PLACE NAME], New Jersey. Barbara is an attorney graduated from Hofstra University, and her husband is also an attorney. They have two children. One is Samuel, and the daughter is Elise. They both practice law in New Jersey and New York.

The youngest one, Henry, is single. He is a graduate of the principal of Princeton University. Went on to Columbia Law School where he finished a successful first year of law school. Decided that he did not like law. Transferred into architecture. Graduated with honors from the School of Architecture in Columbia. And at present in 1992 is entering a PhD program in architecture at Princeton University.

Sounds like congratulations are in order. I certainly can add that you're a very young-looking grandfather.

Thank you very much. It was a little bit of a trip again to do that, but it had to be done.

And I thank you on behalf of the museum for your time and for your story.