

Interview with David Yegher  
August 18, 1992  
Maryland

- Q: My name is David Yegher. It's spelled right now Yegher but it used to be J. Jegher. My name before the war at home, I was called Chaim David and I was born in a town called Ronadejus in Transylvania in the Carpathian Mountains in Romania.
- A: What was the year of your birth?
- Q: September 17, 1927. I was living at home with my mother and father and we were a family of six children, three girls and three boys. My two older sisters were married. One was living in a city called Siget and she had two children. She married a man by the name of Ignatz Hershkowitz. My second older sister was married and I don't remember his name. I know Ashmael but I don't remember the family name. Anyway the whole problem started with all the suffering we endured. I was thirteen years old when we couldn't go from town to town and we had to register and we had to close the front windows to the house facing the street. Jews couldn't travel on trains. It was long- suffering and one day the military came in. It was a Friday afternoon. My mother was cooking the Shabbos dinner.
- Q: This was in 1940 about?
- A: In 1944 and my mother was cooking the Shabbos dinner and of course we were all at home because we were not allowed to go anyplace and they told us whatever we can carry to make a package. We have to go with them.
- Q: Were these iron guards who came or were these gendarmes or the military? Do you recall?
- A: I really don't remember. I just don't remember. All I know is that when we were leaving, whatever, we made a package that everybody could carry, whatever you could carry. My mother was crying and telling my father, this is what we worked all our lives. This is what we worked and tried to make a family life and try to make, you know, to eventually be able to achieve something and now we have everything. What we have now is just what we can carry in our bags. We had a very prosperous farm, orchard with trees. We had cattle, but my father was also what I would call it ----- transportation or something. What it was. There was no cars, it was primitive, there was no cars, no machineries but when anybody

wanted to go into the city my father drove two horses with a wagon that people got on the wagon to go to the city.

Q: What city would you go to?

A: To Siget. And anybody wanted to come back, they also got on the wagon and they came back and he was passing a few towns on the way until we got where we were living. Also on the way to Siget in the morning there was country stores all in these villages, towns that my father stopped and got a list from the country stores whatever it needed and he went into Siget, bought it, brought it to them so they would have the things they were looking for, they need.

Q: So he made regular trips?

A: Every day except Shabbos.

Q: These people would pay him for the ride into Siget?

A: Yeah. So in other words there were many things that pertained to conduct a way of making a living. For instance, one way is to have transportation for people to bring them into the city and also back. And also on the way into the city, the farmers who had cows or sheep that milk, they had it in containers and we took the containers from them and we took it into the main creamery in the city and they made cream, whipped cream, butter and then we brought the empty containers back and we dropped them off. We did this six days a week. One way of making a living was taking in the milk which was also from our farm and from the other farmers and picking up the list from the country store...

Q: Of their needs.

A: Of their needs, and a country store was not just anything like you have a store here. I mean a country store over there, we bought petroleum, we bought whiskey, we bought flour, we bought whatever in the world it was. A general store everything that the farmers or the people in the villages needed. And that was usually the only store and therefore there were no separate stores for this or separate stores for that. So this is what we did.

Q: This was two horses. It must have been a pretty large wagon?

A: Yeah, it was. You could seat at least twenty people.

Q: How long was the journey from your town to Siget?

A: About an hour and a half, two hours. Also it was big because of the hills and the mountains which you have to go through. There was very steep hill that it was very difficult to get up in the winter time or even when you had on the way from

the city that you were bringing back to the people flour and petroleum. This was very heavy. When you loaded up the wagon it weighed like a railroad car and to pull up the steep hills, to cross over into the villages, it was very, very difficult.

Q: I suppose you had to help pull or push the wagon, or did the horses manage?

A: The horses pushed and you put your elbow and you pushed along with them and a lot of times depending on the weather you just didn't have enough power to pull it. So we went to the nearby farm and they came in and lend us another horse or two that we put up to help pull over the mountain. Just as hard as it was going to get up on the mountain, it was just as difficult getting down, to hold back all that weight. And you got to the point where you were about holding it to the middle of the mountain going down and then you just lost control and it would just shoot down and anything happen. It was God's will. Sometimes the horses were trying to hold it back. They held it back as much as they could and then they just used to just like slide down on the hind legs on the ground and the weight from the wagon was just pulling them down and sometime one horse was holding back so hard that they pulled the whole wagon into the ditch on the side where the water was running. Then we had a hard time. We had to unload it, put everything on the street and get the wagon out and load it up again. It was a very hard life but it was home. I mean we had a very, very strong family unity. And we always -- sometimes it was very little to eat and sometimes whatever it was we sat at a table and we shared. And my mother, may she rest in peace, she always fed everybody and sometimes there wasn't anything left and she just went without. And I saw that myself.

Q: Where were you in the range of children? Were you one of the youngest?

A: No, I was the fourth one. Then, of course, I had relatives. I had, of course, grandparents. My mother's side lived in the same town where we lived. And, of course, my father's parents lived with us. My grandfather, both of my grandfathers had died.

Q: While you were a kid they died or even before you were born?

A: They died before the problem started. But my grandmother, my father's mother, she was in bed all the time, she was something wrong with her, and of course we carried her to the train when we were leaving. And we took her and she was in the wagon even when we went to Auschwitz. And of course my other grandmother was still walking. Then my father had one brother and three sisters.

Q: All living in Ronadejus?

A: Two of them were living in Ronadejus. The others were living in some other towns. My mother had a brother and two sisters. Her brother luckily enough before all this trouble started, he emigrated to Argentina and his children, I mean

my uncle, I happened to see him after the war. He moved from Argentina to Israel and he died just about a couple of years ago now. But his children, my cousins, are still living now. But my mother's two sisters, the husbands and the children, they all perished in Auschwitz. My father was, they were very poor when they got married. They didn't have anything. He started all of this so-called enterprises, whatever, a way that was needed and in order to be able to support the family and the money that he made from this -- taking all these things to the villages and into the town and everything else, we bought land. We had beautiful orchards with apples, pears, plums. We ended up making our own whiskey because I remember big, big drums like they have gas storage tanks that they used to put in all the fruit. And there was a little thing coming out from the bottom after whatever long it took, and the whiskey was coming out and we made our own wine and we also made our own dried fruit. And we sold it not only to the markets in Romania at the time but we also sold it to the neighboring countries like Czechoslovakia and Hungary and this and that.

Q: How did you manage to sell to other countries? Was there a co-op set up?

A: I have no idea.

Q: So you must have produced a mass of dried fruit, a fairly large amount?

A: Yes, yes. I remember when I was a little boy that in the summertime, whatever manure from the cows was piled up in big piles. And in the wintertime when the snow was you chopped it up in chunks and you loaded it in a sled and you hauled it into the fields for fertilizer. During the daytime my father was taking care of whatever he had to do the business of, I don't know what would you call that, transportation or whatever. And at nighttime we worked in the fields.

Q: Is that right?

A: You'd better believe it. I mean that was the kind of situation. There was no clock, there was no nothing. You devoted your whole time working in the fields. And then, of course, when the summer came, you have to plow it and you plowed it with the horses not with tractors. Every time you cleared more trees to make more land, clearing for farm land to be able to. One time my oldest brother was already taken from us into what they called forced labor by the Hungarians because during my time when I was going in school which reminds me another situation. When I was going in school and I was four years in public school.

Q: This was Romanian public school?

A: Romanian public schools. I had very little time to do my homework because when I came home I had to do the chores in the fields.

Q: Did you have specific duties?

A: Yes I had to clean all the stables and see that the milking cows were fed. And my sister did my homework. As a matter of fact, when we started school, I flunked the first year because I never did my homework. But my sister that was a year younger from me, she started school the following year and she did her homework and she did my homework. But I was bright enough that I really did very well not from studying at home, just for being in school and doing it when the teacher was doing the stuff. Then the problem came when the Hungarian took over that part. I started the fifth year in school with a Hungarian teacher that only spoke Hungarian. I never spoke Hungarian in my life.

Q: It's a foreign language to many people.

A: Yes and what happened was, I was very good in arithmetic. We used to have tests like who could answer faster like five times five, five times three, eight times nine. I always was the winner. But we had the test in Hungarian and I lost because I had to transfer the Hungarian to Romanian or to Yiddish. Even today when I am figuring a bill, when I had my catering, people used to always be amazed because I figured in Yiddish, always.

Q: Is that what you spoke at home, Yiddish?

A: Only Yiddish. We spoke Yiddish at home and I spoke Romanian in school. And then in the fifth year I had to learn Hungarian. And it was a very hard thing. And one of the things that really hurt me --- when we were leaving the house, when they were taking us to --- they took us to the ghetto, there was one of the guys who was my best friend all my life.

Q: A Jewish guy?

A: No, a gentile. His father was the post office man. He delivered the mail. We were very close friends. We were practically every day together. When I was leaving, when we were taken, I had on a red sweater with no sleeves. It was man-made. The guy that was taking us told me to take my sweater off. Would you believe it I saw him take my sweater, he took it with a stick ---

Q: Didn't want to touch it.

A: And he gave it to my best friend because my best friend asked him to get it for him. And he was wearing a rifle but it was not a real one. It was made out of wood just so that he had the authority. This is something that I could never believe. I never went back there and if I ever do I'm gonna take a sweater off him. If it's the last thing in my life I'm gonna do.

Q: Were there many Jews in that community? What was the breakdown in terms of gentiles and Jews in your town?

A: There was about, for that time of the world it was considered to be a lot. It was two hundred families. And there was about half of them, Jews. There was only one main street that the whole town consisted of, but there was a lot of homes in the back fields and in the woods. Most of the homes, I would say seventy-five percent that were built on the main road were Jewish people. The Jewish people had more or less -- it was even in those days like we had a kitchen that we were, you know the floor was nothing but a mud floor because I remember my mother once a week used to bring mud and make it soft with water and just take the hand and go over and give it a fresh go-over. But still in all it had a table and chairs and we were eating with knives and forks and we had kosher dairy dishes and meat dishes. My father was very religious. My mother was ---

Q: Chassid or ---?

A: Well, I never knew the word Chassid at the time but I do know I never saw anybody anywhere in America or anywhere I have been that could have been more religious than my father. My mother wore what they call a sheitl and I remember when my sisters got married they cut their hair. And they cried. I remember that. We lived, for instance, a lot of the gentiles that were living in that area, they had a house. But their house consisted of four walls and in the corner was a bed and in the other corner was a stove which was heated with wood. In the wintertime they kept this wood going, the stove. This is how they heated and they all slept in one bed and all around, whatever. But we had beds. We were civilized people. We had beds. Everybody had their own bed. We might had a room where we had three kids sleeping in the same room, whatever, but we had beds and we each had a bed.

Q: Was this one floor this house, one story?

A: Yeah, one floor. In the summertime we still continued, for instance, we had our own, like they call here a pizza oven, we had one that was built out of brick. And we heated it with wood, made it hot, and the oven got hot and my mother baked bread and also she put Friday in the cholent for Shabbos and she put it in the oven with the coal created by the wood and you can imagine if a woman today would have to go out and get wood and create the oven, this baker oven, which was like a huge boiler which was built out of stone and brick. You bring the wood and you put it in and you light the fire and you create coal and when it's hot enough you put in all the pots and have like a 24 by 36 opening and you sealed it and you used wet mud to seal it so the heat will not escape, and then you opened that Saturday after you come home from shul and that's what we ate Saturday, the cholent and the kugel and all that and it was always very delicious. There's nothing ever comparing to that.

Q: Was this oven outside the house?

A: No, it was a corner of the house. Like let's say when you come in from the front, the front part like three-quarters was the kitchen and then there was a wall with a door that you went into the other room, that was the other corner of the house. That corner was built where the baker-oven was built. It had a big chimney going up and this is how my mother baked the bread and put the food in for the cholent and things like that. And we had a wooden stove in the kitchen which was lined with brick. This was how we cooked and this is how we heated the winter. When you went to sleep and I'm telling you it was bitter cold, none of the rooms were ever heated, wherever you went to sleep but you never had to worry because you had feather quilts. You was really in no problem.

Q: Did you attend cheder?

A: Oh yes, I attended it's not a cheder. I mean I didn't have to be in public school until nine o'clock so I started cheder in the morning like 6:30. Then when I finished cheder my mother waited for me to give me something to eat and I was eating while I walked to public school. And when I got out of public school again she waited for me to give me something to eat and then I went to cheder till nine o'clock at night.

Q: So morning and night you went?

A: Yeah and I also of course had a lot of Shabbos. You know they had teachers and lectures and things like that. And I spent a whole day in cheder, Sunday, because there was no public school.

Q: And your chores on top of all of that.

A: Chores on top of that. And of course, then they took us to the ghetto.

Q: This was the Ordea ghetto, the Siget ghetto or Ordea?

A: Well, it was across the river. It was in Czechoslovakia. It's called Slotyna, Solopvina in Yiddish. That's where they got all the Jews from the whole area because when the Hungarian came in, they already had occupied Czechoslovakia, it was Hungary. Then when they came in, took over the Carpathian Mountain it became Hungary, too. So all of it was already one and when they got the Jews from all the towns and from the big city, from Siget they formed the ghetto in what used to be Czechoslovakia. It used to be Slotyna and in Yiddish they used to refer to as Solopvina. They cramped us in. They took a section of the town, of the thing, and they made a ghetto. They moved all the gentiles out and they took whatever it was and they cramped us in, ten in a room. There was no such a thing as a bed or anything.

Q: When in 1944 were you taken from your home?

A: I am for one terribly ---

Q: Okay I can verify that because we have start times for the ghettos and end times for the ghettos.

A: One thing I just don't remember dates. I just know what happened. So when we were in the ghetto in Solopvina we had tremendous suffering because aside from everything, sleeping on the floor and things like that, we just didn't have food. We were really suffering. And so I endangered my life by sneaking out from the ghetto. The way I did it, there was somebody going through because you see you have to go through guards and they checked everything. The traffic still people were going on the main road. We were not allowed to get near the main road.

Q: Was there a fence around the ghetto?

A: Yeah, oh sure, there was a fence around the ghetto and there was guards around the ghetto and also where the main road was that went through the ghetto that was also blocked off. If you had a house you had to block the windows, board it off. And there was a fence that had to be made higher so nobody could get over it. But I went over it and I saw a wagon with two horses. There were just wagons and horses that the local people were still using. So what happened there is a long piece of wood that holds together the front wheels with the back wheels, that's in the bottom like. And I put my legs onto that under the wagon and my hands and I went through the checkpoint and when I got on the other side I went into the town where we were living. I guess whatever it was at that day I told them that we were being held in such and such a place and that we don't have food and we're starving and this and that. I was able to manage to get a wagon from somebody and I had a lot of people -- because you see my father was very honored and respected because of all the transactions and all the things that we did for the town and for all the other towns so everybody knew because if you wanted to send something to the city you got my father to carry it. If you wanted to bring something home, you got my father to carry it. So we were very well known. So when I came into the town and told them we're starving and I had a wagon, I had from the farmers, they brought me all kinds of things and I loaded up a whole wagon.

Q: You were able to get back to your old town?

A: I got back to my old town but when I got into town I kept asking where the Gestapo was to make sure I don't run into them. And some of the people even helped me stay out so they couldn't reach me. And I loaded one of these big wagons and I mean full with everything, with corn and potatoes and mostly that. I found two horses that used to belong to us. Of course I recognized them and I got them and I hitched them up and would you believe it I drove in through the checkpoint and I was inside already and when I did, I wanted to get in. You know everything was blocked off.



Q: The ghetto itself was blocked off?

A: The ghetto, the main road, everything was fences. In order for me to be able to do this, I broke open whatever I was able to do, a gate. And I got in the ghetto and I drove to where my mother and father were and what happened was my mother was so worried and so nervous and upset she used to bite the back of her hand to keep her --- she bit off her flesh because she was so upset. And when I got there I yelled quickly whoever was available to unload quickly the wagon. And when I did that after it was unloaded I took the two horses and the wagon back to the main road and I slapped them in the back and I let them go. And nobody ever found out.

Q: Did your mother know you were going to do that?

A: Are you kidding? She would tie me up.

Q: But she knew you were missing and she was --?

A: Of course, because I was gone for two days. As far as she was concerned she didn't know if I am alive or if I am dead because when I had to do this I had to do it on the QT because I had to find out if I go another half a mile in the town am I running in. They were looking for people like me that if you did something what they didn't let you do they just hanged you and just let you hang in order to set an example.

Q: Your whole family was in the ghetto except your oldest brother?

A: That's right.

Q: He had been deported for forced labor earlier?

A: That's right. He was in the Russian front line behind the enemy line digging trenches and doing this kind of work and this is the only brother that survived. He is now in Israel. I know of another man who lives in Cleveland who was together with my brother in the same labor force. So we were in this ghetto and we were there until they brought more and more people, more Jews, till they rounded up all the Jews from all over the area.

Q: Did this take a couple of months or weeks, do you recall?

A: I would say maybe a couple of months. I really don't remember dates because to me one day was just like another day. I never knew --- as a matter of fact I didn't even know the day that I was born because before I came to America there was a lady in Germany who says to me I was young, under age, and somebody says to me one day, would you like to go to America and I said what are you talking

about. Anyway I said well they asked me the date I was born. But every time somebody asked me I just used whatever data just came to my mind. The latest was very easy. I used to say January first. So this lady asked me where I was born and this lady asked me for my name and I never could believe she happened to write a letter to her organization UNRRA and one day she sees me in the street and she comes running after me and she says, look what I've got, look what I've got. I've got your birth certificate. They send it to her. And so that's what I knew the day I was born and things like that. But you see my brother, I am Yegher and he is Taub. The reason for that is because when the Jewish people got married, nobody ever realized that you have to go to City Hall to get a license so when my older sisters and my older brother was born they were named after my mother because the laws didn't consider them married because they weren't married legal. But then when they found out they had to have from the city a marriage certificate, then when I was born I became Yegher. So everybody wants to know why your brother Taub and why I am Yegher.

Q: Yegher is your father's name?

A: Yes. Yegher is my father's name and my mother's name was Taub. That's why they are named Taub. We're in the ghetto and every day you know how you must feel. You had a beautiful whatever it was nice life, nice home, nice situation, human beings live whatever it was and all of a sudden you are cramped in like I don't have to explain. You put twenty people in a room. You could just sit on the floor, or whatever it is.

Q: Were you in an apartment or was this a house?

A: There were houses like they have townhouses here, one floor you know. When they brought the people in from the other towns they just unloaded whatever --- we walked from the stations. And when we walked they decided you go here and you go here and you go here. You split up the families and when it's full they say go to the next house and you keep pushing in and pushing in until it's full. Once it's full they go to the next house and this is how they packed them in.

Q: You all managed to stay together though.

A: Well, once you get food in a house nobody stayed guard because you could walk around outside the ghetto. So if three people from one family was in one house and three people from the other they just sort of stayed together. Until one day -- you know the life, one of the things that kept people from losing their mind like my father, for instance, you pray every morning and you put tfillin and you daven every night and you worry about the Shabbos and you keep things sort of something to do so you don't go out of your mind and this is what usually happened the whole time.

Q: They didn't assign labor or anything like that?

A: No, we were just kept in. You could go out certain times even from the houses but you have to stay inside and so on. So one day after being in the ghetto and I don't have to tell you we had people getting all kinds of bacteria and sickness and dying and everything else. Even the world at that time didn't have the proper medication what they have today. Even today you put twenty people, fifteen people in a room and you're bound to have problems. And so until one day after being all this time in the ghetto and all this tremendous --- And the situation was they never left you alone. The entire time from the minute this thing started they were always trying to find a way how to beat you and how to keep you running and how to keep you scared and how to keep you from having no time to think or trying maybe make a plan of some kind. And they were constantly taking people from one house move them to the other house. For no reason at all they just came in beating people. And people were so scared and people were always crying and people were always upset in situations like that. They created such a fear that we never knew what's going on in the world outside. We never knew what the situation is all about. We were just like sheep. Like animals we were herded into one corner, herded into another corner, beaten into here, beaten into there, moved into here, moved into there. When the time came they evacuated us from the ghetto, I remember distinctly they told us that the front is lying where they were fighting the Russian was getting in danger because they were afraid that we will provide information, we will turn espionage or traitors or partisans against them to help the Russians. But we never had a chance from nothing. We never had a chance. We didn't know a war, we didn't know nothing. We just didn't know from nothing. So they told us that the time has come that we're close to the front line and they have to evacuate us deeper into, away from the front.

Q: Had you heard any bombing?

A: No, absolutely not. So what happened is, you know the Jewish people, they always are so law abiding citizens. They are such a law abiding citizens. I don't know if this has anything to do with this or not but while I was here in Washington, I worked in a place, in a restaurant called Duke Zieberts and on the way to work one day I hear on my radio that George Lincoln Rockwell is going to be speaking on the mall. And so I went into work and when I finished my work I walked down to see what's happened. I just couldn't believe I saw swastikas in America. I saw a man like they used to be a Gestapo tall off the ground, the guards. I saw a man that looked like that and he's talking and he has a swastika. There's people with swastikas all around and I said to myself, I am not going to be like the Jews in Europe. They had the tallis and tfillin and when the Gestapo came they said, Sh'ma Yisrael. I'm not going to be like that. I'm going to go down and I'm going to see what he says. And he was talking about whatever he was saying. So I walked away and I started talking to the Jewish people in this area. As a matter of fact I tried to contact B'nai Brith, the Anti-Defamation League. And they told me, no problem, because this is America. That's what they call freedom of speech. But I just couldn't believe this is freedom of speech. So I

tried to talk to -- I met in libraries in the Silver Spring area was Jewish War Veterans. And I'm never going to forget there was one guy, Harvey Rosenberg, who was a Jewish lawyer who told me this is freedom of speech, this is America, that the swastikas is the American way of life. He was talking about having this big rally the fourth of July, you know how many people are down there. So he went down there July the third which was a Saturday and July the fourth was a Sunday. I went down there and the park police had him roped off with ropes. He's speaking on a loud speaker and he has his troopers with the Gestapo folded the hands in each corner all the way around him and I said to myself, let me hear what he's got to say. If Harvey Rosenberg, a Jewish lawyer, I tried to tell him, what are you going to do? Are you going to wait until he comes to your house. You can all let this man, this is not what it is. And he says to me, if he comes to my house, I'm going to kill him. And I says, well, I'm glad to hear you at least say you are not going to say Sh'ma Yisrael. So I went down there and I honest and truly tell you for the first time in my life I was able to beat up a Nazi. I tore his ear off and he tried to take my eyes out.

Q: This was Rockwell?

A: No, one of his troopers. And the man I talked to, I'm the one that started the riot. I had my hand on the rope. And I was trying to reason with him. He was a marine that turned Nazi. So I said to him, why are you people doing this sort of thing. Didn't the world suffer enough for what Hitler did? And he says to me who are you to talk like that. I says to him you see this number, I got this in Auschwitz. And he says to me, you big liar. How much did you pay to have this put on? And he said to me we are going to build bigger and better gas chambers than Hitler did. When he told that to me I put my hand on the rope and I jumped in. And I started a riot. And when I started the riot I got arrested because for the first time in my life when I jumped in the guy got on top of me and put his fingers in my eyes and whatever I had to do. But I got him messed up in such a way that the police took me off and they twisted my hand in back of me and they held me by my belt and by my hand in the back. And I says to the officer, officer I have nothing against you but you're breaking my arm. And I says, if you don't let me loose or you make me in pain, I says, I don't want to fight you. And he says to me, shut up, you did enough damage already. So I was booked. I put ten dollars down as they call whatever it was, I don't know, and they let me go home. It was in the newspapers and the Nazi party called my house; they're going to kill me, kill my wife, kill my children. I had friends come over while I went to work to stay in the house with my kids.

Q: What year was this?

A: I don't remember what year it was but it was all over the newspapers and everything else. And all of a sudden the whole town, the Washington area was talking about David Yegher. And I had the best criminal lawyers who tried to donate their time to defend me against this. So anyway when I went to court the

judge took one look at me and he says to me, Mr. David Yegher, I feel you had enough of the Nazis and you suffered enough of your life. What I'd like to do is give you back your ten dollars. Go downstairs and we'll give you back your ten dollars and we'll make believe like this thing never happened. But anyway because of this, all these lawyers were trying to build a case by saying when you tell a Holocaust survivor that you're going to build bigger and better gas chambers that's not freedom of speech. That is not something that a man or that. His permit was canceled and he could not talk Fourth of July. But he was gotten more permits for other places; and he went to Cleveland and he went to this. But I was told by the Anti-Defamation League, we don't want you in jail. You got away with it once. But we don't want you to get involved again because the next time you're not going to get off so easy. I still kept in touch and believe me I had people come to my house and wanted me to give them the okay to kill them. And I said, no I don't want them killed. I don't want to be a martyr. And besides I will not do anything but I would break the laws of the United States and as far as I'm concerned, I will have no part of it. And I told him if you're going to, I'm going to report you because the United States laws has to be uphold. So anyway that's one of the situations that happened to me in Washington. So when they took us from the ghetto they loaded us in closed railroad cars.

Q: You mean the cattle cars?

A: Cattle cars -- and again as many as they could push in, they pushed in and they locked the doors.

Q: What time of year was that, do you recall?

A: It was around this time of year, around Pesach time, around this time of the year. I remember that much and we rode in these cattle cars for a long time. We didn't have no food and we didn't have nothing and people go to the bathroom and God knows what else. And then they open the cattle cars and there were people with sticks. The minute they open the cars and you had to get off the cars, it was between tracks, like for no reason they were yelling, los, los, and beatings, for no reason. Everybody didn't have a chance to look or see or do anything. Everybody didn't have a chance to look or see or do anything. Everybody was just trying to bend down to prevent them from hitting you and they were beating you all the time. We were going down in between these tracks and I saw somebody in the front with a long stick like and he was saying this way, this way, to the left and to the right.

Q: This is Auschwitz now?

A: Yes, I found that out. When we got there, I'm the only one that was going to the right. My sisters were young, good healthy women, grew up on the farm, worked the fields, but because they had their children, they went to the left -- my mother, my younger brother. I went to the right with the man and I knew that the sister

who was a year younger than me also went to the right but I talked to people after the war that she ended up in the crematorium after all. But I was the only one. Now I'm talking to you what I told you a whole generation of uncles and aunts and families and people and the whole town that I don't know if a dozen people survived from the whole town. And I landed in Auschwitz, Birkenau. But then while I was there it didn't take long for me to find out because the next morning I was asking what happened to the people and somebody was showing me the smoke.

Q: Another prisoner you asked?

A: Yeah, that was there before me. So when I found out about what in the world was happening with this and that, what can I do? When I got there they shaved off my hair and they gave me a striped suit and they gave me a pair of shoes with wood soles and cloth and that was it. And I was living, I saw in the Holocaust Museum the bed, flat, which was eight or ten people in three layers. And when one turned, everybody had to turn. So I was in one of those. And one day I got separated from all the people that was from my area because somebody told me one day that this is where the people get numbers and they are being shipped out to work instead of sending them to the gas chambers. I saw a line one day: I was way across in another barrack and I took my chance and I ran and I got in line. And sure enough I got a number and I was put in trucks and we were taken to a desert place which was in Poland called Oberschlazingen and I landed up in a place called Gleiwitz. I since found out that Gleiwitz had four camps, concentration camps. It was Gleiwitz one, Gleiwitz two, Gleiwitz three and Gleiwitz four. I was in Gleiwitz two. And when we got there, there was nothing but mountains, wilderness. But the barracks were already built and it had electric wires around and with the Gestapo. And when we opened the gate, one gate it had where the Gestapo came into in and out bringing out the people and one gate is to the side where you went to work. And then they also divided the camp though they didn't put electric wires was just a fence with two gates and they made women. Because afterwards, like after we got there, we dug down the mountain and we pushed it like coal cars and we built a factory. They brought the machineries, I'm never going to forget this, we built the whole thing. What we did is we mixed the cement by hand, seven shovels of sand, one shovel of cement. Then you kick it back and forth, then you make a hole in the middle, then you put so much water and you mix it. But this was like eight stories high. We brought the cement eight stories with a wheel barrel. I still have here, you see this, you were not allowed to stop and I was exhausted. I got to the fourth floor, I put the thing down for a second, he hit me with a piece of steel and cracked my skin. And so we were over there and the women came in to monitor -- it was long tubes, steel, it had little fires and it was turning and it was creating some kind of black sword (?) and the women were taking care of that. They were taught how to put the sword and when it fills up, tie it up and put a new one in. There was a whole shift and we were continue building more factory, more thing. And I lost my left ear, my mastoid because I was young, energetic, and after we came back from work, from

working in the construction, building all day long, the Gestapo, they had the barracks outside they wanted to have beautiful flower gardens and polish their shoes and things like that. And I was a farm boy, I knew how to work with dirt and make these things and I made a flower gardens and I did keeping up with their fields, whatever it is in front of the houses and I cleaned the floors and I used to get extra soup for that.

Q: You did this in addition to the factory?

A: In addition, of course, because when you were working in the factory, they did not give you enough food for you to be able to continue working and continue living. They have it calculated to give you just enough food to keep you alive but to extract from you all the strength so you become weak. And believe me the way they did it there was the barracks all the way around the fences, there was one barrack in the middle. They called the people out and you have to get in five in a row. And then they make you run around this barrack, the center barrack. When you ran around and then when you got weak and they started hitting you, you had to run faster, faster. The guy that was doing this, where he ran behind everybody, when he saw the people that he overtook, he stopped right there, those people were not strong enough to live anymore, to produce work, they went to the trucks and went to the gas chambers. Because they had more people, they brought Jews from all over the world in Europe and they wanted the healthy one to make use of their strength. But I was always running fast and I was always able to keep up and that's how I survived. But what happened is when I did all this extra work I got extra soup. And one day this same guy that was asking for volunteers and I always went and I did and he dug a ladle and he gave me the soup and you saw all the rest of the people just dying to get a bite of something and nobody could get nothing. You see them dying, starving. But then he asked for a volunteer to wash the kettle out. And I was very gladly going to wash the kettle because this guy didn't care about how he dipped out. The best stuff was in the bottom of the kettle.

Q: This was another prisoner, this guy?

A: No, this was one of the Gestapo. And when I come there to volunteer to wash the kettle and I was one of the volunteers, I already got a bowl of soup, I heard him say to me, you swine and he hit me on my side with his right hand and he busted my ear drum. And since then I had nothing but pain and even after I got liberated, I went to doctors in Germany and doctors in everywhere and I finally ended up here in Washington a place with the ear clinic where a doctor said to me, I have one choice, have the operation because it's so deteriorated that it's going to affect my brain and it's pressing against my brain and that I don't have much to live. So I authorized him to operate on me and he took the mastoid out completely and I have a mastoid, a plastic one and I don't hear in my left ear. But thank God the operation was very successful. The doctor told me I would have to come in and check-ups and things like that. But thank God whatever it did it took over. I go

to see him every couple of years or so and I have no problem. So anyway I was in Gleiwitz.

Q: How did they take you from Auschwitz to Gleiwitz, again by train?

A: No, no, by truck. We were working in Gleiwitz and building the factory and me doing the side works and me getting a little soup a couple of times a week, because it wasn't every day. And so I was coming along.

Q: So the work the women were doing as you were building the factory they started doing work in the factory?

A: They ran the machinery and they as a matter of fact, when they got through for the day, their faces, the whole thing, was covered with the dust, with black dust, just like your hair black. That's what the job they did. And afterwards one day while we're being there and I'm telling you every day ----- I look outside in the street and I see people walking, cars and the highway and I said to myself, I don't know, will I ever be able to walk free, will I ever be able to walk free. There was no such thing as trying to plan an escape because where are you going to go. There's no place to go. They will catch you. And so we don't know anything what goes on in the world. We don't know nothing. And one day they tell us they have to evacuate us. They opened up all the warehouses and everybody was running crazy, grabbing a loaf of bread.

Q: This was the winter.

A: The winter, oh was it winter. We went, I don't remember, two or three days walking through the woods up to here in snow. And when the nightfall came they just tell us freeze or die or something and we just kept on walking. And anybody just couldn't walk anymore, they just shot you and left you right there. And there is one thing that I had with me that was another guy by the name of Shia Spiegel who was from Poland, from Bengene and he and I sort of teamed up to look out for one another. Well, when everybody went crazy and got a loaf of bread, I took a loaf of cheese, like a loaf of American cheese, five pounds and I put it in my belt and covered over with this and I carried because two days later the bread was gone and you had to march. And if anybody had any bread they killed you for it, or food or something. So I used to reach inside and take a piece of cheese, break off a piece and hold it in my hand, and I had him lay down in my arms like this and I fed him and he ate the piece of cheese, or he did that to me and this is how we survived. Then we came to a place where there were railroad cars where they were going to transport us. Yeah, there is one more thing that I did. I became an expert in concrete, and not just concrete, also to make the steel because the concrete is usually reinforced by steel. I became an expert in steel. They promoted me to build the individual air shelters for the Gestapo all around the camp. Basically it was built like four feet deep on the location, round. Then we had a place where we had to design that we built forms like barrel sections with a



narrow opening from the back. And lookout that was wide and narrow to the front. And then we put a dome on it. We built this whole thing by hand and then we loaded it on a two-wheel cart and we pushed it to the location. And when we got to the location we left clamps that we put nuts and bolts to tie it together, the section. Then we put the dome on it. That's what I was doing. That was my last job with a crew of people.

Q: Those warehouses that they opened were those in the SS part of the camp?

A: They opened up everywhere. And everywhere people could go in and people ---- we went crazy trying to find food, all they could find. And so when we got to the railroad, when they were evacuating us, they made us go into the wagon. It was open; it was cold; it was snow so deep; it was absolutely blizzard. In our wagon there was a hundred and eighty people because when they tell the people to go in I saw this with my eyes: the Gestapo took the rifle with the heavy side and hit people over the shins, over the feet, so they will back up so they can get more people up. And no matter how they did, they still couldn't get everybody on there. What happened to the people then, I have no idea. But we left. When midnight came the train took off. The first morning there were thirty people dead in our own wagon. We drove in this wagon for about eight days. Nobody ever gave us anything to eat. To get water, I made out of whatever I could find from striped shirts, from coats like a rope with a hat and dragging it down on the ground as the train was going to get snow for water.

Q: These were the open cars, you said?

A: The open cars. Out of our wagon when we were unloaded in Oranienburg, there were three people from my wagon left, everybody died. Three people in my wagon, Shia Spiegel, one, me and somebody else. And the only reason we survived because I got the snow for water and I got the cheese that I made him and he made me eat and nobody could ever find out.

Q: So it lasted you that whole time?

A: Right, a little piece at a time.

Q: What did you do with the dead bodies? Were they still on the train with you?

A: First of all when there was enough people, people just dumped them overboard. But then there was nobody to do it anymore so everybody that just died, they just died. I saw a man dying who was out of his mind, shivering, things like that. And I found out that he was born in the town right next to my town and I just couldn't believe it. And so when I got to Oranienburg I was still in pretty good shape. And as I was walking, this was I believe an air hangar for airplanes or something. And believe it or not, I come across somebody that we grew up together. We were together practically every day. And his name is David

Yegher, too. And he lives in Lakewood, New Jersey right now. He wrote his biography. He wrote it so the kids would have. He has it in there that I saved his life. I don't know how I did it but I got some food for him. On top of being sick what it was he was also wounded from air raid. And I bandaged him up and I stayed with him until they were looking for healthy people and they picked me again and guess where they sent me -- to Bergen-Belsen. I was in Bergen-Belsen and I saw like your eyes would never want to see. Just like flies people dying all over the streets and there was a wagon that was being pushed by people like us picking them up and just dumping them in the wagon and you see a hand or a leg or something stuck in the wheel or something and they just pushed the wagons and pushed the wagons. I didn't know where they were taking them but they were just picking up the dead like you pick up logs or something. And again they are looking for somebody that is still in good health and I still was. That's when I lost, I separated from my friend because he was no longer able.

Q: David Yegher, the other David Yegher?

A: No, no.

Q: Spiegel.

A: Spiegel. So when they took me to Bergen-Belsen and I was still with Spiegel, from Oranienburg to Belsen-Belsen, when I got to Bergen-Belsen, again they were looking for people that were still in pretty good shape and I still was and they took me to Oranienburg.

Q: Back to Oranienburg.

A: No, no, no, from Oranienburg to Belsen-Belsen and from Belsen-Belsen they took me to Hamburg. They was a place called Desaoofa. Now, in Desaoofa where my strength came to an end, they took me out in the morning to repair the railroads and the bridges that were bombed during the night. We always rode in some sort of a transport car, truck to get to the place or by train to where the place was bombed and we were repairing. But to come back, most of the time we couldn't ride back because either the bridge was bombed, either the train was not available or something, we had to walk. So we walked and by the time we got to the place into Desaoofa they had saved a kettle for soup for us because we were important people to give us. But when we got there and they brought out the kettle of soup and we got in line, everybody got in line. And the guy was very nice; he took the soup and he dumped it on the floor and we didn't get nothing to eat. And during the night was air raids. We had to go down to the basement but the basement was full of water when we get down. It took me four months to get me to the point where I could no longer stand on my feet. They loaded me into railroad cars that we were told we're going back to Belsen-Belsen. The reason we were shipped to Bergen-Belsen they should put us in the gas chambers or whatever in the crematorium to get rid of us. But, God was with us. What happened was the

whole time that they tried to reach Bergen-Belsen, there was air raids. They bombed this track, they bombed this track. They shifted us back and forth and they never reached Bergen-Belsen.

Q: You saw and heard the raids?

A: Oh sure. As a matter of fact I was in one place whereby we were a little wooded area but we were not allowed to go into the shelters. But to the left of us -- there was three corners. One was like a military, like a post office whatever it was and one was an air shelter where all the Germans ran in and one was a bridge. Three bombs were direct hits. Our place was vibrating like you couldn't believe it. And then they called us to come to the air shelter and to move the stuff. We removed the dead bodies and things like that but nothing happened to us. So when they couldn't get us anymore to Bergen-Belsen, they unloaded us in a place called Zamposten. In this place, Zamposten, it wasn't a concentration camp, it was ---- of course it was guarded, it didn't have electric wires whatever it was but it was a prisoner of war camp. And they unloaded us inn this place called Zamposten and this was how shall I say it was like a ghost camp because there was no movement because everybody was weak and dying and so on.

Q: These were soldiers. This was a POW camp so there were ---?

A: I was too weak to know. All I know is I was told that this is a prisoner of war camp. I want you to know I am not a weakling. I want you to know my condition, the way I felt and I'm never going to forget that. I'm always hunting, looking to find something to eat. I finally found a potato and I finally dragged myself to the trees to find some limbs to be able to build a fire to cook the potato, bake it or something.

Q: Where did you find the potato?

A: I found it someplace. But would you believe it I couldn't accomplish my goal because I didn't have the strength after I found a match. I couldn't have the strength to light the match. Could you believe that. I was getting weaker and weaker and weaker by the minute and I was already in a situation that I didn't know, I didn't know, I couldn't get up, I couldn't move and I was ----- but I don't know what happened in the next I don't even know how many days, I just don't remember. All I know is I was lifting my head one day and I saw the Germans running and the British running after them. Then I looked again and I saw the British running back and the Germans running after the British.

Q: This was from your barracks?

A: From my barrack through the window. Then I saw the Germans and the British chasing them and that was the end But the next thing I knew, I remember, you see the movies where there was people skin and bone, that's how I was. My thigh

right here I could take it around with my fingers. I remember one thing that somebody coming with scissors and cutting off the striped pants and the shirt I had on and lifting me up and putting me on a blanket which was put on a stretcher. I remember somebody putting some kind of powder or whatever it was and covering me with a blanket and that's all I know. I don't remember nothing else until I came to in that used to be a German military barrack what they turned into like a hospital. I remember them feeding me like you feed a baby with a bottle, the sweet milk. I remember them that after that giving me the broth from a potato. Then I remember them giving me the broth with a little potato in it. And I have started to recover really nice. Then I made a mistake because there were Germans, workers that were working for the military and somebody did me a favor by giving me a piece of his sandwich. I had two bites and I swallowed it and I was dying. I remember one of the military doctors, because there was a few doctors around trying to do whatever they're going to do and I heard one saying, I can't let this one die because he is my challenge and he revived me. It took me four months to be able to stand on my feet and being able. After that I just got up one day and they told me where are you going to go, what are you going to eat, what are you going to be. I says, where I'm going to go God knows, but I'm going to go anywhere and everywhere to look for anybody that I can find to survive. And everywhere there was a camp that I heard of I somehow managed to get there by stopping in, begging for food, things like that. What can I tell you. I met at the time people, German people, who fed me, who cried when they heard my story. I also had people tell me that they are going to get even with America because they said the reason they lost the war was because America bombed their cities, their villages and their towns and they're going to get even with America. I went in and I searched all over the Germany where it was under the British occupation. Then I wanted to know if I can find some more people. So I went across the border. I just don't know. They were so strict of having people going across the border.

Q: Which border?

A: Between the British zone to the American zone. But I fooled all of them and I went across to the American occupied territory. This is how I came to America, from the American zone.

Q: What year did you emigrate?

A: I came to the United States in 1948. It was April 17 that I came into the United States.

Q: Between the time you were released from the hospital and emigrating you were going to various camps, that's how your time was occupied.

A: Yes I was going to various camps and I was living in various camps until one day that lady found me. That changed my life. And of course, the rest is history.

When I landed in New York and I came in and I was sponsored by the United Jewish Appeal. But I was sponsored to come to America I don't even know who the people were that I was assigned to go west. So when I came to New York I ran into some people. They knew of my people, I ran into some people that I knew at the Hotel Marseille, 103<sup>rd</sup> Street and Broadway. When they came to me and they told me that they have me assigned and when am I ready to go west and I said to them I'm sorry I don't know west, east. All I know is that I found a few people. It's not my relatives but it's some people, a few people that I knew and to me this is my family. And I said I like to stay here. And they said to me well, they want me to know if I stay that I will be strictly on my own. They cannot be responsible for me or give me any assistance or financial or anything like that. And I said to them, haven't you done enough for me already. You brought me out to America. I guarantee you that I won't be no burden to you. In a country like this where you can go out and have a job and make a living. And they said okay you're on your own and I've been on my own. I worked, I got a job, I was working in this place. Oh, I worked hard. I was making \$50 a week and I worked from eight o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock at night seven days a week.

Q: Was this a factory?

A: No, cooking. And so after working a year I got a raise, not money, but I mean I got working six days.

Q: You got a day off?

A: Yeah, then after working two years over there I heard about the Catskills and I heard about the places. I went to work as an assistant chef to a place which was very well known at the time called Pioneer Country Club at Greenfield Park, New York which was kosher, strictly kosher. They were so impressed with me, they had a hotel, the Edwards Hotel in Florida, they were paying me some assistant chef \$150, so I went from \$50 to \$150. But I went to Florida and worked for them. As first chef I went from \$150 to \$400. I worked for them two years. Then I got to be so well known because the people who have eaten where they stayed and people came from other hotels because they liked the food so much that I had two agents who were signing up my jobs. I did that for ten years and believe it or not I did that from 1950 to '51 actually. That was the first year I went until '58 when I came to Washington. I was in those years making a thousand dollars a week because while I was in Germany hunting around and finding places where DP's were, DP camps, so I used to work in hotels and restaurants and I learned to bake and butcher and do everything and this was my profession. So when I came to Washington, I didn't realize then, I was the chef, one of the most popular, the best restaurant in Washington, Duke Zieberts. I was there four and a half years. Then I went into business for myself and I operated Yegher's kosher caterers. When you work, whatever money you make, you know I had a family and kids, you are just not able to save a lot of money but I was able to save up \$3,000 and I went into the business. I made a very good living and I sold it for \$1,010,000

cash. I sold it and I went into the Pavilion in the Old Post Office and I left September a year ago, the Pavilion.

Q: You sold that restaurant too?

A: Well there was nothing to sell. My lease was up and while I was there I just didn't make any money. It was just a very bad arrangement. Everybody that ever goes in there has a hard time. It's just not a money proposition because it's so over-rated and it looks so glorious and looks so over, over, over promoted that people just don't realize you just can't make a living. I know people there who are absolutely starving in business. They have no money to take care of their children and no money to live, just waiting for -- you know. So I managed to hold on because I didn't have to hire no chef. I didn't have to hire no expensive whatever you want to call it and I was able to hold out until my lease is up and I just took my equipment and I came out here. My situation right here, I hope to be able to find a bank who's going to lend me money to build a road. What you see right here I own nineteen acres with all of them buildings and it's all free and clear.. And I'm hoping to get a loan and then I'm going to open and then I'm going to retire.

Q: Will this be a kosher inn or -----?

A: Well, it has a lot of ifs and buts about it. For this to be kosher, I would like it to be kosher, but if it's not going to be kosher is because it will be determined that it's just not a market to support it. So it all depends, it all depends. I haven't really decided yet but I will have to do -- remember one thing, I am a survivor. I'm going to do whatever I have to do to survive.

Q: I did have a question if you don't mind going back a little bit about what you remember about the first occupation of your town.

A: Oh, how can I forget, I mean it started little things, slowly. You have no idea. First you had to register. After you registered they imposed various restrictions. You couldn't walk from one town to the other; you couldn't be out at night; you couldn't have no windows facing the main road, have to be blocked.

Q: Did you live on that main road?

A: Yes, and they were deporting Jews what they called it where people had to evacuate because of the front lines and they needed people to work the fields. So they came in with this clever thing by saying that all the Jews who don't have enough means of living and supporting themselves and what they have within their farm. For instance; we had no problems; we had enough food, we had enough things, we had enough things we never needed to leave the farm. We had wheat, bread, you know all the things in the summer, in the winter.

Q: You were self sufficient.

A: Self sufficient, and we even sold a lot. So there was no problem with us but there were Jews taken who were very cleverly misrepresented because they were taking Jews to Galicia and then we found out they weren't taking them to work, they were taking them and they dug deep trenches and shot them all. But there were some people that somebody, somehow, that the word got out. Wherever they did, they did it in such a way by always giving you a reason. We need to evacuate the people because the ones that don't have enough sufficient to sustain, to live, whatever they have on their farm because they are not allowed to work, you're not allowed to walk, you have to stay on your farm, those are the Jews that they took. Then they come to the Jews and they said, well everybody of such and such age had to report to the military. That's when they took my brother. Then they came again and they said no school, no Jews are allowed to go to school; no Jews are allowed to congregate; no Jews are allowed to go to the synagogue; no Jews are allowed to have communications of any kind with one another. Everything you have on the farm you have to deliver to such and such a place, whatever the crops and things like that. I remember my father dug a hole in the barn and put in sacks of wheat so we would have. In case whatever, in reserve or something. But we didn't know that when you put in sacks of wheat in the ground and the wheat touches the ground on the side, the wheat turns to dirt. It started cultivation and growing. When we uncovered it, whatever it had, lumber on the top and hay or something, there was only a little bit in the middle that was still useable. Everything else was all turned. We had no experience. We had known we would have put lumber on the side, on the bottom but we didn't know. When we didn't have wheat we ground the beans for flour and made some kind of bread out of beans because we just couldn't get because even in the farm when you get whatever you get in the winter time you have to be able to exchange and trade and market, you just cannot ---- We were lucky because we, now for instance, potatoes -- we dug a hole in the ground and we put straw on the outside and on the bottom and then we covered with straw and we put dirt on it, it was just like fields. Then we used to go and dig out potatoes. So we always found some things. Every day of course you had to wear the Star of David.

Q: Did you have to make it at home, did somebody distribute them?

A: I don't remember, I don't remember of they distributed it or you made it or you got it, I have no idea. And as always there was never a let down. There was never a let down one day that they would leave you alone. There was always this constant harassment, nudging -- today you have to do this, today you have to do this, today you have to do this constantly. And they wore you down, wore you out, wore you down.

A: How old were you when decrees began?"

A: I was thirteen years old.

- Q: Had you begun gymnasium or were you going on in school at that point?
- A: What are you talking about? I only had four years of public school. That's it. I had very little schooling but I did have training in Jewish, I went to cheder. I learned in cheder. I know how to daven pretty good. I know all there is to know. I learned from my father. I was with him ----
- Q: You carried his entrepreneurial spirit.
- A: I mean he used to pray all the time and he used to be so observant and so religious and such a good person.
- Q: He wore a beard?
- A: No, he didn't wear no beard but he used some kind of paste to dissolve the hair or something because you're not allowed to use a razor. But anyway ----
- Q: What about anti-Semitism by the Romanians?
- A: Oh, I had anti-Semitism all the time. I grew up with that. Let me tell you something. I was a tough kid, and I mean I was a tough kid. I was not bothered by anybody because to me, I would never back down and even if I encountered --- --- I encountered a bunch of school, my younger age you know, and there was somebody by the name of Kuza that they had thought, he got after the Jews at the time, even before the Germans came. And they got surrounded me and they wanted me to say Treaska Kuza which means in Romanian long live Kuza. And I wouldn't say it.
- Q: Kuza, that was part of the government real anti-Semite -----?
- A: That was the guy like George Lincoln Rockwell over here. And Kuza organized men who were going on the trains and when they found a Jew they threw him off the train while the train was running, through the window, beat him up and things like that. So anyway they tried to get me to say Treaska Kuza and I wouldn't say it. But I knew one thing. There was about five, six kids my age and I knew that if I took care of the leader that they would scatter. They had me surrounded and the guy who was the leader was telling to me to say Treaska Kuza and I got closer and closer to him and I used my right foot and I kicked him in the balls. He bent over screaming and when he did the rest of them, and I hit him afterwards, and I said who is next? And they all ran away. That was one thing and I was attacked another time. I was a tough kid. Somebody was going to hit me and I took his arm and I was going to put him over my shoulder, flip him over, but I did a terrible thing, what I did I had his hand backwards and I broke his arm. Nobody bothered me again. They knew I was a tough kid. When I went to school even I also spoke very good Romanian and the teacher was trying to break up the Jewish



kids, there was two in a bench and so they got and they put one gentile and one Jew because they wanted not that the Jewish kid to be able to talk in Yiddish and carry on together. But there was me and one more kid from the other end of the town. They let us sit together. Well they said because we spoke fluently, Romanian, so they didn't have to do it. But whatever it was -- I was a tough kid.

Q: Did your father, was he ever harassed singly within the town?

A: Well, we were constantly harassed, no question about it, constantly harassed. I remember one time, I don't remember exactly what happened. Somebody, I don't know, hit my father with a rifle and my father told my sister to go and get the police because we were on pretty good terms with the police. My mother wouldn't let her out of the house. As a matter of fact it's a good thing she didn't because the guy was outside who hit my father, he was outside in the street and after a few minutes if my sister, if anybody would have come out he would have shot us. But instead of shooting us he used his rifle to shoot and he shot the geese. There was a flock of geese and he shot the geese with the bullets. And so my mother, she wouldn't let my sister go out and she just stayed in the house down until he left. What can I tell you. This transport that went from Gleiwitz to Oranienburg that was a suffering. I'm telling you. There were some people that got off the train when the train had to slow down, whatever, and they started to run away. They were just shot, they were just shot.

Q: Were you able to get a blanket or anything when they opened those warehouses before that trip?

A: No, no.

Q: So you were just exposed?

A: You better believe it. You stay close together and when one side is warm you turn the other side to each other.

Q: What did you do mentally? Do you remember? How did you deal mentally with that kind of hardship? Do you think you're going to make it through or do you just agree to accept the inevitable?

A: No, no, no, you never think of that. You constantly think what to do to survive. You constantly plan what to do, how to do, what to survive. You don't think of it's good, you don't think of it's bad. It's just like somebody is out in the desert and they're dying from thirst and when you see them in the movies, when they're running, when they see water, what do you think these people are going to be thinking of? Their entire body and mind and soul and power and strength is just to get to that water. Well that's the kind of conditioned that you become that you constantly like fatigue just thinking where can I find something to eat. You don't think of nothing else. You just think, how can I survive the next hour. And you

are constantly thinking just of that. And there is nothing else because you are in such a pain for hunger , you're in such a pain trying to find something to eat that you just don't ever have anything else on your mind. You're just frustrated, how can I find something to eat to get rid of the pain. And that's the way the whole situation is. And you constantly manipulate and maneuver and you constantly look to find something, something that you can eat, constantly. You constantly plan where to be. When I used to do the side work all the time.

Q: The gardening?

A: The gardening and polishing the shoes and making the beds and things like that. That's what it took and you're just so helpless, you're just so useless, you're just so without nothing you can do. It's just like you see so many people dying, you see so many people starving, you see so many people, there's nothing you can do, there's nothing you can do. It's just like you are walking along the roads and there's an earthquake and you get covered and you're dying. What can you do? Nothing! There's nothing you can do. And I don't know why is there always that somebody always comes up in a generation and always has the right, he feels he has the right to destroy the Jews. I don't know. I don't know. I just don't know. All of a sudden the Jewish life becomes so cheap and so nobody sets any value on it and Jewish life -- I mean I saw the crematoriums.

Q: At Auschwitz?

A: Yes. I mean how in the world can ever be somebody ever able to do systematically like a lumber factory, like a manufacturer that produces cars, systematically gassing and burning human beings, never mind Jews, just somebody. What in the world does ever anybody ever has gotten the idea that he has the right to do that. How in the world? I just recently applied for the Wiedergud Machel because I just never wanted anything from them because I just never wanted anything from them. But some of my friends just talked me into it by saying, you're going to get old, you never know what's going to happen, why shouldn't you be able to get something out of it? They took enough from you. So, but it's already too late. Anyway I filed with the Mead organization in New York. They told me that they might be able to overturn something, whatever. You can never tell. But the situation is ----- Because I'm a Holocaust survivor and because of this area I have been approached many different ways, many different times, especially when they had the Eichmann trials I had been followed by reporters. Wanted to know what I'm going to say.

Q: Your reaction?

A: Reaction. I was also on television. There was a guy here on Alan King show that he was the one that hunted down Klaus Barbie. I was on TV because he wanted to have somebody to talk about.

Q: Larry King?

A: Larry King, yeah. And so my last statement was that I hope that the world would learn what a horrible thing the Nazis did to the world and to the Jews especially. And I hope that never again would anything ever be instituted something of that nature and whatever. So I had quite a few calls because I was in the kosher catering and I was very well honored with dignity and respect. People knew me and they called me to tell me what a wonderful thing I did and said. So we're going to have a Holocaust Museum here?

Q: Right.

A: And I hope to God that it will be there to be able to that the world never forgot what the world did and a lot of it could have been prevented but the world didn't lift a finger. And again we were alone and no defense, nobody. And the people that could do, didn't. They made it that they didn't want to be involved. Well, I hope to God that the State of Israel will exist and be able to because God forbid this time and God forbid if the State of Israel should ever be destroyed or overpowered that there wouldn't be no more State of Israel and this time we will not escape. It will be the end of the Jewish for sure and that I can tell you because as many enemies we got now and as many ways they now know how to exterminate and will be absolutely merciless.