Interviewed Oct. 24, 1995 (2:04:07) and Nov. 22, 1995 (53:15) in Melbourne, Australia
*Points where witness is overcome by recollections

Born Dec. 2, 1929, from Wieluń, near German border, about 19 km from border town of **Praszka** (Praschkau) and not far from **Częstochowa**, about halfway between Częstochowa and **Łódź** (1:08).

Many Jewish people and schools in Wieluń. Of 60,000 [16k?] people, one-third were Jewish. [From Virtual Shtetl: In the beginning of 1939, Wieluń was inhabited by 5,238 Jews who constituted 33% of the total population.]

Simon came from a religious family and went to a boys-only Jewish school, not a cheder, not gymnasium. There were six or seven rooms, it was called **Yagada? [2:11]**.

School started at 7 a.m., with a break for breakfast. The children could go home for lunch, or stay in **Cheder? [2:53].** In the afternoon at 3, they had a break, went until 6. It was "a proper school and very religious"; they had to stay and *daven mincha* **(?)** in the evening. They didn't call the teachers rabbi, but Hebrew names.

For general schooling, a teacher came to teach Polish, geography, arithmetic, but mainly was Jewish studies. They learned Yiddish and "Ashkenazi Hebrew," which he could read and write at age 7. **Lashon Hakodesh? [4:40]** was what they learned, spoke it just the same as one would modern Hebrew. At my age, Russia, translated in Yiddish but in class talked only Lashon Hakodesh and Hebrew. I could speak Polish, learned in street and in **Sin Cheder?** [5:53], when we spoke only Polish.

His family included two older brothers, four sisters, one younger brother (identified here as Zeesel). Their father had an orchard on property he owned about 8 km from town, growing apples, pears, cherries, plums. Father went to Poles and hired their orchards for the season, rented the orchards and the fruit. Fruit sold to wholesalers in cities **Częstochowa, Mylin,? Łódź** (7:50)

Simon's brother-in-law said the grandfather was in the Russian army for 27 years and got property after that, got the orchard and divided it between his two sons; next door belonged to Simon's uncle. The brothers didn't work together.

An instance I remember — we lived in the city, in summer went to the orchard and lived there. I was about 3 years old and wanted to help, climbed tree and started dropping fruit; and of course, nobody could find me and it got dark. We had a guard because Poles would come at night and pinch fruit and the guard came and said come down or I'll shoot, which frightened me, so to make me come down he called my mother. They knew I was frightened of devils and whatnot so my sister put on a sheet and black hat and of course that frightened me; she said she would go away if I came down. Got down on promise I wouldn't be punished.

My mother came from very religious home. I remember very little of her; only thing I remember of her is portrait of her in grand room, I see only in a dream, sort of. What I hear from my

brother-in-law and sister, she was a very nice person, very beautiful, had a heart of gold, anyone who came found lodging in our place. She came from a little city called **Działoszyn?** (12:34). **Tseeru?** was her name (12:50).

I remember my father's father better than father. Grandfather came on little horse and cart. He passed away at 105, about five years before the war. He was stooped, with a long white beard.

One thing I remember about my father: In the orchard we were picking cherries when I was 6 or 7; I almost fell and he caught me.

It was a very happy home. On Saturday afternoon, father listened to you read and if you made a little mistake you got a *patsch* (tiny slap).

Interviewer: What do you remember about the beginning of the war? It's very difficult to separate what you read about, what you were told, from what you truly remember.

SM: The thing that I'm going to tell you is the things I remember and what I've been through not what I've heard from other people.

Antisemitism in our city very great. The market was an open square in the middle of the city, surrounded by buildings; on each corner a great big poster in Polish (17:10) said "Jews to Jews and Poles to Poles." In front of Jewish shops, men (Endeck) keeping people from going in Jewish shops. ... Youths would go walking in the market square. There was not one Friday night when one of the Jewish boys didn't get knifed by the Poles. Police looked the other way; they were with them, of course. That was going on for quite a few years. As far as I can remember, there was antisemitism.

In 1939, they lived in a building with a Jewish restaurant downstairs. Coming home from school he heard the restaurant's radio and heard tomorrow morning would be a **prueba** (air-raid exercise), and people should go to the cellar and come up when they hear the all-clear. Early Friday morning, 4 or 5 a.m., the siren went off but it was the real thing; went up from cellar when the siren sounded again and the whole city was on fire. We could see all the people in street lying already dead. We dressed quickly and grabbed what we could, two sisters and I [others were in country already]. One sister was a dressmaker; one was 22, the other 18. We were running, like everyone else, one of my sisters got separated; we found out she went to **Zduńska Wola?** [23:00], where an older, married brother lived; took us about a week but my older sister and I walked to **Tuszyn?**[23:35] We were following the mob of Jewish people and hoping we would meet my mother and others. German planes were bombarding the people.

At **Tuszyn** the Germans caught up with us. There was a train running from **Łódź to Tuszyn** so it must have been very close. After that people started walking back so we went back to Wieluń and then to our country home; mother and younger brother were there, 18-year-old sister came back. Father, I think passed away shortly before the war. I blocked it all from memory.

Now and then when walking, we would come to a city with Red Cross and would get something to eat, drink, or rummaged from fields. In **Tuszyn**, the Jewish community organized proper

meals. Polish peasants on way didn't help us, didn't fight. They were running, too: they had enough to do with themselves at that stage.

My first encounter with German authorities was in Wieluń when they hung 10 or 12 Jewish men in the marketplace so every Jew can see if they don't do what they want them to do, where they will end up. They left them hang for quite a few days. After a while, they were rounding up the Jewish men; came to the villages everywhere; came to our place, too, and all the men were taken, took me, too, to the city, Wieluń.

I didn't know what they were doing, but there were doctors there and they were separating the men; after a few days I was sent back home, probably because I was too young. Cousins who were taken and brother-in-law husband of another sister, were sent to near **Poznan?** [29:30] where they were working them in mines — coal or stone — and no one ever came back from there anymore. I know some of my cousins perished almost immediately because they wouldn't eat *treif* (non-kosher); one was a rabbi, one studying to be one. Nobody came back from there.

We went back to the country; we could grow things, country easier to survive; we could grow things.

***** *Asked by interviewer if he knew the men hanged in the market, Mr. Michalowicz is overcome by recounting seeing the hanged men [31:00].*

Early 1940, maybe, not far from us was a huge property because so big sent in SS men; Jews were of interest to landowner; he came to our house, when I came home, mother very badly beaten up, dog lying in front of house, shot. Man wanted to take heirlooms; had sister who was going to get married, had big case with linen with trousseau, he was going to touch all that.

***** My mother asked him not to touch the contents of the case. The dog jumped on him when he started beating mother; he shot the dog. *(34:45, cant talk about it anymore; interviewer changed subject.)*

The man took everything. A few months later, end of 1940, took all the Jews from all the villages and grouped into one big house. One sister (she survived, and is in Australia) was working for administrator of whole area. The administrator, a German, apparently a very nice man; he liked my sister and cousin and some of the other girls. When they were making Wieluń Judenrein, he let them know and we ran away. Before that, I just remembered, they brought from Weiluń the Judenalteste, made them dig hole in forest and shot and buried them there.

My sister came home, told my mother, and two sisters, older sister with a baby, younger brother; others were married; we didn't know where they were. All of them ran away into the forest. I came home and could see house was empty, a meal being prepared but there's nobody here. I understood something is wrong. It was harvest time, end of summer, corn and all that. I could see signs that they ran away, caught up with them after few kilometers. We went into the forest and a Jewish man who had run away, in his 40s, knew area very well and he came and said I will take you into a deeper forest where there's dugouts and we will stay there and see what's going to happen.

We stayed for week, he said they had cleaned the city completely; there's no way of going back, all the Jews are gone. He said youngest should go to a camp not far away, and said to my mother you have a brother living in **Tschenstochau?** (41:05), he was a **xx?**, and you and daughter with baby should go there, so decision was made —

While we were in forest we needed food especially for little baby. Man arranged we go to a Pole in a village, me and my brother because we were children. There was a big river, we crossed shallow spots and went to the Pole and got bread and milk, as much as we could carry but couldn't find exact spot on the way back. There was a deep hole and we both fell in but held on for dear life to the food and managed to get out, but we both almost got drowned because we didn't want to lose the food. Incidents like that stay in a child's mind.

***** Decision was made to separate, no other way, so my mother, and the elderly people went to **Tschenstochau?**; We hired a guide at night and had to be very careful because Germans were patrolling all the time. Early morning we came close to camps, that's where we separated. Two sisters, younger brother and I went to camps *[emotional about separating from mother 45:00]*.

Had to register, stayed a night and day in a barn. That was a camp in a village, one big house, men and women, in separate rooms, of course. The whole camp maybe 70 men, 12 girls, one SA man looked after us. We were going to work by ourselves. It was under German administration but camp was run by a Jew, supervised by German, in 1941. Work we were doing was demolishing old Polish houses and building new homes. Poles had 10 acres of land, they put together 5, 6, 7 and put it together into a big one and brought Volksdeutsche from Poland and Romania and gave them land they took from Poles. So we're demolishing old houses and barns and building nice houses for Volksdeutsche.

There until probably beginning of 1942; it was not so bad because we could go to Poles if had money and buy some food. From Germans we got soup at night and a round bread for whole week, bit of butter. In the food there was horsemeat; the horses stunk like hell. I sometimes went to the Poles and didn't have any money, but they wouldn't give or sell anything so I pinched chickens. We had potatoes from fields.

You weren't ill-treated?

Not there, as long as you worked. Each weekend we were on duty to clean up. One Sunday it was my turn and we had a Jew who was running away; we hid him that night, put straw on the floor and gave him a blanket. I gathered it together, made a bundle of it and put in corner, but it was on a hole for chimney; there was a fire and the house burned down. SS man asked what happened, whose fault was it? Of course, they wouldn't say or I wouldn't be here telling you my story now. I remember very well there was a Mr. Mass [53:04] — his son passed away not long ago — he must have had Russian gold rubles and he had a few in his boot heel and they were burnt and gold melts. Things like this that you remember this day.

We heard — that was close to Częstochowa, near **Klobutzko** (54:07) [German name for Kłobuck]— one day a teenage boy came back and said all of people in **Tschenstochau?**

[German name for Częstochowa; Michalowicz seems to switch between two, or else this is a different place altogether] were sent to Treblinka. He got away because he was carrying clothes to a wagon, and covered himself with a bundle and after a few hours he jumped off the train and lived on the fields. We didn't want to believe him. That was our first finding out from there what actually happened. I don't remember date, could be 1942. We were all gathered into Klobuztko and packed onto farmers' wagons, and off we go, where, nobody knows.

Must have been a few days and people died on the train; no food, no drink, no nothing. People looking out slats to see where we were, and suddenly we stopped. People were saying "Auschwitz" and at that stage we didn't know what it was. Don't think they had ovens fully working but we could smell flesh burning. I think there were mass graves and they were burning bodies. Then suddenly we moved and after a few hours we got to Blechhammer [58:37]. W walked from station to camp, waited on Appellplatz. Blechhammer was run in the camp by Jews. The Judenalteste's name was Mr. [Karl] Demerer [59:18], he was terrific, a nice man. He saved a lot of people there. He came from **?? or Będzin??** — one of the cities [59:30]. On the Appell he was saying, "no money, no money." He wanted people to hang onto their money; hold it if you can. After the war, survivors took him to America and set him up there.

Then came Mengele, whoever; they made selection there. The girls were separated from the men straightaway, and they made a selection. There were about 70 children and five were picked out and when we were picked out we all survived. I was one of the five. They separated my younger brother. Karl Demerer came to the boys and asked how old are you, and he added two years to the age. I was 12; he said I was 14. I was separated from my brother. All children and old people were taken onto truck. We were sent to barracks; they most likely to Auschwitz. I stayed on in Blechhammer, from 1942 until the *Todesmarsch*, 1945.

Who else was in the barracks?

They had a *Jugend* barrack; they had a lot of youngsters in barrack. We were put into commandos. They were extracting oil from coal already then; we were doing building, 14 km square, the works. People from all over the world: Poles, Russian, French, prisoners of war.

When I parted with my brother, we had a towel we were using in previous camp, we cut it in half, or bread, whatever we had, we divided in half. Children, what do they know.

At barracks we got same thing as everyone else. There was an SA man, I think he was homosexual and he liked children, and almost every night they had a barrel of soup and he made sure another barrel or whatever came to the block. Our ration was the soup, if you can call it soup, but anyhow something warm, a square of bread for four or five people. In the morning was wakeup call. Everything went by whistle, one wakeup, two get the coffee, which was dark water, three whistles was out to the Appellplatz [roll call area] — that was a must. Counted and counted again. Had to make your bed; if not done properly got 10 or 15 on your behind. Stayed on the Appellplatz for hours and hours, summer or winter, didn't matter. We marched to work, divided into commandos/groups.

Once making air-raid shelters for the Germans, middle '42, they just had holes dug in ground, camouflaged with branches. Near the building where we're working was a laboratory with German scientists, Jewish scientists. The air-raid went. We could see they were sending up balloons. [1:11:05]
Was Zwangsarbeitslager so guarded by SA not SS. I ran into shelter when air-raid siren went off and suddenly one of Germans spotted me — we had a number and Jewish star on chest and one on leg— and he spotted me and screaming *Raus, Jude! Jude, Raus!* and I ran out and bang! a bomb right smack center. If I'd stayed there I would be dead.

That was 1943 or so, we were taken over by the SS, officially became branch of Auschwitz, tattooed numbers on our arms. Must say, under the SS much cleaner than under the SA. They were disinfecting us and the barracks more often. Food and punishment were worse.

They made us do exercises, hopping like frogs for their entertainment. We were running—drop, run, drop — and beating all the time; was going on for quite a few weeks when they first came. I was lucky in a way, I made friends with professional artists, mainly Austrians, and established a theater. The SS wanted a theater in camp for their entertainment. I was lucky I met them and also that I could sing. Got into theater group — Jews from Holland, France, all over, only kapos and ones running camp could watch performances. After each performance, Germans brought us food. There was singing, poetry, sketches —could mock kapos, Judenalteste; God forbid you make mocking sketch of SS. They were professional artists, they knew how far they could go. Some already in Buchenwald before the war, sent back home, had a chance to get out of country, the ones that didn't manage, they came back again. I was lucky because chosen by one of SS to become the shoe polisher, so after work I had special armband and went to their barracks and polished their shoes. Each one left next to his shoes a piece of bread or something; even the Obersturmbannführer always left something, I had enough I could give food to others. I was lucky that way.

English prisoners we came together with at work; there were Jews amongst them that Germans didn't know. I went once to toilet and one started singing ... He left me food until one day I was spotted and I was called. Once they called up your number — you weren't called by your name, you were called by your number — you started to shake. When you get home at night you are sent to punishing room and I was given 25 with special strap. You only know first four or five and afterward you don't know anything anymore. … I survived that too, thanks, God. Of course, you're pretty sick after that for a while. Taken to the hospital. [1:21:56] But in Blechhammer it was protected, in other camp ones that couldn't work anymore were sent away; we can imagine where they went. They were looking for sick people. When you were sick you didn't report sick; you were taken away. They were standing at the gate, taking your temperature with hand; if warm that was the finish of it. Once we were building roads, pushing lorries with heavy stones. One fell on my right hand, cut deep, I still have scar. Frightened to show anybody, so to disinfect you urinated on it and made bandage from shirt and kept going. You didn't want to report sick; were frightened.

And then came the air raids, started in 1943. They'd say, *Your friends are coming, let them kill you*. Others could go into barracks but not us. Aeroplane would circle around and an hour later the bombs came. Had huge pipes, we crawled into them. One bomb hit other end of pipe and the

people there were killed. Dropping [klang? 1:26:07] bombs; we had to dig them out. We were not human, big deal a few Jews get blown up. Once we dug them out, a German expert dismantled them but in many cases a bomb went off and we're carrying pieces of bodies.

After a while they decided they would teach youngsters trades. They asked what would we would like to learn, all building trades, carpentry, mechanics. I wanted to be carpenter; I was assigned to Kommando 2. When the SS came it was not like before; when at work there was a guard. A lot were Ukrainians, Estonians, worse than Germans, were beating at work just for fun, just because you were a Jew and he had the gun and he was the authority.

But with the SS it was different. They took us to point of work, outside of it, and guards were all around 14km-square working perimeter; they were patrolling inside now and then; responsibility inside was our own. Each group of 12 or so, one was foreman; I was quick to learn to read plans so I had responsibility for this particular group. We were making steel for bunkers; we had to bend it, make it fit; for air-raid shelters. Made of steel and concrete. On the Baustelle [building site] were English, French prisoners. English were treated best; got rations from Red Cross and home; they threw away the camp food, but they had special huts … One of my group went near the hut to see what he could get. … If one person was gone a long time, guard punched me, but I didn't tell and that guy's alive.

With air raids one time I remember after raid we were carrying little buckets where we had our rations, carried with pieces of wire around our shoulders [to free hands]. After raids there was wire everywhere so we took pieces of wire. One instance the kapo made *ganze spiel,* said it is stealing. They hung these five people as an example, they hung there for five days. Sometimes they buried them up to the neck. We had to watch it. They would put something on the person's head and shoot at it until they missed and killed the person.

I tried to keep clean; didn't turn in my shirt for another one because you would get one with lice. Had heating in Blechhammer, pipes around the barracks, boiling water, and I washed my shirt that way. Made sure to have shower whenever I could, although always cold. Most important thing was when somebody told me *I won't survive that*, you could bet that three days later that was the end of them.

A few in camp from France that I met — my mother's maiden name was Fuchs,[1:39:52] that gentleman's name was Fuchs, we worked in same Kommando. After the war I met his wife. He did not survive, he was one who said *I can't take it*. Was easier for us Polish Jews to survive, than a French, a Dutch Jew, our standard of living not as high; we were tougher; they were used to better conditions. We were Ost Jude, survived better than West Jude.

One day in Blechhammer, I'm called to the office. … I think it was Mr. **Pollach[?]** [1:42:22] — he's here, too —was secretary under Mr. Demerer, asked if I had sister named Lola. I said yes and he said she had just come there from another camp. He called her in. She tells me now she spotted me in the early morning when I went out to work and went to the office and told them. We met. That was amongst the Jews; Demerer was a very nice person.

In Blechhammer before SS came they punished by putting you under a cold shower and beat you with a lash with piece of lead on the end; nobody survived that. One day Demerer said, *You either stop it or it's me.* … From then on that punishment was terminated in Blechhammer, thanks to Demerer.

In the Juden group in that block were two gentlemen responsible, the blockalteste, one a French Jew name of [1:44:50] **Klockfisch[?]**; other I don't remember the name, but they found he had bread he should not have had and he was taken and getting beating. For some reason he survived but when he came back not one spot was not black and slashed on his body.

Many instances that happened that one has blocked out, or it would be hard to live.

One night, could have been Christmas, SS wives and girlfriends were there. One said I had beautiful eyes and gave me some chocolate. A few days later, after New Year's, we heard already shooting, cannons, the Russians were approaching and we start marching. Toward evening shooting stopped and they took us into a barn and said early morning we would go back to the camp. But it was not to be. Shooting started again, SS said keep going. No food. Now and then at a destination they had a bucket of potatoes. We could see other groups from other camps; had to keep going because if you couldn't continue, you got shot. Every few minutes you hear *bang bang bang bang*. People tried to hide at night when we got into barn; the [soldiers] took pitchforks and stabbed at the straw.

One night we were going in circles; they got lost, so going in circles and circles and circles, until morning. Don't know how many perished. Eating snow but it's bad for you; dries you out. Don't know how long we marched, six weeks or maybe more. Got to Gross-Rosen, they put us in outskirts of camp with just walls with electric wires. Standing on Appellplatz, was mud, many froze standing. One of my artist friends, **Willi Frier,** [1:51:52] and I said, *There's no point. I had enough, goodbye*. He said, *No, you stupid? You've gone so far—you are young, you will survive.*

One night on the march I sneaked out. There were houses with smoke from chimneys. I went in and there was a woman eating and I said in German *I am very hungry* and she said, *Get out, you war criminal.* I said I am only a child. She started yelling, I got frightened but managed to get back.

We were loaded onto the famous cars again at Gross-Rosen, transported to Buchenwald. Just before Buchenwald was a city called **Weimar?**. [1:54:32] We got there at station, and Americans started to bomb. They bombed the train. As soon as SS went, we went. A lot got killed; the ones who didn't we had a feast. There were brussels sprouts in field nearby. Nothing you find now can taste as good as brussels sprouts did then; consequences after a different question *[chuckles]*.

To Buchenwald only 5 kms, special little train going. Went into barrack, threw everything off, dunked into disinfectant, had shower, other side got meager clothes. I was assigned there to Block 49, double-story brick block, separated from all the ones I knew. My hands were frozen; I couldn't open them, couldn't manage soup, somebody helped me. I don't know how many weeks I was lying there, I was very ill. It was not run by Jews inside barracks, that barracks was run by

a Dutchman, left me to lie there. I got a little better, they said were going to give needles against typhoid, but I learned you didn't want the needle, don't know what was on it.

Jakob Alterwein, also from Blechhammer [1:59:25], he passed away last year [also in Melbourne] — I sneaked out, he had his [frostbitten] toes chopped off. Mine got better. I was assigned to Barrack 23; they were sending you out in Buchenwald to work, sent to **Weimar** to clean up after bombings in street.

Three of us from block survived — one in Melbourne [**Camille Schoos?],** one in Paris **[Joe Schwarzbeck?]** [2:01:45]. They told me when I first went to that block they shifted bunks so I got the lower bunk because I wasn't able to climb up.

Somehow I got better, lucky or unlucky. We were taken out to clean the streets. If you were hungry, like an animal you could smell food. Once we found some potatoes, made a little fire and ate them. Once who do you think I see? — the politischer Leiter from Blechhammer. He was our guard and he recognized me because he used to see me in the theater. He said, *You remember me?* I said, yes. He said, *I haven't got much myself, I can't give you anything, but if you have gone so far, keep it up because I don't think it's going to be very long*.

A bit of hope. *[Tape cuts off]*

Interview resumes on 11-22-1995
with life in orphanage after war

Going to school, putting in as many hours as possible because our schooling during war was nil. Our life there was almost normal, as can be in orphanage. Teachers very nice; majority German because we all could speak German. I grasped French language quite easily.

With Korean War decided they must send us away from Europe as quickly as they could. I wanted to go with a friend but he decided to go to Canada. It was very hard to get in; had to go through medical tests; I didn't pass for some reason, so the next was Australia.

While I was in France we were getting pocket money, 100 francs would buy a sandwich, although fares were given to us from the orphanage. In the first year, we were called *déporté politique* and had special cards and lapel sign, and had no fares, could go wherever we wanted to in France. Each car had four or five seats reserved for us, but embarrassing for us youngsters so we didn't use those seats and leave old ladies or men standing. We were physically recuperated by then. In movies, didn't have to queue up, pay only a minimum amount. To us the French were really very good. We were treated exactly like their own people.

Once going 120-130 km to visit Paris, two or three boys, and a couple struck up conversation and I became very friendly with them and after a few months in **Danier?**[7:36], 4-5 km from Paris, visited them. That lady was so nice to me, made sure I had cake or something special.

Funny, when you talk about it, things come back. One time headmaster called me in and held up clip from newspaper, said Gen. Michalowicz of Yugoslavia looking for his son. I said I was sure

it wasn't me. Also funny when we were playing sports ... nobody wanted to come near me, afraid to hurt me. Headmaster had to give them pep talk; I didn't want to be treated as someone special.

Went to consul, maybe English, and got to Australia in 1948, end of. Left Paris 14th of July (Bastille Day); didn't want to go then. Went by train to Marseilles, we all knew each other because we were all getting together because they were bringing Jewish artists like **Molly Picon?**[12:05] and her husband and we all got together. From Marseilles boarded SS *Derna*, sunk in World War I, fitted out for cattle— we were the cattle. World War I over a thousand people on that boat. Maximum speed 7 knots. Took over 3 months to get to Australia. Had births, death, marriage. Lot of non-Jews, Ukrainians and Estonians, don't know who organized. The Joint paid for us.

Voyage was really something. First stop Port Said. Loading sheep and onions. Once we get into Suez Canal and Red Sea I was only one in dining room because everyone was seasick. Food was very bad. Next went to Aden — restrictions on water and food so we were pinching onions. Food so bad that we were comparing it to camp diet. Couldn't sleep because on bunks, packed like sheep, so we slept on deck. From Aden went to Colombo. I got very sick, caught pneumonia, but luckily a Jewish doctor was looking after us. Colombo was first spot we could go ashore because Arabs wouldn't let Jews in. Got a dollar, went to a restaurant. That was really something after 2 months on the boat.

Went to Perth, where greeted by late **Mr. Absetz?**[20:02] who came from Melbourne. We were the first children survivors who came to Australia. and **Mr. Sid Einfield** came to Fremantle. They greeted us, gave us 10 shillings, we got a milkshake — didn't know what it was. Boat stayed in Fremantle for a week, we stayed with families over Shabbat, went to shul for first time since before war. They weren't religious, they just cared to teach us something. Mr. Absetz accompanied us to Melbourne, taken to **Berkholt?,** [20:30] housing for immigrants from Jewish Welfare Society.

A few Czechoslovakian boys didn't go because they had guardians. We were greeted by **Mr. Fink** and his wife, Nina Fink; they were there every day.

We didn't worry what we would find in Australia, it was an adventure, go on a boat, as far away as possible from Europe.

Canberra had three meals provided and after three or four weeks they tried to find jobs for us. Before leaving France, they took us into **ORT** to give us crash course, I in typewriter mechanic. But I had friends from Buchenwald, they were older, and had trades; they established themselves already in Paris making shoes. When I went to school in France, I helped them out to get a bit of pocket money. So I had a bit of knowledge in the leather trade.

I went with this lady to **McDool's?** big stationer with typewriters. He said, can you sing a song; I said no, but in my broken English (they tried to teach us English in France) I said I come here for job not to sing. And that was about the end of the interview. I said I had experience in leather, so we went to **Mr. Oppurz?** who was supplying to the handbag trade, and I got a job in **Berg??** with a Jewish fellow. Comes payday, he gives me something, 3 pounds, something, end of 1948.

I said to him, what's that, he said you're only youngster. I said I was doing the same work and I did the job very well. I said, *Why do you want to exploit me*. So I left. Another friend had a job with handbag company in Victoria, so I went there and I showed the manager what I could do and was hired immediately. Comes payday, he gives me a normal wage.

We found rooms with families. I happened to go to the Fuchses, the caterer **Michael Fuchs**. That was like a home to me, treated like their own child. That's where I could see what we were missing; the family life. Before, we used to go to the **Pusches** for Shabbat, six or seven boys. In France we were all the same; a lot of French Jewish children also were orphans. We went to evening school to learn English. I had a knowledge of English. I regret it now, wish I had taken some courses.

Teacher in France looked after us as if we were his own children, made sure we were tucked in at night, brought us cherries, took us out to dinner; helped us get back to normal family life. I've got his photo here.

Fuchses lived near the Kadimah? — that's where I met my wife. ... Used to go to picnics, hire trucks, go for picnics to **Mariala**;[36:17] almost bitten by snake there on the beach. Got married in 1950, I think, August 23.

How do you relate to your country of origin?

Poland? No way. To me Poland is nonexistent. All my memories from Poland are nothing but misery; antisemitism, frightened to go out into the street. Glad to be out of it; wouldn't like to go back there ever. I have a friend I went to **Cheder** with; he took his son, to show him his roots, and then his daughter. My sister went back; she said she had a lot of pleasure out of it, to see how bad the Poles are off — revenge.

Sing a couple of songs; the song of Treblinka and the one you composed on family life in Australia.

[39:00] Don't know who wrote it or when but we used to sing it in the camps. Used to sing a lot of songs from the camps. In France on Friday night after dinner, we sat and sang and that's where all these songs came out.

Second song: When first came to Australia went with family the **Redlachs, Julia and Friedrich,** the butcher. She said, call me Mom. She always introduced me like I was her son. Stayed with two sons, Max and Peter. We're still in touch. Used to be a song, "Reflections on the Water," in English. I liked the tune of it and while I was sitting and listening to it and feeling sorry for myself I came up with something like this. It was seven years since I lost my mother then. *[Sings.]*

Quite happy, two lovely daughters and six grandchildren.

Last minute thoughts?

It was impossible to tell you what ... it's like when you are torn away from your parents, your mother especially ... at that age. ... also the sufferings and everyday what you went through in the camps, especially what they call the Todesmarsch ... how you walk in the cold without food without clothes without anything. ... From day to day I had to fight to survive. You cannot possibly describe that it's possible that one human being could have done a thing like this to another human being. I myself, now, I cannot believe it myself. I have been through it ... but I cannot believe it even is possible. Sometimes I think ... it was a dream; it's unreal. And yet now to hear that people come out and say it's nonexistent ... it's not true, it's false. ... it hasn't happened, that it's exaggerated, it's unbelievable. ... You've got to think of the future ... Now still survivors left. What's going to happen in 20, 30, 40, 50 years? It can happen again. If it's already denied now, what's going to happen in 50 or 20 or 30 years? ... A tape like this will come up and say, Here we are, we've got proof. It happened, it existed, it's proof. *That is the only reason that maybe we are doing this: Maybe I can prevent a future tragedy to some other future generation. Hopefully.*